



Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival 2017

Monday 23 January - Thursday 2 February 2017

Round 4 Report: *Thursday 27 January 2017 - by John Saunders (@JohnChess)*

A Man and A Woman

The leadership in the Tradewise Gibraltar Masters has been whittled down from nine to two as Ju Wenjun (China) and Emil Sutovsky (Israel) are now the only players to have maintained maximum scores after the fourth round, played on 27 January 2017. They will meet in round five, with Ju Wenjun having the white pieces.

The gloves were off in round four as the higher rated started to assert themselves and there were a few more decisive results amongst the leading encounters. The only significant exception was Emil Sutovsky's victory over Nikita Vitiugov, though Sutovsky's 2628 rating doesn't really reflect his true class. Like Vitiugov he is a former winner of the Tradewise Gibraltar tournament and he remains a dangerous and imaginative opponent against anyone. In their game Vitiugov went in for an exchange for two pawns sacrifice (if that can be construed as a sacrifice) which analysis engines also thought was playable, but Sutovsky demonstrated otherwise in a forceful series of moves up to the time control, neutralising Black's two bishops and establishing his own knight on a dominating square. An interesting game which includes a few exceptions to general positional principles.

Tradewise Gibraltar Masters, Round 4, 27.01.2017

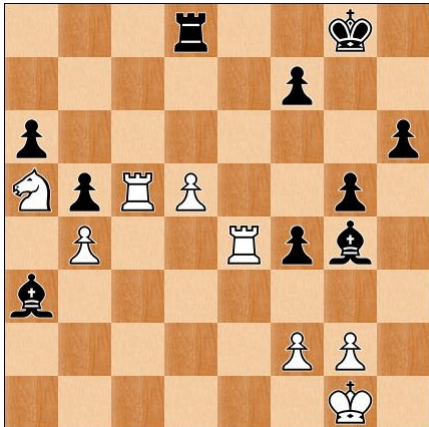
E.Sutovsky (2628) - N.Vitiugov (2724)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Nb8 10.d4 Nbd7 11.Nbd2 Bb7 12.Bc2 Re8 13.Nf1 Bf8 14.Bg5 h6 15.Bh4 g6 16.N3d2 c6 17.Qf3 Bg7 18.Ne3 Qb6 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.b4 c5 22.Nb3 cxb4 23.cxb4 Rad8 24.Nc5 Rd4 25.a3 Red8 26.Ng4 Nxc4 27.hxg4 Bc8 28.Bb3 Qf6 29.Bd5



29...Qf4 Engines approve of the text move but, somewhere beyond their horizon, there prove to be problems. Engines also toy with 29...Bxc4!?, which is very tricky, but it may also run in difficulties after 30.Qxc4!? R8xd5 31.Nb3 Rc4 32.Na5, etc.

30.Nb3 Now Black is obliged to give up the exchange for two pawns. **30...R4xd5 31.exd5 Bxg4 32.Qxf4 exf4 33.Rac1 Bb2?!** Things start to go wrong after this as White is now able to defend and maintain his shaky-looking d-pawn. **33...Rxd5** probably equalises, though White can still put pressure on the weak a and f pawns. **34.Rc5 Bxa3 35.Re4 g5 36.Na5**



Normally it is undesirable to be compelled to defend isolated pawns with rooks, and still more so to put the knight on the edge of the board, but here White's position hangs together rather well and Black's two bishops aren't that great either. **36...Bb2 37.Nc6** A knight on the rim may sometimes be dim but when it gets to c6, it can deliver hard kicks. **37...Rd6 38.Ne7+ Kf8 39.Rc6 Rd7 40.Rxa6** The threat of Ra8+ indirectly defends the apparently loose knight on e7. **40...Rc7 41.Nc6 Rd7 42.Re8+** The point of this pretty tactic (if Black captures, White mates in two) is to force the black king away from the d-pawn's march forward. **42...Kg7 43.Rd8** Another reversal of usual positional expectations as the rook supports the advance of the d-pawn from the 'wrong' side. **43...Rxd8 44.Nxd8 Bf5** 44...Be5 45.Ra7 Bh5 46.Rb7 and the b-pawn drops off. Black's two bishops are curiously impotent in the face of White's threats. **45.d6 Bc3** 45...Be5 46.Nc6 is equally hopeless since 46...Bxd6 loses a piece to 47.Nd4, attaching both bishops at once. **46.Nc6 Kf6 47.Ra7 1-0** Now White simply marches the d-pawn through.

Warning to Future Opponents: Never Capture Ju Wenjun's e-pawn

It is perhaps unchivalrous to say so but for the second day running Ju Wenjun was the beneficiary of a major blunder by her opponent. Sam Shankland had given up a piece for considerable compensation, which might have been even better but then, despite a five-minute think and still having plenty of time left until the time control, inexplicably overlooked a none too difficult tactic. The parallel between Ju Wenjun's third and fourth round games was rather spooky – both of her opponent's blunders involved capturing a hot e-pawn.

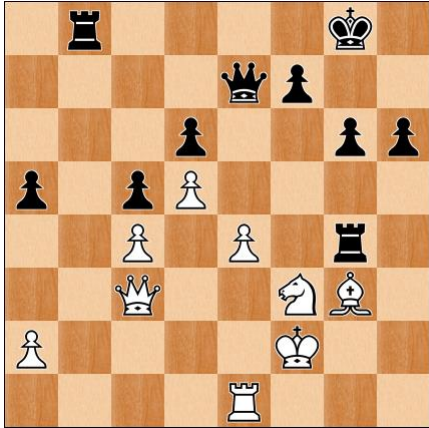
(8) Ju, Wenjun (2583) - Shankland, Samuel L (2674) A62

Gibraltar Masters Caleta Hotel (4.4), 27.01.2017

Saunders, John **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.Nc3 g6 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Bg2 0-0 9.0-0 Re8 10.Re1 Nbd7 11.Bf4 Ng4 12.Rc1** 12.h3 Nge5 was the continuation in a couple of games in 2016, both involving at least one Chinese player. **12...Nde5 13.Ne4 Bf5 14.Nfd2 h6 15.h3 Nf6 16.Nc3 Rb8 17.g4 Bc8 18.Bg3 b5 19.b3 a6 20.f4**



20...Nexg4! The boldest continuation. Black gets plenty of positional compensation, as well as two pawns, for the piece.
21.hxg4 Nxg4 22.Nf3 Ne3?! 22...b4 first looks more forceful. After 23.Na4 Ne3 24.Qd2 Black has the possibility of 24...c4!? when 25.bxc4? Qa5 would leave White in great difficulties. **23.Qd2 Bb7 24.Bf2 Nxg2 25.Kxg2 b4 26.Nd1 Qd7 27.Rc4 a5 28.Ne3?!** 28.e4 looks more natural. **28...Ba6 29.Rcc1 Re4 30.Nc4 Bc3** It seems a shame to take the exchange since Black comes to miss the considerable dominance afforded by the dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal. 30...Bxc4 31.bxc4 a4 looks quite pleasant for Black. **31.Rxc3 bxc3 32.Qxc3 Bxc4 33.bxc4 Rxf4 34.Bg3 Rg4 35.Kf2 Qe7 36.e4**



As in the previous round Ju Wenjun offers her opponent a hot e-pawn and she must have been both amazed and delighted to see lightning strike twice. **36...Rxe4?? 37.Bxd6!** This barely merits an exclamation mark. I like to think even a player of my limited powers could have found this shot since there is hardly anything to calculate. **37...Qxd6 38.Rxe4 g5** True, Black has three connected passed pawns but they do not constitute compensation here since White's advanced d-pawn is poised to get the job done rather sooner. **39.Qe5 Qf8 39...Qxe5 40.Nxe5 Rd8 41.Nd3** and it is all rather easy. **40.Re2 Rd8** Making White's task a little easier though there was nothing to be done anyway. **41.Nxg5 hxg5 42.Qxg5+ Kh7 43.Re4 1-0**

14 players are now on 3½/4 including four of the elite players, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Hikaru Nakamura, Mickey Adams and Boris Gelfand, and the women's world champion Hou Yifan, with the rest of the 2700+ rated players on 3/4. It is perhaps worth bearing in mind that last year's winner emerged from the 3/4 pack so everyone is still well in contention. Swiss system tournaments are all about how you fare in the home straight.

A selection of photos of round four can be downloaded from my Flickr account at <https://flic.kr/s/aHskMV4WNF>

Video footage and interviews from today's round are available to embed from our [YouTube Channel](#).

Report Ends

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