

NEW IN CHESS

READ BY CLUB PLAYERS IN 116 COUNTRIES

Ivanchuk and Karjakin take Rapid & Blitz World titles

**Nigel Short
How I became British KO Champion**

Judit Polgar on Paul Keres

**Parimarjan Negi
Do you believe in fortresses?**

Timur Gareyev relives his Blindfold Record

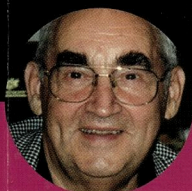
Jovanka Houska's favourite square

A surprise in the Open Spanish

Winner Grand Chess Tour and World number 4

Wesley So

'At the end of the day I want to be world champion'



MARK TAIMANOV REMEMBERED BY GENNA SOSONKO



The New Blindfold King

Timur Gareyev
takes world
record to 48 games



The legendary Miguel Najdorf stunned the world with a blindfold simul against 45 opponents in Sao Paulo in 1947. It wasn't till 64 years later, in 2011, that Marc Lang broke this world record by taking on 46 players. On December 4, 2016, at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, Timur Gareyev erected a new touchstone. Riding 50 miles on a spin bike, the American grandmaster successfully completed 48 games in 18.5 hours without sight of the board. Here's his mind-boggling story, written by **TIMUR GAREYEV** himself with the help of his friend and collaborator Jennifer Vallens.

'What I discovered was that the steady movement of the bike made such a difference in my focus and flow of blindfold chess.'

There is a famous quote from the French painter Paul Gauguin, 'I close my eyes so I can see'. When I play blindfold chess, I do just that... close my eyes and see. I don't just see pieces on a chessboard though, I see 48 different works of art. Each game painted with a different brush stroke.

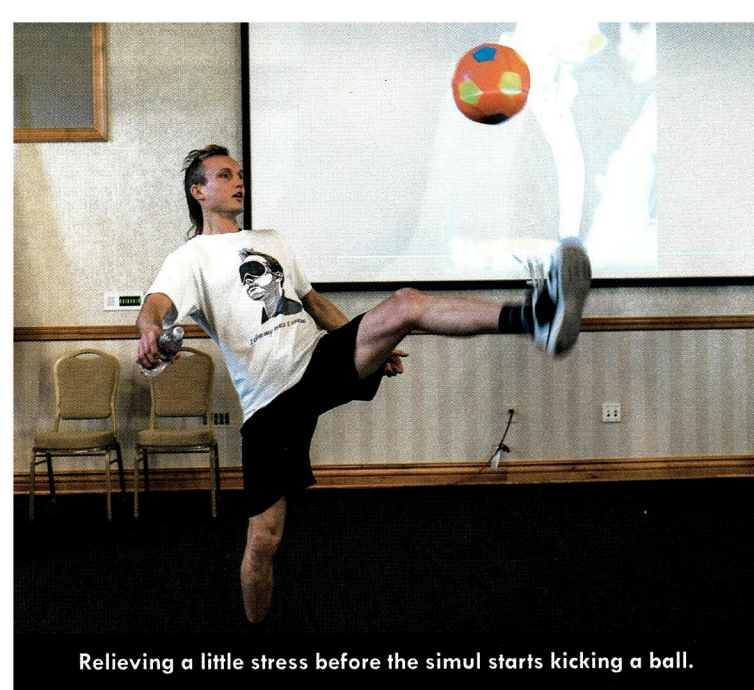
My fascination with blindfold chess started around 2011, when I played my first blindfold chess game, a game played without the sight of the board or pieces. The simple act of blindfold chess is not so difficult for the skilled chess player. Ask any IM or GM to go over a game that he just played and he can recount the

moves without looking at the board. Blindfold chess is like that. At my level, most games played with a lower strength player have a predictable pattern to them. But once you add additional games played at the same time, keeping track and recalling each individual game becomes much more challenging.

I enjoyed this mental challenge and started increasing the number of boards that I could play. The challenge with blindfold chess is less on strategy, as it would be in a competitive game with a player of similar strength, and more on the exercise of visualizing through imagery. When I started increasing the games over

10 or 15 boards, the added challenge of endurance captivated me. I did several exhibitions in 2013, most notably a 27-board blindfold simul in Hawaii and 33 boards in St. Louis.

I found the challenge of perfecting the art of blindfold chess thrilling and I began dreaming about breaking the world record. But it wasn't until I met Jennifer Vallens in 2014 that a real plan came in focus. She saw the beauty and significance in what I was set to accomplish. Together we developed a common vision to share the art of blindfold chess with the world and the 'blindfold king' was born.



Relieving a little stress before the simul starts kicking a ball.

Asking the participants what they had for breakfast.

PHOTOS: LENNART OOTES

Over the next two years, I mastered my craft as I travelled on my blindfold chess tour. Some of my most memorable events have included playing 35 boards blindfolded in California, breaking a world record for Tandem blindfold chess with Blindfold Chess Champion Marc Lang in Germany, and setting a new world record for rapid blindfold Consecutive Games in Iowa.

My training not only consisted of playing blindfold chess, but I needed to work on my endurance and memory as well. This past year, I ran a couple of marathons and even went on a 3,000-mile weeklong ride on a motorcycle.

I began practicing yoga daily, implemented a vegan diet and I also started working with a memory expert who helped me develop memory techniques.

Just for kicks

It was during this tour when I came up with the idea of pairing bike riding with playing blindfold chess. We were in Ft. Collins, Colorado, at an elementary school. I hopped on a stationary bike in the gym during a break of prep-

aration for the blindfold chess the next day. As I pedaled the bike, I decided, just for kicks, that I would experiment with riding the bike during the event. What I discovered was that the steady movement of the bike made

'I began practicing yoga daily, implemented a vegan diet and I also started working with a memory expert who helped me develop memory techniques.'

such a difference in my focus and flow of blindfold chess. Now I try to always incorporate some form of exercise into my blindfold chess play.

This blindfold chess journey was not without its trials. Jennifer did everything she could to promote blindfold chess and find sponsors. We were looking for a host who could finance the event and find a location that could accommodate a 24-hour event with 50 or so players who would

commit to that timeframe. There were talks with the Chicago chapter of Mensa, the Prague Chess Society and the Stockholm Chess Federation, but at the end of the day there were always obstacles that frustrated our ambitions.

In the end we decided to bring the event back to the US. My goal was set for 2016. With no sponsorship in sight and the end of the year approaching, our options were looking bleak. But Jennifer and I decided to forge ahead and organize the event ourselves.

We had two months to pull it together. Jennifer started a crowdfunding campaign and reached out to family and friends. We were able to raise 28% of our goal, not nearly enough to subsidize our event. But we continued.

We settled on Las Vegas as the venue because we had so many supportive friends there, and it is a town that never sleeps. We searched high and low for an appropriate location. December 3 was a prime holiday date and hotels and other venues were booking up fast and charging premium rates. We contacted our good friends Juan and Sabrina of the Las Vegas Chess Center to see if they would work with us to plan this event. They enthusiastically agreed. This was the start of building



And pedalling and making moves... until raw-food master Joe caused a half-hour interruption by setting off the fire alarm with his sausages.

a dream team for the event. We invited Lennart Ootes to help with our technology and be our photographer and we asked Jay Stallings to help out with commentary. Both, without hesitation, volunteered their time to support us. Through the Las Vegas Chess Center, I met Keith and Ryan Ray of Killer Dutch Productions. They were eager to get involved and went full throttle, securing 7 cameras and state-of-the-art lighting and sound. We stumbled upon the Foundations Room at UNLV as a potential for the location. When that was secured, it was all coming together beyond our wildest dreams.

Cryotherapy

Jennifer took the role of party planner and took measures to ensure that all participants would feel like they were breaking the world record too. We knew this would be a long day for everyone involved with one move possibly taking up to 45 minutes before the next move could be played. We set up a meet and greet the night before so that we could all feel comfortable and get to know each other.

The Foundations Room was a perfect venue. We had outdoor space and had borrowed two spin bikes for players to ride between rounds. The

room was equipped with wifi and all our technology needs could be satisfied.

My ideal situation would have included a month to prepare physically and mentally. I would have spent the time hiking, doing yoga, meditation and cryotherapy (a form of therapy where you get into a chamber that is set to subzero temperatures for 3 minutes. The shock of the temperatures promote health). I would do all the things that would put me in a spiritual and mental place befitting the magnitude of the task at hand. But as it turned out, without the financing, we had to work together to get the details in order.

I rented a house to share with my mother who came from Kansas and my father who came out from Kazan, Russia, to support me. We housed a few friends as well.

Finding the right spin bike was crucial to my success. When I started doing blindfold events early on, I found that I needed absolute quiet. Small whispers were extremely distracting and took away my mental energy. But since incorporating a spin bike in my performance, I found that I am more engaged and able to interact and talk with the players, and small noises no longer have the same effect on me.

But finding a bike sponsor proved to be equally challenging. We spent hours trying out different bikes to make sure I had the right one. A friend of mine had a connection at the gym at Las Vegas airport who said they would loan us a bike. We had one already from UNLV, but I needed to know I had the best. It was comical to see Jennifer and me buzzing around the airport looking for the gym. Once we found it, we were told we could take two bikes. Here we were dragging spin bikes through baggage claim, down the elevator, outside through airport pick-up and finally to the parking. There we jammed the two bikes in her minivan and off we went just an hour before set-up for the event and meeting the players.

It turned out, with the help of the Las Vegas Chess Center, we were able to secure all 48 of our players. Most were club members and good friends of mine. Participants came out from California, Colorado and as far as Missouri and Tennessee. We had 48 games set up in two rows. Boards 44-48 were not played over the board, but online with participants from Brazil, Sweden and the US. The average rating of the players was 1700. The participant from Brazil was 92-year-old Luciano Nilo de

Blindfold World Record

It is not easy to find out what exact requirements a successful blindfold simultaneous world record should meet, as there are no generally accepted rules. Or rather, there are more or less generally accepted rules, but there are different opinions on all kinds of detail. For instance, Timur Gareyev heard his opponents say their moves, but there are purists who find that the moves should be transferred by a neutral teller. Or, a probably more important issue, what should be the average level of the opposition? When we asked Jennifer Vallens what the average rating of 1700 was based on, she replied that this was based on the USCF ratings that they could verify. Of these players the highest-rated one was 2200, the lowest 895. Six players were rated 1900 or

above. But six players had no ratings. In the history of blindfold chess the lack of clarity or agreement about the rules has led to many disputes, as can be read in the wonderful book *Blindfold Chess* (McFarland) by blindfold authorities Eliot Hearst and John Knott. There are no FIDE rules for such records and there is no governing body for blindfold chess. Timur Gareyev and Jennifer Vallens have sent all the details to The Guinness Book of World Records (who, by the way, don't acknowledge Miguel Najdorf's record, because he allegedly had access to the scoresheets – most experts don't share this view) and are confident that his simul will meet their rules 'with no problem'. But this verification takes time and hopefully we can inform you of their decision in a next issue (DJtG).

Andrade, the only surviving participant from Najdorf's 1947 record simul!

At the meet and greet, it was helpful to see the set-up and imagine the players seated at their boards. Talking with the players also helped me to experience their personalities, voices and styles. Knowing the players prior certainly helped distinguish the opening systems on different boards, which tends to be the toughest part.

We set up the boards in a double u-shaped arc. We placed the name cards with rating level at each board. I was able to visualize the players at the boards and later watched a digital video of the name cards. This helped me prepare for the task.

'I am alcoholic'

On the morning of December 3, people started arriving at 7 a.m. The games were to start at 8 a.m. While the players were registered, I relieved a little stress playing soccer.

Once each player was seated, I went around the room having each of them say their name and their rating.

'The participant from Brazil was 92-year-old Luciano Nilo de Andrade, the only surviving participant from Najdorf's 1947 record simul!'

Players were encouraged to share what they had eaten for breakfast or anything they wanted to include in their introduction. This was a great ice breaker, but also helped with my memory associations. When I came to Robert Giordano's board and his turn came up to introduce himself, he joked 'Hello, my name is Robert and I am alcoholic'. The crowd burst out in laughter and the whimsical tone was set for the day.

After shaking everyone's hand, I took one last mental picture of the room. I swung my leg over to step up

on my bike and slipped my blindfold over my head, swiping my sight for total blackness. Before I could start my first game, I needed to get my head in the right space. I ignited my ujjayi breath. In yoga, that is referred to as the victorious breath of fire. I inhaled deeply through my nose, taking in enough oxygen and holding it in for a count of 5, and slowly I exhaled also through my nose for another count of 5. I did this a few times. This rhythmic breathing helps me stay present, self-aware and grounded. With that, I began 'Board 1'.

Everything was progressing as it should. The mood remained light. The players were able to get up from their seats and grab a bite to eat, walk around to watch the other games and take turns being interviewed in the back for the live stream broadcast. Wearing an actual blindfold had been more of a prop in my first years, but now as I put on the blindfold, it transforms me and I am better able to focus and recreate the positions in my mind.

In previous events, players have quit due to endurance challenges and I have actually encouraged players to take back their poor moves and look for better ones. But this event was different, all the players were engaged and on their game. They were up for the task and as motivated to see it through as I was.

Using all your senses

I would announce my move by saying the board number and then calling out my move. We had a teller work in 3-4 hour shifts. The teller held a microphone. In the initial rounds I would ask each player to say their name before calling out their moves. When each player would say his/her name, it would often trigger the board position to pop up in my mind. The image is not necessarily a board position per se, but rather a recall of the game. With blindfold chess, it is not photographic memory that allows me to play, but rather the meditative

World Record Blindfold Chess

	boards
1919 Richard Réti	24
1921 Gyula Breyer	25
1924 Alexander Alekhine	26
1925 Alexander Alekhine	28
1925 Richard Réti	29
1931 George Koltanowski	30
1933 Alexander Alekhine	32
1937 George Koltanowski	34
1943 Miguel Najdorf	40
1947 Miguel Najdorf	45
2011 Marc Lang	46
2016 Timur Gareyev	48

source: *Blindfold Chess* by Eliot Hearst and John Knott

ability to imagine and associate. This ability truly feels like the 'art of blindfold chess'.

I feel that in order to truly engage your memory, the best method combines using all of your senses. I think that perceiving the board as a whole, similar to how you would scan a page or paragraph in the methods of speed-reading, works best.

As I flowed from one game to the next, I was able to sustain my energy by foods and drinks. Eating solid foods requires a lot of work to digest, so I stuck with liquids. Sustaining this high level of cognitive function

without coffee, sodas and traditional energy drinks was a top priority. My friend from Colorado, Joe of Joe's Magic Foods, provided me with a steady flow of raw drinking chocolate for natural caffeine and fresh squeezed organic apple juice to keep my blood sugar in check. Since I was blindfolded, every time Joe brought me a new food, I was surprised with an unexpected flavour. Watermelon marinated in lemon juice was refreshing and acted like both a stimulant of melon sugars and enzymes with a zing of lemon. I was unprepared for the taste of pickled Serrano peppers, but they provided a welcome jolt of energy. Joe made smoothies made up of tons of brain boosting ingredients like avocados, beets, coconut oil and green leafy vegetables.

I took a few breaks, 8 to be exact, for about 10 minutes each. These breaks were basically my only chance to stretch out my legs and use the restroom.

After about two and a half hours in and despite all the cool action on Board 1, the first fireworks were going off on Board 4 in my game with Tom Brownscombe.



NOTES BY
Timur Gareyev

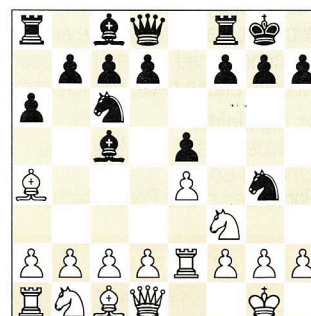
Tom Brownscombe (2149)

Timur Gareyev

Blindfold World Record 2016

Ruy Lopez, Møller Defence

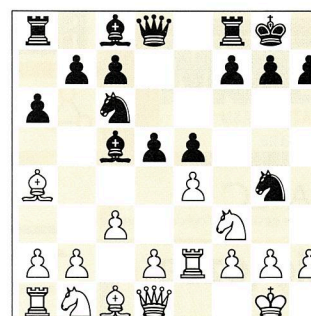
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6
4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙c5 6.♞e1
♘g4!? 7.♞e2 0-0



8.c3

After 8.h3 f5!, all of a sudden Black's intentions unfold. Now 9.hxg4? gives Black too much play: 9...fxg4 10.♘xe5 g3 11.d4 ♙xd4 with a crushing attack. On 9.d3 Black has 9...d5!? 10.♙g5 ♞d6 11.♘c3 fxe4 12.dxe4 ♘d4!, with attack.

8...d5!

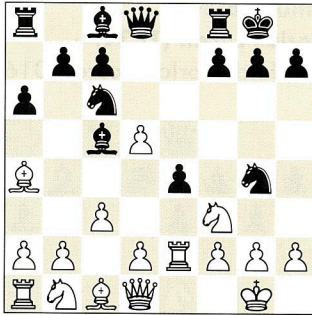


9.exd5?

This is a big mistake from which White can no longer recover. Necessary was 9.d4 exd4 10.exd5 (after 10.cxd4? ♘xd4! 11.♘xd4 dxe4 12.♞xe4 ♞h4 White cannot successfully cope with Black's initiative) 10...♞xd5 11.♙xc6 ♞xc6 12.cxd4 and White is OK.

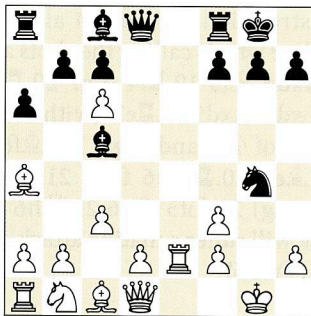
9...e4!





A killer shot that my opponent missed in his analysis!

10.dxc6 10.♘g5 hits on 10...♖d6! 11.g3 ♗xd5 12.♜xe4 ♜xh2! 13.♙xc6 (13.♞xh2 ♖h5+ 14.♞g1 ♙g4 winning) 13...bxc6 14.d4 ♙g4 and Black wins. **10...exf3 11.gxf3**



11...♜xh2! Black's attack now develops in one breath.

12.♙e5 ♗f6! 13.♞xc5 ♜xf3+ 14.♞g2 ♙h3+! 15.♞xh3 ♗h4+ 16.♞g2 ♗g4+ 17.♞f1 ♜h2+ 18.♞e1 ♞fe8+ White resigned.

Now speaking of fire, three hours into the simul we had a fire in the kitchen! Or at least that's what the police and firemen thought as the fire alarm went off. The piercing alarm rang in my ears and would not stop going off as everyone had to evacuate. I was led outside and had to keep from letting my mind wander and worry about how this unforeseen circumstance could set us back in time. I instead implemented my victorious breathing and enjoyed the kiss of the warm sun on my face.

As we found out, it was Joe who was using his portable cooker to make sausages for participants that

set off the smoke sensor. Thirty minutes after the incident happened, everyone returned to their places and we picked up right where we left off.

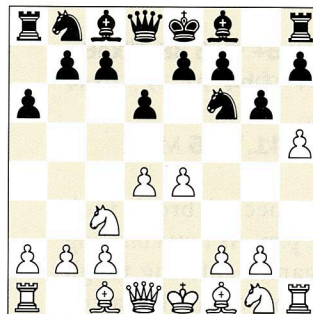
As I mentioned the 'cool action' on Board 1, I might as well show you that game too.

Timur Gareyev
David Dashoff
Blindfold World Record 2016
Pirc Defence

1.d4 d6 2.e4 g6 3.h4

This is the kind of move everyone wants to play but somehow feels shy to pull the trigger. Kind of like guests at a party waiting to have their first cocktail before starting to mingle. Well, we are not the kind that will postpone all the fun until the next great game, so let's get the party started now!

3...♜f6 4.♜c3 a6 5.h5!



Leading up to the idea to make this game crazy enough to make it worth our attention.

5...♜xh5 6.♞xh5!?

6.g4 is also a worthwhile approach, for example 6...♜f6 7.g5 ♜fd7 8.♙e3.

6...gxf3 7.♗xh5 h6 8.♜f3 ♞g8

9.♙c4 e6 10.♙f4 ♗f6 After

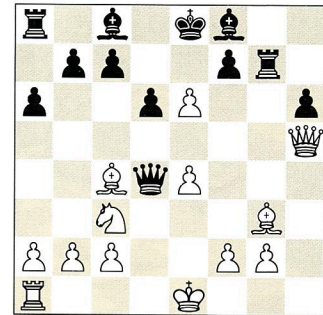
10...♞xg2 11.♙g3 ♗f6 12.0-0-0 ♗g6 13.♗h3, Black is definitely in

a position to give the exchange back and keep an extra pawn.

11.♙g3 ♜c6 12.d5 ♜d4?

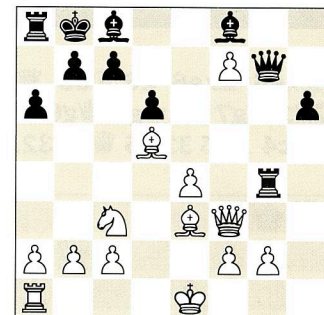
The beauty of an aggressive strategy and applying constant pressure, is that your opponent has many more opportunities to make a mistake!

13.♜xd4 ♗xd4 14.dxe6 ♞g7



15.exf7+ White could also withdraw the bishop, 15.♙b3, with a winning advantage.

15...♞d7 16.♗f5+ ♞c6 17.♙d5+ ♞b6 18.♗f4 ♞g4 19.♗f3 ♞a7 20.♙f4 ♞b8 21.♙e3 ♗g7



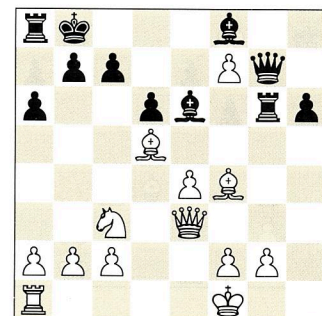
Ironically, I have gone through the motions of chasing Black's king into safety.

22.♞f1?! Instead, 22.0-0-0 was more natural. For example, 22...♞xg2 23.e5 ♞g1 24.e6 winning.

22...♞g6 23.♙f4

23.♙b3 was better: 23...♙e6 24.♙xe6 ♞xe6 25.♜d5 ♗xb2 26.♞e1 with a clear advantage for White.

23...♙g4 24.♗e3 ♙e6



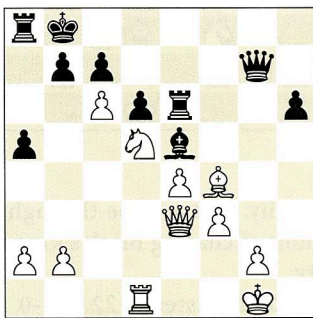
Now Black gets the f7-pawn.



MARIUS LUCAN

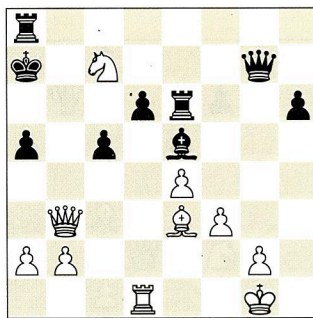
The cool action on Board 1 in the game with David Dashoff ended with a nice combination.

25. ♖xe6 ♜xe6 26. ♘d5 ♚xf7
27. ♜d1 ♙g7 28. ♙g1 ♚g6 29. f3
a5 30. c4 ♙e5 31. c5 ♚g7 32. c6



I have managed to consolidate my game and now execute the attacking plan.

32... bxc6 33. ♚b3+ ♙a7 34. ♙e3+ c5 35. ♘xc7



35... ♚g3?? And David lost his cool. Instead, 35... ♜g8 was the proper way

to seek counterplay, when 36. ♘b5+ ♙a6 37. ♘c7+ is an interesting repetition of moves.

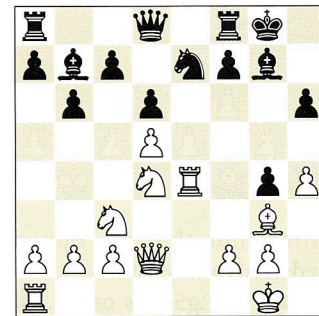
36. ♙xc5+! Now I execute the combination that I trusted I had calculated well.

36... dxc5 37. ♘b5+ ♙a6 38. ♚xe6+ ♙xb5 39. a4+ ♙b4 As 39... ♙xa4 40. ♚c4 is mate.

40. ♚b6+ ♙c4 41. ♚b5 Mate.

A second unexpected break took place around 2 p.m. As I was blasting through the games entering tough middlegame action, one of the participants, Marius Lucan, got concerned about a wired device I was wearing. I was not sure what was happening, but I was asked to take a break asap and was escorted outside. The technicians explained that I was using a wireless microphone and that the device on my back was a transmitter, the same that the commentator was using. With Marius as a witness, the wireless mic was removed. To remove all suspicions I refused to wear the wireless mic any longer and continued with an overhead mic. Lucan went on to win his game and when interviewed on the livestream he said that he was convinced that no cheating had been going on and went on to say that this was the best day of his life.

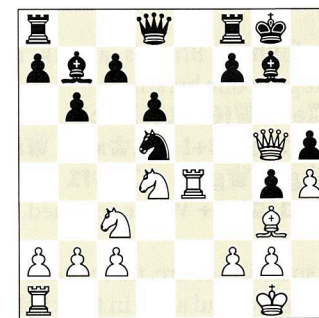
Timur Gareyev
Marius Lucan (1834)
Blindfold World Record 2016



16...h5 17. ♚g5?

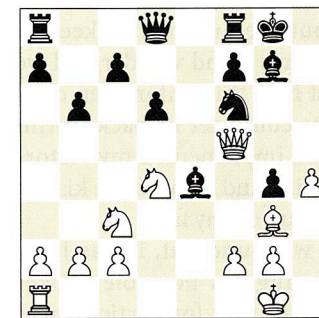
Missing an important tactical shot. 17. ♜ae1! instead, was giving White a winning advantage: 17... ♘xd5 (less catastrophic is 17... ♙xd4 although it's clear who is calling the shots after 18. ♜d4 ♘f5 19. ♜f4 ♘g7 20. ♜fe4) 18. ♘d5 ♙xd5 19. ♜e7! (with the big threats of ♘f5 and ♚g5) 19... ♙f6 (or 19... ♙e6 20. ♜1xe6 fxe6 21. ♜xg7+ winning) 20. ♘f5 ♙e6 21. ♚h6 and Black will suffer a mating attack.

17... ♘xd5!



Now I am in trouble and must calculate a way to keep myself in the game.

18. ♚xh5 ♘f6 19. ♚f5 ♙xe4





Once his suspicions were dispelled, Marius Lucan called the experience 'the best day of his life'.

My opponent reversed the move order in an effort to confuse me and it worked!

20. ♖xe4?? This sure is not a sacrifice. As I assessed the bishop capture on e4, I assumed that the knights had gotten traded already. Over and over again I realize how important it is to stay in the moment when playing blindfold chess!

That said, after 20. ♖xe4 ♜xe4 21. ♖xe4 ♜xd4 22. ♖xd4 f5 White does not have sufficient compensation to hold the game in balance.

20... ♖xe4 White resigned.

Fatigue set in around midnight, around the 16-hour mark. I don't know how Lennart was able to keep up with the never-ending task of entering all the moves. He was my quality control, making sure all moves were legal and entered correctly. He singlehandedly entered over 2700 moves played and recorded manually!

Despite lack of sleep, an imperfect memory system, and unexpected higher strength of the majority of the players, I trusted that my human

mind wouldn't settle for anything beyond brilliant. I've read that the subconscious handles 90% of our daily thought processes and actions. Just like stepping up to the chess table and instantly noticing the best opportunity virtually with no conscious thought, I trusted flowing from one board to the next, connecting with the memory anchors. I used a combination of animal and fruit associations in my mind. It also helped to play alternate colours to vary up the games and keep them distinct.

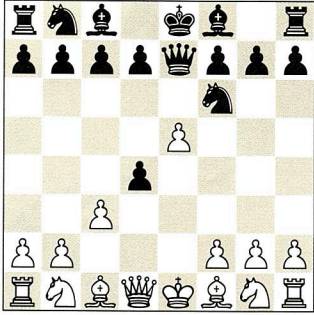
For example, considering you may have a sequence of several openings such as 1.d4-d5, 1.e4-e5, 1.c4-e5. You may choose the image of Princess Diana for the Queen's Gambit, Elvis Presley for 1.e4-e5, and an Englishman drinking a cup of tea for the English Opening. Now the key is to anchor those characters along the journey through your memory palace. As the games evolve you may elaborate on more ways to distinguish and transform the images to aid your memory.

The challenges are definitely in the opening of the games. But as I reach the 'state of flow', visualizing becomes effortless and turns into awareness. It becomes easier to see and execute as the game goes on. The positions become more distinct.

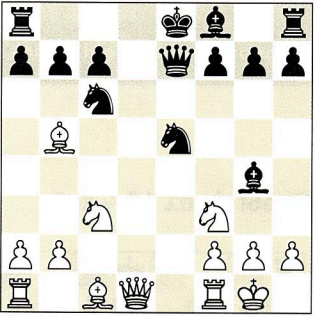
Here is a game in which I lost track in the opening. But that did not stop me from tricking my young opponent a bit later with 'an offer he could not refuse'.

Timur Gareyev
Wu Shenmein
 Blindfold World Record 2016
 King's Pawn, Centre Game

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 ♖f6
 Here I briefly lost track of the opening position. Fortunately, I was able to recover quickly: 'Oh that's the Dutch Gambit game number 36' (It's actually not the Dutch but the Danish Gambit - ed.).
4.e5 ♖e7



Certainly a risky way to handle the opening since the queen will be blocking the dark-squared bishop.
5.cxd4 d6 6. ♖f3 ♜c6 7. ♘b5 ♙g4 8.0-0 dxe5 9.dxe5 ♜d7 10. ♜c3 ♜xe5



My opponent bites! (You may want to have a look at his smile in the accompanying picture ☺)



Wu Shenmein: Really, can I take your queen?

LENNART QOTES



After 18.5 hours the blindfold comes off and it's time to rejoice with Jennifer Vallens.

I like focusing on my breath, and calmness of mind is certainly the key to greater focus. 'Blindfold chess meditation' comes from a place of oneness with the experience. Instead of isolating and handling each board as an outcome, or an enemy to be destroyed, the whole 'circle' of 48 games is experienced as one flow process of effortless decision-making. Anything less than that, and you're burning your engine trying to go 45 miles an hour in 1st gear.

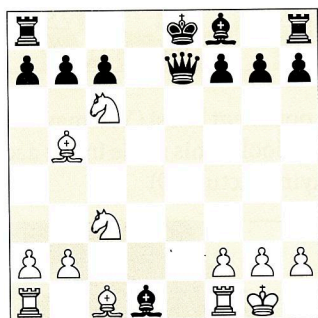
I was told the last game concluded at 3.38 a.m. As I peeled off the blindfold, I was understandably disoriented. It was difficult to gain my equilibrium. I felt like I was in a dream state. But the primary feeling I had was relief. I had just fulfilled my dream. I broke the world record for blindfold chess. I played 48 games in 18.5 hours and rode about 50 miles on a bike. I won 35 games, drew 7 and lost only 6. My overall percentage of wins 80.2%. And you know what, I'm ready to do it again! Anyone interested in sponsoring a 55 board world record event?

But first, I will show you one more game from the simul in Vegas.

Timur Gareyev
Scottson White
 Blindfold World Record 2016
 Sicilian, Smith-Morra Gambit

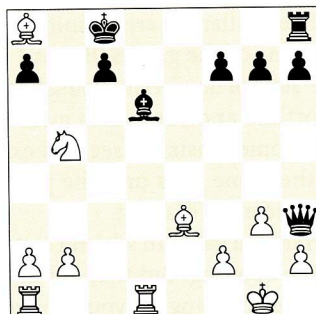
1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3
4.♗c4 ♗c6 5.♗f3 e6 6.♗xc3 a6

11. ♖xe5! ♗xd1 12. ♗xc6



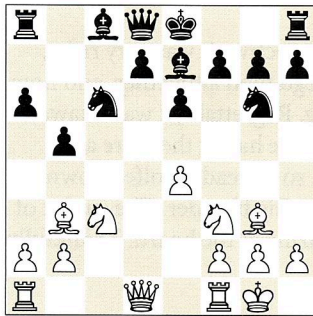
It is not so easy for Black, since I am picking up more than enough material. Plus Black's king gets exposed, and my opponent lacks any development.

12...bxc6 13. ♗xc6+ ♔d8
14. ♖xd1+ ♕c8 15. ♗xa8 ♖h4
16.g3 ♖h3 17. ♗e3 ♗d6 18. ♗b5



And here Black realized the tough nature of his position and resigned.

7. ♖f4 ♗g7 8.0-0 ♗g6 9. ♖g3 b5
10. ♖b3 ♖e7



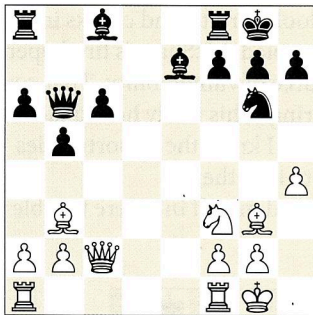
Now that I've completed my development, the question is how do I get through!?

11. ♗d5!? exd5 **12.exd5 0-0!?**

A practical solution by Black to get the king out of the way while still retaining an extra pawn.

After 12...♗a5 13.d6 ♖f6 14.♖d5 ♗xb3 15.♖ae1+ ♖f8 16.♖xa8, despite the computer's verdict of equality, Black's position looks very tough.

13.dxc6 dxc6 14.♖c2 ♖b6 15.h4!?



I like this idea and it worked well in the game.

15...c5?!

15...♖g4 was necessary: 16.♗h2 ♖h5 17.♖f5 ♖c5 and Black retains an edge.

16. ♖d5 ♖b7 17. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 18.h5 ♗h8

Now Black may activate the knight only at the expense of weakening the kingside structure.

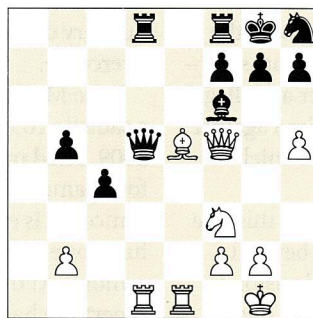
19. ♖fe1 ♖ad8 20.a4 c4 21.axb5 axb5 22. ♖f5 ♖f6 23. ♖e5 ♖d5 24. ♖ad1

24.♖a6!?

LENNART OOTES

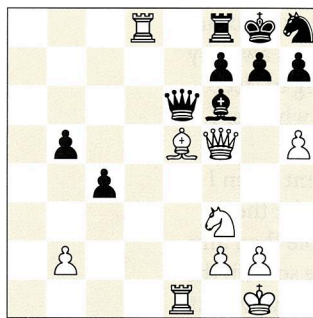


And as always, it's your mother who is proudest of all.



24...♖e6 After 24...♖xd1 25.♖xd1 (25. ♖xf6!? ♖d5 26.♖e5 ♖d1+ 27.♖e1 ♖d5 28.♖g4 g6 with compensation for the exchange) 25...♖xd1+ 26.♖h2 ♖d5 27.♖e4 ♖xe5+ 28.♗xe5 ♖fd8 29.g4 it's tough for Black to avoid getting somehow trapped.

25. ♖xd8



Another queen blunder?? Or a sacrifice...

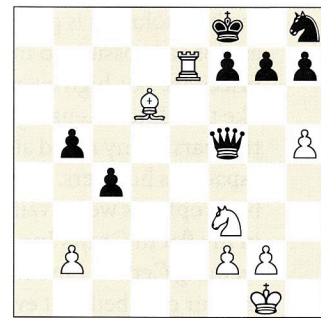
25...♖xf5??

He should have played 25...♖xd8 26.♖xe6 fxe6 27.♖xf6 gxf6 28.♖xe6 ♗f7 with an interesting, likely even endgame. Or 25...♖xd8 26.♗d4, with a white edge.

26. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 27. ♖d6+ ♖e7

Black certainly saw through the complications and realized that I do not recover the material. However, along the weak 7th and 8th rank, Black's king is indeed in trouble.

28. ♖xe7



Now Black has no good defensive ideas.

28...♖d3 Or 28...g6 29.h6 f6 30.♗d4 with a mating attack.

29. ♖e6+ Black resigned. He will either step back with the king followed by mate or has to give up his queen. ■