

The Sinquefield Chess Generation

Young Guns at Work!

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Managing Editor: Romain Edouard

Assistant Editor: Daniël Vanheirzeele

Typesetting: Mark Haast

Proofreading: Kai Tan

Software: Hub van de Laar

Cover Design: Iwan Kerkhof

Graphic Artist: Philippe Tonnard

Photos: Lennart Ootes

Drawings: Simon de Kerchove

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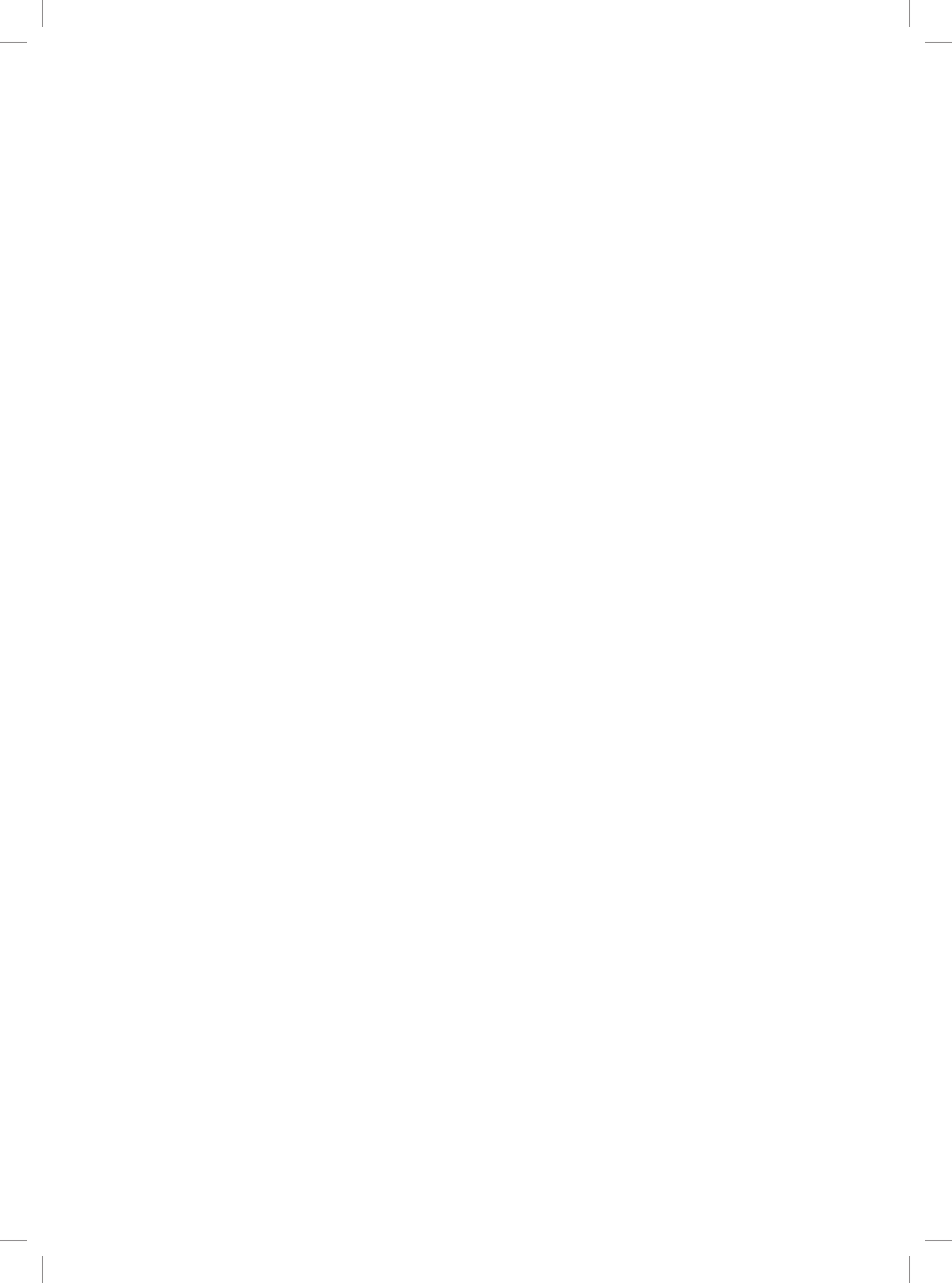
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Young Guns at Work!

Alex Colovic

Thinkers Publishing 2021





To my family

Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⊙	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
▷	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

Table of Contents

Key to Symbols	6
Preface	8
Chapter 1 – Andrew Tang.....	11
Chapter 2 – Jeffery Xiong	55
Chapter 3 – Samuel Sevian.....	91
Chapter 4 – Akshat Chandra.....	115
Chapter 5 – Awonder Liang.....	183
Chapter 6 – John Burke	225
The Rest of the World	275

Preface

“You should write a book,” he said.

It was December 2018 and Josip Asik, Dusan Krunic and I were sitting in one of Skopje's restaurants waiting for our food to arrive. Then Josip spoke. I still wonder if he would have suggested it had the food come a moment earlier.

Josip and Dusan are my dear friends. Our cooperation started many years ago when they asked me to write for Sahovski Informator (Chess Informant) and after that, for British Chess Magazine. Then they moved to conquer America by revamping the American Chess Magazine and this is how the concept of the book came about.

The idea was to write about the best players in the USA born at the turn of the century. These players grew and blossomed thanks to the continuous and generous support by the world's biggest chess patron, Rex Sinquefield, and the Saint Louis Chess Club. Their success changed the scenery of American chess, set new standards and propelled the country as the promised land for new talents.

While we were discussing the idea of the book, now over some good food, I remembered that I had always liked to analyze players' styles and preferences as Botvinnik did in his preparations. When his secret notebooks were published, I was fascinated with how he managed to extract precise characteristics based on concrete examples. As a matter of fact, Botvinnik also called these analyses “characteristics”. Here is an example of what he thought about Tal's play prior to the match in 1960 (my translation from Russian from the book “Botvinnik – Tal, Return Match”): “The general tendency – to obtain positional advantage by lively play rather than long maneuvering”.

Has Botvinnik's way of analysis become a lost art? Now I had a chance to do it myself.

By the time dessert came, we had agreed on the concept. Some days later, I realized with horror the enormity of the task that I had taken upon for myself.

It took me a year and a half to complete the analytical work.

To write proper “characteristics”, I had to go over hundreds of games of each player. I wanted to learn what they liked and disliked, how they reacted in different situations, what was their preferred way of playing, how they handled themselves. During the first “scan”, I went relatively quickly over the games, writing down the impression from each game. This is what Botvinnik did when analyzing Bronstein's play before their match in 1951. I continued with the scan until the moment when I felt that I had “understood” the player. Then I returned to the games that were most relevant for their “characteristics” and I analyzed them deeply.

The main difficulty was that sometimes, the initial impression of a “characteristic” based on a game was not exactly what I thought it was, as the deeper analysis unearthed details that changed the picture. In such cases, I had to discard those examples and either look for others, or to conclude that the “characteristic” was not clear enough to form part of the player's profile.

Most of the players in this book turned 20 in 2020. I intended to analyze their styles while they were still juniors and therefore, the latest games I consulted were from early 2020.

I was absorbed by Botvinnik's analysis, but nobody writes like that today. In the words of Toni Morrison: “If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it”.

That is how this book has come into existence.

Alex Colovic
Skopje, 9 March 2021

Editorial note: A very special thanks to the wonderful ACM team Josip Asik and Dusan Kronic. Without their help we could never have pulled this one off.



Chapter 1



Andrew Tang




Biographical information

Andrew Tang (born November 29, 1999) is an American Grandmaster. He was awarded the title Grandmaster in 2018. He is known online for his bullet, hyper bullet, and ultra-bullet (one-minute, 30-second, and 15-second chess, respectively) skills. Andrew also competed in the 2021 Bullet Chess Championship where he competed against Nihal Sarin, Daniel Naroditsky and Alireza Firouzja. He finished in second place. Tang streams chess live on Twitch, preferring fast bullet chess games of 15, 30, or 60-second chess with no increment. He is currently rated at 2525.

Andrew Tang's style is based on a sound positional basis. This preference for positional play is also manifested in his opening repertoire. One of his main choices with White is the London System, an opening where White obtains a solid center and harmonious development. His preference for the Sämisch Variation against the King's Indian indicates the same, as there, White obtains a well-protected pawn center with good piece development behind it. With Black, his choices are the Queen's Gambit Declined and the Ruy Lopez, again going for solid positions and smooth development.

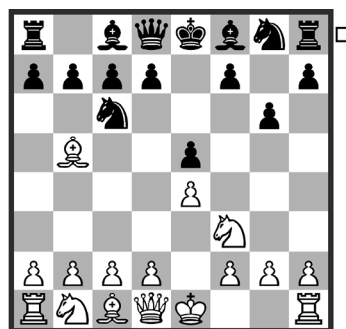
With such classical inclinations, it is not surprising that Tang has a very good understanding and technique. Here is an example where he outplays his opponent positionally and then follows up with a precise tactical finish.

Game 1

 Brodsky, David (2479)
 Tang, Andrew (2521)
 Charlotte 2020

1. e4 e5 2.  f3  c6 3.  b5 g6

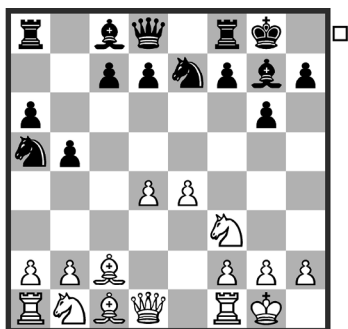
(see diagram on the right)



Position after: 3... g6

The Cozio Defense is one of Tang's favorite choices in the Ruy Lopez. He likes to fianchetto the dark-squared bishop, so he also has the Steinitz Deferred in his repertoire.

4. d4 exd4 5. c3 a6 6. ♖c4 ♗g7 7. cxd4 b5 8. ♖b3 ♞a5 9. ♖c2 ♞e7 10. 0-0-0



Position after: 10... 0-0

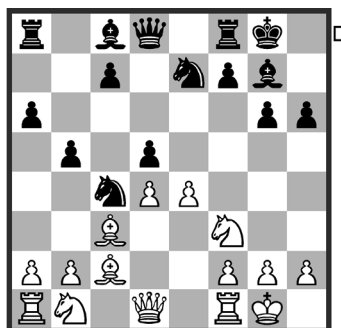
Black scores very well from this position. He has finished development unhindered and has good play against White's center.

11. ♗g5

After 11. ♖e1 d6 12. h3 c5, Black was already somewhat better and Tang outplayed Nepomniachtchi in a blitz game, although eventually, he blundered in a winning position and lost.

11... h6 12. ♗d2 ♞c4 13. ♗c3 d5

Counter-attacking the White center is one of the main ideas in the Cozio.

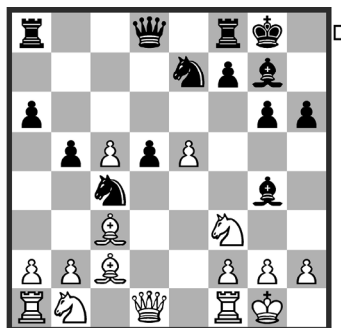


Position after: 13... d5

14. e5 c5 15. dxc5

15. b3 cxd4 16. ♗xd4 ♞a5 is very comfortable for Black as the knight from a5 will return to c6 to further pressurize the center.

15... ♗g4



Position after: 15... ♗g4

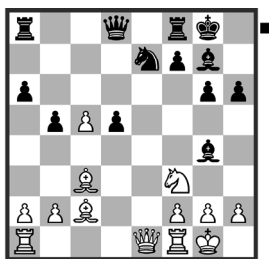
Black finishes development and thanks to this pin, attacks the pawn on e5.

16. h3?

White succumbs to the pressure of the pin.

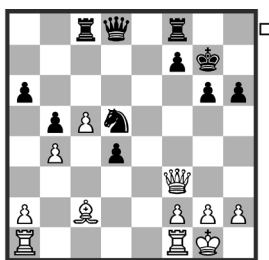
It was vital to finish development with 16. Nbd2 although White would have to navigate the complications after both replies.

A) 16... Nxe5 17. Qe1 getting away from the pin. 17... Nxf3+ 18. Nxf3



Position after: 18. Nxf3

18... d4 [18... Qxf3 doesn't spoil the structure as White has 19. Qxg7 Qxg7 20. Qc3+ d4 21. Qxf3 with an approximately equal position after 21... Rc8 22. b4 Nd5

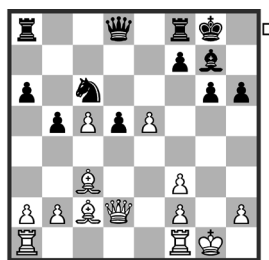


Position after: 22... Nd5

when the knight lands on c3 and is no worse than the bishop.] 19. Qxd4 [19. Nxd4 ? doesn't drop a piece but still loses; 19... b4 20. h3 bxc3 21. hxc4 Qxd4 22. Qxe7 cxb2 as the pawn on b2 is too strong.] 19... Qxd4 20. Nxd4 Qxd4 21. Qxe7 Rac8

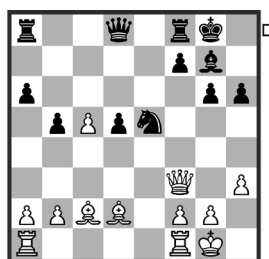
with ... Qc5 next, and the position is equal.

B) 16... Nxd2 leads to sharp play after 17. Qxd2 [17. Qxd2 is an alternative: 17... Qxf3 18. gxf3 Nc6



Position after: 18... Nc6

(threatening ... d4) 19. Rad1 Nxe5 20. Qxd5 Qxd5 21. Rxd5 Nxf3+ 22. Qg2 Qxc3 23. bxc3 Ng5 with an approximately equal endgame as the strong bishop compensates for the wrecked pawn structure] 17... Nc6 18. h3 Qxf3 19. Qxf3 Nxe5 .

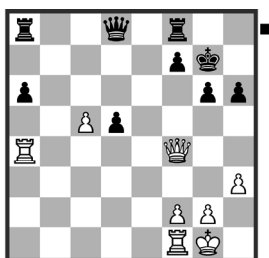


Position after: 19... Nxe5

B1) 20. Qg3 Nc4 21. Qf4 Threatening c6. 21... Rc8 22. b3! ? Qxa1 This is not forced, but it's critical to take the exchange. 23. Rxa1 Qf6 24. Rd1 Na3 25. Qd3 with good compensation for White in view of

Black's dark-squared weaknesses and the wayward knight on a3.

B2) 20. ♖f4 ♘c4 21. ♙c3 ♘xb2
22. ♙xg7 ♙xg7 23. a4 bxa4 24.
♙xa4 ♘xa4 25. ♖xa4



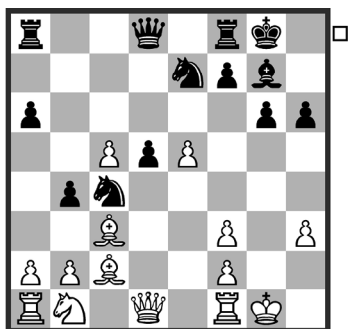
Position after: 25. ♖xa4

when White's activity should suffice for enough compensation.

16... ♙xf3 17. gxf3

17. ♖xf3 d4 18. ♖d1 [18. ♙d2 ♘xe5 leaves Black a pawn up with little compensation for White] 18... dxc3! is a relatively simple but effective combination.

17... b4!



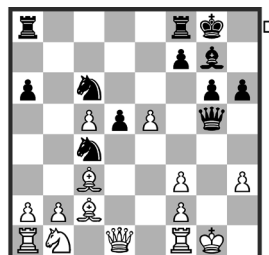
Position after: 17... b4!

Black's play in the remainder of the game is powerful and precise, quite typical for Tang's best games. The idea of this pawn sacrifice is to gain a tempo with ...♘c6 in order to liberate the h4-d8 diagonal for the queen.

18. ♙d4

White wants to avoid giving the tempo with ...♘c6 and intends to play f4 in order to prevent ...♖g5, but this doesn't help much.

18. ♙xb4 ♘c6 shows Black's idea. 19. ♙c3 ♖g5+



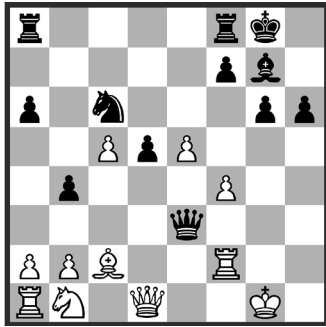
Position after: 19... ♖g5+

20. ♙h1 [20. ♙h2 d4 21. ♙d2 ♙xe5+ is even worse for White after 22. ♙h1 ♖h4 23. ♙g2 ♘e3+! 24. ♙xe3 dxe3 25. ♖e2 ♖f4 with a winning attack.] 20... d4 21. ♙d2 ♖h5 22. ♙g2 ♘xb2 23. ♖c1 ♘xe5 Threatening ...♖xf3+. 24. ♙e4 ♖ab8 with a winning position for Black.

18... ♘c6 19. f4 ♖h4

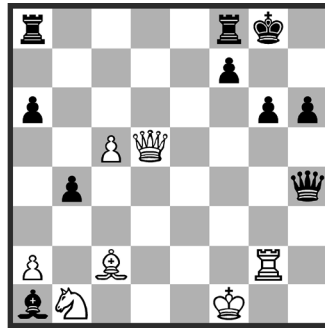
Everything falls apart for White. He cannot defend both f4 and h3.

20. ♖e3 ♞xe3 21. fxe3 ♔g3+ 22. ♔h1 ♚xh3+ 23. ♔g1 ♚xe3+ 24. ♖f2



Position after: 24. ♖f2

25. fxe5 ♞xe5 26. ♔d2 ♔g3+ 27. ♖g2 ♚h4 28. ♔f1 ♞xb2 29. ♚xd5 ♞xa1



Position after: 29... ♞xa1

24... ♞xe5

This allows White to give one check.

An easy sacrifice. Black collects a lot of pawns and White is still hampered with an undeveloped queenside.

30. ♖xg6+ ♔h8

0-1

In the next game, against another bright American hope, Tang outplays his young opponent convincingly.

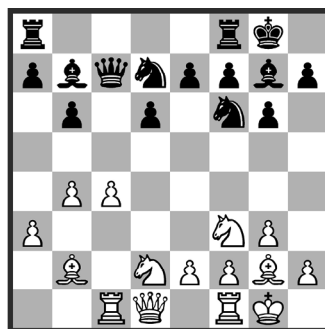
Game 2

♖ Tang, Andrew (2501)
 ♜ Yoo, Christopher Woojin (2414)
 ♁ Reykjavik 2019

3... c5 4. dxc5 ♔a5 5. a3 ♚xc5 6. b4 ♚c7 7. ♞b2 ♞g7 8. c4 d6 9. g3 b6 10. ♞g2 ♞b7 11. 0-0 0-0 12. ♖c1 ♞bd7

1. d4 ♞f6 2. ♞f3 g6 3. ♞bd2

A rare choice in Tang's repertoire, as usually he goes for the London System with 3. ♞f4.



Position after: 12... ♞bd7

Both sides have finished development and obtained good development. The position is balanced.

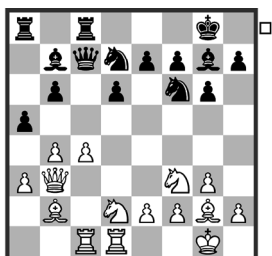
13. ♖b3

Tang continues to put his pieces on good squares.

13... ♜ac8

Black makes the typical hedgehog moves, but herein lies the danger in this position for Black – after both sides play the typical moves, White ends up better! This doesn't happen abruptly and Black definitely could have played better in the next several moves, but generally this means that the tendency here is in White's favor, so Black had to do something more concrete.

13... a5!? was more direct, starting queenside play immediately. This move also hides a small tactical detail if White continues in the same way as in the game: 14. ♜fd1 ♜fc8.

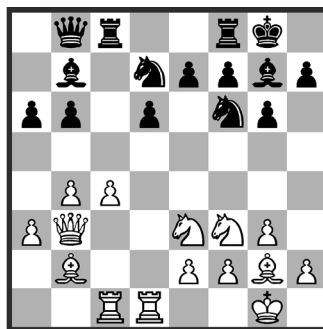


Position after: 14... ♜fc8

With the tension on the queenside and possible opening of the a-file, Black

naturally keeps the rook on a8. 15. ♘f1 ♙c6! This is the idea – Black threatens to take on b4 and play ...♙a4, winning the exchange. 16. ♜e1 e6 with a flexible position for Black.

14. ♜fd1 a6 15. ♘f1 ♖b8 16. ♘e3

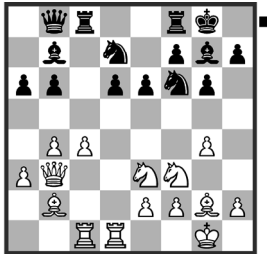


Position after: 16. ♘e3

16... b5

The typical counterplay on the queenside, but it also weakens the queenside.

A) 16... e6 was a more conservative approach. It covers the d5-square but weakens the d6-pawn. Still, it was possible to play like this. 17. g4 is a common idea from the similar-looking position from the double-fianchetto line of the English Opening. The difference is that here, the queen is on the queenside while in the English Opening, the queen is on the kingside on h4 [the tactical justification is that White cannot immediately take advantage of that, as after 17. ♖d3 ♜fd8 18. ♖xd6? ♖xd6 19. ♜xd6 ♘e4, Black wins material].



Position after: 17. g4

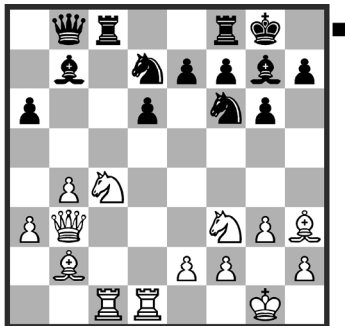
17... h6 18. h4 ♖fd8 19. g5 hxg5 20. hxg5 ♜h5 21. ♙xg7 ♚xg7 22. ♗b2+ e5 23. ♝c2 with unclear play.

B) 16... ♝c7!? (Δ... ♝fc8) 17. h4 ♝fc8 18. ♙h3 ♗a8 19. ♜h2 with the idea ♜hg4 and again, play is complex and with mutual chances.

17. ♙h3

Another typical idea borrowed from the above-mentioned line of the English Opening.

17... bxc4 18. ♜xc4



Position after: 18. ♜xc4

18... ♝c7?!

Black continues with the normal moves, moving away from the pin, but after White's next, he is under severe pressure.

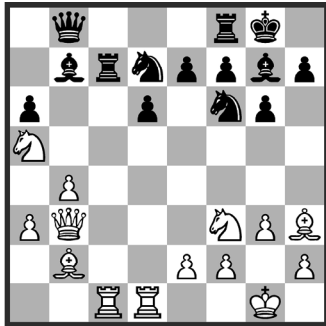
18... e6 was possible, although it's understandable that Black didn't want to play it – it looks too loose. 19. ♗d3 [19. ♜xd6? ♝xc1 20. ♙xc1 ♙d5 wins material for Black and even though after 21. ♝xd5 exd5 22. ♙f4, White has compensation, this is not what White wants to embark on from a position where he has solid and easy play.] 19... d5 [19... ♙d5 20. ♜fd2 is more pleasant for White, as Black always has to worry about the pawn on d6.]



Position after: 19... d5

This solves the problem with the d6-pawn, but White keeps the initiative after 20. ♜a5 ♜e4 21. ♙xg7 ♚xg7 22. ♜d2, thanks to his good central control and the queenside majority.

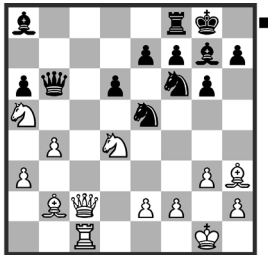
19. ♜a5



Position after: 19. ♖a5

19... ♜xc1

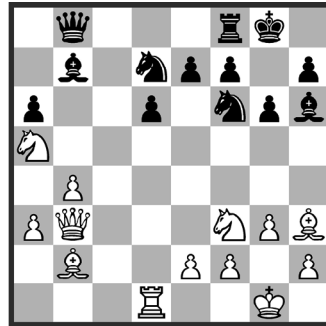
After 19... ♙a8 20. ♜xc7 ♚xc7 21. ♜c1, White has strong initiative on the queenside. 21... ♚b6 [21... ♚b8 is worse: 22. ♘c6 ♚e8 23. ♚e3 threatening both ♚xe7 and ♚a7.] 22. ♘d4 still targets the c6-square. 22... ♘e5 23. ♚c2



Position after: 23. ♚c2

and with ideas such as ♘dc6 or ♙g2 (in order to exchange one of the defenders of the c6-square), White threatens to overwhelm Black's queenside.

20. ♜xc1 ♙h6 21. ♜d1



Position after: 21. ♜d1

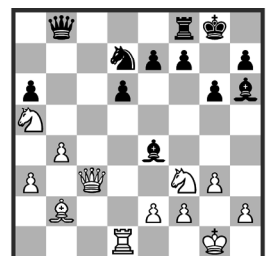
21... ♙e4

21... ♙a8 doesn't avoid the loss of the bishop pair after 22. ♚c4 ♚a7 23. ♘c6 ♙xc6 24. ♚xc6, with a practically winning position for White, as his bishops dominate the board while Black is stuck with the weak pawn on a6.

22. ♘d2

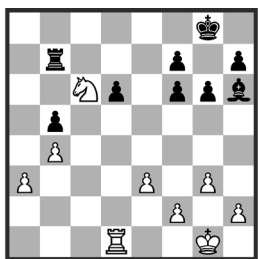
White was already spoilt for choice, but he characteristically chooses the more methodical option.

22. ♙xd7 was more concrete: 22... ♘xd7 23. ♚c3.



Position after: 23. ♚c3

A) 23... ♖f6 24. ♘c6 ♙xc6 25. ♚d3 ♚b5 24. ♚xb5 axb5 25. e3, ♚xc6 is winning for White as Black cannot successfully defend the pawn on a6 and prevent further damage to his position. For example: 25... ♚b5 26. ♚xb5 axb5 27. ♘d4 ♜b8 28. ♘c6 ♜b7 29. ♙xf6 exf6 30. e3



Position after: 30. e3

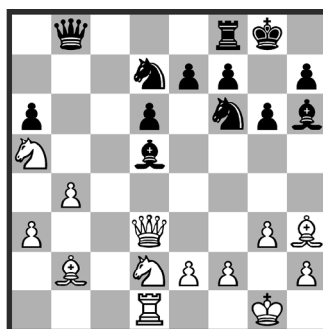
prevents ...♙c1, as now White wants to take on d6. White has a technically winning position here.

B) 23... ♘e5 24. ♘xe5 dxe5 25. ♘c6 Better than the capture on e5. [25. ♚xe5 ♚xe5 26. ♙xe5 ♜c8±] 25... ♚c7 [25... ♙xc6 26. ♚xc6 is hopeless for Black with his weakness on a6, passive pieces and damaged central structure. 26. ♚xe5 ♚xe5 27. ♘xe5 should be technically winning for White, although Black can try to put up resistance with the bishop pair.

22... ♙d5

22... ♙a8 was an alternative, although White keeps a big advantage after 23.

23. ♚d3



Position after: 23. ♚d3

White threatens both ♙xd7 and ♚xa6.

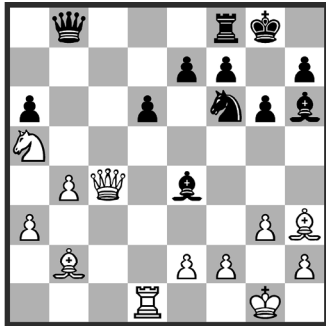
23... ♘c5

Probably Black has pinned his hopes on this move, but after White's calm retreat, he cannot keep the position together.

24. ♚c2 ♘ce4

24... ♘cd7 was no better. After 25. ♘c6 ♙xc6 26. ♚xc6, White has a winning position with the bishop pair, the weak pawn on a6 and Black's loose knights.

25. ♘xe4 ♙xe4 26. ♚c4



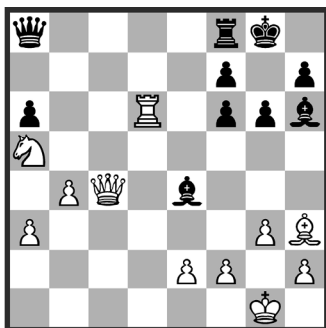
Position after: 26. ♔c4

Again threatening both the pawn on a6 and the bishop on e4 (after ♗xf6).

26... ♖a8

26... ♖b5 also loses after 27. ♗xf6 ♕xc4 28. ♘xc4 exf6 29. ♖xd6, winning another pawn.

27. ♗xf6 exf6 28. ♖xd6



Position after: 28. ♖xd6

White wins material and Black has nothing to show for it.

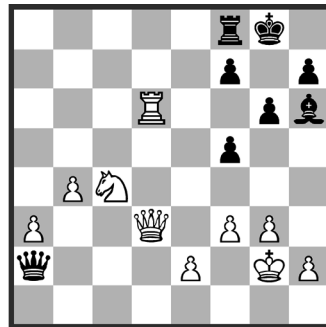
28... f5 29. ♖xa6 ♖e8 30. ♗g2

The bishop on h3 was doing nothing, so White exchanges it.

30... ♗xg2 31. ♔xg2 ♕e4+ 32. f3 ♕e5 33. ♖d3

A good, consolidating move.

33... ♖b2 34. ♘c4 ♖a2



Position after: 34... ♖a2

35. ♖d8

White wins in many ways. Tang chooses to simplify the position.

35... ♖xd8 36. ♖xd8+ ♗f8 37. ♖d3 ♖a1 38. f4

White secures the e5-square for the knight. Apart from being two pawns up, White can also play against the king, attacking the f7-pawn.

38... h5 39. ♘e5 h4 40. ♖d5 h3+ 41. ♔f2
1-0

Tang is very resilient in defense and dangerous in the counter-attack. In the game against the Italian Grandmaster below, Tang defends well and when his opponent oversteps the mark, he takes his chance and converts the advantage in the end-game flawlessly.

Game 3

♁ Brunello, Sabino (2566)
 ♀ Tang, Andrew (2475)
 🌐 Riga 2017

This line was popular in the 1970's, thanks to Korchnoi's efforts, but nowadays it is considered that Black can equalize against it.

11... ♔e7

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙e7

This was also Geller's choice in Game 5 of his Candidates match against Korchnoi in 1971.

Tang always chooses this move order in the Queen's Gambit Declined (QGD).

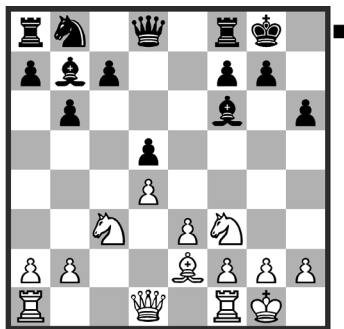
4. ♘f3 ♘f6 5. ♙g5 h6 6. ♙h4 0-0 7. e3 b6

11... ♘d7 is the main line, when after 12. b4 [in case of 12. ♔b3 c6, Black doesn't have to move the queen to e7] 12... c5 13. bxc5 bxc5, Black equalizes as shown in several games from the matches between Karpov and Kasparov.

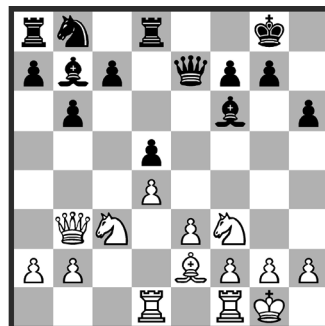
The Tartakower Variation is Tang's main defense against the 5. ♙g5 line of the QGD. It offers a solid and playable position that fits his preferences.

8. ♙e2 ♙b7 9. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 10. cxd5 exd5 11. 0-0

12. ♔b3 ♖d8 13. ♖ad1



Position after: 11. 0-0



Position after: 13. ♖ad1

13... c6