

The TCEC14 Computer Chess Superfinal: a perspective

Matthew Sadler¹
London, UK

Season 14 has been amazing! The clash of styles between STOCKFISH and LEELA produces consistently interesting chess - just like the match between STOCKFISH and ALPHAZERO did. You really hope that this sort of clash of styles can continue for the next few seasons.

Just a few impressions about the games. I was really impressed by LEELA's handling of the White side of g17, the Budapest. I've done a fair amount of analysis on this line and a few good players have got stuck against it. Aronian defeated Ivanchuk in 2013 at the London Candidates but more due to Ivanchuk's terrible time trouble than due to getting anything out of the opening. Giving the c-pawn back very quickly is a great way of putting the pressure right back on Black. I also liked g45 a lot: a Hedgehog where LEELA generated a huge amount of play with some risky but incisive pawn play on both sides of the board. The LEELA win in g53 was extremely nice too: again, it's impressive to see Black being stretched so greatly with rook's pawn thrusts on both sides (**18. a4** and **23. h5**) then a thrust of the g-pawn (**24. g6**) followed by returning to the queenside with **28. c4**. This sort of *whole board vision* is what grabbed me so much when I first played through ALPHAZERO's games - the game 'exactly how to attack' (Sadler and Regan, 2019) is the best example of this - and it makes for wonderful chess when you have a player who can execute it so well.

I found g62 incredible: the move **10. ... 0-0-0** would never have occurred to me! In some ways, I felt that LEELA was playing like STOCKFISH - grabbing a hot pawn and betting on surviving with a rather dodgy king - and STOCKFISH was playing like LEELA - sacrificing a pawn for open lines against the king. G63 was magnificent: perhaps the most ALPHAZERO-like game of the whole match. Material balance is not important, accurate assessment of an opposite-coloured bishop position, restriction of the opponent's king, entombing of the Black rook on h8 (a little like the game 'Python squeeze' featured in *Game Changer*). It's a classic game: it was wonderful to watch and I've played through it a few times since with great pleasure. G66 was a wonderful effort from STOCKFISH. It followed a STOCKFISH-ALPHAZERO game until move 16 in which ALPHAZERO was also under great pressure and the power of STOCKFISH's attack was huge! G81 and g82 (the opening part) was a great pair of games in a sharp Slav gambit. g81 was particularly nice with rook's pawn thrusts on both sides of the board from LEELA to tie Black up on the queenside - even at the cost of another pawn - while LEELA targets the kingside (it's another theme you see quite often in ALPHAZERO's games). G85 and g86 (the opening part) were also fantastic. STOCKFISH handles these positions with so much energy: quite amazing!

REFERENCES

Sadler, M. and Regan, N. (2019). *Game Changer*, esp. pp 38-43 and 99-100. New in Chess.

¹ Communicating author: <https://matthewsadler.me.uk/>