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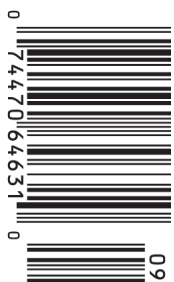


## Challenging *the* Ruy Lopez

We look at recent books that take the black side of the Spanish torture and conclude: Black can defend!

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# A Lonesome Timur



***GM Timur Gareev** was all alone at the top of the National Open standings, the first person to take clear first here since 1984.*

By IM Irina Krush | Photos by Chris Bird

**B**ased on past experience, I arrived at the National Open (June 10-13, 2010) with the superstitious belief that I would play decently and have a good time. The uninspiring performance I had in Phoenix at the 2010 Copper State International had done nothing to shake my belief that the National Open was one of my 'lucky' destinations. I even felt that the tournament had a special prize just for me, called the "under 2500" prize, which my rating put me in a favorable position to collect. (I was rated just below the cutoff point, and made the assumption that that would help with pairings; I'd either get paired down, or when I got

paired up, it'd be to the 2600-2650 range, which is still visible without straining the neck.) I'll let you know how my premonition worked out a little later in the article.

This was the first year that the National Open was run since its founder, Fred Gruenberg, retired from its organization. The transition proved to be very smooth, however, under the stewardship of Al Losoff, his wife Janelle, and Chief TD Bill Snead, who together formed the organizing committee. The main difference I noted was that the boards in the Open Section were moved from the right side of the ballroom to the left, an innovation that was *surely* the product of a long

brainstorming session on how to improve the tournament.

The National Open has lots of side events, but the king among them is the Game/10 Championship, always held on the eve of the main event. 14 grandmasters entered, hoping to capture the \$1,400 first prize. I decided to limit my role to that of spectator, and in that capacity I observed one of the defining episodes of the 2010 National Open, for me (see sidebar "Blitzed").

Back at the main event, the six-round sprint to become National Open champion began. Var got off the ground running,

*Above: Timur Gareev (in jacket) getting a different perspective on the action.*

punishing Jaan Ehlevest's passive play with a nice Exchange sac in round five.

### Dutch Defense, Leningrad System (A87)

GM Varuzhan Akobian (2683)

GM Jaan Ehlevest (2633)

National Open 2010, Las Vegas (5),  
06.13.2010

1. d4 d6 2. Nf3 g6 3. c4 f5 4. g3 Bg7 5. Bg2 Nf6 6. 0-0 0-0 7. b3 c6 8. Bb2 a5 9. Nbd2 Na6 10. a3 Bd7 11. Qc2 c5 12. e3 Qc7 13. Rfe1 Rae8 14. d5 a4 15. e4

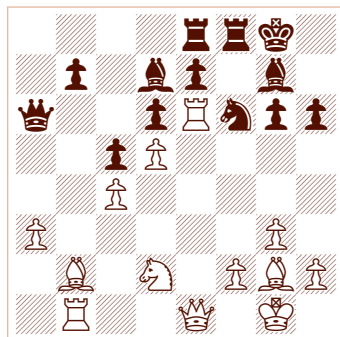
The try 15. bxa4!? Qa5 16. Rab1 Bxa4 17. Qd3 gives White an advantage.

15. ... fxe4 16. Ng5 Qb6 17. bxa4 e3 18. Rxe3 Bxa4 19. Qc1 Nc7 20. Rb1 Qa6 21. Qe1?!

Playing 21. Bh3! improving White's worst piece, was a strong continuation. 21. ... b5 (Now the game move 21. ... h6 is met with 22. Be6+ Kh8 23. Nf7+ Kh7 24. Ne4 Nxe6 25. dxe6 Bc6 26. Bxf6 exf6 27. Nxd6) 22. Be6+ Nxe6 23. Nxe6 bxc4 (23. ... Rf7 24. Nc7) 24. Nxf8 Kxf8 25. Bxf6 Bxf6 26. Qxc4 and White is winning.

21. ... h6 22. Nge4?!

22. Ne6! Nxe6 23. Rxe6 Bd7.



Analysis after 23. ... Bd7

24. Bf1! was an interesting Exchange sacrifice akin to the one White played later on in the game. White gets great compensation based on the weaknesses around Black's king and the relative ineffectiveness of his rooks.

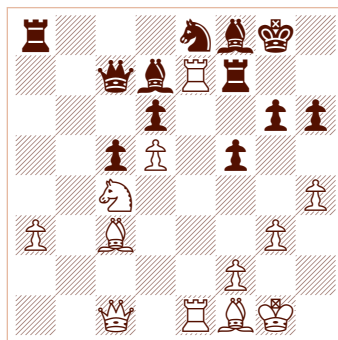
22. ... Bd7?!

Possibly 22. ... b5!? or 22. ... Ng4!? 23. Rf3 Nf6 could be suggested as improvements, with the idea behind the latter being that an exchange on f6 is no longer threatening as White's rook is placed on f3 rather than e3.

23. Nxf6+ exf6 24. Ne4 b5 25. cxb5 Bxb5 26. Qd2 Rb8 27. Rbe1 Ne8 28. h4 Bd7 29. Bf1 Qb6 30. Bc3 Ra8?!

There is counterplay after 30. ... f5! 31. Bxg7 Nxg7 32. Nc3 f4.

31. Qc1 Rf7?! 32. Nd2! Qc7 33. Nc4 f5 34. Re7 Bf8 (See diagram top of next column)

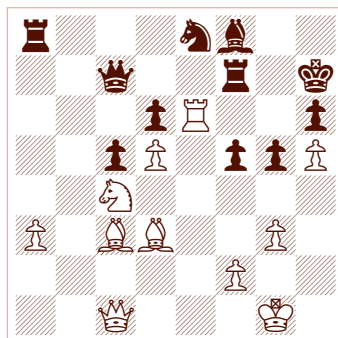


After 34. ... Bf8

35. R7e6

There is an added bonus to 35. Rxd7!, an effective way to sacrifice the Exchange, it also brings Black's queen to the d7-square, so that White always has the fork option on b6. 35. ... Qxd7 36. Re6 Kh7 37. h5 g5 38. Bd3.

35. ... Bxe6 36. Rxe6 Kh7 37. h5 g5 38. Bd3



After 38. Bd3

The fruits of White's Exchange sacrifice are obvious.

38. ... Bg7 39. g4 Kg8 40. Bxf5 Rxf5 41. gxf5 Qf7 42. Rg6 Qxf5 43. Ne3 Qd7 44. Qb2, Black resigned.

Despite the previous game, the gem of the tournament was Alex Lenderman's effort against Magesh Panchanathan, also from round five. In Alex's own words:

"I was happy with my position after I got the pawn back [on move 11] because I had more control of the center and his bishop on c8 was a problem. His position was a bit cramped all along. The main thing that made me go towards the sacrifice, despite seeing I had a great position anyway, like with f4 [18. f4], or other continuations, is that I calculated some lines that worked for me, but it just intuitively felt that the attack must be effective, with all my pieces attacking his king and all of his pieces besides the queen and rook on the queenside. I knew with such a weak king no matter what happens he will not last for long.

"This sacrifice was more double-edged, though, than the simple 18. f4, where I

underestimated just how good my position was. I thought if I gave him a chance there, he might regroup and have a good game [after 18. f4]. When I was attacking and he found some defensive moves, in particular 24. ... Rfc8, I got a bit worried and doubtful but then I gathered my confidence back, thinking that I was right all along and ended up cruising through with an unstoppable attack."

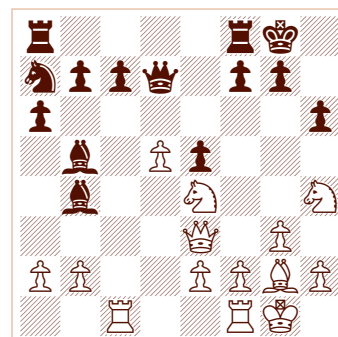
### Open Catalan (E04)

GM Alex Lenderman (2576)

GM Magesh Panchanathan (2521)

National Open 2010, Las Vegas (5),  
06.13.2010

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. g3 d5 4. Nf3 dxc4 5. Bg2 a6 6. 0-0 Nc6 7. Bg5 h6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9. Nc3 Bd6 10. Qa4 0-0 11. Qxc4 e5 12. Ne4 Qe7 13. d5 Na7 14. Rac1 Bd7 15. Qb3 Bb5 16. Qe3 Bb4 17. Nh4 Qd7

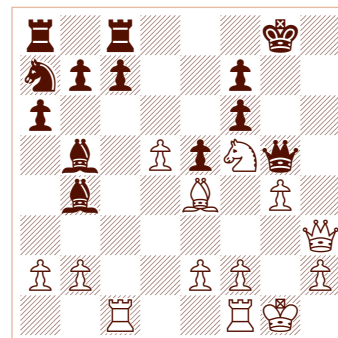


After 17. ... Qd7

18. Nf6+!!

Two exclams for the imagination and the courage. Also strong is 18. f4!? exf4 19. Qxf4.

18. ... gxf6 19. Be4 Qg4 20. Nf5 Qh5 21. g4 Qg5 22. Nxe6+ Kg7 23. Nf5+ Kg8 24. Qh3 Rfc8



After 24. ... Rfc8

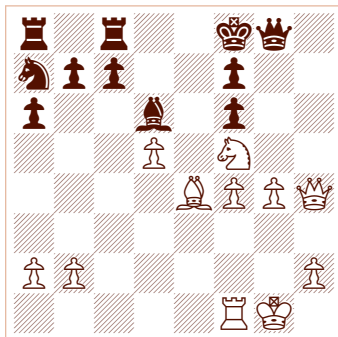
25. e3!?

Another shocking move, since White will be now be down a whole rook! But the idea is to play f2-f4 and trap the black queen.

25. ... Bxf1 26. Rxf1 Bd6 27. Qg3!

A quiet move, preparing f2-f4.

27. ... Kf8 28. f4 exf4 29. exf4 Qg8 30. Qh4



After 30. Qh4

A picturesque position.

30. ... Ke8 31. Qxf6 Qxg4+ 32. Kh1 Qe2 33. Bd3! Be7 34. Ng7+ Kf8 35. Qh6 Bg5 36. fxg5 Qxd3 37. Nf5+ Ke8 38. Re1+, Black resigned.

Congrats to Alex for this beautiful game!!

In an unusual situation for an American open event, in the final round only the result on one board would decide first place. Varuzh was the only perfect score, while the only 4½ was Timur Gareev, the happy-go-lucky, 22-year-old transplant to American shores from Uzbekistan, who currently studies marketing at the University of Texas at Brownsville. Any result except a loss would give Var clear first place. Would Gareev's aggressive style give him the upper hand over Varuzh's rocklike stability?

## Tarrasch Defense (D34)

GM Timur Gareev (2659)

GM Varuzhan Akobian (2683)

National Open 2010, Las Vegas (6),  
06.13.2010

1. d4 e6 2. c4 d5 3. Nc3 c5

The Tarrasch is Var's go-to choice when he's looking for solidity. It had already brought him a win in round four (against the same GM Mikheil Kekelidze from the blitz game; see sidebar, "Blitzed").

4. cxd5 exd5 5. Nf3 Nc6 6. g3 Nf6 7. Bg2 Be7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Bg5 c4 10. Ne5 Be6 11. b3 h6

A Rybka-approved deviation from 11. ... Qa5, which he tried against Wesley So in Wijk aan Zee earlier this year.

12. Bf4

More common is 12. Bxf6 Bxf6 13. Nxc6 bxc6 14. bxc4 dxc4 15. e3, reaching a typical pawn structure for this line.

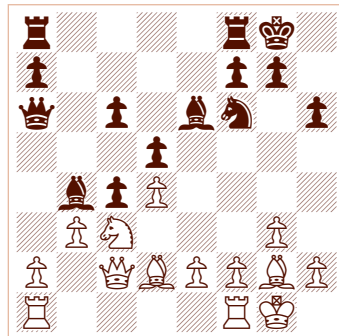
12. ... Qa5 13. Bd2 Bb4

A good, simpler alternative would have been 13. ... Qb6!? getting the queen out

of the discovered attack, and forcing White to play e2-e3 to protect the d4-pawn. 14. e3 cxb3 15. Qxb3 (15. Nxc6 bxc6 and Black has counterplay on the b-file.) 15. ... Qxb3 16. axb3 Rfc8.

14. Nxc6 bxc6 15. Qc2 Qa6

Defending c6, but allowing a nice tactic.



After 15. ... Qa6

16. Nxd5!

Making use of the now unprotected bishop on b4.

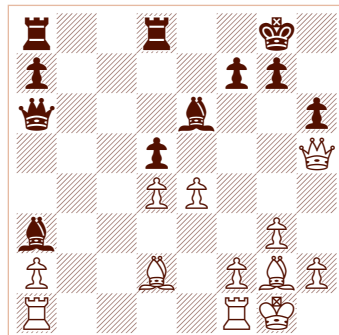
16. ... Nxd5 17. bxc4 Rfc8?

Better would have been 17. ... Bd6! 18. cxd5 cxd5 and Black has decent compensation for the pawn (the rooks are coming to c8 and b8). Also, 17. ... Rac8 was probably an improvement as well: 18. e4 (18. Bxd5 cxd5 19. Bxb4 Rxc4 20. Qd2—White has a clear extra pawn, but opposite-colored bishops and activity on the c-file give Black cause for optimism.) 18. ... Bxd2 19. cxd5 cxd5 20. Qxd2 dxe4 and the difference is that here Black's rook won't be attacked on a8 when White recaptures on e4. The other rook will be effective on the d-file.

18. cxd5?

White misses a big chance with 18. e4! (Timur later said that he didn't consider this move at all) 18. ... Bxd2 19. cxd5 cxd5 20. Qxd2 and White has an extra pawn and Black has minimal compensation.

18. ... cxd5 19. Qd1 Ba3 20. e4 Rd8 21. Qh5



After 21. Qh5

21. ... Qc4

Just an idea, but it looks interesting: 21. ... dxe4!? 22. Bxe4 Rab8 23. Bxh6!? gxh6 24. Qxh6 Bc4 25. Bh7+ Kh8 26. Bg6+ Kg8 27. Qh7+ Kf8 28. Qh8+ Ke7 29. Rfe1+ Kd7 30. Bf5+ Kc7 31. Qe5+.

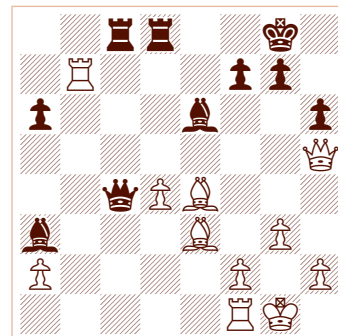
22. Bc1!

A good move whose point is to acquire the c1-square for one of White's rooks.

22. ... Bf8

Not 22. ... Bxc1 23. exd5 Bb2 24. dxe6 fxe6 25. Bxa8 Bxa1 26. Rxa1 Rxa8, which leaves White a clear pawn up.

23. Be3 Ba3 24. Bc1 Bf8 25. Be3 Ba3 26. Rab1 Rac8 27. Rb7 dxe4 28. Bxe4 a6?



After 28. ... a6

Something happened to Var's sense of danger. He allows a pretty obvious sacrifice around his king. 28. ... Bf8 was necessary, when White retains an advantage after 29. a3 a6 30. Rfb1 but an extra pawn is not as good as a mating attack!

29. Bxh6! Qxd4 30. Bh7+ Kxh7 31. Be3+

White picks up the queen, and the rest is just mopping up.

31. ... Kg8 32. Bxd4 Rxd4 33. Qa5 Bc5 34. Rc7 Rxc7 35. Qxc7 Rc4 36. Qd8+ Kh7 37. Qd3+ g6 38. Re1 Rd4 39. Qxa6 Rd2 40. Rxe6!?

Gareev decided that the simplest path to victory was giving back the Exchange.

40. ... fxe6 41. Qxe6 Rxf2 42. Kh1 Rc2 43. a4 Rc1+ 44. Kg2 Rc2+ 45. Kf3 Rxd2 46. Qf7+ Kh6 47. Qf4+, Black resigned.

White picks up the bishop with 48. Qc7+ if Black moves to the seventh rank, or mates with 48. g4 Kh4 49. Qh6 on ... 47. Kh5.

And thus Timur Gareev found himself atop the tournament standings at 5½ out of six. He became the first person to win the tournament by himself since 1984!

I thought *Chess Life* readers would appreciate getting to know the charming National Open champion, so one day, I caught up with him just as he'd returned from a day trip to Mexico with friends.

Timur first came to the U.S. when he was seventeen, and spent a year studying

[Gareev describing himself]:  
*freedom,  
spirituality,  
excitement.*

*Right: Timur Gareev. Below, the second place logjam among Authur Kogan (directly below), and (bottom row, l-r) Alex Lenderman, Alejandro Ramirez, and Varuzhan Akobian.*





Some of the tournament staff that make this a great event. Left to right: Wayne Clark, Tom Brownscombe, Karen Pennock, Allen Magruder, Kenneth Sloan.

at UTD. He then returned home, and came back to attend UMBC for a year. Now he's at UTB, with a year and a half to go before he finishes his bachelor's in marketing. I couldn't resist the half-joke that he's sampled all the U.S. chess universities, to which he replied that he was thinking of pursuing a master's at Texas Tech.

Timur's interests include jujitsu, poker, and skydiving, which he described as a "relaxing, refreshing experience." When asked for three words to describe himself, he went for nouns: freedom, spirituality, excitement. His decision to study marketing he explained by saying that he's an "ideas person, not a numbers person." His chess style he characterized as "aggressive; adventurous." Timur wants to improve at chess, aiming for 2650 in the near future, and 2700 a few years down the road, but made it clear that he has no ambitions to be champion: he just wants to play and understand chess on the level of the big guys. For him, chess seems to be both an end (in the sense that he enjoys the creative process) and a means to an end; he wants to make a contribution to society through chess, being an ambassador for the game. Actually, I understood this kind of relation to chess quite well, since my own is very similar. You want to use chess to make some kind of an impact on the world, beyond just achieving your own personal success with it.

I promised to unveil the mystery of the Under-2500 prize, so here it is: I won it!

My tournament took the form of a win-draw pattern; I won all my white games, and drew all the black.

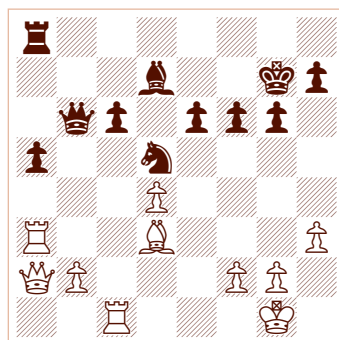
Here's a key game that I played in round five, against someone who had an excellent tournament despite losing to me! At 68 years of age, Ed Formanek had a very spry performance, going four from six, defeating one grandmaster (Arthur Kogan), drawing two others (Melik Khachiyan and Renier Gonzalez) and, to round it off, crushing an international master in the final round to claim a share of the Under-2300/Under-2400 prize.

#### A Krushing Victory

*IM Irina Krush (2520)*

*IM Edward Formanek (2262)*

*National Open 2010, Las Vegas (5),  
06.13.2010*



White to play

I had been pressing the whole game and had just netted an Exchange after a strange decision by Ed to place his rook in the way of a discovered attack. White should convert this easily, but my next move is a product of excessive optimism and relaxation.

**36. Qc4?!**

Why not the simple 36. Rc5, not losing any pawns and threatening to take on a5?

**36. ... Qxb2 37. Rb3**

Of course, activating my rook like this had been the idea, but surprisingly, the rook lift is not as devastating as it was supposed to be.

**37. ... Qd2 38. Rb7 Rd8 39. Ra1 Kh6 40. Be4 Nc3**

The last few moves were time pressure moves, and now that we'd reached the time control, I could take stock of what had happened.

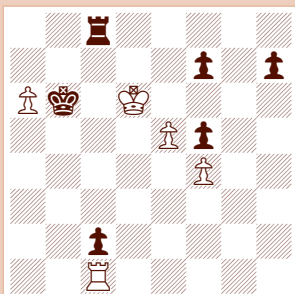
**41. Bf3!**

Grabbing the pawn with 41. Bxc6 Bxc6 42. Qxc6 actually leaves Black with a lot of counterplay after 42. ... Qxd4. I had to be careful of such positions all the time, and I realized it was crucial not to acquire material at the expense of letting Black get rid of the horrible bishop on d7. The whole strategy for the rest of the game is based on punishing that piece.

# Blitzed

In round four of the six-game blitz tournament, two GM's with perfect scores were paired, Varuzhan Akobian and Mikheil Kekelidze. The following position was reached:

*GM Varuzhan Akobian (Quick: 2611)*  
*GM Mikheil Kekelidze (Quick: 2463)*  
*National Open G/10 Championship,*  
*07.08.2010*



**Black to play**

Black had a big time advantage, starting out with close to two minutes while Varuzhan had something in the vicinity of forty seconds, but he squandered that whole advantage immediately, looking for a win that he couldn't find. So both players now had thirty seconds, and they repeated the position numerous times, with White going Ke7, Black replying ... Rc7 check, White moving the king away, Black moving the rook along the c-file, and so on. Eventually White offered a draw on his own move; Black responded by asking him to first show his move, which White did, but then when Black held out his hand to accept the draw, White had apparently reconsidered, said he wanted to play on, ignored the outstretched hand, and forced Black to continue playing having wasted some precious seconds holding out his hand. Then White efficiently and remorselessly flagged his opponent.

This situation needn't have happened, as the official time control of the tournament was ten minutes plus two seconds delay, but whoever had set this clock had neglected to include the delay function. From an

observer's standpoint, it looked like at the outset, neither player was aware that this crucial part of the time allotment was missing, and that White realized this somewhat earlier than Black, probably around the time he rescinded the draw offer, and decided to cash in on this awareness (the lack of delay was White's only winning chance in the position.)

Now, I understand that blitz is a game of time, but it's also still a game of chess, so these sorts of examples raise the question of where to draw the line, when and how much to elevate the time factor over the game factor. It's a very subjective question, dependent on everything from an individuals' understanding of chess etiquette, to their sense of fairness and respect for the game and their opponent, to their ability to rein in their competitive instincts in the heat of battle. Personally, I think that blitz without at least some minimal increment or delay is a brutish spectacle set up to bring out the worst in people as they grab for whatever piece of wood is within reach to stave off the ticking of their final seconds. Every time I witness this spectacle, I am traumatized at the core.

So yes, I do think the question of where to draw the line has no perfect answer, and thus should be taken out of players' hands entirely, but still, absent that, I'd suggest a few guidelines, such as: don't behave in such a way that your opponent won't want to shake your hand afterwards. Don't behave in such a way that your opponent will feel like you trampled all over him and the chessboard just to get a lousy point. And think how you'd feel if the same was done to you.

This story has a rather ironic background, too. Just a few weeks earlier, there had been a blitz tournament at the end of the U.S. Championship in St. Louis. There was

a matchup Akobian-Finegold, where the players first reached a drawn queen plus bishop endgame, then a drawn queen endgame, with the only difference in strength of position being that Black had a lot more time, though White had a reasonable amount (about a minute) at the beginning too. The audience was treated to a bunch of back and forth with neither player making any progress, and when Akobian offered a draw, it was ignored by the player with more time, who was merciless in converting his time advantage into a full point. Afterwards,

Akobian expressed his indignation with his opponent's behavior ... but for some reason this didn't prevent him from doing the exact same thing a few weeks hence.

Call it karma, divine providence, or whatever, but the universe seemed to cast a vote on this issue. In the very next game, the proponent of the "no holds barred" blitz style lost to Timur Gareev, which effectively ended his chances of winning first, then drew the final game against Pavel Tregubov to secure a finish out of the money.



**GM Mikheil Kekelidze: Victim of a blitz etiquette breach?**

## 2010 National Open

41. ... Nb5 42. Rd1!

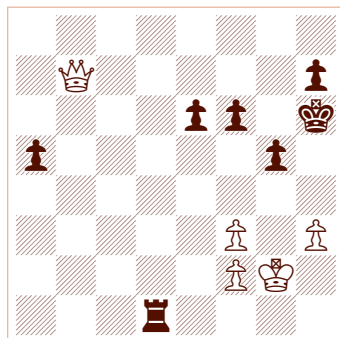
A simple, but effective move. Black's queen is forced to leave her ideal post on d2, and each retreat (to b4 or c3) has a big drawback.

42. ... Qb4 43. Qc1+!

Forcing an important weakening of Black's pawn formation around the king.

43. ... g5 44. Qc5

Now this would be winning, except Black has the only move. A critical line that I spent a long time on was 44. Bxc6 Bxc6 45. Qxc6 Nxd4 46. Qc7 Nf3+ 47. gxf3 Rxd1+ 48. Kg2 Qxb7 49. Qxb7.



Analysis after 49. Qxb7

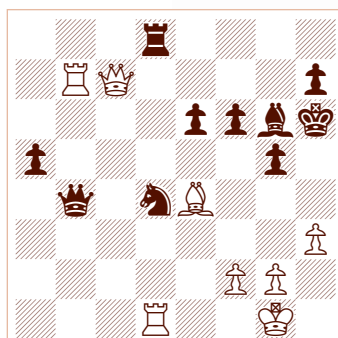
I could have reached this position by force, and I thought it was winning, but I also had concerns about Black setting up some kind of fortress with the rook on the fourth. Of course, Black's king is terrible and he should lose because of *Zugzwang*, but I can't say I regret not going for this.

44. ... Be8

And now, I put in more time and calculated the win:

45. Be4! Bg6 46. Qxc6 Nxd4 47. Qc7

(see diagram top of next column)



After 47. Qc7

This is very similar to the position I could have gotten on move 44, with the important difference that my bishop is on e4, not f3, so Black doesn't have any options on the f3-square. White threatens basically everything on the board; the queen, the rook, and most importantly, mate on h7. Black is forced to give up the queen.

47. ... Ne2+ 48. Kh2 Qxb7 49. Bxb7 Rxd1 50. Qe7 Nd4 51. Qf8+, Black resigned

Mate will follow after 51. ... Kh5 52. g4 Kh4 53. Qh6+.

In the last round, I got paired with Ben Finegold and made the advisable decision of switching from the familiar but narrow paths of the Queen's Gambit Accepted or Slav that I have been playing recently to the Nimzo Indian, which in my fifteen minutes of pre-game preparation I noticed that Ben didn't seem to have any particularly strong weapon against. I figured I had enough experience on the White side of the Nimzo that I could figure out whichever of the three lines Ben was likely to play against it. This sensible opening choice resulted in easy equality, and gave me a great ending to one of my favorite tournaments. ■



PHOTO BY OSCAR GALVAN

## 2010 National Open At A Glance

**Date:** June 11-13, 2010 **Location:** South Point Hotel, Casino and Spa, Las Vegas, Nevada **Top Finishers:** *Open*, 1st, 5½: Timur Gareyev; 2nd-5th, 5: Varuzhan Akobian, Aleksandr Lenderman, Alejandro Ramirez, Arthur Kogan. *Under 2200*, 1st-2nd, 5½: Danyul Lawrence, Michael William Brown; 3rd-4th, 5: Liulia Cardona, Eric Zhang. *Under 2000*, 1st-2nd, 5½: Daniel Bryant, Colin Reece Field-Eaton; 3rd-5th, 5: Yusheng Xia, William Barefield, Esteban Escobedo. *Under 1800*, 1st, 6: Matthew Noble; 2nd-3rd, 5½: Dimitri Kosteris, Cesar Mendoza. *Under 1600*, 1st, 6: Ernesto Lim; 2nd-3rd, 5½: Raymond Tan, Eusy Ancheta. *Under 1400*, 1st, 5½: Shaogang Bian; 2nd-3rd, 5: Vahe Patatanyan, Gary Andrus. *Under 1200*, 1st, 5½: Francisco Moreno; 2nd-4th, 5: Kobey Love, Stephen Van Voorhis, Henry Maltby. *Unrated*, 1st, 6: Ruperto Dilig, Jr.; 2nd, 5: Gerald Centeno; 3rd, 4: Al Canafe. **Chief Arbiter:** Bill Snead