

By Pete Tamburro



## A CONVERSATION WITH A TEN YEAR OLD AUTHOR:

# OLIVER BOYDELL

work. He's played through hundreds, if not thousands, of games (there's the work ethic for you!) and decided to do a service to kids his age.

Anyone who has taught chess will tell you that they encourage their students to play over games. Anyone who has been around primary and secondary students will tell you that deep notes will not attract them, and heavy positional struggles will bore them. Education has to have a level of entertainment.

**B**ack in 2010, I was assigned to write a review of a 14-year-old boy's first chess book, *Mastering Positional Chess*. With a certain degree of skepticism I asked for his phone number so I could interview him and get a feel for who this kid was. Certainly, some readers might ask if he actually wrote it without help. After talking with young Daniel Naroditsky, I was much impressed.

Because I taught advanced students in history my entire professional career, I noticed that Daniel's traits – quick responses, an excellent command of language, no short grunts of yes and no, well-developed ideas and a real love of his work ethic (he had a handwritten notebook that he kept on all his games) – were those my students exhibited as well.

Thus, when Bruce Pandolfini and I were recently chatting on the phone, he mentioned that I should talk to a ten-year-old lad that had now written a book on the great masters' games! He had the mom send me the book. Then, I talked to the author, Oliver Boydell. The title – *He's Got Moves, 25 Legendary Chess Games as Analyzed by a Smart Kid* – pretty much sums it up.

Olive is an engaging young fellow with an excellent vocabulary, very quick with answers and explains all the why's and wherefore's of his

Oliver Boydell came up with a simple plan:

1. Pick exciting games from the past
2. Make the notes breezy and brief
3. Use lots of diagrams
4. Have questions for the reader with answers in the back of the book
5. Have a "lesson" or two, a concept, to take with them that they should remember about playing good chess
6. Give a favorite move – one that might stick with the reader.

For the miserable types that give a disapproving "harumph" to all this, you've forgotten what it is to be a kid.

Our chat was fun and we share it here.

### How does it feel to be an author?

I'm proud of myself and am really excited. I had never done anything like it before and now I know I can.

### When did you start playing over games? Where did you find them?

I've always played over games. I started with books and online. Then I found many games on Chessbase. I also saw some of them in the lessons I had with my chess teachers. Once I liked a particular player, I'd look up his games and play them over.

### How would you know which ones to look up?

I started with the World Champions. I already knew Capablanca and many others, but when I found Chessbase, I think the second name I searched was Anand. I went through a lot of games, some had bad or questionable play, then I'd find a game I liked. It seemed that I played over a hundred bad games before I'd find one I really liked.

### What attracted you to certain games over others?

At first, I liked mostly

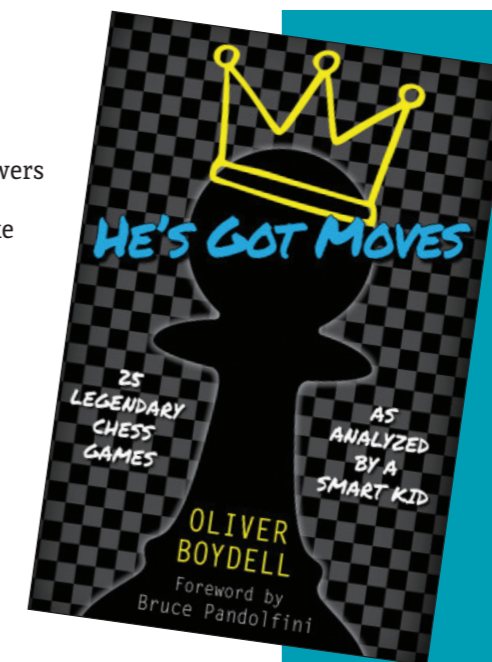
attacking games. Then I began to like more positional games. Still, my favorite games are those that show an active style. More modern games are about exploiting weaknesses.

### How should the average kids your age go about learning from your book?

They should play through all the games, going over every single move. Play each game over several times. Do it the first time just for fun, to see what you like. When you find a style or player you like, try to play that way, in the style of the winning player. Another thing I'd like readers to get from these games is how to make plans. You should always try to play with a plan. Kids should try to understand winning plans and see how GMs make those plans work.

### Do you look at more deeply annotated games now?

Yes and no. Sometimes I do, especially if the game is really good. But I prefer



language because my goal was to teach the important chess concepts and this is best done when the language is clear and everyone – kids and adults – can understand.

### How do you go through a game? Do you take notes? Do you use a chess engine as you go?

I take notes on what I think is interesting. I might go over it several times to make sure I didn't make any mistakes, like missing an obvious tactic. I would use the engine several times, even different engines, to make sure I agreed with the evaluation. I also look for certain ideas I can write about, like doubling rooks and controlling open lines.

### Do you go over the game you just played with your opponent?

Usually, I go over tournament games I've played with my coaches, like the games I play at the Marshall. At certain tournaments, I get my games analyzed in team rooms, like by the Speyer coaches. Or sometimes I just go back to my Stockfish and see what it thinks I did right and wrong.

### What influenced your progress the most?

Unrated to 1300 was my biggest jump. I learned some things from books. I tried to solve puzzles and tactics for different levels. I would go over tactical problems and combinations every day. I would also play chess games online. You can't get too much of puzzles, openings, endgames, and middlegame play. It's all good. Whether using an app, or playing on Chess.com, I tried to learn from my mistakes and

to play over games quickly. I can see more games that way, and my moves then become more natural.

### Should kids look at those kinds of games?

If they can, and if they enjoy it, yes. But they don't have to spend a lot of time on every single move to learn how to become better players. Some moves are more important than other moves. In fact, spending too much time analyzing every move could become boring and confusing. Besides, it will give you a different problem – time trouble.

### Did you make your notes very brief because kids won't read much more than that?

I went for short, entertaining, funny notes, trying not to be boring, since kids, and adults as well, need a little bit of laughter when learning. I chose simple, easy to understand



correct them. For some positions I didn't understand right away, I would go back and try to figure out what I had missed. Again, there's always Stockfish.

**What are the most important things your coach(es) have told you to help you get better?**

Coaches were very important. They've helped me a lot. The one thing they've all stressed is learning how to analyze without moving the pieces. You should treat analysis like you would a real game. But they also taught me something else. If I'm willing to work, I can do it on my own. At one time, there were no coaches in the world. People still played chess and still got better.

**Do you plan to do more books like this in a series?**

Definitely! There are lots of incredible games out there. There are also tons of interesting puzzles, and there are many, many great strategies.

**What is your plan for chess improvement now?**

With the pandemic, there are not many tournaments. So, playing online, analyzing my games, doing puzzles every day, and going over positional ideas, is a good way to practice. I also like looking at videos explained by GMs.

**I looked at the ratings of the opponents you've faced – mostly scholastic players with ratings below 1800. When do you plan on playing open tournaments where you will have to play stronger and older players?**

I have already played in some. I would have played many more games if the pandemic hadn't gotten in the way. I prefer strong opposition and I hope to get more chances very soon. I know I'm hundreds of points stronger now, and I feel that I'm getting stronger every day.

**Do you keep a notebook of your own games and annotate them?**

At first, when I was much younger, I had a device to record the moves of all my games. I would analyze those games later. But then I stopped

using it and would record my games by hand. It helped me learn faster. I would then enter those games in Chessbase and make all kinds of notes. Sometimes I would print out diagrams of the important positions. I'd create files of nice positions and ideas.

**Do you write anything down to try to remember?**

Once my games are entered in Chessbase, I add my variations and thoughts, sometimes even in words. I then review my games and my ideas with my teachers. I'm always looking, on my own, for games in Chessbase and other online services that are useful to me.

**Who have your chess teachers been?**

My first chess teacher (when I was 5 years old) was Tomo Fukui. Tomo is a co-founder of GM Chess (affiliated with Avenues School). Tomo, who had played for Hunter (under the guidance of Sunil Weeramantry) and a 3-time scholastic national champion, understood scholastic chess competition well and was a fantastic chess coach. In addition to Tomo, there have been other chess teachers: GM John Fedorowicz, GM Irina Krush, Bruce Pandolfini and Pradeep Pathak.

**The original document you sent me had 30 games. Why did you drop five and why those in particular?**

The publisher said it took up too much space. I loved them all. Some of the games simply had to be dropped. It was very hard to decide which ones to take out. In the end, I got rid of some of the longer games. I think most readers prefer shorter games anyway. They usually are more exciting.

**What are your favorite chess books that you have at home? What did you like about them?**

There was one puzzle book at first, a big red one. It was *Winning Chess Puzzles for Kids* by Jeff Coakley. I liked that book a lot. Pradeep, my teacher from India, taught me how to apply pressure and how to keep it up. He is a master at strategy and sent books that focused on exploiting weaknesses, especially showing more modern games.

**What part would you like chess to play in your life when you're an adult?**

I will always keep chess in my heart. It changed my life when I found out about it. I always practice, hoping to learn more and more. My goal is to become a GM.

AN EXCERPT FROM OLIVER'S BOOK

C68

Emanuel Lasker

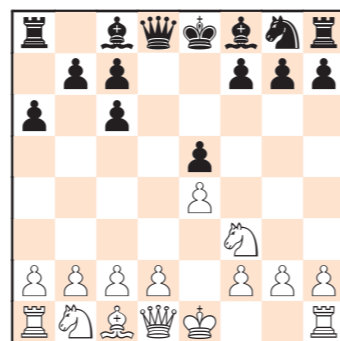
Jose Raul Capablanca

St. Petersburg 1914

Ruy Lopez, Exchange Variation

Capablanca needed to draw the following game to pretty much lock up first prize. But it's not always easy to draw when you need one. True or not, supposedly the Czar of Russia designated the top five placers in this event as Grandmasters. Thus, according to legend, Emanuel Lasker, Jose Capablanca, Alexander Alekhine, Siegbert Tarrasch, and Frank Marshall became the first five GMs.

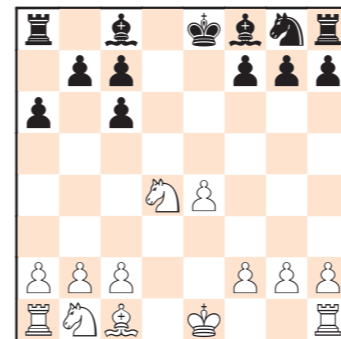
- 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 The Morphy Defense.
- 4.♙xc6 The Exchange Variation.
- 4...♗xc6 Taking away from the center (instead of toward it) for tactical reasons.



- 5.d4 Trying to create a kingside pawn majority.
- 5...exd4 6.♙xd4

**QUESTION** Why does White play 6.♙xd4 instead of 6.♗xd4?

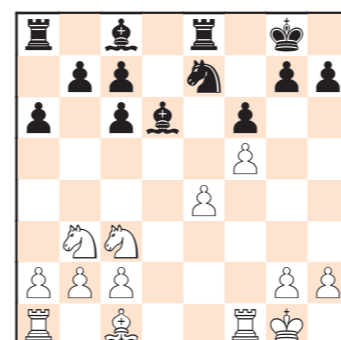
- 6...♙xd4 7.♗xd4



Black to move

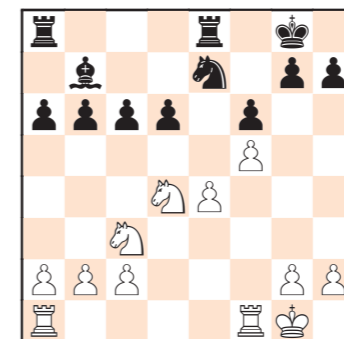
White has a kingside pawn majority and Black has a queenside majority. But Black's majority is messed up.

- 7...♗d6 Developing and defending the c7-pawn.
- 8.♗c3 ♗e7 The knight is safer at e7 than f6.
- 9.0-0-0 Both sides are ready for business.
- 10.f4 Capablanca's Rule says that when advancing a pawn majority, you should move the unopposed pawn first. Let's see how Lasker continues.
- 10...♙e8 Aiming at White's e4-pawn and trying to discourage e4-e5.
- 11.♗b3 This safeguards against a pin along the a7-g1 diagonal.
- 11...f6 Making it tougher for White to advance his king-pawn.
- 12.f5! Lasker violates Capablanca's Rule! You might say he has a plan.



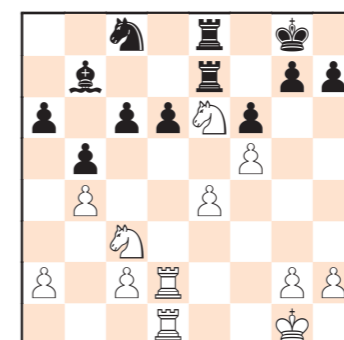
Black to move

- 12...b6 Capablanca wants to flank his queen-bishop. But the bishop is better placed if it guards e6.
- 13.♙f4! What? Is Lasker now threatening to help Capablanca out by undoubling his pawns?
- 13...♙b7 It turns out, 13...♙xf4 was better for Black.
- 14.♙xd6! Yes! Lasker undoubles the black c-pawns! Why? Because it's easier to attack the healthy pawn at d6 than it is to attack the doubled pawn c7.
- 14...cxd6 Black has "healthier" pawns but a weaker position. Go figure.
- 15.♗d4 The knight is headed for e6.



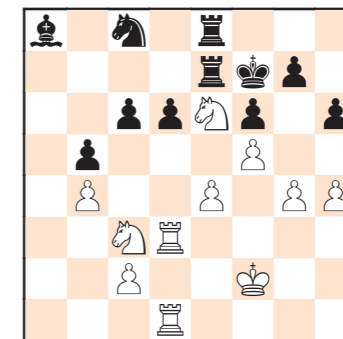
Black to move

- 15...♙ad8? Better was 15...♙c8.
- 16.♗e6 What a great knight. A monster knight!
- 16...♙d7 17.♙ad1 Aiming at the d6 pawn.
- 17...♗c8 Black is playing so defensively. Capablanca seems intimidated.
- 18.♙f2 Preparing to double on the d-file.
- 18...b5 Trying to gain queenside space. Also clearing b6 for the knight.
- 19.♙fd2 This discourages the Black knight from moving anywhere.
- 19...♙de7 The black rook gets off the d-file.
- 20.b4 Holding back Black's b-pawn.



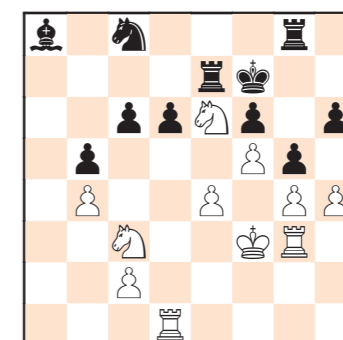
Black to move

- 20...♗f7 Capablanca expects action on the g-file, sooner or later. So, he moves the king to the f-file.
- 21.a3 Guarding b4, so he doesn't have to think about defending it later.
- 21...♙a8? Black is trying to get play by opening the a-file. This turns against him.
- 22.♗f2 Each side activates the king for the endgame.
- 22...♙a7 Preparing to advance the a-pawn.
- 23.g4 Activity on the g-file proceeds.
- 23...h6 To stop g4-g5.
- 24.♙d3 Now the rook can shift along the 3rd rank.
- 24...a5 25.h4 Supporting an upcoming g4-g5.
- 25...axb4 26.axb4 ♙ae7 Black decides he can't really use the a-file profitably.



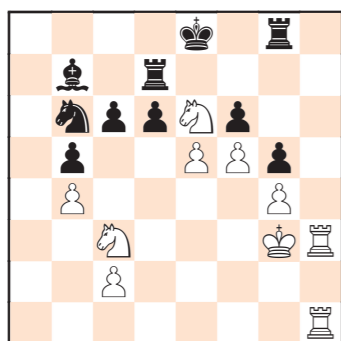
White to move

- 27.♗f3 Moving up the king. But White must be careful of potential dangers along the a8-h1 diagonal.
- 27...♙g8 Black would love to open the g-file to his favor.
- 28.♗f4 In the tradition of Steinitz, Lasker always tries to get an active king's position.
- 28...g6 29.♙g3 g5+ 30.♗f3



Black to move

If 30...gxh4, White gets the h-file after 31.♖h3.  
 30...♖b6 Now it is White who will gain the h-file.  
 31.hxg5 hxg5 32.♖h3! Sure enough. White gets control of the h-file.  
 32...♗d7 The d-pawn had to be defended.  
 33.♕g3 An important setup move. White gets his king off the a8-h1 diagonal.  
 33...♗e8 Black's king is starting to get in the way of his rooks.  
 34.♗dh1 Doubling on the h-file.  
 34...♗b7 35.e5! A clearance sacrifice! Clearing the e4 square.



Black to move

35...dxe5 36.♗e4 Devastating.  
 36...♗d5 This doesn't work.  
 37.♗6c5 Winning the exchange.  
 37...♗c8 38.♗xd7 ♗xd7 39.♖h7! Seizing the 7<sup>th</sup> rank.  
 39...♖f8 40.♖a1! Shifting flanks, taking the a-file. Black's plan has backfired.  
 40...♗d8 41.♖a8+ ♗c8 42.♗c5 Black resigned

It's hopeless. White is threatening several different mates. What a masterpiece!

I will always remember how Lasker undoubled Capablanca's c-pawns.

**KNIGHT OR KNIGHTMARE?**

**A00**

**Richard Reti**  
**Alexander Alekhine**

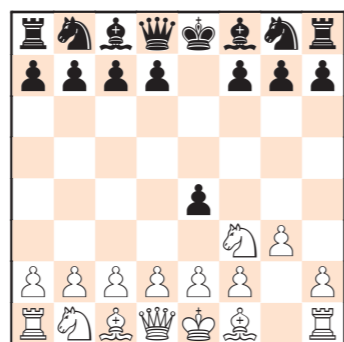
Baden-Baden 1925

*Alekhine's Defense in Reverse*

The Czech grandmaster Richard Reti (1889-1929) gave us Reti's Opening

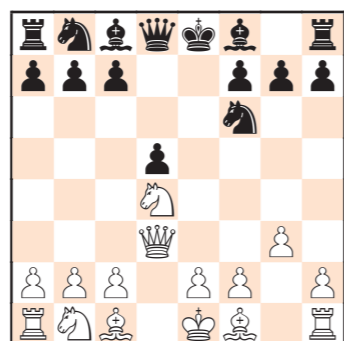
(1.♗f3). It begins with White moving a knight. Alexander Alekhine (1892-1946) gave us Alekhine's Defense (1. e4 ♗f6!). It begins with Black moving a knight. The following famous game between these two giants ends with a long combination by Alekhine. It ends with Black winning a knight!

1.g3 A kingside fianchetto beginning.  
 1...e5 2.♗f3 Trying to lure the king-pawn forward.  
 2...e4



White to move

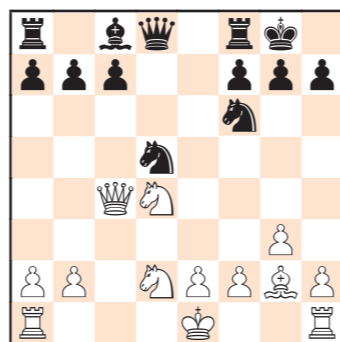
In a way, it has become an Alekhine's Defense in Reverse.  
 3.♗d4 d5 Black could also have played 3...c5.  
 4.d3 White puts pressure on the e-pawn.  
 4...exd3 5.♖xd3 Activating the queen.  
 5...♗f6



White to move

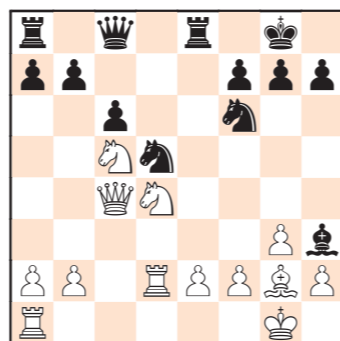
6.♗g2 Completing the fianchetto.  
 6...♗b4+ 7.♗d2 This check could be answered by c2-c3.  
 7...♗xd2+ 8.♗xd2 0-0 So far Black has the only pawn occupying a center square.  
 9.c4 White plays to eliminate Black's d5 pawn.

9...♗a6 10.cxd5 ♗b4 You see what I mean?  
 11.♖c4 ♗bxd5



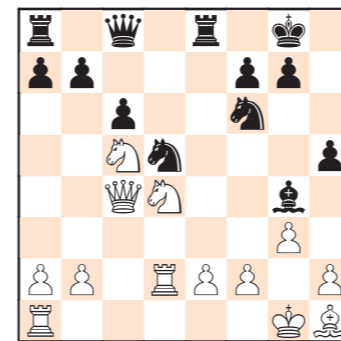
White to move

So, the queen-knight winds up on the center square d5.  
 12.♗2b3 c6 White has a kingside majority and Black a queenside majority. The position is equal.  
 13.0-0 ♗e8 Black puts the rook on the half open e-file.  
 14.♗fd1 In turn, White takes over the d-file.  
 14...♗g4 Developing and pinning the e-pawn.  
 15.♗d2 Defending e2 and getting out of the pin.  
 15...♖c8 Getting off the d-file and supporting a bishop invasion at h3.  
 16.♗c5 White's knights seem active.  
 16...♗h3 Alekhine offers the b-pawn for attack. White could try 17.♗xh3 ♖xh3 18.♗xb7.



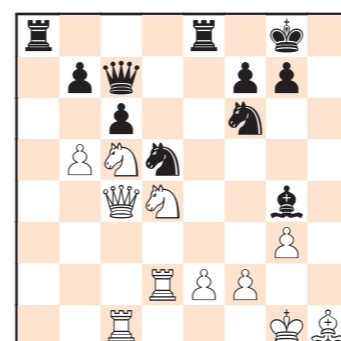
White to move

17.♗f3 White avoids the bishop trade.  
 17...♗g4 Alekhine offers a bishop trade again.  
 18.♗g2 Again, Reti declines.  
 18...♗h3 Trade anyone?  
 19.♗f3 ♗g4 20.♗h1 h5!



White to move

Thanks to Reti's bravery, Alekhine has the chance to launch a remarkable.  
 21.b4 A form of minority attack. White's two pawns attack Black's three.  
 21...a6 For the meantime, Black stops b4-b5.  
 22.♗c1 Activating his last rook.  
 22...h4 The aggression proceeds.  
 23.a4 Reti reinforces the possible advance b4-b5.  
 23...hxg3 24.hxg3 ♖c7 White has a small positional superiority. So Alekhine looks for tactical counterplay. Note that the Black queen attacks g3.  
 25.b5 Reti continues with his minority attack plan.  
 25...axb5 26.axb5



Black to move

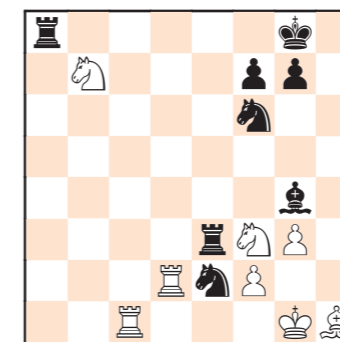
White's plan seems to have worked. But Alekhine gets the right idea. He complicates!  
 26...♗e3!! What a move! Remarkably, the rook cannot be safely taken.

**QUESTION** How does Black answer 27.fxex3?

27.♗f3? From here on, Alekhine blows Reti away.

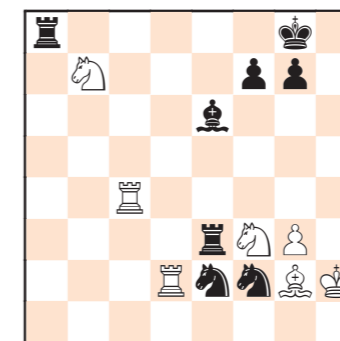
Oliver Boydell

27...cxb5! 28.♖xb5 ♗c3! A menacing invasion.  
 29.♖xb7 A crucial decision. The square b7 now becomes critical.  
 29...♖xb7 Alekhine trades queens.  
 30.♗xb7 Who would expect that this unfortunate b7 knight would be lost?  
 30...♗xe2+ Undermining f3.



White to move

31.♗h2 Is White managing to defend?  
 31...♗e4!! Another fantastic move! Think of it. The rook at e3 has been hanging for five moves!  
 32.♗c4 ♗xf2 Guess what? The rook is no longer hanging.  
 33.♗g2 Alekhine's final moves make this game very special.  
 33...♗e6! Getting the bishop into position for the final setup.

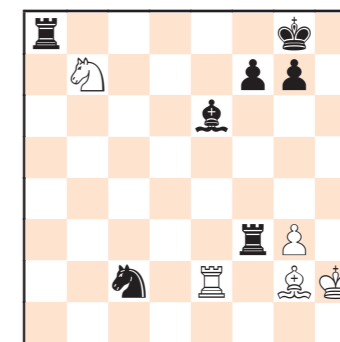


White to move

34.♗cc2 ♗g4+ 35.♗h3 Walking into a discovery.  
 35...♗e5+ 36.♗h2 ♗xf3! We knew this rook was going to do something big.  
 37.♗xe2 ♗g4+ 38.♗h3 ♗e3+ Another discovery.

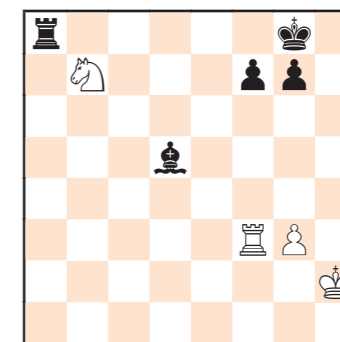


39.♗h2 ♗xc2



White to move

40.♗xf3 ♗d4 The first fork.  
 41.♗f2 ♗xf3+ 42.♗xf3 ♗d5



White to move

This second fork is absolutely crushing. The knight at b7 is lost. **White resigned**

This is one of the greatest chess games ever played.

I will always remember how Alekhine left his rook hanging on e3 for five moves.