FIVE TO FIVE

UT Dallas defeats University of Belgrade, ties decade-long Svetozar Gligoric Transatlantic Cup

By DR. ALEXEY ROOT, WIM

The November 6, 2015 opening ceremony for the 10th annual Svetozar Gligoric Transatlantic Cup match between the University of Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas), located in the city of Richardson, and the University of Belgrade, located in Serbia, began politely enough at 12:30 p.m. Through video and audio feeds, dignitaries shared pleasant thoughts about chess and their international opponents. The UT Dallas President ad interim Hobson Wildenthal stated, “[Chess is] a sport, a real sport, but no traumatic brain injuries associated with it.”

I retreated from the playing hall’s charged atmosphere to the VIP room, where Grandmasters Nadezhda Kosintseva and Valentin Iotov provided commentary. One of my ED 4358 (“Using Chess in Elementary Schools”; offered online via UT Dallas eLearning) students asked the grandmasters, “Why aren’t you playing?” Kosintseva replied that they were too old. Stallings clarified, “No titled player over 26 years of age can play.”

UT Dallas Chess Advisory Board President Rodney Thomas acted as the VIP room emcee, often asking Iotov about positions displayed on a giant screen from the Internet Chess Club feed, “Is this position pleasant or unpleasant for the UT Dallas player?” Iotov usually answered, “It is too early in the game to tell.”

The VIP room grandmasters showed a position from one game, discussed it, and then rotated through the other games. By the time the grandmasters returned to the first game, it had completely changed. The time control of 40 (with a five-second increment) meant that the games progressed very quickly. It was impossible to follow all 16 games. Sometime after the match ended, the VIP room crowd learned that UT Dallas had won by a score of 9 to 7.

Grandmaster Aleksandar Indjic, who played first board for UT Dallas, and Grandmaster Sahaj Grover, board six, were both enrolled in my ED 4358 course in the fall semester of 2015. Their extra credit assignment was to annotate their games from the match:
The University of Belgrade Team in Serbia competing against the University of Texas at Dallas. The University of Belgrade is the oldest and largest university in Serbia, founded in 1808 as the Belgrade Higher School. The school seal is in the right corner of the photo.

**NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E21)**
GM Aleksandar Indjic (2564, SRB)
IM Nikola Nestorovic (2457, SRB)

*Notes by Indjic.*

This game was not easy for me because I am from Serbia, so I know all the players who represented the University of Belgrade. It is never easy when you are supposed to play against your friends. Nikola is a very good friend of mine and a very strong chess player too.

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. c4 b6 4. Nc3 Bb4 5. g4

An interesting move, but suspicious. The point of 5. g4 is to create a highly nonstandard position with a lot of complications. I am the only one playing this variation, probably for good reason. The objective value of my move is not good, but it has surprise value. 5. Bg5 is more frequently played.

5. ... Bb7 6. Qd3 d5 7. cxd5 exd5 8. Bg5 0-0 9. h4 Nbd7

Nikola reacted very well to my provocative fifth move. His position is safe and he can start taking advantage of my irregular play.

10. a3 Be7

The other option for Black is 10. ... Bxc3+, followed by 11. bxc3 Re8 12. Nd2 h6 13. Bxf6 Qxf6 14. g5 which is unclear.

11. Bf4 c5

I wanted him to take the g4-pawn to open the g-file. That variation would give me strong compensation for my sacrificed g-pawn leading to unclear play after 11. ... Naxg4 12. Rg1 Ndf6 13. Ng5.

12. Bg2?

The follow-up 12. g5 was the better option 12. ... Ne4 13. Bh3 Re8 14. 0-0 with an almost equal game but probably slightly preferable for Black.

12. ... Re8?!


13. Ng5?

Here I got carried away by the possibility of an attack. Safer and better is 13. g5 Ne4 14. 0-0.

13. ... Nf6?!

The line 13. ... cxd4! 14. Nxd5 Bxd5 15. Bxd5 was my initial idea when I jumped on g5 with the knight. 15. ... Ne5!! I didn’t see this fantastic move. If he plays something else then he has the worse position. Then, after 16. Bxe5 Qxd5 17. Nf3 Nxe5 18. Bxd4 Bc5 my position is very bad.

14. dxc5 Bxc5 15. 0-0-0 Qe7!

Nice move! During the game he was using a very effective strategy. He was always avoiding conflict. Because his position is stronger, eventually I am not going to have any useful moves.

16. Nxd5

I had to play 16. Nxd5, otherwise my position will collapse soon.

Until this moment Nikola played almost a perfect game. Now both of us were in time trouble so we had to play the rest of the game instinctually.


I am a pawn down in the endgame. I think the chances of my getting a draw are similar to his chances to win this position.

26. ... Bd6 27. Ra1 Bb8 28. Ra4 Kf8 29. Re4 g5 30. hxg5 hxg5 31. b4 Rd5 32. KC3 Rd8 33. Kc4 Bd8 34. Kb5 Be7 35. Ne5 Rd1 36. Ne6

He has lost control over the position. Black is not better anymore.

36. ... Nc7+ 37. Ka4?

We were both in time trouble and making serious mistakes. 37. Kc4 would have given me an equal position.

37. ... Bf6 38. Kb3?? Ra1?

The move 38. ... Rd3+! was a winning continuation as after 39. Ka2 Nb5 I am losing material.

39. Bd4 Bxd4 40. Rxd4 a5 41. Rd7 Ne6 42. Ne5 Rb1+ 43. Kc2 Rxb4 44. Rxf7+ Kg8 45. Re7 Nc5 46. f3 a4 47. Ra7 b5 48. Kc3 Rf4 49. Kc2 b4? 50. Ra5

50. ... b3+?

Best is 50. ... Ne6! and it turns out the a-pawn is untouchable because of 51. Rx4 b3+ 52. Kxb3 Nc5+ with a winning advantage to Black.

51. Kb2 Ne6 52. Ra6 Nc5 53. Rc6 a3+ 54. Kxa3 Nb7?

The continuation 54. ... Ra4+ 55. Kb2 Ra2+ 56. Kb1 Na4 57. Rc4 would lead to an equal position.

55. Rc8+ Rf8 56. Rc7 Nd6 57. Kxb3

The situation has changed completely and I’m on top now. We are both playing with seconds on our clock here.


This endgame with a pawn down for Black is hard, especially when you are playing using the increment of five seconds after every move.


Black resigned because he will lose the pawn on g5. At the end I can say this game was full of unexpected turns. Eventually I succeeded in winning it with some luck for sure.

FRENCH DEFENSE, CLASSICAL SYSTEM (C13)
IM Vladimir Lukovic (2439, SRB)
GM Sahaj Grover (2498, IND)
Notes by Grover.

1. e4 e6

I am always comfortable playing the French Defense, one of my main weapons.

2. d4 d5 3. Nc3
This is one of the main lines against the French Defense. Other popular lines include the Advance Variation (3. e5) and the Tarrasch Defense (3. Nd2).

3. ... Nf6 4. Bg5 dxe4!? The moves 4. ... Be7 and 4. ... Bb4 are two other ways to continue in this variation.

5. Nxe4 Be7 This line has gained a lot of popularity recently.

6. Bxf6 gxf6 Black damages his own pawn structure for the pair of bishops. The resulting position is double-edged. The most current theory in this line seems to prove that Black is fine.

7. Nf3 f5 8. Nc3!?
The move 8. Ng3 instead seems more logical and something most people would play, but it isn’t optimal because of 8. ... c5?! Now White doesn’t have d4-d5, which would have been possible had the knight been on c3.

8. ... a6 9. g3 b5 10. Bg2 Bb7 11. 0-0 c5 12. d5!?

This is something I didn’t expect during the game, as before the game I had prepped mainly for 12. dxc5.

12. ... b4 13. dxe6 bxc3 14. exf7+ Kf8 (see diagram top of next column)
This position seems like it’s easy for Black, who is just a piece up, but practically it’s very difficult for Black to continue as most of his pieces are on their original squares. Development always comes first! 14. ... Kxf7? is losing for Black as 15. Ne5+! Kg7 16. Bxb7.

15. Qe2 Bf6!?
The computer’s first suggestion, and a somewhat safe move. I basically wanted to put my queen on e7, and the bishop on b7 to e4, so that I can defend my position.

16. bxc3 Qe7 17. Qc4 Nd7 Never too late to develop pieces!

18. Qf4 Be4 19. Rfe1! I think this move was pretty good as White is setting up a trap, which I fell for.

19. ... Bxc3?
I thought my position was completely winning as both white rooks are attacked. Since White is already a piece down, taking the rook means I would be a rook up, which is just too much material.

20. Rad1!


20. ... Ra7 ? Suddenly I have to save my position, which in this time control was difficult to do.

21. Re2! He was playing very well so far. I had begun to realize that soon enough I may have big problems.

21. ... Qf6!? Most of my pieces were paralyzed, so I decided to advance my queen and make some space in general. 21. ... Qxf7? is bad due to 22. Ng5! and White is winning; 21. ... Kxf7? is also a blunder as 22. Rxe4 Qxe4 23. Ng5+ is winning.

22. Ng5 h6 23. Nxe4 fxe4 24. Qxe4 Qxf7 I had already realized that this position is almost

1950: Yugoslavia defeats USA

In 1950, Yugoslavia defeated the United States of America in a 10-board, four-day “radio match.” Steve Pejovich (photo, center left) was then a high school senior in Belgrade. Before he left Yugoslavia in 1957 for a career culminating as professor emeritus at Texas A&M University, Steve was known by his given name of Svetozar. Svetozar Pejovich and other Belgrade high school chess players volunteered as match assistants. Pejovich remembers, “We got permission to miss four days of school” to relay the moves that one of his fellow volunteers recalled were “radio-received.” Three volunteers were assigned to each game. A first volunteer took each move from the radio room to a second volunteer, who sat across from the Yugoslavian player. That second volunteer made the American’s move on the board and started the Yugoslav’s clock. Pejovich was a third volunteer. His job was to update his assigned game’s demonstration board. I asked Pejovich if he remembered who played that game. He said that Ivkov played for Yugoslavia and asked, “A fellow named Bisguier played for the American side. Is he still alive?” I assured Pejovich that Grandmaster Arthur Bisguier (born 1929) is still alive. Bisguier’s opponent, Grandmaster Borislav Ivkov (born 1933), is also alive. Pejovich could not remember the result of the two games between Ivkov and Bisguier, but the Yugoslavians defeated the Americans 11½ to 8½. (Bisguier defeated Ivkov in their first game; they drew their second game. ~ed.) —Alexey Root
losing for me. I was also low on time. From this moment onward, I was 110 percent focused on defending my position.

25. Bh3 Nf6!? 26. Qf3 Ba5

The move 26. ... Bd4? just loses a piece because of 27. c5!

27. Be6 Qg6 28. Bf5 Qf7 29. Be6 Qg6

I was ready to take the draw here as this is nearly losing for me, but deep inside I knew that my opponent will not repeat such a position three times.

30. Qc6! Qh5

Protecting the c5-pawn.

31. g4! Qg5

The only move, as 31. ... Nxe4? loses to 32. Qc8+! Kg7 33. Rd7.

32. h4?

My opponent is now in time trouble and this is the first of his several inaccuracies which lead to me having a winning position. The most effective (and winning) continuation is 32. f4! Qxf4 33. Qxc5+ Re7 34. Rf1.

32. ... Qxh4 33. Qxc5+ Re7 34. Qxa5 Rxe6 35. Rd8+??

And here is White’s blunder! 35. Qc5+ Kg7

36. Qc7+ Kg6 37. Rxe6 Qxg4+ 38. Qg3 was winning for him, and it’s forced as well. But when it comes to a matter of seconds it’s difficult to make the best choice.

35. ... Kf7 36. Qc7+ Kf6 37. Rxe6

And now I missed a winning opportunity. I encourage the readers of Chess Life to think about how Black can continue.

37. ... Qxg4+??

In time pressure, I missed 37. ... Rxd8! 38. Qxd8 Qxg4+ 39. Kf1 Qxe6 and White can resign.

38. Kf1 Qh3+

Now it’s not possible for Black to play as he did in the previous line as 38. ... Rxd8 39. Rxf6+! Kxf6 40. Qxd8+ and it’s White who will play for a win.

39. Kg1 Qg4+ 40. Kf1 Qh3+, Draw agreed.

So I decided to just repeat the moves and take a draw. This was a difficult game for me. I could have improved in the opening and could have been more prepared for it. Our team nevertheless won 9-7, which is pretty awesome. The Gligoric Cup was a great experience for me!

See more information about the Gligoric Cup at chessclub.com and www.chessdom.com/10th-annual-svetozar-gligoric-transatlantic-cup/.