

Nepomniachtchi, I
Grigoriants, S RUS

Aeroflot Open A 2015 (2.12.2015-28.03.2015)
 [A.J. Goldsby I]

"Game of The Month"
 for March, 2015.

This game features a young
 player that I have never
 shown the spotlight on before,
 and it also showcases an
 opening that I have not
 looked at in quite some time.

1.e4 e5 ; 2.Nf3 Nf6 ;
 The Petroff Defense.
 (Petrov/Russian Defense.)

(Diagram)

Of course, this opening was
 a big favorite of {former}
 World Champion Karpov
 and also pioneered ...
 in a really big way ...
 by the great American,
 GM Frank J. Marshall.
 This is an opening that
 seems to be (mostly)
 ignored by contemporary

C43
2714
2573

X A B C D E F G H Y
 8 r n l ~~q~~ k v - t (
 7 p p p p + p p p '
 6 - + - + - ~~n~~ - + &
 5 + - + - ~~p~~ - + - %
 4 - + - + ~~P~~ + - + \$
 3 + - + - + N + - #
 2 P ~~P~~ P ~~P~~ - ~~P~~ P ~~P~~ "
 1 ~~R~~ N ~~L~~ Q ~~K~~ L + R ! [
 x a b c d e f g h y

GM's in our current era.
 (Of course, far fewer GM's
 use 1.e4, nowadays - so all
 of these lines have waned
 somewhat over the course
 of the last 30+ or so years.)

3.d4!? , (Maybe - '!')

This move - which blows up
 the center - was popular over
 100 years ago.

[The main line would
 have to be: (>/=) RR
 3.Nxe5 d6 ; 4.Nf3 Nxe4 ;
 5.d4 d5 ; 6.Bd3 Nc6 ;
 7.O-O Be7 ; 8.c4 Nb4 ;
 9.Be2 O-O ; 10.Nc3² , (plus)
 with White holding a
 slight edge here.

[See MCO-15, page #98;
columns no. one through
col. number six, (mainly
column # 03); and also
all applicable notes.]

A good - and relatively
recent example of this
line - would have to be:
GM T. Radjabov - GM A. Giri;
FIDE Grand Prix (R# 10.1)
Tbilisi, Georgia (RUS) / 2015.
{A tough draw in over 50
or so moves.}]

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 r ~~n~~ l ~~q~~ k ~~v~~ - t ({
7 ~~p~~ p ~~p~~ p + p ~~p~~ p '
6 - + - + - ~~n~~ - + &
5 + - + - ~~p~~ - + - %
4 - + - ~~P~~ P + - + \$
3 + - + - + N + - #
2 P ~~P~~ P + - ~~P~~ P ~~P~~ "
1 R N ~~L~~ Q ~~M~~ L + R !
x a b c d e f g h y

I think that Nepomniachtchi
used this line so as to quickly
get off the beaten path ...
of known/mainline theory.

3...Nxe4 ; (liquidation)
Black grabs the center Pawn,
this is one of Black's most
solid and reliable lines here.

[The main alternative to
...NxP/e4 is taking White's
QP on d4, for example:
3...exd4 ; 4.e5 Ne4 ;
5.Qxd4 d5 ; 6.exd6 Nxd6 ;
7.Nc3 Nc6 ; 8.Qf4 g6 ;
9.Bd2 Bg7 ; 10.0-0-0² 0-0,, ;
when Black's position
looks to be fully playable.

[See MCO-15, page # 101;
column # 12, & all notes.]

One of the few good games
in this system would have
to be this older gem:
Y. Sakharov - S. Furman
/ [C43]
URS-ch sf
Kiev, USSR; (R#13) / 1957.
{White won a nice game
in a total of 45 moves.}]

(Diagram)

White has to be careful so
as not to allow the f2-square

X A B C D E F G H Y
 8 r n l w k v - t (
 7 p p p p + p p p '
 6 - + - + - + - + &
 5 + - + - p - + - %
 4 - + - P n + - + \$
 3 + - + - + N + - #
 2 P P P + - P P P "
 1 R N L Q K L + R ! [
 x a b c d e f g h y

to become over-burdened,
(see the note after Black's
fourth move in this game).

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.
.

4.dxe5!? , (open lines)

My opinion is that this is
a fully playable line for
White, although it is
condemned by a couple
of opening books ...
and at least one DVD.
(I base this on several
years of analysis with
engines - although you
can forgive me if I do
not divulge any of that
work here.)

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[Modern theory shows that
the first player should play

the following opening branch
as being possibly the best
mode of play for White:

RR4.Bd3! d5! ; (center)

Once more, note how

Black ignores trying to
win material and just
plays for holding the
center of the board.

(RR4...Nc6!? ; 5.dxe5 d5 ;

6.exd6 Nxd6 ; 7.O-O Be7 ;

8.Nc3÷ , (unclear)).

5.Nxe5 Nd7 ; 6.Nxd7 Bxd7 ;

7.O-O² , (w / a plus?)

when White might have a
tiny edge here.

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[See MCO-15; pg. #101;
column # 09 & all notes.]

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Note the relevant contest:

GM Magnus Carlsen (2826) -

GM Wang Yue (2732); [C43] /

ICT / Third Pearl Springs

Nanjing, China / 22,10,2010.

{White won a tough game ...

in just over fifty moves.}]

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.

4...d5 ; (hmmm)

This is OK, and is also a
safe and solid move here
for Black.

(A very famous example of

4...d5; would have to be:

GM B. Jobava - GM A. Grischuk;

ICT / FIDE World Cup;

Khanty-Mansiysk, RUS; 2009.

{White lost his Queen -
and then resigned - in
only 16 moves! See
<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1565514>.)}

[Instead, after the variation
of: (>/=) RR 4...Bc5 ;
5.Qd5!? Bxf2+! ; 6.Ke2 f5!³ ;
Black probably stands a
little bit better here.

See the contest:
GM Adam Tukhaev -
IM Oleg V. Ivanov;
National Champ. Tn.
Alushta, UKR; 2009.
{A long, tough draw ...
in almost eighty total
moves - incredible!}]

(Diagram)

However, a very important
alternative ... and one that
was (at one time) hotly debated
by opening theory, would
have been 4...Bc5.

X	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
8	r	n	l	q	k	v	-	t	(
7	p	p	p	-	+	p	p	p	'	
6	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	&	
5	+	-	+	p	P	-	+	-	%	
4	-	+	-	+	n	+	-	+	\$	
3	+	-	+	-	+	N	+	-	#	
2	P	P	P	+	-	P	P	P	"	
1	R	N	L	Q	M	L	+	R	!	[
	x	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	y

5.Nbd2 Nc5!? ; (tempi?)
Black loses some time with
this retreat, but it should not
be fatal, as long as both
sides don't get too creative.
(The engines still assess this
position as being relatively
equal here.)

[A safe route for Black ...
(but possibly a very
boring one) ... would be
the following line:
RR5...Nxd2 ; 6.Bxd2 Be7 ;
7.Bf4 c5 ; 8.c3 Nc6 ;
9.Bd3 Be6= ; (equal)
N. Short - Y. Seirawan;
Lugano, 1986.

[See MCO-15, pg. # 101;
col. #09, and also note (i).]]

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X A B C D E F G H Y
8 r n l w k v - t (
7 p p p - + p p p '
6 - + - + - + - + &
5 + - n p P - + - %
4 - + - + - + - + $
3 + - + - + N + - #
2 P P P N - P P P "
1 R - v Q K L + R ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

.
I know that, in one well-known game, that Black would usually swap on d2 ... and also get a fully playable game, as well. (See the note given below.)
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.
Now the indicated move is 6.Nb3, and this is what "Nepo" plays here.

6.Nb3 Nxb3!? ;

This seems to open the a-file here for White maybe 6...Ne6; was just a little better.
.

[(>/=) 6...Ne6 ; 7.c4 dxc4 ; 8.Qxd8+ Nxd8 ; 9.Bxc4÷ , (unclear)]

.
.
7.axb3 Be7 ; 8.Bd3 c5 ; 9.c3 Nc6 ; "=" (equal)

This has got to be a level position here, but now both sides have a lot of choices to make here.
.

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 r + l w k + - t (
7 p p + - v p p p '
6 - + n + - + - + &
5 + - p p P - + - %
4 - + - + - + - + $
3 + P P L + N + - #
2 - P - + - P P P "
1 R - v Q K - + R ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

.
The machine likes 0-0 here for White, but the GM finds a slightly different try.
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(10.Ra4!? prepares a possible Rook transfer to the K-side and also prevents ...Bg4; by Black.)

10.Ra4!? Be6 ; 11.0-0 h6 ;

This stops any and all thoughts of White playing

his DSB to g5 ... but it also slightly weakens Black's Kingside here.
(The box liked 11...a6.)

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 r + - Q k + - t (
7 P p + - V p P - '
6 - + n + l + - P &
5 + - P p P - + - %
4 R + - + - + - + $
3 + P P L + N + - #
2 - P - + - P P P "
1 + - V Q + R K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

Now both sides have got to make a plan for the coming middlegame.

12.Re1 , (Safety.)

This is a simple and also a solid move ...

White simply defends his important center Pawn.

[The engines like: (>/=)
RR12.Bc2 Qc7 ;
13.h3 a6 ; "="

- Deep Fritz 14.]

Now the machines likes 12...Qb6; followed by 13...a7-a6; but there is only a minor difference between the two moves.

**12...Qd7 ; 13.Bd2 Rd8 ;
14.Qc2 a6 ; 15.h3! Qc8 ;**

It is still a fairly level game, neither side has any real advantage here.

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + q t k + - t (
7 + p + - V p P - '
6 p + n + l + - P &
5 + - P p P - + - %
4 R + - + - + - + $
3 + P P L + N + P #
2 - P Q V - P P + "
1 + - + - R - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

Both sides are playing well, but the position is pretty complicated, there are a great deal of things to look at every move.

Now the engines like
16.Bf4, for White, when
16...0-0; gives Black a
rock-solid position.

(However, "Nepo" plays
a second alternative which
plunges the game into a
deep mire of obtuse and
wild complications.)

16.Rf4!? b5!? ; (space)

Thus far, it is a level game,
but now White gets maybe
a little too experimental.

(Most engines liked simply
castling on the 16th move
for Black)

.

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + q t k + - t (
7 + - + - v p p - '
6 p + n + l + - p &
5 + p p p P - + - %
4 - + - + - R - + $
3 + P P L + N + P #
2 - P Q v - P P + "
1 + - + - R - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

.

This would be a good place
for diagram, as the fireworks

are about to start.

.

17.h4!? , (Probably dubious!?)

White goes for some unclear
play with some attacking
chances on the King-side.

.

However, the computer shows
this to be a dangerous for
White, the "evals" immediately
begin to tip in Black's favor.

(In the final analysis
after nearly a month of work ...
I never found a clear refutation
of White's overall concept.
So ... maybe 17.h4!?)

.

[White could maintain a
level playing field with the
following continuation
here: >/= 1 17.Bf5 0-0 ;
18.Bxe6 Qxe6 ;
19.Qd3÷ , (unclear)
when Black looks to have
the better dynamic chances.]

.

.

The next few moves look
to be forced, (for both sides).

17...g5 ; 18.Rf6™ g4 ;

19.Nh2™ , (Forced?)

Thus far, both sides have
been playing "forced"
moves, but now Black
decides to grab the Rook ...

[<19.Rxe6? , (DIH)]

X A B C D E F G H Y
 8 - + q t k + - t ({
 7 + - + - v p + - '
 6 p + n + l R - p &
 5 + p p p P - + - %
 4 - + - + - + p P \$
 3 + P P L + - + - #
 2 - P Q V - P P N "
 1 + - + - R - K - !
 x a b c d e f g h y

This will give White clear attacking chances on the dark squares ... for a very long time.

Now the machines like 19...d4; and 19...h5.
19...Bxf6!? ; (hmmm)
 Black decides to accept White's offer, however, he may have regretted this decision later on.

[Probably better was: (>/=)

RR19...d4! ; 20.Rxh6 Rxh6 ;
 21.Bxh6 Bxh4 ; 22.Bf4 dxc3 ;
 23.bxc3 Bxb3!³ ; (w/an edge)
 Black has an extra Pawn ...
 and real winning chances.]

20.exf6 Kd7 ; (Maybe - '!')

This is probably the most accurate, if Black's King remains on the K-side, he might get hammered. (20...Kd7; is also the first choice of all the chess engines, as well. 20...h5; 21.Bf5, Kd7; may simply transpose back into the continuation that was played in the actual game.)

Up to this point, the game been of an extremely high caliber. However, now the game sees several miscues, one can only guess as to the reason why. {Stress? Time pressure? Something else?}

Now Fritz and Houdini seem to prefer 21.Bf4, here.

21.Bf5 h5!? ; (hmmm)
 It is easy to criticize a GM ... who is playing moves in the heat of battle ... especially when you can (repeatedly) run a half

dozen of the world's best chess engines in the background ... while you play "armchair QB" free of stress, and offer advice while comfortably sipping a cup of coffee. (I have almost no respect for players who have never really played the game and have never experienced the trauma and tension of tournament chess.) And while I fully appreciate the strain of tournament chess, it is also a good annotator's job to try and find improvements for a game that they are examining.

[The following variation was probably (at least) a small improvement over the game: (>=) RR21...Bxf5 ; 22.Qxf5+ Kc7 ; 23.Qf4+!? Kb6 ; 24.Nxg4÷ , (level?) when neither side can brag of holding any real appreciable edge in this position.]

(Diagram)

Having said it, (see the diatribe

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + q t - + - t (
7 + - + k + p + - '
6 p + n + l P - + &
5 + p p p + L + p %
4 - + - + - + p P $
3 + P P - + - + - #
2 - P Q L - P P N "
1 + - + - R - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

in the paragraph given above); I still must remark that 21...h5; was probably not the best, and that 21...Rde8; and 21...Bxf5; were probably superior to the try of 21...P-KR4 here.

When attacking, and I cannot find a clear line leading to an advantage, I like to make a move that pins my opponent down and also restricts the overall movement of his most important pieces. (This is exactly what "Nepo" does here.)

22.Bf4 , (Maybe - '!')

I like this, however, many of the better engines prefer the immediate capture on the e6-square. (See below.)

[After BxB/e6; White can easily get a big advantage, what follows is just one sample line: (>/=)
 RR22.Bxe6+ fxe6 ;
 23.Qg6! Rdg8 ;
 (< 23...Rdf8!? ; 24.f7! Nd8 ;
 25.Bg5!² , w / an edge).
 24.Qf7+ Kd6 ;
 25.c4!f , (initiative)
 when White seems to have a small edge and an enduring attack.
 (White's big threat is Bf4+ next, and Black cannot ignore this.)]

X	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Y
8-	+	q	t	-	+	-	t	{	
7	+	-	+	k	+	p	+	-	'
6	p	+	n	+	l	P	-	+	&
5	+	p	p	p	+	L	+	p	%
4	-	+	-	+	-	v	p	P	\$
3	+	P	P	-	+	-	+	-	#
2	-	P	Q	+	-	P	P	N	"
1	+	-	+	-	R	-	K	-	!
x	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	y

Now Black is in a jam and cannot easily wiggle out if it ...

at least, not in this position.

22...Rde8?! ; (hmmm)
 (Maybe an error?)

Black plays what he probably believes to be a good move, however, it transpires that Black's last move was simply just a mistake.

[Both of the following tries were a clear (and solid) improvement over the actual game:

RR ¹ 22...Qb7! ; 23.Nf1÷ ,
 (unclear) and also]

[.
 RR ¹ 22...Rhe8 ; 23.Rd1² .
 (Small plus for White.)
 Both lines minimize the problems that Black had during the game.]

(Diagram)

Black has problems here ... yet he was far from being dead lost in this position.

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + q + r + - t (
7 + - + k + p + - '
6 p + n + l P - + &
5 + p p p + L + p %
4 - + - + - v p P $
3 + P P - + - + - #
2 - P Q + - P P N "
1 + - + - R - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

.
23.Rd1± d4?! ; (Maybe - '?')

This causes Black even more trouble here, 23...Na5; is a much better move here.

(The last thing Black needs to do here is open lines for all of White's pieces - making his opponent's attack even more virulent than it already was.)

[A fairly decent improvement here would be the following line for Black: >/=

¹ 23...Na5 ; 24.b4 Nb7 ;
25.c4!!± , (w / a big edge)
(25...d4; 26.Be4, with Black having a tough position.)
... when White's onslaught will be hard to stop.]

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + q + r + - t (
7 + - + k + p + - '
6 p + n + l P - + &
5 + p p - + L + p %
4 - + - p - v p P $
3 + P P - + - + - #
2 - P Q + - P P N "
1 + - + R + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

.
Now we have to have another look at the position ... and try to understand what happens next.

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24.cxd4! , (Best.)

This is the most precise move for White, it also follows the well-known idea that usually the attacker wants as many open lines as possible.

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[Also good was:
RR24.Nf1!?± ,
with a solid advantage
for White.]
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24...Nxd4 ; 25.b4 , (!)

White takes advantage of the pin down the d-file, the BN (on d4) cannot take the WQ, as it is pinned to the Black King. (This is an example of an absolute pin.)

[RR25.Qe4 Rd8÷]

X	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Y
8-	+	q	+	r	+	-	t	({
7	+	-	+	k	+	p	+	-	'
6	p	+	-	+	l	P	-	+	&
5	+	p	p	-	+	L	+	p	%
4	-	P	-	n	-	L	p	P	\$
3	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	#
2	-	P	Q	+	-	P	P	N	"
1	+	-	+	R	+	-	K	-	!
x	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	y

Of course, if now the Pawn on c5 takes the WP on b4, then RxN/d4+ is the reply.

A critical position has now been reached, and although Black is in a bind, he may have still saved himself with an accurate defense.

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25...Qc6? ; (Losing.)

And Black - having been subjected for many moves of intense pressure, finally commits the decisive error.

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[>/= ...Kd8[]; was forced, for example:

¹ 25...Kd8™ ; 26.bxc5± , but White still has a very powerful attack.]

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The next few moves all appear to be forced here - for both sides.

26.bxc5 Qd5 ; 27.Qe4 Qxe4 ; 28.Bxe4 Bd5™ ; (Best.)

This "give-away" looking move was pretty much forced, if Black had played his Rook to d8, then RxN/d4+ was just winning for White.

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(Diagram)

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This is an important position ... and White may now have missed the best continuation.

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```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + - + r + - t (
7 + - + k + p + - '
6 p + - + - P - + &
5 + p P l + - + p %
4 - + - n L v p P $
3 + - + - + - + - #
2 - P - + - P P N "
1 + - + R + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

29.Rxd4!? , (Error?)

This is probably good enough for White to win, but "Nepo" had a much better move.

[Much better was: >/=

¹ 29.Bxd5! Ne2+ ;

30.Kh1 Nxf4 ;

31.Bxf7+ Kc6 ;

32.Bxe8+ Rxe8 ;

33.f3 g3™ ;

34.Nf1 Rf8 ;

35.Rd6+ Kxc5 ;

36.Rxa6+- ,

with an easily won game for White. (In some of the lines that I looked at, White won ALL of Black's Pawns in this wild endgame!!)]

The next few moves all look to be good for both sides, although 32.Nf1 might be a small improvement over the course of the actual game.
29...Rxe4 ; 30.Rxd5+ Kc6 ; 31.Rf5 Rhe8 ; 32.g3!? , (luft)
 White gives himself a good escape square, although playing the WN to f1 was probably just a little better.

[An improvement was: >/=

¹ 32.Nf1! Rc4 ; 33.Be3+- , with a won game for White.]

Now Black had to play 32...Rh8[]; missing this, the second player simply is blown away.

32...Rb4!? ; ('?') **33.Rxh5 Rxb2 ;**

34.Nxg4 b4!? ; **35.Ne5+ Kb5!?** ;

36.Nxf7 , '+-' Black Resigns.

(White has the decisive threat of Nd6+, forking the BK and the BR.

Additionally, the White KBP is a monster and a "fast" passer ... there was no real reason for Black to play on.)

Black gives up this one, there really was not much reason to play on from this point.

[I could give MANY lines here showing how easy it would be for the first player to win, the following variation is - I think - maybe the most natural; (the one a human might actually try to play):
 36.Nxf7 Re1+!? ; 37.Kg2 Re6 ;
 38.Nd6+ Kc6 ; 39.f7 Rf6™ ;
 (The only move to try and stop White's Pawn.)
 40.Rf5 , ('+-' White is winning.)
 Black cannot stop the White KBP from reaching the last rank ... and even Black sacks his Rook for the KBP and tries to run his own Pawns, White's KRP is still faster than any of Black's Pawns.]

(Diagram)

X	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Y
8-	+	-	+	r	+	-	+	{	
7	+	-	+	-	+	N	+	-	'
6	p	+	-	+	-	P	-	+	&
5	+	k	P	-	+	-	+	R	%
4	-	p	-	+	-	✓	-	P	\$
3	+	-	+	-	+	-	P	-	#
2	-	t	-	+	-	P	-	+	"
1	+	-	+	-	+	-	K	-	!
x	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	y

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The really outstanding thing about this game was the depth of White's concept, the exchange sacrifice was VERY deep and almost impossible to calculate over the board!