

Volume 81 No. 5 August 2016 £4.50 UK \$9.95 Canada

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Chess

SPEED DEMON

Magnus Carlsen comes out on top at the Grand Chess Tour's Blitz and Rapidplay events in Leuven



John Henderson on the Spirit of '66



IM Jose Vilela reports on the Capablanca Memorial



Ten Amazing Moves from Amatzia Avni

Chess

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Subscription Rates:

United Kingdom

1 year (12 issues)	£49.95
2 year (24 issues)	£89.95
3 year (36 issues)	£125

Europe

1 year (12 issues)	£60
2 year (24 issues)	£112.50
3 year (36 issues)	£165

USA & Canada

1 year (12 issues)	\$90
2 year (24 issues)	\$170
3 year (36 issues)	\$250

Rest of World (Airmail)

1 year (12 issues)	£72
2 year (24 issues)	£130
3 year (36 issues)	£180

Distributed by:

Post Scriptum (UK only),
Unit G, OYO Business Park, Hindmans Way,
Dagenham, RM9 6LN - Tel: 020 8526 7779

LMPI (North America)

8155 Larrey Street, Montreal (Quebec),
H1J 2L5, Canada - Tel: 514 355-5610

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editors. Contributions to the magazine will be published at the Editors' discretion and may be shortened if space is limited.

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Chess Magazine (ISSN 0964-6221) is published by:
Chess & Bridge Ltd, 44 Baker St, London, W1U 7RT
Tel: 020 7288 1305 Fax: 020 7486 7015
Email: info@chess.co.uk, Website: www.chess.co.uk

FRONT COVER:

Cover Design: Matt Read
Cover Photography: Grand Chess Tour

US & Canadian Readers – You can contact us via our American branch – Chess4Less based in West Palm Beach, FL. Call toll-free on 1-877 89CHESS (24377). You can even order Subscriber Special Offers online via www.chess4less.com

Printed in the UK by The Magazine Printing Company using only paper from FSC/PEFC suppliers www.magprint.co.uk

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Rain, Sangria and Grandstar in Mallorca

Carl Strugnell enjoyed his trip to the Balearic island, where the rounds didn't begin until 8.30pm each day!

"Where are you off to this time?" questioned my cousin. "Mallorca!" I replied. "Oh, sunny Spain. You don't half get around", he countered semi-enuviously. "Ah, you know, I'm stuck in a room playing chess. It's not everyone's idea of a good time. I prefer it when it rains to be honest, so at least I don't regret missing out."

By my attempt to downplay the part-time jet-set lifestyle of a chess fanatic, I brought it on myself. From Swansea to London it was approaching the 80s in early May, and I left feeling optimistic, only to bump through the clouds and land on a wet and windy island. 'Sod's law, I'll have to live up to my word and focus on the chess', I thought to myself.

The tournament in Mallorca was a good standard, with a host of titled players, most of those I spoke to being regulars on their third or fourth visit. From the UK, Lawrence Trent made an appearance, taking off of his managerial cap to glide through the rounds on the top boards until the end, finishing with a 2530 performance.

Yours truly did well enough, partly regaining the stack of Elo I had lost over the past year or so. Pictures are better than words, so let's get to it. A few rounds before our first game, an Englishman, FM John Hall, had beaten my opponent, a promising Spanish youth, so it was up to me to traumatise him of everything British.

C.Strugnell-M.Santos Ruiz
Llucmajor Open 2016
Sicilian Taimanov

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 ♗c7 6 ♙e3 a6

The immediate 6...♘f6 has always prompted 7 f4! as an answer, and if 7...♙b4 8 ♘db5 ♗a5 9 e5 ♘e4 (or 9...♘d5 10 ♙d2) 10 ♗d3. **7 ♗d2 ♙e7!**



The rounds were at 8.30 every evening, so my room-mate GM Thal Abergel and I adopted a crazy rhythm, a healthy mix of nightclubs and lie-ins; we always kept the tournament in mind as our priority though, so limited the booze to Sangria. When it came to preparing for the round each day, I decided to limit it, to get an extra nap in, just in case.

I finally opened my computer an hour before kick-off to discover with horror my opponent played a line that could practically bear his name. I'd never seen it before and didn't have enough time to truly understand the point. The 17 year old, already over 2400, had not only played it more than anyone else, he had an almost perfect score with it, holding a GM and beating everyone else. If you're looking for something under the radar in the Sicilian, this might be a good bet, but of course it will take some work. Indeed, I would hardly call it an SOS line.

7...♘f6 is the more usual means of development. Now 8 f4 has only been given the official stamp of worthiness relatively recently. The point is to avoid the 8 0-0-0 ♙b4 line, which is a theoretical headache; instead, in a nutshell, favouring to weather the storm and seek favourable queenless middlegames.

My opponent's move order denies me the

right to this variation, so we are supposed to go offbeat or settle for the Brazilian or Morozevich lines, which usually arise after 7...♘f6 8 0-0-0 ♙e7 (rather than the principled 8...♙b4) 9 f3 0-0 10 g4 b5 11 g5. Here there are two ideas: 11...♘e8 is a move favoured by Morozevich, in which the knight sometimes bounces back via the d6-square, and 11...♘h5 has been named the 'Brazilian' Taimanov after some of its leading practitioners.

8 0-0-0

Instead, 8 ♙e2!? b5 9 ♘xc6 dxc6 10 e5 ♙b7 11 ♙f4 was unclear and soon agreed drawn in Perez Candelario-Santos Ruiz, La Roda 2016, while without a target on f6, 8 f4 is less tempting: 8...b5 9 ♙e2 ♙b7 10 ♙f3 ♘a5! 11 ♗d3 ♘c4 and Black went on to win in Silva Rodriguez-Santos Ruiz, La Roda 2016.

8...♘f6 9 f4

Critical. 9 f3 would go towards the mainstream, and Black would have forced me into it, which I dislike on principle. Better that, though, than 9 h3 b5 10 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 11 e5 b4 12 exf6 bxc3 13 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♙xf6 15 ♙d4 ♙b7 16 ♖g1 ♙d5, which already favoured Black in Jarque Megias-Santos Ruiz, La Roda 2016.

9...b5! 10 e5 b4



11 exf6

I finally opted for this line, the only one Santos Ruiz seemingly hadn't faced up until then. I reasoned that it was, firstly, better to draw with White than lose with White, then search for a solution in the comfort of my home for next time, and, secondly, that by directly threatening to go towards a known draw line there was a good probability Black would feel forced to play a wild card at some point. It also didn't seem impossible that in practice, if not in theory, White could have the easier time and play on for a bit.

11 ♘a4 ♘d5 looks wrong, but the main alternative 11 ♘cb5 leads to a long forced line: 11...axb5 12 ♘xb5 ♗a5 13 exf6 gxf6 14 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 15 ♗xd6 ♗xa2 16 ♔d3. Here Black has at a minimum a draw, but my opponent had improved on Richard Rapport's game with Grischuk to give White some extra difficulties: 16...♗a1+ (16...♗a5 17 ♙c5 ♗d8 18 ♖h3 ♗a1+ 19 ♘d2 ♙a6 20 ♖xh7 ♖g8 21 ♖g7 ♖h8 22 ♖h7 ♖g8 23 ♖g7 ♖h8 24 ♖h7 ♖g8 25 ♖g7 ½-½ was Grischuk-Rapport, Reykjavik

2015) 17 ♖d2 ♖a2 18 ♖b3 ♖b1! (this actually gives Black an advantage) 19 ♖b5?? (19 ♖g1 ♖xb2 20 ♖d3 ♖a2 21 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 would have limited the damage) 19...♗xh1 20 ♖xc6 dxc6 21 ♖c5 ♖xg2+ 22 ♖e3 ♖a7 23 ♖d3 ♖d7 and Black won in S.Jones-Santos Ruiz, London 2016.

11...bxc3 12 ♖xc3 ♖xf6 13 g4 h6!

Objectively the best move, but it also means he is not buying into my blackmail.

13...♖b7!? 14 ♖g1 ♖b4 was one ambitious line I wondered about. 13...♖b7 is another risky try and has seen a lot of catastrophes, even at the highest level: 14 g5 ♖xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖c8 16 ♖a4 0-0 17 ♖g1 d5 18 ♖b1 d4! (or 18...♖fd8 19 ♖d3 d4 20 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 21 ♖xd4 ♖b6?? 22 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 23 g6+!! fxg6 24 ♖h3+ ♖g8 25 ♖xe6+ and White won in Yu Yangyi-Svidler, Dubai (rapid) 2014) 19 ♖xd4 ♖xf4 20 ♖g3 ♖xg3 21 ♖xg3 ♖fd8 (21...♖xd4 22 ♖xd4 would have equalised) 22 ♖d3 a5? 23 ♖b6 ♖xd3 24 ♖xd3 ♖b4 25 ♖xa5 ♖xd3 26 cxd3 h6 27 gxh6 gxh6 28 a4 and White went on to win in Yu Yangyi-Ganguly, Dubai (blitz) 2014.

14 h4 ♖b7 15 ♖h2! ♖c8

Now f4 is under attack. Instead, 15...♖d6 had already been played via this move order, but given the small amount of time I had to prepare, I was not aware of it. Moreover, it would have been a much better bet to reach some sort of unbalanced position: for example, 16 ♖d2 ♖xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♖f3 is just pretty unclear.

16 ♖d2



16...♖d6!?

It's alive! The game is on!

16...♖xd4! is the usual suspect: 17 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 18 ♖xd4 (now we understand why ♖h2 was played) 18...0-0 19 g5 h5! 20 ♖f2 d5. Although Ivan Saric did beat Yu Yangyi from here, proving that even a 2700 can go wrong, it stands to reason Black has equalized, or at least is close to having done so. The latter, by the way, adopted the line as White five months later, as we saw above. It's just a shame we didn't get to see if Yu had an improvement on the 13...h6 line, but we can only imagine he did.

Here after 21 ♖e1 (White can also opt out if he so pleases: 21 ♖d3!? g6 22 a3 a5 23 ♖e1 ♖c6 24 ♖f6 ♖b5 25 ♖xb5 ♖b6 26 ♖ee2 ♖xb5 27 ♖xe6 fxe6 28 ♖xg6+ forced a draw in Guseinov-Macieja, Istanbul Olympiad

2012) 21...g6 22 ♖e3 a5 23 ♖b3 a4 24 ♖xa4 ♖c5 25 ♖g2 ♖a8 26 ♖b4 ♖xb4 27 ♖xb4 ♖e2 28 ♖e2 ♖a6 29 ♖d1 ♖a8 30 ♖g3 ♖c4 31 ♖d2 ♖a1 32 ♖c3 ♖g7 33 ♖f3 ♖8a2 34 b3! ♖a6? (now the rooks can't get back home; 34...♖f1 was required) 35 ♖c7! ♖a5 36 f5! exf5 37 ♖d4 (37 ♖b6! and then to f6) 37...♖b5 38 ♖xd5 ♖f1 39 ♖d8 ♖a6 40 ♖d5 ♖f2+ 41 ♖c3 Black resigned in Saric-Yu Yangyi, Wijk aan Zee 2014.

17 ♖b3!

Black should be fine after 17 ♖xc6 ♖xd2+ 18 ♖hxd2 ♖xc6.

17...♖xd2+ 18 ♖hxd2 ♖b4! 19 ♖c5 ♖d5! 20 g5 hxg5 21 hxg5



A second big decision for Santos Ruiz: where to go?

21...♖e7

After 21...♖d8 it's a true shame 22 ♖xa6 doesn't quite work out, in view of 22...♖xa6 23 ♖xd5 ♖e2! 24 ♖e1 ♖c4! 25 ♖f5 ♖c7 26 ♖d4 0-0 27 ♖c5 ♖xf4+. Instead, 22 c4?, with the idea of 22...♖c7 23 ♖xd5! exd5 24 ♖e1+ ♖d8 25 ♖e7+, fails upon 22...♖xf4! 23 ♖xd7 ♖f3. Thus White must go 22 ♖g2! ♖c7 23 ♖f1, which is a mess and I wouldn't have been either scared or confident.

22 ♖xe7 ♖xe7

After 22...♖xe7 23 ♖xd7 ♖f3 24 ♖xa6 ♖xd1 25 ♖xd1 ♖a8 26 ♖b5+ ♖f8 27 a4 it's hard to tell who's better.

23 ♖a5! ♖a8 24 ♖xa6 ♖c7

It was while looking into the following line that I first saw the mating net which came in handy later on: 24...♖c5 25 b4!? ♖xb4?? (25...♖c7) 26 ♖xd7+ ♖e8 27 ♖d8+ ♖e7 28 ♖1d7#.

25 ♖b5 ♖c6?!

I really wasn't impressed by this and rightly so. From now on the pressure is on me to get the full point. It would still just have been pretty unclear after 25...♖a7 26 ♖b3 ♖xa2 27 c4.

26 ♖xc6 dxc6 27 a3!! (see diagram at top of next column)

With hindsight this is just common sense, but I'm so proud of this move as it hits the spot. Instead, the tempting 27 c4 falls upon 27...♖a8! (and not 27...♖xf4? 28 ♖xc6+! ♖xc6 29 ♖d7+ ♖e8 30 ♖d8+ ♖e7 31 ♖1d7#) 28 cxd5 cxd5+!. In most lines if the king had just been on b1 my life would have been much easier.



27...♖a8 28 ♖c4 ♖xf4 29 ♖e5!? ♖d5

Avoiding 29...♖a5?? 30 ♖xc6+, but I wondered if his best try wasn't 29...♖g6 30 ♖xg6+ fxg6. Even though Black's structure is crippled, it will be extremely difficult for White to improve. Of course, my opponent wasn't looking for a defensive strategy, so I needn't have worried.

30 c4 f6 31 ♖g4 ♖f4

31...♖b6 32 gx6+ gx6 33 ♖h2 ♖f8 34 b3 would also have left me with a small but secure plus.

32 gx6+ gx6 33 ♖h1 ♖f8 34 ♖h7+?!

34 b4 was the way to do things...

34...♖f7 35 ♖dh2 ♖d6?!

...as here 35...♖c8! would have near equalised.

36 ♖7h6!

Best, whereas after 36 ♖xf6 ♖xh7 (if 36...♖xf6 37 c5+!) 37 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 38 ♖xh7 Black's active king compensates for his loss of a pawn.

36...f5

36...♖c5 37 ♖xf6 ♖xc4 38 ♖c2 looks quite scary for the black king.

37 ♖d2+ ♖c5 38 ♖e5 ♖h7 39 b4+ ♖b6

40 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 41 ♖d6



41...♖h1+?

Co-operative chess. If 41...♖c7 42 ♖d2, but 41...♖h2! must be the best try, reaching a very good position with which to test your technical capacities over the board with a friend.

42 ♖c2 ♖e1 43 ♖xc6 ♖c7 44 c5 e5 45 b5 ♖e2+ 46 ♖d1 ♖b2 47 b6+!

Carefully calculating 47...♖xb6 48 cxb6+ ♖xd6 49 b7 ♖c7 50 b8♖+.

47...♖b7 48 ♖b4! e4 49 ♖d7+ ♖c8 50 c6 1-0



Julio Granda Zuniga remains an inspiration to all chess players. The Peruvian shone in Mallorca, be it when winning smoothly or in a messy situation aided by pushing through f4.

The undisputed winner of this fifth edition of the Lluçmajor Open was Julio Granda Zuniga. The Peruvian GM is impressive on all accounts, be it by his level, his style or his calm sympathetic nature. I am truly at odds to make any sense of the way he sees the game. Atypical would be an understatement; it's a truly idiosyncratic vision that professes offbeat openings merged with the ability to play calm moves in wild positions and vice versa when needed.

The means I will use to paint this picture with examples is to humour the reader with a sense of the pataphysical. Pataphysics is to metaphysics what metaphysics is to daily existence; it could be termed 'a science of imaginary solutions'. Far from ludicrous, this approach through the spectrum of an imaginary realm has the merit to untangle what cannot be understood by ordinary means.

J.Granda Zuniga-R.Edouard Lluçmajor Open 2016



17 f4!?

The move with Granda's signature on it. As we will see, his decisive games with White all passed by the same treatment, that is to say

a timely f4. In this particular case, the computer is not impressed. After all this move would only be truly helpful if White could manage to open the f-file, but Granda had a simpler view of things.

17...exf4 18 ♖f3 ♘f7 19 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 20 ♙xf4

White's plan now is to play d4 and create a dangerous majority on the queenside.

20...♗hd8 21 ♙d1 ♙d6 22 ♘e3 ♙e6 23 d4! cxd4 24 ♗fxd4

24 c5 was possible, but perhaps Granda did not feel the need to be so sharp and instead calmly exploits his strategic plus.

24...♗ad8?

More tenacious would have been 24...♗xd4 25 ♗xd4 and then, for example, 25...♘g6, jumping to e5.

25 ♗xd6 ♗xd6



26 ♘f2

Once again, not in a rush. To create a passed pawn with 26 ♗xd6 cxd6 is, one must admit, extremely tempting.

26...f5?

26...♘c8 to defend the rook and deny White a passed pawn was called for.

27 ♗xd6 cxd6 28 ♘c2 f4 29 ♘d4 1-0

With c6 under control, White is threatening

TEST YOURSELF

C.Strugnell-V.Jianu Arad 2012



It's funny how thought by association works. My rook and knight endgame, above, reminded me of this ordeal. How does Black stop the a-pawn?

H.Herraiz Hidalgo-C.Strugnell Lluçmajor Open 2016



Where should White retreat the dark-squared bishop to?

D.Suarez Pouza-C.Strugnell Lluçmajor Open 2016



White has just taken on d5. It's tempting to take back without thinking, but just how worthy of inspection is 16...cxd3?

to run for the try line, so Black resigned.

Our next game was played in the last round. If Granda loses he will share first with his opponent. Still, he declined an early draw offer. Granda isn't just a pro, he actually likes the game!

J.Granda Zuniga-K.Movsziszian Llucmajor Open 2016



24 f4!

As I said, this move never failed to show up and this time it comes with a boom!

24...d4 25 cxd6 26 dxf3 27 e7 28 c5! 29 e8 28 e5 f5?

After 28...e6 29 h3 d6 30 e4 Black suffers from a severe case of 'monochromy' (weakness on one colour complex). I like this term – I'm trying to bring it back!

29 d4 g5!? 30 h3 d6?

Now White's initiative will be overwhelming. A better practical choice would have been to sacrifice a piece in the hope of exchanging White's last pawns, making it difficult if not impossible for him to convert his material advantage. After 30...gxf4 31 gxf4 xe5 32 fxe5 xe5 of course we are still a long way from that goal and White would win this 99% of the time.

31 a7! gxf4 32 dxc6 33 gxf4 34 dxd8 35 a8 1-0

Everything looks easy when Granda is on song.

J.Granda Zuniga-M.Hoffmann Llucmajor Open 2016



38 d4! 39 d7 39 h2 40 g2?!

Granda goes into passive mode. Either 40 h3 b4 41 h2 or 40 g2 b4 41 b5 xf3 42 f6! 3xf6 43 gxf6 4xf6 44 c1! was better.

40...b4 41 h6 42 b7 42 h2 a6

Black's pieces are finding some harmony.

43 d2 c7

Missing 43...f4! with the idea of ...d8xg5.

44 g3 45 g8 45 dh1 a7

Black's body language transpires a desire to draw, but after...

46 h4



...he should have played 46...g7 for his wish to be granted.

46...h8? 47 f4!! 1-0

What else? Here Black resigned, somewhat prematurely, although finishing with f4, Granda's apparent trademark for the tournament, is all the more poetic. A possible continuation could have been 47...g7 48 f5! gxf5 49 exf5 xf5 and here the beautiful and effective 50 hx7+!! hx7 51 hx7+ hx7 52 e4 g6 53 h2. It's good to notice that Black's pieces will need a few moves to even pretend to be doing something.

Leading Scores: 1 Julio Granda Zuniga (PER) 8½/9, 2-8 Romain Edouard (FRA), Aleksandr Rakhmanov (RUS), Misa Pap (SRB), Allan Stig Rasmussen (DEN), Felix Levin, Frank Bracker (both GER), Sergey Fedorchuk (UKR) 7, 9-12 Karen Movszizian (ARM), Bjorn Moller Oschner (DEN), Lawrence Trent (ENG), Adrien Demuth (FRA) 6½.

Solutions to Test Yourself

Strugnell-Jianu

41...b5! (the game went 41...b5?? 42 c4 d2+ 43 c1 d4 44 d2 dxc6 45 b4!, winning) **42 a7** (if 42 dxc3 c5+! or 42 d4 c5!) **42...a4+** and the knight is heading to b6. Black has just avoided the angel of Death by a iota and it is now White who needs to find defensive resources.

Herraiz Hildalgo-Strugnell

17 g3 (17 e2? would be bad; the best is now 17...c8!, compromising White's pawn structure next move, and if 18 g4?! h5! 19 gxh5? hx5; 17...h5 is also not without interest, and if 18 e3 f5!, while in the analysis room we stumbled on 18 g3 c8 19 g2?? hx3+ 20 hx3 hf4+ 21 gxf4 4xf4+ 22 g3

g5#) **17...h5** (White has to give up the bishop-pair) **18 d2 19 f6 19 f6! 20 hxg3** and the game ended in a draw on move 46.

Suarez Pouza-Strugnell

16...cxd3! (16...xd5 17 dxc4 xc4 18 b3 d3 is only equal) **17 dxc6 dxc2 18 0-0** (18 xc2 amounts to the same thing) **18...d5 19 e1 e8 20 xc2 g4!!** (key; otherwise the idea is simply wrong) **21 ad1!** (allowing Black to demonstrate his point; 21 d5 xc6 22 f3 d7 23 ad1 ad8 is just unclear) **21...xc6! 22 e4** (22 xe5? xd1 hits the white queen) **22...xf3 23 gxf3 d5! 24 g3 25 e4** and now, quite instructively, I chose the wrong plan, the mating pattern obnubilating my thought process: **25...b6! 26 e3 f6!**

April's Studies Competition

The winning entry was from Andrew Lee of Leicester. The solution:

Martin Minski Original for WCBCSC, 2016



White to play and win

1 d6+!

1 g8? xa8! 2 f7+ (Black even wins after 2 xg2?? h8+ and draws if 2 xa8 g1) 2 d6 3 g6+ c5 4 h6 a2 is just a draw.

1...d6!

1...c7 2 g8 now leads to a win.

2 d4+!

The right path. 2 c8+? e5! 3 g8 h7+! 4 xh7 g1 and 2 g8? h7+! 3 xh7 g1 enable Black to save the day.

2...c5 3 g8 h7+

Allowing White to reveal his main idea, but also if 3...a8 4 xa8 g1 5 a7+.

4 xh7 g1 5 a7+

And there goes the black queen.

