

**GM Yakov Estrin (2550) – GM Hans Berliner (2500)  
5th World Correspondence Chess Championship  
ICCF Tournament, 1965-1968 - Two Knights Defence**

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|----------------|--------------|
| 1. e4 e5       | 2. Nf3 Nc6   |
| 3. Bc4 Nf6     | 4. Ng5 d5    |
| 5. exd5 b5!?!) | 6. Bf1 Nd4   |
| 7. c3 Nxd5     | 8. Ne4 Qh4!! |
| 9. Ng3 Bg4     | 10. f3 e4!!  |

*Berliner prepared this innovation in the extremely sharp Ulvestad variation and the subsequent complications especially for Estrin who was the world renowned authority on the Two Knights Defense.*

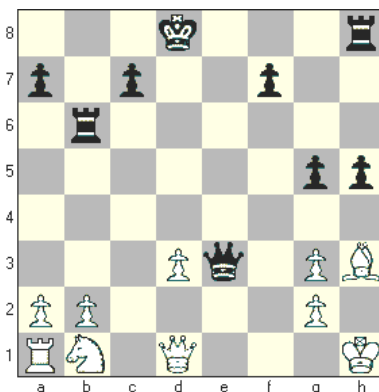
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|--------------|---------------|
| 11. cxd4 Bd6 | 12. Bxb5+ Kd8 |
| 13. O-O exf3 | 14. Rxf3      |

*In a later CC World Championship Estrin tried to improve by 14. Qb3 and won a game with that move, but neither he nor his opponent Nielsen found the brilliant refutation 14...Nb4!! which Berliner had prepared against that move, guaranteeing Black at least a draw. This analysis is now published in Berliner's monograph "From the Deathbed of the Two Knights Defense."*

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|---------------|---------|
| 14. ... Rb8!! | 15. Be2 |
|---------------|---------|

*Black's 14th has a mate threat unseen until his 18th move. Berliner considered 15. Bf1 to be White's best though it was later overshadowed by 15. a4, which leads to great complications which Berliner had investigated in depth. 15. a4 was explored in subsequent games.*

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|--------------|----------------|
| 15. ... Bxf3 | 16. Bxf3 Qxd4+ |
| 17. Kh1 Bxg3 | 18. hxg3 Rb6   |
| 19. d3 Ne3   | 20. Bxe3 Qxe3  |
| 21. Bg4 h5   | 22. Bh3 g5     |



*Black has won the opening and early middle game and now looks for a way to convert his initiative to victory.*

*Estrin has a different goal, to reach an endgame he would have some drawing chances. It was not to be.*

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|----------------|---------------|
| 23. Nd2 g4     | 24. Nc4 Qxg3  |
| 25. Nxb6 gxh3  | 26. Qf3 hxg2+ |
| 27. Qxg2 Qxg2+ | 28. Kxg2 cxb6 |

*Some technical problems remain, Black needs to penetrate White's queenside with his king without allowing White to reduce the number of pawns too early. It is clear that it is Black's game to win.*

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|-------------|--------------|
| 29. Rf1 Ke7 | 30. Re1+ Kd6 |
| 31. Rf1 Rc8 | 32. Rxf7 Rc7 |
| 33. Rf2 Ke5 | 34. a4       |

*Not the best but Berliner's analysis demonstrated a win in all variations. The main line he considered ran*

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|--------------|----------------|
| 34 Kg3! Kd4! | 35 Kh4 Kxd3    |
| 36 Kxh5 Rc2! | 37 Rf7 Rc5+!   |
| 38 Kg4 Ra5   | 39 Rf3+! Kd2!! |

*(39 ... Kc2 40 Rf2+ is unclear)*

*40 a3!*

*(If 40 Rf2+ Ke1 or 40 b3 Ra3! stopping a4)*

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|-------------|-------------|
| 40...Kc2    | 41 Rf2+ Kb3 |
| 42 Kf4 Rb5! | 43 Ke4 Ka2! |
| 44 Rf7 a6!  | 45 Ra7 Ra5! |
- 46 Rb7 b5 and Black wins.*

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|--------------|--------------|
| 34. ... Kd4  | 35. a5 Kxd3  |
| 36. Rf3+ Kc2 | 37. b4 b5    |
| 38. a6 Rc4   | 39. Rf7 Rxb4 |
| 40. Rb7 Rg4+ | 41. Kf3 b4   |
| 42. Rxa7 b3  | 0-1          |

**Notes:** It is interesting how Black invited 23. Nd2 and 24. Nc4 while White headed straight towards an endgame with all of the winning chances.

GM Andy Soltis considered this the best game of the 20th Century ranking it No. 1 of 100 best games of the 20th Century ... some disagree because it was correspondence chess (CC) game. The fact it was a CC game makes it all the greater for me as his opponent had not minutes to refute his play, but days! Plus as noted earlier Berliner was playing an opening where Estrin was recognized as THE leading authority in the world. Way to go Berliner!