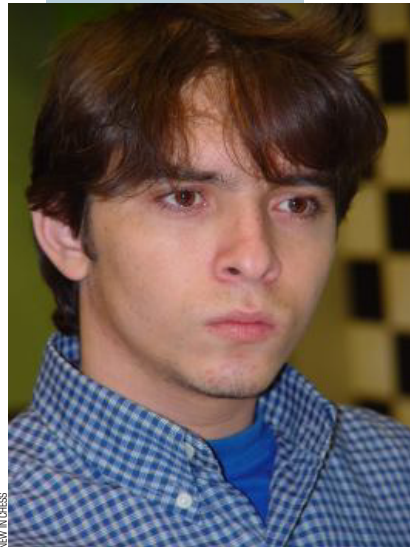


# Emotions Run High in Buenos Aires

Usually, my tournament reports start with a general description of the city in which the event has taken place, its history and its chess tradition. Things like that. But this time I think we should skip this prelude and proceed immediately to the action that took place at the American Continental Championship. The reason behind this change of style is that there is a lot to talk about, especially about the so-called 'tie-break scandal'. But first things first. Let's start with a description of the fight that ended in a victory for Cuba's number one, Lazaro Bruzon.

The 3rd American Continental Championship took place in the Argentinian capital of Buenos Aires at the Bolsa de Comercio de Buenos Aires, a central building near the famous Casa Rosada, the Pink House. As the organizers proudly announced at the closing ceremony, there was a record number of participants: 152 against 151 in 2003! And they were not only fighting for the 40,000-dollar purse, but also for seven qualifying spots for the 2006 World Championship.

I am not a chess politician, nor do I plan to be one in the near future. However, I cannot avoid expressing my disgust with the or-



Lazaro Bruzon: 'After a good start he remained concentrated and carefully worked on his result.'

NEW IN CHESS

## Giovanni Vescovi

ganization of certain chess events (such as the poorly organized European championships or the World Youth Championship in Belfort) and FIDE's policies. There seems to be no concern whatsoever for the chess players.

From the airport we headed directly to the official hotel. This year the organization had a limited budget from FIDE, so they decided that the invited players (a few players from each Zone

whose lodging costs were paid for by the organization) should share rooms. Although I was not very happy with this news, there was nothing to be done about it, since this was the information sent to all participating federations. The real problem became clear when I entered my room and saw that there was no space for luggage, let alone a chess board and a computer for preparation! A couple of minutes later I was on the streets again with my friend GM Rafael Leitao, in search of a better place to stay, and it didn't turn out to be very difficult to negotiate a 25% discount on the rate of a nice 4-star hotel.

What astonished us even more was the fact that many players decided to stay at the official hotel and did not even complain. Maybe this passive behaviour, this

lack of attitude from the players, is the reason why FIDE and its organizers just can't be bothered. Also, perhaps due to the same limited budget, there was no free day, and the Internet coverage was, to say the least, quite weak. Except for these structural problems (and the tie-break(!), about which more later), the organizers tried their best - there were bulletins and they offered sandwiches and juice during the games.

So, let's have a look at the chess. Thanks to the presence of top-seed Gata Kamsky the average of the 10 highest ratings was higher than the previous edition, despite the fact that the names were pretty much the same. There are two possible explanations for this increase: either the ratings have inflated, or the players from this side of the globe are getting stronger. Both reasons may be true, but the latter is easier to prove.

The winner of the tournament was GM Lazaro Bruzon, who is steadily improving his play. A reasonable result in the top group of Wijk aan Zee was already an indication that more could be expected from the Cuban, and winning the Continental simply corroborated this expectation. After a good start he remained concentrated and carefully worked on his result. Let us see one of his finest achievements annotated by his opponent (!).

**NOTES BY**  
**Gilberto Milos**

SI 30.2 - B80  
**Lazaro Bruzon**  
**Gilberto Milos**  
Buenos Aires 2005 (4)

For the second time in a row I lost to the winner of the American Continental Championship. Last time, in 2003, I was the victim of

**BUENOS AIRES**

Alexander Goldin, and this time Lazaro Bruzon outplayed me and took the title.

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♗d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♙d7 9.f3 ♙e7 10.♙e3**

A curious move. The idea is to get into the variation 10...0-0 11.g4 a tempo down. But the bishop on d7 is worse in this variation than on c8, because square d7 is important for the knight after White plays g5.

**10...b5 11.♙b1**

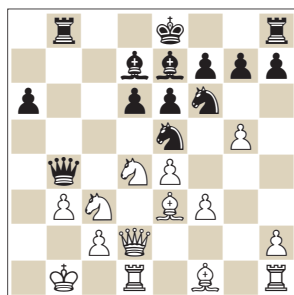
The alternative is 11.g4 ♘xd4 12.♙xd4 b4 13.♘e2 e5 14.♙e3 ♗a5 15.♙b1 ♙e6 16.♘c1 0-0, and Black is fine because he will play ...d5 or block White's attack after g5 with ...♘h5. For example: 17.h4 (or 17.g5 ♘h5) 17...♗fd8 18.h5 d5.

**11...♘e5 12.a3 ♗b8!**

The normal move is 12...♗c7, but I wanted to open up the position of the white king as quickly as possible. 12...♗c7 13.g4 ♘c4 14.♙xc4 ♗xc4, and after g5 Black can play ...♘h5 without fear of ♙e2 and f4.

**13.g4 b4 14.axb4 ♗xb4 15.g5 ♗b8! 16.b3**

16.b3 allows Black a powerful attack after 16...♘xf3 17.♗f2 ♘xc4 18.♗xf3 ♘xc3+ 19.bxc3 ♗xc3 20.♗d3 ♗c7.



**16...♘h5?**

My original idea was 16...♘xf3! 17.♘xf3 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♗xe4, but then I saw 19.♘d4 ♗xh1 20.♙g2 ♗xh2 21.♘c6, with the

threat of ♙f4 and I concluded that White was winning. However, at home, when calculating with that friend that proves every day that we are blind, I soon found 21...d5!! 22.♙f4 ♙xg5!, and Black is better.

**17.♘a2**

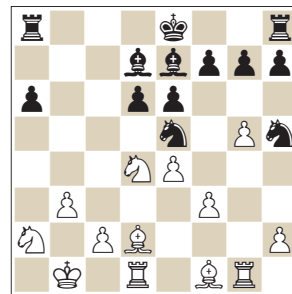
This is excellent for White. The pawn on a6 and the knight on h5 are black weaknesses.

**17...♗xd2 18.♙xd2 ♗a8**

Not a good idea is 18...a5 19.♙xa5 ♙xg5 20.♙c7.

**19.♗g1!**

Well played. White controls the position and waits to play f4 at the right moment.



**19...h6?**

A serious mistake. Correct was 19...0-0 20.f4 ♘c6 21.♘xc6 ♙xc6 22.♙e2 g6 23.♙xh5 gxh5 24.♘c3, when White will attack with f5 and g6, and it will not be easy to defend Black's position.

**20.gxh6 gxh6**

The idea of my ...h6 was to sac a pawn with ...♙g5 and then to control the black squares, but I never got the chance.

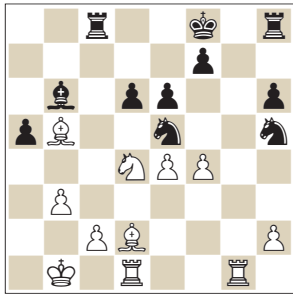
**21.♘b4 a5 22.♘a6 ♙f8 23.♘c7 ♗c8 24.♘cb5 ♙xb5?**

Another serious mistake. I thought I had found an idea to exchange the dark-squared bishops, but the idea was completely misguided. I should have tried ...♗a8 or ...♗c5, and the position is still playable.

**25.♙xb5 ♙d8**

Continuing the idea started with 24...♙xb5.

**26.f4 ♙b6**



**27.fxe5!**

I had not seen this obvious move, after which Black is lost. Bruzon played it immediately, as he did with the rest of his moves.

**27...♙xd4 28.exd6**

The rest is simple.

**28...♙xg1 29.♖xg1 ♗b8 30.c4 e5 31.♙xa5 ♘f6 32.♙c7 ♗b7 33.♙b2 ♘e4 34.♙c6 ♗xc7 35.dxc7 ♘d6 36.c5 ♘c8 37.♗d1**

And Black resigned.



But Bruzon was not alone at the head of the posse all the time. Actually, the leader after the first half was Peruvian GM Julio Granda Zuniga, who in the end had to settle for second place. The following game is very characteristic of his fighting style.

**NOTES BY  
Julio Granda Zuniga**

SO 4.4 – C45  
**Alexander Shabalov**  
**Julio Granda Zuniga**  
Buenos Aires 2005 (6)

**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6**

I preferred 4...♘f6 instead of 4...♙c5, because I felt that this line would give me more possibilities to try and play for a win.

**5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♗e7 7.♗e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♙a6 9.b3 g6 10.f4 ♙g7**

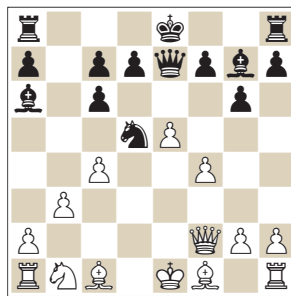
My vague memories of this line forced me to think a lot and to play on the edge of the abyss, as I



**Julio Granda: 'In truth, this was an instinctive move, as I had only a few seconds left and had not found an objective win.'**

dreaded Shabalov's and (who knows?) Fritz's preparation. I felt really worked up.

**11.♗f2**



**11...♘f6**

Having seen some games with this line, I had noticed that the knight usually goes to b6, but I felt that on that square it tends to have too little perspective.

**12.♙a3 ♘g4**

The idea of this move is to keep the white queen from going to c5, followed by an attack on a5.

**13.♗e2 ♗e6 14.♘c3**

The white position is very sound, whereas my pieces seem to be badly coordinated.

**14...0-0-0**

Another consequence ♘g4.

**15.h3 ♘h6**

The idea of playing 15...♘xe5? was wrong because of 16.fxe5

♙xe5 17.♙b4!, and I don't believe Black has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece.

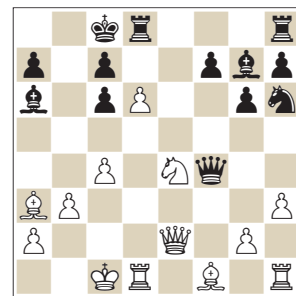
**16.0-0-0 d6 17.♘e4**

With this move White consolidates his advantage.

**17...♗f5**

Black tries to complicate the game in an inferior position.

**18.exd6 ♗xf4+**



**19.♗d2**

Dubious. The natural continuation was 19.♙b1 ♗e5 (not 19...♗he8? because of 20.d7+ ♗xd7 21.♘d6+, and wins) 20.♙b2 ♗xb2+ 21.♗xb2 ♙xb2 22.♙xb2 cxd6 23.♘xd6+ ♙c7 24.c5 ♙xf1 25.♗hxf1, with a large advantage.

**19...♘f5**

Suddenly I've come back to life with good chances to win.

**20.g3**

Faced with the complexity of the position, Shabalov opts to simplify to an endgame with some drawing chances.

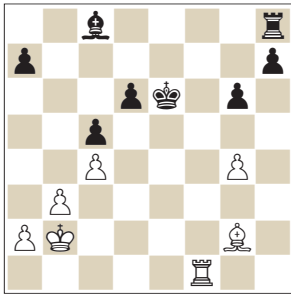
**20...♘g3 21.♘g3 ♗xg3 22.♗g4+ ♗xg4 23.hxg4 ♙e5**

I didn't have much time left and had to play natural moves, trying to exchange pieces and then to convert my extra pawn.

**24.♗f2 cxd6 25.♗xf7 ♗d7 26.♗xd7 ♙xd7 27.♙h2 ♙e6 28.♙g2 c5 29.♗f1**

If 29.♙d5+, then 29...♙f6 30.♗f1+ ♙g5 31.♙xe5 dxe5 32.♗f7 ♙c8, and Black wins (but not 32...♙xg4? 33.♙e6+ ♙g3 34.♗xa7 ♙c8 35.♙xc8 ♗xc8 35.♗xh7, with drawing chances).

**29...♙xb2+ 30.♙xb2 ♙c8**



Finally my bishop is going to play a part, and funnily enough, it does so from its original square.

**31.a3 ♖e5 32.g5 h6 33.gxh6 ♖xh6 34.♙d5 ♖h2+ 35.♗c3 ♖h3+ 36.♗b2 ♙f5 37.h4 ♗d4**

Trying to create a mating net, but the problem was that I had very little time left.

**38.♖f2 ♖e3 39.b5 ♖e1 40.a4 ♖b1+ 41.♗a2 ♖b4 42.♗a3 ♙d3 43.♖f4+ ♗c3 44.a5 ♖h3+ 45.♗a2**

If 45.♗a4, then 45...♙c2 46.♖f3+ ♗b2, and funnily enough, mate is inevitable.

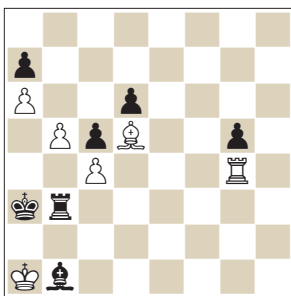
**45...♖b2+ 46.♗a3 ♖b3+ 47.♗a2 ♗b4 48.a6**

If 48.b6, then 48...axb6 49.axb6 ♗c3 50.b7 ♖b6, and wins.

**48...g5**

The moment had come to advance the g-pawn in order to 'distract' the rook. In truth, this was an instinctive move, as I had only a few seconds left and had not found an objective win.

**49.♖g4 ♖a3+ 50.♗b2 ♖b3+ 51.♗a2 ♙b1+ 52.♗a1 ♗a3**



**53.♖xg5**

A serious mistake as a result of the

## BUENOS AIRES



Playing more and more chess again? Sharing second place Gata Kamsky effectively secured qualification for the 2006 World Championship.

tension and the pressure that had accumulated over many moves. The only way to fight was 53.♖g2 ♙d3 54.♖a2+ ♗b4 55.♖b2 ♖xb2 56.♗xb2 ♗a5 57.♗c3 ♙f5 58.♗d2 ♙d7! 59.♗e3 ♙xb5 60.cxb5 ♗xb5 61.♗e4 ♗xa6 62.♗f5 ♗b5, and Black wins.

**53...♙d3**

After 54.♖g1 ♖b2 mate is inevitable. White resigned.



With this win Granda jumped to 5½ out of 6. He seemed to be on the right track at this stage, but, alas, he stumbled in the following crucial game.

SI 14.3 – B90

**Gata Kamsky**

**Julio Granda Zuniga**

Buenos Aires 2005 (8)

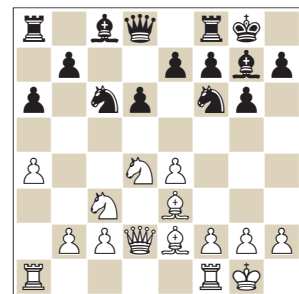
**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.a4 g6**

Black decides to go for a Dragon set-up, now that White has indicated that he is not going for an attack with o-o-o. A natural-born Najdorf player usually prefers the schemes with ...e5, and although I am pretty sure

this was not the rationale behind Granda's decision, Kamsky scored an important win with White against such a scheme against Short in their PCA Candidates match back in 1994.

**7.♙e2 ♘g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♙e3 ♘c6 10.♗d2**

10.f4 was played in two games by Smirin last year: 10...♖b8 11.♗h1 (White had a slight plus after 11.♙f3 e5 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.♗xd8 ♖xd8 15.♖ad1 ♖xd1 16.♖xd1 ♙e6 17.b3 in Smirin-Sutovsky, Ashdod 2004, a game that ended in a draw) 11...♙g4 12.♘b3 ♗c8 13.a5 ♙xe2 14.♗xe2 ♘d7 15.♘a4 f5 16.cxf5 ♖xf5, and White was slightly better and went on to win in Smirin-Gelfand, Ashdod 2004.



### 10...♖g4?!

Going for the bishop pair. In general this is not such a great deal for Black, since the ♖c8 does not have much of a future. But here, with ...a6 played, this is really bad. White has the simple plan of gripping the queenside with a5 and ♖b6, and then gaining space with b4 and c4. Black's only counterplay is linked with the push ...f7-f5. Strategically his position will be worse due to the pawn structure and his exposed king, but maybe he can get some dynamic compensation. I prefer the plan with 10...♗xd4 11. ♖xd4 ♖e6, as in Anand-Gelfand, Shenyang 2000.

**11. ♖xg4 ♖xg4 12. ♗d5 ♖c8 13. a5! ♗xd4 14. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 15. ♗xc4 ♖c6?**

Even worse was 15...♗xc2?? 16. ♗e3 ♗c8 17. ♗xc2 ♗xc2, and White should be winning. Correct was 15...♖e6, trying to exchange on d5 and play a slightly worse major piece ending.

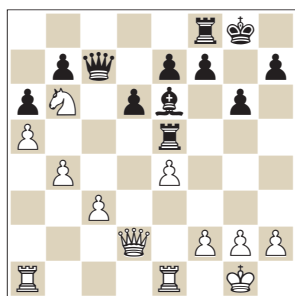
**16. ♗d2 ♖e6 17. ♗b6!**

White will not allow this exchange, of course.

**17... ♗c7 18. c3 ♖c5 19. ♗fe1 ♖e5**

The situation doesn't seem too desperate, but a better practical decision may have been sacrificing an exchange with 19...♗xa5 20. ♗xa5 ♗xb6. White should probably play for an attack with f4-f5 or h4-h5, but if Black manages to exchange one pair of rooks or the queens he might have chances of holding the game.

**20. b4**



### 20...♗c6?!

The start of a losing plan. Good or bad, Black had to play 20...f5, for instance: 21. exf5 ♗xf5 22. f4 ♗xe1+ 23. ♗xe1 ♖f7 with the idea of ...e7-e5. Julio, who was already in time-trouble, probably did not want to expose his king and decided to wait a bit more.

**21. ♗d4 g5?**

A serious mistake. This set-up can be played with a queen on e5, not a rook. Black cannot coordinate his pieces and has no prospects of counterplay whatsoever.

21...f5 was the only move, for example: 22. exf5 ♗xf5 23. f4 ♗xe1+ 24. ♗xe1 ♗f6 25. ♖c4! ♗f7 26. ♗e3, with advantage for White.

**22. ♖e3 f6 23. f3 ♗e8 24. c4 ♗h5 25. ♗ae1 ♗f7 26. ♗a4 ♖c8 27. ♗h2 ♗g7 28. ♖c1 ♖g8 29. ♗d3 ♖e6 30. f4!**

Black resigned. In fact, White played only natural moves and won easily. This was not a good day for Granda. For Gata this was an important win, which put him in the lead with three rounds to go.

Now let me say something about my own performance. This was my first tournament after graduating from Law School, and I must admit that I was not too confident. A childish loss in Round 4 against Granda felt like a cold shower, but it also woke me up and I started playing more relaxed! After Round 8, I was on +4, and I only needed one more win to qualify for the World Championship. First I missed a good chance as Black against Nogueiras and then, in the penultimate round, I was paired with one of my roommates, fellow Brazilian GM Gilberto Milos. Quite an awkward situation. What to do? How to prepare? Milos was already on +5 and needed two draws, but I had to play for a win, and he knew it. We pretended ev-

erything was OK, turned off the computer and watched some football on TV. The next day, still no preparation, but right before going to lunch, Milos decided to stay and check some variations! Then, when Rafael and I came back, and Gilberto had left for his lunch, I could also turn on my computer without feeling like a sinner!

RL 7.4 – C67

**Giovanni Vescovi**

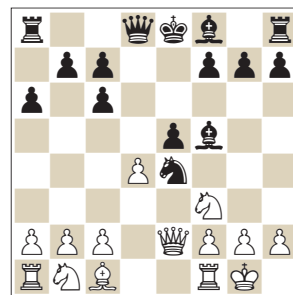
**Gilberto Milos**

Buenos Aires 2005 (10)

**1. e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. ♖b5 ♗f6 4. 0-0 ♗xe4 5. d4 a6**

A surprise. With this move order Black wants to avoid the Exchange Variation and invite White to the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez. I had never seen this before, but decided in principle that I should check this 'refutation' of the Exchange Variation.

**6. ♖xc6 dxc6 7. ♗e2 ♖f5**



My adversary blitzed these first moves, convincing me that he had prepared this. The first move that came to mind here was 8.g4, trying to exploit the centralized position of the black monarch. But then, it is so obvious, that it must have been studied extensively by the theory. 'No, Giovanni, try something else. 8.g4 is suicide, and you will lose by the book', I thought. Some 40 minutes later I played...





ALEX SHAROV

In the penultimate round Giovanni Vescovi (I.) was paired against his room mate Gilberto Milos. 'What to do? How to prepare? We pretended everything was OK, turned off the computer and watched some football on TV.'

### 8.g4!?

Objectively, this is not a bad move. Very risky, though. To my surprise, Gilberto had not given much attention to this possibility during his brief preparation.

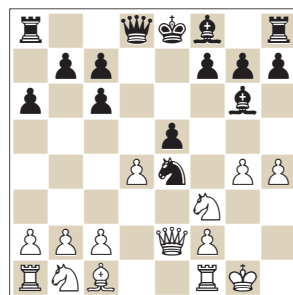
After 8.♖e1 ♗e7 (8...♞f6!) 9.g4 ♗g6 10.♗xe5 ♗d6 11.♗c3 f6 12.♗xg6 hxg6 13.d5 White is slightly better.

The position would be equal after 8.♖d1 ♗e7 9.dxe5 ♞c8 10.♗e3 o-o 11.♗bd2 ♗xd2 12.♞xd2 c5 13.♞c4 b6.

### 8...♗g6 9.h4?!

Here I must admit that I could not believe myself to be playing such moves. This is probably the most unorthodox position I have had on move 9 in my life. When I did a search in my database after the game it turned out that the same position had occurred in the game Winawer-Zukertort, London 1883!!

Correct was 9.♗xe5 ♞xd4 10.♗xg6 (after 10.♗f3 ♞b4! was unpleasant, and Black is better) 10...hxg6 11.♗c3 f5 12.♗f4 o-o-o 13.♞ad1 ♞f6 14.♞xd8+ ♗xd8 15.♗xe4 fxe4 16.♞xe4, with a small plus for White.



### 9...f5?!

Milos failed to find the best answer, although at first sight this looks quite promising.

But, of course, Zukertort found the correct way, 122 years ago!!: 9...♞d7! 10.♗xe5 ♞xd4, and now:

A) 11.♗f3? ♞d7 12.♗g5 (after 12.♗h2 h5 13.f3 ♗c5+ 14.♗g2 hxg4! 15.fxe4 ♞e7 the 'defences' around the white king will soon collapse) 12...♞e7 13.♞c1 o-o-o 14.♗xe4 ♞xe4, and Black won, Winawer-Zukertort, London 1883;

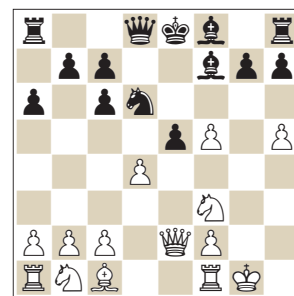
B) Better is what I wanted to play: 11.♗xg6 hxg6 12.♗c3 f5 and now:

B1) 13.♗g5?! ♗d6 14.♗xe4

fxe4 15.♞ae1 o-o 16.♞xe4 ♞xb2 17.♞xg6 ♞xa2 18.♞e6 is what I had in mind. I thought I could attack, but the computer says Black is better;

B2) I could not decide during the game whether it was better to make a draw with 13.♗xe4 ♞xe4 14.♞xe4+ fxe4 15.♗g5 ♗e7 16.♞ae1 ♗xg5 17.♞xe4+ ♗e7 18.♞fe1 o-o-o 19.♞xe7 ♞xh4 20.♞1e4 ♞d7 21.♞c8+ ♞d8 22.♞8e7.

10.h5 ♗f7 11.gxf5 ♗d6



### 12.♗g5?

An impulsive and stupid move. If I had worked harder, I would probably have found the correct way: 12.♗xe5! ♞e7 (after 12...♗e7 13.♗xf7! ♗xf7 14.♞c1 Black has serious problems: ♗e7 is hanging, he has lost the light-squared bishop, and White will open the game, e.g. 14...♞d7 15.♗d2 ♗d6 16.♗b3) and now 13.♞g4!. This was the simple move that I missed. My pieces are dominating, the f-pawn is protected, and ♗g5 and ♞e1 are coming. 13...♞f6! (this cold-blooded reply seems to be the best defence) 14.♗g5! ♞xf5 15.♞e1! ♗e6 16.♞xf5 ♗xf5 17.♗xc6 ♗d7 18.♗e5+, and White is better.

### 12...♗e7 13.♞xe5 ♗f8!

Simple and good. Now Black is just fine.

### 14.♞f4 ♗xg5

Instead, 14...♗xh5 15.♞e1 ♗f6 16.♞e6 ♗xf3 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♞xf3 is unclear.

### 15.♗xg5 ♞f6 16.♞e1

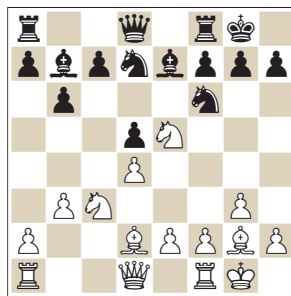
And here I offered a draw before things would get even worse. Gilberto was very nervous and decided to take it, although he is a bit better here. In the end it turned out to be very good for both of us.

Before the last round I was trying to relax as much as possible before the pairings were published. And I watched Maradona's TV show, of course, in which he interviewed Pelé. Around 11 pm Rafael arrived with the pairings: I had to beat Shulman with black. My brain started working, but I decided I should get some sleep. Easier said than done! I couldn't fall asleep until 3 am, and I jumped out of bed at 6.30.

Buenos Aires				
1	Bruzon	CUB	2662	8½
2	Granda	PER	2601	8
3	Onischuk	USA	2628	8
4	Milos	BRA	2606	8
5	Kamsky	USA	2700	8
6	Felgaer	ARG	2618	8
7	Vescovi	BRA	2640	8
8	Needleman	ARG	2242	8
9	Ivanov	USA	2566	7½
10	Spraggett	CAN	2592	7½
11	Shabalov	USA	2593	7½
12	Dominguez	CUB	2639	7½
13	Hernandez	MEX	2518	7½
14	Akopian	USA	2558	7½
15	Lima	BRA	2535	7½
16	Arencibia	CUB	2527	7½
17	Leitao	BRA	2598	7½
18	Shulman	USA	2550	7
19	Nogueiras	CUB	2541	7
20	Ibragimov	USA	2605	7
21	Gulko	USA	2589	7
22	Labollita	ARG	2383	7
23	Quezada	CUB	2522	7
24	Castro	COL	2385	7
25	Vera	CUB	2490	7
26	Kudrin	USA	2559	7
27	Vasquez	CHI	2558	7
11 rounds, 152 players				

Q1 16.9 – E15  
**Yury Shulman**  
**Giovanni Vescovi**  
 Buenos Aires 2005 (11)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 b6 4.g3  
 ♙a6 5.b3 d5 6.♙g2 ♙b4+ 7.♙d2  
 ♙e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗e5 ♙b7 10.♗c3  
 ♗bd7 11.cxd5 exd5



This is the kind of position I was hoping to play. Objectively, White is slightly better, but the position is quite flexible, in the sense that both players have many plans to choose from. Besides, I noticed that my opponent didn't have much experience in this kind of position, so maybe he would feel ill at ease.

12.♙g5  
 I was expecting 12.♙f4 ♖e8 13.♖c1 ♗f8 14.♙g5 ♗e6 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6, as happened in the Candidates match between Petrosian and Kortchnoi in 1977.

12...h6 13.♙xf6 ♗xf6 14.♖c2 ♖e8 15.♖fd1 ♖c8

White did not play the opening well and Black is fine. But the problem in this situation was that Black was forced to win, and some positions with a slight plus are not enough if White has an easy way to play. So I had to keep as many pieces as possible on the board and maintain the tension.

I rejected 15...♙d6 16.♗b5 ♙xe5 17.dxe5 ♖xe5 18.♖xc7 ♖xc7 19.♗xc7 ♖c8 20.♗b5 ♖xe2 21.♗d6 ♖c7 22.♗xb7 ♖xb7 23.♙xd5 ♗xd5 24.♖xd5 ♖c7 25.♖f5, with an inevitable draw. Better was

15...c6! 16.e3 ♙d6 17.♗d3, with a good game for Black.

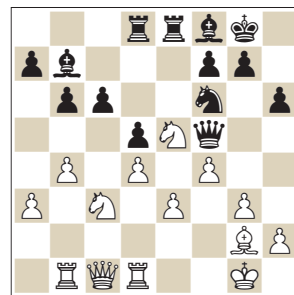
16.e3 c6 17.♖ac1 ♙a3 18.♖b1 ♙d6 19.f4

I was happy when White played this. It is not a bad move, but in the long run I might have some chances.

19...♙b4?!

Better was the thematic 19...c5.

20.♖c1! ♖f5 21.a3 ♙f8 22.h4 ♖ad8



My first impression was that Black had a good game. Of course, I was hoping to be able to play ...c6-c5 at some stage, and then try to open the position, hopefully exploiting the advance f2-f4. But...

23.♖d2!

This was the idea behind 20.♖c1. Now ♖f1 is coming, and Black must be very careful. To be honest, I started to get worried, and regretted the fact that I had not played ...c5 when I could.

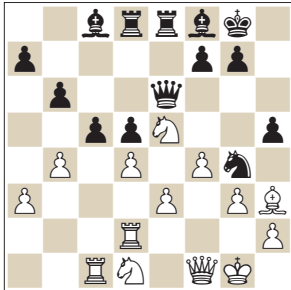
23...♖e6 24.♖f1 ♙c8 25.♖c1 ♗g4

I could not find anything else. I was a bit upset at this point, because I really did not understand the position and felt that I had lost the thread.

26.♙h3

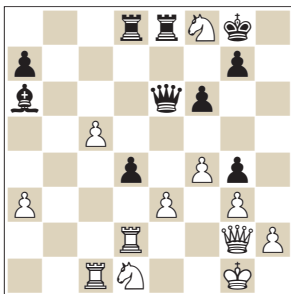
The natural reply. I also felt that I could have problems after 26.f5!? ♖xf5 27.♖xf5 ♙xf5 28.♗xc6 ♖d7 (28...♖d6 29.♗xd5 ♗xe3? does not work: 30.♖e2 ♖de6 31.♗c7!, and White wins) 29.♗xd5 ♙e4 30.♗f4 ♗xe3 31.♙xe4 ♖xe4 32.♖e2 f5, and White should have

some advantage with such a strong knight on c6.  
**26...h5 27.♘d1 c5!**



This was my idea when I played 25...♘g4. The situation is not so clear and both players were getting short of time. Also, if you have to win, you have to take risks.  
**28.♘f2!**

More solid than 28.dxc5 bxc5 29. bxc5 ♖a6 30.♖g2 f6! 31.♙xg4 hxg4 32.♘g6 d4!, and it seemed to me that Black has counterplay. Further analysis proved this evaluation right: 33.♘xf8, and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 33...♙xf8 34.e4 ♙b7 35. ♘f2 f5 36.exf5 ♖e3 37.♖xb7 ♖xd2, with a double-edged position.

B) Shulman was afraid of the spectacular 33...dxe3 (which had not even occurred to me), but after 34.♘xe6 (34.♖xd8? e2! wins) 34...exd2 35.♖c2 ♖xe6 he had missed the simple 36.♖xd2!

**28...cxb4**

Just for fantasy's sake, let us check an interesting queen sac, which of



**Yury Shulman: feeling ill at ease in a type of position he didn't have much experience with?**

course did not even cross my mind, but which may have even been better than the game continuation: 28...♘xe5 29.♙xe6 ♘f3+ 30.♙h1 ♘xd2 31.♖d1 ♙xe6 32. ♖xd2 c4 33.♖d1 g6 and if Black manages to play ...b5 and ...a5, there might be some pressure. White should be better, but it would be interesting to know the correct assessment of this position.

**29.♘fxg4 hxg4 30.♙xg4 ♖h6 31. ♙xc8 ♖xc8 32.axb4 ♖xc1**

32...♙xb4 33.♖dc2 ♖xc2 34.♖xc2 did not appeal to me. White may seize the initiative with the control of the c-line and by activating the queen. Complications could arise after 34...♙d6 35.♖b5 ♖e6 36.f5 ♖e7 37.f6 ♖e6 38.♖c6 ♖d8 39.fxg7, and White's king is safer than Black's.

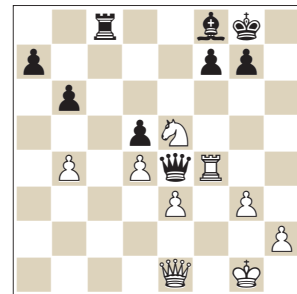
**33.♖xc1 ♖e6! 34.f5?!**

I was expecting 34.♖c2 ♙xb4 (34...f6 35.♘c6 ♖xe3+ 36.♖xe3 ♖xe3 37.♖a2, and the ♘c6 is too strong) 35.♖c6 ♙d6, with an unclear position.

However, the most critical move was 34.♖a2!? ♖c8 35.♖b1 f6 36. ♖g6 ♖h3, and it's doubtful whether White has something more than a draw: 37.♖f7+ ♙h7 38.♖g6+ ♙g8 39.♘d3 ♖e6 40. ♘e5 ♖h3. Funny...

**34...♖xf5 35.♖f2 ♖c8! 36.♖e1 ♖e4 37.♖f4?**

White walks into Black's trap. Correct was 37.♖xf7 ♙d6 38.♖f4 ♖c2, and Black should soon restore the material equilibrium.



**37...♙xb4!**

A fantastic blow. Now Black wins.

**38.♖xe4**

Sad necessity. Accepting the sacrifice would lead to a mathematical loss: 38.♖xb4 ♖c1+ 39.♖f1 ♖xe3+ 40.♙g2 ♖c2+ 41.♙h3 ♖h6+ (41...♖g5! 42.♘f3 ♖h5+ 43.♘h4 g5 mates, according to Fritz) 42.♙g4 ♖c6+ 43.♖f5 ♖f2! (but not 43...g6? 44.♘xg6!) 44. ♖b1 g6, winning.

**38...♙xe1 39.♖f4 f6 40.♘d3 ♙d2 41.♙f2 ♖c2!**

An accurate move. With the extra 15 minutes of the second time-control I calmly checked the variations and convinced myself that the a-pawn is unstoppable.

**42.♖f5 a5 43.♖xd5 a4 44.♖d8+ ♙f7 45.♖d7+ ♙e6 46.♖a7 a3 47. ♙f3 a2 48.♘f4+ ♙d6 49.♘h5 ♙a5 50.♘g7 a1 ♖ 51.♘e8+ ♙d5**

And White resigned.

After almost five hours of tense fighting, not to mention the whole morning of preparation, I felt exhausted. Happy, but exhausted. This happiness I had to retain for a while, because immediately after signing the score-sheets I heard that we were supposed to play a tie-break...



### The tie-break scandal

So now finally we come to the second part of this report. After the final round, Bruzon finished as the sole winner with +6, while seven players tied for second place. This meant that according to the rules we had to play a tournament to see who would qualify for the World Championship. The players were Granda, Onischuk, Milos, Kamsky, Felgaer, Vescovi and Needleman. One 2700 player, five 2600+'s, and a 2242 rated 15-year-old boy. Who is Needleman?

Gaston Needleman is the son of an Argentinian master, and scored a once-in-a-lifetime result in this tournament, making his first GM norm. He is a talented young player and showed great fighting spirit, saving many difficult positions. In the last round he secured shared second place by holding Kamsky to a draw with the black pieces in his pet Taimanov Variation of the Sicilian. Probably his best game in the tournament was against Shabalov in the penultimate round.

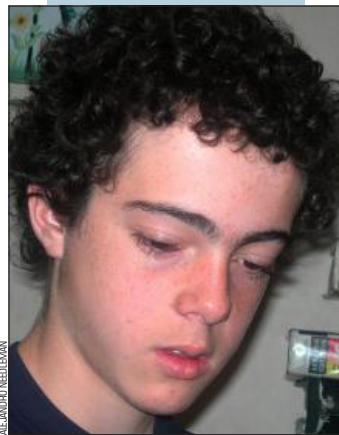
### NOTES BY Gaston Needleman

SI 40.15 – B47  
Alexander Shabalov  
Gaston Needleman  
Buenos Aires 2005 (10)

I needed half a point to make my first GM norm and arrived at the board in good spirits as a result of four consecutive wins over FM Axel Bachman (Panamerican U16 champion), IM Guillermo Soppe (ex co-champion of Argentina), Ariel Sorin (Argentinian champion) and IM Yuniesky Quezada from Cuba.

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7**

In this same Continental champi-

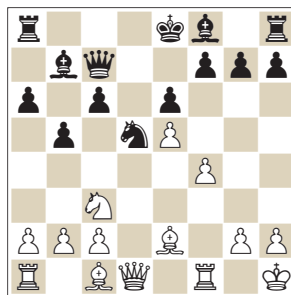


ALEXANDER NEEDLEMAN

**Rated 2242, 15-year-old Gaston Needleman sensationally made his first GM norm.**

onship I had scored 1½ out of 2 with this variation, so I saw no reason to change.

**6.♗e2 a6 7.0-0 ♗f6 8.♖h1 b5 9.♗xc6 dxc6 10.f4 ♗b7 11.e5 ♗d5**



### 12.♗e4

In case of 12.♗xd5 cxd5 13.♗e3 White has a small advantage that is hard to exploit. Black has sufficient counterplay on the queenside and a possible continuation is: 13...♗c5 14.♗xc5 ♖xc5 15.c3 ♗d8 16.♖d4 ♖xd4 17.cxd4 ♗c8 18.♗ac1 ♗e7.

The move in the game is more aggressive, but it also allows Black to get some play. Of course, this ambitious move is fully understandable in a classification game for the world championship as White against an opponent who is rated no fewer than 300 points lower.

### 12...♗e7

Before playing c5 it is better to have the king ready to castle. Apparently, this was a novelty. 12...♗d8 was played in Crosa-Lebrede, Sao Paulo 2003, with a win for White after a complicated game.

### 13.♖e1

With 13.c4 bxc4 14.♗xc4 White can create an additional problem for Black on the c-file, but the strong steed on d5 and the b-file would secure the equilibrium for Black.

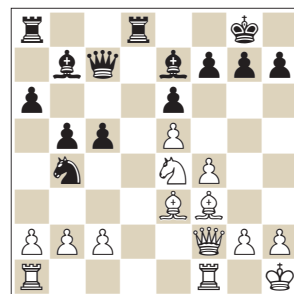
### 13...c5 14.♗f3 0-0 15.♗d2 ♗b4!

It would be unpleasant to allow the bishop to occupy a5. Now, in case of 16.♗xb4 cxb4 White would be left with a backward pawn on c2, and Black would be slightly better.

### 16.♖f2 ♗fd8

Not, of course, 16...♗xc2 17.♗ac1 ♗d4 18.♖xd4.

### 17.♗e3



### 17...♗xe4!

Giving up a good bishop for a better knight. The pressure on c5 was annoying and for a possible attack on the kingside White would need a knight. That's why I took this difficult decision. The alternative 17...♗ac8 18.♗d6 ♗xf3 19.♗xc8 ♗xg2+ 20.♖xg2 ♖xc8 seems to be a bit better for White. It would have been interesting to play with a strong knight and a pawn for the exchange. After the text-move the white attack on the kingside loses force and the knight will be missed to occupy

f6, the square that Black has to weaken in order to stop the advance f5.

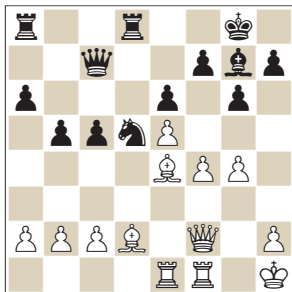
**18. ♖xe4 ♜d5 19. ♖d2 g6**

The beginning of the typical plan to defend the kingside.

**20. ♖ae1 ♖f8 21. g4?!**

It seems to me that without a knight that can go to f6, this way of attacking does not make sense. I think it would be much more difficult for Black to defend against a slower plan beginning with 21. h4, followed by h5, g3, ♖g2 and ♖h1.

**21... ♖g7**



**22. ♖g2**

After 22. f5 ♖xe5 (22... ♖d7 was interesting, when in case of 23. f6 ♖f8 Black will have his hands free to continue his play on the queenside, and in an ending the advanced white pawns might be weak) 23. fxe6 fxe6 24. ♖a5 ♖xa5 25. ♖f7+ ♖h8 26. ♖xe6 ♖e8 27. ♖xd5 ♖xb2 28. ♖xc5 ♖ad8 Black has a small advantage. During the game I planned to calculate all this in case Shabalov played f5, but I was confident that I could ignore this push and continue my play on the other flank.

**22... ♖d7 23. ♖g3 ♖e8**

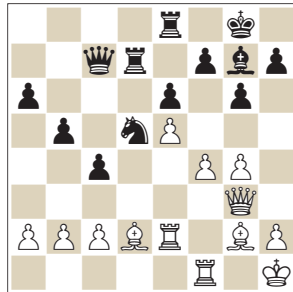
The previous moves, both black and white, were aimed at e5 and it seems that Black has succeeded in stopping White's progress on the kingside.

**24. ♖e2**

The position remains complicated, but I believe that Black has a concrete plan to follow, whereas

White's f5 push has been deterred. After 24. f5 exf5 25. gxf5 ♖xe5 Black is better.

**24... c4**



**25. a3**

This probably is the mistake that gives Black the advantage. One plan to continue the attack on the kingside was to bring the dark-squared bishop to d4: 25. c3 a5 26. ♖e1 b4 27. ♖f2 bxc3 28. bxc3 ♖b8 29. ♖d4 a4 30. f5 a3, with complicated play.

**25... c3!**

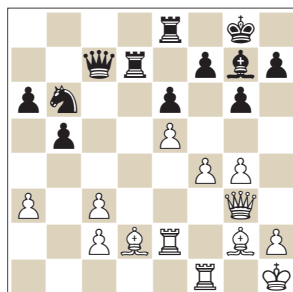
Destroying White's queenside, grabbing the initiative and securing good endings for Black.

**26. bxc3**

After 26. ♖xc3 ♜xc3 27. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 28. bxc3 ♖c8 Black would have a slight endgame advantage, but the game would probably end in a draw. What made me relaxed was that a draw would be enough for my norm. With the text-move Shabalov maintains chances to play for a win, because the endgame would be pretty sad for White.

**26... ♜b6!**

Black starts looking for more.



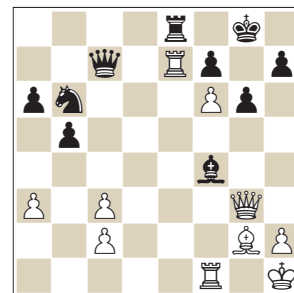
**27. f5?**

In time-trouble Shabalov decides to open up the position, looking for tactical chances. After 27. ♖c1 Black would increase the pressure with ♜c4 and ♖f8. The continuation that would have kept him in the game was 27. ♖e3 ♜c4 28. ♖d4 ♜xa3 29. f5, and with the pawn on e5 defended, White could try to weaken the black kingside before the black a-pawn starts marching.

**27... exf5 28. gxf5 ♖xe5 29. ♖f4 ♖de7 30. f6?**

Black would remain better after the exchanges 30. fxg6 hxg6 31. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 32. c4!? ♖e7! 33. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 34. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 35. cxb5 axb5. Shabalov's move is White's final mistake, caused by a tactical oversight.

**30... ♖xf4! 31. ♖xe7**



**31... ♖xe7!**

A nice move and the only way to for Black to get an advantage. Now, short on time, Shabalov tries some final tactical tricks.

**32. ♖xf4 ♖e3?!**

Stronger was 32... ♖xa3.

**33. ♖c7**

White could have played 33. ♖xc3 ♖xe3 34. ♖b7 ♜c4 35. ♖d1 h5 36. ♖d8+ ♖h7 37. ♖f8 ♜d6, although Black would still be better.

**33... h5 34. ♖b7 ♜c4 35. ♖d5 ♜e5**

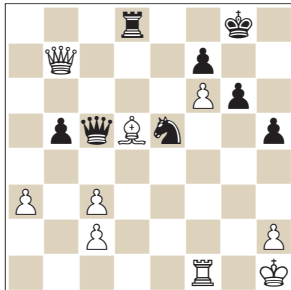
A nice knight manoeuvre to stop any counterplay against f7.

**36. ♖xa6 ♖c5**

Before undertaking offensive action, Black questions the white

bishop, which has to decide if it will continue to attack f7 or stay on the long diagonal h1-a8.

**37.** ♖b7 ♗d8!



**38.** ♗h3

The last chance for White would be to continue to protect his king with the bishop with 38. ♗e4, although Black would still be slightly better.

**38...** ♗d7 **39.** ♖e4 ♖h7!

Leaving White without chances. Now the attack, with which Black exploits the weakness of the h1-a8 diagonal, becomes irresistible.

**40.** a4 ♖g4

The knight creates decisive threats against the white king, which has no defence.

**41.** ♖f4 ♖e3 **42.** axb5 ♖xb5

Also winning was 42... ♖xf1 43. ♖xf1 ♗d2. White resigned.



It is always nice to see a new kid having good results. From the brief contact we had, I would say that he seems to be a good boy, well balanced and with a good talent for chess. From a technical point of view he still has a lot to improve, of course, but his real strength should be around 2400-2450.

So, now that the protagonists have been introduced, let us take a look at the format of this tie-breaker. We were supposed to play a round-robin rapid tournament (15 minutes + 10-second increments), starting right after the closing ceremony. Maybe I am a



**Gaston Needleman (r.) in the tie-break that caused such a stir.**

lazy guy, but I definitely would have preferred to skip this and go to bed. Therefore I asked the organizers some questions: 1) Isn't Kamsky qualified by rating? No, he was inactive before January 2005 in the FIDE lists; 2) Why doesn't FIDE give an extra spot? Because it is past midnight in Europe and there is no one to answer the phone; 3) Can the FIDE President of the Americas not take this decision? He said that he understood the point, that he would like to, but he did not have the authority; 4) Can we play tomorrow? No; 5) Can I go to my hotel, take a nap, and come back in 2 hours? Yes, go ahead!

And so I did. Actually, it turned out to be a 20-minute walk, 10 minutes on the phone with the family, 30 minutes napping, a shower, McDonald's, and back to the playing hall. Crazy... Meanwhile, I was trying to figure out what strategy to take. Funny, but this was an anti-tournament in which you don't have to win; all you had to do was not finish last. According to the rules, if everybody finished on 50%, the worst Swiss tie-break would be out. This meant that the only player who had to win was Needleman.

Regardless of the participants, in such a tournament you have two strategies: either you make draws and get closer to your goal (which,

importantly, allows you to take rests or naps), or you try to win one game to feel safer. I chose the first course. I believe this was the best option, because there would be some decisive results in one or two other games, and the loser would have to fight back, risking going down even further. In other words, the player who loses first will try to recover, and then he might lose again and again, because he is nervous and tired.

At the end of the closing ceremony there was a change of venue, as we moved to the Club Argentino, where at 10 pm we started playing. While most players opted for the first strategy, only Kamsky and Granda decided on the second strategy. Round 1: all games drawn. Round 2: Milos won a pawn on move 10, but lost to Needleman; and Felgaer lost to Granda. Round 3: Felgaer tried to beat me, but it was a draw; Kamsky had a terrible position against Needleman around move 15, but Gaston did not offer a draw when he could, played on and lost. Round 4: Felgaer, on -1, played against Needleman and won.

Standings: Milos and Needleman -1, Granda and Kamsky +1. Round 5: Onischuk blundered his extra pawn and got a much worse position against Needleman, who did not find a way to play on and repeated moves in severe time-trouble. Now Needleman needed a win with White against Granda or against me with Black. Round 6: Gaston got nothing out of the opening, kept on playing and lost to Granda.

So, before the last round, at 3 in the morning, the outcome had already been decided: even if I had lost to Needleman, he would be out because of a worse tie-break in the main tournament. So before we started our game, I shook his hand, congratulated him on his great performance and fighting

spirit, and said that if he wanted I could give him a draw. He thanked me and said no. This was probably the right decision, since he had to grab any opportunity to play against strong players. Anyway, this was our game:

SI 41.1 – A08

**Giovanni Vescovi**

**Gaston Needleman**

Buenos Aires tie-break 2005 (7)

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d3**

Of course, I wanted to test him in positions that were unfamiliar to him. Besides, I have some experience in the King's Indian Attack.

**3...d5 4.♖e2 ♘c6 5.g3 ♘ge7 6.♙g2 g6 7.0-0 ♙g7 8.c3 b6 9.♗e1 ♙b7 10.e5 h6 11.h4 ♖c7 12.♘a3 a6 13.♘c2**



**13...0-0-0?!**

This is a very risky set-up for Black. What's more, it is very easy to play for White.

**14.h4 d4**

After 14...cxb4 15.cxb4 d4 16.♙b2 ♗d5 17.♗ac1 ♗hd8 18.♘cxd4 White was clearly better in Vescovi-Leitao, Sao Paulo 2001.

**15.bxc5 dxc3 16.cxb6 ♖xb6 17.♙a3 ♘d5 18.♗ab1 ♖a5 19.♗b3 ♙f8 20.♗eb1 ♗d7 21.♙xf8 ♗xf8 22.♘e3!**

Aiming for ♘c4-d6, or for eliminating Black's only strong piece.

**22...♘xe3 23.♖xe3 ♗fd8 24.d4**

White is completely winning, both by position and by the clock. Here I still had all my starting

**BUENOS AIRES**



**Lazaro Bruzon: visibly happy with the cup.**

time, whereas Black was down to his final minutes.

**24...c2 25.♗c1 ♖xa2 26.♗c3 ♗c7 27.♗3xc2 ♖a4 28.♗c4 ♖b5 29.♘d2 ♙b8 30.♘e4**

Black resigned.

All's well that ends well. The result was logical, natural, and the best one possible. As I predicted when I asked those questions to the organizers, FIDE later gave a wildcard to Needleman for the next World Championship. Indeed, this was more than obvious. I mean, how could FIDE not have given this wildcard!? Needleman is a young boy who played a great tournament, showed some talent and needs some opportunities. But most of all, he is an Argentinian, and Argentina hosted the last two editions of this important tournament and will host the FIDE World Championship in San Luis.

But it did not end well. When I arrived back home, I was surprised to read an article on the ChessBase site by Carlos Ilardo, which was published in one of the main Argentinian newspapers, *La Nacion*, and entitled 'Checkmate to the illusion'. This gentleman dared to say that the foreign GMs had ganged up in order to eliminate the young boy. Come on! Firstly, there was a 400-point Elo difference, which means that his normal score would be around 8%. Secondly, he was the only

player who was forced to try and win every game, except in his game against Kamsky. Thirdly, the theory is that a Peruvian, two Brazilians and two Russian-Americans would meet secretly and devise an evil plan against an unexperienced and underrated player. What a joke! If Needleman had beaten Granda and reached 50%, I would not have thought twice about offering him a draw, while poor Milos and Granda would have to fight for the last place. That was the idea of the tournament: not to finish last.

There was no conspiracy, Mr. Ilardo, and you know it. You should not be writing articles for a serious newspaper, you should be writing for a gossip magazine, and a very bad one at that. You exploited the fact that a 15-year-old Argentinian boy was involved, and created an emotional lie. And this lie has caused significant damage to the image of many people, including myself.

The repercussion of this ill-intended article was huge on the Internet, and understandably the first reaction of many people was to believe the words printed in a serious newspaper. Oh, and a young boy... shame on you GMs! But when people start thinking about what happened, reason will prevail. Do not forget that all these GMs once were young talented boys themselves and that many times they faced similar situations. We improved, worked hard and got stronger. Maybe Gaston will manage to do the same, and we hope so.

Before finishing, I would like to say that FIDE should calculate one move ahead and think about this tie-break system. It's not the first time this happened. At least, the organizers should be prepared for this and bear the cost of an extra day. To play till 3 am, what is this? Slavery? ♖♙♘♗♞♝♜♛♚♙♘♗♞♝♜♛♚

**NEW IN CHESS 69**