

2016 WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 7

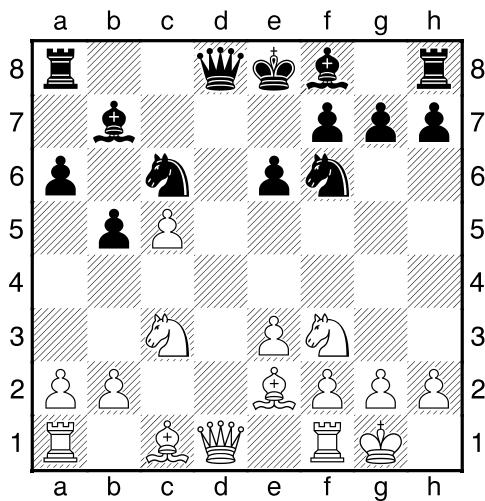
By: Amon Simutowe

ROUND 7

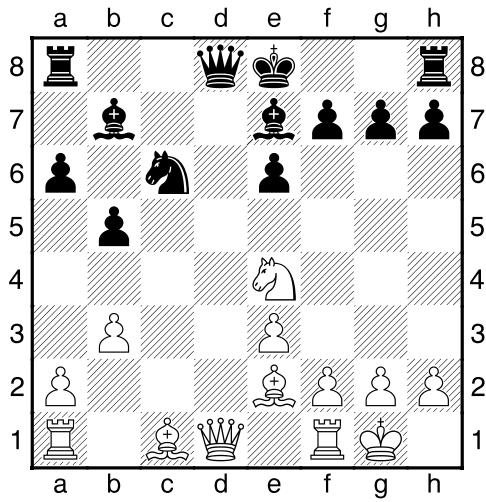
In round 7, Karjakin played with white pieces again. It seems Karjakin has challenges obtaining an advantage with white pieces. I was quite optimistic that that may change by game 6 after he fully settles down. Some analysts on the internet went as far as condemning Karjakin's seconds that they have not done a great job preparing him. While debatable, that's unlikely the case. I think Carlsen has done a better job in making it difficult for Karjakin to implement strategies in which he can obtain an advantage. Karjakin has also made it difficult for Carlsen to breakthrough whenever Carlsen gets an advantage. In the four games Karjakin has played with the white pieces, he has not managed to get an advantage except in round 7 but even then, Carlsen was never in any noticeable danger of losing. In sum, unless the current dynamics between the two players change, Carlsen is in a better situation.

Karjakin Vs Carlsen

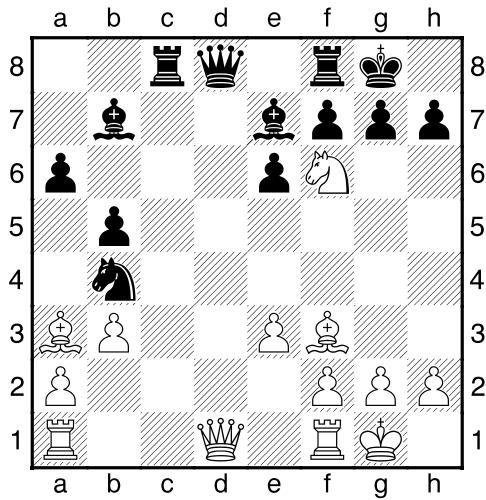
1.d4 Karjakin switches from e4 **1...d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Bd3** I am personally not a fan of this move since white loses a tempo after dxc4 and I think it's difficult for white to gain an advantage. Since Karjakin has a deeper understanding of chess, he probably had some special preparation **5...dxc4 6.Bxc4 e6 7.Nf3 c5 8.0-0 b5 9.Be2 Bb7 10.dxc5 Nc6** The pawn on c5 is not going anywhere – so there is no need for black to rush playing Bxc5



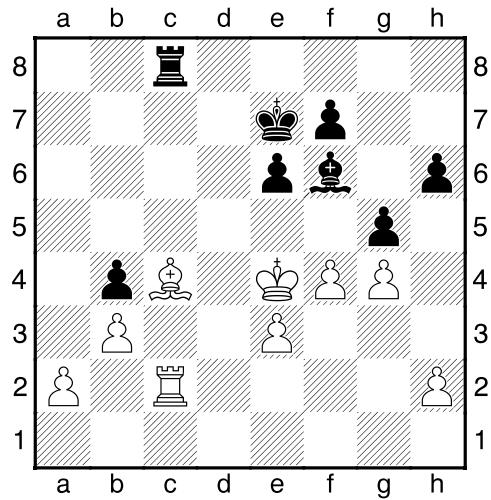
11.Nd2 Bxc5 12.Nde4 [12.Nb3 Karjakin indicated that he had planned to play this move but he overlooked 12...Bd6] **12...Nxe4 13.Nxe4 Be7 14.b3** This doesn't seem like a position in which either player was seriously playing for a win. I imagine the players just aimed to achieve a stable position



14...Nb4 15.Bf3 0–0 16.Ba3 Rc8? Carlsen makes a rare mistake **17.Nf6+** Carlsen apparently overlooked this move when he played 16..Rc8



17...Bxf6 18.Bxb7 Bxa1 19.Bxb4 Bf6 20.Bxf8 Qxd1 21.Rxd1 Rxf8 22.Bxa6 b4 Even though white is a pawn up, it's very difficult to make progress on the queenside **23.Rc1 g6 24.Rc2 Ra8 25.Bd3 Rd8 26.Be2 Kf8 27.Kf1 Ra8 28.Bc4 Rc8 29.Ke2** The easiest way to draw is to exchange the Rooks. So Karjakin has to avoid exchanging the Rooks to at least keep a theoretical chance of winning. The game should draw but the only player who can win is Karjakin **29...Ke7 30.f4 h6 31.Kf3 Rc7 32.g4 g5 33.Ke4 Rc8**



1/2-1/2 Draw

I was optimistic that Karjakin may actually start posing some real challenges to Carlsen by game 6. Carlsen has systematically managed to prevent that. Two...or three games could be some coincidence but more than 5 games show this is more of a strategic effort by Carlsen to prevent Karjakin from implementing strategies which pose a real threat. The pressure is on Carlsen now but that may not negatively affect him if Karjakin does not manage to start getting advantages especially with white pieces.