

A11
Caruana,F. **2781**
-Carlsen,M. **2872**
 CC (rapid) Zürich (4) 04.02.2014
 [A.J.G.]

I thought that I would briefly annotate this game ...
 (When a player as strong as Magnus Carlsen loses, one always wonders what went wrong and exactly what the losing move was.)

1.Nf3 Nf6 ; 2.g3 d5 ;
3.Bg2 c6 ; 4.0-0 Bf5 ;
5.d3 e6 ;

Caruana - so far - has chosen a solid, (if a slightly inferior); opening, obviously an attempt to get Carlsen away from his normal opening preparation.

One even wonders if this was not a prepared line by White, according to the online video, he played his moves very quickly.

Now White quickly strikes at the center.

6.c4! Nbd7!? ; **7.cxd5! cxd5 ;**

8.Be3!? **Bc5 ; 9.Bxc5 Nxc5 ;**
10.Nc3 0-0 ; 11.Qd2 h6 ;
 Take a look at this position.



I would award Black a slight edge, as the second player has more space ...

12.Rfc1 Rc8 ; 13.b4 Ncd7 ;
14.a4 Qe7 ; 15.Nb5 a6 ;
16.Nbd4 Bg6 ; 17.Nb3 e5 ;

Now - because he dominates the center, and has more space, it would seem that Black is slightly better.

18.Nh4 Bh7 ; 19.Bh3 d4 ;

**20.Nf3 Rxc1+ ; 21.Rxc1 Nb6 ;
22.a5 Nbd5 ; 23.Rc5 Rd8 ;
24.Na1!?** ,

This is a doubtful idea, it can never be a good idea to place a Knight in the corner. However, one of Caruana's strength's is knowing the difference between a slightly inferior position and a very bad one. (He also played all of his moves very quickly.)

[>/= (Better was:)

¹ 24.Bg2 , when White may have a slight disadvantage, but you need a microscope just to see it.]

Now Carlsen - probably already short of time - plays a bad move. (One has to guess that some sort of miscalculation - or oversight - was involved.)

Instead of 24...e4?!; simply (say) 24...Bg6; leaves Black with a really easy game.

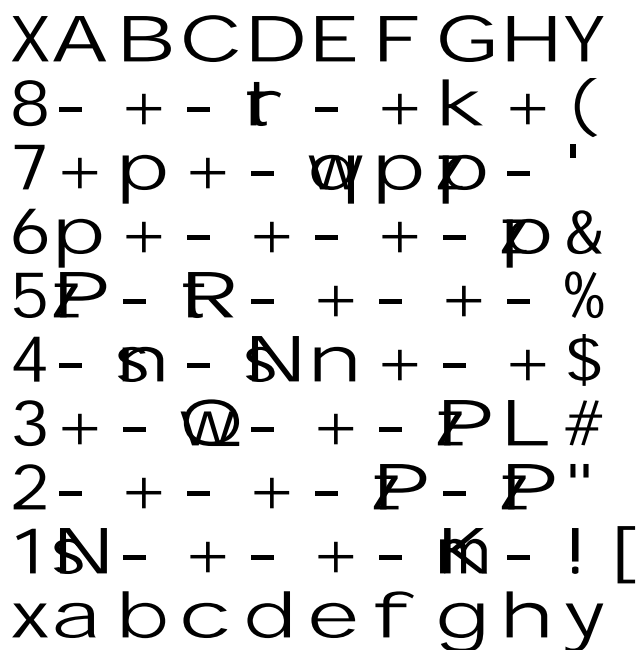
24...e4?! ; 25.Nxd4 exd3 ;

26.exd3 Bxd3!? ;

This looks like a bad idea, simply 26...Re8; is preferred by Fritz 13.

27.Qxd3 Nxb4 ; 28.Qc3 Ne4 ;

Take a look at this position ...



Carlsen appears to be forking Caruana's Queen and Rook.

29.Nf5! , (Zwischenzug.)

This must have been the move that Magnus missed.

[Probably Magnus had looked at:

< 29.Qxb4 Qxc5 ;
 30.Qxc5 Nxc5 ;
 31.Nab3 Nxb3 ;
 32.Nxb3 Kf8 ; 33.Bg4÷ ,
 (Unclear, close to equal?)
 thinking it was at least a
 draw for Black.]

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29...Qf8™ ; (BOX - only move.)

This looks forced.

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[Even worse was:

< 29...Nxc3 ; 30.Nxe7+ Kf8 ;
 31.Rxc3 Rd1+ ; 32.Bf1 Rxa1 ;
 33.Rc4 Kxe7 ; 34.Rxb4 Rxa5 ;
 35.Rxb7+ , "+/-"

when White has an
 easy win.

(Easy - for this level of
 player - at any rate.)]

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30.Qxb4 Nxc5 ;

White now has two pieces for
 a Rook plus one Pawn. It's a
 nice edge for White to be
 sure, but the game is far from
 over.

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Now the two players jockey
 for position ...

(Each player is just trying to
 slowly improve his game without
 making a mistake or creating
 another weakness.)

**31.Nc2 Nd3 ; 32.Qc3 g6 ;
 33.Nfd4 Nc5 ; 34.Bg2 Qd6 ;
 35.h4 h5 ; 36.Qe3 Qf6 ;
 37.Nf3 Qf5 ; 38.Nfd4!? Qf6 ;
 39.Kh2 Kg7?** ; (Bad idea.)

This was another critical
 error, by simply playing
 his Queen to the d6-square,
 it does not appear that White
 has made significant progress.
 (One has to wonder how
 Magnus could have played such
 a lemon. I have to conclude
 that Black was simply short of
 valuable thinking time.)

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40.Qc3! Nd7 ;

Black is just trying to stay
 alive ...

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[Of course not:

< 40...Qxf2?? ; 41.Ne6+ Kg8 ;
 42.Qg7# . (Check-mate.)]

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41.f4 b5 ; (hmmm)

Originally I had thought

that this move was a mistake, but Black did not have a lot of decent alternatives. (A lot of strong programs also choose this move for Black.)

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8- + - t - + - + (
7+ - + n + p k - '
6p + - + - w p + &
5P p + - + - + p %
4- + - N - P - P $
3+ - W - + - P - #
2- + N + - + L k "
1+ - + - + - + - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
    
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Now in a very bad position - and also short of time - Carlsen proves that he is human ... and plays two virtual blunders in a row.

42.Nb4 Nb8?? ; 43.Nd5 b4?? ; 44.Nf5+! , "+/-" Black Resigns. Any move by the Black King simply drops the lady, and Pawn-takes-Knight is answered by simply QxQ+, when Black (also) cannot recapture.

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A nice win by Caruana, who is one of the best fast/rapid players in the whole world.

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