

2016 WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

CARLSEN VS KARJAKIN

WHO WILL WIN THE 2016 WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP?

By: Amon Simutowe

The majority of chess fans think Magnus Carlsen will win the match against Sergey Karjakin. Based on their FIDE Elo ratings, that's statistically true. Carlsen has 2853 Elo points compared to 2772 for Karjakin. But there are several dynamic factors in play. Both Carlsen and Karjakin have no technical weaknesses. I believe winning will come down to strategic and psychological factors between the two of them.

Since both players are almost perfect with their chess skills, I believe they will have each formulated the strategies with the best chance of winning by using new or at least unexpected strategies. New or unexpected strategies help because they increase the reaction time of the opponent increasing the chance of getting into time trouble and making a mistake.

This is a short match, consisting of only 12 games. This means one loss can change the momentum for the rest of the match. I expect both players to choose strategies that will exert pressure on the other when playing with white pieces in the hopes of eventually making a breakthrough, forcing the other to blunder.

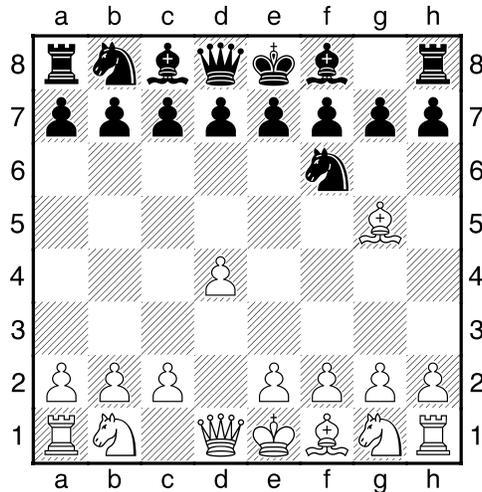
In sum, there is probably little point debating who will win. We are better off just enjoying the match. We know Carlsen has a higher Elo rating making him a slight favorite. But if he loses first, Karjakin is good enough to maintain momentum for the rest of the match.

GAME 1

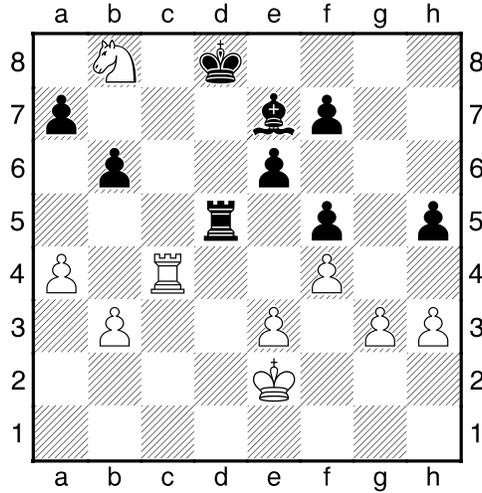
The World Chess Championship kicked off today. Carlsen played the Trompowsky, a fairly rare opening, at least for a World Championship match. I think Carlsen chose the Tromposky in order to surprise Karjakin. Nerves are typically high during such an important match. Perhaps Carlsen was hoping a surprise opening would increase stress on Karjakin, causing him time trouble if he was unprepared for the opening and then lose. Such an outcome would not have likely given Karjakin an opportunity to settle in the match. I remember during most of my competitions, if I went undefeated for the first 3 games, I performed very well in the remaining games. Assuming that's the case for an average master chess player, I imagine Carlsen would try to win within the first four games to obtain momentum.

Carlsen Vs Karjakin

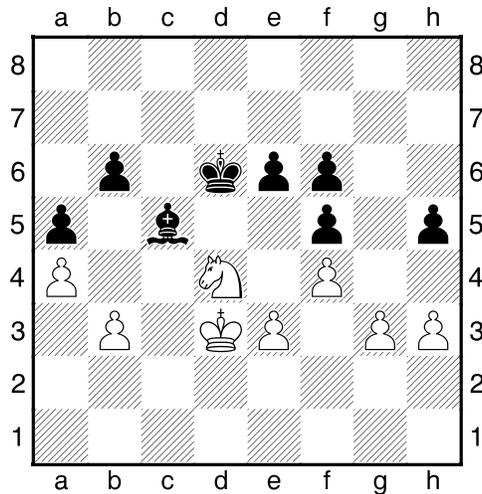
1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 This move must have been meant to surprise Karjakin



d5 I imagine Karjakin chose this response to go into as normal a position as he could to avoid the impact of Carlsen's previous move **3.e3 c5 4.Bxf6 gxf6** [4...exf6 5.dxc5 Would likely lead to a better position for white at some point due to the isolated pawn on d5] **5.dxc5 Nc6 6.Bb5 e6 7.c4 dxc4** I like this response [7...Bxc5 would also likely lead to a better position for white after 8.cxd5 exd5 As shown in the endgame, the f7,f6 doubled pawn structure would make it difficult for black to have a strong kingside] **8.Nd2 Bxc5 9.Ngf3 0-0 10.0-0 Na5 11.Rc1 Be7 12.Qc2 Bd7 13.Bxd7 Qxd7 14.Qc3 Qd5 15.Nxc4 Nxc4 16.Qxc4 Qxc4 17.Rxc4 Rfc8 18.Rfc1 Rxc4 19.Rxc4 Rd8 20.g3 Rd7 21.Kf1 f5 22.Ke2 Bf6 23.b3** Carlsen is slightly better and has been since he exchanged the Rooks after taking the c-file square. Of course Karjakin is fully aware of this endgame structure. I believe Karjakin decided this was his best chance to achieve an equal position. Since Carlsen can't lose in this position except in an unusual circumstance such as a blunder, he should be happy to have this position and keep hoping Karjakin might make a mistake **23...Kf8 24.h3 h6 25.Ne1 Ke7 26.Nd3 Kd8 27.f4 h5** A good response. Karjakin doesn't have to worry now about the Knight going to the f4 square anytime soon to take the h5-pawn, so he may as well play it there **28.a4 Rd5 29.Nc5 b6 30.Na6 Be7 31.Nb8** Carlsen is slightly better but the question is whether the advantage will ever become big enough to turn into a win.



a5 32.Nc6+ Ke8 33.Ne5 Bc5 34.Rc3 Ke7 35.Rd3 Rxd3 36.Kxd3 f6 37.Nc6+ Kd6 38.Nd4 Kd5 39.Nb5 Kc6 40.Nd4+ Kd6 41.Nb5+ Kd7 42.Nd4 Kd6



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This is generally what I would expect to happen today at this level of competition. Carlsen had white pieces and obtained an advantage with the hope that it would become big enough to win, perhaps with the help of a mistake from Karjakin. Carlsen played without stress. He obtained a position in which he could not lose but he could win. Karjakin played most likely with some concern since he had to defend accurately to just draw.