

2016 WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 8

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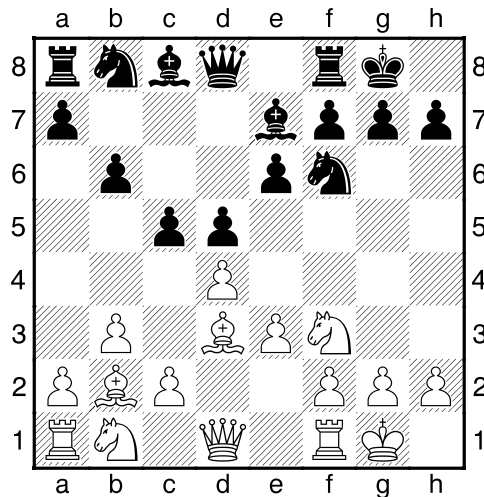
ROUND 8

The scenario I have been predicting happened in Round 8. Karjakin went without a loss in the first five games and his confidence surged while Carlsen faced increasing pressure. Carlsen showed he was under pressure particularly in the last two games as he started making uncharacteristic mistakes. But after round 7, I thought Karjakin was unlikely to be a threat because he had not managed to get a serious advantage by then even with white pieces. But in round 8, Carlsen surprisingly pushed too hard for a win in a position in which it was too risk to do so and Karjakin won with black pieces.

Both Carlsen and Karjakin embraced a dynamic position. They made a number of mistakes uncharacteristic of their status when they were both in time trouble with less than 7 minutes on the clock to reach the first time control. In the endgame, Carlsen was outplayed and he resigned. If Carlsen doesn't win the next game, it will be very difficult to win this match even though he is the stronger of the two players. At least we are sure the match will be exciting as Carlsen would not go down easily.

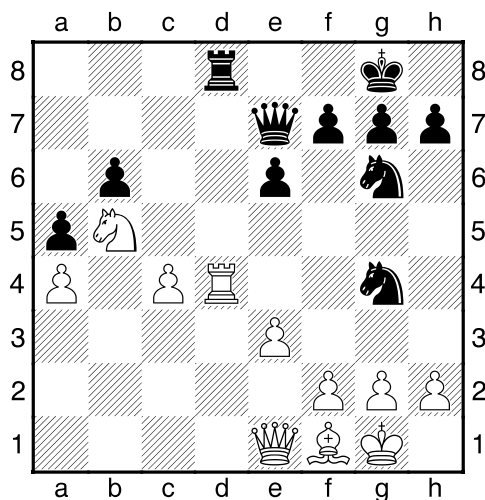
Carlsen Vs Karjakin

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 c5 5.b3 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Bb2 b6 Karjakin likely held off playing the Knight on b8 to c6 or d7 to avoid committing to a variation early. After playing b6, he added playing Ba6 as part of the options

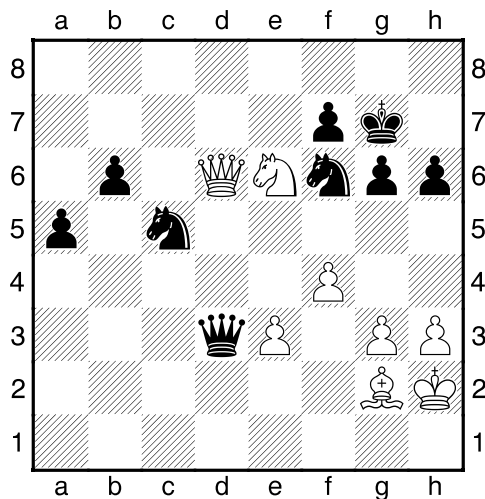


8.dxc5 A fairly rare continuation in this position **8...Bxc5** [8...bxc5 is quite common] **9.Nbd2** I have played these types of structures and it's usually more difficult to play on either side than it looks but it is dynamic giving both sides some chances **9...Bb7 10.Qe2 Nbd7 11.c4 dxc4 12.Nxc4 Qe7 13.a3** In these structures, I find a3 a bit uncomfortable for Karjakin **13...a5** This is

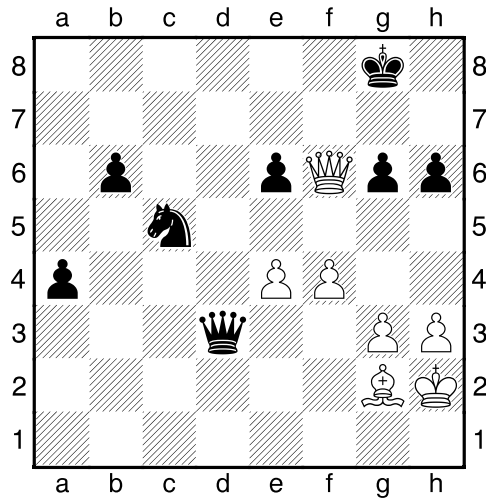
quite forced and it leaves the pawn on b6 quite vulnerable **14.Nd4 Rfd8 15.Rfd1 Rac8 16.Rac1 Nf8 17.Qe1 Ng6 18.Bf1 Ng4** An interesting move. Generally, the player with white pieces attacks in this line but it seems Karjakin was comfortable launching an attack. But this is not unusual in a dynamic position. One of the threats is Ng4-e5 threatening to exchange the Knight on c4 and leaving the a3-pawn vulnerable to the attack from the Bishop on c5 and Queen on e7 **19.Nb5 Bc6 20.a4 Bd5 21.Bd4 Bxc4 22.Rxc4 Bxd4 23.Rdxd4 Rxc4 24.bxc4** This was the first time when it became clear Carlsen was playing for a win. 24. Rxc4 or 24. Bxc4 was safe.



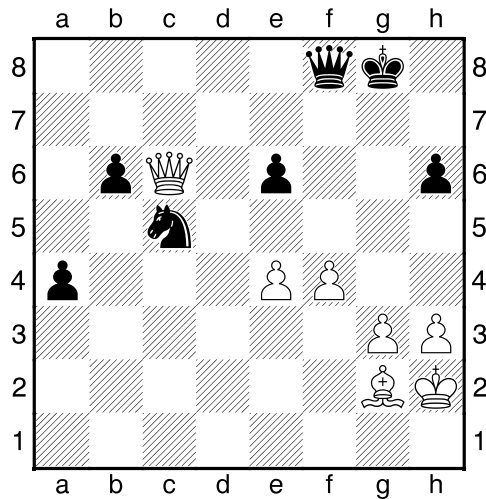
Nf6 25.Qd2 Rb8 26.g3 Ne5 27.Bg2 h6 28.f4 Ned7 29.Na7 Qa3 30.Nc6 Rf8 31.h3 If [31.Rxd7 Nxd7 32.Qxd7 Qxe3+ 33.Kf1 leading into a fairly complicated position for both sides and it seems Carlsen didn't want that perhaps because both players had less than 7 minutes to make roughly 9 moves to reach the time control and get additional time] **31...Nc5 32.Kh2 Nxa4 33.Rd8 g6 34.Qd4 Kg7 35.c5 Rxd8 36.Nxd8 Nxc5 37.Qd6 Qd3** A mistake [37...Qa4 was a better response since 38.Qe7 falls to (38.Qxb6 leads to a better endgame for white) 38...Qd7] **38.Nxe6+**



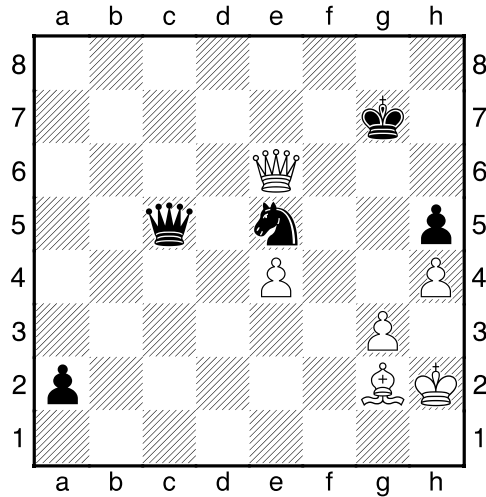
fxe6 39.Qe7+ Kg8 40.Qxf6 a4 This was a crucial continuation since [40...Qf5 is not a better continuation due to 41.Qd8+ Kg7 42.Qxb6] **41.e4** At the press conference, Karjakin admitted that he overlooked this move



41...Qd7 42.Qxg6+ Qg7 43.Qe8+ Qf8 44.Qc6



This is a very ambitious move (44. Qc6) and it showed the game was headed for a decisive ending. If Carlsen wanted to draw, he would have likely played [44.Qg6+] **44...Qd8** [44...a3 doesn't work due to 45.Qxb6 a2 46.Qa5 winning for white] **45.f5** perhaps forced since Carlsen had to be decisive on the Kingside to distract Karjakin from successfully advancing his a-pawn **45...a3 46.fxe6 Kg7** Both players played the previous 3 moves instantly **47.e7 Qxe7 48.Qxb6 Nd3** Perhaps eliminating any serious chances of Carlsen winning. I assume Carlsen did not fully anticipate this when he played 44.Qc6 **49.Qa5 Qc5 50.Qa6 Ne5 51.Qe6** [51.Qb7+ Kf6 52.Qa6+ Ke7 53.Qxh6 Qc3 54.Qg7+ Kd6 is still worse for Carlsen as Karjakin's king would match to c5 to come to aid the a-pawn to queen on a1] **51...h5** A very good move. [51...Qa5 52.Qe7+ Nf7 53.e5 would be difficult for Karjakin though he should be able to draw] **52.h4** [52.Qf5 loses after 52...Ng4+ 53.hxg4 Qxf5 54.exf5 a2 55.gxh5 a1Q] **52...a2 Carlsen resigns**



53.Qxa2 Ng4+ 54.Kh1 [54.Kh3 Qg1 55.Qb2+ Kg6 threatening Qh2# and Nf2+] 54...Qc1+ 55.Bf1 Qxf1#

0 - 1 Karjakin wins

I predicted Carlsen would come under pressure as the match progressed but I never imagined he would become quite desperate. This is what seemed to have happened too and he ended up losing after forcing imbalances in the match. If he doesn't win the next game, the match would become more challenging than imagined.