

Championship Chronicle



2009 US Women's Chess Championship

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Zatonskih Stays Perfect, Krush Sends Message

Day two of the 2009 US Women's Championship saw the two main favorites both win.

IM Anna Zatonskih won her second game in a row, this time a victory over WIM Battsetseg Tsagaan who insisted on complicating the position when she had little time left on the clock.

IM Irina Krush sent a message to the rest of the competitors with a fighting win with the black pieces against one of her major rivals, IM Rusudan Goletiani.

Having being held to a draw with the white pieces in round one, Krush saw this game as a "must win" and succeeded in her quest to not fall a full point behind Zatonskih.



IM Anna Zatonskih, current leader, and IM Irina Krush, just a half-point behind, will meet in a crucial round 3 encounter. (Photo Betsy Dynako)

WGM Camilla Baginskaite moved into joint second place but was kicking herself after her game against WIM Alisa Melekhina as

she felt she had a winning position towards the end but she, like Krush in the previous round, fell victim to Melekhina's stubborn defense and a draw was agreed.

WIM Iryna Zenyuk got off the mark with a win against Yun Fan although check out the analysis for Fan's not very obvious missed draw opportunity at the end of the game.

And last but not least, WGM Sabina Foisor and WFM Tatev Abrahamyan had a complicated affair that eventually fizzled out to a draw.

Current Standings:

- 1 Anna Zatonskih, 2
- 2-4 Irina Krush, 1½
- 2-4 Sabina Foisor, 1½
- 2-4 Camilla Baginskaite, 1½
- 5-7 Rusudan Goletiani, 1
- 5-7 Iryna Zenyuk, 1
- 5-7 Alisa Melekhina, 1
- 8 Tatev Abrahamyan, ½
- 9-10 Battsetseg Tsagaan, 0
- 9-10 Yun Fan, 0

Round 3 Match-Ups

Round 3 sees probably the most anticipated game of the tournament when IM Anna Zatonskih and IM Irina Krush play against each other.

These two have not played each other since their infamous play-off match in last year's US Women's

Championship and with the 30-move rule in effect, most people are expecting a blood bath.

WGM Camilla Baginskaite will play against IM Rusudan Goletiani who may feel this is a "must win" for her to stay in with a chance of winning the tournament.

In other match-ups, IM Iryna Zenyuk plays WGM Sabina Foisor, WFM Tatev Abrahamyan plays WIM Alisa Melekhina and WIM Battsetseg Tsagaan plays Yun Fan in a battle of players yet to get on the scoreboard.



Ben's Best: Goletiani vs Krush

GM-Elect Ben Finegold Picks His Game of the Day

Goletiani, Rusudan (2437) – Krush, Irina (2490)

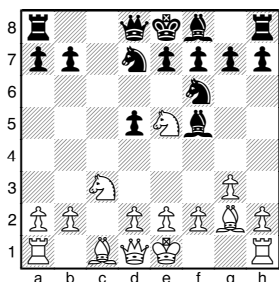
1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c6 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.c4

Irina said she had not fully prepared for 4.c4. Krush expected some kind of Reti, but was not sure what move order Rusa would try. The text move is aggressive, and a good choice, especially as a surprise.

4...Bg4 5.Ne5 Bf5 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.Nc3

Black has to be careful of three things: (1) Her d pawn can be attacked, (2) her b pawn can be attacked and (3) the bishop on f5 can get pushed around with a later g4! Rusa tries to execute these ideas, but, especially the third one!

7...Nbd7?!



The least common move played in this variation. More common are 7...Nc6 or 7...e6. Now Goletiani goes for the throat!

8.Qa4!

The strongest and most aggressive continuation! White must be quick to punish the unusual Nbd7 before black gets to complete her development with e6, Bd6, 0-0, etc... Black must now defend d5... soΔ

8...e6 9.g4! Bg6 10.h4

Surprisingly, I have 74 games in my database in this position, with white scoring very heavily. To her credit, Krush defends well, and makes the most principled move.

10...h6 11.Nxg6 fxg6

During the live commentary, I was thinking white was doing quite well. But, I also thought white must keep up the aggression, or, eventually, black will complete development, and have a reasonable game. Rusa and Irina both thought white was better here, but, as Goletiani acknowledged after the game, white is not doing as well as she thought. Rusa was quite confident here that her posi-

tion was close to winning, but could not find the knockout blow.

12.Qc2

I thought this was an odd move during the game, but, it turns out to be the most common continuation! White scores over 70% with 12.g5 hxg5 13.hxg5 Rxh1 14.Bxh1. Rusa saw this variation, but thought the g5 pawn might be too loose after 14...Nh7. During the live commentary, I thought 12.Qc2 was a bit strange. Somehow, I thought the black king was better on f7 then e8! Castling has not been a top priority for many of the players this event!

12...Kf7 13.d4

During the game, one of the live spectators suggested 13.h5. I did not like this move due to 13...g5 closing up the kingside. In fact, 13.h5 is the most common move (!), but, black scores quite well! Goletiani's 13.d4 is best.

13...Bb4 14.g5 hxg5 15.Bxg5

Krush was more worried about 15.hxg5. I expected Rusa's play with Bxg5, Rh3, etc. Krush defends well, and it seems she may have been right about 15.Bxg5 being somewhat innocuous. 15...Qa5 A novelty. Gareev won a nice game in 2007 when he faced 15...Rc8. I thought black's counterplay on the queenside this game was excellent. Krush plays very aggressively in the counter-attack and causes white all sorts of problems.

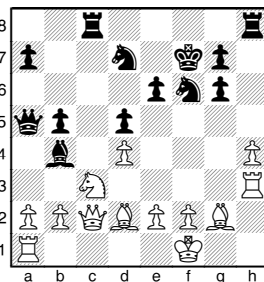
16.Rh3 Rac8 17.Kf1

Krush was critical of this move, and thought Rusa should try 17.Bd2 instead. During the live commentary, I thought 17.Kf1 was normal, and I liked white's game. Perhaps Goletiani and I both underestimated black's counterplay.

17...b5 18.Bd2

I was shocked by this move, and expected 18.Qd3 breaking the pin. For once, Rybka agrees! This is too slow. Now black seizes the initiative, and white must think about getting equality.

"Somehow, I thought the black king was better on f7 then e8! Castling has not been a top priority for many of the players this event!"



18...Bd6!!

Jen and I almost fell out of our chairs after this move! Simply brilliant! It prevents white from playing Rg3 and, at the same time, prepares 19...b4. I have rarely seen a move which puts ones queen in the line of fire of the enemy bishop (d2), but concrete variations are more important than strategical dogma!

19.Qd3 b4 20.Nd1

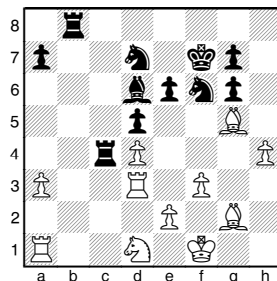
I expected 20.Nb5, although white probably thought this could be unsafe, with the knight having no flight squares. The text move is passive, but solid.

20...Qa4 21.Bg5 Qc2 22.Qa6 Qc6 23.Qxc6 Rxc6

Rybka thinks it is about equal, but, I was sure, during the game, that black was better. The white pieces are not well coordinated, and black's king is perfectly safe. After white's next, black gets the better rooks, with nice open files.

24.a3 bxa3 25.bxa3 Rb8 26.Rd3 Rc4 27.f3?

Weakening the dark squares to try to activate her game with e4. Better was 27.Nc3 and white is only slightly worse.



27...Nh5! 28.e4 Rc2?!

Better was 28...Nf4. Both sides were in time trouble after the titanic middlegame struggle.

29.Rd2?

Rusa should play 29.Ne3! and she can untangle. Now black is,

once again, much better.

29...Rxd2 30.Bxd2 Rb3! 31.exd5 exd5 32.f4 Ndf6 33.Nc3 Bxf4 34.Be1 Ke6 35.Ra2 Kd6 36.a4 a6!

Controlling b5.

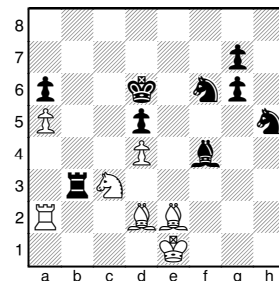
37.a5 Bg3 38.Bd2 Bxh4 39.Bf3 Bg3?

In time trouble, Irina misses 39...Ne4! 40.Bxe4 Ng3+! -+

40.Be2 Bf4

Finally time trouble is over! Black is much better, but, white has good drawing chances once again.

41.Ke1?!



[Better was.. 41.Bxa6! Bxd2 42.Nb5+ Kd7 43.Rxd2 ..and white has good chances for a draw.]

41...Ne4! 42.Nxe4+ dxe4 43.Bxf4+?! Nxf4 44.Bxa6 e3! 45.Kd1! Rb4 46.Kc1

46.Ra3 Rxd4+ 47.Ke1 Rb4!-+

46...Rxd4 47.Bb5 Kc5 48.Bf1 Rd7! 49.a6 Kb6!

Brilliant endgame play by Krush leaves her with an easily winning position. Now both players had less than 10 minutes to finish the game, and Rusa plays on to the bitter end. A great fight from two of the favorites.

50.Be2 Ka7 51.Rb2 g5 52.Ra2 g6 53.Rc2 Re7 54.Kd1 Rh7! 55.Bf3 Kxa6 [55...g4!-+] 56.Rc3 Re7 57.Rb3 Ka5 58.Ke1 Ka4 59.Rb6 e2 60.Rd6 Re3 61.Bc6+ Kb4 62.Bh1 Nd3+ 63.Rxd3 Rxd3 64.Kxe2 Rd4 65.Ke3 Rf4 66.Be4 Rf6 67.Bd5 Kc5 68.Be4 Kd6 69.Bd3 Ke5 70.Be2 Rf4 71.Bd3 g4 72.Be2 g3 73.Bf3 Kf5 74.Ke2 Rb4 75.Bc6 Kf4 76.Bd5 Rb2+ 77.Kf1 Ke3 78.Kg1 Rd2 79.Bc6 Kf4 80.Bb7 Rd7 81.Bc6 Re7 82.Bd5 Kg4 83.Kg2 Re2+ 84.Kf1 Rd2 85.Bg2 Rxg2 86.Kxg2 Kf4 87.Kg1 Kf3 88.Kf1 g2+ 89.Kg1 g5 90.Kh2 Kf2 91.Kh3 g4+

A great game by both players, who showed a great fighting spirit. 0-1

Zatonskih Gains Second Win Against Tsagaan

Zatonskih, Anna (2496) – Tsagaan, Battsetseg (2256)

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.c4 d6 6.Nc3 Nbd7 7.0-0 e5 8.e4 exd4

Zatonskih had the position prior in a game played earlier this year 8...c6 9.h3 exd4 10.Nxd4 Qb6 11.Re1 Ne8 12.Nb3 a5 13.Be3 Qb4 14.Nd4 a4 15.a3 Qa5 16.f4 Nc5 17.Qc2 Bxd4 18.Bxd4 Nb3 19.Rad1 Nxd4 20.Rxd4 Be6 21.Bf1 f6 22.Kh2 Bf7 23.Rd2 Kg7 24.Qd1 Kg8 25.Kg2 Be6 26.Be2 Kg7 27.Rf1 f5 28.exf5 gxf5 29.Re1 Rf6 30.Bh5 Qc5 31.Nxa4 Qa5 32.Nc3 Qc5 33.Bxe8 Rxe8 34.Rxd6 Qxc4 35.Kh2 Rf7 36.Qd4+ Qxd4 37.Rxd4 Rfe7 38.Kg1 Bf7 39.Rxe7 Rxe7 40.Kf2 Bh5 41.Rd2 Kf7 42.Na4 Ke8 43.Nc5 Kf8 44.Nd7+ Kf7 45.Ne5+ Ke6 46.g4 ffg4 47.hxg4 Be8 48.Ke3 c5 49.Ke4 Ba4 50.f5+ Kf6 51.Kf4 Kg7 52.g5 Re8 53.f6+ Kf8 54.Rh2 1-0 Zatonskih, A (2462)–Armbrust, F (2321)/Caleta ENG 2009

9.Nxd4 Re8 10.h3 a6 11.Be3 c6

11...Rb8 is much more popular in this position.

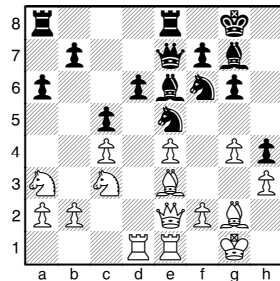
12.Qc2 h5

A new idea in this position according to my database. Tsagaan likes to attack but this may be very premature in this particular position.

13.Rad1 Qe7 14.Rfe1 h4 15.g4

Blocking the position on the kingside and nullifying Tsagaan's potential attack.

15...Ne5 16.Qe2 c5 17.Nc2 Be6 18.Na3



18...Nfxg4!?

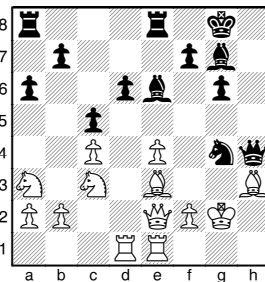
Played with little time left on her clock and termed as "desperation" by the com-

mentary room. The sacrifice doesn't seem too bad in itself but maybe a little foolish to play with just a few minutes to make over 20 moves to reach the first time control.

19.hxg4 h3?

The obvious 19...Nxg4 should be tried, 20.Nc2 (20.Bf4!? Bd4 21.Rxd4 cxd4 22.Nd5) 20...Bxc3 21.bxc3 Ne5 and the c-pawn will also fall.

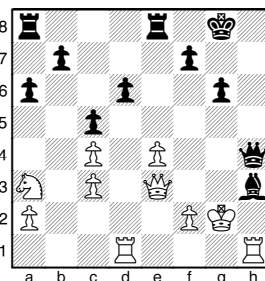
20.Bxh3 Qh4 21.Kg2 Nxb3



22.Rh1!

White's position is now totally defended and black doesn't have enough compensation for the sacrificed piece.

22...Bxc3 23.bxc3 Nxe3+ 24.Qxe3 Bxh3+

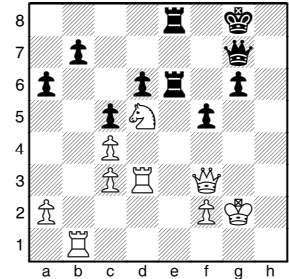


25.Qxh3

25.Rxh3 is possible despite the apparent loss of the rook on d1, e.g. 25...Qg4+

26.Kh2! Qxe4 (26...Qxd1 27.Qh6) 27.Rxd6+-

25...Qxe4+ 26.Qf3 Qe5 27.Rd5 Qg7 28.Nc2 Re6 29.Rd3 Rae8 30.Ne3 f5 31.Rb1 R8e7 32.Nd5 Re8



33.Rxb7 1-0

"Played with little time left on her clock and termed as "desperation" by the commentary room."



IM Anna Zatonskih and WIM Battsetseg Tsagaan enjoy a pre-game chat. (Photo Betsy Dynako)

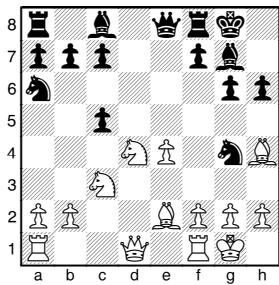
Foisor and Abrahamyan Settle for Complicated Draw

Foisor, Sabina (2390) –
Abrahamyan, Tatev (2334)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3
Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3

Abrahamyan was probably expecting 5.f3, the Samisch Variation, which Foisor normally plays against the King's Indian Defense.

5...0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Na6
8.Be3 Ng4 9.Bg5 Qe8
10.c5 h6 11.Bh4 exd4
12.Nxd4 dxc5



13.Nb3

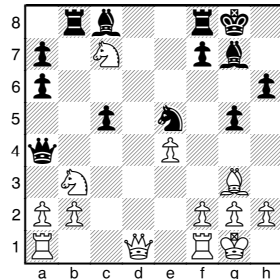
Foisor varies first from an Abrahamyan game played at the Olympiad in Germany last year. 13.Ndb5 Nf6 14.Bf3 g5 15.Bg3 g4 16.e5 Nh5 17.Bxg4 Nxb3 18.hxg3 Qxe5 19.Bxc8 Raxc8 20.Re1 Qg5 21.Qf3 Nb4 22.Rad1 a6 23.Ne4 Qe5 24.Ned6 Qxb2 25.Nxc8 axb5 26.Ne7+ Kh8 27.Re2 Qc3 28.Qxb7 Qc4 29.Re4 Qc2 30.Rde1 Nd3 31.R1e2 Qb1+ 32.Kh2 Qf1 33.Qxc7 Nxf2 34.Re1 Ng4+ 35.Kh3 Nf2+ 36.Kh2 Ng4+ 37.Kh3 Nf2+ 1/2-1/2 Tjolsen, K (2110) – Abrahamyan, T (2286) / Dresden GER 2008

13...g5 14.Bg3 Ne5
15.Bxa6 bxa6 16.Nd5

White will win her pawn back but she's not neces-

sarily in a rush to do so.

16...Rb8 17.Nxc7 Qa4



Black threatens moves like ...c4 and ...Qxe4.

18.Qd6

18.Nd5!? Re8 (18...Qxe4? 19.Re1; 18...c4 19.Nd2) 19.Nxc5 Qxd1 20.Rfxd1 Rxb2 and white probably has a slight advantage thanks to black's pawn structure.

18...Rb6 19.Qxc5 Rc6

19...Nd3!? is an interesting way for black to regain the sacrificed pawn 20.Qe3 Nb4 21.Qe2 Nxa2 22.Nc5 Qd4 23.Rxa2 Qxc5]

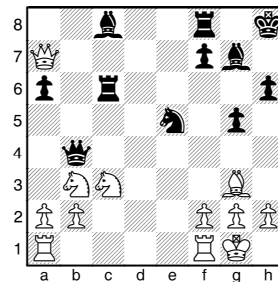
20.Qxa7 Nd3

Black has the initiative and a lot of activity for the two sacrificed pawns.

21.Nd5 Kh8 22.e5

Now might be a good time to bring the queen back into play 22.Qe3!? Nxb2 23.Rac1 Rxc1 24.Rxc1 Be6 (24...Qxa2? 25.Ra1) 25.h3 and black may be struggling to prove compensation for the pawn.

22...Nxe5 23.Nc3 Qb4



24.Rae1

24.f4! A hard move to find but a good one. Any knight move, allowing 25.fxg5, or black capturing the pawn herself allows the white rook on f1 to join in the action.

24...Nd3 25.Re4 Qb6
26.Qxb6

The commentary room mentioned 26.Qe7 trying to keep queens on but it

doesn't seem any better than the move played after 26...Re6 27.Rxe6 Qxe6 and the queens will either get traded or black gets in ...f5 with a lot of play.

26...Rxb6 27.h4 Nxb2
28.Be5 Bb7 29.Bxg7+
Kxg7 30.Re2 Nd3 31.hxg5
hxg5 32.Rd2 Nf4 33.f3
Rh8 34.Ne2 Nxe2+
35.Rxe2 Bd5 36.Re5 Bxb3
37.axb3

With everything swapped off peace reigns.

37...f6 38.Ra5 1/2-1/2



WGM Sabina-Francesca Foisor, currently a student at UMBC, Maryland.
(Photo Betsy Dynako)

Melekhina Defends to Thwart Baginskaite

Melekhina, Alisa (2310) –
Baginskaite, Camilla (2356)

1.e4 c5 2.c3

A surprise from Melekhina! Normally she plays the Closed Sicilian with 2.Nc3 but apparently she's been expanding her repertoire.

2...Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.Nf3
Nc6 5.Bc4 Nb6 6.Bb3 c4

Melekhina mentioned she had prepared for 6...d5 that Baginskaite had played previously. 6...d5 7.exd6 Qxd6 8.Na3 a6 9.0-0 Bf5 10.d4 cxd4 11.Nxd4 Nxd4 12.cxd4 e6 13.Re1 Be7 14.Qf3 Qc6 15.Qg3 0-0 16.Bf4 Bf6 17.Be5 Bxe5 18.Qxe5 Rac8 19.h4 Rfd8 20.Rac1 Qxc1 21.Rxc1 Rxc1+ 22.Kh2 h6 23.g4 Bg6 24.h5 Bh7 25.Bxe6 fxe6 26.Qxe6+ Kh8 27.Qxb6 Rd7 28.b3 Bg8 29.Qb4 b5 30.Qd2 Ra1 31.Qe3 Rxa2 32.Nb1 Rc7 33.Nc3 Rb2 34.Ne4 Rxb3 35.Qf4 Rd7 36.g5 hxg5 37.Qxg5 Rd3 38.Nf6 Rf7 39.Nxg8 Kxg8 40.Qd8+ Kh7 41.Qe8 Rxf2+ 42.Kg1 Rdf3 43.d5 ½-½ Galant, S (2223)–Baginskaite, C (2317)/Stillwater 2007

7.Bc2 d5

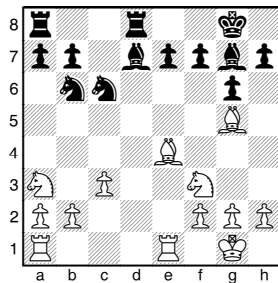
The more popular move here is 7...Qc7

8.exd6 Qxd6 9.d4 cxd4
10.Qxd3 Qxd3

Once again Melekhina is playing a game in which the queens come off early. In speaking to her after the game she couldn't understand why her opponents would play that way.

11.Bxd3 g6 12.0-0 Bg7
13.Re1 0-0 14.Be4 Bd7

15.Na3 Rfd8 16.Bg5



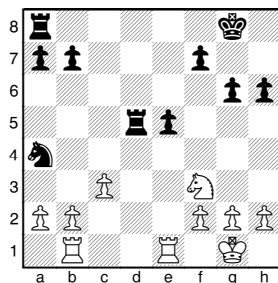
16...Na4!

It's usually not a good idea to deliberately put a knight on the edge of the board but from here it puts a lot of pressure on the b2–c3 pawn chain.

17.Rab1 Be6 18.Nc2 h6
19.Be3 Bd5!

This move practically forces a variation in which Baginskaite takes over control of the d–file.

20.Bxd5 Rxd5 21.Nfd4
Nxd4 22.Bxd4 Bxd4
23.Nxd4 e5 24.Nf3



24...f6

Baginskaite makes her pawns solid and limits Melekhina's pieces. She must have a slight edge here.

25.Rec1 Rc8 26.c4 Rd3
27.Ne1

Allowing the rook to penetrate the seventh rank. This could have been prevented

by 27.b3 Nc5 28.b4 (28.Kf1 e4) 28...Ne6 29.c5 but black probably still has an edge after 29...Ra3

27...Rd2 28.b3 Nc5
29.Rc2 Rcd8 30.Kf1 Rxc2
31.Nxc2 Rd2 32.Nb4 Ne4

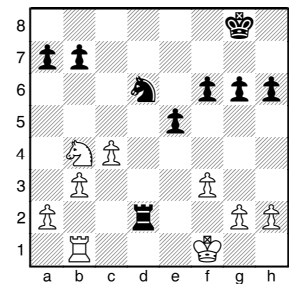
It may have been better to play 32...Kf7 protecting the f6 pawn and getting the king into action, e.g. 33.a4 f5 34.Nd5 e4 threatening ...Nd3. Black is clearly in a better position here.



WIM Alisa Melekhina taking photographs at the Contemporary Art Museum events. (Photo Chris Bird)

33.f3 Nd6

Both players had seen the rook and pawn ending after 33...Nc3 34.Rc1 Nxa2 35.Nxa2 Rxa2 36.Rd1 b6 37.Rd7 Ra3 38.b4 Rc3 39.c5 bxc5 40.bxc5 Rxc5 41.Rxa7 and both came to the conclusion that it was probably drawn. Because of this, Baginskaite goes for a different knight move that she feels may offer more.



34.Re1!

Possibly overlooked by Baginskaite. The position now is equal as white will challenge black's active rook.

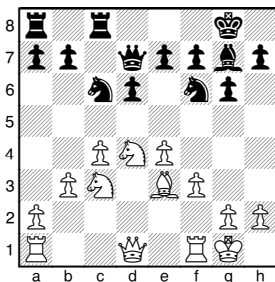
34...Nf5 35.Nd5 Kf7
36.Re2 Rd1+ 37.Re1 Rd2
38.Re2 Rd3 39.Ke1 Nh4
40.Nb4 Rd4 41.Nc2 Rd3
42.Nb4 Rd6 43.Nd5 Nf5
½-½

"It's usually not a good idea to deliberately put a knight on the edge of the board..."

Zenyuk Wins, Fan Misses Miracle Save

Fan, Yun (2201) –
Zenyuk, Iryna (2281)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+
Bd7 4.Bxd7+ Qxd7 5.c4
Nc6 6.Nc3 Nf6 7.d4 cxd4
8.Nxd4 g6 9.f3 Bg7
10.Be3 0-0 11.0-0 Rfc8
12.b3



White has obtained a typical Maroczy Bind with pawns on a2, b3, c4, e4, f3 and g2. This is a positional idea linked with trading off the white-squared bishop on move 4. This position has been seen in hundreds of chess games previously.

12...Qd8 13.Qd2 Qa5
14.a3

It is more normal to bring the white rooks to c1 and d1.

14...a6 15.Rfc1 Nd7
16.Ra2 Nxd4 17.Bxd4
Bxd4+ 18.Qxd4 Qc5
19.Qxc5 Rxc5

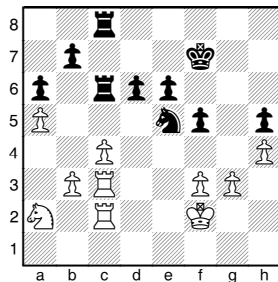
All the trades have seen the position become very sterile and equal.

20.a4 Rac8 21.Rd1 Kf8
22.Re2 R5c6 23.Re3 Nc5
24.Rb1 e6 25.Na2 Ke7
26.h3 h5 27.h4 Rb8
28.Rc3 f5

Zenyuk has slowly improved her position while the white pieces have become passive and moved without a real purpose. Be-

cause of this, Zenyuk now starts to create some openings in the position which only her pieces can take advantage of.

29.exf5 gxf5 30.g3 Rf8
31.a5 Nd7 32.Re1 Kf7
33.Rec1 Rg8 34.Kf2 Rgc8
35.R1c2 Ne5



36.f4?

I don't like this move as it gives the black knight access to too many good squares.

36...Ng4+ 37.Kf3 Nf6
38.Re3 Rc5 39.Nc3 Rxa5

The a-pawn falls and black now has a winning position.

40.Ne2

Here, according to Zenyuk, Fan's flag fell before she managed to press the clock. However, instead of pausing the clock and summoning an arbiter, Zenyuk made the next move and hit the clock back and then got an arbiter. Obviously the arbiter could no longer determine whether the flag had indeed fallen before Fan had pressed the clock as it could have fallen after Zenyuk had pressed the clock back for her 40th move and so the flag fall claim was denied.

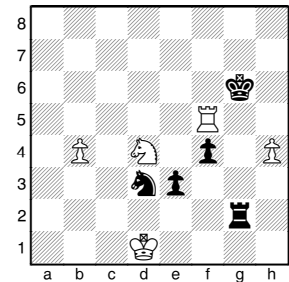
40...Ng4 41.Rd3 e5
42.Rdc3 b5 43.cxb5
Rxc3+ 44.Nxc3 axb5
45.fxe5 dxe5 46.b4 Ra3
47.Ke2 e4 48.Nxb5 Rxc3

The e and f pawns will march down the board.

49.Rc5 Rg2+ 50.Ke1 Kf6
51.Nd4 Ne5 52.Rb5 Nd3+
53.Kd1 f4 54.Rxh5 e3

55.Rf5+ Kg6?

55...Ke7! and white wins easily as in the game.



56.h5+?

56.Rg5+!! Amazing... trading rooks actually leads to a drawn knight and pawn ending! 56...Rxc5 57.hxc5 Nxb4 58.Ke2 Kxc5 59.Kf3 Nd5 60.Ne6+ Kf5 61.Nxf4! with a draw.

56...Kh6 57.Ne2 Rf2 58.b5 f3

White cannot move the knight because of ...Rd2#.

59.Rf6+ Kh7 60.Rf7+ Kg8 0-1



Yun Fan and WIM Iryna Zenyuk share a friendly moment before their game in round 2. (Photo Betsy Dynako)

Photo Gallery

Rusudan Goletiani, Tatev Abrahamyan and Iryna Zenyuk make their way to the Chess Club. (Photo Betsy Dynako)



Jeanne Siquefield rings the Titanic bell to start round 1. (Photo Betsy Dynako)



Anna Zatonskih and Iryna Zenyuk go over their game in the commentary room. (Photo Betsy Dynako)



Irina Krush hula hoops at the hula chess exhibition. (Photo Chris Bird)



Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis Founder, Rex Siquefield, relaxes while listening to live commentary of round 2 by Macauley Peterson, IM Jennifer Shahade and GM-Elect Ben Finegold. (Photo Betsy Dynako)

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Round Schedule

- Round 3, Tuesday, October 6, 2:00 pm
- Round 4, Wednesday, October 7, 2:00 pm
- Round 5, Thursday, October 8, 2:00 pm
- Round 6, Saturday, October 10, 12:00 pm
- Round 7, Sunday, October 11, 12:00 pm
- Round 8, Monday, October 12, 12:00 pm
- Round 9, Tuesday, October 13, 10:00 am
- Tie-Break (if necessary), Tuesday, October 13, 5:00 pm

Other Events

- Breakfast with Players at Siteman Cancer Ctr, Friday, October 9, 8:30 am
- Players Simul at Sci-Fest, Friday, October 9, 10:30 am
- Players Lunch at Chess Club, Friday, October 9, 12:00 pm
- Closing Ceremony, Tuesday, October 13, 7:00 pm
- A Game of Chance, 2009 US Women's Champion vs Special Guest Kemper Art Museum, Wednesday, October 14, 6:00 pm

FM Mike Klein's Daily Wrap

Read more from Mike at the Championship website, www.USChessChamps.com

Defending U.S. women's chess champion WGM Anna Zatonskih is using her versatility to keep her opponents off balance at the 2009 championship at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis. After two games, she was the only player to move to 2-0, reflecting two victories. Zatonskih played a solid opening variation that she seldom uses to frustrate the aggressive style of Battsetseg Tsagaan. "I'm expecting Zatonskih to surprise us in many games," said Grandmaster-elect Ben Finegold, who provided live commentary.

The top-seeded Zatonskih, of Long Island, NY, avoided the trap of overlooking Tsagaan, of Ellicott City, MD, the seven-time Mongolian women's champion. Zatonskih insisted she was not placing undue emphasis on her upcoming en-

counter with second-seeded IM Irina Krush, with whom she shared an infamous incident at last year's championship.

In 2008, the pair played a controversial championship playoff. After the pair were tied following nine rounds of regular play, the two women played an "Armageddon" blitz match to decide the winner. Both women had their time dip below 5 seconds, so Zatonskih made several random moves quickly, and Krush overstepped the time limit. Zatonskih had one second remaining and claimed victory. Krush, of Brooklyn, NY, was nonplussed by the strategy and claimed Zatonskih began making her moves before she was legally allowed. Video replays were inconclusive and the accusations flew faster than the pieces. Since then, the two have competed as

American teammates, but have not had a chance to face off over the board. They meet in round three on Tuesday.

In other round two action, Krush made a remarkable comeback from a horrible opening position to defeat third-seeded IM Rusudan Goletiani, of Hartsdale, NY. "It was a complete opening disaster," Krush said.

The youngest competitor, 18-year-old Alisa Melekhina, of Philadelphia, PA, battled the oldest player, 42-year-old Camilla Baginskaite, of Sioux Falls, SD. Like the first round, Melekhina faced a tough defense, but again she was able to hold the balance and score one-half point for the drawn game.

Sabina-Francesca Foisor of Baltimore, MD, and Tatev Abrahamyan,

of Glendale, CA, also battled to a draw, giving Foisor 1.5 points out of two and Abrahamyan her first half-point of the tournament. The two played an uncompromising affair with wild imbalances before the game petered out into an equal ending.

In the last game, Iryna Zenyuk, of Pittsburgh, PA, got her first win by grinding out an equal ending against Yun Fan, of Greencastle, IN, who is now 0-2.

