

38. ... Rd4!

Avoiding 38. ... Rxf2 39. Ra8+ Kf7 40. Ra7+ Kg6 41. Rg7+1 with stalemate. "It is amazing that I even had this idea," admitted Caruana.

39. Ra8+ Kf7 40. Ra3

"I would have had more chances with 40. Ra7+ Ke8 41. Ra8+ Kd7 42. Ra7+," said Caruana, but Carlsen showed 42. ... Kc8! 43. Re7 Rd1! 44. Kh2 Rf1 45. Rxe6 Rxf2+ 46. Kh3 Rf1 47. Kh2 Re1 "and it should still be winning," said the Norwegian.

40. ... Rxc4

"Now it is just over," said Carlsen.

41. Rxf3+ Ke7 42. Re3 Rd4 43. f3 c4 44. Ra3 Rd3 45. Ra7+ Kd8 46. Kg2 c3 47. Ra4 c2 48. Rc4 Rd2+ 49. Kh3 Kd7 50. Rc5 Rf2 51. f4

There are not even any Rxc2 stalemate tricks because of this pawn.

51. ... Rf3+ 52. Kh2 Rxf4, White resigned.

CARUANA: THE UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

In some ways Caruana's early career approximates that of his title opponent.

Caruana enjoyed an excellent early chess education in New York (where his family had moved from Caruana's birthplace Miami when he was a pre-schooler) and began competing in tournaments around Europe, also becoming a grandmaster at 14.

Yet by then Caruana's family had made even bigger life changes than Carlsen's in order to help their son's rise up the chess ladder.

Caruana and his parents moved to Europe in 2004 and the 12-year-old rising star became a chess professional. A year later Caruana changed allegiance from the USA to Italy, the land of all eight of his great-grandparents.

However, while in Europe, Caruana did not reside in Italy, moving from Spain to Hungary to Switzerland (the city of Lugano, very close to the Italian border) and back to Spain again over an eight-year period.

Caruana's breakthrough year came in 2012, although by then he had already won the Italian championship so often there was no point competing in the event any more.

In 2012, by now a regular invitee to the world's strongest tournaments, Caruana finished second in Wijk aan Zee and first in Dortmund, Reykjavik, and the Grand Slam Chess Final shared between São Paulo and Bilbao. (In the latter event Caruana was beaten in a rapid playoff by Carlsen.)

Two years later came the performance that stunned the world: a seven game winning streak at the Sinquefeld Cup with Caruana's victims including GMs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave,

Levon Aronian, Hikaru Nakamura, Veselin Topolov and Carlsen, who finished in second place three points behind Caruana. Caruana's final score of 8½/10 was one of the greatest results ever in a super-tournament.

At the closing press conference, Rex Sinquefeld, President & Chairman of the Board of the Saint Louis Chess Club, stood up to ask a question, saying, "This is addressed to all the players except Hikaru Nakamura. When will you move to St. Louis and start playing for the USA?"

No doubt, given the emergence of elite events at the Saint Louis Chess Club, Caruana had already been considering a change back to the U.S. However, he was now rated above 2800 and was world number two. A bidding war began between the Italian Chess Federation, who had begun supporting Caruana's considerable training costs, and U.S. interests. Ultimately, the U.S. proved to have the resources to regain their man.

In 2015 Caruana officially moved to St. Louis and only a year later he was helping the U.S. team take their first Olympic team gold in 40 years.

Though he won many top-level tournaments between 2015 and 2017, Caruana could not recapture the incredible standard he had set at the 2014 Sinquefeld Cup.

However, from March 2018 onward Caruana has played at an extraordinary level, with four elite tournament wins and a second at the U.S. Championship behind GM Sam Shankland. Caruana seems to have added a seemingly indestructible opening repertoire to his hard-working, calculation-heavy, fearless style. His sense of danger can occasionally desert him, but when Caruana goes all-in few can hold him back, as the following game against Carlsen from the memorable 2014 Sinquefeld Cup shows.

BISHOP'S OPENING (C24)

GM Magnus Carlsen (FIDE 2877, NOR)
GM Fabiano Caruana (FIDE 2801, ITA)
2014 Sinquefeld Cup (3), St. Louis, Missouri,
08.29.2014

1. e4 e5 2. Bc4 Nf6 3. d3

The move 3. Nc3 is not a viable option for White nowadays at the highest levels because 3. ... Nxe4 4. Qh5 Nd6 5. Bb3 Be7 is too close to dead equal.

3. ... c6 4. Nf3 d5 5. Bb3 Bb4+

This takes the c3-square away from the white knight. The continuation 5. ... Bd6 6. Nc3 dxe4 7. Ng5 0-0 is not bad for Black but offers few winning chances.

6. c3 Bd6 7. Bg5

"I thought this was too early," said Caruana.

7. ... dxe4 8. dxe4 h6 9. Bh4 Qe7 10. Nbd2 Nbd7 11. Bg3

"This looks a little strange, but he didn't want me to play ... Nf8-g6," explained Caruana.

11. ... Bc7 12. O-O Nh5! 13. h3!?

"Magnus probably thought that he could play 13. Nxe5? Nxe5 14. Qxh5 and missed 14. ... Bg4!," said Caruana. "Now if he loses the g3-bishop it will just be a symmetrical structure with no prospects for White. So I expected something like 13. Nh4 Nxg3 14. fxxg3!?, but not the idea he played."

13. ... Nxg3 14. fxxg3 Nc5



"14. ... Nf6 is much safer," said Caruana.

15. Bxf7+!

"I played 14. ... Nc5 very quickly, which was a bit careless," said Caruana, "because after this sacrifice I soon realized that things weren't so simple."

15. ... Kxf7!

The alternative 15. ... Qxf7? loses to 16. Nxe5 followed by 17. Qh5+.

16. Nxe5+ Kg8 17. Ng6



17. ... Qg5!

The line 17. ... Qd6 18. Rf8+ Qxf8 19. Nxf8 Kxf8 gives Black plenty of material for the queen but after 20. Qh5 the black king remains exposed.

18. Rf8+ Kh7 19. Nxf8

"This was a big shock for me—he abandons his king to take my rook," explained Caruana.