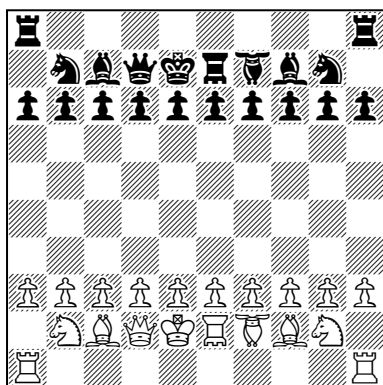


GRAND CHESS

I am not a great enthusiast for games whose main difference from orthodox chess lies in the addition of knight power to rook or bishop, and those who enjoy such games may feel that they have been rather under-represented in recent issues of *VC*. But a recent browse through David Pritchard's copies of *Nost-algia* drew my attention to a "first Cyberspace Grand Chess World Championship" held in 1998, which included two fine wins by R. Wayne Schmittberger. It seemed to me that they were well worth reproducing here, and perhaps this will help to restore the balance.

Grand Chess is a Christiaan Freeling game featuring Marshall (R+N) and Cardinal (B+N) :



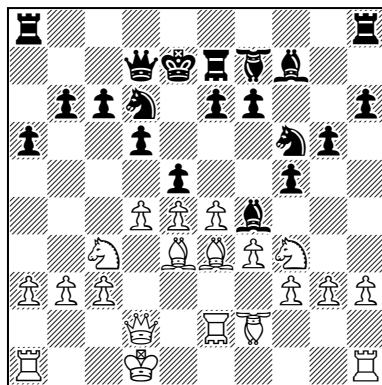
Pawns promote optionally on ranks 8 and 9 and compulsorily on rank 10, but only to replace a piece already captured; if no replacement piece is available, a move to the tenth rank is illegal. Normal pawn-two with *en passant*; no castling.

Wayne Schmittberger was White in the first game. Notes in quotation marks are by him.

1 e3-e5

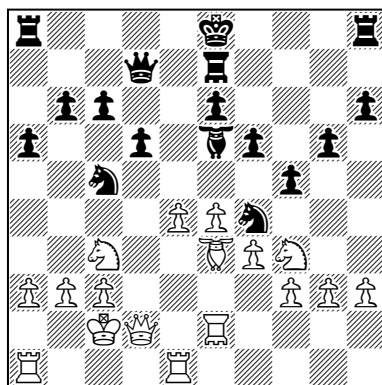
The men on files a-e are the same as in orthodox chess, so that these moves at least have a familiar feel.

- 1 ... i8-i7
- 2 f3-f5 h8-h6
- 3 Nb2-c4 Ni9-h7
- 4 d3-d5 d8-d7
- 5 g3-g4 Bc9-g5
- 6 Bh2-f4 Nb9-d8
- 7 Ni2-h4 e8-e6
- 8 Bc2-e4 a8-a7
- 9 Ke2-d1



This is effectively going to be part of 0-0 by hand, and I wonder whether it might not have been worth borrowing an idea from Paul Byway's Modern Courier Chess (and from several older games) and allowing an unmoved king a double move.

- 9 ... Bg5xf4
- 10 Cg2xf4 Nh7-g5
- 11 Be4-g2 g8-g7
- 12 Kd1-c2 e6xd5
- 13 Bg2xd5 Bh9xd5
- 14 Cf4xd5 Cg9-f7
- 15 Cd5-f4 Nd8-c6
- 16 Rj1-e1 Ke9-f10



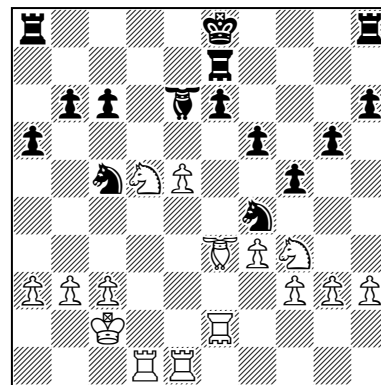
Black's position does not seem too bad, but as we shall see he has left his king in the centre just a little too long.

17 e5-e6 d7xe6

With hindsight, ...Ce8 or even ...Ce9 might have been better, since after the exchange of queens White's second rook will occupy the d-file with gain of tempo.

- 18 Qd2xd9 Mf9xd9
- 19 Ra1-d1 Md9-f9
- 20 f5xe6 Cf7-e8
- 21 Nc4-d6

"The start of an overwhelming cavalry charge involving all four of my Knight-moving pieces."



- 21 ... Ce8-f6
- 22 Cf4-g6

White despises the mere capture of the pawn on c8, and goes for the jugular. The immediate threat is Ne8+ forking K and C, and if

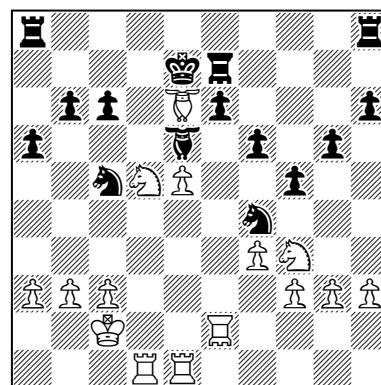
22 ... Cf6-e7

to avoid this then

23 Cf6-e8+

forks K and M instead.

23 ... Kf10-e9



24 Nh4-g6

Again adding to the pressure rather than taking material at once. Black's game is resignable, but he keeps going for a few more moves.

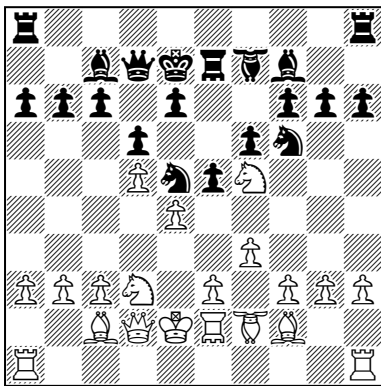
- 24 ... Ce7-d8
- 25 Ce8xf9 Cd8xf9
- 26 Nd6xc8+ Ke9-f10
- 27 Mf2xf8 Kf10-g9
- 28 Rd1-d9

and Black did resign. The elementary textbooks of my youth would have tut-tutted over his unmoved rooks.

The reverse game was described by John McCallion as "My favorite game. After White sacrifices a pawn to gain the advantage of two Bishops, Black follows a Steinitzian pattern of play, returns the pawn at an opportune moment and, in an exciting ending

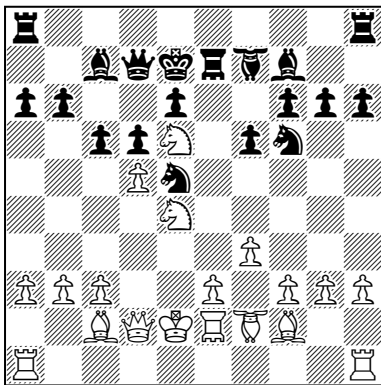
with White one move away from crushing his King, delivers mate. A game worthy of a World Championship which will surely become a classic!”

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 1 | d3-d5 | f8-f6 |
| 2 | Nb2-c4 | Ni9-h7 |
| 3 | Ni2-h4 | g8-g7 |
| 4 | g3-g4 | Nb9-c7 |
| 5 | d5-d6 | Nc7-e6 |
| 6 | e3-e5 | d8-d7 |
| 7 | Nh4-g6 | |



“A complete surprise” (RWS, as are subsequent quotations), and my own instincts would certainly have been to give higher priority to development and king safety. White has already moved his knight on g6 twice, contrary to normal tenets, and that on d3 will have to move again if his bishop is to have any scope. As for the king, its natural home would seem to be on c2 or b2 behind unmoved pawns, so a natural K-side development for White would seem to be Pd3 up, Nb2 to c4, Bc2 out, and K to c2 or beyond.

- | | | |
|---|--------|-------|
| 7 | ... | f6xe5 |
| 8 | Nc4xe5 | c8-c7 |
| 9 | Ng6-e7 | |



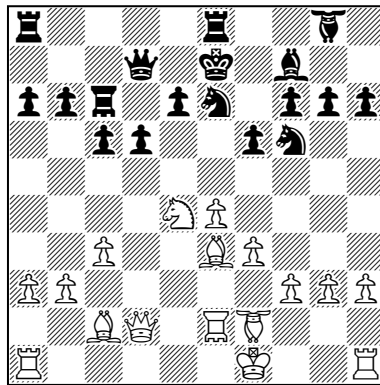
“Another surprise: either a ‘!’ or ‘?!’ move, but I am not sure which.” On

the larger Grand Chess board, “having the two bishops” is likely to be even more advantageous than in ordinary chess, but whether it is worth a full pawn is perhaps another matter.

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|----|--------|--------|
| 9 | ... | Bc9xe7 |
| 10 | d6xe7 | Mf9xe7 |
| 11 | Ke2-f1 | |

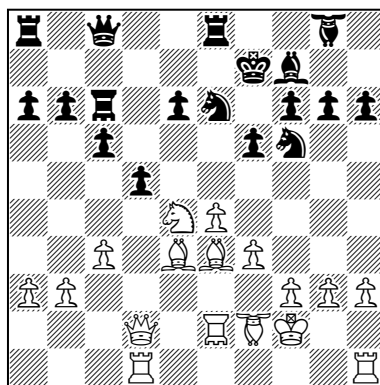
White’s K-side being compromised, he takes his king to the other wing, but we shall see that it is not really safe there either.

- | | | |
|----|--------|----------|
| 11 | ... | Me7-c8 |
| 12 | Kf1-g1 | Ne6-f8 |
| 13 | f3-f5 | Rj10-f10 |
| 14 | Bh2-f4 | Cg9-i10 |
| 15 | c3-c4 | Ke9-f9 |



“Embarking on a ‘safety first’ plan and hoping eventually to neutralize White’s Bishop pair and use my extra pawn in the ending.”

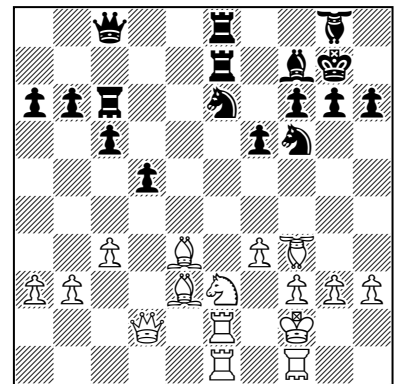
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|----|--------|---------|
| 16 | Bc2-e4 | Kf9-g9 |
| 17 | Kg1-h2 | d7-d6 |
| 18 | Ra1-d1 | Qd9-c10 |



“This proves to be a very good square for the Queen: it operates effectively here for the next 23 moves!”

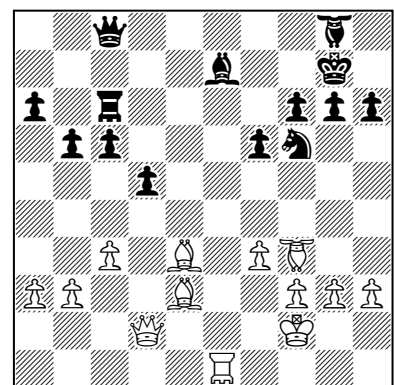
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|----|--------|---------|
| 19 | Ne5-f3 | e8-e6 |
| 20 | f5xe6 | Nf8xe6 |
| 21 | Bf4-e3 | Ra10-a9 |
| 22 | Cg2-h4 | Ne6-f8 |

- | | | |
|----|--------|---------|
| 23 | Rj1-f1 | Ra9-f9 |
| 24 | Mf2-h1 | Kg9-h10 |
| 25 | Rf1-f2 | Kh10-i9 |
| 26 | Rd1-f1 | |



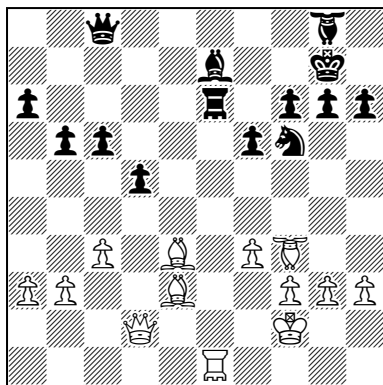
Development is essentially complete, and both sides have set out their stalls for the next phase. We may notice, however, that whereas White’s king’s position is a little loose, with the open f-file perilously close, Black’s is tight and well organized, with the knight on h7 holding things together just like a knight on f6 in ordinary chess.

- | | | |
|----|---------|---------|
| 26 | ... | b8-b7 |
| 27 | Nf3-g5 | Bh9-g8 |
| 28 | Ng5xh7+ | Nf8xh7 |
| 29 | Rf2xf9+ | Rf10xf9 |
| 30 | Rf1xf9+ | Bg8xf9 |
| 31 | Mh1-f1 | |

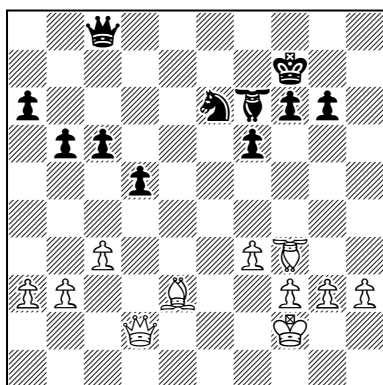


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|----|-----|--------|
| 31 | ... | Mc8-f8 |
|----|-----|--------|

“It has been hard to find safe squares for my Marshall because of White’s Bishop pair and well-posted Cardinal. Passive moves are bound to be bad. This costs my j pawn but I get lots of compensation: Marshalls off the board, one of the Bishops traded and, most importantly, activity for my Cardinal to support the advance of my d pawn while menacing the White King.”



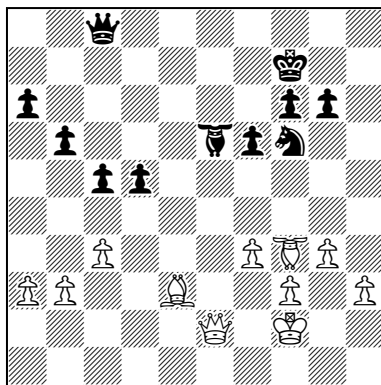
32 Mf1xf8 Nh7xf8
 33 Be4-d5 Bf9-g8
 34 Bd5xg8 Ci10xg8
 35 Be3xj8+ Ki9-h9
 36 Bj8-e3



We are now down to the endgame. White has bishop for knight, but in all other respects the position would seem to favour Black. Black's half-passed pawn is well advanced, White's is sadly backward; White's king's position is still a little loose, Black's is relatively secure (his knight will soon return to its excellent station at h7); and Black's advanced pawn is distant from White's king, so that he has two widely separated points of attack which White may be hard pressed to counter.

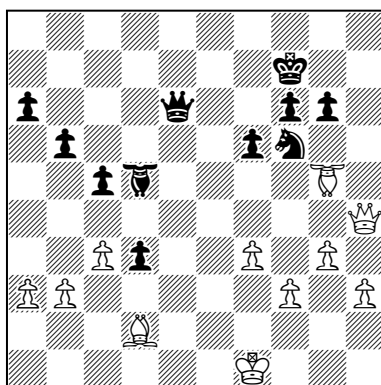
Particularly important is the relative looseness of White's king's position. Endings in ordinary chess tend to be all about position and material, the occasional mate being a tactical surprise rather than a primary objective of play. Here, the power of Q+C working together means that mate can be an objective even with so few men left.

36 ... Cg8-f7
 37 Qd2-f2 Nf8-h7
 38 i3-i4 c7-c6



39 Qf2-f5
 "Starting an assault that just falls short, but I had already won our other game and White was in no mood to try the passive defence of blockading my d pawn." In truth, I suspect that White's attack was largely a matter of desperation (I would not expect an attack with pieces alone to break down a solid defensive position such as Black has here), but a sustained defence after Black's ...d5 would have been long, difficult, and almost certainly unsuccessful.

39 ... d6-d5
 40 Qf5-j5 Kh9-i9
 41 Ch4-i6 Cf7-d6+
 42 Kh2-g1 Qc10-e8
 43 Be3-j8+ Ki9-h9
 44 Bj8-d2 d5-d4



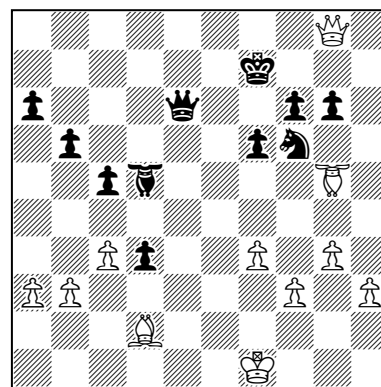
No doubt White had been hoping for 44...Ki9 45 Bj8+ with a draw by repetition, but Black has calculated that White's checks will soon run out. His threat is not so much 45...d3M (not Q, because promotion is possible only to a piece that is currently off the board) as 45...Qe3+ 46 Bxe3 dxe3Q+ (possible now), winning a piece with check and in fact forcing mate in three (47 Kf1 Cg3+ 48 Kg2 Qf2 mate, or 47 Kg2 Qe2+ 48 Kg1 Qh2+ 49 Kf1

Cg3 mate, or 47 Kh1 Cg3+ 48 Kg2 Qf2 mate). Passive defence is clearly useless (45 Qf5 may perhaps avoid the immediate mate, but after 45...Cxf5 46 fxe5 Qe3+ 47 Bxe3 dxe3Q+ the piece is again lost and the helpless pawns on the left-hand side will soon follow), and White tries the checks for lack of better alternative.

45 Qj5-j9+ Kh9-g8

Not of course 45...Ni9, when White has 46 Cj8+ and the knight will be captured with check.

46 Qj9-i10+ Kg8-g9



47 Qi10xi8

47 Qj9+ Kf8 would have left White with no further check (and we notice that the knight on h7 has performed one final service by preventing 47 Qi9+). White can now meet 47...d3M by 48 Cxh7+, but of course this was not Black's primary threat.

47 ... Qe8-e3+
 48 Bd2xe3 d4xe3Q+

and White **resigned** because of the mate in three which we saw in the note to move 44.

To some extent, the "exciting ending" may have been illusory, because I imagine that Black had calculated through to 47 Qj9+ Kf8 before playing 44...d4, but it was still an impressive performance.

Large-board variants can play slowly because the two armies start a long way apart. Grand Chess, with the main armies on ranks 2 and 3, the back rank left clear for the rooks (shades of Thai Chess), and pawn promotion on rank 8, tackles this problem in an imaginative and intelligent manner. It is perhaps as good as any of the added-knight-power games, and is certainly better than most.