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XXXII NATO Chess Championship, Tartu EST, June 26 - July 1, 2022

by Lt Col. Sławomir Kędziński

Silver medals of the Polish Army!

Ninety four players from 15 NATO countries took part in the Championship. Additionally, three teams were formed - NATO 1, NATO 2 and NATO LTM (Life Time Members).

The representatives of the Polish Armed Forces ended with a second place in the classical chess event (tempo 90' + 30"/move) behind the unbeatable team of Greece. According to the rules of the NATO Chess Championship, the team ranking was determined by the result of the top 4 of 6 national team players.

To the Polish national team were nominated: Lieutenant Colonel Sławomir Kędziński (Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland at NATO in Brussels), Captain Dariusz Sycz (Training Centre Engineering and Chemical Forces General Jakub Jasiński in Wrocław), Lieutenant Damian Graczyk (Special Military Police Department in Mińsk Mazowiecki), 2nd Lieutenant Marcin Pietruszewski (14th Anti-Tank Regiment in Suwałki), 2nd Lieutenant Kamil Cichy (21 Brigade Highland Riflemen in Rzeszów) and Corporal cadet Matthew Tustanovsky (Military Academy Technical University in Warsaw). Whereas Lieutenant Aleksander Stańkowski and Corporal cadet Michał Choina (Military Technical Academy) played on the NATO team.

Estonian defense commander General of Armed Forces Martin Herem took patronage of the competitions by participating in opening and closing ceremonies. The organization committee was efficiently led by the long-time Estonian team captain of chess Colonel Mati Tikerpuu. It should be emphasized that the organization of the tournament was very high level and that the tournament was housed in the Military Academy in Tartu. We were accommodated in the barracks. All the players received a commemorative chess themed puzzle. The hosts also took care of the culture program in which we visited local museums.

The panel of referees consisted of: Luc Cornet (BEL), Vairis Kurpnieks (LAT) and from Estonia: Georg Abozenko, Tarmo Tuul and Andres Karba.

As I mentioned, the whole competition was led by the Greek team which was not in any round threatened by competing teams. At the same time, it should be noted that the German team was weakened by the lack of two top players, what eventually knocked it down to fourth place. Missing in the Polish team was Maj. Mateusz Sypień, who was unable to attend due to family reasons.

Seventy seven players took part in the blitz tournament. Lt. Gen. Martin Herem also played, taking 70th place with 3.5 points.

FIDE has declared 2022 in connection with the Year Women in Chess. All the female players received a commemorative medal.

The cup for the best game was awarded to IM Anastasios Pavlidis for performing a spectacular attack in the game against Eigen Wang.

Queens Gambit D30

E. Wang (2293) - A. Pavlidis (2296),
Tartu (r.5) 2022,

**1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 h6 4.e3 Nf6 5.Nbd2 c5 6.d:c5 Q:c5 7.a3 0-0 8. Be2 Re8 9.0-0 e5 10.b4 Bd6
11.Bb2 a5 12.c:d5 e4 13.Nd4 a:b4 14.Nc4 Bf8 15.d6 Bd7 16. a:b4 R:a1 17.Q:a1 b5 18.Na5 B:d6
19.Rd1 Ng4 20.h3**



**20...N:f2! 21.K:f2 Qh4+ 22.Kf1 Bg3 23.B:b5 Qf6+ 24.Kg1 Qf2+ 25.Kh1 B:h3 26.Rg1 Re5 27. Be2 Rg5
28.Qf1 Bg4 29.B:g4 R:g4 30.Nf5 Rg5 31.Qd1 Q:f5 0-1**

It should be noted that from 2021 Poland leads the work of the International Military Committee of Chess (International Military Chess Committee), where the author of the text serves as the Chairman, and Capt. Dariusz Sycz as Secretary.

This year, the Polish Ministry of National Defense funded a commemorative "coin" for the players, who played NATO Chess 12 times, as well as institutions and individuals particularly involved in the promotion of the royal game in the military environment.

The gold medal was awarded to Capt. Dariusz Sycz for winning the 1st Online Tournament NATO Chess and Europchess, employee club EU institutions.

It was a nice touch of the competition organizing a Polish table and the preparation of small gifts for all players and additionally for team captains to celebrate 20 years of representation of Polish Army in NATO Chess. It is worth emphasizing that since 2002, Poland has taken part in each edition of NATO Chess tournaments, excelling with podium places and winning several dozen individual medals except two team competitions. Participation of Polish representatives would not have been possible

without the support of the Ministry and commanders of military units in which the soldiers work on a daily basis.

In this place I would like to express my sincere thanks for the Operations Center of the Ministry of National Defence, Offices of the Ministry of National Defence, Academy Art of War, Military Technical Academy, Military Center of Civic Education, Institute of Air Force Technical Department, the Central Military Sports Team and the Polish Chess Association, which supported the national team in various ways for the 32nd NATO Championship. The 1st Sapper Regiment played a special role in Brzeg, which has been there since 2021 as coordinator of chess events in the Polish Army in the international and national arena.

Now we invite you to familiarize yourself with the games commented by Polish soldiers.

Queens Pawn Opening D00

U. Bohn (2168) - S. Kędzierski
(2133), Tartu (r.4) 2022,

The game was of great importance for both teams, as the sympathetic Ulrich is among the leading players and he almost always scores. Also, he beat me once, with two draws, in previous editions, so I had additional motivation for a rematch.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 d5 3.e3 c5 4.c3 Qb6 5.Qb3 c4 6.Qc2 Nc6 7.Nd2 g6 8.e4 e6

Played during the text move I thought passive, but honestly, I could not think of a more active continuation.

9.Ngf3 Bg7 10. Be2 0-0 11.e5 Nd7 12.h4 f6

On the wing attack, I decided to respond with a classic counterattack in the center, as especially the White pieces have not yet developed. My opponent consumed more and more time, looking for tactical solutions.

13.e:f6 N:f6 14.Ne5 N:e5 15.d:e5?

It was necessary to capture with the bishop, resulting in an equal position.

15...Ng4

Black takes advantage of the opponent's mistake and immediately organizes an attack at the White king.

16.Bg3?

Poor move after 11 minutes of thought. I prefer exchanging the bishop on g4 with the later loss of a pawn.

16...R:f2!

Strong move in the closed position where the seriousness of the error became significant. However, I felt that missing the coordination of White pieces gives Black rich tactical possibilities with a quality sacrifice.

17.Qa4



17...R:e2+

The quality sacrifice gives decisive advantage.

18.K:e2 Qe3+ 19.Kd1 Bd7?

Feeling short of time, I couldn't find the winning variation with the capture of the bishop on g3. Therefore I wanted to play at safety, because the position was still won for Black.

20.Q:d7 Q:g3 21.Q:e6+ Kh8 22.Kc1

There are no good moves in this position for White. There is no safe haven for the king and the uncoordinated rooks are clearly visible.

22...Q:g2

Black wins a pawn while keeping full attack capabilities.

23.Rd1

Best move in position but not enough.

23...Qe2

Black creates irresistible threats with the idea of Ne3, Qd3 with mate on c2.

24.Q:d5

Base in a lost position.

24...Q:d1+ 25.K:d1 Ne3+ 26.Ke2 N:d5 27.N:c4 b5 28.Nd6 B:e5

Now Black only needs to convert the decisive advantage, but due to the severe time trouble it must be kept vigilance.

29.N:b5 Rb8 30.N:a7 R:b2+ 31.Kd3 B:c3 32. Rc1 R:a2 33.Nb5 Bf6 34.Ke4 Ne7 35.Nd6 Ra4+ 36.Kf3 B:h4

White only hope is that Black will run out of time or exchanges a piece.

37.Rc7 Ra6 38.Rd7 h5 39.Ke4 Kg8 40. Nc4 Ra4 41. Kd3 Bf6 42.Nd2 Ra3+ 43.Ke2 Ra2 44.Kd3 Kf7 45.Ne4 Ra3+ 46.Ke2 Bh4 47.Rb7 Ke6 48.Nd2 Ra2 49.Kd3 Ra6 50.Ke4 Bf6 51.Nb3 Ra4+ 52.Kf3 Kf5 53.Nc5 Ra3+ 54.Ke2 Nd5 55.Nd7 Re3+ 56.Kf2 Re7 0-1

Bogoljubow Defence E14

A. Pavlidis (2296) - M. Pietruszewski (2195),
Tartu (r.6) 2022,

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Nbd2 b6 5.a3 B:d2+ 6.Q:d2 Bb7 7.e3 Qe7

The idea was prepared long ago in my variations debut, but I didn't have the opportunity to test it in practice. Black avoids the main variations with Ne4, after 7...0-0 8.Be2 d6 9.0-0 Nbd7 10.b4 Ne4 11.Qc2 f5 and now 12.Bb2 (12. d5! I just wanted to avoid this structure with Black because advantage of space and bishop pair is more worth than opportunities of Black on the kingside.) 12..Rf6 13.d5 Rh6 14.Rad1 c5 15.g3 Qe8 with an unclear position.

8.b4 d6 9.Be2 Nbd7 10.Bb2 0-0 11.0-0 a5



12.Rac1N

Novelty. It looks illogical due to the potential opening of the "a" file. Unfortunately, it is not easy to find the right way to counter this move. Critical moment in the game. I recommend to readers looking for the best continuations for Black. More popular is 12.Qc2 c5 13.d:c5 d:c5 14.b5 Ne4 15.Bd3 f5 16.Rfd1 e5 17.Ne1 Nd6 18.Be2 Rad8 19.Qd3 Rf6 20.g3 Rh6 21.Qc2 Qf7 22.Nf3 Be4 23.Qd2 Qe7 24.Ne1 Nf7 25.f4 Nf6 26.Qc3 Re8 27. f:e5 N:e5 28.Q:e5 Q:e5 29.B:e5 R:e5 30.Rd6 Ng4 31.R:h6 N:h6 32.Rd1 Nf7 33.Kf2 Kf8 34.Nf3 Re6 35.Rd7 Re7 36.R:e7 K:e7 37.Nd2 Nd6 38.Bf3 Bd3 and then 0-1 M. Radovanović - K. Dragun, Batumi 2019.

12...Be4!?

The classic setup approach at e4 is not a knight, but just that messenger. Then Black will try to stop White's pawns by the moves c6 and d5. The continuation 12...c5! constitutes logical reaction Rac1 13.d:c5 d:c5 (13...b:c5 14.b5+/-) 14.b5 Ne4 15.Qc2 e5 with good prospects in relation to the Dragun game cited in the commentary of the 12th move.

13.Ne1

Human reaction. It is worth noting that the computer prefers move 13.b5!? c5 14.Rfd1 Rfd8 15.Qc3+/-.

13...Rfc8

Better was 13...a:b4 14.a:b4 c5 15.f3 Bg6 16.e4.

14.f3 Bg6 15.Nd3

15.b5 e5 16.Rd1 Re8 17.e4 e:d4 18.Nc2 Nc5 19.N:d4 Nfd7 20.Rf2+/-.

15...c6

Black keeps playing his plan, but one can get the impression that Whites position is improving with each one. Other variations are 15...e5 16.e4+/- or 15...a:b4 16.a:b4 B:d3 17.B:d3 c5 18.Rfd1+/- and the alternative 15...c5 16.d:c5 d:c5 17.b5+/-.

16.e4 a:b4

16...e5?! 17.c5! b:c5 18.d:e5 d:e5 19.b:a5 or 16...d5 17.c:d5 c:d5 18.e5 Ne8 19. R:c8 R:c8 20. b:a5 b:a5 21.Q:a5 +/-

17.a:b4 e5

A specific decision to confront the superiority opponent's space with 17...d5 leads to 18.c:d5 e:d5 19.e5 Ne8 20.f4 Bf5 21.g4 Be4 22.f5 with initiative.

18.d:e5

18.c5 b:c5 19.d:e5 d:e5 20.N:c5

18...d:e5 19.Qc3! Ne8

19...Re8 20.Ra1! Rad8 21.Ra7+/-

20.N:e5 N:e5 21.Q:e5 Q:b4 22.Bc3

Another critical moment arises and I recommend the readers to try to find the best continuation for Black.

22...Qc5+!?

In an inferior position the black knight is heading to e6 to set up a defense. Weaker was 22... Qd6 23.Q:d6 N:d6 24.Rfd1 Nb7 25.Rb1 Ra6-/+.

23.Q:c5 b:c5 24. Ra1 Nc7 25.R:a8 R:a8 26. Rd1 Ne6 27.Rd6 Ra2 28.Bf1 Ra6 29.Be5 Kf8 30.Rd7 Ke8 31. Rb7 Ra2 32.Rb8+ Ke7 33. Rb7+ Kd8 34.Rb8+ Kd7 35. Rb7+ Draw.