

Chapter Three

Modern Variation II: A Danish/Latvian Co-Production

Our Hero: Edvins Kengis

After our repertoire moves of the previous chapter (1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♗f3 dxe5) White usually recaptures with the knight. I'm not sure people play this because they think it's better than 5 dxe5; more likely they do it because "everybody does it" (as we saw in the last chapter, they don't!), or because 5 ♗xe5 is "supposed to be best", or perhaps because the pawn capture was never mentioned in books, so it had to be bad!

In any case, while you must be prepared for 5 dxe5 (and we saw in the last chapter that accurate Bagirov-style play should equalize), you will much more likely get 5 ♗xe5 – which is, I admit, objectively best – and if you play Anand, you will *definitely* get 5 ♗xe5.

What should we do with this horse

on our side of the board? One of the clearest strategical ideas for Black is to take advantage of the fact that the pawn wedge is gone: now a fianchettoed king's bishop has a serious diagonal, unblocked by a pawn from g7-d4, and hitting said horse on the way. This idea, invented by the great Dane Bent Larsen and refined by the Latvian GM Edvins Kengis (the variation now bears the latter's name) is the subject of this chapter.

From a repertoire standpoint, I am recommending *both* 5...g6 and 5...c6. This is not because I can't make up my mind, but rather that the two lines often transpose to one another (see Game 1) and other lines (see, for example, Game 64, note to move 6) can transpose back into them! So it's essen-

tially pointless to know Kengis but not Carlsen, or vice versa.

There are certain differences between the lines and I will address these in the notes to the specific games. One could specialize in playing either 5...g6 or 5...c6, based on these small differences – or switch back and forth to confuse your opponents!

Game 17

E.Jimenez Zerquera-B.Larsen
Palma de Mallorca 1967

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♗d5 3 ♗f3 d6 4 d4 dxе5

Larsen comments: “Theoreticians have called this move a mistake, because it brings the white knight to a good square. But it may be playable: the idea should be to win back the ‘lost’ tempo by exchange threats against the white knight.” A very modest statement – and yet there are now around 2000 games in the database with this line!

5 ♗xe5

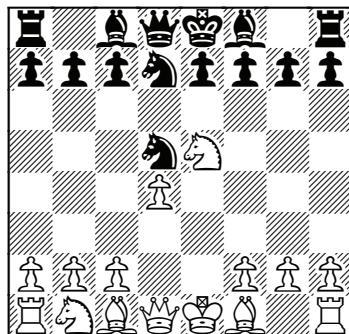
If 5 dxе5 then 5...♗g4!. Remember? Right, just checking!

5...g6

I like this and 5...c6, but a line I definitely *don't like* is the third most popular move, 5...♗d7.

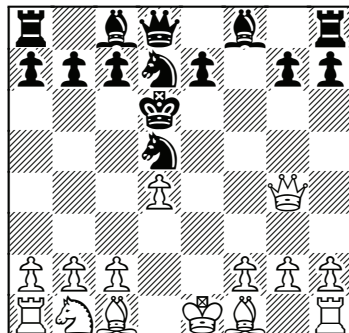
This was another Larsen novelty that he flung out vs. Tal, allowing the extremely dangerous 6 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 7 ♖h5+ when, as Tal said, the black king must go for a walk! Fearing prepared analysis, Tal avoided the sac and al-

most lost, but to me the whole line makes no practical sense. If you want to play this 5...♗d7, then you must spend hours and hours studying the insanely complicated and heavily booked-up sac on f7. After that, you have to deal with...



Disappointment: Your opponent doesn't want to play, and forces a draw: 6 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 7 ♖h5+ ♔e6 8 ♖g4+ ♔f7 9 ♖h5+ ♔e6 1/2-1/2 M.Golubev-M.Grunberg, Bucharest 2002.

Regret: You avoid said draw, and are crushed mercilessly: 6 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 7 ♖h5+ ♔e6 8 ♖g4+ ♔f7 9 ♖h5+ ♔e6 10 ♖g4+ ♔d6?



Alekhine Alert!

11 c4 ♖f6 12 ♖g3+ ♔e6 13 cxd5+ ♖xd5 14 ♖c3 ♖xd4 15 ♙e3 ♖b4 16 a3 ♖xb2 17 ♙c4+ ♔d7 18 ♗d1+ ♔e8 19 ♖b5 1-0 R.J.Fischer-B.Larsen, Santa Monica (free game) 1966.

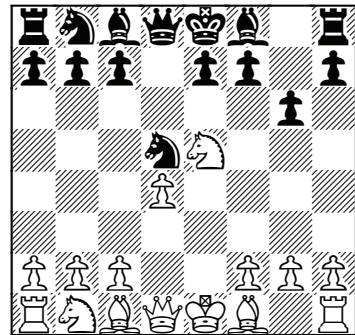
Software Remorse: Your opponent's computer is better than your computer, and his prepared line wins your queen before your prepared line starts: 6 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 7 ♖h5+ ♔e6 8 g3 b5 9 a4 c6 10 ♙h3+ ♔d6 11 ♖c3 b4 12 ♙f4+ ♖xf4 13 ♖e4+ ♔c7 14 ♖a5+ ♖b6 15 ♖e5+ ♖d6 16 ♖xd6 exd6 17 ♖xf4 ♙xh3 18 ♖f7+ ♙d7 19 0-0 h5 20 h4 d5 21 ♖fe1 ♖c4 22 b3 ♖d6 23 ♖f4 ♗h6 24 ♗e5 ♖f6 25 ♖g5 ♙g4 26 ♗ae1 ♖f7 27 ♗e7+ ♙xe7 28 ♗xe7+ ♔d6 29 ♖e3 ♗e6 30 ♗xe6+ ♙xe6 31 ♖e2 ♙g4 32 f3 ♙f5 33 ♖d2 ♗e8 34 ♖xb4+ ♔c7 35 c4 ♙e6 36 ♖c5 ♔b7 37 ♔f2 dxc4 38 bxc4 ♙d7 39 ♖xh5 ♖d6 40 ♖c5 ♗e6 41 g4 ♖f6 42 ♔g2 g6 43 ♔g3 ♗e6 44 ♔f2 ♖e8 45 ♔g2 ♖d6 46 d5 1-0 I.Balinov-W.Posch, Oberwart 2001.

Ecstasy: Your *new* computer is better than your opponent's computer, he allows your prepared line, and you win!! 7 ♖h5+ ♔e6 8 c4 ♖5f6 9 d5+ ♔d6 10 ♖f7 ♖e5 11 ♙f4 c5 12 ♖c3 a6 13 0-0-0 g6 14 ♙xe5+ ♔xe5 15 d6 ♙h6+ 16 ♔c2 ♖e8 17 ♗d5+ ♖xd5 18 ♖xd5+ ♔f6 19 ♙d3 exd6 20 ♖xd6+ ♔f7 21 ♖e4 ♖c6 22 ♖e5 ♗d8 0-1 E.Rozentalis-A.Sokolov, Bern 1992.

Agony: Your opponent *doesn't* have a computer and avoids all your preparation by playing 6 ♖f3! and grinds you down in the endgame: 6 ♖f3 g6 7 c4

♖5f6 8 ♖c3 ♙g7 9 g3 0-0 10 ♙g2 ♖b6 11 b3 e5 12 dxe5 ♖xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 ♖g4 14 ♙b2 ♖d7 15 e6 ♗e8 16 0-0 ♗xe6 17 ♙xg7 ♔xg7 18 ♖d4 ♗e8 19 ♖b5 ♗d8 20 ♖xc7 ♗b8 21 ♖c3 ♖df6 22 ♗ad1 ♙d7 23 h3 ♖e5 24 ♗fe1 ♖c6 25 ♗d6 ♗bc8 26 ♖7b5 a6 27 ♖d4 ♖xd4 28 ♗xd4 b5 29 ♗ed1 ♗e8 30 ♙b7 ♗c7 31 ♙xa6 bxc4 32 ♙xc4 ♙xh3 33 a4 ♖g4 34 ♖d5 ♗b7 35 ♖f4 ♖e5 36 ♖xh3 ♖f3+ 37 ♔g2 1-0 R.Byrne-M.Rohde, New York 1989.

I get worn out just thinking about it! Now back to 5...g6, where we can at least play chess for a while!



6 ♙c4

Still the most popular move today, which I will examine further in the following three games. Also possible are: two "caveman" variations, 6 ♖f3 and 6 h4 (Games 21-22); the direct 6 c4 (Game 23); the positional 6 ♖d2 (Game 24); and White's best alternatives, the quiet but strong 6 ♙e2 and 6 g3 (Games 25-26).

6...♙e6

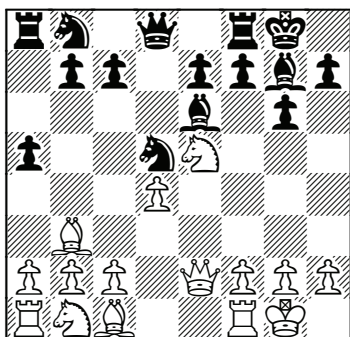
Nowadays 6...c6 is preferred, as it's

not clear where the c8-bishop belongs. But don't get careless with 6...♘g7? 7 ♖xf7! ♔xf7 8 ♜f3+ ♕e6 9 ♜e4+ and White wins!

7 ♘b3 ♘g7

A key strategic objective of the Kenigs Variation is to *lengthen the diagonal of the g7-bishop*. Black has already removed the white pawn wedge at e5; next on the list is the d-pawn. If Black can soften that point or even remove the pawn altogether, his position will normally improve (one recalls that in Game 1 Carlsen cleared the bishop's diagonal all the way to b2!). Therefore Black often aims to get in either ...e5 or ...c5. Sometimes Black can attack further down the diagonal with minority attack moves like ...a5-a4-a3 or ...b5-b4.

8 0-0 0-0 9 ♜e2 a5



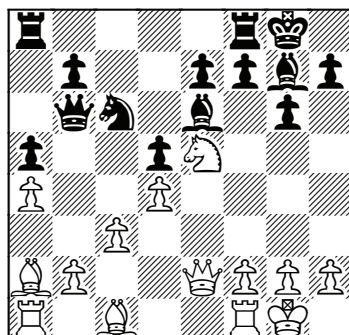
A typical Larsen rook pawn attack, with many positional ideas. If White plays a2-a4 to stop the pawn, and if White later employs c2-c4 to drive off the centralized black knight, said knight finds a brilliant square at b4. If the pawn is not stopped, it might ad-

vance all the way to a3, perhaps cooperating with the fianchettoed bishop.

10 ♖c3 c6 11 ♖xd5?!

Giving Black a central pawn majority and the good c6-square for the queen's knight – but even after the more logical 11 ♖e4 a4 12 ♘c4 ♖d7 White's good knight is exchanged or driven back, as 13 f4 would be too weakening in view of 13...♜b6.

11...cxd5 12 a4 ♖c6 13 c3 ♜b6 14 ♘a2



14...♘xe5!!

An absolutely stunning conception, that only an original thinker like Larsen could come up with: Black gives up the normally essential fianchettoed bishop *and* gives himself doubled isolated e-pawns which are normally always bad in Alekhine's Defence!

But a great player like Larsen sees that this position is exceptional. First of all, after the coming exchanges, White will be left with but one minor piece, a dark-squared bishop, that is unable to attack the usually very weak e6-pawn! In fact White is the one with weak pawns on the queenside and his "wedge" pawn

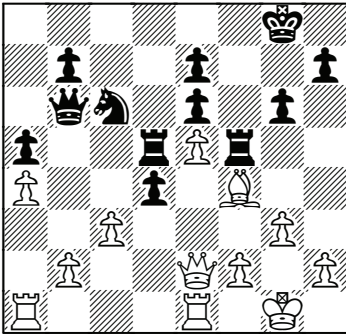
Alekhine Alert!

at e5 is weak as well! Black is left with the superior minor piece and open files for his rooks – bravo, Bent!

15 dxe5 d4!

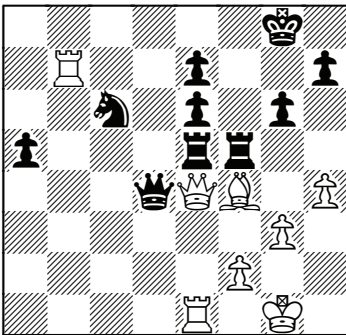
“Advantage for Black,” says Larsen, and I second the motion.

16 ♖h6 ♜fd8 17 ♙e6 fxe6 18 ♜fe1 ♜d5 19 ♙f4 ♜f8 20 g3 ♜f5



Beautiful! The black rooks take up light square outposts (where the only white minor piece can't attack them) and pressure White's position from every side.

21 ♜ad1 ♜b3 22 h4 ♜xa4 23 ♜e4 ♜b3 24 cxd4 ♜xb2 25 ♜b1 ♜xd4 26 ♜xb7 ♜dxe5!

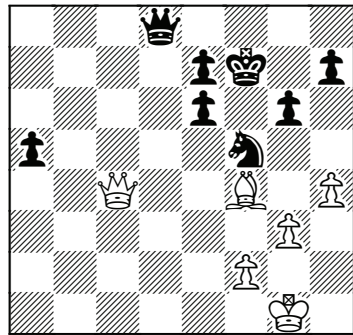


Larsen is unstoppable!

27 ♜b1

If 27 ♙xe5 ♜xf2+ 28 ♙h1 ♜xe5 29 ♜xe5 ♙xe5 30 ♜b8+ ♙g7 31 ♜xe5 ♜xg3 32 ♜bb5 ♜xh4+ 33 ♙g2 a4 and five extra pawns should be enough.

27...♜xe1+ 28 ♜xe1 ♜d5 29 ♜c1 ♙d4 30 ♜b8+ ♜f8 31 ♜xf8+ ♙xf8 32 ♙h6+ ♙e8 33 ♜c8+ ♜d8 34 ♜c4 ♙f5 35 ♙f4 ♙f7



Now the black king is safe, as Larsen notes, and he can win by combining the advance of his passed pawn with queen + knight attacks against the white king.

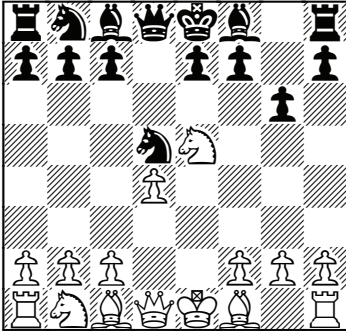
36 ♙e5 ♜d1+ 37 ♙h2 ♜d2 38 ♜c5 a4 39 ♙c3 ♜c2 40 ♙g1 ♜d1+ 41 ♙h2 ♜d5 42 ♜b4 ♜f3 43 ♙g1 a3 0-1

White resigns as the passed pawn is too strong, but can't be taken either; i.e. 44 ♜xa3 ♙d4 and now:

- a) 45 ♙f1 ♜h1 mate.
- b) 45 ♙b4 ♙e2+ 46 ♙h2 (or 46 ♙f1 ♙xg3+) 46...♜xf2+ 47 ♙h3 ♙g1+ and mates.
- c) 45 ♜b2 ♜xc3! wins a piece.

Game 18
P.Ostojic-E.Kengis
 German League 1992

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♗d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♗f3 dxе5 5
 ♗хе5 g6



The young Kengis saw Larsen’s idea, liked it, and set out to make the variation his own. Still far from GM strength, he lost with 5...g6 his first time out. Was he discouraged? No! He played it three more times – three more losses. Now most people who lose four games in a row with the same variation might give up on it, but not our persevering Latvian: with his fifth game in the variation that would bear his name, he finally made a draw! Then he draws five more games! Finally he wins one! Now he has his line down, and from that big win in 1989 until he gave up the variation in 1996, Kengis made such a plus score with Black that he wiped out the 0-4 deficit with which he started. He defeated strong GMs like Christiansen and Gallagher with his

variation, and ended up (this includes those young losses) with a highly respectable overall plus score of eight wins, seven losses and twenty draws.

He also developed many interesting positional ideas that are specific to this particular structure, which I will discuss in the following notes.

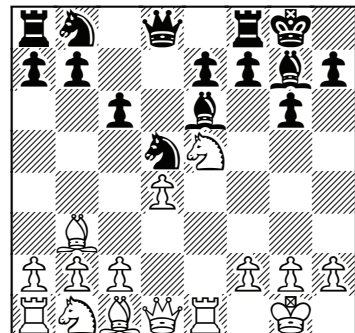
6 ♖c4

Played, as we saw, in the first game with this line and still the most popular move today. But it seems to me that this primitive attack on f7 gets nowhere, and we will see that Kengis has no problem dealing with it.

6...c6 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 ♖e1

Even quieter was 8 ♖b3 0-0 9 c3 ♗f5 10 ♗a3 ♗d7 11 ♗ac4 ♗5b6 12 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 13 ♖e1 ♗xc4 14 ♖xc4 e5 when Black equalized cleanly with this diagonal opening move, and after 15 dxе5 ♗xd1 16 ♖xd1 ♖хе5 17 ♖h6 ♖fd8 18 ♖g5 ♖xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♖g7 20 f3 h5 21 ♖e3 a6 22 ♖b6 ♖e8 23 g3 ♖f6 it was completely equal, J.Coret Frasquet-I.Abreu Suarez, Spanish Team Ch. 1994.

8...0-0 9 ♖b3 ♖e6



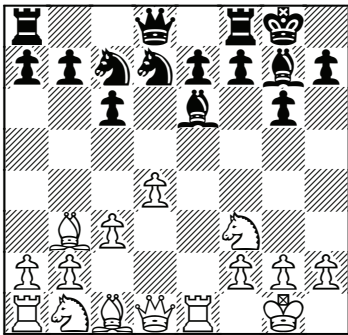
Accurate! Black challenges the bishop on b3. Kengis has done very well from this position, but look what happens to Adams in the next game when he plays the less precise 9...d7. For the Larsen-style 9...a5, which is also good, see Game 20.

10 h3

White has some alternatives:

a) 10 c4 b6 puts unpleasant pressure on c4 and d4. (Kasparov was able to get c2-c4 in “for free” vs. Adams, but only against inaccurate play.)

b) 10 c3 d7 11 f3 c7 introduces another Kengis strategical idea: exchange the light-squared bishops.



This leaves White with the worse bishop (blocked by the d-pawn) while Black’s cleric tends to become stronger as the game goes on and the long diagonal opens. One can see that Black is already equal. J.Howell-E.Kengis, London 1991, continued 12 e6 dxe6 13 b3 b6 14 c4 (14 bd2 is better – White probably overlooked the temporary sac of the e-pawn) 14...c5! 15 d5 c7 (a second well-refined Kengis idea:

a pawn is sacrificed to liven up Black’s play, here Black gets it right back with the better game; meanwhile note that – fundamental Kengis – the long dark diagonal has been cleared of one more pawn!) 16 xe7 d6 17 e1 xd5 18 a3 b6 19 xd5 cxd5 (Black has strong pressure against White’s undeveloped queenside) 20 g5 h6 21 d2 a4 22 ab1 fe8 23 f1 a6 24 c4 b5 25 e3 ed8 26 ec1 f6 27 c4 e4 28 c2 d3 29 e1 e8 30 d2 d6 31 e2 dxe3+! (Black breaks up White’s position with this stylish exchange sac) 32 fe3 f5 33 f2 d4+ 34 d1 dxc2 35 cxc2 f5 36 a3 f7 37 b3 c3 38 f1 h5 39 h3 e4 40 xe4 xe4 41 cxb5 axb5 42 d1 h6 43 d3 e6 44 e2 g5 45 f3 h4 46 d2 f6 47 a2 d5 48 a4 b4 49 a5 c4! (a well-calculated win) 50 bxc4+ (if 50 a6 cxb3 51 a7 e8 52 a8+ xa8 53 xa8 b2 and queens) 50...xc4 51 a6 b3 52 a4+ b5 0-1. White resigns in view of 53 a3 b2 54 b3+ (or Black comes first in a big way: 54 a7 b1 55 a8 d1 mate!) 54...xa6 and the passed b-pawn will cost White a rook.

10...d7 11 f3 c7

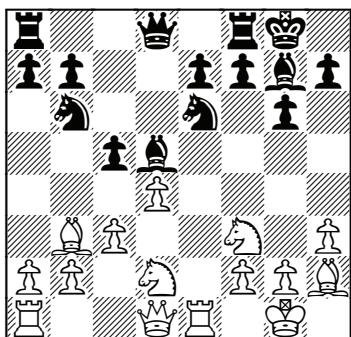
Kengis’ typical manoeuvre equalizes for Black.

12 c3 d5 13 f4

13 g5 gave White nothing in S.Polgar-E.Kengis, Vienna 1991, after 13...e6 14 e3 b5 15 xd5 cxd5 16 b3 c7 17 f4 e6!, as Kengis offered one of his now standard positional pawn sacs (but he must have lost a few

early games trying to figure out when these worked and when they didn't!). This one is clearly sound as Black gets open lines on the queenside and Benko-style pressure: 18 ♖xc7 ♜xc7 19 ♜xb5 ♜ab8 20 ♜e2 ♜b6 21 b3 ♜fc8 22 ♜d3 ♜a5 23 ♜fd2 e5! (Black breaks in the centre while White is still undeveloped; note the recurring theme of lengthening the diagonal of the g7-bishop) 24 dxe5 ♜xe5 25 ♜g3 ♜c6 26 a4 d4 27 b4 ♜d8 28 ♜e4 dxc3 29 ♜bxc3 ♜xb4 (Black recovers his pawn with the better game, and outplays White in the subsequent tactics) 30 ♜ad1 ♜d4 31 ♜h1 ♜b3 32 ♜e3 ♜a5 33 ♜d6 ♜f5 34 ♜d7 ♜f8 35 ♜d5 ♜b4 36 ♜xf5 gxf5 37 ♜xf5 ♜xc3 38 ♜xc3 (or 38 ♜g5 ♜c1+ 39 ♜h2 ♜d6+ 40 ♜g3 ♜g6 41 ♜d5 ♜b1 when Black has an extra rook and a mating attack) 38...♖xc3 39 ♜g5 ♜h4 0-1.

13...♜e6 14 ♖h2 ♜b6 15 ♜bd2 c5!



All the Kengis themes in one!

a) Black lengthens the diagonal of his fianchettoed bishop and breaks up the white centre;

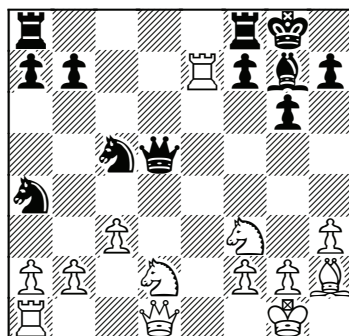
b) the light-squared bishops are exchanged;

c) the black e-pawn is sacrificed for queenside pressure.

16 dxc5 ♜xc5 17 ♖xd5 ♜xd5!

Fritz's number one, 17...♜xd5, is of course possible, but Kengis is playing for a win!

18 ♜xe7 ♜ba4



One sees the power of Black's fianchettoed dark-squared bishop now: both b2 and c3 are under severe pressure, and obviously 19 b3 is terrible due to 19...♜xc3.

19 ♜c2 ♜ae8 20 ♜ae1

Also after 20 c4 ♜c6 21 ♜c7 ♜b6 22 ♜b3 ♜a6 23 ♜d7 ♜xb2 Black recovers the pawn with some advantage.

20...♜xe7 21 ♜xe7 ♜xa2

Black recovers his pawn with a good game.

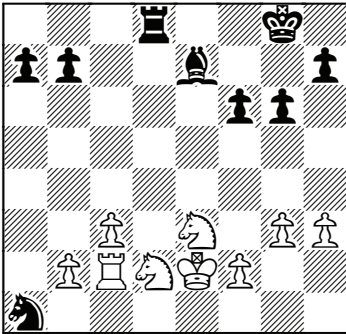
22 ♖d6 ♜d5 23 ♖xc5

Now Black's advantage is permanent (the better minor piece); it's not clear that Black can increase the pressure after the simple retreat 23 ♖g3.

23...♜xc5 24 ♜f1 ♖f6 25 ♜e2 ♜d3 26

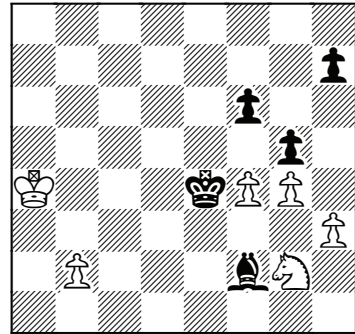
Alekhine Alert!

♔xd3 ♖xd3 27 g3 ♜d8 28 ♞e3 ♞c1 29
 ♜c2 ♞b3 30 ♚f1 ♙e7 31 ♚e2 f6 32 ♞d2
 ♞a1!



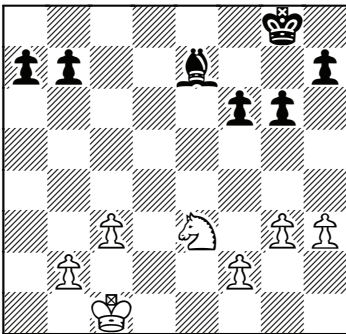
White's knight and neutralizes the b-pawn.

48...♚d4 49 ♚xa4 ♚d3 50 f4 ♚e4 0-1



Black cleverly liquidates into an ending that is going to be a nightmare for White to draw.

33 ♜c1 ♜xd2+ 34 ♚xd2 ♞b3+ 35 ♚c2
 ♞xc1 36 ♚xc1



White resigns, as his paralyzed knight will be lost after 51 fxc5 fxc5 52 b4 (giving Black the wrong colour rook's pawn doesn't work either as the white king is too far away, and the superlative black bishop cuts off said king when it tries to approach: 52 h4 gxh4 53 ♞xh4 ♙xh4 54 ♚b3 ♚f3 55 ♚c2 ♚xg4 56 ♚d1 ♚f3 57 b4 ♙g3 58 b5 h5 etc) 52...♚f3 53 b5 ♚xg2 and the bishop will deal with White's b-pawn, after which Black finishes easily in the king and pawn ending. A triumph for the Kengis bishop!

36...♙c5 37 ♞d5 ♚f7 38 f3 ♙d6 39 g4
 b5 40 ♚c2 ♚e6 41 ♞e3 ♙c5 42 ♞g2 g5
 43 ♞e1 a5 44 ♚d3 ♚e5 45 c4 ♙f2 46
 ♞g2 bxc4+ 47 ♚xc4 a4 48 ♚b4

The main game and the two Kengis wins given in the notes show his mastery of the position. It's clear that White gets nothing when the light-squared bishops are exchanged, but Black has a more difficult task in lines where White's bishop is kept back. This does not mean Black has a free ride after 6 ♙c4, however, as the following game shows – accuracy is still required!

The last hope is 48 b4, for if Black takes en passant, White should draw – but after 48...a3! 49 ♚b3 ♚d4 50 ♚xa3 ♚d3 Black wins, as his bishop both cor-