

Charles Hertan

Strike Like Judit!

The Winning Tactics of Chess Legend Judit Polgar

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INTRODUCTION

Judit Polgar's Chess Legacy

The basic facts about Judit's storied career are mostly well-known, but still astounding: born in July, 1976, she learned the rules at age 5 and played her first tournament a year later. Her parents home-schooled Judit and her older sisters Zsofia and Zsuzsa, with a chess-based curriculum developed by their father Laszlo. This consisted of daily game study, blitz and blindfold play, and solving 30 problems a day posted on a wall of 'homework'. Years later, the 'Big Book' of Laszlo's exercises was published, which remains a great training tool for beginners and beyond.

At age 10 the youngest Polgar won the strong unrated section of the New York Open, gaining instant notoriety. From there her career took off like a rocket, winning the World (Boys) Under-12 Championship in 1988, ranking 55th in the world at age 12, winning the World (Boys) Under-14 Championship in 1990, and beating her first GM, Lev Gutman, brilliantly, at age 11 (Brussels, 1987). Even World Champions began singing her praises; Mikhail Tal proclaimed her the leading young title contender, and Vasily Smyslov coined the moniker, 'Tal in a skirt'.

In 1991 she won the powerful Hungarian Championship, thereby eclipsing Bobby Fischer's record, by becoming the youngest grandmaster ever at age 15 years, 5 months. She reached 2600 in 1993 and became a fixture on the super-tournament circuit in 1994, winning a Category 15 event in Madrid and nearly beating World Champion Kasparov in her first appearance at the super-tournament in Linares, regarded then as 'the Wimbledon of Chess'.

Well before her 20th birthday, Judit was already unquestionably the strongest female player who ever lived. But 'women's chess' never interested her. Getting habitual invitations to the world's strongest events is an incredible achievement, requiring phenomenal strength and dedication. Playing for the Women's Championship at that point would mean taking a few steps backwards! Would Kasparov or Anand skip Category 16 Dos Hermanas, to play a match against a 2550 GM? Given her giftedness, JP was rightly focused on the whole ball of wax – becoming World Champion.

Scaling the rocky terrain between becoming a top-echelon GM and a serious title contender, is a grueling uphill climb. Many 2600 GM's briefly crack the super-tournament circuit, but find they've gone as far as talent and hard work can carry them. Talent was never the issue with Judit, but

she had some chinks in her armor against the very best. Judit, and her biographer Tibor Tolnai, both cited her opening preparation as a liability against title contenders. This is hard to believe when you focus on her wins; she had a wonderful feel for complex openings and introduced many powerful novelties. Judit explained that her early training put less importance on openings, but preparation at the highest level is in a separate class. Even the belief that opponents are better prepared puts one at a practical disadvantage.

Judit's very love of beautiful moves and adventure may have limited her championship potential. Of the few World Champions who played all out to win every game, only Tal took as many risks, and even he mellowed with age. Fischer and Kasparov had the unparalleled ability to tightrope-walk the boundaries of correctness, while almost never stepping over into unsoundness. Judit's love of chess art and chaos was so great, she sometimes couldn't resist pushing the envelope in search of novel ideas and beautiful combinations. This approach served her very well against all but a few championship-caliber opponents... and this leads us to her greatest obstacle on the road to number one: Vladimir Kramnik.

The problem of the 'difficult opponent' is a universal phenomenon in sports; most tournament players can identify the one opponent who simply gives us fits. This bugaboo can and must be overcome to succeed – Fischer was 0-3 with 2 draws when he faced Spassky in 1972 (0-4 after losing Game 1). But Bobby was already the favorite in view of his incredible surge before the match. He put on the greatest display of dominance in chess history by beating the super-GM's Taimanov and Larsen 6-0(!) in Candidates matches, then clobbering ex-Champion Petrosian by 'only' 5-2.

JP's nightmare was much worse – no wins and fourteen losses to Vladimir in classical play (she finally beat him at the World Blitz Championship in 2009)! He seemed able to beat her every which way; positionally pounding her King's Indian Defense, outplaying her in endgames, once even shocking her on the black side of a Sveshnikov Sicilian (as we will show, this was akin to sticking one's head in the lioness' jaws).

Such a spell could only be broken Fischer-style, by one final, decisive jump in strength. Judit seemed on her way in 2003, when she had her best results yet, leading her to crack the top 10 and soon rise to number 8 in the world. What happened next? More on that in a moment...

I first saw Judit at the 1987 New York Open when she was just age ten. Watching her in action was a unique experience! Even as a child, she

radiated a remarkable energy and self-assurance. Adding to the mystique was a miniature lion talisman which she neatly placed by the board (being something of a trickster, next day I bought a miniature gumby figure to use in like fashion!). The next time I saw her was at the strong Biel Interzonal in 1993. By then she was a dashing and to my eyes quite beautiful figure, a 17-year old chess starlet briskly walking the stage alongside chess legends.

I decided to write this book while researching an article for my (former) tactics column in *New In Chess Magazine*. I'd used some of her brilliancies in my 2008 book *Forcing Chess Moves*, but never scoured her whole oeuvre, combing it for lesser-known gems. Any student of chess who examines her body of work will be dazzled: sparkling combinations, original attacks and shocking moves seem routine!

Above all, I was deeply impressed by JP's incredible courage and will to win. My article noted that 'most grandmasters make "the devil's bargain"...' Realizing they can beat lesser players with technique alone, they learn to play it safe and avoid undo risk. Every tournament player understands the devastating effect a loss can have on the psyche. Human nature seems to dictate that once we learn to minimize losing, strong players prefer the safer path, even at the cost of far fewer wins. Judit belonged to a very rare breed of elite players, including Fischer, Tal, Kasparov and, more recently, Nakamura, who played all out to win in virtually every game, with white or black.

My next *Forcing Moves* column highlighted the best tactics of an elite Olympic team. To my dismay, game after game was something like watching paint dry: 'White gains a slight opening edge, wins a pawn, grinds opponent with careful technique...' I could barely muster the six positions needed for an entertaining article. It dawned on me then that Judit played more beautiful tactics in a single month than many strong players produce in their whole careers!

My publisher was enthusiastic when I pitched the idea of a book on Judit's tactical legacy. Those familiar with chess social media will recognize the reverence, and even love, shown by her many enduring fans around the world. This has little if anything to do with gender; Gaprindasvili and Chiburdanidze, the best women before Judit, never inspired such adoration. Judit's everyman appeal is exactly like Tal's. What do the vast majority of chess fans want to see? A battle to the finish, with beautiful combinations, sacrifices, and original ideas! Judit embodied all these beloved traits and more – you'll find in these pages that she also played crystal-clear endings, if that's more your cup of tea.

So what happened to her quest for the world title? The records show that her peak rating of 2735 was achieved in July 2005, ranking her #8 on the FIDE rating list. But during her peak in 2003, you could make a good argument that she was becoming even stronger than that. Here are the July 2005 rankings:

1. Garry Kasparov 2812
2. Viswanathan Anand 2788
3. Veselin Topalov 2788
4. Peter Leko 2763
5. Vasily Ivanchuk 2752
6. Vladimir Kramnik 2744
7. Peter Svidler 2738
8. Judit Polgar 2735

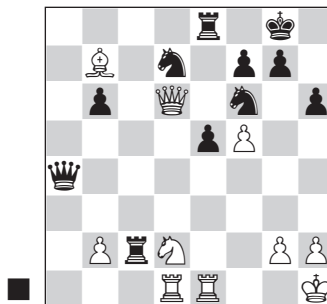
In practice, Polgar was starting to equal, or even get the better of, Topalov, Ivanchuk and Svidler. As a young teenager she lost her first four games to the immensely powerful GM Ivanchuk; after that she outscored him 8-6, including four straight wins!

Remarkably, she never seemed too overmatched by the most successful champion of all time. In her first game with Kasparov, an infamous incident occurred in which he released a knight for an instant, put it back and moved it elsewhere!

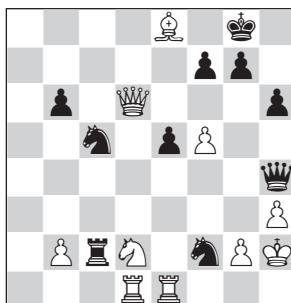
Game 4

Judit Polgar 2630
Garry Kasparov 2805

Linares 1994 (5)



In her chess memoir Judit graciously gives him the benefit of the doubt, but video revealed that Garry indeed played the blunder 36...♗c5?, losing the exchange. Just to hold, he would have been forced to find a difficult drawing line in serious time pressure: 37.♙c6 ♖h4 38.♙xe8 ♗g4 39.h3 ♗f2+ 40.♖h2



analysis diagram

In blitz mode even the great Kasparov might miss 40...♖f4+ 41.g3? ♖xf5! with Black on top, so that White must take a draw instead with 41.♖g1 ♗xh3+ 42.gxh3 ♖g3+. We'll never know, because Garry grabbed that knight (again!) and surreptitiously tucked it back to f8, later prevailing over his flustered teenage opponent!

In their second meeting Judit again held her own, but was unable to hold a theoretically drawn ♜ vs ♜+♗ ending with unexpected pitfalls; such are the growing pains of facing the best. Still, one could reasonably argue that Judit wasn't tactically overpowered by Kasparov! He beat her more by dint of experience and intimidation, until Judit finally broke through with a crushing rapid-play victory in 2002.

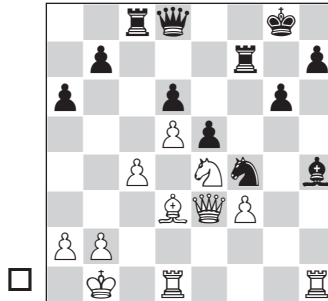
With Kasparov's highest ambitions already behind him, only Kramnik and Anand seemed to stand squarely between Judit and the world title. Her chess biography acknowledges that she was somewhat awed, justifiably, by the talent of her two strongest peers. Vladimir Kramnik became World Champion in 2000, shocking the chess world by ending Kasparov's ubiquitous 15-year reign. Viswanathan Anand would in turn snatch the crown from Kramnik in 2006. Anand's style was sharper than Kramnik's, but both were impeccably universal players who excelled at all aspects of the game.

During her best years, Judit regularly had strong tournament performances marred by losses to Kramnik, Anand or both. Still improving, she was able to score several fantastic wins against Anand, like this convincing 2003 rapid victory:

Game 5

Judit Polgar 2718
Viswanathan Anand 2774

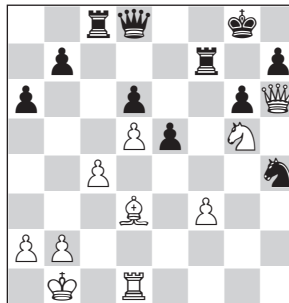
Mainz m rapid 2003 (1)

**25. ♖xh4! ♘g2**

Anand's intention, since the pawns are clearly overwhelming after
 25... ♖xh4 26. ♘xd6.

26. ♖h6 ♘xh4

26... ♖xh4 27. ♖xh4 ♘xh4 28. ♘xd6 ♖cf8 29. ♘xf7 ♖xf7 (29... ♖xf7 30. d6 ♖d7
 31. ♙e4) 30. ♖h1 g5 31. c5±

27. ♘g5

Black loses material after 27... ♖ any 28. ♖xh4 and risks getting mated after
 27... ♘f5 28. ♙xf5 gxf5 29. ♘xf7 ♖xf7 30. ♖xh7+, so he played on down a
 piece for a while with

27... ♘f5 28. ♘xf7 ♖f6 29. ♖h3 ♖f8 30. ♘h6+

... and soon resigned.

When Tolnai's book came out in 2004, he noted that Judit had met her
 future husband Gusztav and seemed to be playing with new inspiration.
 His conclusion: Polgar still had decent chances to become World
 Champion...

But in 2004 JP's ambitions were felled by an opponent that no male GM has ever faced: motherhood! She became pregnant with her son, Oliver, and took 14 months off of competitive chess, at the height of her career. After his birth, she tried to regain her peak form and participated in the World Championship cycle in 2005. But chess is an unforgiving suitor; it's impossible to advance at the very highest level without absolute devotion. Judit's words in later interviews reflect those of mothers the world over: 'Your priorities change...' In 2006 her daughter Hanna was born. As it happened, Judit chose a happy, normal family life over single-minded (some might say maniacal), Fischer-like devotion to winning the crown. Like most parents, she describes having children as the most fulfilling stage of her life, and shows no regret about her decisions.

I realize I tread on sensitive ground regarding motherhood and career. But Polgar's own words, and the trajectory of her chess career, beg this conclusion. By knocking at the door, Judit proved that a woman could become World Champion. Whether she could do it while being the primary parent to young children, is an open question. Men have always had the luxury of being able to father children and still immerse themselves completely in their careers. I consider myself a social progressive. Actively involved in co-parenting my daughter, I spend many more hours with her than anyone I knew in my father's generation. Still, I thank my lucky stars that my wife Rhonda is such a devoted mother. I've come to feel that there really are hormonal and temperamental differences which allow women to more deeply immerse themselves in being fully available, for long periods of time, to young children. Without question, my wife and countless other women are able to do this, while still having remarkable, valid and even brilliant work careers. But becoming World Chess Champion is a task of a different order. I would be delighted to be proven wrong on this point, but time will tell.

It would be deeply misguided, however, to imply that having children ended JP's chess greatness. After her return to competitive chess in 2005, she continued to play at a very high level, scoring many beautiful victories. Her talent and love of chess were unabated, although she never recaptured her contender's form of 2003. Judit relates that invitations to elite tournaments declined, and regardless of talent one cannot viably compete for the crown without regularly battling the world's best. In 2007 she competed in the Candidates cycle for the World Championship, losing a close match to Bareev, a player she had previously dominated 7-2. Such results are demoralizing, and it must have dawned on Judit about this time that her championship hopes were fading. At the same time, being released from the grind of the championship circuit allowed JP to indulge

more freely in her love of interesting chess. Flashes of her brilliance could still be seen until Judit Polgar finally announced her retirement from competitive chess in 2014.

By all accounts, Judit’s personal qualities are as remarkable as her play. Tolnai comments on her humility and openness to others, in contrast to the huge egos and sour personalities of many top players. This winning attitude comes through in her writing. As a player she was a ruthless fighter, but away from the board she was remarkably humble and generous toward her opponents.

Judit Polgar shattered the gender barrier, proving that a woman could compete and win at the very highest levels. For her, this was only an afterthought. Along with other all-time great chess artists like Bronstein and Kortschnoi, who fell just short winning it all, her ultimate contribution to chess is the timeless beauty of her games, so we turn our attention to this.

What ardent chess player wouldn’t dream of writing a book about the legendary Ms. Polgar? Her games are a virtual playground of dazzling combinations and ideas. But the enviable task comes with a challenge: how to write something fresh and different, about such a well-known public figure? Having no interest in redundancy, I strove to avoid the examples covered in her excellent memoir *Judit Polgar Teaches Chess* (Vols. 1-3). To do this I went back to the databases and pored through her whole tournament career, approaching 2000 games. Since even her lesser known gems have often appeared elsewhere, it was impossible to be completely original, and after the fact I found that many of the tactics I found also appeared in Tibor Tolnai’s *Chess Princess* (2004), or elsewhere. This induced me to strive even harder to explore as much new territory as possible, in both the analysis and presentation and of Judit’s wonderful oeuvre. I hope I’ve succeeded in this regard, and in the overarching quest to write an interesting, entertaining and approachable chess tribute.

I must express gratitude for the steady wisdom of New In Chess publisher Allard Hoogland. When I protested, ‘How can one write a book about the Beatles, without covering ‘Hey Jude’?’, he agreed, and we added a final chapter covering JP’s ‘greatest hits’. They are wondrous feats of chess art, and if this is your first in-depth look at Judit’s games you will not be left out in the cold.

Charles Hertan
Northampton, March 2018

CHAPTER 2

Sicilian Slayer

In her chess autobiography, Judit remarks that she was ‘born to play 1.e4’. More specifically, I would add that she was born to attack the Sicilian! Since the ascent of 1...c5 in the 1950’s to its modern status as the marquis master defense against the King’s Pawn Opening, combatting this many-headed monster is the key to success in chess. Anyone who has ever faced 1...c5 against strong opposition will nod in agreement. A well-known adage posits that ‘Sicilian endgames favor Black’. Like all aphorisms this may be exaggerated, but the basic concept is sound. White’s core Sicilian strategy is a kingside attack, and since Black usually castles kingside, this means attacking the king. Black’s natural plan is a queenside breakthrough using the open c-file along with the minority attack ...b5-b4. With reduced forces Black’s king is safer, but White’s queenside isn’t. Added to this challenge is the chameleon-like nature of Black’s numerous Sicilian formations, and the huge amount of theory and preparation required to combat them all! For these reasons generations of American juniors (Winston and Wilder being notable exceptions) declined to take the bull by the horns and master the open Sicilian, but against elite competition it’s hard to succeed this way.

Above all the reason for JP’s stellar anti-Sicilian play was this – her style coalesced perfectly with the right practical approach for White. This meant playing for the initiative at all costs, calculating deep variations, a willingness to sacrifice, and taking calculated risks to pose Black maximal defensive challenges. Her games reveal some consistent threads JP used to augment this general approach. From early on she was enchanted with the thematic pawn break g4-g5 followed by f5-f6. On a less conventional note, she grasped, perhaps better than anyone, the potential of trading bishop for knight in the service of maximizing the kingside initiative. Another important Sicilian precept regards the dark-squared bishop as White’s ‘positional linchpin’. Examples where Black rode this factor to victory are legion. Indeed, this general rule is so salient, that exchanging the ‘Sicilian bishop’ against a GM without full justification is nearly tantamount to resigning! But Judit had an uncanny knack for knowing exactly when to invoke a higher principle – better bishops don’t help much when you’re checkmated!

Incredibly, even at age 11 she displayed the preparation and elan, not just to hold her own against 1...c5, but to push formidable masters beyond their defensive limits.

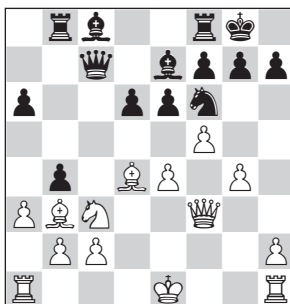
Game 24

Judit Polgar 2320

Peter Szekely 2420

Hastings 1988/89

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙c4 e6 7.♙b3 ♙e7 8.f4
0-0 9.♚f3 ♘c6 10.♙e3 ♚c7 11.f5 ♗xd4 12.♙xd4 b5 13.a3 ♖b8 14.g4 b4



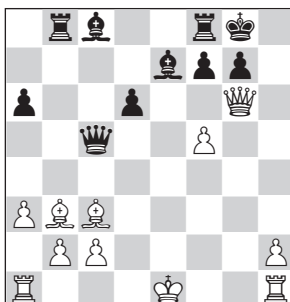
15.g5!?

White fights for every tempo and achieves her favorite f5-f6 break without delay. In Judit's realm, provoking a sea of complications is an added bonus!

14...♗d7?!

Already an inaccuracy.

- A) Not 15...bxc3?? 16.gxf6 ♙xf6 17.♙xf6 gxf6 18.♖g1+ ♔h8 19.♚g4;
- B) But 15...♗e8! is at least equal: 16.axb4 (the difference is 16.f6?! bxc3! 17.fxe7 ♚xe7) 16...♙xg5 (16...♖xb4 17.♙xg7 is unclear) 17.♖a4!? ♙d7 18.♖xa6 ♖xb4 19.♖a7 ♖b7;
- C) A more violent road to equality is 15...♗g4!? 16.♚xg4 bxc3 17.♙xc3 (17. bxc3 e5) 17...exf5 18.exf5 ♚c5 19.g6 hxg6 20.♚xg6



analysis diagram

20...♚e3+ 21.♔d1 ♚f3+ 22.♔d2 ♚f4+.

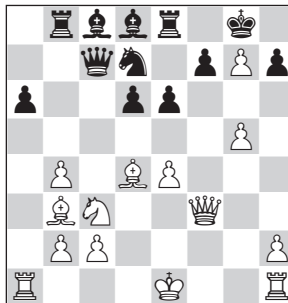
16.f6! bxc3?

The position is a minefield, and Black immediately steps on a shell.
Incredibly the last chance was 16...♙d8! with fascinating complications:



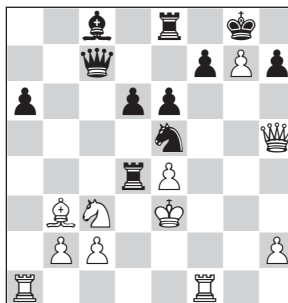
analysis diagram

17.fxg7 ♖e8 18.axb4 (18.♖f1 ♜e5 19.♙xe5 dxe5 20.axb4 ♙xg5=)



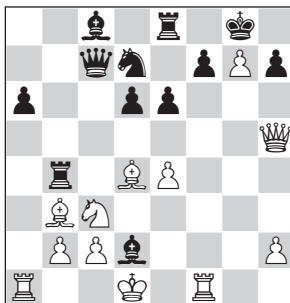
analysis diagram

A) Great complications arise from 18...♙xg5 19.♚h5 ♖xb4 20.♖f1!
(20.0-0? ♜e5 21.♙xe5 ♙e3+!=) 20...♙d2+:
A1) 21.♙xd2 ♖xd4+ 22.♙e3 ♜e5!



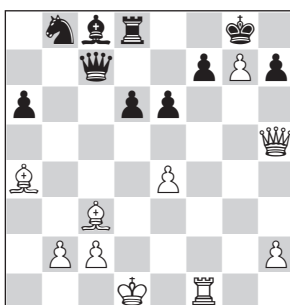
analysis diagram

23.♖xf7! (23.♙xd4?? ♚c5#) 23...♜xf7 24.♙xd4 ♚a7+ 25.♙d3 ♚f2 26.♚e2
♜e5+ 27.♙d2 ♜f3+ 28.♙c1 ♚xe2 29.♜xe2 ♜xh2 30.♙c4=(!);
A2) 21.♙d1



analysis diagram

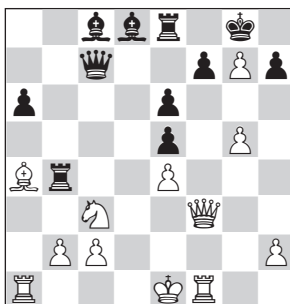
21...♖b8 (21...♙f4 22.♖xf4 ♗xd4+ 23.♙e2 ♘e5 24.♗h4 ♙xg7 25.♚h6+ ♙g8
 26.♗g1+ ♘g6 27.♚xh7+ ♙f8 28.♗xg6+-) 22.♗a4 ♙xc3 (22...♗xb3 23.♖c4
 ♚e7 24.♙xd2 ♗b7 25.♗f3 e5 26.♘d5+-) 23.♙xc3 ♗xa4 24.♙xa4 ♗d8



analysis diagram

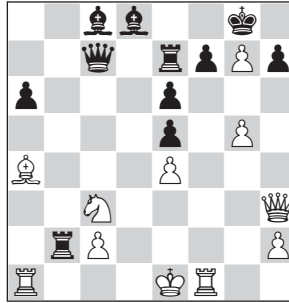
25.♙a5+-!

B) Back in the position after 18.axb4, Black needs to play 18...♗xb4 19.♗f1
 (19.♙f6±) 19...♘e5 20.♙xe5 dxe5 21.♙a4.



analysis diagram

Finally, the computer grants Black a playable position with 21...♗xa4!
 22.♗xa4 ♙xg5 23.♖c4 ♚e7, avoiding the pitfall 21...♗e7 22.♚h3!! ♗xb2?

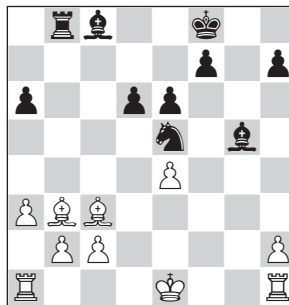


analysis diagram

23.g6! fxe6 24.0-0-0! ♖b8 25.♗xd8+ ♕xd8 26.♗f8+-.

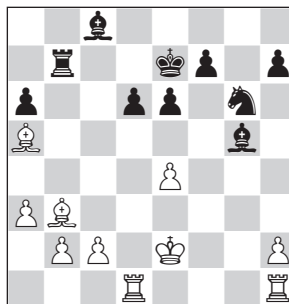
In practice Black missed the unlikely resource 16...♗d8, and was already busted. As Judit remarks about sharp Sicilian and King's Indian lines, one mistake may be your last.

17.fxe6 ♘e5 18.gxf8 ♕+ ♔xf8 19.♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 20.♗xc3 ♗xg5



It's still a tricky matter of technique, and young Judit acquits herself beautifully. Like Tal, her calculative wizardry served very well into the ending, and the bugaboo of winning won positions wasn't a major issue.

21.♗d1 ♔e7 22.♗a5 ♖b7 23.♔e2 ♘g6



24.h4!

This fine technical shot turns the slumbering h-pawn into a battering ram, opening lines for White's rooks. If Black takes, then 25. ♖b4 in conjunction with e4-e5 regains the h-pawn advantageously.

24... ♖f6 25.h5 ♗e5 26. ♖b4 ♜b6 27. ♜hg1 ♖b7 28. ♖a5 ♜xb3
28... ♜b5 29. ♖c7
29.cxb3 ♖xe4 30. ♖b4 ♖d5 31. ♜xd5! exd5 32. ♖c3 ♗e6 33.b4 d4 34. ♖xd4
♗f3 35. ♗xf3 ♖xd4 36. ♜g2 h6 37.a4 ♗d5 38. ♜c2 1-0

What's worse than fending off a furious Sicilian king hunt by a 12-year-old attacking dynamo nicknamed 'Tal in a skirt'? How about doing it at rapid or blitz time controls! Here a strong IM known for slashing attacks seems to be the one who is outplayed 'like a child':

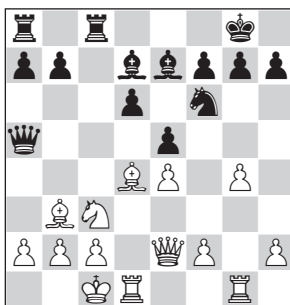
Game 25

Judit Polgar

Marcel Sisniega

Mazatlan rapid 1988

1.e4 c5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♗c3 d6 6. ♖c4 e6 7. ♖e3 ♖e7
8. ♗e2 ♗xd4 9. ♖xd4 ♗a5 10. ♖b3 0-0 11.0-0-0 ♖d7 12. ♜hg1 ♜fc8 13.g4 e5



14.g5!

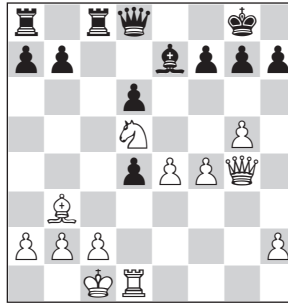
Again, the relentless striving for complications and initiative! Black anticipated the standard Sicilian counterpunch 14. ♖e3 ♜xc3! 15. ♖d2 (15. bxc3 ♗xe4) 15... ♖b5 16. ♗e1 ♜xc2+ 17. ♗xc2 ♗a6 with full compensation.

14... ♗e8?!

Active tries were more promising:

A) 14... exd4 15.gxf6 ♖xf6 16. ♗d5 ♗d8 17. ♗d2 ♜c5 18. ♗xf6+ (18. ♗h6 g6) 18... ♗xf6 19. ♗xd4±;

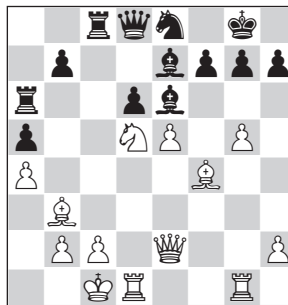
B) 14... ♗g4 15. ♜xg4 ♖xg4 16. ♗xg4 exd4 17. ♗d5 ♗d8 (17... ♖f8?? 18. ♗h5+--) 18.f4±



analysis diagram

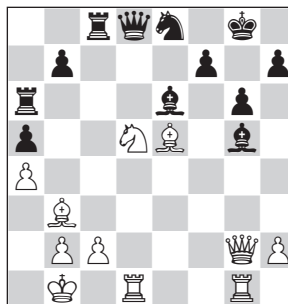
White's ♖+♗ outweigh a rook, and her unopposed ♙ is a strong attacker. In general, Black's challenge in these lines is heightened by a realistic fear: the sharpest try may land him in prepared analysis, with fatal consequences. By keeping Black on the razor's edge 'a la Tal', Judit consistently exploits this psychological advantage.

15. ♘d5 ♙d8 16. ♙e3± ♙e6 17. f4 exf4 18. ♙xf4 a5?! 19. a4 ♖a6 20. e5



20... ♖a6

Black is positionally worse and under siege – a dire situation. If 20...dxe5 21. ♙xe5! (not 21. ♘f6+? ♙xf6 22. ♖xd8 ♙xd8, dissipating the attack) 21... ♙xg5+ (21... ♙xd5 22. ♙xd5 ♙xg5+ 23. ♖b1 ♙e7 24. ♙b5! and White can switch to exploiting her two ♙'s) 22. ♖b1 g6 23. ♙g2,



analysis diagram

with ♘f4 looming, the engine proclaims Black's goose cooked.

21.c3

21.♖b1

21...♙f5?!

Essential now was 21...dxe5 22.♙xe5 ♙d6 23.♙e4±.

22.exd6 ♙f8

22...♙xd6 23.♙xd6 ♖xd6 24.♘e7+



As the old wisecrack postulates, Black's miserable position compensates his pawn disadvantage.

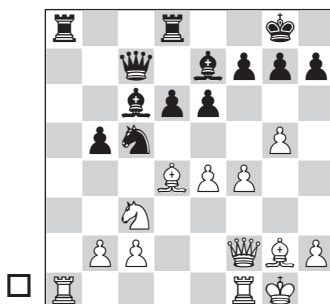
23.♘e7+ ♙xe7 24.♙xe7 ♙g6 25.♖ge1 ♙xe7 26.♖xe7 ♙f8 27.♖xb7 1-0

Game 26

Judit Polgar 2320

Diane Savereide 2250

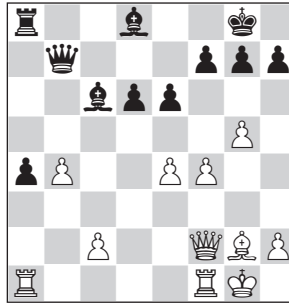
Thessaloniki ol W 1988 (13)



Like all great attackers, JP preferred what the Soviet School called 'concrete play', using forcing lines to provoke a crisis. Her creativity often led to original decisions:

21.b4!? ♘d7

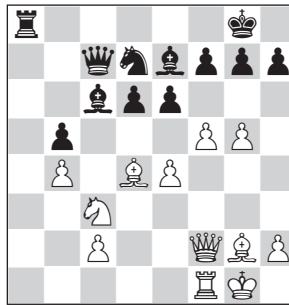
21...♘a4!? 22.♘xa4 bxa4 23.♙b6 ♙b7 24.♙xd8 ♙xd8! was an interesting road to dynamic equality.



analysis diagram

Instead came

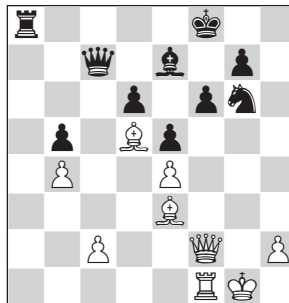
22. ♖xa8 ♜xa8 23.f5!



The former US Women's Champ avoids the trap 23... ♙xg5?? 24.fxe6 ♜e5 (24...fxe6 25. ♖f7+ ♜h8 26. ♙xg7#) 25. ♙xe5 dxe5 26.exf7+ ♜f8 27. ♖f5+–, but misses JP's novel idea.

23...exf5?!

Black could thread her way to equality with 23...e5! 24. ♙e3 (24.f6 exd4 25.fxe7 ♜e5) 24...f6 25.g6 hxg6 26.fxg6 ♜f8 27. ♙h3 and now the accurate 27... ♖a3, but not 27... ♜xg6?? 28. ♙e6+ ♜f8 29. ♜d5 ♙xd5 30. ♙xd5,

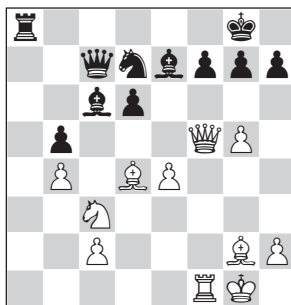


analysis diagram

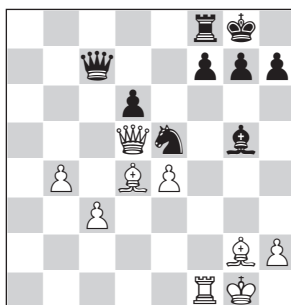
when the maneuver ♖f2-f5-e6 is crushing.

24. ♖xf5!

An unusual double attack steals the initiative.

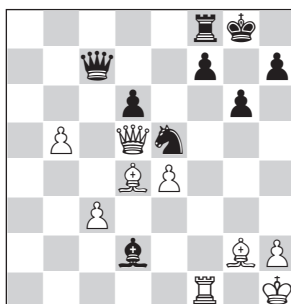


24...♖f8 25.♗xb5 ♘xb5 26.♙xb5 ♗e5 27.c3 ♘g5 28.♙d5



The critical position. Black needs her knight on c4 to contain the b-pawn, so 28...h6, defending the ♘, is required: 29.b5 ♗c4 with reasonable defensive chances (if 29.♘xe5 dxe5 White's connectors are vulnerable, e.g. 30.c4 ♙b6+).

28...g6? 29.b5! ♘d2 30.♙h1!



Now the ♘ is loose after 30...♗c4 31.b6! (or 30...♘xc3 31.♖c1), so the passer rolls.

30...♙c4 31.♙xd6 1-0

Young stars of the Computer Era may overlook the profound influence Bobby Fischer cast over chess theory in the late 20th century. It certainly wasn't lost on Garry Kasparov, who in a sense was Fischer's star disciple.

Both players were uncompromising warriors, playing to win virtually every game with either color. Among modern champions only Tal had done so to the same extent, but he was also a gambler and a chess showman, willing to roll the dice and rely on his wits and ingenuity to outscore the field.

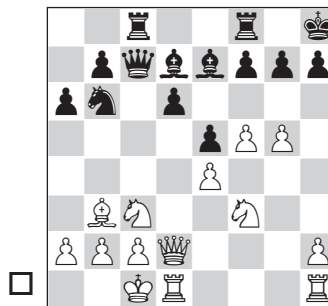
By contrast, Fischer and Kasparov were chess scientists, marrying Tal's relentless aggression to otherworldly scientific preparation and discipline. As we noted in the Introduction, both players showed unprecedented ability to surf on the wave's edge of correctness, while almost never spilling over into unsoundness. When asked about his philosophy Fischer famously quipped 'I believe in strong moves'; and it's no accident that Kasparov considered Bobby to be more ahead of his rivals than any other champion (though some students of chess history might bestow this laurel on the other American champion, Paul Morphy). While Judit played more in the spirit of Tal and Bronstein, Fischer, who later became a Polgar family friend, undeniably influenced her early play. You can detect it for instance in her incisiveness in sharp endgames, and her initial choice of Fischer's favorite Sozin Variation to play for mate against the Sicilian:

Game 27

Judit Polgar

Isabelle Kientzler-Guerlain 1915

Rio Gallegos Wch U16 W 1986 (10)



19.f6!?

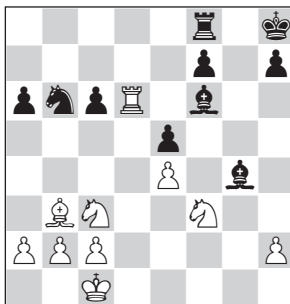
Her signature lever!

19...gxf6 20.gxf6 ♕xf6 21. ♖xd6

Like Fischer, JP had no qualms about carrying the initiative into an ending or a queenless middlegame – an objective approach almost unheard of in a 10-year-old attacker!

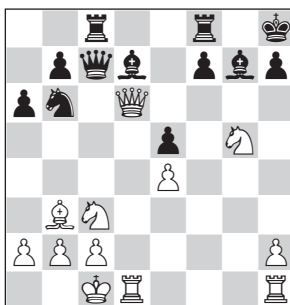
21...♗g7

White has a small but pleasant advantage after 21...♖xd6 22. ♖xd6 ♖c6 23. ♖hd1 ♗g4 24. ♖xc6 bxc6 25. ♖d6! (see analysis diagram overleaf).



analysis diagram

22. ♘g5



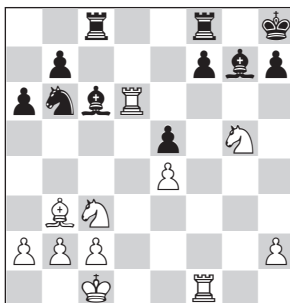
22... ♔c6?!

Forced was 22... ♔e8!, but White keeps a nice attack with the paradoxical 23. ♖d3 ♔h6 24. ♖e3!.

23. ♖hf1± ♗xd6

Now 23... ♔e8 24. ♘xf7+ ♔xf7 25. ♖xf7 ♖xf7 26. ♔xf7 ♗xf7 27. ♖xb6 is practically winning.

24. ♖xd6



f7 is indefensible, and the massacre is on.

24... h6 25. ♘xf7+ ♔h7 26. ♔e6 ♖c7 27. ♔f5+ ♔g8 28. ♘xh6+ ♔h8 29. ♘g4 ♘c4 30. ♖d3 ♔e8 31. ♖h3+ ♔g8 32. ♘d5 ♖d7 33. ♔e6+ ♖df7 34. ♘e7#