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Game 66

V. Anand – V. Bologan

Dortmund 2003
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6
2 d4 d5
3 ëc3 ëc6
4 ëxe4 ëd7
5 ëg5

This line became popular in the 1980s. At first it looks like no more than a crude trap (5...h6?! 6 ëe6!), but there is much more to it than this since Black doesn’t find it easy to expel the knight from g5 without allowing a sacrifice on e6.

5 ... ëgf6
6 ëd3 e6
7 ëf3 (D)

8 ëe2 h6

Now the sacrifice on e6 no longer works and the knight must retreat, but White has arranged to recapture on e4 with his queen, bringing it to an active position.

9 ëe4 ëxe4
10 ëxe4 ëc7

The other main line runs 10...ëf6
11 ëe2 ëc7 12 ëd2 b6 13 0-0-0, with a slight advantage for White.

11 0-0

At first sight 11 ëg4 looks good as it more or less forces 11...ëf8, but after 12 0-0 c5 13 c3 b6 it’s not so easy to exploit Black’s inability to castle, and White has not been able to demonstrate more than an edge.

11 ... b6

Anand was very happy to see this move, since he had a powerful novelty prepared at move 14. 11...ëf6 is still possible, although this is rather different from the note to Black’s 10th move because White has already castled kingside.

12 ëg4 g5??
After this, Black cannot back away from the line he has chosen. 12...\(\text{f}8\) is still possible, although his options are more limited here as Black is already committed to ...b6. After 13 b3 \(\text{b7}\) 14 \(\text{b2}\) \(\text{f6}\) 15 \(\text{h4}\) \(\text{d5}\) White has a slight advantage.

13 \(\text{h3}\) \(\text{g8}\) (D)

14 \(\text{e1}\)!

This was the new move. Previously, White had countered the threat of ...g4 by playing the more passive 14 \(\text{d2}\), which is less dangerous for Black, although the position still isn’t especially pleasant for him. Anand had realized that he can ignore the threat of ...g4, as playing to win the knight allows White to launch a powerful sacrificial attack. Anand relates, “I played this move and looked at his face a bit, just to see if there was any reaction. Unfortunately, I got the same deadpan poker face that he always presents.” Playing over the rest of this game superficially gives the impression that it’s simply a sacrificial crush with White battering Black with one spectacular blow after another. However, that isn’t really the case and the success of White’s attack is far from guaranteed. Black only needs to play two moves, ...\(\text{b7}\) and ...0-0-0, when his king will be totally safe and he will have a ready-made kingside attack. Despite the fact that Black could have improved his play later, the impact of this game was such that Black essentially abandoned the line with ...g5.

14 ... \(\text{f8}\)

There’s nothing wrong with this, but Black could also have considered accepting the sacrifice, although it would require a very brave player to go down this route. The main line runs 14....g4 15 \(\text{xh6}\) \(\text{gxf3}\) 16 \(\text{xe6+!}\) \(\text{fxe6}\) (16...\(\text{e7}\)? loses at once to 17 \(\text{xe7+!}\) \(\text{xe7}\) 18 \(\text{f4}\) \(\text{xg2+}\) 19 \(\text{h1}\) 17 \(\text{xe6+}\) \(\text{e7}\) (after 17...\(\text{f8}\) 18 \(\text{h6+}\) \(\text{g7}\) 19 \(\text{xe7+}\) \(\text{xg7}\) 20 14\(\text{g6+}\) \(\text{f8}\) 21 \(\text{c4}\) \(\text{xe2}\) 22 \(\text{h1}\) Black will have to surrender two pieces to avoid mate) 18 \(\text{xe7+}\) \(\text{f8}\) 19 \(\text{g6+}\) \(\text{f7}\) (19...\(\text{d8}\)? loses to 20 \(\text{g5!}\) 20 \(\text{f5+}\) \(\text{e8}\) 21 \(\text{h6!}\) \(\text{d6!}\) (21...\(\text{xf5}\)? 22 \(\text{e1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 23 \(\text{xe7+}\) \(\text{xe7}\) 24 \(\text{g7+}\) is winning for White) 22 \(\text{xf8}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 23 \(\text{e1+}\) \(\text{d8}\) 24 \(\text{f7}\) \(\text{e7}\) 25 \(\text{xc8}\) \(\text{xc8}\) 26 \(\text{xf3}\), reaching a position in which White’s attack is over but he has
accumulated four pawns for the piece. However, all White’s pawns bar one are still on the second rank, and while queens remain on the board, the pawns are not a dominant factor. It seems likely that White has an edge, but I would say that the odds are heavily on a draw.

15 \( \text{h}f5 \)

White could also have tried sacrificing at once on e6 by 15 \( \text{xe6}+ \text{d8} \), and now:

1) 16 \( \text{xe}1 \text{e}5! \) 17 \( \text{f}5 \) g4 18 \( \text{h}5 \text{xf}3+ \) 19 gx\( f3 \) \( \text{xf}5 \) 20 \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{d}7! \) gives Black fair play for the pawn.

2) 16 \( \text{xh}6 \text{f}6! \) (after 16...\( \text{e}5? \) 17 \( \text{g}3 \text{xf}3+ \) 18 \( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{xb}6 \) 19 \( \text{f}6+ \text{e}7 \) 20 \( \text{xc}6 \text{b}7 \) 21 \( \text{h}6 \) White has three pawns for the exchange) 17 \( \text{f}5 \) g4 18 \( \text{h}4 \text{h}6 \) 19 \( \text{xf}6+ \text{e}7 \) 20 \( \text{xc}6 \text{gxf3} \) 21 \( \text{d}5+ \) \( \text{c}7! \) 22 \( \text{xb}6 \) \( \text{g}2+ \) 23 \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{h}2+ \) 24 \( \text{xh}2 \) \( \text{h}4+ \) 25 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{xf}5 \) and it is time for White to give perpetual check.

3) 16 \( \text{h}7! \) with another branch:

3a) 16...\( \text{c}5?! \) 17 \( \text{g}8 \text{xe}6 \) 18 \( \text{h}5 \) (not 18 \( \text{g}3? \) \( \text{d}6! \) 19 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{c}8 \) followed by ...\( \text{b}7 \), after which White’s pieces totally lack coordination) 18...\( \text{e}4 \) 19 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 20 \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{h}x\,5 \) 21 \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 22 \( \text{xf}7 \) \( \text{xf}7 \) 23 \( \text{xf}7+ \) \( \text{c}8 \) 24 \( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{b}7 \) is similar to the note to Black’s 14th move in that White ends up with four pawns for the piece, but here White has a more definite advantage since his knight has an excellent square on e5.

3b) 16...\( \text{f}6! \) 17 \( \text{xf}6 \text{xe}3 \) 18 \( \text{xe}8 \text{e}6 \) 19 \( \text{xf}7 \) \( \text{xf}7 \) 20 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 21 \( \text{xf}8 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 22 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) allows White just an edge.

We now return to 15 \( \text{h}5 \) (D):

The queen move genuinely threatens to take on e6 as Black can no longer reply ...\( \text{d}8 \).

15 ... \( \text{g}7? \)

The upshot of this move is that Black’s king has to stay on the kingside and then White’s attacking chances are extremely dangerous. 15...\( \text{g}7? \) is correct, since by supporting the second rank, Black prevents a sacrifice on e6 and renews the threat to complete his development by ...\( \text{b}7 \) and ...0-0-0. 16 \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) is fine for Black, while after the natural continuation 16 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 17 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{cxd}5 \) 18 \( \text{cxd}5 \) 0-0-0 19 \( \text{dxe}6 \) \( \text{fxe}6 \) 20 \( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{b}8 \), Black’s lead in development gives him sufficient
compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Therefore White’s best reply is the modest 16 a4 b7 17 a5 0-0 18 axb6 axb6 19 e4, with just a slight advantage.

16 h4! (D)

Now Black is in trouble, since the attack on g5 cannot be ignored and 16...gxh4 loses to 17 f4 followed by xe6+.

16 ... f8

Forcing the queen to return to h3, but condemning the king to a precarious existence.

17 h3

17 xe6? fails to 17 c5!.

17 ... h8

The best continuation, since the veiled threat to the queen forces White to waste a tempo after exchanging on g5.

18 hxg5 hxg5

19 g4 c5 (D)

With this move, Bologan rather optimistically offered a draw. Despite the time White has spent on his several queen moves, his kingside pressure is very dangerous.

20 xg5

20 xg5! is probably even stronger, since after 20...b7 21 f4 d8 22 g3! Black is in serious trouble:

1) 22...cxd4 23 c4! sets up a lethal sacrifice on e6.

2) 22...f6 23 dxc5 h5 24 d6+ g8 25 g4 bxc5 26 ad1 gives White an extra pawn and an attack.

3) 22...xf3 23 xf3 cxd4 24 c4 leaves Black with no reasonable way to meet the threats at e6.

20 ... cxd4?!

Black restores the material balance but gives White time to bring his last piece into play. 20...f6 was the only chance to play on, although after 21 f4 xf4 22 xf4 cxd4 23 xd4 b7 Black is a pawn down in an ending.

21 ad1
This is an especially clear example of the principle of moving all your pieces into attacking positions before cutting loose with sacrifices. The immediate 21 ëxe6? is premature since 21...ëxe5! 22 ëxe5 ëxe6 23 ëf3 ëxe5 24 ëxa8+ ëg7 25 ëe4 f5 26 ëf3 ëg6 followed by ...ëh7 gives Black good counterplay for the pawn.

21 ... ëb7 (D)
After this, White’s attack crashes through, but there isn’t really a satisfactory move: 21...ëc5 22 ëf4 e5 23 ëxg7+ ëxg7 24 ëxe5+ gives White a winning ending, while after 21...a5 22 ëe4! f5 (22...ëa7 loses to 23 ëe7+! ëg8 24 ëxd4) 23 ëf4! fxg4 24 ëxc7 ëa7 25 ëxd4 ëf7 26 ëb5 White wins the exchange.

22 ëxe6!
Now that Black’s bishop is not on the same diagonal as the white queen, the sacrifice on e6 proves decisive.

22 ... fxe6

Or 22...ëxf3 23 ëxf3 ëe8 24 ëe7 ëh2+ 25 ëf1 ëf6 (25...ëe5 26 ëf5 is also winning for White) 26 ëf4 ëh1+ 27 ëe2 ëxd1+ 28 ëxd1 ëxe7 29 ëd5 ëe5 30 ëb7+ and White wins.

23 ëe7+!
A beautiful conclusion to White’s attack.

23 ... ëxe7
24 ëxg7+ ëd6
25 ëxd4
Now the rook on d1 proves its worth.

25 ... ëc5 (D)
Hoping in vain to play 26...ëh1+ 27 ëxh1 ëh5+. If 25...ëd8, then 26 ëb5+ ëc6 27 ëc3+ ëe5 28 ëe4+ ëxb5 29 ëa4+ ëxa4 30 ëd3+ is crushing.

26 ëf5
Good enough, but 26 ëb5+ ëc6 27 ëe2! ëad8 28 b4 ëxb5 (Black must watch out for mate on d6) 29 ëxb5 ëxb5 30 ëxd7 is simpler.
26 ... \( \text{We}5 \)  
Or 26...\( \text{d}5 \) 27 \( \text{x}e6 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 28 \( \text{xe}6+ \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 29 \( \text{xd}7+ \) \( \text{f}6 \) 30 \( \text{d}6+ \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 31 \( \text{xd}6+ \) and White wins easily with his pawns.

27 \( \text{f}3+ \) \( \text{d}5 \)
28 \( \text{g}3+ \) \( \text{e}7 \)
29 \( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) (D)

The simplest way to win is by exchanging the defensive bishop. With a material advantage and threats against the exposed black king, White’s task is not difficult.

32 ... \( \text{h}5 \)
33 \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \)
33...\( \text{xe}4 \) 34 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 35 \( \text{g}6+ \) \( \text{f}7 \) 36 \( \text{b}7 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 37 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}1+ \) 38 \( \text{h}2 \) is also decisive.

34 \( \text{g}6+ \) \( \text{d}8 \)
35 \( \text{f}7 \) \( \text{e}8 \)
36 \( \text{d}3 \) 1-0

After 36...\( \text{c}6 \) (or else \( \text{b}5 \)) 37 \( \text{f}8 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 38 \( \text{xd}7 \) \( \text{e}1+ \) 39 \( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{xd}7 \) 40 \( \text{f}6+ \) \( \text{e}7 \) 41 \( \text{g}4 \) Black’s position is hopeless.

In August, Anand played an eight-game rapid match against Judit Polgar, which was notable because every game ended decisively. At first the players traded blows, with Polgar winning games 1, 3 and 5 and Anand scoring in the even-numbered games (the colours were switched each day so that Anand had White in games 2, 3, 6 and 7). Anand was only able to pull ahead on the final day by breaking the pattern and winning both games. The fourth game featured an interesting battle in the Sicilian Najdorf.