

Championship Chronicle



2009 US Women's Chess Championship

Zatonskih Finishes In Style, Baginskaite Wins Race For Second

Inside this issue:

Ben's Best: **2**
Baginskaite-Foisor

Ben's Best: **3**
Abrahamyan-Krush

Zatonskih-Fan **4**

Goletiani-Zenyuk **5**

Melekhina-Tsagaan **6**

Photo Gallery **7**

FM Mike Klein's Daily **8**
Wrap-Up

Final Standings:

- 1 Anna Zatonskih, 8½
- 2 Camilla Baginskaite, 6½
- 3-4 Irina Krush, 5½
Alisa Melekhina, 5½
- 5 Tatev Abrahamyan, 4
- 6-7 Sabina Foisor, 3½
Rusudan Goletiani, 3½
- 8 Iryna Zenyuk, 3
- 9-10 Battsetseg Tsagaan, 2½
Yun Fan, 2½



IM Anna Zatonskih, 2009 US Women's Chess Champion.
(Photo Betsy Dynako)

IM Anna Zatonskih, who had already sealed the Championship the day before, showed off her positional skills to beat Yun Fan in the final round.

The win left Zatonskih finishing on an unbeaten 8½/9, a performance she said was her best ever. Fan finished the tournament on 2½/9, which was for her just one point shy of a WIM performance.

WGM Camilla Baginskaite won an entertaining game against WGM Sabina Foisor in the final day's play to finish the tournament in second place, scoring her first ever

IM norm in the process.

Foisor had earlier sacrificed an exchange for some pawns and an attack but it was Baginskaite who ended up with the mating attack after she defended well and then counter attacked with precision.

IM Irina Krush was unable to force a second place play-off as she was undone by WFM Tatev Abrahamyan.

Abrahamyan's attack came at just the right time, with just a few seconds left on Krush's clock to meet the 40 move time control, and so Krush didn't have time to find the right defense to Abrahamyan's sacrifices.

Once the time control was reached

and play slowed down, Krush realized her position was lost and Abrahamyan forced her to resign just a few moves later.

WIM Alisa Melekhina found herself finishing in third place, tied with Krush but awarded on the tie-breaks of having most blacks in the tournament.

She played 1.d4 for the first time ever knowing her opponent, WIM Battsetseg Tsagaan, would play the King's Indian Defense.

The opening was guessed right although the game itself ended up good for Tsagaan at some stage. However, in her usual time trouble, Tsagaan was unable to find the best defense and she fell into a mating attack, which ended the game.

In the fifth and final game, IM Rusudan Goletiani beat WIM Iryna Zenyuk in an interesting struggle, although both players were probably kicking themselves after they each missed some good chances towards the end.

The game itself was quite instructive, at least in terms of how to open diagonals for bishops. At the end Goletiani's pawn push was too much for Zenyuk to handle in mutual time trouble and resigned when Goletiani put her second queen on the board.



WGM Camilla Baginskaite finished in 2nd place and score an IM norm.
(Photo Betsy Dynako)



Ben's Best: Baginskaite vs Foisor

GM-Elect Ben Finegold Annotates His Joint Game of the Day

Baginskaite, Camilla (2356) –
Foisor, Sabina (2379)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6
4.e3 a6 5.Qc2 g6

The a6 Slav is very popular nowadays. Black could also choose 5...b5!? but the text move is also quite popular.

6.Bd3

Preventing 6...Bf5

6...Bg7 7.Nf3 0-0 8.0-0 Bg4
9.Ne5 Be6

When looking at this game in my database, I was shocked to find 100 examples of this position! Now, I thought Camilla played a very committal move, but, it turns out to be the most common at the GM level, and scores 70%! For someone who did not bring her computer, she certainly knows her stuff!

10.c5 Nfd7

I expected this move, but, 10...Nbd7 is more common, and, was once played by Gary Kasparov.

11.Nxd7 Nxd7 12.b4

The most popular, but, visiting GM Pascal Charbonneau actually lost to 12.Bd2 in 2004, against Moiseenko.

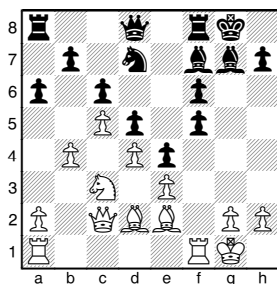
12...f6 13.Bd2

A novelty. 13.e4, 13.f4, and 13.Bb2 have all been played previously. I like the text move as well.

13...Bf7 14.f4 e5 15.f5 e4
16.Be2

Excellent play by both players. White would like the kingside closed, so she can use her space advantage on the queenside. Black tries to force play and open up the kingside.

16...gxf5

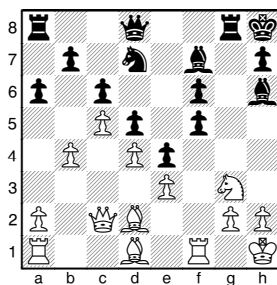


17.Bd1!?

During the live commentary, I expected this move, thinking white would want to play Ne2-f4. Rybka prefers the pedestrian 17.Rxf5.

17...Bh6 18.Ne2 Kh8 19.Kh1
Rg8 20.Ng3

White wants to play Nxf5, but, Foisor has other ideas, and plays an interesting exchange sacrifice.



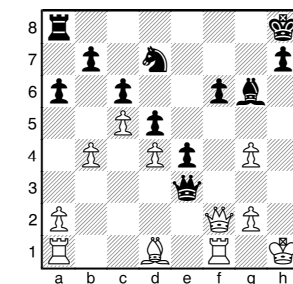
20...Rxf5!? 21.hxg3 Qc7
22.g4

Jen and I thought white may give back the exchange with 22.Rf4!? but, instead, Camilla plays a move Jen liked, that I had not considered. Rybka, of course agrees that 22.g4 is best.

22...Qg3

Jen and I both thought black had excellent compensation for the exchange.

23.Rxf5 Bg6 24.Rf1 Bxe3
25.Bxe3 Qxe3 26.Qf2



26...Qc3

Sabina should have tried the equalish endgame after... 26...Qxf2 27.Rxf2 Kg7 Instead, she keeps the queens on, and black has trouble defending her king in the end. A difficult decision.

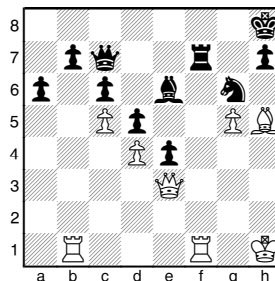
27.Be2 Re8 28.Rac1 Qa3
29.Qf4 Re7

White was in time trouble here, and Sabina, although having 20-25 minutes left at this point, makes some mistakes. Now white can enter the queenside effectively with 30.Qc7! but, with the clock ticking, her main concern was to make the time control! Camilla only had about 7 minutes left at this point.

30.Rce1 Rf7 31.g5 f5! 32.g3
Qxb4 33.Qe3 Nf8 34.Rb1
Qa4 35.Bd1 Qxa2 36.Bb3
Qa5 37.g4 Qc7 38.gxf5 Bxf5
39.Bd1 Be6!?

The bishop is poorly placed on e6. Black is still doing fine, but, white is able to make the time control!

40.Bh5 Ng6



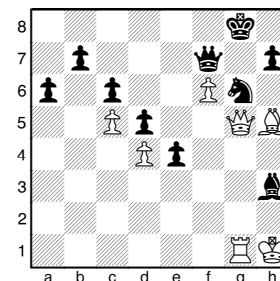
41.Rf6!

Now Camilla thought she had a big advantage. It was now clear, as Krush had lost her game to Abrahamyan, that a draw would secure clear second, but, Camilla said she wanted to win the game now, as she felt comfortable here, and that black had little counter-chances. Rybka likes white's position after the excellent 41.Rf6.

41...Rxf6 42.gxf6 Kg8
43.Qh6 Qf7 44.Rg1 Bf5?

I thought black had to play 44...Qc8 here, but, I felt white was already close to winning. Rybka thinks black can defend, but, in a tournament game, this seems unlikely, as black has to watch out for mate, the g6 knight, and the b7 pawn.

45.Qg5 Bh3



46.Qg3

In the commentary room, we all thought... 46.Bxg6 hxg6 47.Qh5 was winning for white... but, we all overlooked the computer move... 47...Bf5! and black is better! 48.Qxf5?? Qh7+

46...Bf5 47.Qb8+ Qf8
48.Qe5! Qc8 49.Rg5 Be6
50.Bxg6 hxg6 51.Rxg6+ Kf8
52.Qd6+ Kf7 53.Rg7+

53.Rg7+ Kxf6 54.Qe5#

1-0

Ben's Best: Abrahamyan vs Krush

GM-Elect Ben Finegold Annotates His Joint Game of the Day

Abrahamyan, Tatev (2342) – Krush, Irina (2490) [B42]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6

Tatev said she was surprised at this move, and figured Krush would play the classical with d6, cxd4, Nf6, and Nc6 as she has done many times previously. Also, Krush likes to essay the O'Kelly with 2...a6, which she has played twice previously against Tatev, with Irina scoring 2-0 those games!

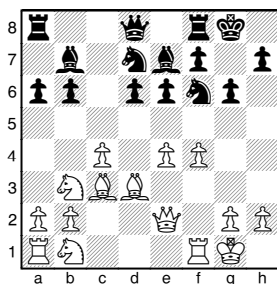
3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bd3

This opening is a favorite of IM Rusa Goletiani. Rusa was not having a good tournament, but maybe Krush liked the ideas for black in this opening, and thought it her best chance for a double-edged game she could win.

5...Bc5 6.Nb3 Be7 7.Qg4 g6 8.Qe2 d6 9.0-0 Nd7

Both players are following the main line. Now Tatev plays the unusual 10.Bd2!? when 10.c4 is the main line. Tatev said she had played this way previously. It is an interesting idea to put the Bc3 and Nbd2, so the c4 pawn has more protection, and the Bc3 can be quite active.

10.Bd2 b6 11.f4 Bb7 12.c4 Ngf6 13.Bc3 0-0



14.e5

Jen and I thought this might be premature, but Tatev thought she should have

played e5 even earlier!

14...Nh5 15.N1d2 Qc7

I thought this position was dynamically equal. White has chances to build up a kingside attack (as we shall see!) and black has a very solid, flexible formation, with good counter-chances on the e5 and c4 weaknesses.

16.Rae1 Rad8 17.Bb1 Rfe8

This was a bit surprising, as it weakens f7, but, Krush wanted to reposition her bishop, which is an excellent idea.

18.Qg4 Bf8 19.Qh3 Ng7 20.Be4 d5

I was also mildly surprised by this move, as it gives up the fight for e5, but Tatev expected Krush to play this way, as it fights for the center, and c and d files.

21.cxd5 Bxd5 22.Nf3?!

Tatev correctly pointed out that she should have played... 22.Bxd5 exd5 23.Nf3 ..with a slight edge to white.

22...Bc4

Another surprise, but, Rybka says it is best! Black now has good counter-chances on the queenside.

23.Ng5! h5 24.Rf3 Be7

24...Nc5 and black has nice play.

25.Bb1?!

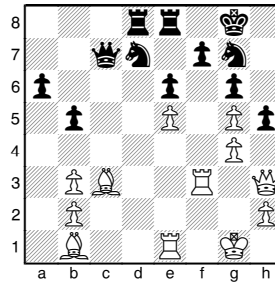
Tatev thought she should have played 25.Bc2, so that after b5, she could play a3, and her Nb3 is protected.

25...b5 26.g4?!

Both sides were in time trouble, so Tatev starts to attack. Maybe it is not sound, but fun for the spectators (and commentators!). Krush had less than 3 minutes at this point, so

finding the proper defenses is exceedingly difficult.

26...Bxg5 27.fxg5 Bxb3 28.axb3



28...Nc5?

Tatev was expecting... 28...Qc5+! 29.Rf2 b4 ...and she thought Krush had a much better position. Rybka agrees.

29.gxh5 Nxh5 30.Qg4 a5?!

30...Nxb3!?

31.Rh3?

31.b4!∞

31...Ng7?

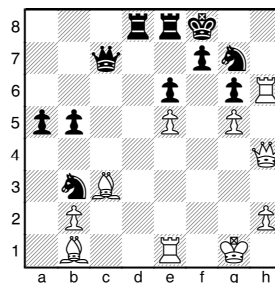
31...b4!?

32.Rh6 Nxb3

32...b4 33.Qh4f; 32...Nh5∞

33.Qh4 Kf8!?

33...Nh5 34.Bxg6!! fxg6 35.Rxg6+ Ng7 36.Rh6.



34.Rh7?!

34.Rxg6! fxg6? (34...Nd2 35.Bxd2 Rxd2 36.Rxg7! Kxg7 37.Qh6+ Kg8 38.Bh7+ Kh8

39.Be4+ Kg8 40.g6! Qc5+ 41.Kh1 Qf2 42.Rg1 Qxh2+ 43.Qxh2 Rxh2+ 44.Kxh2+–) 35.Qh8+ Kf7 36.Bxg6+ Kxg6 37.Qh6+ Kf7 38.g6+ Kg8 39.Qh7+ Kf8 40.Qh8+ Ke7 41.Qxg7#

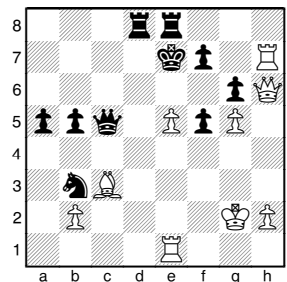
34...Nf5?

34...Qc4! =

35.Bxf5 Qc5+ 36.Kg2 exf5 37.Qh6+

37.e6!+–

37...Ke7



38.Rxf7+??

38.Qxg6! Qd5+ 39.Kf2+–

38...Ke6??

38...Kxf7! 39.e6+ Ke7 Tatev missed Ke7 (as probably Irina did, as she had less than 30 seconds left). 40.Qxg6 Qc6+ 41.Kg1 Rd5+–

39.Qxg6+ Kd5 40.Qxf5 Kc4

Neither side lost on time, but, as the time control is made, it is clear white is winning. A titanic struggle!

41.Qe4+ Nd4 42.Bxd4 Qxd4 43.Qc2+ 1-0

Zatonskih Outplays Fan To Remain Unbeaten

Zatonskih, Anna (2496) –
Fan, Yun (2201)

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6
4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 Bd7!?

An unusual variation but one that cannot be bad when it has been played by such greats as Karpov and Korchnoi.

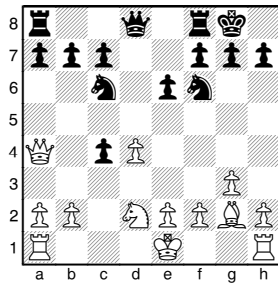
6.Ne5 Bc6 7.Nxc6 Nxc6
8.Qa4 Bb4+

8...Qd7 is a more popular choice after the unusual 8.Qa4 9.e3 Nb4 10.Qxd7+ Kxd7 11.Na3 Nd3+ 12.Ke2 Bxa3 13.bxa3 Rab8 14.Bd2 b5 15.Ba5 h5 16.h4 Rhc8 17.Rhd1 Ke7 18.Rab1 c5 19.dxc5 Rxc5 20.Bc3 g6 21.e4 e5 22.f3 Nd7 23.Ke3 Rc6 24.Bf1 N7c5 25.f4 exf4+ 26.gxf4 Ra6 27.Bxd3 Nxd3 28.Rxd3 cxd3 29.Bb4+ Ke6 30.Kxd3 Rd8+ 31.Ke3 Rc6 32.Ba5 Rdc8 33.Rb3 Rd6 34.Rb1 a6 35.a4 bxa4 36.Rb7 Rc2 37.Bb4 Rb2 38.e5 Rd7 39.Rb6+ Kf5 40.a3 Rb3+ 0-1 Hulak,K

(2510)–Kortschnoj,V
(2635)/Sarajevo 1984

9.Bd2 Bxd2+ 10.Nxd2 0-0

After this move the comments were that black is already strategically lost in this position. 10...Nd5 is the other option.



11.Bxc6 bxc6 12.Qxc4
Rb8

12...Qd5 13.0-0 Rfd8
14.Qxd5 Rxd5 15.Nb3 a5
½-½ Dorfman,J (2515)–
Psakhis,L (2535)/Lvov
1984

13.b3 Qd6 14.Nf3 Ne4
15.0-0 f5?

Fatally weakening the e5 square and the e6 pawn.

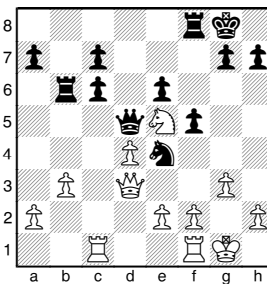
16.Rac1 Rb6 17.Qd3

Zatonskih plays it safe. The computer suggested line runs something like 17.Rc2 a5 18.Ne5 Rb4 19.Qxc6 Rxd4 20.Qxd6 cxd6 21.Nc6 Rd2 22.Rxd2 Nxd2 23.Rd1 Ne4 24.Nxa5±

17...Qd5

17...Rd8!?

18.Ne5!



18...Ng5

This move brought some remarks from the commentary team saying it would be a good shot in a one-minute game because of the mating threat on h3. However, despite the obvious one move threat, it is actually black's best move in a fairly difficult position.

19.f3! Nf7 20.Nxf7 Rxf7

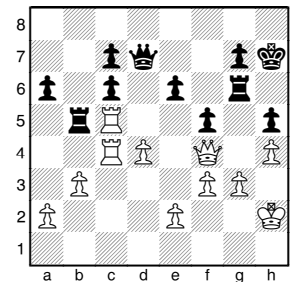
The great white knight has been traded off but it brings little relief to the black position.

21.Rc5 Qd6 22.Rfc1 h5
23.Qe3 Rf6 24.Qe5 Qd7
25.Qf4 Rh6 26.Kh1 Qe7
27.h4 Qd7 28.R1c4 Rg6

29.Kh2 Kh7 30.Ra4 a6
31.Rac4

Zatonskih is in no rush and has systematically improved her position while black has to just sit and wait for white to find the best way to start mopping up pawns.

31...Rb5



32.Rxb5

32.Rxc6 allows unnecessary complications 32...e5!
33.Qc1±

32...axb5 33.Rc2 Qd5
34.Qe5

34.Qxc7? Qxd4±

34...Qd7 35.e3 Qc8
36.Qc5 Qd8 37.Qxc6

Zatonskih finally starts taking the weak black pawns after careful and patient play. The rest of the game is simple for the Champion.

37...f4 38.exf4 Qxd4
39.Qxb5 Qe3 40.Qe2 Qb6
41.Qe4 Kh6 42.Re2 Qc5
43.Qe3 Qf5 44.Qd2 Rf6
45.Re5 Qb1 46.f5+ Kh7
47.fxe6 g6 48.Qe2 1-0



IM Anna Zatonskih and Yun Fan shake hands before their final round game.
(Photo Betsy Dynako)

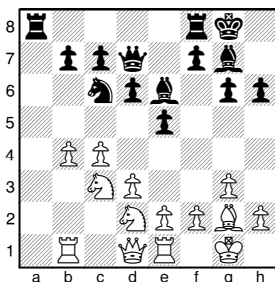
Goletiani Beats Zenyuk In Final Round Battle

Goletiani,Rusudan (2437) – Zenyuk,Iryna (2281)

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 d6 5.d3 0-0 6.0-0 Nc6 7.Nc3 e5 8.Bg5 h6 9.Bxf6 Bxf6 10.Rb1 a5 11.a3 Be6

Zenyuk varies first from Goletiani's recent game at the Women's World Team Championship in China 11...Bg7 12.b4 axb4 13.axb4 f5 14.b5 Ne7 15.Nd2 g5 16.Qb3 Kh8 17.Ra1 Rb8 18.Ra7 f4 19.Rfa1 Nf5 20.Ra8 Nd4 21.Qd1 Rxa8 22.Rxa8 c6 23.Bh3 Nf5 24.Qb3 Qc7 25.bxc6 bxc6 26.Qb8 Qxb8 27.Rxb8 Be6 28.Rb6 Rc8 29.Nb3 Nd4 30.Bxe6 Nxe6 31.Na5 Nd8 32.Kg2 Kg8 33.Ra6 Bf8 34.Ra7 Nf7 35.Ne4 Kg7 36.Rd7 d5 37.cxd5 cxd5 38.Rxd5 Kg6 39.Nc4 Bg7 40.Rd7 Rc6 41.g4 Ra6 42.Ned6 Nxd6 43.Rxd6+ Rxd6 44.Nxd6 h5 45.h3 hxg4 46.hxg4 Bf8 47.Nc4 Kf6 48.Kf3 Bc5 49.Ke4 Bxf2 50.Nxe5 Be1 51.Kd5 Ba5 52.Nd7+ Ke7 53.Nc5 Kf6 54.Ne4+ Kg6 55.Ke6 Bb6 56.Nd2 1-0 Goletiani,R (2391)–Ju Wenjun (2443)/Ningbo CHN 2009

12.Nd2 Qd7 13.Re1 Bg7 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4



15...e4!

A normal tactic to watch for in this position, which Goletiani admitted she didn't see until after she had played 14.b4. The idea doesn't actually win material but gives the bishop on g7 much more life rather than being blocked in by it's own pawn on e5.

16.b5

16.Ncxe4? f5; 16.Ndxe4? F5

16...Ne7 17.Qc2 exd3 18.Qxd3 Bf5!?

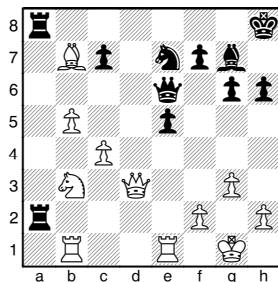
Zenyuk wants white to put a pawn on e4, blocking in her own bishop on g7 just like the g7 bishop used to be blocked in.

19.e4 Be6 20.Ne2 Ra2 21.Nb3 Kh8 22.Nf4 Rfa8 23.Nxe6 Qxe6

23...fxe6? 24.e5! and white's bishop comes back to life.

24.e5 dxe5 25.Bxb7

Ben Finegold pointed out in the commentary room the amusing aspect of black's bishop on g7 being blocked in again by it's own pawn on e5 while the white bishop now has an open diagonal to work on.



25...Qb6! 26.Qf3 R8a3 27.Ba6 f5 28.c5 Qe6 29.Qa8+ Kh7 30.Nc1!?

Both players were running short of time.

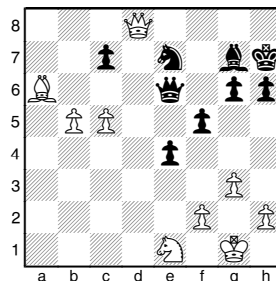
30...Ra1?!

30...Rc2 was necessary 31.b6 cxb6 32.cxb6 e4! 33.b7 Rxa6 34.b8Q Rxa8 35.Qxa8 Nc6

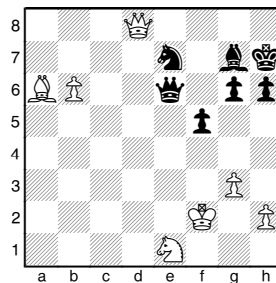
31.Rxa1 Rxa1 32.Nd3?!

32.Bc8! Rxa8 33.Bxe6 Ra5 34.Bd7 and it's anyone's game.

32...Rxe1+ 33.Nxe1 e4 34.Qd8



34...e3! 35.b6 exf2+ 36.Kxf2 cxb6 37.cxb6



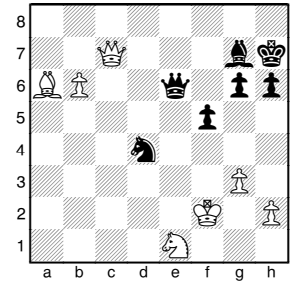
37...Nc6

37...Nd5! and the b-pawn falls in all variations 38.b7 Bd4+! 39.Kg2 (39.Kf1? Qxa6+ 40.Kg2 Qe2+ 41.Kh3 Nf4+) 39...Ne3+ 40.Kg1 (40.Kf2? Ng4+

41.Kg2 Qa2+; 40.Kh3? f4+) 40...Qxa6! 41.Qe7+ Bg7 42.Qxe3 Qxb7

38.Qc7 Nd4?

38...Qa2+ 39.Ke3 (39.Be2 Nd4!) 39...Qb3+=



39.Bc4!+- Qe4 40.b7 f4

40...Nc6 41.Bb5 Nb8 42.Nf3!+-

41.b8Q 1-0

Melekhina Beats Tsagaan On White Side Of King's Indian

Melekhina, Alisa (2301) –
Battsetseg, Tsagaan (2265)

1.d4

Melekhina plays 1.d4 for the first time in her life! She said she did it because white gets good positions in the King's Indian Defense, which she was expecting. I find it a little confusing she might say that though as Melekhina herself plays the King's Indian!

1...g6 2.Nf3 Bg7 3.c4 Nf6
4.Nc3 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Be2
Bg4!?

A great decision by Tsagaan to play an offbeat variation guessing that Melekhina wasn't too acquainted with the white side of the opening.

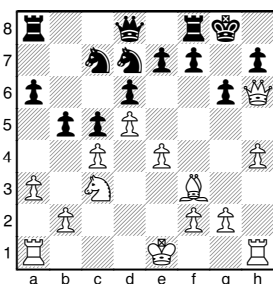
7.Be3 Nfd7

Melekhina went into a think here, having not seen this position before, and came up with...

8.a3

which has not been played before according to my database! Melekhina said that sometimes a3 is a useful move in some lines of the King's Indian, saving a tempo if the move b4 is ever needed to kick a knight out of c5.

8...c5 9.d5 Na6 10.h3 Bxf3
11.Bxf3 Nc7 12.Qd2 a6
13.Bh6 b5 14.h4 Bxh6
15.Qxh6



15...f6

Planning to meet h5 with g5 keeping the kingside closed up.

16.Be2 Ne5 17.Qe3 Nxc4
18.Bxc4 bxc4 19.f4 Rb8

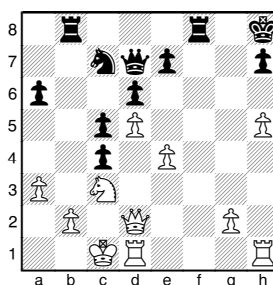
20.h5 g5

20...Qe8 21.hxg6 Qxg6
22.0-0-0 Kh8

21.fxg5 fxg5

21...Rxb2 22.g6 e5!?
23.dxe6 Nxe6 24.0-0

22.Qxg5+ Kh8 23.Qd2
Qd7 24.0-0-0



24...Qg4!

The best move, played in her usual time trouble.

25.Rde1 Qf4 26.Re3

26.Qxf4 Rxf4 27.Rhf1
Rg4=

26...Qe5 27.Rf3 Rf6

Swapping a couple of rooks and simplifying the position may have been Tsagaan's best option, especially when short of time 27...Rxf3 28.gxf3 Rf8 29.Qe3 Nb5 and black cannot be losing this.

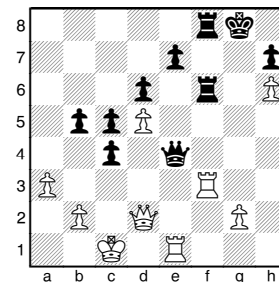
28.h6 Rbf8 29.Rhf1 Kg8
30.Kc2?!

30.a4!? stopping the black knight joining the game.

30...Nb5! 31.Nxb5 Qxe4+
32.Kc1 axb5 33.Re1

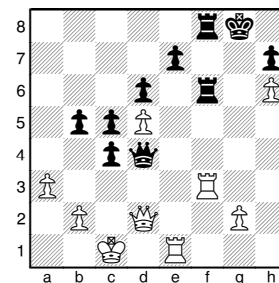
A tough move to meet with

little time on your clock. Where can the queen go that will prevent white getting a mating attack?



33...Qd4?

33...Qh4 34.Rxe7 Rxf3
35.Rg7+ Kh8 36.gxf3 Rxf3
and black is a pawn up but both kings are wide open.;
33...Qg6 was the other option 34.Rxe7 Qxh6
35.Rg3+ Kh8 36.Qxh6
Rhx6 37.Rb7=



34.Qg5+

34.Qg5+ Rg6 (34...Kf7
35.Qg7+ Ke8 36.Qxe7#)
35.Rxf8+ Kxf8 36.Qxe7+
Kg8 37.Qe8#

1-0



WIM Battsetseg Tsagaan and WIM Alisa Melekhina in the commentary room after their game. (Photo Betsy Dynako)

Photo Gallery: All Photos by Suzy Gorman



On the rest day, some of the players went to Suzy Gorman's photo studio and took part in a photo shoot. Seen here are Rusudan Goleiani (top left), Anna Zatonskih (top right), Alisa Melekhina (middle left), Camilla Baginskaite (middle right), Yun Fan (bottom left) and Battsetseg Tsagaan (bottom middle).

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FM Mike Klein's Daily Wrap-Up

The 2009 U.S. Women's Chess Championship, held at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis, already had a clear winner going into the final round, but there was heavy drama in the battle for money, place and qualification for other tournaments.

Defending U.S. Champion Anna Zatonskih, of Long Island, N.Y., finished off the tournament in style with a positional crush of Yun Fan, of Greencastle, Ind. She won the record \$15,000 first place prize fund. Zatonskih ended with eight wins and one draw in nine games, and her 8.5 points were tied for the best result in the championship in more than 20 years. She said the championship was the best performance of her career.

"I think it was the strongest U.S. Championship I ever played," Zatonskih said.

She scoffed at the idea of taking a short draw today.

"I had nothing to lose," she said.

"I had such a good position out of the opening." She added that the superior quality of the tournament organization and conditions "made me feel like I was doing something important."

The battle for second place, which began with three women mathematically eligible, crystallized when 42-year-old Camilla Baginskaite, the tournament's oldest participant, rebounded from a rough round eight loss. Baginskaite, of Sioux Falls, S.D., finished with six wins and one draw after beating Sabina Foisor, of Baltimore, Md., in the longest game of the day to pull one point ahead of both Alisa Melekhina and Irina Krush.

Melekhina, of Philadelphia, Pa., found a late checkmate tactic to beat Battsetseg Tsagaan, of Ellicott City, Md., and briefly pulled into a tie with Baginskaite, whose game was still in progress.

Krush, of Brooklyn, N.Y., failed to keep pace. She began the round on equal second with Baginskaite

but could not stay tied, as she lost to Tatev Abrahamyan, of Glendale, Calif. Krush's loss ended her streak of three consecutive wins.

With the win, Baginskaite won \$12,000 and avoided a complicated tiebreaker system that would have left second place highly in doubt. This was especially important because the top two finishers in the tournament qualified for the next Women's World Chess Championship, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey.

Zatonskih and Baginskaite are the only two American women to gain births so far to the 64-player knockout event. Krush may still qualify based on her high rating.

Baginskaite said she noticed that Krush lost and all she needed to do was draw her position to clinch second place. But judging that her game was better, she risked thousands of dollars in prize money and her world championship qualification to play for the win.

"I couldn't see any way for (Foisor) to hold. Why should I play for a draw?" she said. "It's about self-respect. You have to win this position."

After more than 30 years of playing chess, Baginskaite also earned her first international master "norm," a title she will acquire with two more norms.

Melekhina, the youngest player in the event, finished in a tie for third place with Krush at 5.5 points. They will both take home \$7,500.

All five games were decisive in the last round. The last draw was in round five, more than 20 games ago. In many men's events, more than half of the games end in draws. At this championship, fewer than a quarter ended peacefully.

