

DANGEROUS WEAPONS: THE RUY LOPEZ

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Preface

The Ruy Lopez enjoys a long and distinguished history, and one would be forgiven for thinking that, by now, its theory would have almost settled. Recent evidence, however, suggests that the opposite is true; its theory is still developing rapidly and no doubt there are many discoveries yet to be made. These days Black players are less likely to choose the 'main lines' – there are a greater number of options for Black that are now recognized as fully acceptable. Perhaps the most obvious example is the Berlin Defence, which Kramnik used so effectively to frustrate Kasparov in their 2000 World Championship match, but there are many other possibilities too. In turn, White players have been forced to fight back. No longer can White expect to apply the Spanish Torture, game after game. Lopez players must be more flexible and prepared to take on a wider variety of positions, or employ a system-type approach with d2-d3, a choice which has become noticeably popular in recent times.

I would like to thank my co-authors Tony Kosten and John Cox, for all their hard work and enthusiasm in researching and writing their chapters. I very much hope that readers are inspired to try out the ideas discussed in this book, whether they are playing the Ruy Lopez or fighting against it.

John Emms,
Kent,
November 2012

Series Introduction

The original concept behind *Dangerous Weapons* was to take a major chess opening and to approach it in a completely different way: to concentrate on variations that are ambitious, sharp, innovative, disruptive, tricky, enjoyable to analyse; ones not already weighed down by huge mountains of theory, and ones unfairly ignored or discredited. To me this seemed like an author's paradise, which I'm sure contributed somewhat towards the inspiration behind this series!

The main motivation behind studying major openings in such a way is to be able to present the reader (not forgetting the author!) with a considerable number of fresh, hard-hitting opening weapons for both White and Black; in some cases to create repertoires and in others to enhance and rejuvenate existing ones.

What is a Dangerous Weapon?

For the purpose of choosing opening variations for this series, usually a *Dangerous Weapon* fits into one or more of these overlapping categories:

1. Moves that create complex, original positions full of razor-sharp tactics or rich positional ideas where creative, attacking play is rewarded; moves which are new, rare or very fresh, leaving plenty of scope for research.

It should be pointed out that even though mainline theory produces a vast number of wonderfully complicated positions, these opening variations lose out heavily in the 'danger' stakes. No matter how sharp and difficult the position, the opening phase is nowhere near as hazardous for your opponent if he is able to fall back on that comfort blanket known as theory. I've played plenty of incredibly sharp lines without any real fear simply because of reasonable book knowledge and some solid home preparation. Apart from a few exceptions, in *Dangerous*

Weapons the emphasis has generally been on non-theoretical lines, where your opponent is left to his own devices at a very early stage.

2. Moves that are highly ambitious; ones which aim for total domination.

Perfect for those not satisfied with a quiet theoretical edge as White and eager to search for a big advantage or even a direct refutation, albeit at some risk; or for those as Black who prefer to strive for the initiative at any cost, preferring this over a manageable disadvantage or sterile equality.

3. Moves that have been previously ignored, discarded or discredited by theory, perhaps unfairly so or maybe for the wrong reasons.

Discredited lines can be especially dangerous – the psychological element cannot be ignored. Facing an opening like this, I find myself asking the question, ‘Why is he playing this variation if it is meant to be bad?’ Often there is a very good reason (a logical improvement, perhaps, which overturns a previous assessment), and in any case how are you supposed to remember a hypothetical 15-move refutation when you only browsed it in a book once, and that was a few years ago?

4. Moves that are visually shocking; moves which seem to contradict the laws of the game.

Disregarding the question of objective merit for the moment, there’s no doubt that a crazy-looking move has at the very least some psychological value. Unleashed on an opponent, it can produce a range of emotions: uncontrolled laughter, perhaps followed by over-confidence; anger (at being insulted by such a move) followed by over-aggression; or perhaps discomfort, followed by timidity. Of course you may instead encounter understanding followed by objectivity – you have to pick and choose your opponents.

Dangerous for Whom?

It would be difficult, probably impossible, to guarantee that every single variation in this book is 100% sound. You have to understand that in some cases ‘dangerous’ can mean ‘dangerous for both sides’. What I do expect, or at least hope, is that your opponent’s ride throughout the opening should be far bumpier than yours!

Guiding You Through

Throughout the book there are some icons together with explanatory notes to emphasize significant points. They should be fairly self-explanatory, but here's a brief summary:



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This signifies a game, variation, sub-variation or position where the Dangerous Weapon has obviously produced the desired effect.



BEWARE! Pointing out immediate danger for the player using the Dangerous Weapon.



ROLL THE DICE! Signifying a variation or sub-variation which is perhaps more suited for games with short time-limits or for players who enjoy taking risks.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This indicates a transposition to a different opening variation. Using different move orders to reach a desirable position or to trick your opponent into something with which he is unfamiliar is becoming a weapon of increasing value.

As the title suggests, *Dangerous Weapons* may not be for the faint-hearted! More than anything, it is aimed at players of all levels who like to be entertained, those who are happy to try out fun-to-play openings at their local chess club, on the Internet, in tournaments, wherever they choose to play.

Good luck studying and playing your *Dangerous Weapons*!

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Chapter Five

New Ideas in the 4 d3 Berlin

John Cox

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 d3 (Diagram 1)

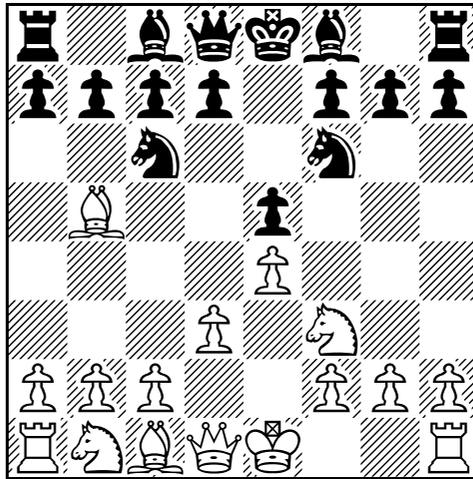


Diagram 1 (B)

This is the move Kasparov said later he wished he'd tried in London in 2000. It provides a calm strategic alternative to the main endgame line of the Berlin, yet with

a drop of poison. Before proceeding further, though, let's take a trip back a hundred years and let one of the greatest show us how to deal with the structure which arises in the system I'm recommending:

□ J.Capablanca ■ D.Janowsky
New York 1913

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 a6 5 Bxc6 dxc6 6 0-0 Bg4 7 h3 Bh5 8 Qe2 Bd6 9 d3 Qe7 10 Nd1 0-0-0 11 Ne3 Bg6 12 Nh4 Rhg8 13 Nef5 Qe6 14 f4 Bxf5 15 Nxf5 exf4 16 Bxf4 Bc5+ 17 Be3 Bf8 18 Qf2 Rd7 19 Bc5 Bxc5 20 Qxc5 Kb8 21 Rf2 Ne8 22 Raf1 f6 23 b3 Nd6 24 Rf4 Nxf5 25 Qxf5 Qxf5 26 Rxf5 Re8 27 g4 b6 28 b4 (Diagram 2)

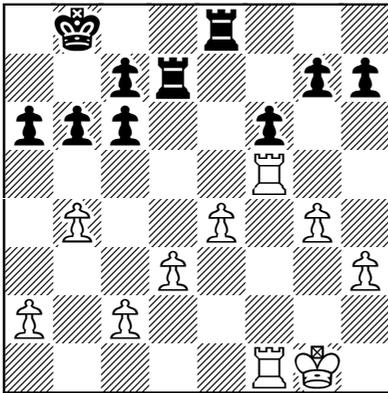


Diagram 2 (B)

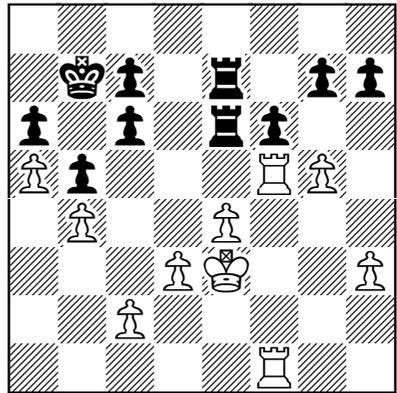


Diagram 3 (W)

28...Kb7 29 Kf2 b5 30 a4 Rd4 31 Rb1 Re5 32 Ke3 Rd7 33 a5 Re6 34 Rbf1 Rde7 35 g5 (Diagram 3) fxg5 36 Rxc5 Rh6 37 Rg3 Rhe6 38 h4 g6 39 Rg5 h6 40 Rg4 Rg7 41 d4 Kc8 42 Rf8+ Kb7 43 e5 g5 44 Ke4 Ree7 45 hxg5 hxg5 46 Rf5 Kc8 47 Rxc5 Rh7 48 Rh5 Kd7 49 Rxh7 Rxh7 50 Rf8 Rh4+ 51 Kd3 Rh3+ 52 Kd2 c5 53 bxc5 Ra3 54 d5 1-0

This game doesn't really need notes, but there are two points I want to make.

First of all, you don't have to be on the queenside to play a minority attack; although the pawn structure is different from the classic QGD structure, White's g4-g5 was just that. There's more ways to play the Spanish Exchange structure than d4, takes, recaptures with a piece, trade all the pieces, win the ending, effective though that

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approach can be in the right hands, and the system we're going to look at in this chapter generally involves White playing f4 rather than d4, as in this game.

Secondly, observe White's handling of the queenside pawns. Generally White can do one of two things to frustrate Black's majority. He can place his pawns in a sort of bowl shape; either c4/b3/a4 (watch out for the unopposed light-squared bishop, though) or c3/b2/a3. The advantage of both structures is that Black can't make a passed pawn without actually taking one of White's pawns with a piece. The other is to play b4 as Capa did, fixing the pawns where they are. The danger in that is that if Black manages to get control of the fourth rank or even just c5, he can play ...c5 and dissolve the doubled pawns. The advantage, though, is that if Black doesn't manage that then his pawns are fixed, immobile and hence weak – in this game indeed Janowsky allowed them to become irredeemably fixed and proceeded to lose some of them, but even without Black's rash ...b5 the point would have stood.

Now let's move on to the system against the Berlin:

□ L.McShane ■ J.Parker

British League 2011

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 d3 Bc5 (Diagram 4)

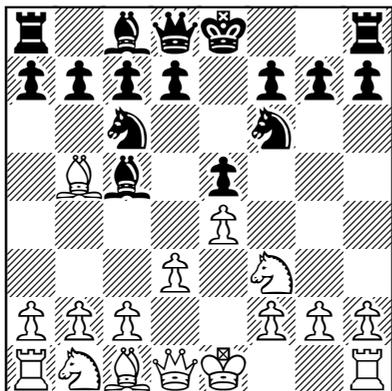


Diagram 4 (W)

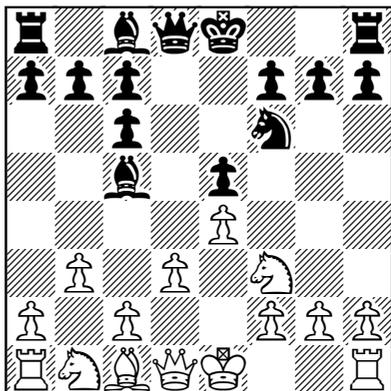


Diagram 5 (B)

This is the classical reply and pretty much the invariable choice of the top players these days; of course Black can play many moves and we'll have a quick look at some of them in the 'Looking a Little Deeper' section. This is the position in which Luke McShane has a new idea.

5 Bxc6

The line established back in the 19th century was 5 c3 (5 0-0 Nd4 is pretty comfortable for Black) 5...0-0 6 Bxc6 bxc6 7 Nxe5 d5, when Black has enough compensation for the pawn. 6 0-0 allows either 6...d6 with a kind of Giuoco Pianissimo where White's bishop has overshot to b5, or 6 ...d5, a more forthright attempt to equalize which seems to have gone out of fashion a little bit.

5...dxc6

Jonathan thought for about ten minutes over this move. "I thought 5...bxc6 might just lose a pawn", he told me afterwards, and indeed obviously Black would prefer to have castled while White wastes time on c3, as in the old line. Probably Jonathan's sage observation is more or less correct despite a bit of initial optimism from the machines. For example, even the naive line 6 Nxe5 d5 7 exd5!? Qxd5 8 Nf3 0-0 9 0-0 Re8 10 Nc3 Qd6 11 Re1 Bf5 12 Be3 sees Black struggling to demonstrate any reasonable compensation. 7...Nxd5 8 d4 Bd6 9 Nxc6 Qf6 10 0-0 Bxh2+ 11 Kxh2 Qxc6 isn't much better, largely because White has the vexing 12 Qe2+, when 12...Be6? loses a piece to c4, d5 and so on.

6 b3 (Diagram 5)

This was Luke's new idea. "This structure is underrated for White", he tells me.

6...Qe7

Luke went to the well again in L.McShane-V.Kramnik, London Chess Classic 2011, which followed a thrilling course after some initially unpromising stuff: 6...Bg4 (after the present game Jonathan Parker felt he should have unloaded this bishop like this) 7 Nbd2 Nd7 8 Bb2 f6 9 Nf1 Nf8 10 h3 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 Ne6 12 Ne3 Qd7 (of course Black is very solid here, but still it feels as though White has slightly more possibilities, although the ones Luke now finds wouldn't occur to every player) 13 h4 a5 14 a4 0-0 15 h5 Bxe3 16 Qxe3 c5 17 Qh3 Qc6 18 0-0 Nf4 19 Qh2 Qe8 20 h6 g5 21 g3 Ne6 22 f4 gxf4 23 gxf4 Nxf4 24 Rxf4 exf4 25 Kf2 Rf7 26 Qh5 Qe6 27 Qxc5 Kh8 28 Qc4 Re8 29 Rh1 Qd7 30 Qb5 Re6 31 Qxd7 Rxd7 32 Rg1 Rc6 33 Kf3 Rd8 34 Rg5 Rf8 35 Rg2 Rg8 36 Rh2 Rg1 37 d4 Rf1+ 38 Kg4 f3 39 d5 Rd6 40 c4 Kg8 41 c5 f5+ 42 Kxf5 Rg6 43 Bd4 Rd1 44 Be3 Rg2 45 Rh3 f2 46 Bxf2 Rxf2+ 47 Ke6 Rf7 48 d6 c6 49 Ke5 Kf8 50 Rh2 Rg1 51 b4 axb4 52 Rb2 Rg5+ 53 Ke6 Rg6+ 54 Ke5 Rxh6 55 a5 Rh5+ 56 Ke6 Rh6+ 57 Ke5 Rh5+ 58 Ke6 Ke8 59 a6 Rh6+ 60 Ke5 bxa6 61 Rxb4 Ra7 62 Rb8+ Kf7 63

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Rc8 Re6+ 64 Kf5 a5 65 Rh8 Rf6+ 66 Ke5 Kg7 67 Rc8 a4 68 Rxc6 a3 69 d7 a2 0-1. This very complicated game has been analysed in a few places, and the consensus seems to be that White had at least equality following his exchange sacrifice but went astray in time trouble, although as often happens there's rather less consensus about where exactly this occurred.

Jonathan faced McShane's idea again in L.Trent-J.Parker, British League 2012, and this time followed Kramnik's example: 6...Bg4 7 Bb2 Nd7 8 Nbd2 f6 9 h3 Bxf3 10 Nxf3 Qe7 11 a3 0-0-0 12 b4 Bd6 13 c3 Nf8 14 Qa4 Kb8 15 0-0-0 (it's hard to believe in the combination of the queenside pawn advances and this queenside castling) Ne6 16 Qc2 c5 17 Nd2 c6 18 Nc4 ½-½. Black is better here, but Jonathan agreed the draw in view of the state of the match. Sadly, that didn't mean my Barbican team had got on top and Jonathan was agreeing a draw to make sure of victory; on the contrary things had already gone so horribly wrong that Jonathan judged the situation as hopeless and gave up in disgust.

7 Bb2 (Diagram 6)

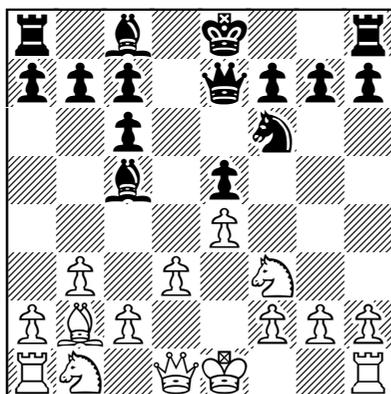


Diagram 6 (B)

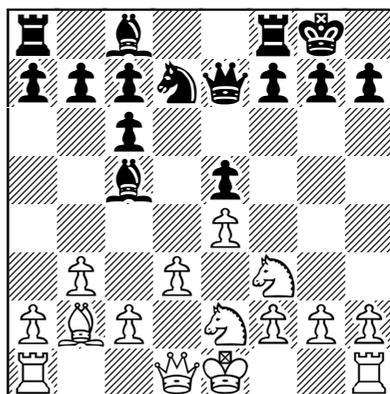


Diagram 7 (B)

7...Nd7

Lysyj and Ovetchkin like 7...Bb4+, but they don't consider White's most obvious reply. The lines they give are 8 Bc3 Bxc3+ 9 Nxc3 Bg4 10 0-0 (or 10 Qd2?! Bxf3 11 gxf3 Nh5 with an edge for Black) 10...Nd7, and 8 Nbd2 Bg4 9 c3 Bd6 10 h3 Bh5 11 Nc4 Nd7, assessing both lines as equal.

These are all convincing enough but I'm pretty sure Luke would have played 8 Nc3. As the game shows, he wouldn't have feared ...Ba3, 8...Qc5 9 Qd2 is nothing, and

while the machine is confident about its position after 8...0-0 9 0-0 I think this is more or less what White wants; he continues with Ne2-g3 and so forth and angles for a convenient f4 or d4 break. The computer wants to play the disruptive 9...Rd8 when White has to be careful to arrange his desired manoeuvre; perhaps he should start with 10 h3 (to prepare Qc1 without running into ...Bg4).

8 Nc3 0-0 9 Ne2 (Diagram 7)

This is White's usual manoeuvre in this structure; the knight is on its way to g3. Black doesn't usually want to play ...g6, which gives White a variety of handles, so he has to be constantly wary of a Nf5 leap, and White can get ready for f4 to liberate his rooks.

9...Ba3

A controversial moment; obviously Black could play ...Bd6,...c5, ...Re8, ...f6 and Nf8-e6 instead, digging in and treating his 'bad' bishop, in Bellin's marvellous phrase, "like a girder in a building". That would perhaps be the more conventional option, but it's a different game, as they say. Still, it's easy to see why Parker wanted to remove the b2-bishop, which would certainly have pointed malevolently at his kingside after a later f4 break.

10 Bxa3 Qxa3 11 0-0 Qe7 12 Ng3 Nc5

These moves need no real commentary; the players follow their respective plans.

13 b4 (Diagram 8)

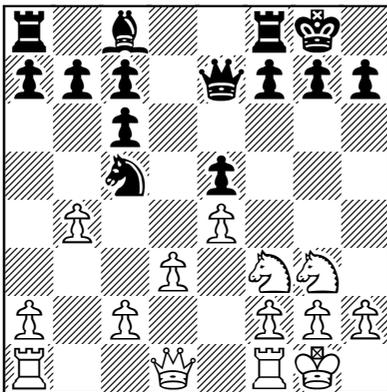


Diagram 8 (B)

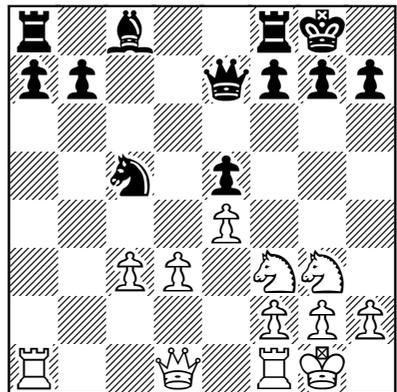


Diagram 9 (W)

A difficult choice. As I said before, White's move doesn't give him such a secure

blockade as the other sort of arrangement of his queenside. What it does do in the short term, however, is prevent Black from establishing a pawn on c5 and thus secure White's control of the d4-square and his advantage in the centre. McShane demonstrates an ability which all strong players have but which is perhaps particularly a mark of his style, to change his plans according to events.

13...Na6

13...Na4 was also possible, but it doesn't change the play all that much. It looks attractive to bring the knight to b6 and to be ready to invade on c4 if White does play d4, but actually it doesn't help half as much as one might think – as they say, it's only a square. White can bring a knight round to e3 and trade the knight off, and the bishop isn't stable on c4 unless Black plays ...b5, which is obviously not what his queenside pawns want to see. Many of these issues came up in a slightly different form in Capablanca's game.

14 c3 c5 15 a3 cxb4 16 axb4 c5 17 bxc5 Nxc5 (Diagram 9)

This was Black's idea; he has solved his structural issues on the queenside, but the trouble is that in so doing he has allowed White a central majority and better control of that sector. Jonathan told me after the game he was surprised by the way his troubles endured here and the way the white knights continue to outplay his bishop.

18 Re1 g6

It looks natural to begin an assault on the white centre, but the trouble is that it just doesn't work: 18...Rd8 19 d4 exd4 20 cxd4 Bg4 21 h3 Bxf3 22 Qxf3 Rxd4? 23 Nf5.

19 d4 Nd7 20 Qb3 Kg7 21 Nf1 Qe6!?

Symptomatic of Black's problems. His structurally marvellous exchange of the c-pawns has left him unable to contest the centre against White's active pieces, and he feels obliged to go for this horrible exchange rather than something like 21...exd4 22 cxd4 Nb6 23 d5 f6 24 Nd4 Bd7 25 Ne3 Rfc8 26 Qb2, and the pressure mounts grimly.

22 Qxe6 fxe6 23 Nxe5 Nxe5 24 dxe5 Bd7 25 Ne3 (Diagram 10)

Black's sacrifice has at least given his rooks some possibilities on the c-file, brought the a-pawn into the equation and ensured that in the end there will be play on both wings and he can hope that his bishop will be the more effective minor piece, and he does have possibilities to resist stoutly in this endgame. Still, you would think White should be winning, and McShane gets there in the end, although Parker displays some excellent grittiness – everyone has their style, and

being very hard to put away in this kind of position is a trademark of Jonathan's.

25...Rfc8 26 Red1 Be8 27 Rd6 Kf7 28 Ra3 Rc5 29 f4 a5 30 Kf2 a4 31 Ke2 Rac8 32 Kd3 b5 33 g4 Ke7 34 h4 Bc6 35 g5 Ba8 36 Nc2 Bc6 37 Nd4 Bd7 38 Ne2 R5c7 39 Rb6 Rc5 40 Ra1 Bc6 41 Ra3 Rf8 42 Ra6 Bd7 43 Ra7 Rb8 44 Ke3 Rbc8 45 Ra1 R8c7 46 Rxc7 Rxc7 47 Rb1 Rc8 48 Kd3 Rf8 49 Kd2 Rf7 50 Ke3 Rf8 51 Nd4 Rc8 52 Kd3 Rf8 53 Rf1 Ra8 54 Rf2 Rf8 55 Rf1 Ra8 (Diagram 11)

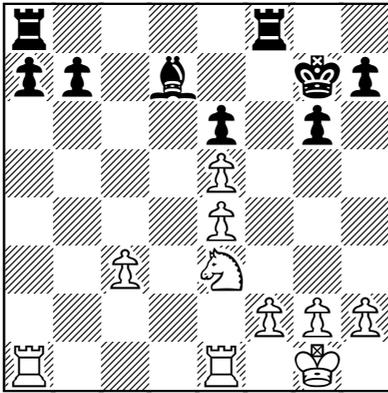


Diagram 10 (B)

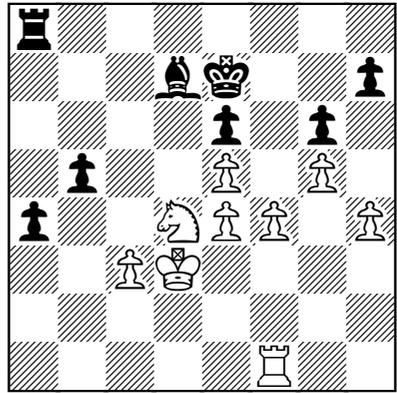


Diagram 11 (W)

Black has defended really well with his annoying alternating pressure on f4 and c3, and round about here I thought my Barbican teammate might even hold on, but McShane is a formidable practical opponent in this type of position (ask Nigel Short!), and has timed his next move cleverly for Black's habitual time pressure.

56 h5 gxh5 57 Rh1 a3?

Black goes down in a surprisingly undignified heap; 57...Be8 was essential: 58 f5 exf5 59 exf5 is of course alarming but it's far from clear that it is winning or that White is even better at all. For example, 59...a3 60 f6+ Kf8 61 e6 a2 62 Ra1 h4! (a voice from the back!) 63 f7 Bxf7 64 exf7 Kxf7, and White should even give some passing thought to how not to lose, which a careless fellow could achieve, for example, with the over-ambitious plan 65 Nf3? h3 66 Kc2 Kg6 67 Kb2 Kh5 68 Rxa2 Rxa2+ 69 Kxa2 Kg4 70 Nh2+ Kxg5 71 Kb3 Kf4.

58 Rxh5 a2 59 Rxh7+ Kd8 60 Nxe6+ 1-0

It's not so easy to trick Parker even in time trouble, but Luke has managed it: White deftly stops the pawn after 60...Kc8 61 Rh8+ Kb7 62 Nc5+ Ka7 63 Rxa8+ Kxa8 64 Nb3, and it's over.