

TCEC Season 21 SuperFinal Review

GM Matthew Sadler

Div P

Both Leela and Stockfish had been extremely impressive during DivP, Stockfish winning 21 games and Leela winning 20. Considering the high bias of the DivP openings and the strength of the competition, it was astonishing that Stockfish and Leela lost just 2 and 3 games respectively! Leela fans were heartened by Leela's 4.5–3.5 victory over Stockfish in their mini-match—achieved with a fine positional piece sacrifice—though an unexpected loss to an inspired Stoofvlees and a drawn mini-match with 3rd-placed Komodo Dragon prevented Leela from really troubling Stockfish for 1st place.

SuperFinal

This time Stockfish and Leela had a slightly different opening challenge to navigate in the SuperFinal as I joined Jeroen Noomen in producing the SuperFinal book, both of us submitting 25 openings each. I enjoyed it greatly and my respect for Jeroen's great work—and that of the other book makers—over the past years increased still further. In total, I worked through 505 opening positions to make the selection of my final 25 positions, running multiple engine matches at long time controls between Stockfish, Leela, Komodo Dragon, and Stoofvlees to ensure the positions were unbalanced (leading hopefully to a 1.5–0.5 result), varied (both games of an opening pair should be different in character) and interesting to chess players. Despite all this preparation, I still made a few poor choices so I was very happy to be alternating openings with Jeroen!

Once again, it was a tale of Leela keeping up in

the early part of the match before becoming outdistanced as the match wore on. 4–3 to Stockfish after 38 games, it became 9–4 after 60 games and 15–6 after 88 games. A finishing burst of wins made it 19–7 to Stockfish. 56–44 was the clearest margin of victory in a SuperFinal since Season 12. In general the opening book worked pretty well, producing a fairly high number of decisive games and 22 decisive game pairs (1.5–0.5 result) with just 2 opening pairs ending in mutual kills (1–0/1–0 game pairs). One nice feature of the match was the 7 consecutive decisive game pairs between games 59 and 72!

Many thanks to the TCEC and the Stockfish and Leela teams for another classic SuperFinal! I streamed some of the games during the event and these videos are to be found here: <https://youtu.be/ELQ0fHBWXUg>

The match

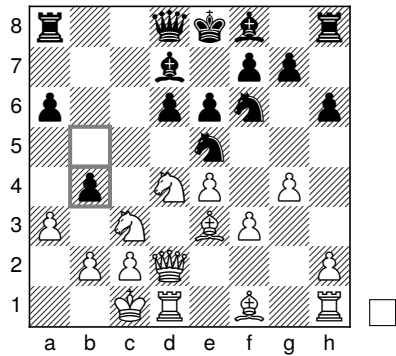
Games 1–2, B67 Richter-Rauzer Sicilian (Matthew)

The match started with one of my openings, taken from *The Richter Rauzer Reborn* by Kozul and Jankovic (Thinkers Publishing). The authors mentioned a couple of times that engines dislike these systems but that—in their opinion—some of the engine evaluations were incorrect. To be honest, I've always found these systems very difficult to handle as Black!

Stockfish—not for the last time in this match—sacrificed the exchange for activity to hold as black

Edited by S. Kiminki (26th April 2022)

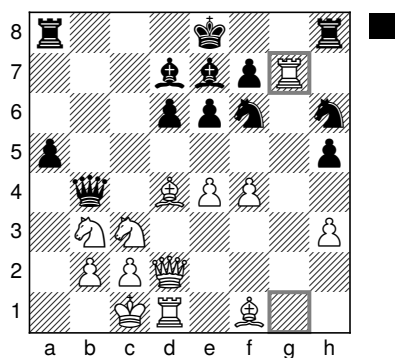
in a sharp, entertaining struggle but Leela's attempt was less successful.



Stockfish—LCZero after 12...b5-b4

The oversharp 12...b4 had been tried unsuccessfully by Stoofvlees in my engine matches but I never expected it from Leela! Energetic play from Stockfish gave it an overwhelming position that led to its first win.

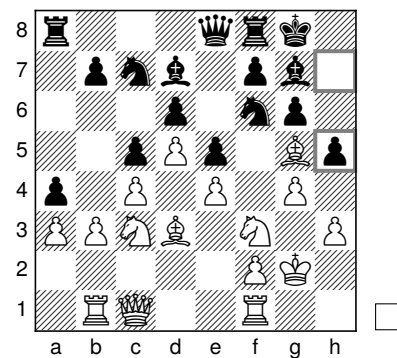
13. a×b4 ♖b8 14. f4 ♜exg4 15. ♔g1 ♚×b4 16. ♜b3 h5 17. h3 ♜h6 18. ♔d4 ♔e7 19. ♚g1 a5 20. ♚×g7



Stockfish—LCZero after 20. ♚g1×g7

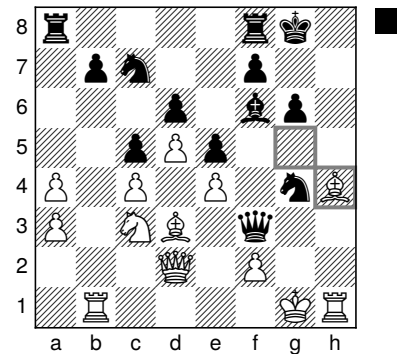
Games 3–4, A56 Benoni (Jeroen)

Stockfish fans couldn't rest on their laurels for long however as Leela hit back with a fine win in a passive Benoni structure which Stockfish couldn't match. In particular, the play around moves 16 and 28 was extremely intricate as Leela decided it could safely make progress on the queenside while leaving its kingside exposed.



LCZero—Stockfish after 16... h7-h5

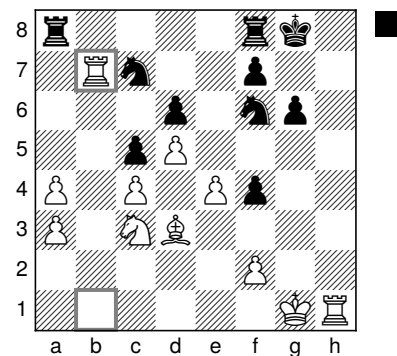
17. b×a4 h×g4 18. h×g4 ♔×g4 19. ♚h1 ♚d7 20. ♜h4 ♔f3+ 21. ♜×f3 ♚g4+ 22. ♜h2 ♚×f3 23. ♚d2 ♜g4+ 24. ♜g1 ♔f6 25. ♔h4



LCZero—Stockfish after 25. ♔h4-h5

A delicate move from Leela, threatening ♔e2. Leela's play forces the exchange of queens, removing any danger to the white king.

25... ♚f4 26. ♚×f4 e×f4 27. ♔×f6 ♜×f6 28. ♚×b7



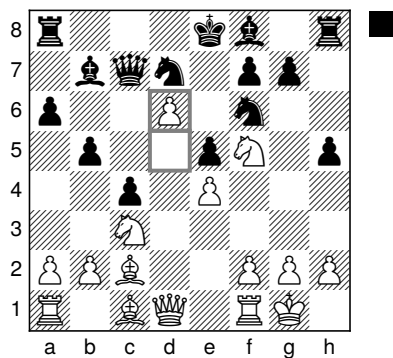
LCZero—Stockfish after 28. ♚b1×b7

And some fine endgame play brought home the win!

Games 5–6, D47 Semi-Slav Meran (Matthew)

A slight departure into nostalgia for me! I probably spent more time on the Meran Semi-Slav with 6. ♘d3 than any other opening during my professional career and won many games as White. It looks like wasted time now as Black has discovered many good ways of playing! 13. ♘d4 e5 featured in the brilliant game Gelfand-Dreev, Tilburg 1993 but I was ready with an idea of my own which I prepared around that time but never got to try!

Stockfish and Leela agreed with me and played the sharp thrust 15. d6 and both assessed the situation optimistically...but both were unable to make any headway after the initial sharp skirmishes.

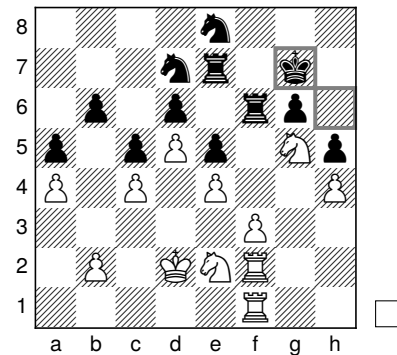


LCZero—Stockfish after 15. d5–d6

Stockfish in particular was impressive with another defensive sacrifice to break White's attacking momentum.

Games 7–8, A56 Czech Benoni (Jeroen)

This game pair featured the first real shock of the SuperFinal. From a heavy strategical opening that typically should favour Leela, Stockfish defended the Black side actively with yet another sacrifice—a Benko-style pawn sac with ...b5—and then won a truly astonishing endgame as White.

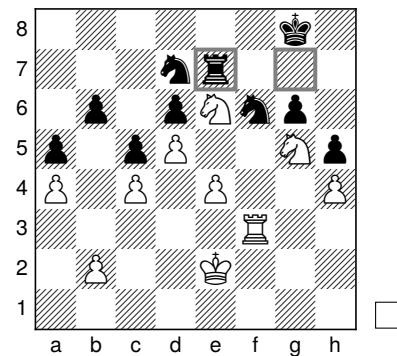


Stockfish—LCZero after 45... ♗h6–g7

I was somewhat skeptical of White's objective winning chances in this position. I know this exact structure quite well as it arose naturally from an anti-King's Indian system I played as a teenager and I hadn't considered it anything special in the end-game! Stockfish had been shuffling for 15 moves already but mysteriously its evaluation had climbed from 1.55 to 3.47 without any discernible change to the contours of the position! Now Stockfish decided it was time for action!

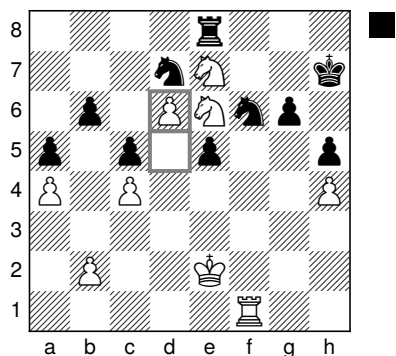
46. f4 exf4 47. ♘xf4 ♗g8 48. ♖e2 ♘g7 49. ♘d3 ♘e8 50. ♖f3 ♖xf3 51. ♖xf3 ♘ef6 52. ♘f4 ♖g7 53. ♘fe6 ♖e7

Some lovely knight play from Stockfish has pinned the black king to the back rank but the invasion channels into Black's position are so narrow (essentially the f-file) it isn't obvious how to proceed further. White's next break is obviously a necessary part of any plan and could potentially open up a channel for the white king via e4–d5 if the barrier posed by Black's knights can be weakened.



Stockfish—LCZero after 53... ♖g7–e7

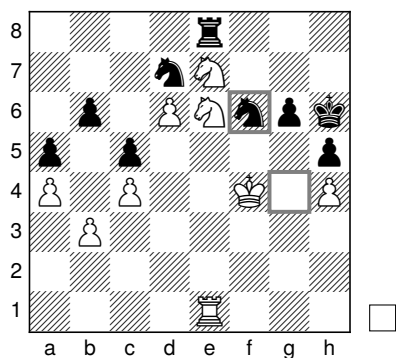
54. e5 dxe5 55. ♖d8 ♜e8 56. ♖c6 ♔g7
57. ♖e6+ ♔f7 58. ♜f1 ♔g8 59. ♖c7 ♜f8
60. ♖e7+ ♔h7 61. ♖e6 ♜e8 62. d6



Stockfish—LCZero after 62. d5–d6

Some fancy footwork from the knights has banished the black king to the side of the board, but there are no entry points yet for the white king. Note that Stockfish is already displaying an astonishing 6.16! Leela takes a radical decision to change its defensive structure, return the extra pawn and improve its knight on f6 to a more active square.

62... ♔h6 63. ♔e3 ♜h8 64. ♔e2 ♜e8 65. ♔e3 ♜h8 66. b3 ♜e8 67. ♔d3 e4+ 68. ♔e2 ♖g4 69. ♜f7 ♖ge5 70. ♜f4 ♖g4 71. ♜xe4 ♖ge5 72. ♖g5 ♔g7 73. ♖c6 ♔f8 74. ♜f4+ ♔g8 75. ♖e7+ ♔g7 76. ♖e6+ ♔h6 77. ♜f1 ♜h8 78. ♔e3 ♖g4+ 79. ♔f4 ♜e8 80. ♜e1 ♖gf6

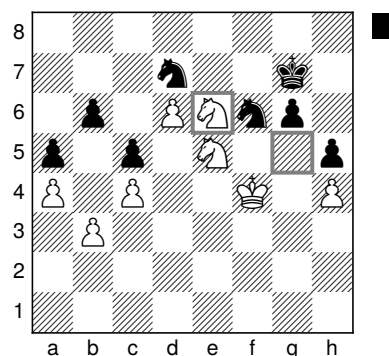


Stockfish—LCZero after 80... ♖g4–f6

Black's defensive line has still not been broken...as long as you ignore the evaluations!

Some more amazing footwork from the white knights pushes Black's defensive line back.

81. ♖c6 ♖g8 82. ♖cd8 ♖gf6 83. ♖f7+ ♔h7
84. ♖eg5+ ♔g7 85. ♜xe8 ♖xe8 86. ♖e5 ♖ef6
87. ♖e6+



Stockfish—LCZero after 87. ♖e6+

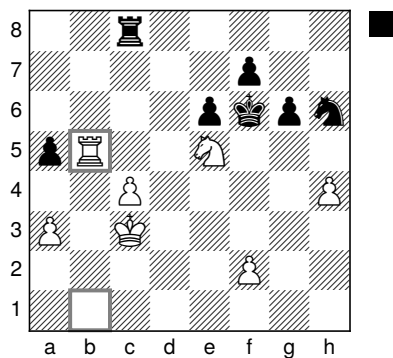
87... ♔g8

87... ♔h7 88. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 89. ♔g5 and the white king invades.

88. ♖xg6 ♔f7 89. ♔f5 ♖g4 90. ♖g5+ ♔e8
91. ♖f4 ♖e3+ 92. ♔e4 ♖g4 93. ♖xh5 and the rest was easy.

Games 9–10, B90 Najdorf Sicilian (Matthew)

Matters didn't improve for Leela fans in the next set of games as it failed to make any impression on the white side of a 6. h3 Najdorf Sicilian and then fell foul of Stockfish's calculation powers in an end-game that didn't look too bad for Black, Stockfish evaluating it as 0.42 on 11.2G nodes (so I guess it should know!)



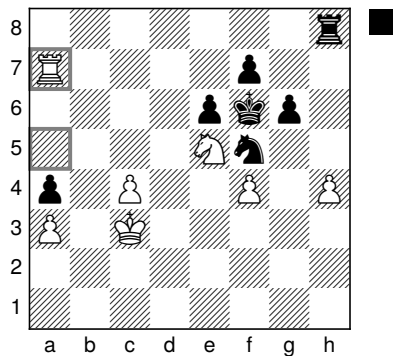
Stockfish—LCZero after 37. ♖b1-b5

37. ♖b5 a4

37... ♖f5 38. ♖x5 (38. ♖d7+ ♖e7 39. ♖b7 ♖d6 40. ♖b6+ ♖x7 41. ♖xc8+ ♖d7 42. ♖a7 e5 keeps the white king at bay) 38... ♖h8 39. ♖d3 ♖x4 offered Black excellent drawing chances according to Stockfish and indeed 6 months on, the latest Stockfish (17th February) still thinks the same after 35737 Mn!

38. ♖a5 ♖h8

38... ♖f5 39. ♖d7+ ♖e7 40. ♖a7 and there is no ... ♖d6 resource as White's rook is one move further to the left.

39. f4 ♖f5 40. ♖a7

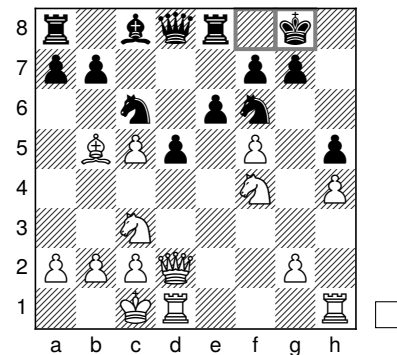
Stockfish—LCZero after 40. ♖a5-a7

Threatening ♖xf7+ mate. Black's counterplay is a move slower and Stockfish never makes a mistake with transitions into rook endgames.

40... ♖e7 41. ♖g4+ ♖f5 42. ♖xe7 ♖xg4 43. ♖xf7 ♖b8 44. c5 ♖b3+ 45. ♖c4 ♖xa3 46. c6 ♖a1 47. ♖b4 a3 48. c7 a2 49. ♖b3 ♖c1 50. ♖xa2 ♖xh4 51. ♖b2 ♖c6 52. ♖b3 g5 53. ♖b4 g4

54. ♖b5 ♖c3 55. ♖b6 g3 56. ♖b7 ♖b3+ 57. ♖c6 ♖c3+ 58. ♖d7 g2 59. c8 ♖d3+ 60. ♖xe6 ♖h3 61. ♖g7 ♖e3+ 62. ♖f6+ ♖h2 63. ♖g4 g1 ♖ 64. ♖xg1+ 1-0

The match was not going according to plan and Leela escaped another scare with Black in the next game pair.

Games 11-12, C13 French Alekhine-Chatard Attack (Jeroen)

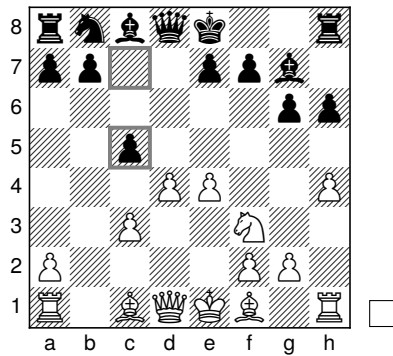
Stockfish—LCZero after 15... ♖f8-g8

Commentating the game live, my first thought in this position¹ (without an engine) was the violent 16. g4! and when Aloril ran Stockfish for a massive number of nodes, Stockfish reported it as completely winning. The latest Stockfish (17th February) starts off with 16. ♖he1 and 16. ♖b1 but after 2114 Mn switches to 16. g4 with a +3.07 evaluation and keeps on climbing (+5.23 after 218165 Mn moving to +6.08 at 3994298 Mn with depth 69).

This seems to have been some strange glitch, although 16. ♖b1 was chosen after 9.7G nodes... In any case, Leela lived to fight another day and Leela fans breathed a sigh of relief!

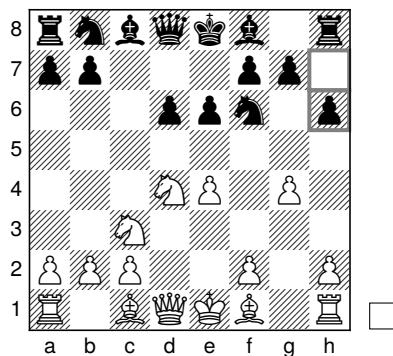
A series of tense draws now ensued, some of which were quite surprising considering the results of engine matches I had run in these openings!

¹<https://youtu.be/A9grNZnGD1o?t=1171>

Games 13–14, A16 Anglo-Grünfeld (Matthew)

LCZero—Stockfish after 8... c7–c5

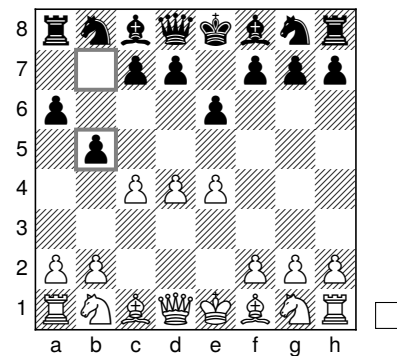
Chatting about opening choices with Jeroen, he mentioned how tough it was to find appropriate lines in the Grünfeld. I have one I thought...but the games—although fairly interesting—always seemed destined for a draw. The inclusion of h4 and ...h6 gives White a target in the h6-pawn and makes it harder for the dark-squared bishop to leave g7. I thought that this would tip a number of theoretical lines in White's favour...but Stockfish and Leela just found others to draw ☺

Games 15–16, B81 Scheveningen Sicilian Keres Attack (Jeroen)

LCZero—Stockfish after 6... h7–h6

Jeroen has tried a few Scheveningen systems before but allowing White to play g5 after which Stockfish essentially demonstrated a forced win for White ☺ The 6... h6 main line held up well for

Black though and neither Leela nor Stockfish made significant headway as White.

Games 17–18, C00 St George's Defence (Matthew)

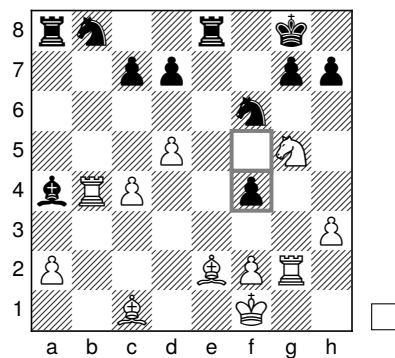
LCZero—Stockfish after 3... b7–b5

There don't seem to many Basman fans at the TCEC as very few of his openings have been tried! This is his St. George's Gambit which fascinated me as a young boy! I explored quite a number of Basman's openings for the SuperFinal which essentially decimated the remaining hope and faith I had in them, but this gambit produced a series of tense games. I was fearing a mutual kill but 2 draws was not high on my list of expected results! Stockfish was somewhat disappointing as White, but Leela seemed on course for a win until Stockfish's freakishly good defensive play kicked into gear!

4. cxb5 axb5 5. ♖xb5 ♖b7 6. ♘c3 ♖b4 7. ♔e2 ♔h4 8. ♖d3 f5 9. ♘f3 ♖xc3+ 10. bxc3 ♔g4 11. h3 ♔xg2 12. ♖h2 ♔g6 13. exf5 ♔h5 14. ♘g5 ♔xe2+ 15. ♖xe2 exf5 16. ♖b1 ♖c6 17. c4 ♘f6 18. d5 ♖a4 19. ♖g2 O-O 20. ♖b4 ♖e8

Leela was at 0.59 until this point but then suddenly dropped to 0.26 as it spotted Stockfish's resource. When Stockfish played it, I truly had no idea what it was up to!

21. ♘f1 f4



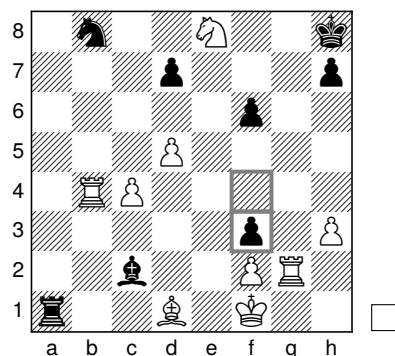
LCZero—Stockfish after 21... f5–f4

I have to refer to the analysis I made at the time as looking at the position for the first time in months, since I can't piece together what the idea was! Black obviously needs to develop its knight on b8, but the bishop on a4 interferes with ...♖a6 while ...d6 simply allows the white knight into e6. Stockfish spies an ideal square for its light-squared bishop and isn't afraid to give up a pawn to secure it!

22. ♖b2

22. ♖xf4 ♖c2 (threatening ...♖xa2) 23. ♖b2 ♖f5 and the threat of ...h6 followed by ...♖xh3 is quite awkward to meet. Now the bishop is settled on f5 (defending e6). Black also has the choice between ...♗a6-♗c5, or ...d6 and ...♗bd7. Beautiful defensive vision!

22. ♖b2 ♖c2 23. ♖xf6 gxf6 24. ♗e6+ ♖h8 25. ♗xc7 ♖xa2 26. ♗xe8 ♖a1+ 27. ♖d1 f3



LCZero—Stockfish after 27... f4–f3 (variation)

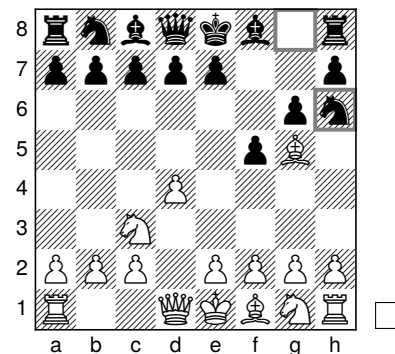
is one beautiful idea I discovered with my engines!

22... h6 23. ♗f3 d6 24. ♖g1 ♖d7 25. ♖h2 ♖f8 26. ♖xf4 ♗a6 27. ♗d4 ♗c5

White's extra a2-pawn is extremely difficult to advance—indeed it even ties down the rook on b2 to its defence. Black's position is not exactly comfortable but it's no challenge for Stockfish's defensive abilities!

28. ♖e3 ♖a3 29. ♖g1 g5 30. ♖d1 ♖ea8 31. ♖a1 ♖e7 32. ♗c2 ♖3a4 33. a3 ♖f7 34. ♖b4 ♖4a5 35. ♖b2 ♖a4 36. ♖b4 ♖4a5 37. ♖g1 ♖e8 38. ♖b2 ♖g6 39. ♖a1 ♗fe4 40. ♖f3 h5 41. ♗d4 g4 42. ♖d1 ♖a4 43. h×g4 ♖×d1 44. ♖×d1 h×g4 45. ♗b5 g3+ 46. f×g3 ♗c3 47. ♗×c3 ♖×e3 48. ♗b5 ♖a8 49. ♗×c7 ♖h8+ 50. ♖g1 ♖×g3+ 51. ♖g2 ♖×g2+ 52. ♖×g2 ♖h4 53. ♖c1 ♗d3 54. ♖c3 ♗e5 55. c5 d×c5 56. ♗b5 ♖a4 57. d6 ♖f6 58. ♖×c5 ♖g4+ 59. ♖f1 ♗d7 60. ♖h5 ♖e6 61. ♖e2 ♗e5 62. ♖h7 ♖a4 63. ♖e7+ 1/2–1/2

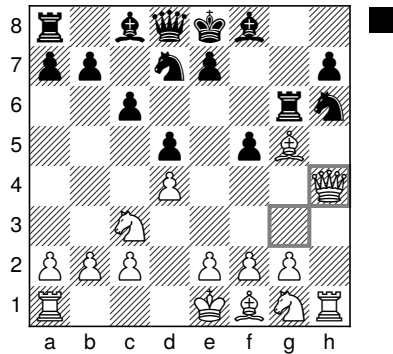
Games 19–20, A80 Dutch 2. Bg5 (Jeroen)



Stockfish—LCZero after 3... ♗g8–h6

Engines seem to spend most of the opening hating the Dutch, then setting up a Stonewall structure and holding an easy draw! Stockfish bucked the trend with another fine defensive exchange sacrifice but Leela indeed went for the Stonewall route! Leela's play as Black was quite remarkable in fact, featuring some amazing knight play. What really confused me was that it seemed like Leela had spent all of its opening moving one piece and yet somehow it ended up barely behind in development! A similar sort of feeling to seeing someone go into a revolving door behind you and come out in front of you ☺

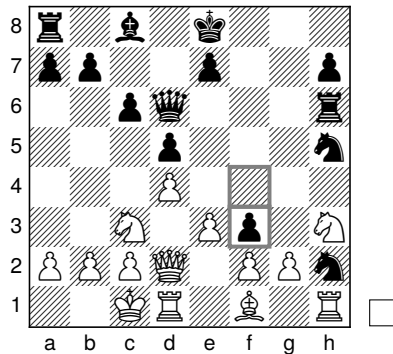
4. ♖d3 c6 5. h4 d5 6. ♖g3 ♘d7 7. h5 ♖g8
8. h×g6 ♖×g6 9. ♖h4



Stockfish—LCZero after 9. ♖g3-h4

I was fearing for Leela with its odd pieces and fairly exposed king, but somehow Leela made everything fit together!

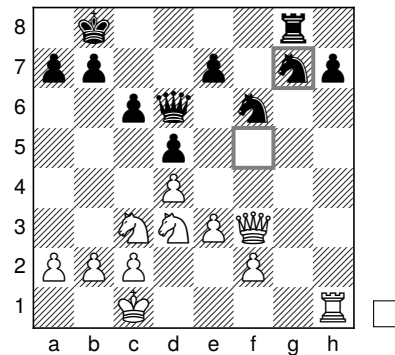
9. ♖h4 ♘g4 10. ♘h3 ♙h6 11. ♙×h6 ♖×h6
12. ♖g3 ♘df6 13. e3 ♘h5 14. ♖f3 ♖d6
15. O-O-O ♘h2 16. ♖e2 f4 17. ♖d2
17. ♖×h2 f3
17... f3



Stockfish—LCZero after 17... f4-f3

Hard to believe this should work but the black knight just waltzes deep into white territory and then just waltzes back!

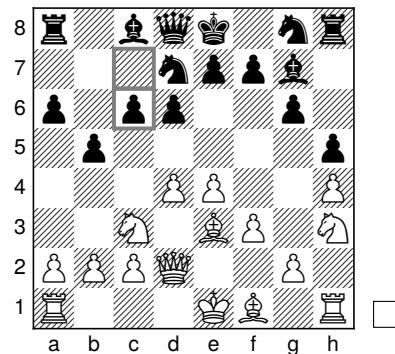
18. g×f3 ♘×f3 19. ♖d3 ♘f6 20. ♙g2 ♘h4
21. ♘f4 ♙f5 22. ♖e2 O-O-O 23. ♙h3 ♖g8
24. ♘d3 ♙b8 25. ♙×f5 ♘×f5 26. ♖f3 ♖×h1
27. ♖×h1 ♘g7



Stockfish—LCZero after 27... ♘f5-g7

...and that's equality!

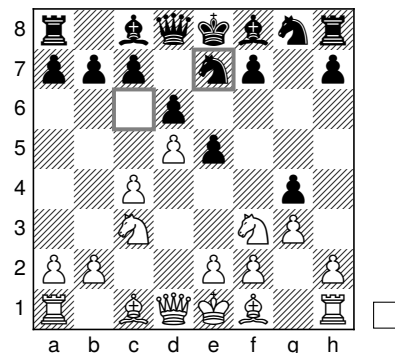
Games 21–22, B06 Modern (Matthew)



LCZero—Stockfish after 8... c7-c6

The less said about these games, the better! I'd witnessed some thrilling fights in my practice games so the damp squibs (2 draws around move 40) that occurred were a big disappointment.

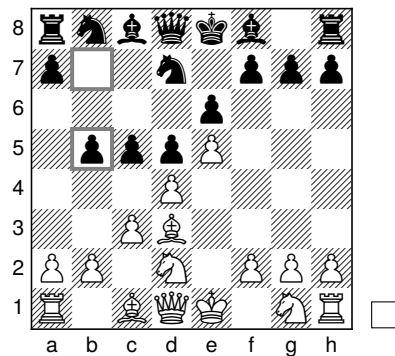
Games 23–24, A21 English Opening (Jer-oen)



LCZero—Stockfish after 6... ♘c6-e7

The first mutual kill of the match! This rather Basmaniac English had been tried by Kramnik (of all people) but it leaves a lot of weaknesses in Black's kingside while White is free to expand on the queenside. Both Leela and Stockfish controlled the position from start to finish.

Games 25–26, C05 French Tarrasch (Matthew)

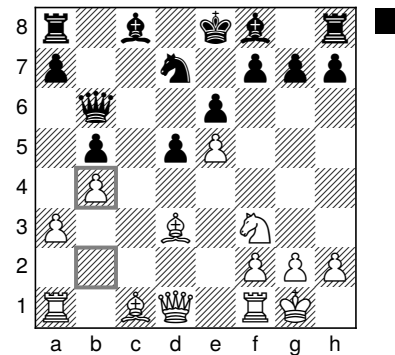


LCZero—Stockfish after 6... b7–b5

I came across this line in an entertaining little book called *Opening Originals—Strong Sidelines for Club Cats* by Daniel Lowinger (Russell Enterprises). Bizarrely enough, taking the b5-pawn is not that promising for White so Black gets to launch his queenside attack at double speed! It proved lucky for Leela which outplayed Stockfish with a central pawn sacrifice reminiscent of the 96th game of the Season 17 SuFi²—a SuperFinal so significant that @mrbdzz remembers no other since! It would have been a perfect game for my chapter on French structures in *The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement*!

7. ♖e2 ♜b6 8. O-O ♘c6 9. a3 cxd4 10. cxd4 ♘xd4 11. ♘xd4 ♜xd4 12. ♘f3 ♜b6 13. b4

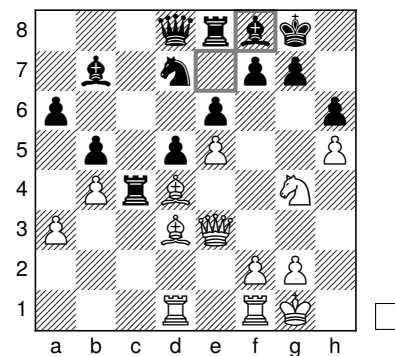
²<https://tcec-chess.com/#div=sf&game=96&season=17>



LCZero—Stockfish after 13. b2–b4

Modern engines are completely unconcerned by losing/sacrificing the d4-pawn in such structures as long as the strong cramping influence of the e5-pawn remains. The absence of the d4-pawn in fact increases the activity of White's dark-squared bishop, providing yet another example of the value of giving away your pawns to free your pieces!

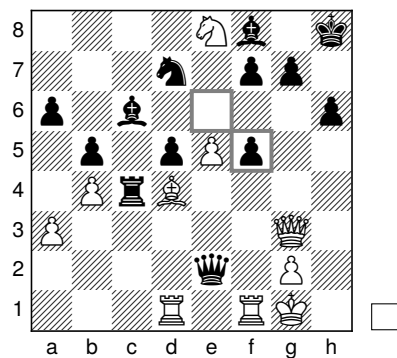
13... a6 14. ♙e3 ♜d8 15. h4 ♙b7 16. h5 ♙e7 17. ♜e2 O-O 18. ♙d4 h6 19. ♜e3 ♜c8 20. ♘h2 ♜c4 21. ♘g4 ♜e8 22. ♜ad1 ♙f8



LCZero—Stockfish after 22... ♙e7–f8

This allows a lovely tactical sequence from Leela based on a positional point that Stockfish had underestimated. Very unusually at this point, Leela's evaluation was higher than Stockfish's (1.34 vs 1.28)!

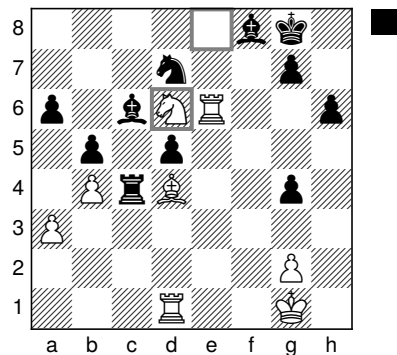
23. ♜g3 ♜g5 24. ♙e2 ♙h8 25. f4 ♜xh5 26. ♘f6 ♜xe2 27. ♘xe8 ♙c6 28. f5 exf5 29. ♜fe1



LCZero—Stockfish after 28... e6xf5

29. e6 f4 30. ♖xf4 ♗xe6 31. ♖xf7 ♖g4 32. ♖f4 ♖xf4 33. ♜xf4 ♘g8 was Stockfish's expected line when White still has work to do. Leela however had anticipated a line with 1 pawn more for Stockfish but where White has neutralised Black's bishop pair assessing it as 2.41! This turned out to be superb positional judgement and the win thereafter was not too difficult.

29... ♖g4 30. ♖xg4 f×g4 31. e6 f×e6 32. ♜xe6 ♘g8 33. ♘d6



LCZero—Stockfish after 33. ♘e8-d6

The key point. The white knight must be removed, but all of the elasticity in Black's position disappears with the dark-squared bishop.

33... ♗xd6 34. ♜xd6 h5 35. g3 ♘f7 36. ♘f2 ♗f6 37. ♘e3 h4 38. g×h4 g3

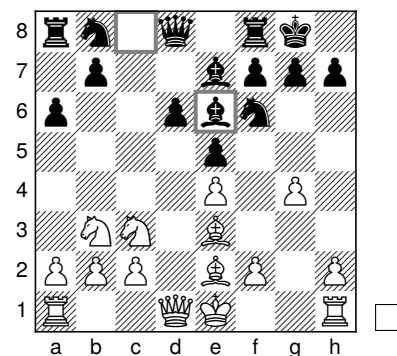
Stockfish surrenders pawns in desperation to distract White's advance and free space for its pieces but Leela is relentless.

39. ♜g1 ♘e7 40. ♗c5 ♗d7 41. ♜xd5+ ♘f7 42. ♜d4 ♜c3+ 43. ♜d3 ♜c4 44. ♗d4 ♗h5 45. ♜c3

♘e6 46. ♜gc1 g2 47. ♜xc4 b×c4 48. ♘f3 ♗c6+ 49. ♘g4 g6 50. ♗g1 ♗f6+ 51. ♘g3 ♗h5+ 52. ♘h2 ♗d5 53. ♜e1+ ♘d6 54. ♗d4 ♗f3 55. ♜e3 ♗d5 56. a4 ♗c6 57. ♜e5 ♗xa4 58. ♜g5 ♗e8 59. ♗a1 ♘e7 60. ♜g4 ♗f7 61. ♘×g2 c3 62. ♗×c3 ♗e6 63. ♜g5 ♗f4+ 64. ♘f3 ♗d5 65. ♗d2 ♘f7 66. ♘e4 ♗f6+ 67. ♘e5 ♗d7 68. ♜g2 ♗g4+ 69. ♘d6 ♗e6 70. ♗g5 ♗f5 71. ♜g3 ♗f2 72. ♜f3 ♗e4+ 73. ♘d5 ♘g8 74. ♜a3 ♗f2 75. ♜xa6 ♗d3 76. ♜a5 ♗e2 77. b5 ♗f3+ 78. ♘e6 ♗d3 79. b6 ♗g2 80. ♗e3 ♘h8 81. h5 ♗b7 82. h×g6 ♘g8 83. ♜a7 ♗c8+ 84. ♘f6 ♗b4 85. b7 ♗d5+ 86. ♘e5 ♗xb7 87. ♜xb7 1-0

Leela had clawed a win back and defended a difficult endgame well as Black to bring the score back to 4-3!

Games 27–28, B92 Sicilian Najdorf (Jeroen)

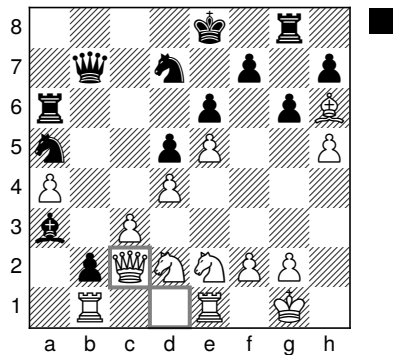


LCZero—Stockfish after 9... ♗c8-e6

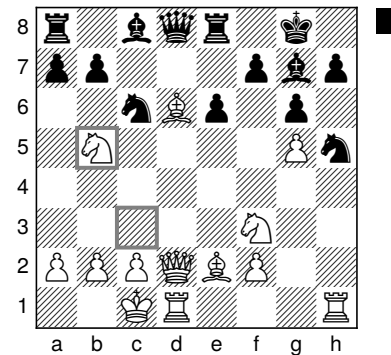
An aggressive line of the 6. ♗e2 Najdorf with an early g4 led to 2 tough fights in which Leela achieved considerably more than Stockfish as White without seriously looking like winning. This situation was reversed in...

Games 29–30, C03 French Tarrasch (Matthew)

... where to my surprise, an offbeat line favoured by unorthodox English IM Alan Merry (1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♗d2 ♗e7) led to 2 draws though Leela seemed to be living on the edge throughout its black game.



Stockfish—LCZero after 26. ♖d1-c2



LCZero—Stockfish after 17. ♘c3-b5

Some really good defence kept Stockfish at bay, even after a subsequent dangerous exchange sacrifice.

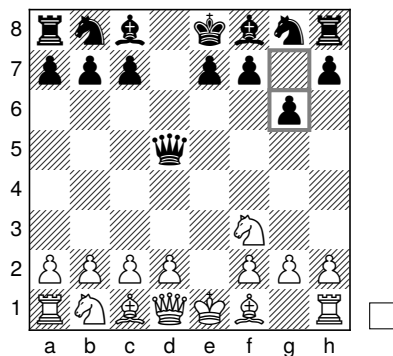
Unbeknownst to us, we had entered a corridor of draws where both engines struggled to create any lasting initiative from White's opening advantage.

Stockfish defended with yet another exchange sacrifice, but Leela was again the moral victor of this mini-match as Stockfish struggled to create anything in its White game.

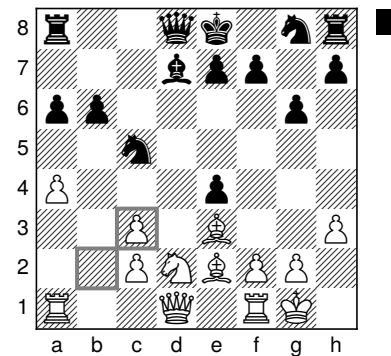
Games 33–34, B06 Modern Defence (Matthew)

The Modern is a favourite of book makers as engine evaluations are often elevated while the positions offer both sides a wide variety of plans to choose from. These 2 games ended in a draw though not without incident!

Games 31–32, B01 Scandinavian (Jeroen)



LCZero—Stockfish after 3... g7-g6

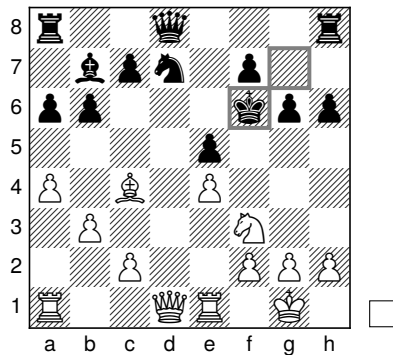


LCZero—Stockfish after 14. b2xc3

Such development schemes are tried from time to time by grandmasters but they are a risky business in the engine world: Stockfish was at 1.12 and Leela at 0.42 out of the opening! The hearts of the Leela fans beat faster as Leela attacked with almost reckless abandon, with first a central pawn thrust, then a rook's pawn sacrifice followed by g4-g5!

4. ♕e2 ♕g7 5. d4 ♘c6 6. ♘c3 ♖d8 7. d5 ♘b8 8. ♕f4 ♘f6 9. ♖d2 O-O 10. h4 e6 11. d6 cxd6 12. ♕xd6 ♖e8 13. h5 ♘xh5 14. O-O-O ♘c6 15. g4 ♘f6 16. g5 ♘h5 17. ♘b5

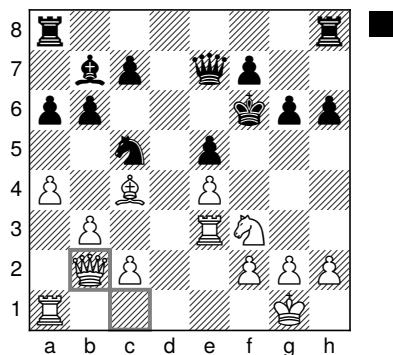
Leela was extremely optimistic as Stockfish gave up its dark-squared bishop and its dark squares with an early “inhuman” ... ♕xc3 but accurate play from Stockfish proved its opening plan was viable. With the white pieces, Stockfish fans were already dancing the conga as Stockfish started with menacing purpose!



Stockfish—LCZero after 15... ♖g7xf6

This isn't the type of position you would instinctively recommend to anyone facing Stockfish! The king on f6 is obviously extremely scary but apart from this aberration, the position is symmetrical and White's pieces are still at a safe distance from the black king. Rapid action is needed!

16. ♜e3 ♘c5 17. ♚c1 ♚e7 18. ♚b2



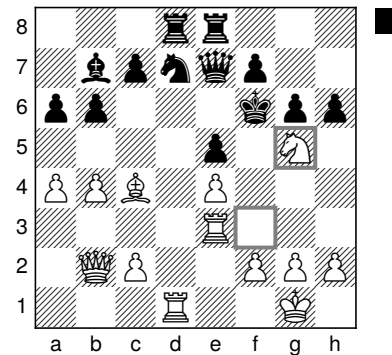
Stockfish—LCZero after 18. ♚c1-b2

Stockfish was at 1.78 and you don't have to be a genius to see the threat of ♘xe5 followed by ♜f3+!

18... ♜he8 19. b4

19. ♘xe5 ♚xe5 20. ♜f3+ ♚g7 21. ♜xf7+ ♚h8 is just enough to keep the black king safe!

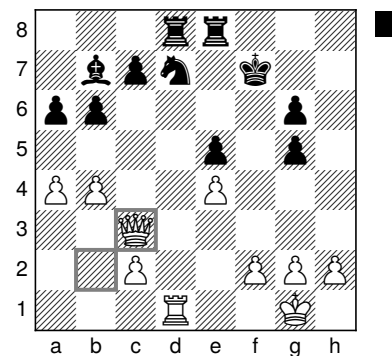
19... ♘d7 20. ♜d1 ♜ad8 21. ♘g5



Stockfish—LCZero after 21. ♘f3-g5

The king was ready to retreat to g7 so Stockfish strikes!

21... h×g5 22. ♜f3+ ♚g7 23. ♜xf7+ ♚xf7 24. ♘xf7 ♚xf7 25. ♚c3



Stockfish—LCZero after 25. ♚c3-c3

The material balance is nominally in Black's favour (rook and two pieces for queen and pawn) but Black has awful problems dealing with an invading white queen and getting its minor pieces active without dropping a clump of pawns. Leela's solution is frankly astonishing. We've talked a lot about giving up pawns to free your own pieces; here Leela gives up pawns to fill entry channels with White's pawns! A truly superhuman concept!

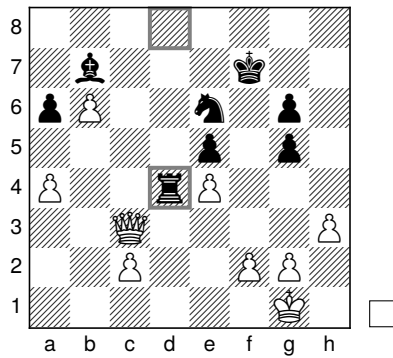
25... c5 26. h3 ♘f8 27. ♜xd8 ♜xd8 28. bxc5

1 pawn!

28... ♘e6 29. cxb6

2 pawns!

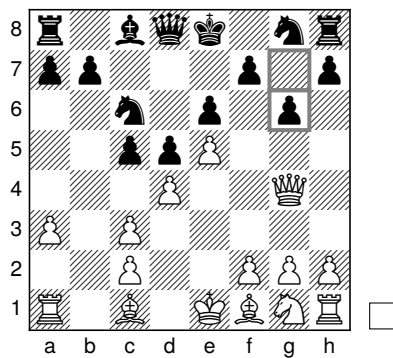
29... ♜d4



Stockfish—LCZero after 29... ♖d8-d4

Stockfish was on 2.82(!) but Leela held this fortress for 190 moves! Stunning! It's interesting that when I ran a recent Stockfish dev (17th February 2022) for 1459421 Mn on my 48-core machine at move 26, it also chose Leela's defence but evaluated the position at +3.75. Running Stockfish for 3742000 Mn with depth 94 a little further in the game at move 97, Stockfish's evaluation was down to +1.74 but holding steady.

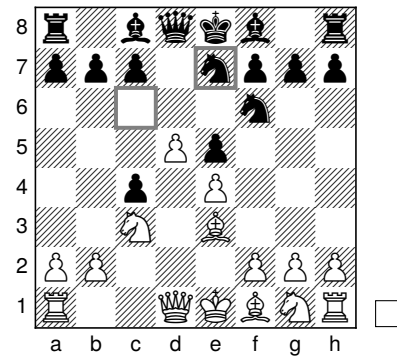
Games 35–36, C18 French Winawer (Jeroen)



LCZero—Stockfish after 7... g7-g6

It was Jeroen's turn to be slightly disgruntled as both engines navigated this dodgy Winawer with ease! I followed him in disappointment after:

Games 37–38, D20 Queen's Gambit Accepted (Matthew)

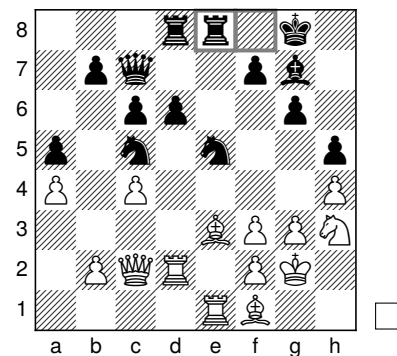


LCZero—Stockfish after 6... ♖c6-e7

I seconded the French elite player Joel Lautier in a Candidates match against Jan Timman in 1994 and this position was the subject of much analysis during the match. I essentially decided that despite its strategic complexity, it was considerably more pleasant for White but the engines managed to neutralize White's space advantage and queenside potential without too much suffering!

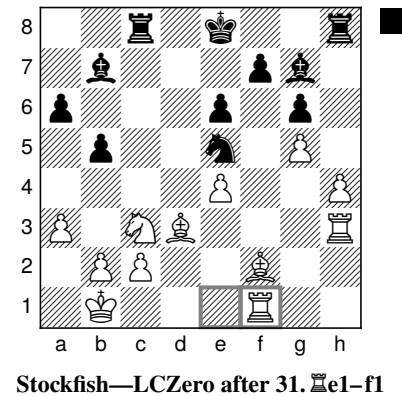
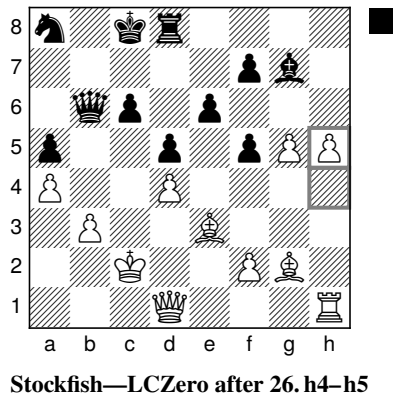
Games 39–40, A41 Old Indian Defence (Jeroen)

A huge disappointment for the Leela faithful as a position in which Leela was hugely optimistic encountered obdurate resistance from Stockfish...



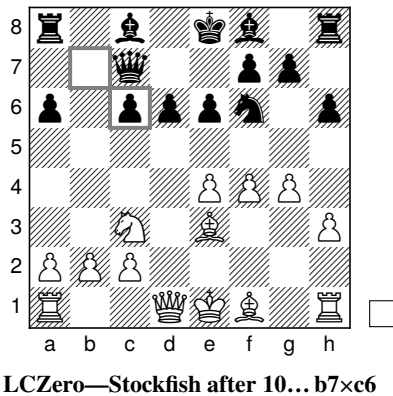
LCZero—Stockfish after 23... ♖f8-e8

... while Stockfish just steamrolled Leela with White.



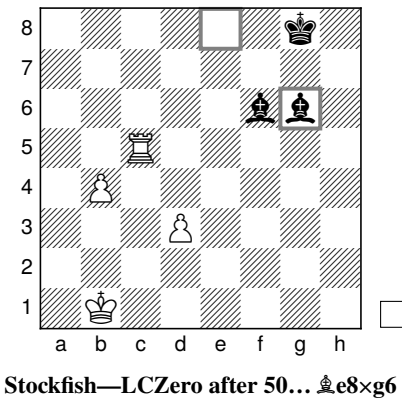
Games 41–42, B90 Sicilian Najdorf (Matthew)

More disappointment was around the corner as a Sicilian Najdorf game pair went wrong for Leela.



Leela has played a number of good games against this structure in the past so I was expecting Stockfish to be put under some pressure but it never materialized. As Black, Leela seemed to have reached a queenless middlegame with typical Sicilian compensation for the pawn.

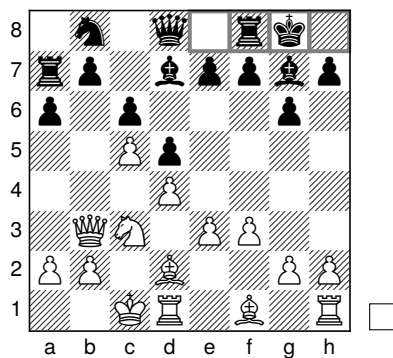
However, after castling incautiously on move 31(!) Stockfish unleashed some amazing play, reaching the following fascinating endgame:



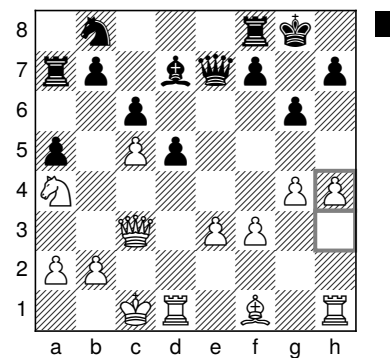
Despite the huge evaluation, we were for many moves in “only one winning move” territory. If I remember right(?), Stockfish made one small mis-step but was otherwise tablebase faultless! Amazing play!

Games 43–44, D15 Slav Defence (Jeroen)

I was really jealous of Jeroen’s opening choice when I saw it—I’d looked at various Slav lines but I hadn’t found anything suitable! This was perfect and Leela played one of its best games of the SuperFinal to pull one back on Stockfish.



LCZero—Stockfish after 12... O-O

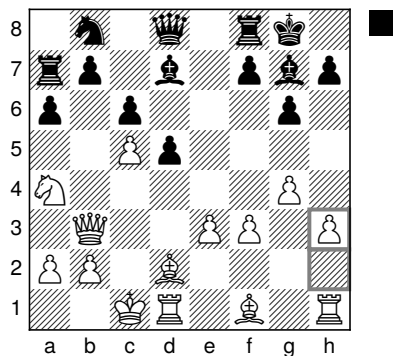


LCZero—Stockfish after 19. h3-h4

13. ♖a4

It was the creative English Grandmaster Julian Hodgson who first started playing Slav lines with ...a6 not with the idea of expanding quickly on the queenside with ...b5 but with the idea of defending b7 with ...♖a7! His idea was that as soon as the white queen moves away from b3 the rook can move back to a8! Black's play often feels odd and time-wasting (...♙e6, ...♘f6d7, ...♙×d7) but Black's solid central pawn structure and safe king give Black quite a lot of leeway.

13... e5 14. d×e5 ♙×e5 15. g4 ♙g7 16. h3



LCZero—Stockfish after 16. h2-h3

A Leela special. 16. h4 was the most natural way of gaining kingside space but with 16. h3 protecting g4, Leela adds the possibility of encircling the central dark squares with ♙c3 and f4 (to add to its control over the queenside dark squares) or e4 to open the centre and expose Black's awkwardly-placed queenside pieces (♞a7, ♘b8).

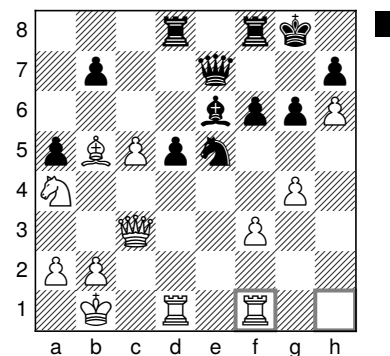
16... a5 17. ♙c3 ♙×c3 18. ♖×c3 ♖e7 19. h4

A flexible switch of plan. The lost tempo doesn't seem to affect White's chances. Indeed the extra move 16... a5 has given White a clear target on the queenside.

19... ♙e6 20. h5 ♘d7 21. h6 f6 22. e4 ♞aa8

22... d×e4 23. ♞e1 is Leela's idea when the open e-file together with Black's sensitive kingside makes life difficult for Black.

23. e×d5 c×d5 24. ♔b1 ♘e5 25. ♙b5 ♞ad8 26. ♞hf1



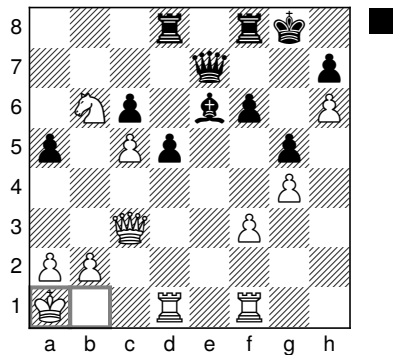
LCZero—Stockfish after 26. ♞h1-f1

Another calm strengthening move, reminiscent of 16. h3. By protecting the f3-pawn, White brings the threat of ♖×a5 into the position.

26... g5 27. ♘b6

27. ♖×a5 d4 gives Black some play for the pawn. Throughout the whole game, Leela will seek to maintain control and not allow a single chance for counterplay.

27... ♘c6 28. ♙×c6 b×c6 29. ♔a1



LCZero—Stockfish after 29. ♖b1-a1

Leela's play over the coming moves felt quite mystifying when I watched it live and it still makes a very mysterious impression now. Leela seems to retreat its pieces to less active squares and passively absorb Black's expansion, after which it is winning! The key is that Leela manages to transfer the white knight from b6 (where it restricts Black play on the queenside files but performs no significant active duty) to the beautiful square d4 after which Black's position collapses!

29... ♜fe8 30. ♜h1

Simply protecting the h6-pawn!

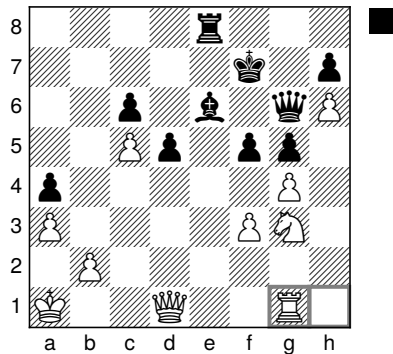
30... ♜f7 31. a3 ♜g6 32. ♜d2 ♜f7 33. ♜d4

White's next move will be ♜d2 (stopping ...♜e2 invading on the 7th) threatening ♜c4 redeploying the knight to d6.

33... ♜e2 34. ♜c4 ♜b8 35. ♜d2 ♜x d2 36. ♜x d2 a4

Stopping ♜b3-d4 so White finds an alternative and circuitous route to d4.

37. ♜f1 ♜e6 38. ♜d4 ♜e8 39. ♜g3 ♜f7 40. ♜d1 f5 41. ♜g1



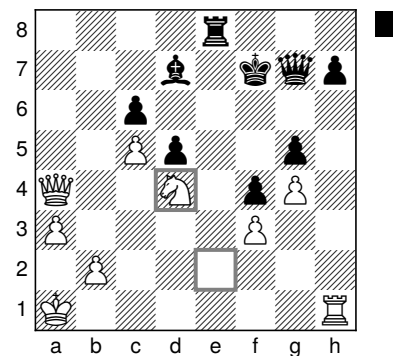
LCZero—Stockfish after 41. ♜h1-g1

Another holding move reminiscent of 16. h3, 26. ♜hf1, and 30. ♜h1. Leela reinforces the key parts of its position, jettisons the unimportant ones (h6-pawn) and waits for Black's activity to blow itself out.

41... f4 42. ♜e2 ♜xh6

Leela happily jettisons the h6-pawn for the open h-file, the a4-pawn and (finally) the huge d4-square for the knight!

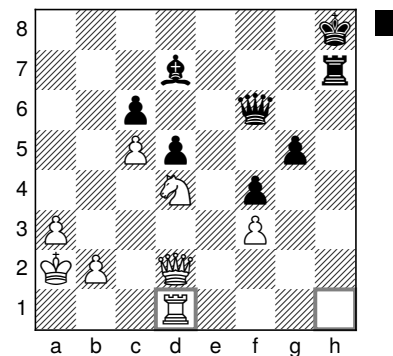
43. ♜h1 ♜g7 44. ♜x a4 ♜d7 45. ♜d4



LCZero—Stockfish after 45. ♜d4

It's arrived and what a path: b1-c3-a4-b6-c4-d2-f1-g3-e2-d4! White has many threats now including simply ♜b4 followed by advancing the a-pawn! Stockfish starts to give away pawns to sow confusion.

45... h5 46. g×h5 ♜f6 47. h6 ♜g8 48. h7+ ♜h8 49. ♜b4 ♜f8 50. ♜d2 ♜f7 51. ♜a2 ♜xh7 52. ♜d1



LCZero—Stockfish after 52. ♜h1-d1

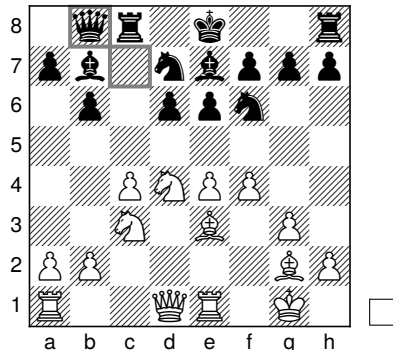
Again, 50. ♜d2, 51. ♜a2, and 52. ♜d1 is a simply amazing reaction to Black's play, consolidating White's position, and charging up for a fresh assault!

52... ♖e7 53. ♖b4 ♖f8 54. ♖b7 ♖c8
55. ♖xc8+ ♙xc8 56. b4 ♖c7 57. a4 ♙g7
58. ♖c1 ♙f6 59. b5 and White's queenside pawns
were too strong.

59... ♙b7 60. ♖b3 g4 61. f×g4 ♙e5 62. ♙f3+
♙e4 63. ♙g5+ ♙e5 64. ♙b4 ♙f6 65. ♙f3 ♖e7
66. ♙a5 ♙c8 67. g5+ ♙g7 68. ♖e1 ♖e3 69. ♖×e3
f×e3 70. ♙d4 ♙g4 71. b6 ♙c8 72. ♙b4 ♙g6
73. ♙c3 e2 74. ♙d2 ♙b7 75. ♙×c6 d4 76. ♙×d4
♙g7 77. c6 ♙a6 78. b7 e1♖+ 79. ♙×e1 ♙g6
80. ♙f3 ♙c4 81. c7 ♙h5 82. c8♖ ♙e6 83. ♙e5
♙×c8 84. b×c8♖ 1–0

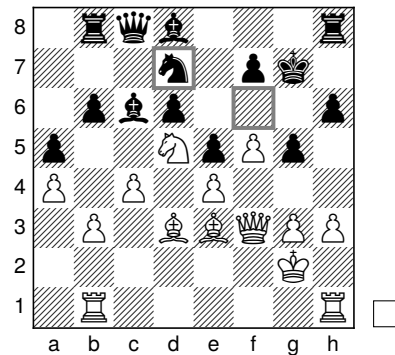
A great game by Leela and holding the reverse
greatly improved the mood of the Leela faithful! It
felt like match on again!

Games 45–46, A30 English Hedgehog (Mat- thew)



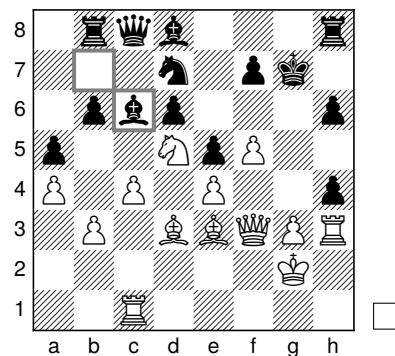
LCZero—Stockfish after 12... ♖c7–b8

I investigated different Hedgehogs before the
match and witnessed many thrilling games (espe-
cially when Stoofvlees was White) so I was some-
what disappointed by the games produced in this
pair. Leela got nowhere as White, the game peter-
ing out to a draw on move 74 and then Leela fell to
Stockfish's classic shuffle-til-you-drop technique as
Black! As time ran short, Stockfish struck...hard!
No comments are required...



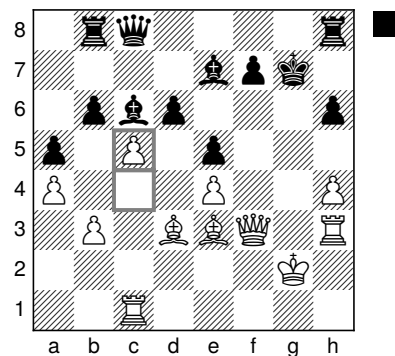
Stockfish—LCZero after 94... ♙f6–d7

95. h4 g×h4 96. ♖bc1 ♙b7 97. ♖h3 ♙c6



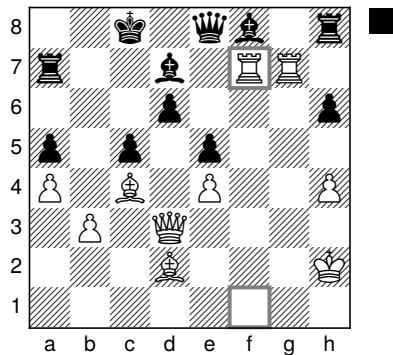
Stockfish—LCZero after 97... ♙b7–c6

98. f6+ ♙×f6 99. ♙×f6 ♙×f6 100. g×h4 ♙e7
101. c5



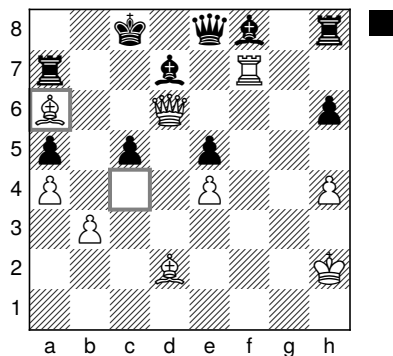
Stockfish—LCZero after 101. c4–c5

101... b×c5 102. ♖g3+ ♙f8 103. ♖f1 ♙e8
104. ♖×f7+ ♙d7 105. ♖g7 ♖e8 106. ♖f5+ ♙d8
107. ♙d2 ♖a8 108. ♙c4 ♙d7 109. ♖f3 ♖a7
110. ♙h2 ♙c8 111. ♖d3 ♙f8 112. ♖ff7



Stockfish—LCZero after 112. ♔f1–f7

112... ♙×g7 113. ♖×d6 ♙f8 114. ♙a6+



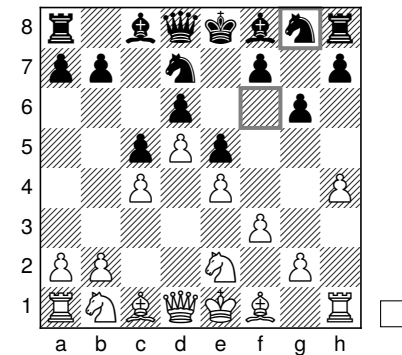
Stockfish—LCZero after 114. ♙c4–a6+

114... ♖×a6 115. ♖×a6+ ♔b8 116. ♖f6 ♖c8 117. ♖b6+ ♔c7 118. ♖a7+ ♔d8 119. ♖b8 and the game was finished!

I think you can safely call that power play!

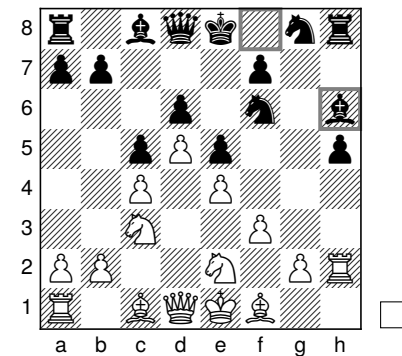
Games 47–48, E60 King's Indian Defence (Jeroen)

The next pair of drawn games was a bizarre example of both engines finding the same bizarre solution... that would never be considered by a human player!



LCZero—Stockfish after 7... ♖f6–g8

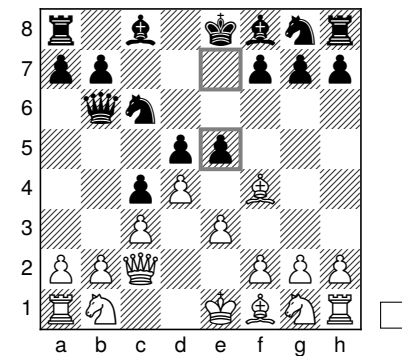
Yep, 7... ♖g8! After 8. h5 g×h5 9. ♖×h5 ♖df6 10. ♖h2 h5 11. ♖bc3 ♙h6...



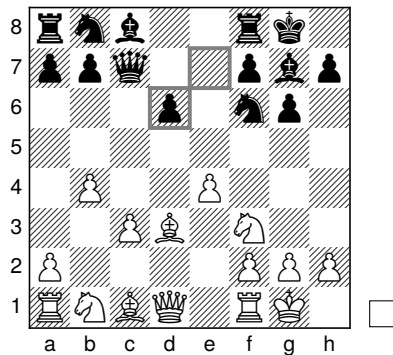
LCZero—Stockfish after 11... ♙f8–h6

... Black has managed to hold back White attempts to gain kingside space with a pawn advance—indeed, Black has the opportunity later to play ...h4 and ...♖h5—while exchanging off the dark-squared bishops. Amazing strategy!

Games 49–50, D00 London System (Matthew)



LCZero—Stockfish after 6... e7–e5

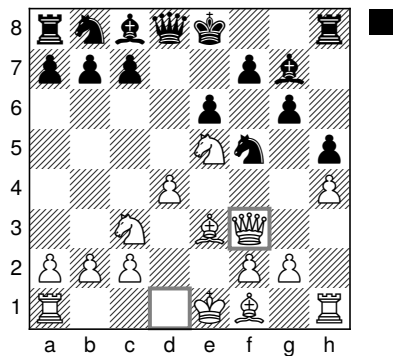


LCZero—Stockfish after 9... e7xd6

... and then added insult to injury by drawing with consummate ease with a pawn less and a broken structure!

Games 55–56, B06 Modern (Jeroen)

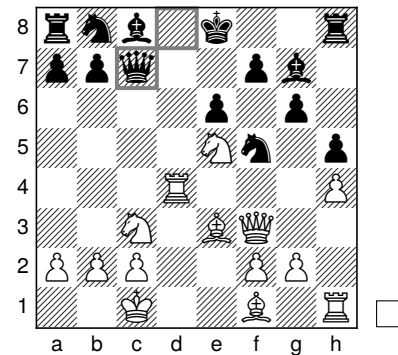
Once again, a line that left the book makers scratching their heads as both Leela and Stockfish drew a very ropey Black Modern line! Stockfish, surprisingly opting for a positional approach, didn't really get anywhere but Leela went full tactical and came very close to glory!



LCZero—Stockfish after 9. ♖d1-f3

Leela's aggressive setup met a horrendously risky—but (inevitably) brilliantly-calculated riposte from Stockfish!

9... c5 10. O-O-O cxd4 11. ♖xd4 ♖c7

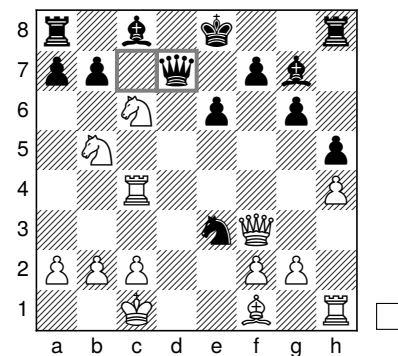


LCZero—Stockfish after 11... ♖d8-c7

To human eyes this looks simply impossible with ♘b5+, ♙b5, and ♖c4 in the air but Stockfish's tactics can make magic real!

11... ♙xd4 12. ♖xf7#

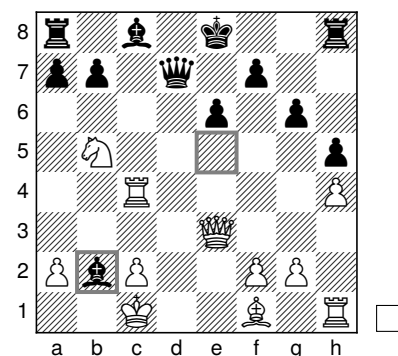
12. ♖c4 ♙c6 13. ♙xc6 ♙xe3 14. ♙b5 ♖d7



LCZero—Stockfish after 14... ♖c7-d7

Ladies and gentlemen, do not try this OTB!

15. ♙e5 ♙xe5 16. ♖xe3 ♙xb2+



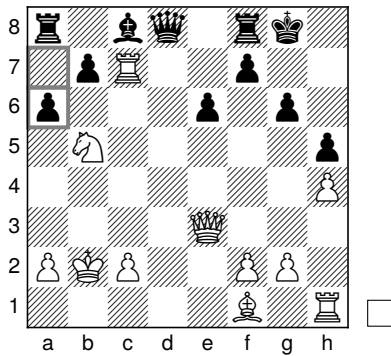
LCZero—Stockfish after 16... ♙e5xb2+

The tactics keep on coming!

17. ♖b1

17. ♖×b2 ♗×b5+ 18. ♖c1 ♗f5 and Black's king will find some safety either after ...O-O or ...♖f8-g7.

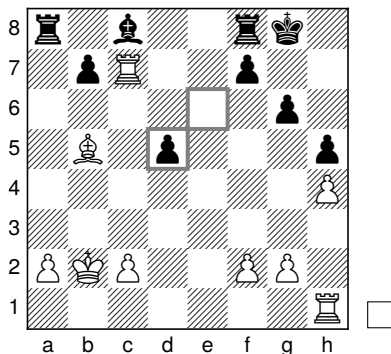
17... O-O 18. ♜c7 ♗d8 19. ♖×b2 a6



LCZero—Stockfish after 19... a7–a6

The key point that essentially had to be seen on move 9, winning back the sacrificed piece.

20. ♗e5 a×b5 21. ♙×b5 ♗d5 22. ♗×d5 e×d5



LCZero—Stockfish after 22... e6×d5

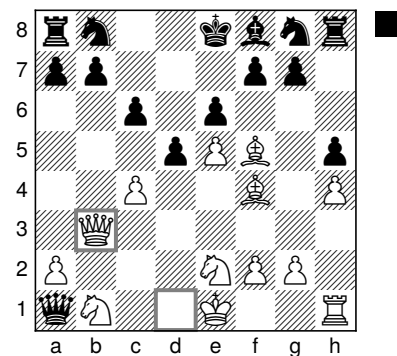
Stockfish was still quite pessimistic (1.45) and Leela very optimistic (0.78) but within a short space Leela's advantage melted away leading to a draw in 77 moves.

23. ♜d1 ♙f5 24. ♜d2 ♜fb8 25. a4 ♙e6 26. ♜d4 b6 27. g3 ♖g7 28. ♜b4 ♙f5 29. ♙d7 ♜a5 30. ♖a3 ♙×d7 31. ♜×d7 ♜c8 32. ♜f4 b5 33. ♜f×f7+ ♖g8 34. ♜g7+ ♖f8 35. ♜d7+ ♖e8 36. ♜b7 ♖f8 37. ♜h7 ♖g8 38. ♜bg7+ ♖f8 39. ♜f7+ ♖g8 40. ♜hg7+ ♖h8 41. ♜×g6 d4 42. ♜d6 ♜×a4+ 43. ♖b2 ♜ac4 44. ♖b1 ♜e8 45. ♖c1 ♖g8 46. ♜b7 ♜ec8 47. ♜g6+ ♖h8 48. ♖d2 ♜×c2+ 49. ♖d3

♜8c3+ 50. ♖×d4 ♜c4+ 51. ♖d3 ♜4c3+ 52. ♖e4 ♜×f2 53. ♜×b5 ♖h7 54. ♜gg5 ♜e2+ 55. ♖f4 ♜f2+ 56. ♖e5 ♜e2+ 57. ♖d4 ♜ee3 58. ♜×h5+ ♖g6 59. ♜hg5+ ♖h7 60. g4 ♜cd3+ 61. ♖c4 ♜c3+ 62. ♖d5 ♜cd3+ 63. ♖c5 ♜c3+ 64. ♖d6 ♜c4 65. ♜h5+ ♖g7 66. ♜b7+ ♖g8 67. ♜b8+ ♖g7 68. ♜g5+ ♖h7 69. ♜bg8 ♜d4+ 70. ♖c5 ♜d7 71. ♖c6 ♜a7 72. h5 ♜b3 73. ♖d5 ♜b4 74. ♖c6 ♜ab7 75. ♜8g6 ♜b2 76. ♖c5 ♜c2+ 77. ♖d6 1/2–1/2

Games 57–58, B12 Caro-Kann (Matthew)

These showcased my second major opening misjudgement of the SuFi ☹



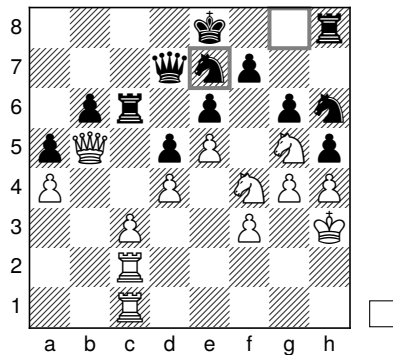
LCZero—Stockfish after 10. ♗d1–b3

5. ♙f4 in the Advance Caro-Kann is a novelty of mine which I had seen as a nice surprise weapon. I'd seen some crazy games and some wins in my test games but both Leela and Stockfish neutralised the opening fireworks with deadly efficiency leading to another dull game for bettors!

It's always darkest before dawn however! Unbeknownst to us, we were about to embark on a run of 7 decisive game pairs!

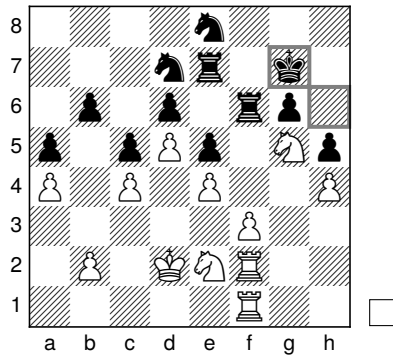
Games 59–60, C10 French (Jeroen)

Leela failed to convert its white side of a slow French (1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘c3 ♘c6 4. e5 b6) but Stockfish made no mistake in a game that was oddly a mirror image of game 8!



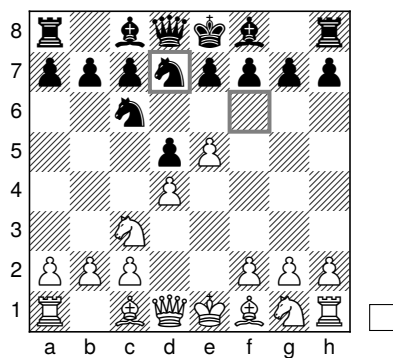
Stockfish—LCZero after 57... ♖g8-e7

The break 58.c4! was just as strong as 46.f4 in game 8! One noticeable feature was that Leela castled on move 59(!) in game 60!



Stockfish—LCZero after 45... ♖h6-g7 (game 8)

Games 61–62, B00 Nimzowitsch (Matthew)

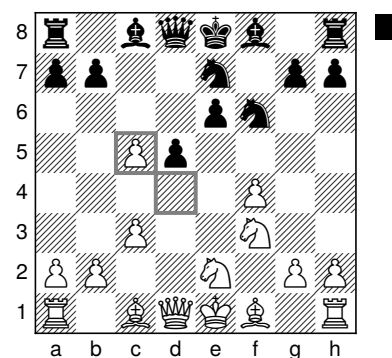


LCZero—Stockfish after 4... ♖f6-d7

The creative French player Christian Bauer is one of the players outside the elite level whose games I regularly follow. His games abound with unusual opening ideas; for example he is the major

exponent of 1... ♖c6 systems at grandmaster level. This is also an opening I dabbled with, influenced by the English legend Tony Miles who played it regularly until the end of his life. This line contains the neat trick 5. ♖×d5 ♖db8! winning back the d4-pawn. I wasn't however expecting Stockfish or Leela to fall for this 😊

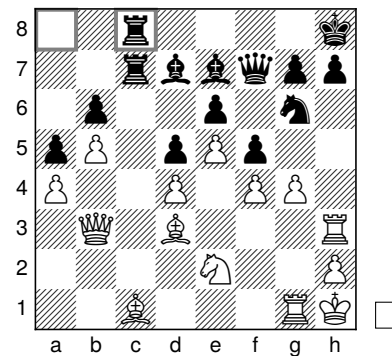
5. ♖ce2 e6 6. c3 f6 7. f4 ♖e7 8. ♖f3 c5 9. e×f6 ♖×f6 10. d×c5



LCZero—Stockfish after 10. d4×c5

This game featured a rare opening self-destruction from Stockfish that gave away a pawn on move 10 and spent the rest of the game making its position worse to try and justify it!

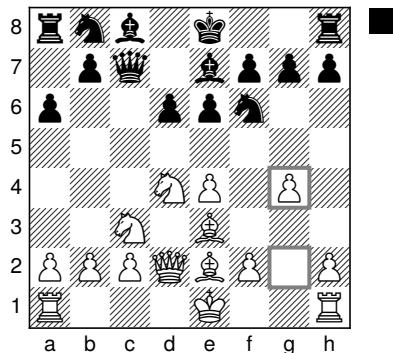
By contrast, Leela went for the Maginot Line approach and held without any particular alarms despite a consistently high Stockfish evaluation.



Stockfish—LCZero after 32... ♖a8-c8

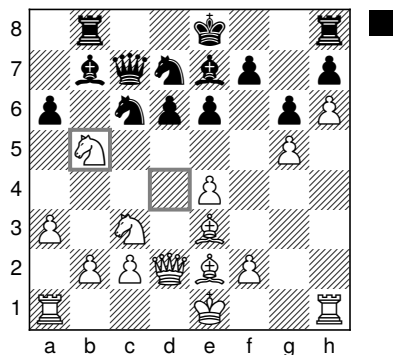
Games 63–64, Sicilian Najdorf 6. Be3 (Jer-oen)

Emboldened by the previous game pair, Leela fans' hopes soared as Leela seemingly took Stockfish apart right from the opening!



LCZero—Stockfish after 9...g2–g4

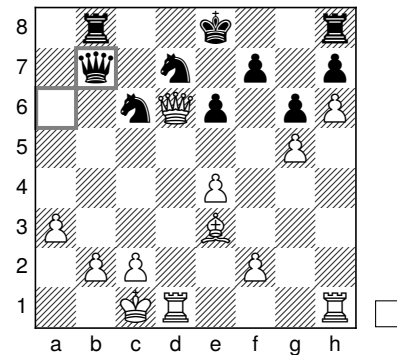
9... b5 10. g5 ♘fd7 11. a3 ♙b7 12. h4 ♘c6 13. h5 ♙b8 14. h6 g6 15. ♘d4×b5



LCZero—Stockfish after 15. ♘d4×b5

Sacrifices on b5 are legion in the Sicilian, and the scenario in the game where White gains 3 connected queenside pawns for the piece are also common. With the pawn on h6 exposing dark square weaknesses all over Black's position, this seemed however to be a superb version for White. I was convinced White was objectively winning! (Maybe I still am! 😊)

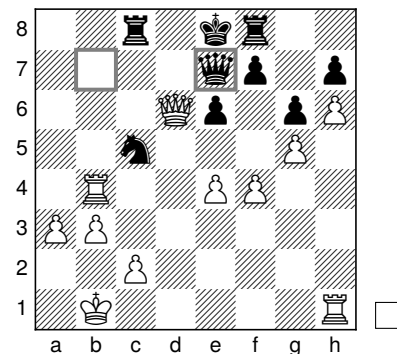
15... a×b5 16. ♘×b5 ♙c8 17. ♘×d6+ ♙×d6 18. ♙×d6 ♙a6 19. ♙×a6 ♙×a6 20. O-O-O ♙b7



LCZero—Stockfish after 20... ♙a6–b7

Black's king is caught in the centre and it will take Black several moves to eject the mighty white queen on d6. Once the queens come off however, White's queenside pawns are free to advance. How could Black be surviving this?

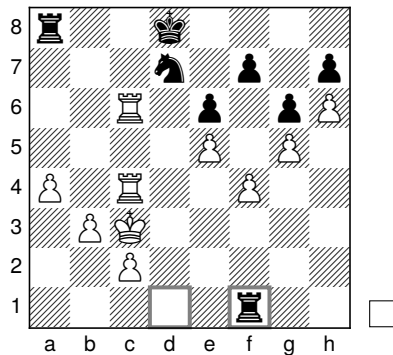
21. b3 ♙c8 22. ♙b1 ♙f8 23. f4 ♘cb8 24. ♙d2 ♘c5 25. ♙b4 ♘ba6 26. ♙d4 ♘×b4 27. ♙×b4 ♙e7



LCZero—Stockfish after 27... ♙b7–e7

Stockfish's evaluation was at 1.59 here but now something strange happened. Despite Leela playing Stockfish's expected moves. Stockfish's evaluation kept on dropping until by 41... ♙f1, it was 0.00 (whereas Leela's evaluation was still at 0.59!)

28. ♙b6 ♙d8 29. ♙×d8+ ♙×d8 30. e5 ♙d5 31. ♙h3 ♙e7 32. ♙c3 ♙a8 33. ♙b2 ♙d8 34. ♙bc4 ♘d7 35. ♙c6 ♙b8 36. ♙3c4 ♙d1 37. a4 ♙a8 38. ♙a2 ♙f1 39. ♙a3 ♙a1+ 40. ♙b4 ♙d1 41. ♙c3 ♙f1

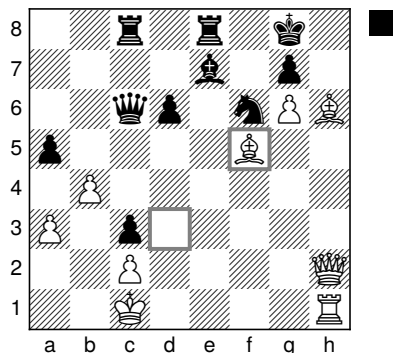


LCZero—Stockfish after 41... ♖d1-f1

Stockfish was relaxing in the sauna already at this point! Leela gave it a go, but Stockfish parried everything with ease!

42. ♖b4 ♖d1 43. ♖c3 ♖f1 44. ♖d4 ♖c8 45. ♖cc4 ♖f3+ 46. ♖b4 ♖f2 47. ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 48. c3 ♖f3 49. a5 ♖b8 50. ♖c4+ ♖b7 51. ♖a4 ♖f1 52. ♖b5 ♖a6 53. ♖d4 ♖f3 54. ♖d7+ ♖c7+ 55. ♖c4 ♖xf4+ 56. ♖c5 ♖f3 57. ♖d6 ♖xc3 58. ♖e7 ♖c8 59. ♖d8+ ♖b7 60. b4 ♖e3 61. ♖f6 ♖e4 62. ♖d3 ♖g4 63. ♖d7 ♖c8 64. ♖d2 ♖d5+ 65. ♖g7 ♖xg5 66. ♖xh7 ♖xe5 67. ♖g7 ♖h5 68. h7 g5 69. b5 g4 70. ♖b2 ♖b7 71. b6 ♖e7 72. a6+ ♖xa6 73. b7 ♖c6 74. b8 ♖x b8 75. ♖xb8 g3 76. ♖b3 g2 77. ♖g3 ♖b5 78. ♖xg2 ♖c4 79. ♖c2+ ♖d3 80. ♖c6 ♖h1 81. ♖a6 ♖g1+ 82. ♖xf7 1/2-1/2

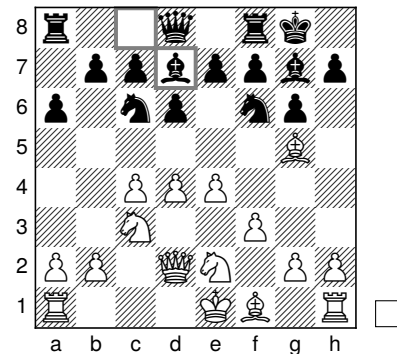
This was heart-breaking enough for Leela fans, and the big evaluation for White in the opening stages made you fear the worst for Leela's chances as Black. And indeed...



Stockfish—LCZero after 29. ♖d3-f5

... a rook sacrifice from Stockfish, a missed defence from Leela and Leela had lost another game pair.

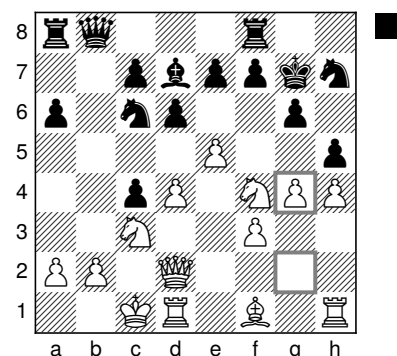
Games 65–66, Sämisch King's Indian Panno (Matthew)



LCZero—Stockfish after 8... ♖c8-d7

The Sämisch King's Indian with the unusual 6. ♖g5 has been a mainstay of my anti-King's Indian repertoire for more than 30 years. The Panno system with 8... ♖d7 is an English specialty as I have faced it multiple times against players such as GM Dr John Nunn (the most illustrious of all English King's Indian players!), GM William Watson, and IMs John Pigott and Alan Merry. I consider it virtually winning for White... In my test games, Leela's White play had been somewhat flaccid but here Leela went full-out tactical!

9. h4 h5 10. O-O-O ♖h7 11. ♖h6 b5 12. e5 bxc4 13. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 14. ♖f4 ♖b8 15. g4

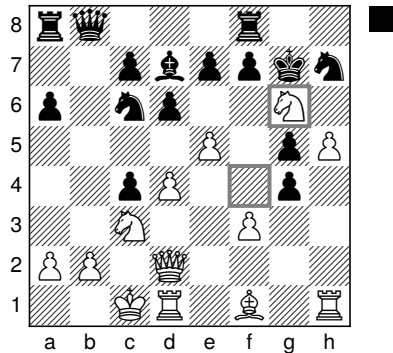


LCZero—Stockfish after 15. g2-g4

Leela and Stockfish's evaluation at this point was quite different—Leela at 1.22(!) and Stockfish at

0.00. From Stockfish's PV it was clear that Leela was intending a move that Stockfish was not considering...

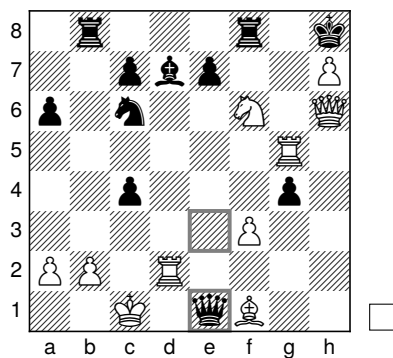
15... h×g4 16. h5 g5 17. ♖g6



LCZero—Stockfish after 17. ♖f4-g6

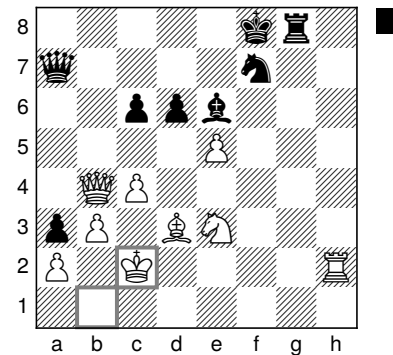
This was it! Unfortunately after **17... d×e5** Leela's evaluation went back to -0.01! Both engines saw the spectacular perpetual that arose in the game...

18. h6+ ♔×g6 19. ♖h2 ♖f6 20. h7 ♔g7 21. d×e5 ♖d5 22. ♖h6+ ♔h8 23. ♖×d5 ♖b5 24. ♖h5 ♖ab8 25. ♖d2 f6 26. ♖×f6 ♖×e5 27. ♖×g5 ♖e1+ 28. ♖d1 ♖e3+ 29. ♖d2 ♖e1+ 30. ♖d1 ♖e3+ 31. ♖d2 ♖e1+ 1/2-1/2



LCZero—Stockfish after 31... ♖e3-e1+

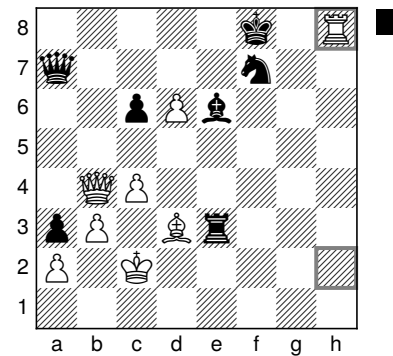
Once again you feared for Leela as Black in such a tactical line but Leela did a super job and seemed set to achieve a draw until...



Stockfish—LCZero after 42. ♖b1-c2

Leela's incautious **42... ♖g3** led to (extremely attractive) tactical disaster after:

43. e×d6 ♖×e3 44. ♖h8+

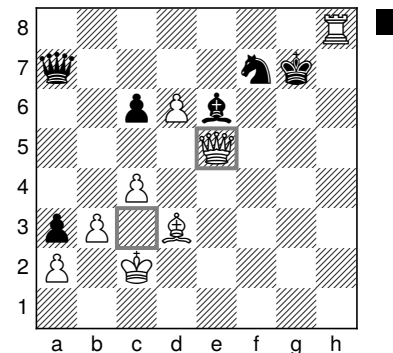


Stockfish—LCZero after 44. ♖h2-h8+

44... ♔g7

44... ♖×h8 45. d7+ and the d-pawn queens.

45. ♖c3+ ♖e5 46. ♖×e5+

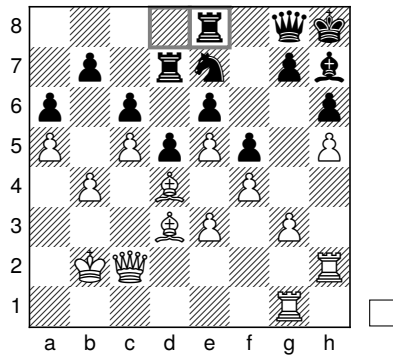


Stockfish—LCZero after 46. ♖c3×e5+

The move that Leela had overlooked completely **46... ♖×e5 47. ♖h7+ ♔f6 48. ♖×a7** and white won in a few more moves.

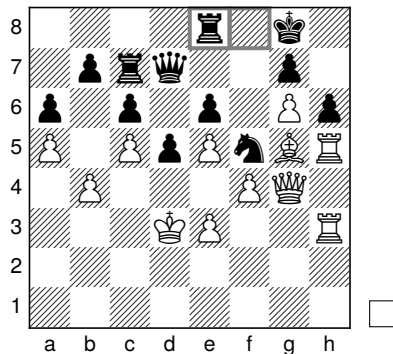
Games 67–68, A97 Classical Dutch (Jeroen)

The pounding continued as Leela lost an “unlosable” game.



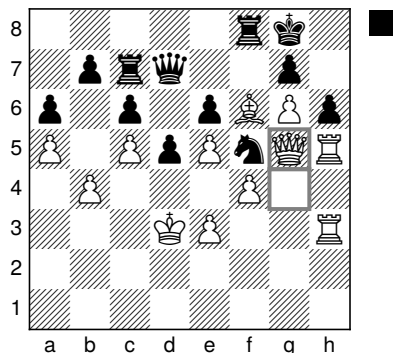
Stockfish—LCZero after 127... ♖d8-e8

The position at move 127(!) didn't look too likely to produce a result. However as both engines played on increments something miraculous happened!



Stockfish—LCZero after 189... ♖f8-e8

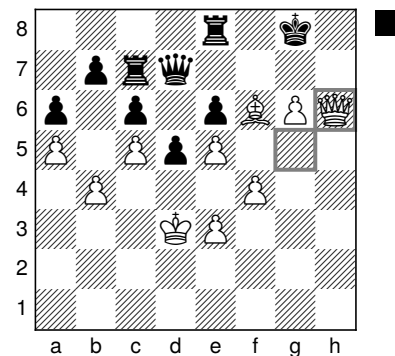
190. ♕f6 ♖f8 191. ♖g5



Stockfish—LCZero after 191. ♖g4-g5

Wow what a move! (Very reminiscent of Stockfish's sublime 150. ♖h5!! in game 60 of the Season 19 SuperFinal.³)

191... ♖e8 192. ♖xh6 ♗xh6 193. ♖xh6 g×h6 194. ♖xh6



Stockfish—LCZero after 194. ♖g5×h6

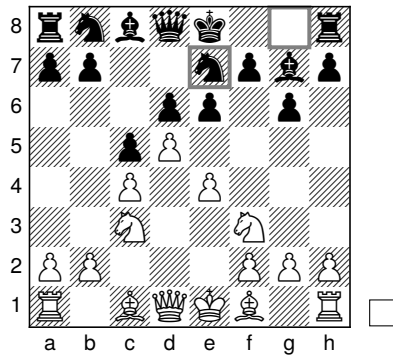
and Black had to give up the queen to stave off mate.

194... ♖g7 195. ♕xg7 ♖xg7 196. f5 e×f5 197. ♖g5 ♖f8 198. e6 ♖c7 199. ♖c3 ♖g7 200. ♖d4 ♖c7 201. ♖e5 ♖g7 202. ♖f4 ♖c7 203. ♖h4 ♖g7 204. ♖g5 ♖e7 205. ♖f4 ♖g7 206. ♖d6 ♖fe8 207. ♖e5+ ♖g8 208. ♖f6 b6 209. a×b6 a5 210. ♖f7+ ♖x7 211. g×f7+ ♖f8 212. f×e8 ♖+ ♖×e8 213. b7 ♖f8 214. ♖f6 ♖g8 215. b8 ♖+ ♖h7 216. ♖c7+ ♖g8 217. ♖g7# 1-0

I think it's fair to say that this defeat robbed Leela fans of their last hopes of victory in the SuperFinal. However, this avalanche of wins wasn't finished yet!

³<https://tcec-chess.com/#div=sf&game=60&season=19>

Games 69–70, B06 Maybe Benoni (Matthew)

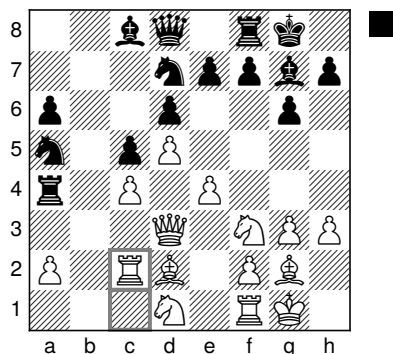


LCZero—Stockfish after 6... Ng8–e7

The American IM Cyril Lakdawala coined this name in his book *The Modern Defence: Move by Move* (Everyman Chess) for this Benoni variant in which Black places the knight on e7 rather than f6. Engines don't like it any more than the ...f6 variant, but it gives Black the chance for accelerated counterplay with a quick ...f5. Leela pressed as White but wasn't able to convert. As Black, Leela ended up forcing an endgame that was clearly better for Stockfish which made no mistake in converting.

The 7th and final decisive game pair however... was Leela's!

Games 71–72, E62 Fianchetto King's Indian (Jeroen)

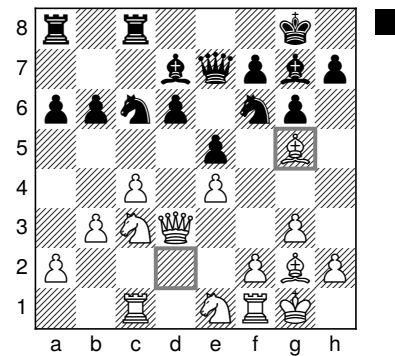


LCZero—Stockfish after 18. Bc1–c2

Struggling to create counterplay from a difficult opening, the same opening from which Ceres defeated Stockfish in an astonishingly beautiful game:

<https://youtu.be/eEZ22A1Rh2M>. Stockfish got its rook side-lined on a4 which Leela exploited beautifully to win.

Leela's successful defence as Black had one remarkable moment.



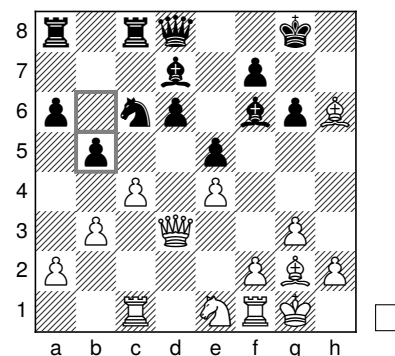
Stockfish—LCZero after 18. d2–g5

This looked like a typically grim situation for Black with a static weakness on d5 and a backward d6-pawn to boot. However, Leela came up with a beautiful defensive concept:

18... h6

This is a pawn sacrifice designed to exchange off White's currently active pieces and leave it with currently passive pieces creating a window of opportunity for Black. In that window, Black's activity will create a static pawn weakness in White's position that will sustain Black in the long moves ahead playing a pawn down!

19. Nd5 Bxd8 20. Nxf6+ Bxf6 21. Bxh6 b5



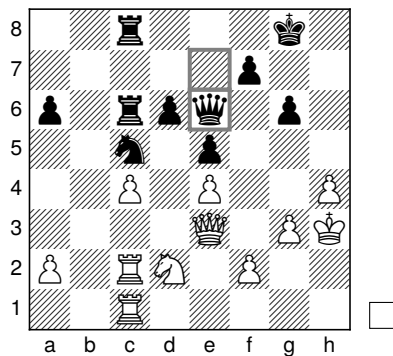
Stockfish—LCZero after 21... b6–b5

Black cranks up the activity while White's knight on e1 interferes with the harmony of White's position.

22. ♖f3 bxc4 23. bxc4

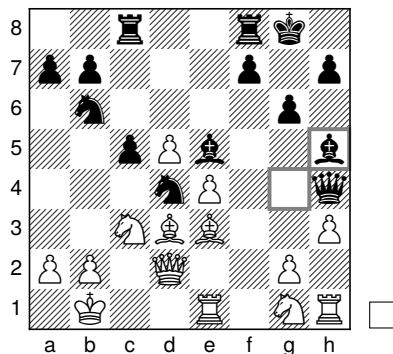
White wants to keep clamping down hard on the d6-pawn, but now Black also has a target.

23... ♙e6 24. ♖fd1 ♜a5 25. ♜d2 ♜c6 26. ♜c2 ♜ac8 27. ♜dc1 ♙g5 28. ♙xg5 ♜xg5 29. h4 ♜e7 30. ♜h2 ♜b7 31. ♜e3 ♜c5 32. ♙h3 ♙xh3 33. ♜xh3 ♜e6+



Stockfish—LCZero after 33... ♜e6+

and Leela held this position without difficulties.

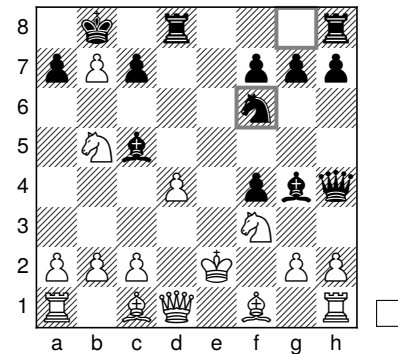
Games 73–74, D70 Grünfeld 3. f3 (Matthew)

LCZero—Stockfish after 16... ♙g4-h5

One of my favourite lines of the Grünfeld... probably because it's one of the few lines I have managed to beat Stockfish (older versions of course) in training games! It's probably just about OK for Black but many of the lines are very fraught!

I was the first to let the winning streak down however as both Stockfish and Leela navigated all the potential piece (look at that bishop on h5!) and

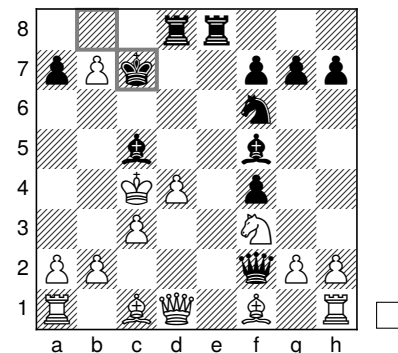
queen traps to reach a draw. Both games are theoretically rather important!

Games 75–76, C25 Vienna (Jeroen)

LCZero—Stockfish after 10... ♜g8-f6

Jeroen let his hair down in this choice with a venerable, famous opening first seen in Steinitz-Zukertort 1872! The follow-up was spectacular...

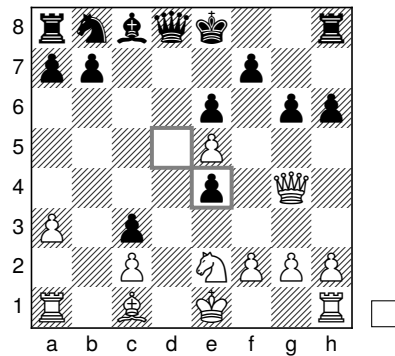
11. c3 ♜he8+ 12. ♜d3 ♜f2 13. ♜xc7 ♙f5+ 14. ♜c4 ♜xc7



LCZero—Stockfish after 14... ♜b8xc7

... but both engines again found a way to liquidate the position to a slightly better endgame for White which both held comfortably as Black!

Games 77–78, C12 French McCutcheon (Matthew)



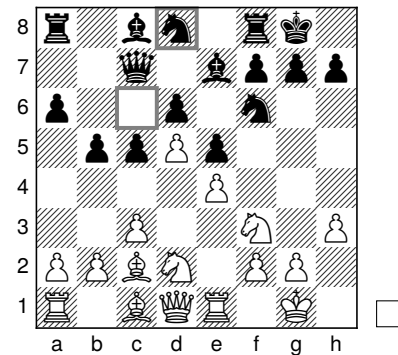
LCZero—Stockfish after 12... d5×e4

A few years ago, preparing for a game in the British 4NCL League, I decided to prepare the McCutcheon. For me, the McCutcheon—like the Czech Benoni—was a synonym of bad but as I dived into it, I became fascinated by the positions. I’ve since scored very well with it. The key decision is always whether to meet ♖g4 with ...g6 or ...♗f8. I discovered the line in this game after considerable analysis and I considered it to make 7... g6 practically unplayable (for a human of course!) The concept behind it seemed to be new (it wasn’t in my databases) so imagine my surprise when I opened an old Russian book of Lutikov’s games (1933-1989) and saw that he was analysing precisely this position with the same concept as mine! As the Russian saying goes (often quoted for chess): “All that is new is well-forgotten old.”

This was one of my big disappointments of the SuperFinal as both Leela and Stockfish headed for a forcing line leading to a slightly better endgame rather than trying to exploit Black’s weakened dark squares in the middlegame (as they had done in all my training matches!) Both games ended in easy draws for Black.

Games 79–80, C98 Ruy Lopez Chigorin (Jeroen)

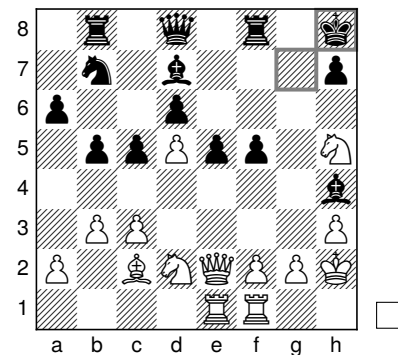
Jeroen again reached back into antiquity with the Ruy Lopez.



LCZero—Stockfish after 13... ♖c6–d8

13... ♖d8 is Rubinstein’s brainchild, intending a regrouping of the knights with ...♖e8, ...g6, ...♖g7, ...f6, and ...♖f7. Stockfish was not very convincing as White but Leela came agonisingly close to a fantastic victory only to be denied by some astonishing Stockfish defending!

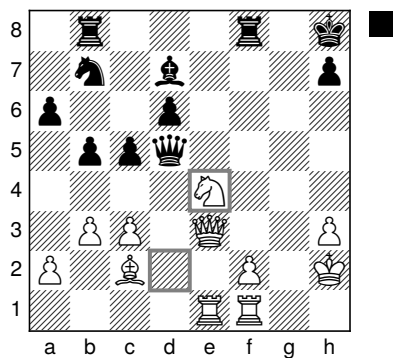
14. ♖f1 ♖b7 15. b3 g6 16. ♖g3 ♗d7 17. ♗e3 ♖e8 18. ♗e2 ♖g7 19. ♗f1 ♗d8 20. ♗h6 f5 21. exf5 gxf5 22. ♗ae1 ♗h8 23. ♗h2 ♗b8 24. ♖d2 ♗h4 25. ♗xg7+ ♗xg7 26. ♖h5+ ♗h8



LCZero—Stockfish after 26... ♗g7–h8

Black’s position looks superficially attractive due to Black’s strong central presence and 2 bishops. However, the passivity of the knight on b7, the awkwardness of the bishop on h4 and the paucity of defensive pieces around the black king give White an opportunity to launch a dangerous attack along the g-file which White had prepared with the earlier 23. ♗h2!

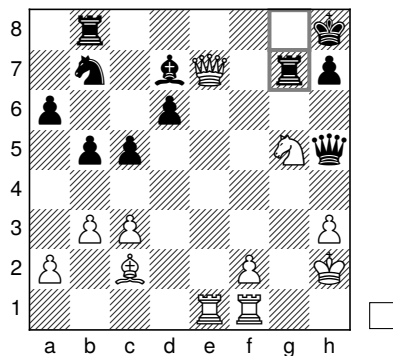
27. g3 ♗f6 28. g4 e4 29. ♖xf6 ♗xf6 30. gxf5 ♗xf5 31. ♗e3 ♗xd5 32. ♖xe4



LCZero—Stockfish after 32. ♖d2×e4

Leela was at 0.70 already while Stockfish was on 1.03. With the b1–h7 diagonal cleared and the g-file opened, Black's chances of survival do not look good. Black's best tactical chance lies in the sensitivity of the h3-pawn in front of White's own king as White reaches forward to attack.

32... ♜h5 33. ♘g5 ♜g8 34. ♜e7 ♜g7



LCZero—Stockfish after 34... ♜g8–g7

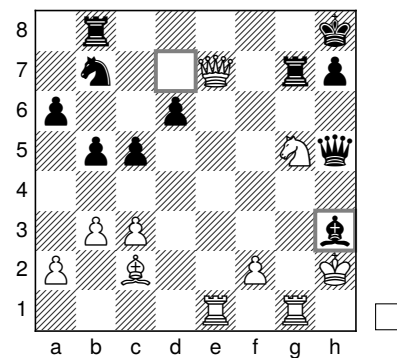
Has White missed something simple? The queen is attacked, the bishop on d7 is covered, ♘f7+ is prevented and the knight on g5 is hanging...

34... ♜xg5 35. ♜xd7 ♜bg8 36. ♜g1 ♜xg1 37. ♜xg1 ♜xg1 38. ♜xg1 ♜g5+ 39. ♜h2 ♜e5+ 40. ♜g2 ♜g7+ 41. ♜xg7+ ♜xg7 was Leela's expected line. 42. ♜f3 followed by ♜e4–d5 looks very unpleasant to defend. Stockfish plunges into the unfathomable tactics instead!

35. ♜g1

No!

35... ♜xh3



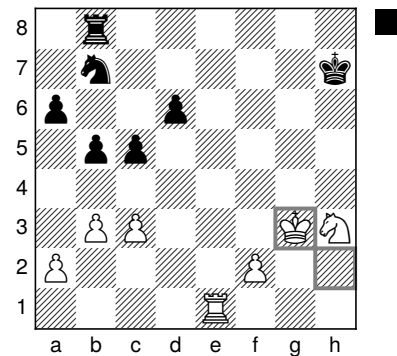
LCZero—Stockfish after 35... ♜d7×h3

More fireworks! 35... ♜xg7 36. ♜xg7 with the threat of ♘f7+ or ♜xh7.

36. ♜xg7+ ♜xg7 37. ♘xh3+ ♜h8 38. ♜g5 ♜f7 39. ♜f5 ♜g7 40. ♜h5

White goes after the h7-pawn to recoup the sacrificed material.

40... ♜f7 41. ♜xh7+ ♜xh7 42. ♜xh7 ♜xh7 43. ♜g3



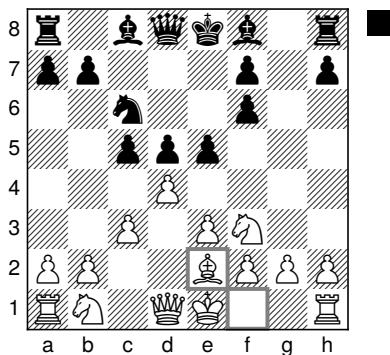
LCZero—Stockfish after 43. ♜h2–g3

I assumed that this ending would be extremely unpleasant for Black due to the passive knight on b7 but Stockfish disabused me of that notion, holding it with ease!

43... c4 44. b4 ♜g8+ 45. ♜f4 ♘d8 46. ♘g5+ ♜g6 47. ♜d1 ♜f8+ 48. ♜g4 ♘f7 49. ♘xh7 ♜xh7 50. ♜xd6 ♜e7 51. ♜d2 ♜f6 52. ♜c2 ♜d6 53. ♜f4 ♜d3 54. ♜e5 ♜d7 55. f4 ♜e7 56. ♜e4 ♜e6 57. ♜c1 ♜e7 58. ♜e5 ♜f3 59. ♜c2 ♜d3 60. ♜c1 ♜f3 61. ♜e4 ♜d3 62. f5 ♜f7 63. ♜f4 ♜f8 64. ♜g5 ♜e7 65. ♜f4 ♜f6 66. ♜e4 ♜f7 67. ♜f4 ♜h3 68. ♜c2 ♜d3 69. ♜e5 ♜e7 70. ♜c1 ♜f7 71. ♜e4

♖f8 72. ♖f4 ♖f7 73. ♜c2 ♖f6 74. ♜e2 ♖f7
 75. ♜c2 ♖e7 76. ♜c1 ♖f7 77. ♖e4 ♖e7 78. ♜c2
 ♖f8 79. ♖f4 ♖e7 80. ♖e4 ♖e8 81. ♖e5 ♖f7
 82. ♖e4 ♖e7 83. ♖f4 ♜h3 84. ♜c1 ♖f7 85. ♜c2
 ♖f6 86. ♜g2 ♜xc3 87. ♜g6+ ♖f7 88. ♜xa6
 ♜c1 89. ♜c6 ♜a1 90. ♖e5 ♜xa2 91. ♜c7+ ♖f8
 92. ♖d6 ♜a8 93. ♖c5 ♜b8 94. ♖c6 ♖g8 95. f6
 ♖f8 96. ♖c5 ♖g8 97. ♖d6 ♖f8 98. ♖c6 ♖g8
 99. ♖d6 ♖f8 100. ♖c5 1/2–1/2

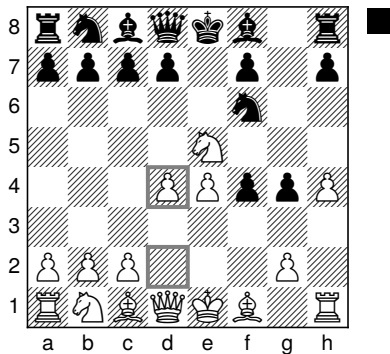
Games 81–82, A45 Trompovsky (Matthew)



LCZero—Stockfish after 7. ♖f1–e2

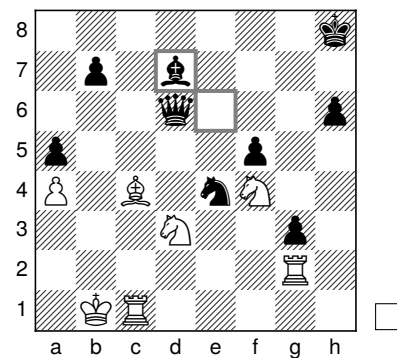
“Hmm, a grandmaster opening” was mrbdzz’s comment when he saw this line. I’ve played this line with Black against the Trompovsky and always believed it to be extremely dangerous for White. In my test matches, Stockfish was struggling against Leela but at the TCEC, neither engine seemed remotely troubled as White!

Games 83–84, C39 King’s Gambit Accepted (Jeroen)



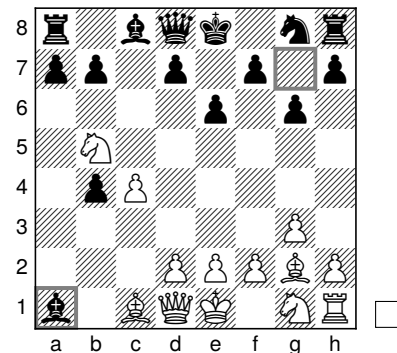
LCZero—Stockfish after 6. d2–d4

In the good old days, a King’s Gambit would be met by howls of agony from the Leela fans but nowadays Leela does just as good a job as Stockfish in navigating these positions. The draw rule kicked in at a slightly odd moment in Leela’s game where—without the evaluation—I couldn’t remotely have told you who was better and why!



LCZero—Stockfish after 38... ♜e6–d7

Games 85–86, A36 English Symmetrical (Matthew)

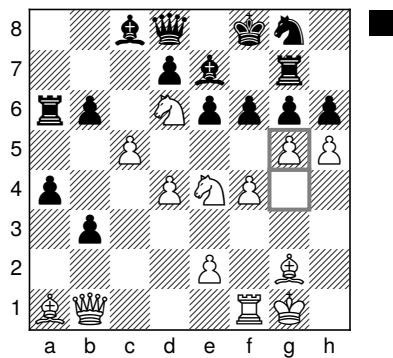


LCZero—Stockfish after 8... ♜g7×a1

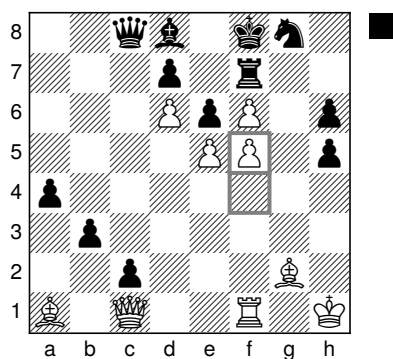
“English Symmetrical” doesn’t quite do this opening justice. This game is taken from the game Hodgson-Gulko, Groningen 1994. Julian had been having a rotten tournament and turned up for the last game somewhat the worse for wear. He blundered into an opening trap (as many grandmasters have done before him) allowing 6... ♜xb4. As he went to the toilet, he passed his wife and said to her “It’s not going well, I’m the exchange and a pawn down already.” His wife (not a chess

player) replied “Look again, you’re a piece and TWO pawns down!” And of course, as these things go, Julian played one of the most brilliant games of his career! Of course, Stockfish managed to hold this as White in miraculous fashion and its win as Black was totally spectacular! A few snapshots!

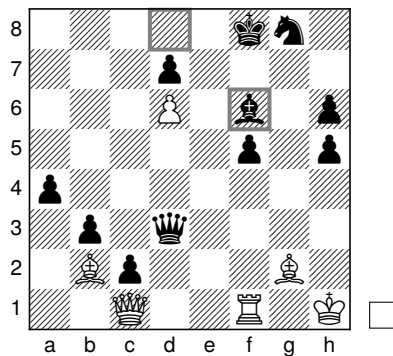
Games 87–88, B77 Sicilian Dragon (Jeroen)



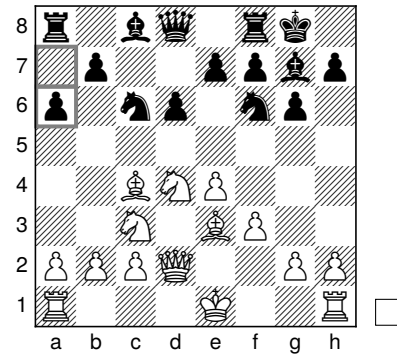
LCZero—Stockfish after 23. g4–g5



LCZero—Stockfish after 33. f4–f5

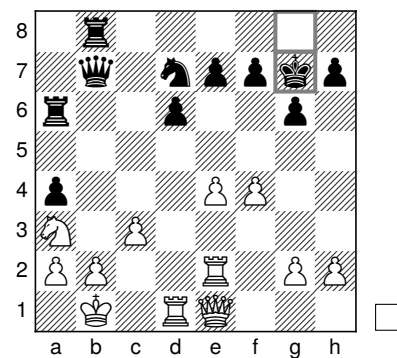


LCZero—Stockfish after 37... ♖d8×f6



LCZero—Stockfish after 9... a7–a6

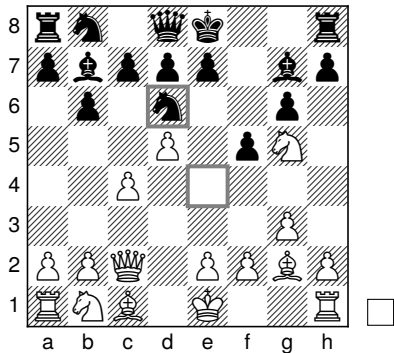
The Yugoslav Attack is a rather terrifying branch of the Dragon Sicilian so you would think that a slow move like 9... a6 would be enough to land Black in serious trouble. And indeed neither Stockfish nor Leela enjoyed their experience as Black. Unfortunately, as White with the position at its mercy, Leela let Stockfish escape with an incautious instamove. As Black, Leela again took the route of sacrificing a pawn for general activity and hoping this would be enough to keep Stockfish at bay.



Stockfish—LCZero after 23... ♖g8×g7

I expected Stockfish to manage but I also expected a very long, slow game. In fact Stockfish ripped open the black kingside fairly quickly and then spent some happy time picking up loose pawns to end up with queen, knight, and 2 pawns against queen and knight!

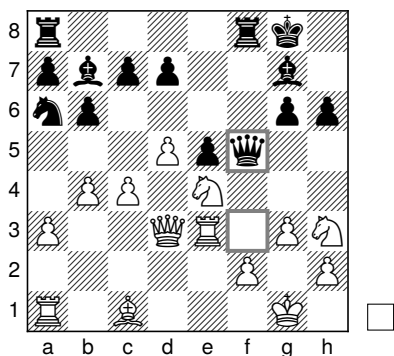
Games 89–90, A15 Offbeat Queen's Indian (Matthew)



LCZero—Stockfish after 8... d4–d6

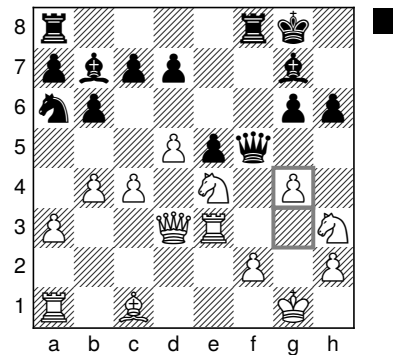
Grandmaster Alexander Ipatov has written two excellent books with the title *Unconventional Approaches to Modern Chess* (Thinkers Publishing) in which he analyses a series of unusual ideas for both White and Black. I use them for inspiration! This strategically risky Queen's Indian double fianchetto line is taken from there.

This looked pretty ropery for me but Leela made very little progress against Stockfish. As White however, there was one moment where Stockfish looked incredibly optimistic...



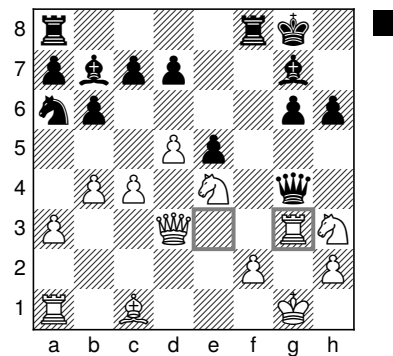
Stockfish—LCZero after 21... f3–f5

22. g4 was Stockfish's amazing idea which looked really cool!



Stockfish—LCZero after 22. g3–g4 (variation)

22... ♖×g4+ 23. ♜g3



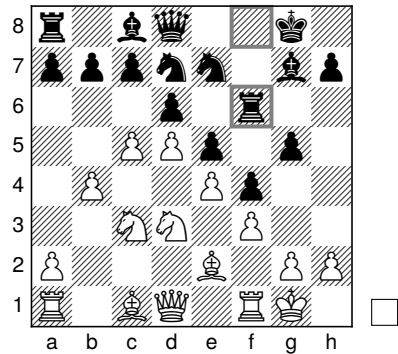
Stockfish—LCZero after 23. ♜e3–g3 (variation)

when White has brought one rook to the g-file with tempo and can look to bring the other into play, targeting the weak g6-pawn in front of Black's king. However as Stockfish analyses deeper it gets steadily less enthusiastic settling on 0.40 after 61484Mn. I would still rather have seen it than 22. ♜g2 as in the game which gave White very little indeed! 23... ♖h5 24. f3 ♜f7 25. ♜g2 ♜af8 26. ♜hf2 d6 27. ♜h3 ♖f5 28. ♜xh6 ♜xh6 29. ♜xh6 ♖xh6 30. ♖xh6 ♜xh6 31. ♜xg6+ ♜f7 32. ♜e6 ♜f5 33. ♜g4 ♜f4 34. ♜f1 ♜xh6 35. ♜xh6 ♜c8 was Stockfish's main line with just a small advantage for White.

Games 91–92, E98 King's Indian Mar del Plata (Jeroen)

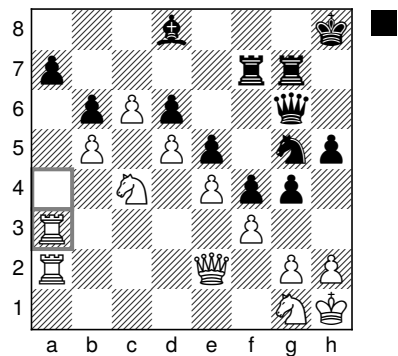
What would the finishing stretch of a SuperFinal be without a Mar del Plata? The starting point was the somewhat inferior move 13... ♜f6 as noted by

King's Indian expert GM Gawain Jones who was following my Twitter feed.



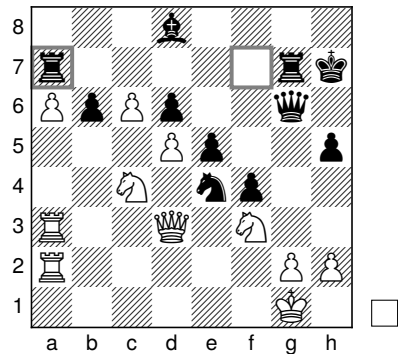
LCZero—Stockfish after 13... ♖f8-f6

Leela continued very effectively but at some stage seemed to hit a brick wall. There wasn't much progress visible in Leela's PV until in this position:



LCZero—Stockfish after 46. ♖a4-a3

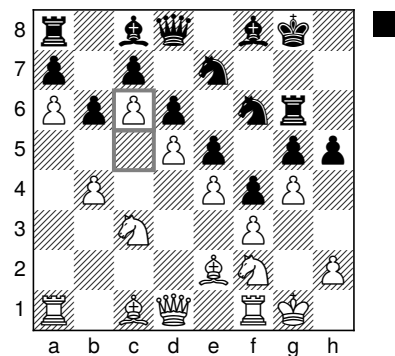
Stockfish—to the shock and astonishment of the chat—suddenly decided to break its defensive formation and play 46... gxf3 47. ♗xf3 ♗xe4 and then after 48. ♔d3 ♗h7 49. ♗g1 it played 49... a5 50. bxa6 e.p. ♖a7



LCZero—Stockfish after 50... ♖f7-a7

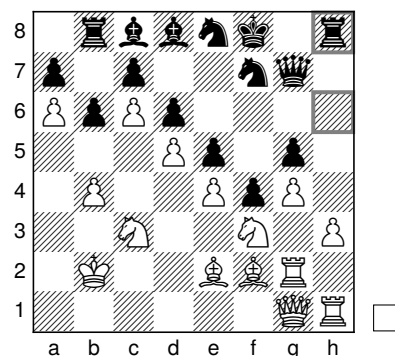
Leela felt Black had improved its position but it felt frankly like Stockfish harming itself and indeed Black's position collapsed quite quickly afterwards.

Stockfish's White game was simply amazing. On move 19 it decided on 19. c6 after which Black could try 19... h4 sealing the position completely!



Stockfish—LCZero after 19. c5-c6

Obviously White would then need to break through either on the queenside or centre with a (series of) piece sacrifice(s). Leela decided to keep some counterplay open with 19... h×g4 and after much shuffling and with both sides on increments we reached this position:

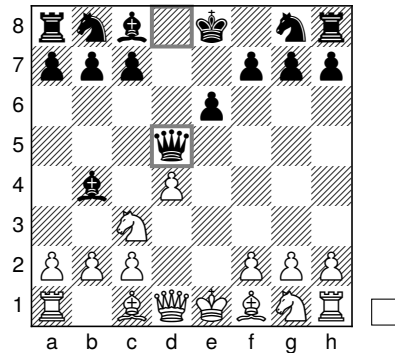


Stockfish—LCZero after 67... ♖h6-h8

I think you can guess that 68. h4 was played and that Leela did not last long!

The match was reaching its end but the engines were not winding down yet...or at least Stockfish wasn't!

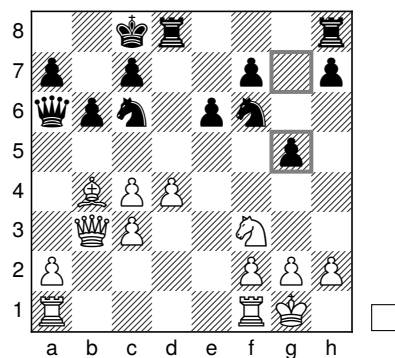
Games 93–94, C15 French (Matthew)



LCZero—Stockfish after 4... ♖d8xd5

One of the perennial struggles of the French player is finding ways to make the Exchange variation more interesting. 4... ♖d8xd5 (instead of the more solid 4... exd5) is one risky idea to inject some life into the position.

In all fairness, it's not a great idea. Funnily enough, both games followed the same path until move 15 where Stockfish uncorked a bit of defensive wizardry and drew, and Leela...didn't and lost!



LCZero—Stockfish after 15... g7–g5

15... g5 was a staggering move! The idea is to both open the g-file for counterplay and weaken White's protection of the d4-pawn.

16. ♖xg5 ♖hg8 17. f4

17. ♖xf7 ♖d7 18. ♖e5 ♖xe5 19. dxe5 ♖e4 is suddenly really dangerous for White due to the threat of ... ♖d2; 17. ♖f3 ♖b7 tees up some unpleasant pressure along the a8–h1 diagonal.

17... ♖xb4

Since the knight is no longer protecting d4, White has to recapture on b4 with the queen.

18. ♖xb4 ♖h5

Threatening ... ♖xf4.

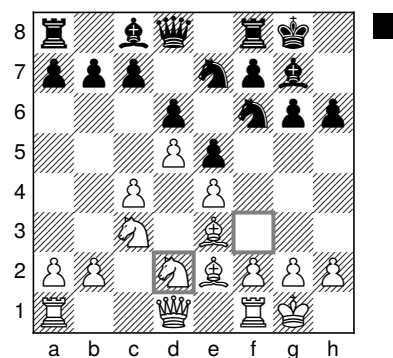
19. ♖b5 ♖xb5 20. cxb5 ♖g7 21. ♖h3 ♖d5 22. a4 a6 23. bxa6 ♖a5

Black has switched from creating counterplay against the white king to defending an endgame a pawn down but with weak White pawns. Amazing defensive flexibility! Leela didn't manage to make anything substantial of its advantage!

24. g3 ♖xa6 25. ♖a3 ♖f6 26. ♖e1 ♖d7 27. c4 h5 28. ♖g2 h4 29. ♖g5 h×g3 30. h×g3 ♖g4 31. ♖h1 f6 32. ♖e4 f5 33. ♖g5 ♖e7 34. ♖h8 c5 35. d×c5 e5 36. ♖b3 ♖xa4 37. ♖b1 ♖c6 38. c×b6 ♖b7 39. c5 e×f4 40. g×f4 ♖xf4 41. ♖a1 ♖f2+ 42. ♖h1 ♖ee2 43. ♖f7 ♖c6 44. ♖c1 f4 45. ♖d8+ ♖d5 46. ♖h5+ ♖e4 47. ♖e6 ♖d3 48. b7 ♖h2+ 49. ♖×h2 ♖×h2+ 50. ♖g1 f3 51. ♖f4+ ♖e4 52. ♖e1+ ♖f5 53. ♖f1 ♖b2 54. ♖×f3 ♖e4 55. ♖f1 ♖×b7 56. ♖e6 ♖e7 57. ♖g5+ ♖d3 58. ♖d1+ ♖e2 59. ♖d8 ♖e3 60. ♖h2 ♖e5 1/2–1/2

Games 95–96, E92 King's Indian 7. Be3 (Jeroen)

Another of Jeroen's King's Indians gave White the chance to set up an ideal anti-King's Indian piece structure:



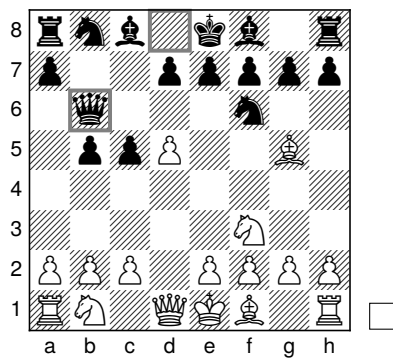
LCZero—Stockfish after 10. ♖f3–d2

The bishop on e2 prevents counterplay with ... ♖h5/... ♖g4 and the king's knight is already on the queenside ready to join in a queenside assault

with c5 supported by the bishop on e3. Leela couldn't make much of this advantage but Stockfish once again established a clear advantage and then turned the screws as time became short!

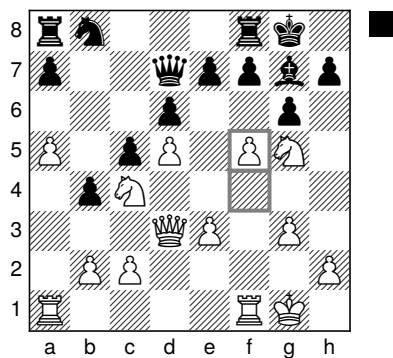
Games 97–98, A43 Benoni (Matthew)

These games featured a risky line with which I have had plenty of success in human games but in which I suffer abominably when I play an engine!



Stockfish—LCZero after 4... ♔d8-b6

Unfortunately, Leela played probably its worst game of the SuFi as Black, moving its queen around the board multiple times and ending up in this terrible pickle:

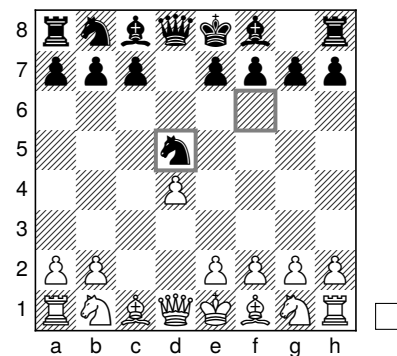


Stockfish—LCZero after 20. f4-f5

Stockfish finished the game off without any trouble. That turned out to be all the wins for this SuperFinal!

Games 99–100, D06 Queen's Gambit (Jeroen)

Somehow both engines managed fairly convincing draws from the awful beginners' opening 1. d4 d5 2. c4 ♟f6 3. c×d5 ♟×d5. Chess is strange sometimes!



LCZero—Stockfish after 3... ♟f6×d5

What will the SuperFinal of Season 22 bring? Will we see a heavier Leela 40b net taking on mighty Stockfish once again or does a resurgent Komodo Dragon stand a chance? We will see very soon, once again with a book by Jeroen and myself! Can't wait!