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Chapter 1

Vassily Ivanchuk, a Portrait

Vassily Mikhailovich Ivanchuk was born on 18 March 1969, in the town of Kopychintsy (in the Ternopolskaya Oblast of Ukraine), into a family of intelligent parents: his father was a lawyer and his mother a physics teacher.

‘At first, nobody dreamt I had any talent for chess’, he recalled in one interview. ‘At first, I just very much wanted to play. I was captivated by this form of sport. It all started when my father gave me a magnetic chess set for my birthday. I liked the pieces and asked my father to tell me about the game and to show me how the pieces moved. Then I wanted to know more and more, and my mother brought me a few books from school. My first book was *A Journey in the Kingdom of Chess*, by Averbakh and Beilin. Then I started solving chess problems in newspapers, which I copied out. It was my first trainer, Gennady Vassilenko, who predicted I would become a successful player – “You will become at least a grandmaster”, he said.’

Amongst the chess books he has loved all his life, Vassily mentioned Lasker’s *Manual of Chess*, Bronstein’s 1953 Zurich Candidates’ book, and Alekhine’s and Botvinnik’s game collections. Openings he loved to study from Keres’ books.

But that is in the future. For now, the life of the 13-year-old Vasya Ivanchuk had undergone a great change – he was a real sportsman. Into his life had come the thing that would forever define it, filling it with the joy of victory, the pain of defeat, constant work and never-ending concern with self-improvement. Put an-

other way, we call it the search for truth in chess.

His first big successes came in 1985. Vassily won the USSR junior championship and won the bronze medal in the championship of Ukraine. A year later, he



joined the chess faculty of the Lvov state university of physical culture. From his student days onwards, he has loved the city of Lvov, which became his home.

In 1986, the 17-year old master won the European Youth Championship (this event was traditionally held in the Dutch city of Groningen, over the start of the new year).

Here are several examples of his play in those years.

The following game, played in the last round, decided the fate of second place.

Black loses patience!

This desperate counterattack leads to deadly consequences, whereas it was possible to hold the position after 28...♖g8 29.♕h2 ♕f8.



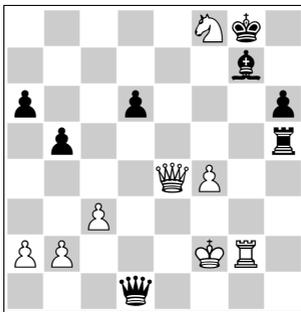
29.♖xe4! ♖xg3+ 30.♖g2 ♖h3

Nothing changes after 30...♖h4 31.♗e7.

31.♗e7

Black suffers disaster on the g6-square!

31...♖h5 32.♗g6+ ♕g8 33.♗xf8 ♖h1+ 34.♕f2 ♖xd1



35.♖h7+!

Forces a mating attack.

35...♕xf8 36.♖xg7+ ♕e8 37.♖g8+ ♕d7 38.♖g7+ ♕c6 39.♖a8+ ♕b6 40.♖b7+

On 40...♕a5 (40...♕c5 41.♖c7 mate) there follows 41.b4+ ♕a4 42.♖xa6 mate.

Black resigned.

Game 38

Nimzo-Indian Defence (E39)

□ **Bareev, Evgeny**

■ **Ivanchuk, Vassily**

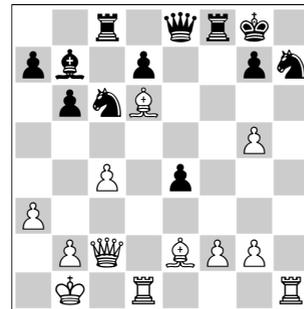
Rethymnon 2003

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♕b4 4.♖c2 c5 5.dxc5 0-0 6.a3 ♕xc5 7.♗f3 b6 8.♕f4

Regarding 8...♕g5 and the previous move, see Game 25.

8...♕b7

At the same European Club Cup, a game was played which sharply reduced the popularity of the move 8...♗h5: 9.♕g5 ♕e7 10.h4!? ♕b7 11.0-0-0 ♗c6 12.e4! ♗f6 13.e5 ♗g4 14.♕f4 ♖c8 15.♕b1 f5!? 16.exf6 ♗xf6 17.♗g5 ♖e8 18.♗b5 e5 19.♕d3!? e4!? 20.♕e2 h6 21.♗d6 ♕xd6 22.♕xd6 hxg5? (defensive chances could have been retained by 22...♗e7) 23.hxg5 ♗h7



analysis diagram

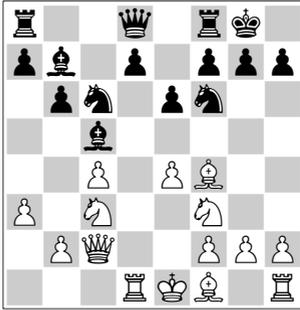
24.♖xh7! ♕xh7 25.♕xf8 ♖xf8 26.♖xe4+ ♕g8 27.♖d5+, and Black resigned, Kasparov-Chuchelov, Rethymnon 2003.

9.♖d1 ♗c6

An interesting continuation, containing an original idea.

On 9...♕xf3 possible is 10.exf3 ♗c6 11.♕d3 ♗h5 12.♕e3 f5 13.0-0 ♖c8 14.f4 g5 15.b4 gxf4 16.♕c1 with the better chances for White, Ivanchuk-Zviagintsev, Elista 1998.

10.e4



10...♞e7!?

The knight transfers to the kingside, whilst after 11.b4 there is 11...♞g6!, and the black bishop can return to e7.

It is noteworthy that, in subsequent games, Bareev did not allow such a knight transfer: 10.b4! ♞e7 11.e4 ♖c8 12.e5 ♞h5 13.♞e3 ♖c7 14.♞b5 ♖b8 15.♞d6 ♞xd6 16.exd6 f5 17.♞e2 ♞f6 18.0-0 ♞d8 19.♞e5 ♞f7 20.♞xf7 ♖xf7 with the better game for White, Bareev-Korotylev, Moscow 2004.

11.h3

White wants to preserve his bishop. After 11.♞e2 ♞g6 12.♞g3 (weaker is 12.♞c1 a6 13.0-0 ♖c7 14.♞d4 ♖ac8 15.♞h1 ♖fe8 16.f4?! ♞xd4 17.♖xd4 e5! 18.fxe5 ♖xe5 with the better game for Black Krush-Serper, Seattle 2003) 12...♞h5 13.♖d2 (no advantage is given by 13.♞d6 ♞xd6 14.♖xd6 ♖e7) 13...♞xg3 (or 13...♞c6 14.♞d4 ♞xg3 15.hxg3 ♖f6 16.b4 ♞xd4 17.♖xd4 ♖xd4 18.♖xd4 with equality, S. Ivanov-Serper, Azov 1991) 14.hxg3 ♞c6 15.♖h5 ♖b8 16.♞f1 ♖d8, the chances are equal, Suba-Grünberg, Sochi 1983.

11...♞g6 12.♞h2 ♞h5

Taking aim at the square f4.

13.♖d2 ♞f6

A silent draw offer.

It seems that Ivanchuk's peaceableness is explained by the specifics of team com-

petition, which requires leaders, who can guarantee results.

It was worth considering 13...f5!? 14.exf5 ♞xf3 15.gxf3 ♞h4 16.♞e2 ♖f6 17.♖d3 ♞g2+ 18.♞d2 ♞hf4 19.♞xf4 ♞xf4 20.♖e4 ♖h6 21.♞c2 ♖ae8 22.♞b1 exf5 with convenient play for Black, Harikrishna-Macieja, Bermuda 2005.

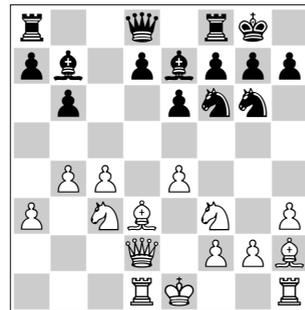
14.♖c2 ♞h5 15.♖d2 ♞f6 16.b4

White turns down the peace offer.

Also not bad is 16.e5 (on 16.♞d3?! Black equalises with the move 16...d5!) 16...♞e4 (but not 16...♞xf3? 17.gxf3 ♞h5 18.b4 ♞e7 19.f4!, and White obtains the advantage) 17.♞xe4 ♞xe4 18.♞e2 (dubious is 18.♖xd7?! ♞xf3 19.gxf3 ♖h4 20.♞g3 ♖h5 with the initiative for Black) 18...a5 with mutual chances.

16...♞e7 17.♞d3

On 17.e5 possible was 17...♞e4 18.♞xe4 ♞xe4 19.♞e2 (19.♖xd7?! a5) 19...a5 20.0-0 axb4 21.axb4 ♖c7, and Black achieves fully adequate play.



17...a5!

Black is fully mobilised and ready for active operations.

18.♖b2

The alternative is 18.bxa5! (on 18.e5? a strong reply is 18...axb4 19.axb4 ♞xb4! 20.♖b2 (20.♞xg6? fxg6 21.exf6 ♞xf3 22.fxg7 ♞xd1 23.gxf8♖+ ♖xf8 24.0-0

♙b3—+) 20...♙xc3+ 21.♖xc3 ♘e4 with advantage to Black) 18...♖xa5 19.e5 ♘h5 20.♙e2 ♙xa3 21.♘b5 with compensation for the pawn.

18...♘h5 19.0-0 ♘hf4

The black knight has reached its destination.

20.♖fe1

White waits to see what his opponent will do. It was hardly good to play 20.♘e5?! ♙d6 21.♘xg6 fxg6! 22.♙b1 ♙e5, and Black's chances are superior.

20...axb4 21.axb4 f5!

Including the bishop on b7 in the game.

22.♘d4?

He could maintain the tension with 22.♖e3!?, not allowing Black to exchange knight for bishop, since 22...♘xd3? 23.♖exd3 d6 24.exf5 ♖xf5 25.♘d4 ♖f6 26.♘db5 e5 27.♘d5 leads to White's advantage.

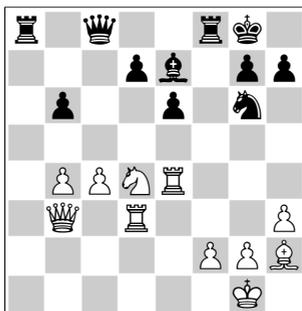
However, after 22...♖c8 23.♙c2 ♙f6 Black's position still deserves preference.

22...♘xd3 23.♖xd3 ♖c8

Defending against the threat of 24.♘xe6.

24.♘db5

24.exf5 is bad because of 24...♖xc4, whilst after 24.♖b3?, Black has the unexpected tactical decision 24...fxe4 25.♘xe4 ♙xe4 26.♖xe4



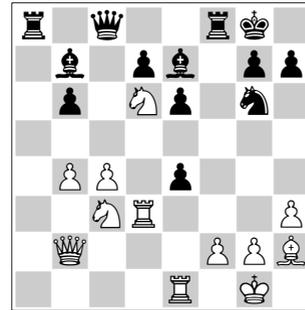
analysis diagram

26...♖xc4! 27.♖xc4 ♖a1+ 28.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 29.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 30.♗xf1 ♖c8

(30...♙xb4? 31.♘xe6) with advantage to Black.

24...fxe4 25.♘d6

Not 25.♘xe4? because of 25...♖xc4.



25...exd3!!

A deeply thought-out and accurately calculated queen sacrifice, which gives Black good winning chances! Less convincing is 25...♙xd6 26.♖xd6 e3! 27.fxe3 ♖xc4 28.♖ed1 (28.♖xd7? ♖c6) 28...e5 with a minimal advantage to Black.

26.♘xc8 ♖axc8 27.♖d2

White cannot defend all his weaknesses at once.

On 27.♖b3 possible is 27...♘f4 28.♖a1 ♙h4!? 29.♙xf4 ♖xf4 30.♘d1 ♖cxc4 31.♖xd3 ♖fd4 32.♖a3 ♖xb4, and Black obtains the advantage.

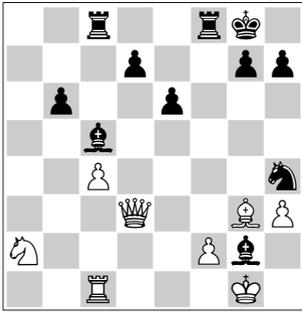
27...♙xb4 28.♖xd3 ♘h4!

The strongest continuation.

After 28...♙a6 29.♙d6 ♙xc4 30.♖g3 ♙xc3 31.♖xc3 ♖f5 both sides have chances.

29.♖b1

Other replies also fail to offer White a satisfactory defence. Bad is 29.f3? ♘xf3+! 30.gxf3 ♖xf3, when after 31.♖xd7? – 31...♙c5+ 32.♗g2 ♖f2+ 33.♗g3 ♖g2+ 34.♗f4 ♖f8+ 35.♗e5 ♖g5+ 36.♗xe6 ♖f6 mate, and in the event of 29.♖c1 a strong reply is 29...♙xg2! 30.♘a2 (or 30.♙g3 ♙c6! 31.♙xh4 ♖f3 32.♖f1 ♙xc3—+) 30...♙c5! 31.♙g3



analysis diagram

31...♙c6!! 32.♙xh4 ♖f3 33.♞f1 ♜a8!
 34.♜a1 (34.♘c3 ♜a3 35.♙h2 ♙d6+
 36.♙g1 ♞fxc3 37.♞xc3 ♞xc3--+)
 34...♞fa3 35.♙h2 ♙d6+ 36.♙g1 ♞xa2
 37.♞xa2 ♞xa2 with a clear advantage.

29...♙xc3 30.♞xc3 ♙xg2 31..♙g3

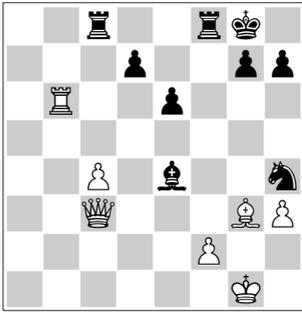
Not 31.♞g3? ♞xc4.

31...♙e4

An important zwischenzug.

32.♞xb6

Not much better is 32.♞d1 ♘f3+ 33.♙f1
 ♙d5! 34.♞b2 ♙xc4+ 35.♙g2 ♙d5⚡.



32...♞xc4!

Ivanchuk conducts the whole game at the peak of his creative strength! Probably, after this move, his teammates watching the game will have breathed a sigh of relief – the result is guaranteed!

White loses after 33.♞xc4? ♘f3+ 34.♙g2 ♘d2+ 35.♞xe4 ♘xe4.

33.♞a3 ♘f3+ 34.♙f1

Or 34.♙g2 ♘d2+ 35.♙g1 e5!? 36.♞a2 (36.♙xe5 ♘f3+) 36...♞a8 with a decisive advantage.

34...♘d2+ 35.♙g1

He is not saved by 35.♙e1 (35.♙e2 ♞c2) 35...♞c2 36.♞b8 ♞xb8 37.♙xb8 ♘f3+ 38.♙f1 d5--+.

35...♞cc8!?

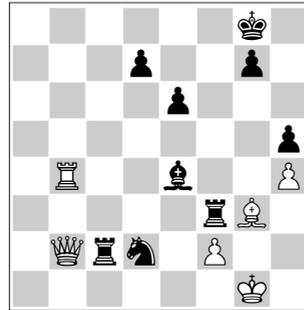
Preventing the exchange of rooks.

Also good is 35...e5!?, following the same line as indicated above.

36.♞b4 h5 37.h4 ♞f3

Black builds a mating net.

38.♞b2 ♞c2



39.♞b8+

After 39.♞a1? the 'mine' explodes – 39...♞xg3+! 40.fxg3 ♘f3+ 41.♙f1 ♙d3 mate.

39...♙h7 40.♞b5 ♞c1+ 41.♙h2 ♞f5

The last subtlety. To avoid mate on h1, White must give up the queen.

White resigned.

Game 39

English Opening (A18)

□ **Ivanchuk, Vassily**

■ **Nielsen, Peter Heine**

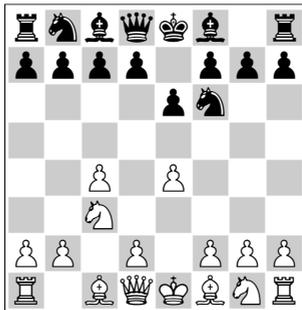
Skanderborg 2003

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.e4

The Mikenas System is the sharpest line in the English Opening. Here we do not get the closed set-ups characteristic of the

opening, but play takes on a dynamic character.

White threatens the further advance of the e-pawn, and on 3...d6 or 3...e5 the move 4.f4! is strong.



3...d5

The other main reply is 3...c5, e.g. 4.e5 ♘g8 5.♘f3 (White plans to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative. Instead, 5.d4 cxd4 6.♖xd4 ♘c6 7.♗e4 f6 8.♘f3 ♗a5 9.♙d3 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 ♗xe5 11.♗xe5 fxe5 12.♘b5 ♖d8 13.♙e3 ♙b4+ 14.♖e2 b6 15.f4 exf4 16.♙xf4 a6 17.♙c7+ ♖e7 18.♘c3 ♘f6 19.♙xb6 ♙b7 gives approximately equal chances, Vitiugov-Alexeev, Moscow 2009) 5...♘c6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘xe5 8.♘db5 f6 9.♙e3 a6 10.♘d6+ ♙xd6 11.♗xd6 ♘e7 12.♙b6 ♘f5 13.♗c5 d6 14.♗a5 ♗d7 15.f4 ♘c6 16.♗a3 ♘ce7, and White's activity fully compensates for the sacrificed pawn, Reinderman-Werle, Groningen 2009.

4.e5

4.cxd5 exd5 5.e5 ♘e4 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.d4 ♙b4 8.♗c2 0-0 9.♙d3 ♙g4 10.♙e3 f5 was seen in Bobotov-Fuchs, Leipzig 1965.

4...d4

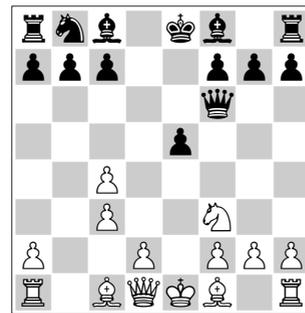
After 4...♘e4, the game Ivanchuk-Aronian, Warsaw 2003, continued 5.♘f3 (after 5.♘xe4 dxe4 6.♗g4 c5!? 7.♗xe4 ♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗d7 9.♙e2 b6 10.0-0 ♙b7

Black has good play for the sacrificed pawn) 5...♘c6 6.d4 ♙b4 7.♗c2 f6 8.exf6 ♗xf6 9.a3 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 0-0 11.♙d3 ♘a5?! (better is 11...b6) 12.0-0 b6 13.♘e5 ♗h4 14.a4 ♙a6 15.♙a3 ♗fe8 16.♗ae1 ♘d6 17.♙xd6 cxd6 18.cxd5 ♙xd3 19.♘xd3 exd5 with advantage to White.

5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3

An equal game results from 6.fxg7 cxd2+ 7.♙xd2 ♙xg7 8.♗c2 ♘c6! 9.♘f3 ♗e7.

6...♗xf6 7.♘f3 e5



8.d4

The once popular 8.d3 has lost ground to the energetic text.

Another interesting try is 8.♙d3!?, e.g. 8...♘a6 9.0-0 ♙d6 10.♗e1 0-0 11.♗c2 ♖h8 12.♙e4 ♘c5 13.d4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 exd4 15.cxd4 c6 16.♙g5, and White's chances are slightly preferable, Miles-Oll, Szeged 1997.

8...exd4 9.♙g5 ♗e6+ 10.♙e2 ♙e7

On 10...f6!?, a good reply is 11.♘xd4 ♗f7 12.♙h6! g6 (12...gxh6?? 13.♙h5) 13.♙f4 with the better game for White.

11.cxd4 ♙xg5 12.♘xg5 ♗e7

13.♗d2 ♘c6

The continuation 13...h6 14.♘f3 0-0 15.0-0 c5 (dubious is 15...♙g4!? because of 16.♗ab1! b6 17.h3 ♙h5 18.♗b5 ♙xf3 19.♙xf3 c6 20.♗bb1 ♗d6 21.♗fd1±, Har-Zvi-Liss, Rishon-le-Zion 1991)