

— *Вопрос Хампи Конеру. По ходу этого чемпионата мы много говорим о возрасте, а вам в случае вашей победы и выхода в следующий круг Хоу Ифань, придется играть с соперницей, которая на 10 лет младше вас. Какого это, ведь еще недавно самой молодой участницей турниров были вы?!*

**Конеру:** Я никогда не задумывалась над подобными вопросами, предпочитая концентрироваться на игре. Что с того, что ей 14 лет? Я знаю, что она — сильный игрок, знаю, как она играет в шахматы, ничего большего мне не требуется. Так что буду играть без всяких комплексов.

## ONLY FOUR OF THEM IS LEFT

How nice it happened: there are no tie-breaks in quarter-finals and tomorrow all the participants have a free day. So the girls were ready to talk until the morning. Only Pia Cramling from the quartet of the semi-finalists was not there. Despite yesterday's victory over Antoaneta Stefanova, Swedish chess player experienced a great pressure this day and was very close to let the opponent make it to tie-breaks.

The other three — Humpy Koneru, Hou Yifan and Aleksandra Kosteniuk — were here and in a great mood. Young Chinese even declined the help of the translator of the team, trying to answer all the questions in English herself. And it was more than good for the first time! As usual, Kosteniuk talked a lot and interesting. While Koneru, and it is yet a tradition too, almost did not say a word...



*Press-officer of FIDE Peter Rajcsanyi started this press-conference from offering the journalists to applause the girls who already put their names in the history of chess. The public in the hall followed his advice with great pleasure. The first question was to Kosteniuk as the one who made it to semi-finals before the others. How could she use the advantages of the black pieces so good in both last matches?*

— My opponent has a very wide opening repertoire and when she chose this line I thought she wanted to use my bad memories. The point is that at the last World Championship in Yekaterinburg I lost the match to Cmilyte exactly because of this position in Nimzo-Indian. But I was surprised by the fact that Anna followed such a sharp line without knowing it and was playing practically by her own calculations at the board. I cannot say that I know this variation perfectly but my knowledge was enough to follow the right line. I checked afterwards and noticed that we copied several well-known games. My opponent made a crucial mistake by taking the pawn on b6. I think that White's position can not be saved after that. She should have played Nge2 and the whole encounter would be ahead. I would have just a slightly better position then, while in the game it immediately became winning.

— *Aleksandra, this summer you have already won one title of World Champion, in Fischer random chess. Do you want to add another one to this collection?*



## WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

NALCHIK 2008



– I am not really against it.

– *Your last two matches – with Kosintseva and Ushenina – are so similar: draw with white and more convincing victory with black. What is the explanation to this?*

– I would not say that these matches were so similar as when I played white totally different things were happening on the board. I was winning the whole game with Kosintseva and it required a big “will effort” to make a draw. I had some advantage yesterday with Ushenina but it was not so clear and draw appeared to be a logical result. As to second games they were really much of the same – first of all because I was guessing the opening right and got initiative with black pieces in both...

– *The question to Koneru: Humpy, did you expect that everything would go so smooth for you? It seems you did not have any problems with the openings...*

– Yes, it is true. I got a pleasant play from the very beginning. The main thing is that I was not risking losing in any moment. The game was actually quite interesting, especially in the middle game. When I managed to exchange her black-squared bishop, it became very easy for me. All what happened after did not matter at all – she had to win...

– *Are you satisfied that you are in the semi-final of the World Championship once again?*

– Yes, I think it is a big success, even though I already played semi-finals in Elista, four years ago. But there I lost to Kovalevskaya, one step away from the final. I hope that this time it won't happen; I am prepared in chess and physically.

– *The question to Hou Yifan. How can you comment on your today's victory?*

– As proved by the game, we chose the line which was not so familiar to both of us, so the whole game we were creating something by ourselves. I do not think that White had some kind of advantage but my opponent was slow with development and I found a good tactical resource. I sacrificed a piece and started the attack. I am not sure that White was winning by force but my opponent did not manage to escape in any case.

– *Did you expect in the beginning of the tournament that you will reach semi-final and would be the only Chinese left in the Championship?*

– I was not thinking about this, I just played chess. As you know, Chinese players are strong, just this time



the luck was on my side, but I still have not reached anything.

– *Aleksandra and Humpy, you play semi-finals of the World Championship not for the first time. Don't you think that you have some kind of psychological advantage because of this?*

**Kosteniuk:** My experience is too old to be useful. But if to speak about World Championship in general, every round here is very tense, and it doesn't matter if it is the first one of the semi-final. Of course it is very nice to reach this stage. Before the start everyone understands that only 4 of 64 would make it to the semi-finals! But when you did this, you don't want to stop. So we will play and see...

**Koneru:** Every such tournament varies from the previous. Yet I am playing with ease, let's see what will happen in the future. I have some experience but do not think it is of such a big importance.





# WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

## NALCHIK 2008



**17...h5?** Nerve breakdown. There was no need to destroy the key point of the defense.

Black should have made some bishop maneuvers: 17...♗d6! – wherever White's bishop goes, the Black's follow. If 18.♗h4, then 18...♗e7! and so on.

The 18. f5 break through could be neutralized in a new way: 18...exf5 (18...gxf5 is very dangerous: 19.gxf5 e5 20.♖xd5!) 19.gxf5 ♗xg3 20.fxc6 fxc6 21.hxc3 (21.♗xc3 ♗e7) 21...♖g7 22.♗f4 ♗d6 23.♗cf1 ♗cf8 24.g4 ♖e7. The pressure is getting lower and the position nearly equalizes...

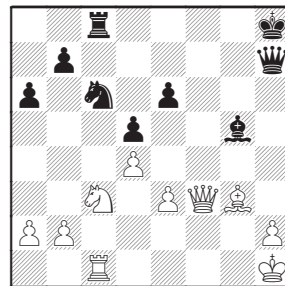
**18.f5.** 18.gxh5 was easier and quicker: 18...♖xh5 (18...gxh5 19.f5) 19.f5! exf5 20.♗xf5 ♗a8 21.♗g4 ♖g7 22.♗xh5, and 22...♗h8 is faced by: 23.♗xf7+! ♖xf7 24.♗f5+ and White gives quick mate.

**18...♖xg4 19.fxc6 fxc6 20.♗f7** (there is a threat of mate combination with a queen sacrifice on h5) **20...♗g7 21.♗xg6!** Black wall falls into pieces.

**21...♗xg6 22.♗xh5+ ♗h6 23.♗xg4** (White won a pawn and kept the dangerous attack) **23...**

**♗g8 24.♗f4 ♗g5?!** It seems that Chinese girl had no energy to fight any longer. 24...♗g6! was more persistent with following ♗c8-g8.

**25.♗f3 ♗h7** (25...♗g6 26.♗xb7) **26.♗xh7+ ♗xh7.** The unstable position of Black's pieces is used by White in an affect combination.



**27.♖xd5! exd5 28.♗e5+! ♖g8** (28...♖xe5 29.♗xc8+) **29.♗g1!** Accuracy until the end. The grandmasters in the press-center thought that 29.♗xd5+ is winning too: 29... ♗f7 30.♗g2, but the computer showed that Black has a defense here: 30...♖h7! 31.♗xg5 ♖xe5! 32.♗xc8 (32.♗h4+ ♖g7!) 32...♗f1+ 33.♗g1 ♗f3+, and Black escapes with the perpetual check.

**29...♖xe5 30.♗xg5+ ♖g6 31.♗xd5+.** Black loses a queen or a rook in the variations. There is no escape. Shen Yang resigned. Painful defeat...

• • •

All the encounters of the second day of the quarter-finals were interesting and entertaining. The pressure was big as never. And not all of the participants could keep decent self-control and manage the nerves.

This is the only way to explain several surprising decisions in the games. I am sure that in the normal situation girls would play different. Only Koneru isolates herself in a way that her victory was out of doubts. Shen Yang made her best

playing active and interesting but the forces seemed to be unequal. In all the other encounters there was a place for intrigue... Thought the scenarios of the games varied.

The result of the game was practically clear already in the opening. The width of opening knowledge has its other side – lack of depth. Anna Ushenina was the one to illustrate this thesis today. Probably she did not manage to guess the reaction of her opponent and found herself playing unfamiliar and dangerous line. Her try to re-discover theoretical variations on the board ended in a catastrophe. Not only a lot of time was spent, but the mistakes were not avoided. In contrary Aleksandra Kosteniuk played confident and already on 16<sup>th</sup> move had a strong attack with black pieces, which she converted into a full point.

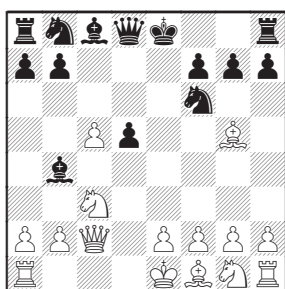
**E35** ♖ USHENINA 2476  
♜ KOSTENIUK 2510  
**1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♗b4 4.♗c2** (Alekhine line in Nimzo-Indian defense) **4...d5.** The most



principal reply which requires a lot of knowledge from both sides. **5.cxd5.** 5.a3 ♖xc3+ 6.♔xc3 is considered the main stream this days, and there is a big tree of possible variations growing in this line...

**5...exd5 6.♖g5 c5!** Black opens the center hoping to use White's king position.

**7.dxc5.**



**7...h6 8.♖h4.** It was a strange decision to make this move if to consider the following problems of White. It is impossible to provoke the opponent that much when you don't have appropriate home preparation! In such terms it was much easier to play the position after 8.♖xf6! ♔xf6 9.e3 — here White has solid reserves.

**8...g5** (the rude encounter starts, every mistake could be fatal) **9.♖g3 ♖e4 10.e3 ♔a5.** Black's pressure on c3 slows White's development.

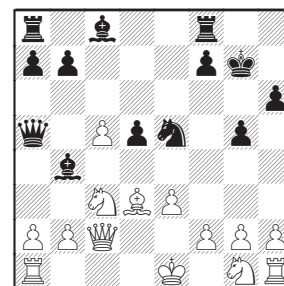
**11.♖e5.** Not only the move itself but also the time spent on it (it took Ukrainian player quite a while) showed that Anna does not have any prepared lines. 11.♖ge2 ♖f5 12.♖e5 0-0 13.♖d4 is more popular recently, though Black is ok here: 13...♖d7!

**11...0-0 12.♖d3 ♖c6!** Accurate and very energetic play is required from Black. It is difficult to find the way for it on the board but as it was shown on practice many times the deal is to have the knowledge.

**13.♖xe4 ♖xe5 14.♖h7+.** It's a step to the side and closer to the edge.

The main line was shown yet 15 years ago: 14.♖xd5 ♖g4! 15.♖f3 ♖xf3 16.♖xf3 ♖xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♖ac8 18.0-0, and here the draw was agreed in the game Kasparov – Short (World Championship match, London 1993). Indeed, Black wins the pawn back and equalizes.

**14...♖g7 15.♖d3.** The bishop was threatened to be trapped by f7-f5.



**15...b6.** Good novelty. And, besides, it is a trap which easily worked out. Kosteniuk gave her opponent a possibility to use her reflexes...

Yet in the game I. Sokolov – Short (Wejk aan Zee 1995) Вейк-ан-Зее 1995 it was shown how dangerous the position of White's king is: 15...d4 16.exd4 ♖xc3+ 17.bxc3 ♖xd3+ 18.♔xd3 ♖f5 19.♔c4 ♖fe8+ 20.♖d2 b5 21.♔b4 ♔c7 22.♖e2 a5!, and Black continues the attack. Yet White's play could be even stronger, that is why 11.♖ge2! is more popular these days.

**16.cxb6?** It seems this move was really made by the reflex. Anna was just tired to calculate the variations and invent the theory. White should have finished the development until it is not late... Foreexample: 16.♖ge2! bxc5 17.0-0 ♖xc3 18.♖xc3, and now either 18...d4 19.exd4 cxd4 20.♖e2 ♖d8 21.♖g3!, or 18...♖xd3 19.♔xd3 ♖a6 20.♔f5 ♖xf1 21.♖xf1 leaves White with good perspective. The position can be assessed as nearly equal.

**16...d4!** (Sasha opens the files and start to "beat" White's king) **17.exd4 ♖xd3+ 18.♔xd3 ♖e8+ 19.♖d1.** What else to do? 19.♖f1? is very bad: 19... ♖a6; Or 19.♖ge2? ♖a6 20.♔d2 ♖xe2+.

**19...♖f5!** (it is more precise than 19...♖a6 — the bishop on f5 aims to make the life of White's





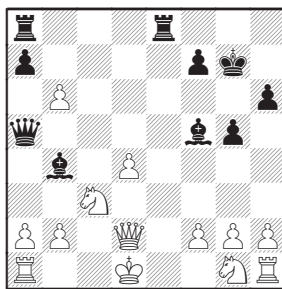


# WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

## NALCHIK 2008



king on the queen's side more difficult) **20. ♖d2.**

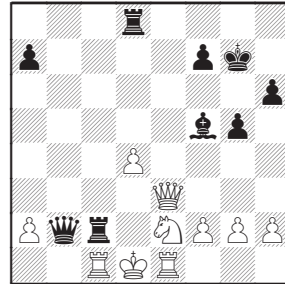


**20... ♗xc3!** (it is very important to make the exchange before White's knight reaches e2) **21. ♖xc3.** The strength of the bishop on f5 clarifies in the variation 21.bxc3 ♖a4+ 22. ♖c1 ♗e1+! 23. ♖xe1 (23. ♖b2 ♖b5+) 23... ♖c2#.

**21... ♖xb6** (is not worse than the other possible decisions) **22. ♗e2** (White banally has no time to bring the reserves of defense) **22... ♗ac8 23. ♖a3 ♗c2.** Black masters in the home-front of White.

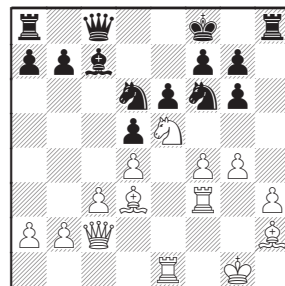
**24. ♗e1 ♗d8!** Minimum lighting effects, maximum efficiency move!

**25. ♖e3 ♖xb2 26. ♗c1**



**26... ♗e8!** The mate on d2 compensates the rook absence. White resigned.

**B13** ♖ HOU YIFAN 2557  
♜ MKRTCHIAN 2436

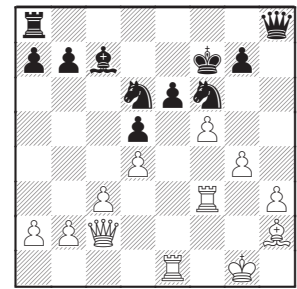


Black maneuvered inefficiently after the opening, lost a lot of time and did not manage to evacuate the king. The moment of punishment has come!

**23. ♗xg6! fxg6. 23... ♗fe4!?** was better from the practical point of view. Though, White could broaden the attack with 24.c4! and after 24... ♗a5 the calm 25. ♗e2! is prepared. It is very pleasant to attack being a pawn up. And even the strong knight on e4 doesn't help Black.

**24. ♗xg6+ ♖f7.** It is impossible to leave the "hot spot": 24... ♗g8? 25. ♗e7+!

**25. ♗xh8+ ♖xh8 26.f5!** In fact White did not sacrifice anything. What happened was an unequal exchange and Black's king found itself in the fire.



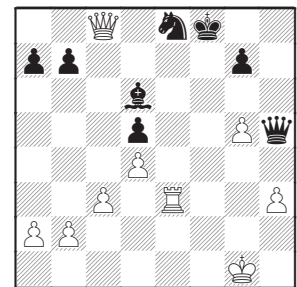
**26... ♗e8.** It is a natural reply which is in fact losing the game. 26...exf5 is very bad: 27. ♗xd6 ♗xd6 28. ♖xf5, and Black has no defense from numerous threats.

It was worth giving a pawn after 26... ♖h4 27.fxe6+ ♖g8, thought it is difficult to say that Black has real chances to escape. There is a small hope to create a counter play by knight maneuver: ♗f6-e4-g5!

**27. ♗xd6 ♗xd6 28.fxe6+ ♗xe6** (there is no way to escape here: 28... ♖g8 29. ♗xf6! gxf6 30. ♖g6+, on 28... ♖e7 White has 29. ♖b3!) **29. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 30. ♖f5+ ♖e7 31.g5.** White attackers reach Black's rears.

**31... ♗e8.** 31... ♗e4 could lead to interesting mate endings: 32. ♖xd5 ♖h4 33. ♗f7+ ♖d8 34. ♗f8+!, Foreexample: 34... ♖c7 (34... ♖d7 35. ♖b5+) 35. ♖a5+! ♖c6 36.d5+ ♖d7 37. ♖d8#.

**32. ♖c8** (all the ways lead to the same city) **32... ♖h5 33. ♗e3+ ♖f8.**



It seems that Black managed to stop the attack. But it is not true: **34. ♖f5+ ♖f7.** After 34... ♖g8 35. ♖e6+ ♖f8 36.g6! Black has only few checks before resigning.