

(The annotations to this game, by Alexander Koblencs (Tal's second) and Valentin Kirillov, are from their report on the match, published in *Shakhmaty (Riga)* (№ 17, 1968). The translation from the Russian is by Douglas Griffin.)

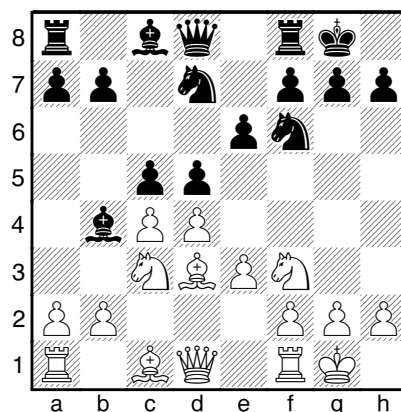
In our day it is difficult to decipher the flow of thoughts directed by purely chess criteria. The fighting conditions, the creative mood, the chronometring of time taken – only an analysis of all these data permit a more or less clear representation of the motives of the moves that are played. We emphasise – *more or less*, since, according to the words of Tigran Petrosian “commentating on someone else's game is like looking into their soul, which, as is well known, is shadowy”. Let's turn first of all to the chronometrage of the times spent in the 4th game. Over his 9th move Tal thought for 17 minutes, over the 10th – 23 minutes, over the 12th – 19 minutes, over the 16th – 33, over the 17th, once again 33 minutes. For 21 moves the ex-World Champion had 10 minutes remaining. On 15 moves Korchnoi spent all of 5 minutes. One does not need to be too much of a psychologist in order to decipher the time ‘cardiogram’. It is evidence that Tal had been taken by surprise by White's opening set-up, which, clearly, had unsettled him and his mind was working hard. It was also clear that Tal was still under the influence of the trauma that he had experienced in the preceding, 3rd, game. It is no wonder that he saw ‘ghosts’, and that he overlooked an elementary move of the opponent's, while in sharp time trouble he failed to exploit a saving chance that appeared for him.

Having examined the game through the lens of the above-mentioned circumstances, the reader will understand the many, initially incomprehensible, slips of the grandmaster.

Korchnoi – Tal

4th match-game, Candidates' Semi-final, Moscow, 2nd July 1968

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.d4 Bb4 4.Nf3 c5 5.e3 0–0 6.Bd3 d5 7.0–0 Nbd7



8.cxd5

Gligorić continued against Tal 8.a3 Ba5 9.Qc2, but did not achieve any particular advantage.

8...exd5 9.Qb3

It is well known that Tal does not like to 'mug up' on the theory according to opening reference books. But all the same one can glance at them. The fact is that Tal got confused after this move, which was 'hinted at' by A. Koblencs & G. Sosonko, preparing the Riga for the match. Thus it proved that a forgotten variation, and moreover, one that is not too dangerous, proved to be a novelty... for Tal!

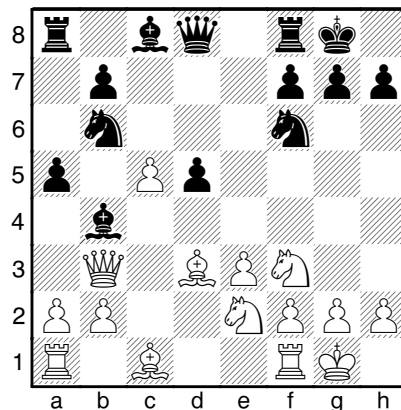
9...Nb6

Curiously, L. Pachman attaches an exclamation mark to this forced move. (*Translator's note:* In fact, Black could prefer 9...Bxc3, played, for instance, in the game Filip-Botvinnik at the 12th Olympiad in Moscow (1956).)

10.Ne2

While here L. Pachman writes: "On 10.Ne2 Black can play 10...Bd7 or 10...a5.; Therefore, better looks 10.Na4 Nxa4 11.Qxa4 Bd7 12.Qb3 a5 13.dxc5. In other words, the move played by Korchnoi is not considered to be the strongest by 'Pachman's bible'. But the choice of the Leningrader reached its goal – Tal deliberated for a long time. It was clear that the resultant position was not to his liking.

10...a5 11.dxc5



11...Nbd7?

While this is already an oversight. Black had simply not seen White's 13th move. Correct was 11...Bxc5 with a slightly worse, but perfectly defensible position. Against any other opponent Tal would have taken the pawn with the bishop, but precisely against Korchnoi he 'feared' being forced to carry out a difficult positional battle. Therefore he decided that it was necessary to think up something to get away from the routine...

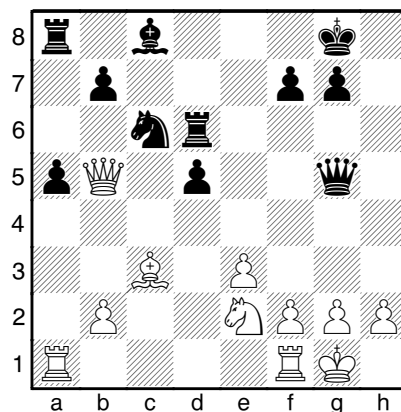
12.Qc2 Nxc5 13.Bxh7+ Nxh7 14.a3 Na6 15.axb4 Nxb4 16.Qb3 Ng5

T. Petrosian recommended 16...b6, in order after 17.Bd2 Na6 to retain more pieces, leaving Black with the hope of beginning counter-play.

17.Nxg5 Qxg5 18.Bd2 Nc6 19.Bc3 Rd8

No better is 19...Qg4. After 20.Nd4 Nxd4 21.Bxd4 the weaknesses on the queen's flank remain, while White in addition threatens to obtain a decisive attack on the king's flank with f2-f4 and Rf1-f3.

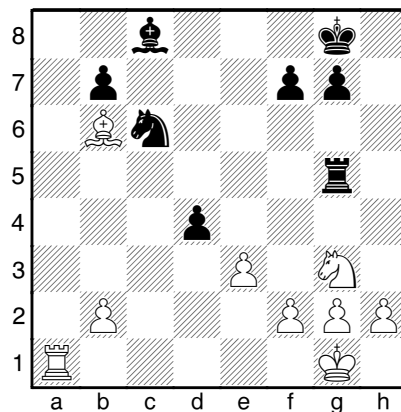
20.Qb5 Rd6



21.Bxa5

Typical of Korchnoi. Believing deeply in his mastery of realising a material advantage he, without thinking, took this pawn. A pawn is a pawn! But stronger was 21.Nf4 Qd8 22.Rad1! (not 22.Rfd1). No good then is 22...d4 23.exd4 Nxd4 24.Rxd4 Rxd4 25.Bxd4 Qxd4 26.Qe8+ Kh7 27.Qxf7 Qxb2 28.Qh5+ Kg8 29.Re1!, and there is no defence. Nor is Black saved by 23...Bg4 24.f3 Nxd4 25.Rxd4 Rxd4 26.fxg4 (here is the difference between 22.Rfd1 and 22.Rad1).

21...Rg6 22.Ng3 d4! 23.Qxg5 Rxg5 24.Bb6 Rxa1 25.Rxa1



25...dxe3?

Of course, this is time trouble taking its toll. But at the same time it is also peculiarly bad luck. Tal fails to exploit a fortunate chance – after 25...d3! the win for White became problematic. If 26.Rd1, then 26...Rb5 27.Bd4 Nxd4 28.exd4 Rxb2 with counter-play. Perhaps the analysts will show that White, as previously, retained a winning position (our report is being given in ‘hot pursuit’ of the match and cannot claim to be an exhaustive analysis), but Tal let slip the chance to create difficulties for the opponent.

26.Ra8 Ne7 27.fxe3 Rd5 28.b4

In Tal’s words, in a “hellish” hurry he had overlooked this elementary move.

28...Rd1+?

Black could have saved the piece by means of 28...Kh7 29.Bc5 Bg4 30.h3 Nf5, but after 31.hxg4 Nxc3 32.Re8 Rd2 33.Re7 his game remained hopeless.

A short agony followed:

29.Kf2 Rd2+ 30.Ke1 Rxc2 31.Bc5 Kh7 32.Bxe7 Bd7 33.Rd8 Bc6 34.Rd2 Rg1+ 35.Ke2 Rb1 36.Kd3 Kg6 37.Kd4 f6 38.Kc5

Black resigned. The score in the match had become 2½:1½ in Korchnoi’s favour.