

**Kramnik,V**  
**-Grischuk,A**  
 7th Mikhail Tal Memorial (2009.06.2012  
*[A.J. Goldsby I]*

**E97**  
**2801**  
**2761**

bloodied, cut and bruised.)  
 .  
 Here, the two warriors have yet another go at each other ... and the result is a game for the ages, a model game, which approaches chess perfection ... at least as far as GM Vladimir Kramnik's conduct of the White side of this affair is concerned.

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 GOTM / June, 2012.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 <FROM: The 2012 Tal Memorial>  
 A model game ...

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There were quite a number of decisive games in this tournament, without question, it was an event where just about all of the participants seemed to give it their best effort. However, many of the games, (IMO); while somewhat interesting ... and certainly deserving of annotation ... were decided by rather banal mistakes, or even oversights.

Play starts off as a Reti, but quickly will transpose to the main line of the King's Indian. (Whether or not Black should have chosen this line ... is open to debate, certainly playing the KID against this opponent could be considered to be a poor choice ... lacking chess wisdom!  
 <Kramnik has to be the number one slayer of the King's Indian ... on the whole of our planet!>

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 The same cannot be said of this magnificent effort, however! These two players always seem to go at each other, holding almost nothing back. (All one has to do is to recall their relatively recent Candidate's Match ... both gladiators came away

I have - for this game - emphasized the games of GM V. Kramnik, as he has been at the forefront of the K.I.D. discussion ... for many years now.)  
**1.Nf3 Nf6 ; 2.c4 g6 ; 3.Nc3 Bg7 ; 4.e4 ,**

(d5, center)

As far as I can tell, Kramnik often plays in this manner.

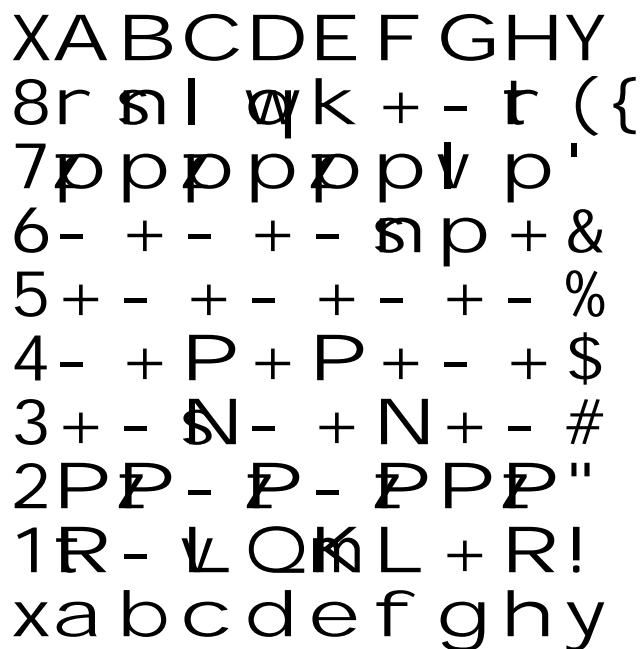
[Does the continuation of:  
RR4.d4 d5 ; (The Grunfeld.)  
give GM Vladimir Kramnik  
any bad memories?

See the contest:  
GM Vladimir Kramnik (2788) -  
GM Vassily Ivanchuk (2781);  
[D93]  
Tal Memorial - Blitz Tourn.  
Moscow, RUS; (#33) /  
30,08,2008;  
{Ivanchuk won a brilliant  
game, 0-1 in a total of  
just 41 moves.}

See also some of GM V.  
Kramnik's exciting games -  
versus GM A. Shirov -  
in the Grunfeld Defense. ]

(Diagram)

The point? While he does not seem to mind playing the Classical lines of the King's Indian, however, he does prevent Black from



even trying the variations of the Gruenfeld Defense.

The next series of moves are all well known and quickly lead us to a "main line" position in the King's Indian Defense.

[ (>/=) 4...c7-c5!?!; might have prevented Kramnik from reaching a King's Indian ... or at the very least, it would not have allowed White the relatively easy time of things that he otherwise enjoyed in this particular encounter. ]

**4...d6 ; 5.d4 0-0 ;**  
**6.Be2 e5 ; 7.0-0 Nc6 ;**  
**8.d5 Ne7 ; (What is the POD?)**  
Thus - we have reached one of the major highways of the King's

Indian Defense. (The well-known "Mar del Plata" System, first popularized by just two players. {S. Gligoric and R. Fischer.})



I have already annotated many games in this line ...

**9.b4** , (The Bayonet System.)

This is the most modern line, and the one that most GM's will play in this particular position.

[White has many other moves here as well ... the main two alternatives are outlined as follows ... ..

\*\*\*\*\*

White can play the venerable - but still feared line - of:

A.) 9.Ne1 Nd7 ; 10.Be3 f5 ; 11.f3 f4 ; 12.Bf2 g5 ; 13.a4 Ng6 ; 14.a5<sup>2</sup> , and White has a nice edge.

[ See MCO-15, page # 593; column #01, and all applicable notes ... mostly note # (d.) ]

See the interesting contest: GM Artur Jussupow (2655) - IM Boris Kreiman (2415); [E99]

ICT, Master's Open Chicago, IL (USA) / 1996. {White won a tough battle, 1-0 in forty hard-fought and interesting moves.} ]

[. \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

White can also play Nd2 here: B.) 9.Nd2 c5 ; (- R.J. Fischer)

Black has other moves here ... but this one helps to greatly slow down White's onslaught (i.e., pushing Pawns and opening lines) on the Queen-side.

10.Rb1 Ne8 ; 11.b4 b6 ; 12.bxc5 bxc5 ; 13.Nb3<sup>2</sup> f5,, ; White is {at least} slightly better here, but Black has standard KID plans of obtaining counterplay.

[ See MCO-15, page # 602; column # 22, and all notes ... esp. those # (i.) thru (q.). ]

One of the better examples of this position - that I could find - was the following tough brawl:

GM Mikhail Gurevich (2630) - GM Alexey Kuzmin (2470); [E97] National Champ. Tournament (URS-chT) Naberezhnye Chelny, USSR; 1988. {White won a gritty game, 1-0 in 45 total hard-fought moves.} ]

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XABCDEFGHIY
8r + l ♖ - t k + ( {
7p p p - ♗ p ♘ p '
6- + - ♘ - ♗ p + &
5+ - + ♙ ♘ - + - %
4- ♚ ♙ + ♙ + - + $
3+ - ♜ - + ♞ + - #
2P + - + L ♚ ♙ ♙ "
1R - ♜ Q + R ♞ - !
x a b c d e f g h y
    
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I have personally played

against this variation ... .. (as Black) ... and both won and lost with it.

(I lost a tough contest vs. GM Alexander Ivanov in South Florida ... <about 10-15 years ago> in this line as Black - but it lead me to do many deep investigations of this position - and taught me quite a bit about chess, as well.)

**9...Nh5!?** ; (outpost - on f4) Black eyes a nice square ... as well as clearing the f-line for the standard Pawn break of ...f7-f5.

[For the continuation of: 9...a5 ; 10.Ba3 axb4 ; 11.Bxb4<sup>2</sup> ; (slight plus) [ See MCO-15, column # 18; and all applicable notes. ]

A really good game in this particular line would have to be the following: GM Loek Van Wely (2655) - GM Jeroen Piket (2630); [E97] ICT, Monaco Master's Monte Carlo, (R#4) /

1,09,1997.  
 {White won a solid game,  
 1-0 in a total of forty  
 <40> moves.} ]



This move ...  
 (playing the BN to h5);  
 is about standard here,  
 however, it is certainly  
 far from being perfect,  
 nor without it's own problems.  
 (The other choice - here -  
 is 9...a7-a5; which is given  
 ... just below here.)

**10.g3!?** , (Maybe - '!')  
 After years of experimentation,  
 the general consensus of  
 modern opening theory is that

White should not allow Black's  
 Knight to freely invade the  
 f4-point.

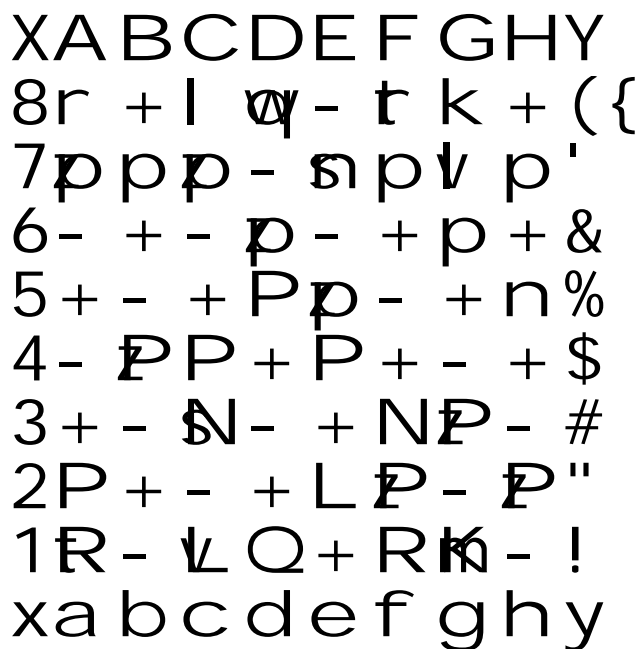
[For the main alternative of:  
 10.Re1 Nf4 ; 11.Bf1<sup>2</sup> a5 ;  
 [ See MCO-15, page #596;  
 beginning with column #07 ...  
 and all applicable notes. ]  
 \*\*\*    \*\*\*    \*\*\*    \*\*\*    \*\*\*

For a game - by Kramnik -  
 after 10.Re1, & then 10...f7-f5;  
 see the following battle:  
 GM V. Kramnik (2790) -  
 GM F. Nijboer (2580); [E97]  
 ICT, Hoogoveen Steel / R#2  
 Wijk aan Zee, NED; 1998.  
 {White won a quick victory,  
 1-0 in just 29 total moves.} ]

(Diagram)

The main alternative is for  
 White to play 10.Re1, (!')  
 here; and many good games  
 have also been played in this  
 line as well.

<< This line of the King's  
 Indian was very topical in the  
 late 90s. Kramnik was at the  
 forefront of the theoretical



discussions on the White side, and was responsible for the popularity of 10. Re1.

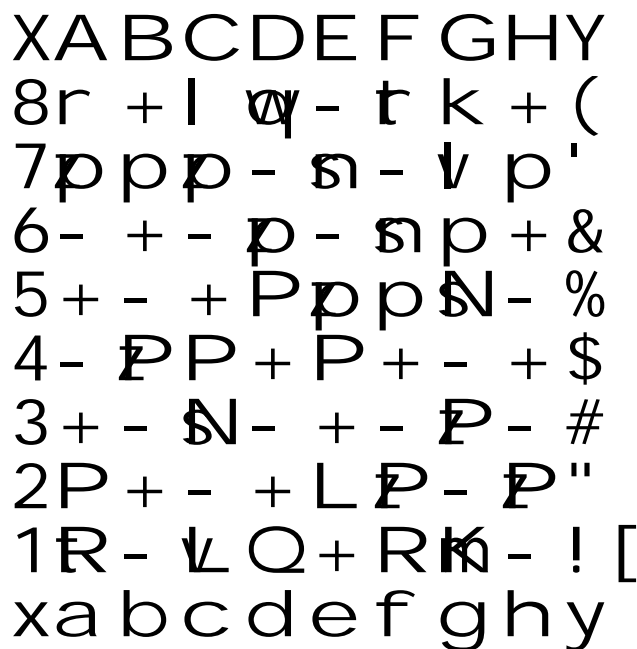
It is interesting to see him revert to the 'old' line once more, as he did against Giri last year. >>

- GM A. Ramirez on the ChessBase website.

**10...f5 ; 11.Ng5 Nf6™ ; ("box")**  
 Black had to retreat the Knight, owing the the threat of BxN/h5.

(Diagram)

At the moment, the game



seems to be about equal ... and the engines confirm this particular assessment.

**12.Bf3** , (redeployment)  
 What is the idea behind this move?

[For the play of: 12.f3 , ("book")  
 [ See MCO-15, page # 599;  
 ... all columns and notes.  
 (Main column # 13, and most note # {b.} here.) ]

12.f3, is a very old move ... Geller played it vs. Gligoric in a game in 1957. A more modern example would be: GM Anish Giri (2696) - GM Etienne Bacrot (2713); ICT, 45th Masters Open Biel (R#3), 25,07,2012.

{White won a very difficult  
and hard-fought struggle,  
1-0 in 37 total moves.} ]

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XABCDEFGHIY
8r + l ♖ - t k + ( {
7p p p - ♗ - v p '
6- + - ♘ - ♗ p + &
5+ - + P p p ♖ - %
4- ♙ P + P + - + $
3+ - ♖ - + L ♙ - #
2P + - + - ♙ - ♙ "
1R - ♘ Q + R ♖ - !
x a b c d e f g h y

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I think that it is for White to begin to re-arrange his pieces and place them on their optimum squares. (The older move <here> was the try of 12.f3, which seems to be an effort by the first party to support White's central pawn wedge.)

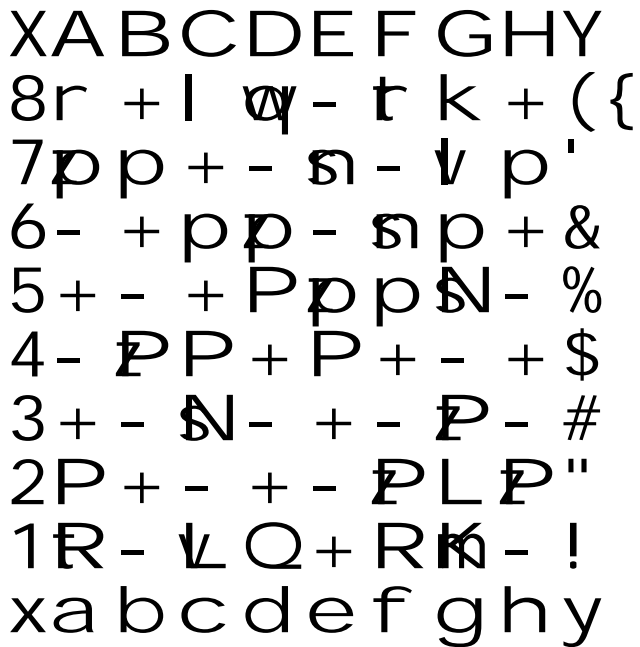
[ The first use of 12.Bf3, (that I can discover in the DB); is in the mid-to-late 1990's; although White lost in most of these initial outings with 12.Bf3. The first successful use of this play seems to be:

K.H. Podzielny (2506) -  
F. Koch;  
Master/City Open;  
Kleve, GER; (R#1) / 01,06,2000.  
{1-0 in just 28 total moves.} ]

With his next move, Black tries to begin the process of undermining White's central Pawn phalanx. (This armada of infantry - smack dab, right in the middle of everything - gives White a big edge in space and a powerful grip on the center.) So it was only natural that Black - probably the sooner, the better - would attempt to undermine White's impressive array of Pawns. **12...c6 ; 13.Bg2** , (Maybe - '!') White goes for slowly improving his overall standing ... while maintaining a solid and a flexible position.

[Also good was: RR13.Rb1<sup>2</sup> , with a solid plus for White; (- Fritz 13). ]

In an earlier game,



(vs. GM A. Giri);  
 Kramnik played 13.Ba3,  
 this move is his attempt to  
 try and improve on his  
 earlier efforts.

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**13...h6** ; (Hits the White  
 Knight on the King-side.)  
 Black cannot forever tolerate  
 this steed on g5, and now  
 takes steps to try and force  
 it back.

(Diagram)

.  
 If this is a bad idea, I am at  
 a complete loss to suggest



something better.

.  
 .  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 White now dives happily into  
 the e6-square, although this  
 means that White must sack at  
 least one Pawn ...  
 (The next few moves appear  
 to be best and/or forced ...  
 although perhaps 15...a7-a6;  
 was a possibility suggested  
 by a few of the better engines.)  
**14.Ne6! Bxe6 ; 15.dxe6 Nxe4 ;**  
**16.Nxe4 fxe4** ; (Black is  
 still at the count of +1 Pawn ...  
 in the material department.)

.  
 Have a long look at the  
 current position that we  
 now have on the  
 chessboard.

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XABCDEFGHI GHY
8r + - ♖ - t k + ( {
7p p + - ♗ - ♘ - '
6- + p p P + p p &
5+ - + - ♘ - + - %
4- ♗ P + p + - + $
3+ - + - + - ♗ - #
2P + - + - ♗ L ♗ "
1R - ♘ Q + R ♗ - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
    
```

```

XABCDEFGHI GHY
8r + - ♖ - t k + ( {
7p p + - ♗ - ♘ - '
6- + p p P + p p &
5+ P + - ♘ - + - %
4- + P + p + - + $
3+ - + - + - ♗ - #
2P + - + - ♗ L ♗ "
1R - ♘ Q + R ♗ - !
x a b c d e f g h y
    
```

.  
 Black appears to be doing well ... Grischuk has an extra button in his pocket and Black's center Pawn mass looks very imposing here - as well.

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 Has White miscalculated?

.  
**17.b5!** , (Perhaps even - '!!')  
 Amazing!!!!

[If White (instead) immediately captures the button on e4, analysis will show that Black gets a good position:  
 < 17.Bxe4!? d5 ; 18.Bg2 e4<sup>3</sup> ;  
 and Black is slightly better. ]

.  
 This move has many purposes:  
 #1.) To open the game for White's two Bishops.  
 #2.) To break down ...  
 - and split up - Black's solid Pawn structure.  
 #3.) To undermine the BN on e7; which is the cornerstone of helping to maintain the overall integrity (& protection) of the second player's center.

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**17...Rf6** ; (Proly best.)  
 This must be one of the best move choices for Black, it is the first choice of Fritz, Houdini and Stockfish.

[A former student of mine ... who now lives in the state of CA on the west coast and takes lessons with a GM ... suggested 17...d6-d5; here.

.  
At first, I wanted to brush this move aside, however, it was not so easily batted away, nor quickly refuted.

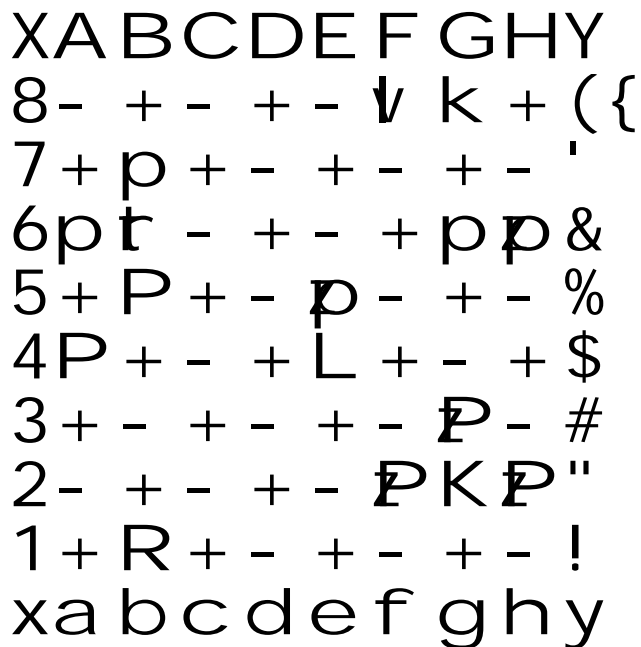
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For example: (</=) RR17...d5! ? ; (Dubious?)

- 18.Ba3! Re8 ;
- 19.cxd5 cxd5 ;
- 20.Qb3! Qb6 ;
- 21.Rad1 Rad8 ;
- 22.Bxe7 Rxe7 ;
- 23.Rxd5 Rxd5 ;
- 24.Qxd5 Qxe6 ;
- 25.Qxe6+ Rxe6 ;
- 26.Bxe4 Rb6 ;
- 27.a4 a6 ;
- 28.Rb1 Bf8 ;
- 29.Kg2<sup>2</sup> , ('±')

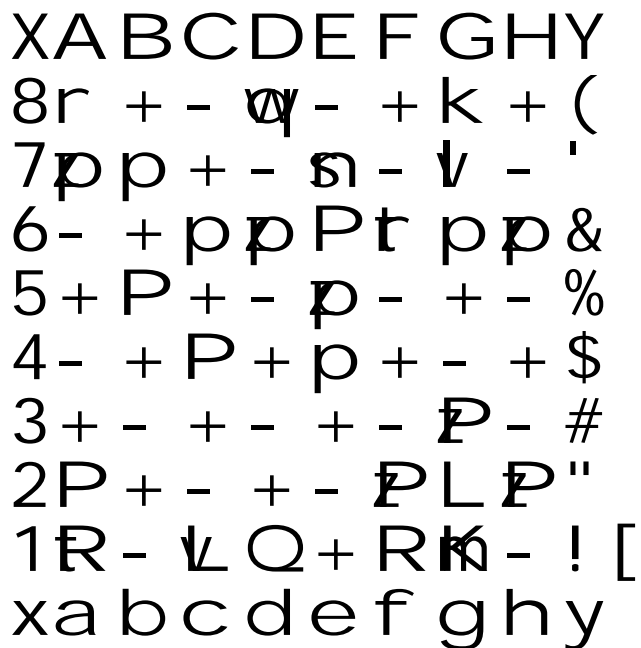
White is clearly better here ...

(Diagram)

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... ..  
but can you win this position



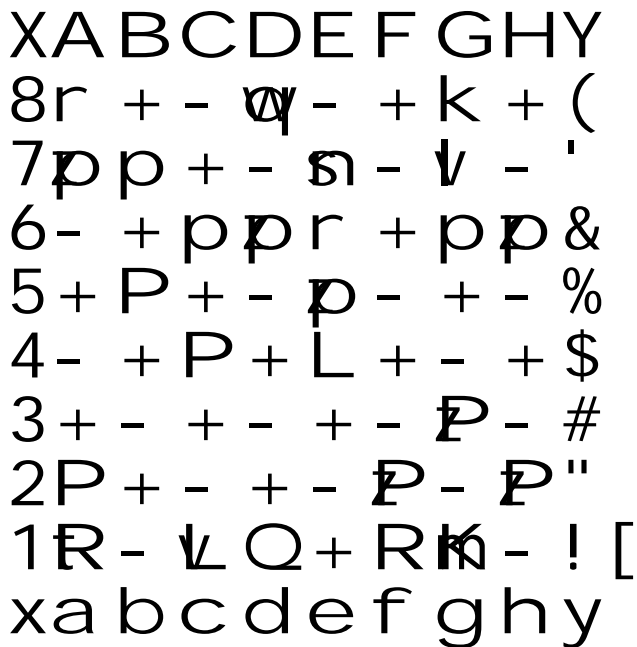
with the Bishops of opposite colors on the chessboard? ]



.  
Once more, Black seems to be OK here ... if White has any advantage here, it is less than a quarter of a point.

**18.Bxe4 Rxe6 ; (Best!?)**

The first player has managed to get his Pawn back, (the front, doubled Pawn - that was standing on e4); however, Black won the other foot soldier on e6 ... .. and remains a Pawn ahead.

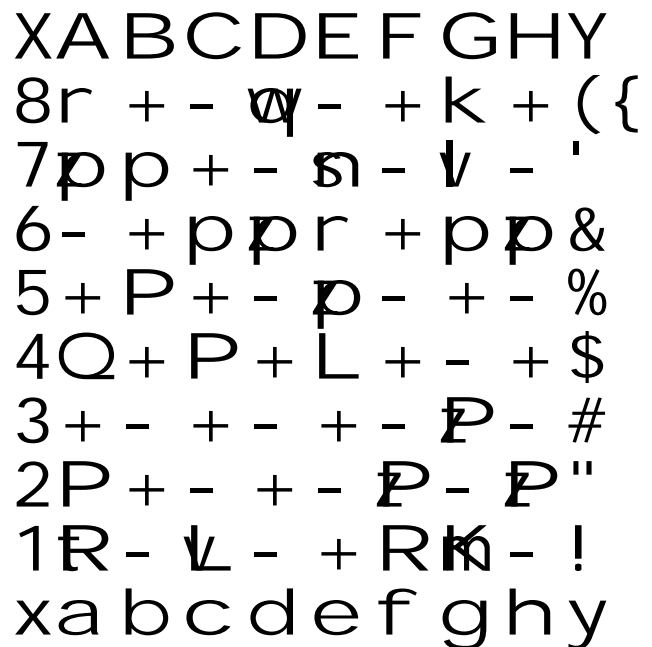


GM Grischuk currently maintains a balance on his spreadsheet of "+1" in buttons ... .. and appears to even have the better overall game.

**19.Qa4!** , (Testing & probing.) White puts the maximum pressure on Black's position, the emphasis

here is for White to deploy all of his pieces as quickly as possible, while maintaining the tension on the second player's position.

[ RR19.Rb1!?² , - Fritz 13 ]

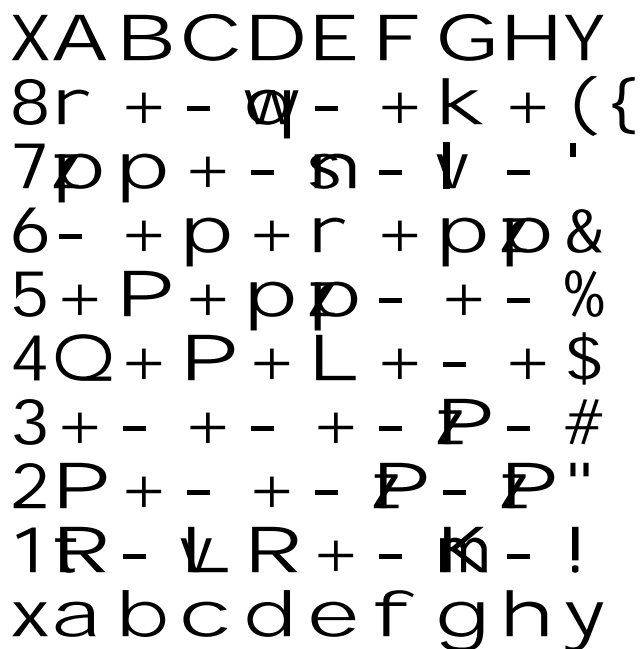


It is not easy for Black to find a way out of this predicament ...

Black's next move appears to be practically forced here.

**19...d5!** ; **20.Rd1** , (The d-file.) White piles on the pressure here.

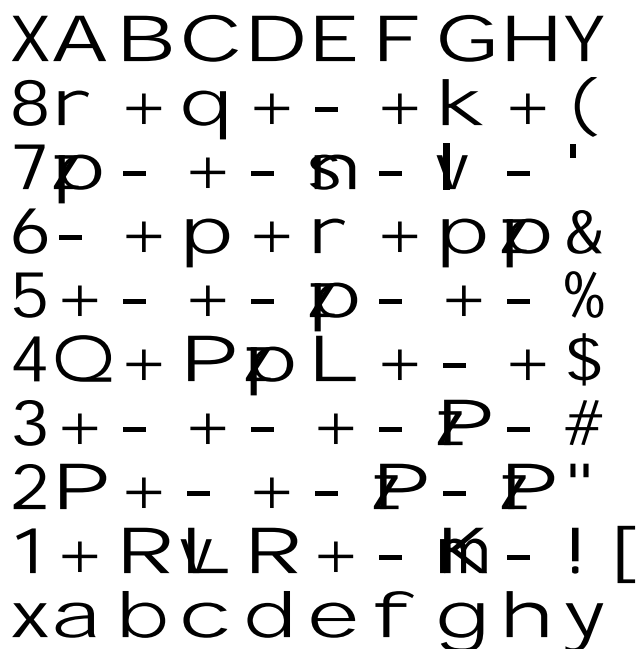
[ </= RR20.bxc6!? dx e4-+ ]



This move is just the first of many pins in this game.

**20...Kh7!?** ; (King-safety.)  
 Black both gets his King to a safer square and even uses his leader to guard a key Pawn on g6 as well. (Grischuk was rightly concerned that Kramnik would eventually play either Bc4 or Qb3, and his Rook - on e6 - would be caught in an unfortunate pin.)

[Possibly better was: (>/=)  
 RR20...d4!? ; 21.bxc6 bxc6 ;  
 22.Rb1 Qc8÷ ; (unclear)



when maybe Black can successfully defend his position from here. ]



Instead of 20...Kh7; many of

the engines seem to prefer 20...d4; although after 21.Rb1, "+/= " ... .. White would have had great play in any case.

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**21.cxd5 cxd5 ; 22.Qb3f** , (White has clear pressure down the a2-g8 diagonal.)

.

Pin - now Black's QP cannot move, as this would drop the Rook on e6. (Maybe - '!')

.

[Interesting was: < 22.h4!? , for White. (Black will come out on top after he plays the BQ to c8.) ]

(Diagram)

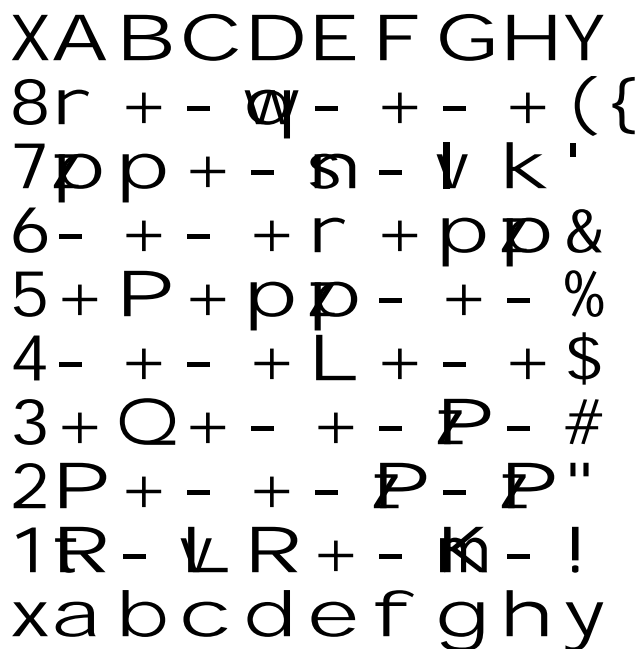
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Black struggles mightily, however, Kramnik is both extremely accurate and also incredibly relentless.

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A critical position - for the whole of this game - has now been reached.

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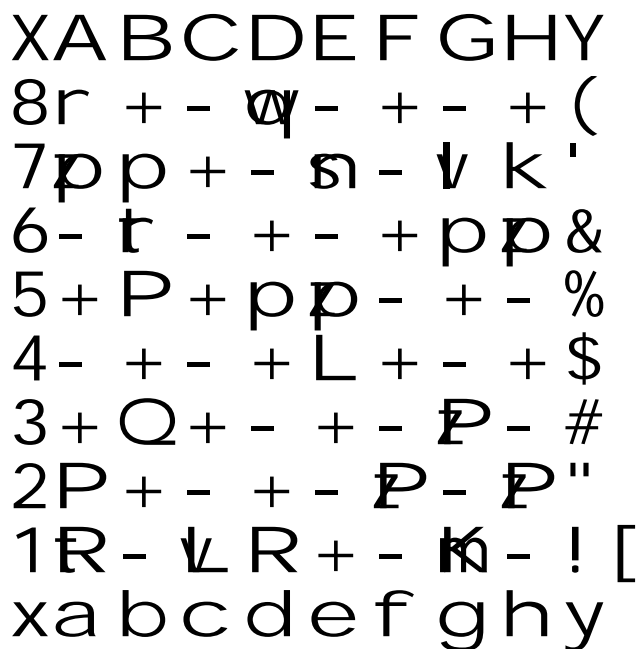
**22...Rb6!?** ; (Look, the b-file.) Black returns the favor by pinning White's QNP to the lady here ... ..

.

[Much better was: >/= <sup>1</sup> 22...Rf6! ; 23.Ba3 d4! = ; White will win back a button on b7, but this seems a large improvement over the game. ]

[. \*\*\*\*\*

The following line was also probably an improvement over the actual game: (>/= <sup>1</sup> 22...Qd7 ; 23.Ba3 d4 ; 24.Rac1<sup>2</sup> Rc8,, ; (Black has some counterplay.) ]

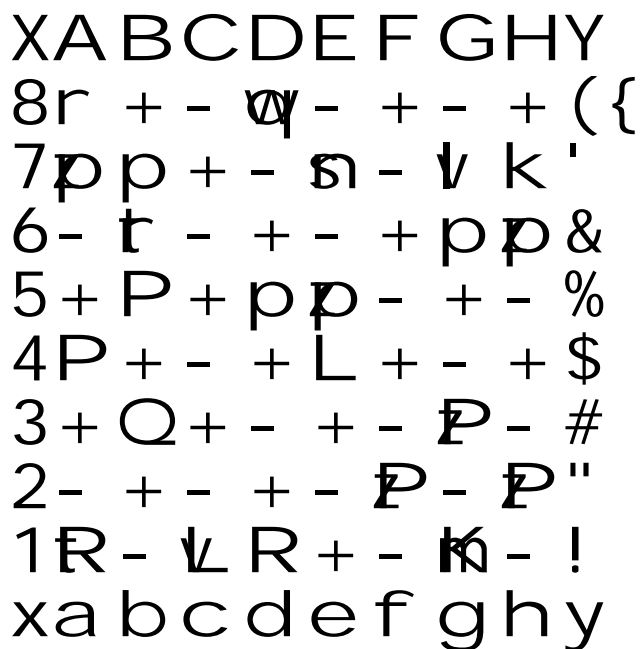


At first glance, Black appears to be on the verge of obtaining a very good game here. (Yet deep study has convinced me that Black's 22nd move was probably inferior here.)

**23.a4!** , (Space, reinforcement.) Kramnik does not panic, but calmly improves his position.

[ RR23.Bxd5!? Rd6 ; 24.Ba3÷ , (unclear) ]

(Diagram)



Despite Black's extra infantryman, many of the engines still show a small plus for White.

**23...a6 ; 24.Ba3! axb5!?** ; hmm (The losing move?)

Grischuk plays to slowly (but surely) free his position. Yet a careful analysis shows that this was not Black's best move.

[Black may have had better chances for survival here by sacking the exchange: (>/=) <sup>1</sup> 24...Qe8!?

; (Best?) This is the move that most of the better engines indicate that Black should

play here.

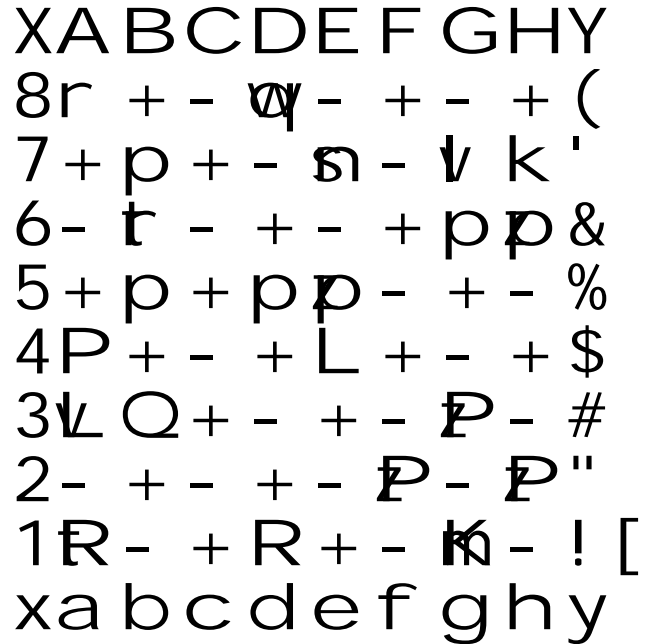
25.Bc5 axb5 ; 26.Bxb6 bxa4 ;  
 27.Qc2 dxe4 ; 28.Qc7 Nf5 ;  
 29.Rd7<sup>2</sup> h5<sup>©</sup> ; (cntrplay)  
 Black has some piece play ...



if White can win from this position it is neither easy nor quick. ]

(Diagram)

Apparently, the capture on b5 might have been imprudent, the box recommends (instead) that he play 23...Qe8.



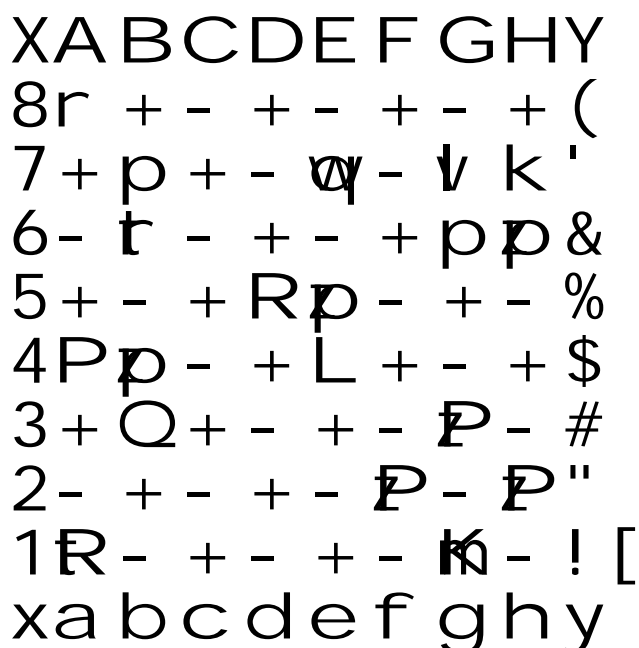
25.Bxe7 Qxe7 ; 26.Rxd5<sup>2</sup> ,  
 This move looks very natural, but the silicon monster finds a move that might be even better here for White.

[Maybe better was: (>/=)  
 RR26.a5! Rba6 ; 27.Rxd5 Rxa5 ;  
 28.Rxa5 Rxa5 ; 29.Qd3 Ra6 ;  
 30.h4<sup>2</sup> , (Maybe - '±')  
 when White is very close to having a winning initiative. ]

To me, Black's next move appeared to be a very natural move for Grischuk. **26...b4** ; (Is this bad?)  
 Black was unable to capture

on a4, as this would have  
dropped the Rook on b6.  
(Pin on the b-file.)

[Probably better was: >/=  
1 26...Ra5! ; 27.Qb1!<sup>2</sup> , (plus)  
- Deep Fritz 14. ]



We have Bishops of opposite-  
colors ... under normal  
circumstances, this would mean  
a draw was likely ...  
but this heroic struggle is far from  
being run-of-the-mill. (Here - only  
Kramnik's Bishop fulfills any really  
useful function, for all the good  
that it is doing, {in this position};  
Black's Bishop on g7 might as  
well be just a Pawn. So - for all  
practical purposes - White is

simply a piece ahead in this  
position.)

**27.a5 Qf7!?** ; (There are  
multiple pins here ...  
on the a-file and also  
on the a2-g8 diagonal.)

Here, Black resorts to tricks of  
his own in an attempt to try  
and maintain the balance.  
(White cannot capture on b6,  
owing to the hanging Rook  
on a1. And White must also  
be careful about moving his  
Rook on d5, a careless play  
wit this piece could leave  
the WQ hanging on b3.)

[ RR27...Rf6 ; 28.Rb5!<sub>±</sub> ]

**28.h4!** , (What is the threat?)  
Now White was - if allowed -  
going to simply shove his Pawn  
all the way to h5 ... winning.

[Less effective was: </=  
< 28.Rad1 Rxa5!<sup>3</sup> ;  
when Black is probably OK. ]



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XABCDEFGHIY
8r + - + - + - + ( {
7+ p + - + q v k '
6- t - + - + p p &
5P - + R p - + - %
4- p - + L + - P $
3+ Q + - + - P - #
2- + - + - P - + "
1R - + - + - K - !
x a b c d e f g h y

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Naturally, Black could not allow this to occur.

**28...h5** ; ("Box?")

This looks to be completely forced for Black in this particular position.

[ RR28...Qe6!? ; 29.h5+- ]

**29.Qd1!** , "+/-"

White - again - does many things, with just one move.

Now, suddenly, and almost

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XABCDEFGHIY
8r + - + - + - + ( {
7+ p + - + q v k '
6- t - + - + p + &
5P - + R p - + p %
4- p - + L + - P $
3+ - + - + - P - #
2- + - + - P - + "
1R - + Q + - K - !
x a b c d e f g h y

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without warning, Black is completely lost.

(The pin on the a-file has been broken. Now White has many threats, such as a5xR/b6, Rd7 and also QxP/h5+.)

Grischuk stares at this mess for a while and then rightfully decides that there will be no saving his position.

A truly wonderful game ... nearly perfect - in fact. (In less than 30 moves, Kramnik rendered a 2750+ player helpless.)

---> A game for the ages!!!!!!!!!!!! (After over three years of work, I think I can finally say - for sure - why Black lost this game. At move 18, Black was fine. However, a whole series of inaccurate moves lead to his resignation 11 moves later.)

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