

Third world title for Viktoriya after a nail-biting title match
By Frank Teer



Source: the Facebook group "International.Draughts"

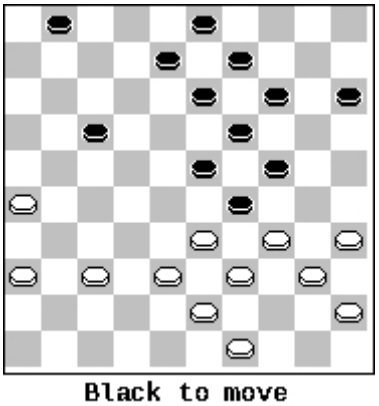
The match began with 9 games at the standard time control of 45 moves in 1 hour 30 minutes, followed by 30 minutes plus a 30-second Fischer increment per move. So for the first 45 moves there was no Fischer increment, which makes getting into time trouble dangerous.
In almost every game of the match Viktoriya had the upper hand;
After Viktoriya had won the 7th game, a tiebreak still had to be played, because the title is only decided after 2 wins. Had Viktoriya also converted the 4th game, in which she had a completely winning position, it would have been over after 9 games.

The tiebreak consisted of 3 rapid games (20 minutes plus a 10-second Fischer increment), followed by 3 blitz games (10 minutes plus a 5-second Fischer increment). All 6 of these games ended in a draw, although in the second rapid game Viktoriya missed some fine chances to decide the match on the spot.

One or 2 superblitz games were to bring the decision. Here the players get 10 minutes of base time plus 2 seconds per move. The special feature, however, is that if a game ends in a draw, the next game has to be played with the time remaining on the clock, and so on, until one of the two wins or loses on time.
Normally it is Viktoriya who struggles more with her time and gets into time trouble sooner, but in the phase with a favourable 6-against-6 position for Viktoriya, Darya suddenly began using a great deal of time, and shortly afterwards only 30 seconds of her 4 minutes were left. Was it panic, or could she no longer find a drawing line? In the nerve-racking phase, with both players almost out of time, an endgame appeared on the board in which Darya collapsed completely; in a position of 4 kings against king plus man she had to resign. That brought the match score to 18-14 for Viktoriya and gave her a third world title.

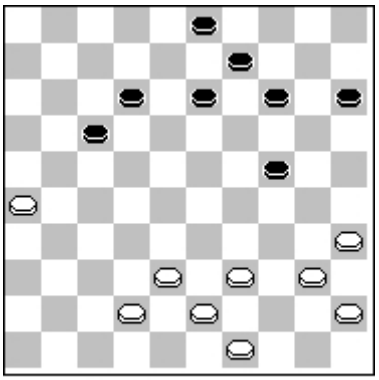
In game 1 Darya made a mistake that cost her a man; in game 4 Viktoriya reached a completely winning position and missed a direct win at several moments, but Darya still saved a draw with a little trick. The only game in which Viktoriya stood badly, game 7, was, strangely enough, won by Viktoriya. In many games Viktoriya got the better position in the second half of the game. She seemed clearly in better form than Darya, who in their previous match had actually been the stronger player in the classical games.
In the end the score was 10-8 for Viktoriya, but the match rules require at least 2 games to be won for the title. That is why a tiebreak was scheduled on the tenth day, in which rapid and blitz games were played until one of the players won a second game.

The first diagram shows the moment in game 1 when Darya made a mistake that cost her a man:



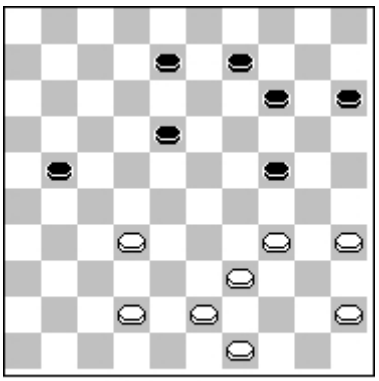
Black to move

In this tense position Darya played **30. …8-12**, where 1-6 would have been the best move. There followed: **31. 37-32** ! White now threatens to win a man with 32-28 etc. Black has no defence against this and decided to give up a man: **23-28 32. 33x11 1-6 33. 34x23 19x37 34. 36-31 6x17 35. 31x42**



Black to move

White is a full man up, but Black's position is somewhat better because White has far fewer active men on the right.
After **3-8 36. 38-32 17-21 37. 26x17 12x21 38. 40-34 13-18** see diagram



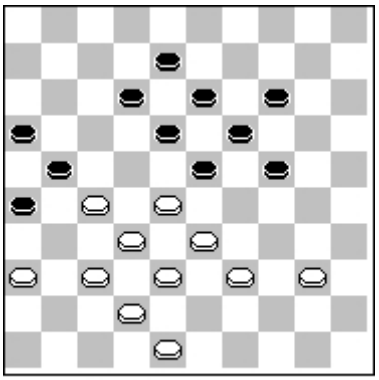
White to move

Here, in my opinion, Viktoriya chose the wrong plan with **39. 49-44 8-12 40. 32-27 21x32 41. 34-29 24x33 42. 39x37** , after which Black got a free hand on the right, and once square 27 had been brought under control a few moves later, the position was analytically a draw: **18-22 43. 44-39 14-19 44. 39-33 22-27** . Viktoriya kept trying, but there was no win to be found any more, and after **45. 43-38 12-17 46. 37-32 17-21 47. 45-40 9-13 48. 40-34 13-18 49. 35-30 27-31 50. 42-37 31x42 51. 38x47 15-20 52. 33-29 18-22 53. 47-41 22-27 54. 32-28 27-31 55. 28-22 31-36 56. 41-37 21-27 57. 22x31 36x27 58. 30-25 27-32** she had to settle for a draw.
In the diagram position it seems better to play the men towards the left and the centre, although a clear win is not easy to find. For example 39.43-38, after which Black faces a difficult choice:

- 18-22 40. 34-30 14-19 41. 39-33 22-27 42. 45-40 8-12 43. 30-25 9-13 44. 25-20 with a big advantage for White
- 14-19 40. 34-30 9-13 41. 45-40 8-12 42. 40-34 12-17 43. 39-33 and the win is not far away

However, a complete winning analysis is not easy to make, because Black has many options.

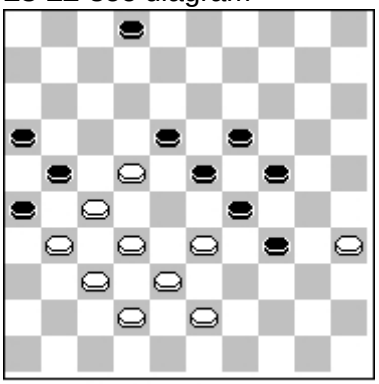
In game 4 Viktoriya reached a completely winning position.



Black to move

In this classical position it is clear that White's right wing has become too thin. There followed **14-20 40. 48-43 20-25 41. 28-22 ?** this was the last moment at which White could still head for a draw with 41. 40-34 24-29 42. 33x24 19x30 43. 28x19 13x24 44. 38-33 12-17 45. 34-29 etc.

23-29 ! the only good move **42. 22-17 25-30 ! 43. 40-35 18-23 ! 44. 33-28 13-18 ! 45. 39-33 30-34 ! 46. 36-31 8-13 ! 47. 17x8 13x2** Viktoriya keeps finding the strongest move **48. 28-22** see diagram

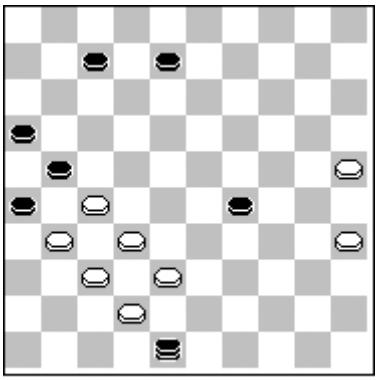


Black to move

A key moment of the game. Viktoriya spent quite a lot of time examining the various winning plans, including some surprising ones:

- 34-40 ! - admittedly somewhat unclear, but the quickest way to win:
  - 49. 22x13 19x8 50. 35x44 23-28 51. 32x34 21x41 52. 31-27 41-47
  - 49. 35x44 23-28 50. 32x12 21x41 51. 31-27 41-46 52. 22-17 46-23
- 34-39! and
  - 49.22*13 19*8 the best, and now
    - 50. 33x44 23-28 51. 32x34 21x41 winning
    - 50. 43x34 29x40 51. 35x44 24-29 52. 33x24 23-28 53. 32x23 21x41 54. 31-27 41-46 wins

Viktoriya chose the clearest line: **2-7 49. 22x13 19x8 50. 33-28 34-39 51. 28x30 39x48 52. 30-25**

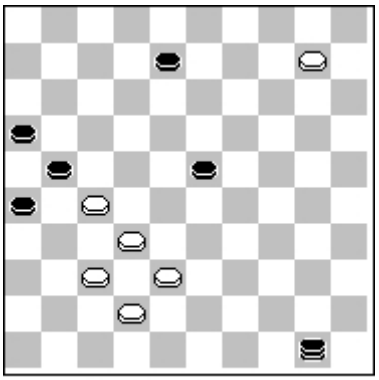


Black to move

Here the easiest win is simply a tempo move 8-13, followed by:

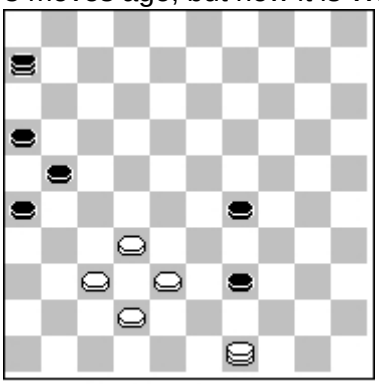
- 53. 25-20 48-25 54. 20-15 25-14
- 53. 35-30 29-34 54. 30x39 48x34 55. 25-20 34-25 56. 20-15 25-14 wins

After the game move **48-39** things became somewhat trickier, although it was still overwhelmingly winning:
48-39 53. 35-30 29-34 54. 27-22 39x6 55. 30x39 6x50 56. 25-20 7-12 57. 20-15 12-18 58. 15-10 18-23 59. 31-27



Black to move

8-12 although still winning, 8-13 is much clearer, because after 60. 27-22 50x6 61. 10-4 Black has a nice win with 23-28 62. 4x50 21-27 63. 32x21 26x17 64. 50x11 6x41
60. 27-22 50x6 61. 10-4 23-29 62. 4-13 29-34 63. 13-35 12-18 64. 35-49 18-23 65. 49-35 23-29 66. 35-49 34-39 67. 49-35 6-17 68. 35-49 17-11 69. 49-35 11-6 the same position as 3 moves ago, but now it is White to move **70. 35-49** See diagram

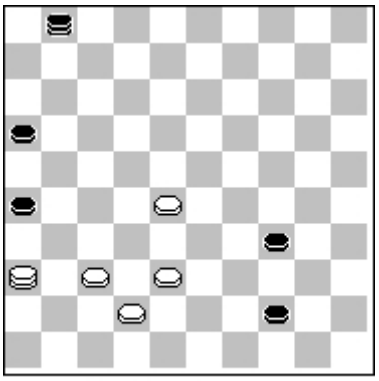


Black to move

Black now has a beautiful direct win with the apparent blunder 29-34! after which White can catch the king with 71. 32-28 (White has nothing else) 6x33 72. 38x40 21-27 73. 49x21 16x27, but the little endgame had to be calculated carefully; it wins by exactly one tempo: 74.

42-38 27-31 75. 40-35 31x33 76. 35-30 39-43 77. 30-24 43-49 78. 24-19 49-27 79. 19-14 27-4

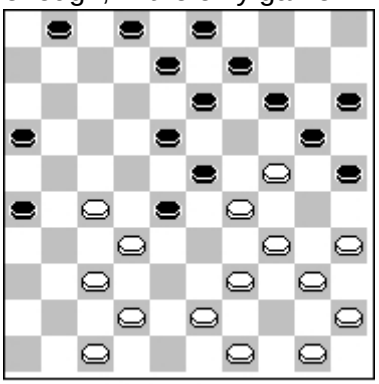
6-1 71. 49-35 29-34 72. 32-28 21-27 73. 35-13 39-44 74. 13x36



Black to move

Whereas 34-40 still simply wins, Viktoriya played the seemingly also winning **44-50**, but now Darya catches her opponent after all with a surprising drawing shot **75. 28-23 ! 1x29 76. 37-31 ! 26x48 77. 36-47 ! 29x42 78. 47x40** - terrible, after such a completely winning position, to walk into the very last drawing trap.

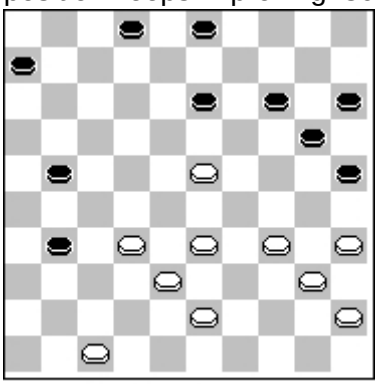
In game 7 Viktoriya finally managed to break her opponent's resistance - and, strangely enough, in the only game in which Darya had achieved a clear positional advantage!!



White to move

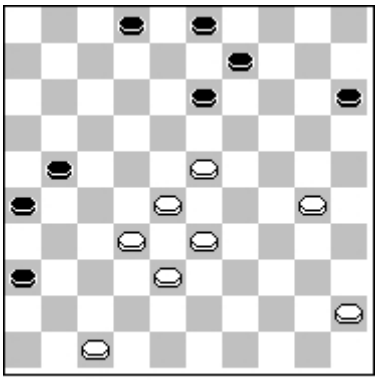
With 23. … 11-16, in this position that is ugly for White but certainly exciting, Black - through the threat 16-21, 26-31 - forced the **continuation 24. 42-38 13-19 25. 24x33 8-13 26. 29x18 13x42 27. 33-29 42x44 28. 50x39 26-31 29. 29-23 16-21**

Black's position is attractive, as she can start working on a breakthrough against White's weakened left wing. Yet it does not come to that, and as the game goes on Viktoriya's position keeps improving: **30. 39-33 1-6 31. 43-38 9-13 32. 49-43**



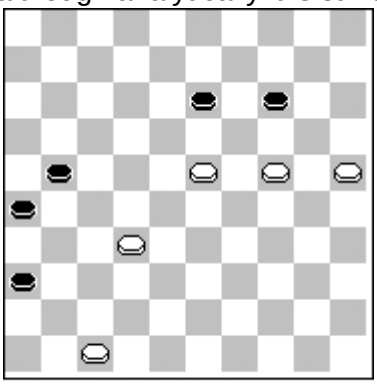
Black to move

14-19 ? an incomprehensible exchange that gives White a free hand to develop the men on the right and build up an attack. After 13-19, in my opinion, White would have had a hard time, for example via 33. 23-18 6-11 34. 34-30 25x34 35. 40x29 11-16 (not yet 19-23 because of the combination with 29-24, 24-29, 32-28) and what is White to do?
33. 23x14 20x9 34. 33-28 6-11 35. 34-30 25x34 36. 40x29 11-16 37. 43-39 21-26 38. 39-33 16-21 39. 35-30 31-36 40. 29-23 !



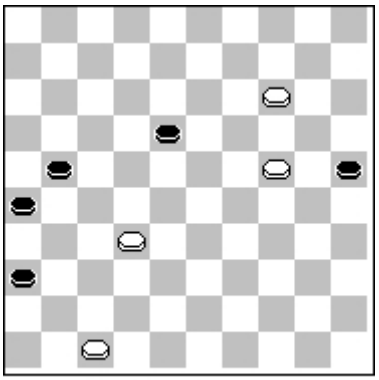
Black to move

With this move 29-23 White prevents Black's attempted breakthrough 26-31, 21-27, 31-37 because of 23-18
9-14 41. 45-40 2-8 42. 30-24 14-20 43. 23-19 20x29 44. 33x24 3-9 45. 28-23 21-27 46. 32x21 26x17 47. 40-34 17-21 48. 38-32 21-26 49. 24-20 15x24 50. 19x30 9-14 51. 30-24 8-12 52. 34-30 12-17 53. 30-25 17-21 gradually White's position has kept improving, although analytically it is still a draw



White to move

54. 25-20 14x25 55. 23-19 13-18 56. 19-14

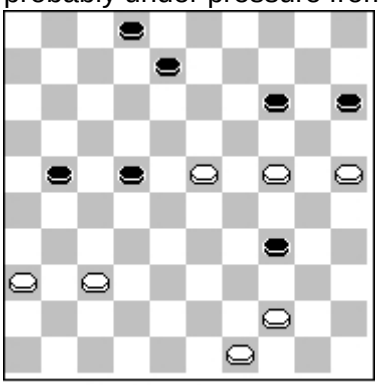


Black to move

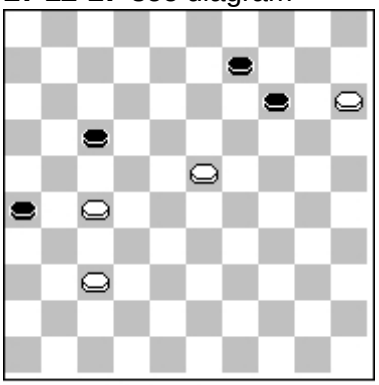
18-23 ?? apparently the position had become too hard for Black to calculate - or did she think this move would also force a draw? The draw was still within reach via 18-22 57. 14-10 22-27 58. 32-28 27-31 59. 10-5 25-30 (a necessary sacrifice, because 31-37 loses to 60. 28-22 36-

41 61. 47x36 37-42 62. 24-20 25x14 63. 5x48) 60. 24x35 31-37 61. 28-22 36-41 62. 47x36 37-42 63. 5-32 42-47 64. 32x16 47-33 65. 22-18 26-31 (or 33-28, also with a strategic draw; because the long diagonal is occupied, White cannot set up a king trap with the help of man 36) 66. 36x27 33-22 draw.
57. 14-10 23-29 58. 24x33 25-30 59. 10-4 30-35 60. 4-18 26-31 61. 18-23 and Black resigned; she cannot even get a king any more.

The tiebreak started with up to 3 rapid games at 20 minutes plus 10 seconds per move. After the 9 games with classical time control a tiebreak was needed, because the title is only won after 2 victories.
In the first tiebreak game, with classical-style play, Darya had a slight advantage, but in the end it was a simple draw.
The second tiebreak game, on the other hand, was all-out war. Darya played a dangerous-looking Roozenburg attack, but after the exchanges the position was roughly equal. In the endgame Viktoriya proved much stronger and twice got a fine winning chance, which, probably under pressure from the clock, she unfortunately failed to convert.

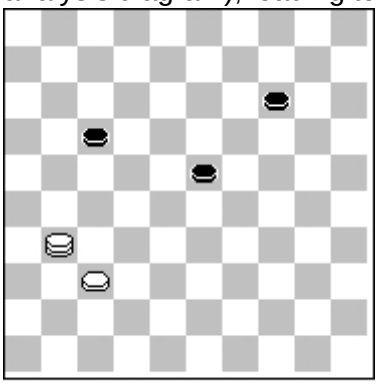

Black to move

In this position Black erred with **35. 2-7?** , where 21-26 was called for - though that too would have led to a laborious draw. After 2-7 Viktoriya, with 3 minutes left on the clock, missed the promising continuation 36.24-19 ! with, after the exchanges, an unstoppable breakthrough, for example 7-12 37 19x10 15x4 38. 23-19 22-28 39. 19-14 12-18 40. 25-20 18-23 41. 20-15 23-29 42. 14-10 28-33 43. 49-43 winning.
However, she opted for a quieter course with the exchange 44-39, which also offered good chances: **36. 44-39 34x43 37. 49x38 7-12 38. 24-19 21-26 39. 19x10 15x4 40. 25-20 8-13 41. 36-31 13-18 42. 23-19 22-28 43. 20-15 18-23 44. 38-32 23x14 45. 32x23 4-9 46. 31-27 12-17** see diagram


White to move

There followed **47. 27-21 17-22 48. 23-19! 14x23? 49. 15-10 26x17 50. 10-4 9-14 51.4*27** (?) and it ended in a draw after **23-29 52.27-43 29-33 53.37-32 14-20 54.43-48**

20-25 (20-24 would still have won thanks to 32-27 and 48-26!!) **55.48-43 17-21 56.43-34 21-27 57.32*21 33-38**
Instead of 14*23? Black should have captured with the other man: 26*17 49.19*10 9-14 50.10*19 22-28 with an easy draw. Although Darya still had more than 7 minutes to calculate, she played 14*23 instantly!!
But instead of 4*27, Viktoriya missed her second winning chance here with 4*31 !! (see analysis diagram), leading to a beautiful sharp endgame

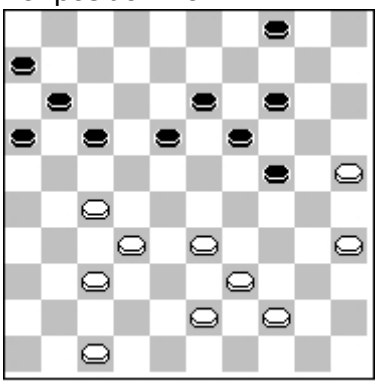


Black to move

After 4*31 the following beautiful win is possible, but at this stage Viktoriya had less than a minute on her clock:

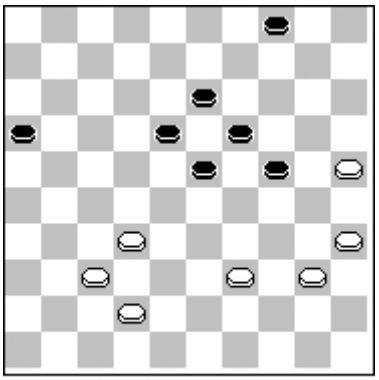
- 23-29 (on 23-28 immediately 31-22) 52. 31-26 ! 17-22 53. 37-31 !!! 22-28 54. 26-17 29-33 55. 31-27 followed by 17-6 and 27-22
- A second line in this endgame after 4*31: 17-21 52. 31-26 21-27 53. 26-3 14-19 54. 3-8 27-32 55. 37x28 23x32 56. 8x24 32-37 57. 24-47 – it works out precisely!

In the third rapid tiebreak game, too, Viktoriya got chances because Darya did not build up her position well.



White to move

Position after 36. … 9-14. Here Darya mistakenly played 37.38-33, after which Black could nicely reinforce with 19-23 and 14-19. After 37.47-42 there is not much going on.
Game continuation: **37. 43-38 19-23 38. 47-42 14-19 39. 33-28 17-22 40. 28x17 11x31 41. 37x26 6-11 42. 32-27 11-17 43. 38-32 17-22 44. 44-40 22x31 45. 26x37**



Black to move

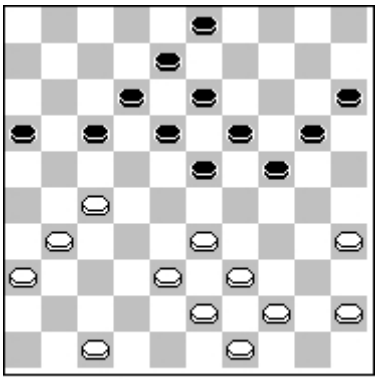
18-22 first 16-21 is analytically better, because now, after 18-22, White can reach a cramped draw with the exchange 32-27 through very precise play: **46. 32-27 22x31 47. 37x26 13-18 48. 40-34 18-22 49. 42-38 4-9 50. 38-32 9-14 51. 34-30 22-28 52. 32-27 23-29 53. 26-21 28-32 54. 27x38 16x27 55. 39-33 27-32 56. 38x27 29x38 57. 27-22 38-43 58. 22-18** 46. 37-31 4-9 after this it is a draw; more promising is 16-21 47. 42-37 21-26 48. 40-34 4-9 and White has a big problem: after 32-27 22-28 White is lost, so White has to sacrifice:

- 49. 35-30 24x35 50. 25-20 13-18 51. 20-15 9-14 52. 39-33 35-40 53. 34x45 19-24 54. 45-40 24-30 55. 40-35 30-34 56. 33-29 34-39 57. 29-24 39-44 58. 24-20 14x25 59. 15-10 44-50 60. 35-30 25x34 61. 10-4 with a drawing line that is very hard to find
- 9 49. 25-20 24x15 50. 39-33 19-24 51. 32-27 23-28 52. 27x18 28x30 53. 18-12 13-18 54. 12x23 30-34 55. 23-18 34-39 56. 18-12 39-44 57. 12-7 44-50 58.7-2 (not 7-1? 50-22 wins), also with a laborious draw

Game continuation: **47. 32-27 22-28 48. 31-26 23-29 49. 42-38 19-23 50. 39-33 28x39 51. 26-21 13-18 52. 21-17 9-13 53. 25-20 24x15 54. 40-34 39x30 55. 35x33 15-20 56. 27-21 16x27 57. 17-11 27-31 58. 11-7 23-28 59. 33x22 18x27 60. 7-2 31-36 61. 2x15 27-32 62. 38x27 36-41** draw

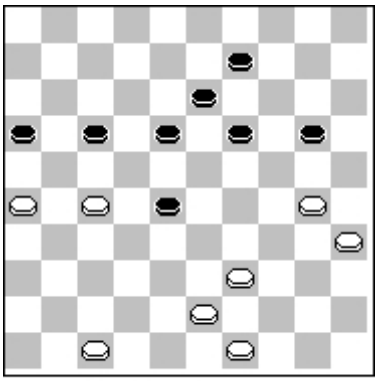
After a well-earned lunch break, the match continued with up to 3 blitz games at 10 minutes plus 5 seconds per move.
In the first blitz game Darya clearly took the upper hand, but she could not achieve a really winning advantage.
In the second blitz game Viktoriya built up much more strongly than Darya in the middlegame, but in a 6-against-6 position the advantage turned out not to be enough.
In the third blitz game an open classical position arose on the board, in which Darya seemed to be getting slightly the better of it. After a sharp middlegame phase, it nevertheless turned out to be simply a draw.

And then the superblitz!!
1. 32-28 17-22 2. 28x17 12x21 3. 34-30 21-26 4. 30-25 11-17 5. 40-34 7-12 6. 45-40 6-11 7. 50-45 1-6 8. 31-27 19-23 9. 34-30 14-19 10. 25x14 9x20 11. 30-25 19-24 12. 25x14 10x19 13. 40-34 2-7 14. 37-31 26x37 15. 41x32 5-10 16. 46-41 10-14 17. 41-37 4-9 18. 34-30 17-22 19. 37-31 11-17 20. 31-26 22x31 21. 26x37 7-11 22. 32-27 17-21 23. 37-31 21x32 24. 38x27 11-17 25. 42-38 17-21 26. 48-42 21x32 27. 38x27 6-11 28. 42-38 11-17 29. 30-25 14-20 30. 25x14 9x20



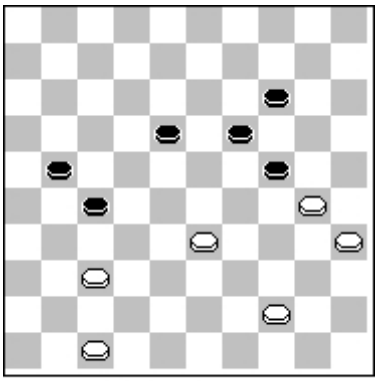
White to move

From here on things go wrong for White:
31. 31-26? less good; better is 44-40 3-9 32. 40-34 24-29 33. 33x24 20x40 34. 45x34 15-20 35.47-42 and White still has some control over the position
3-9 32. 44-40 17-21 33. 26x17 12x32 34. 38x27 8-12 35. 40-34 24-29 36. 33x24 20x40 37. 45x34 23-28 ! Black sets up a strong central attack **38. 36-31 12-17 39. 31-26 15-20 40. 34-30**



Black to move

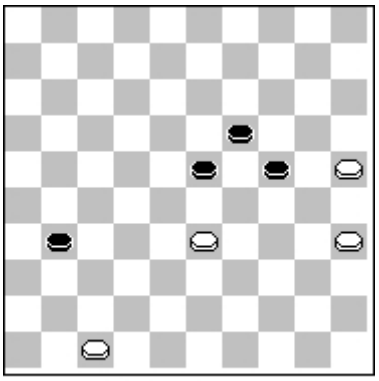
20-24; perhaps 9-14 first was better, since White then cannot play 43-38, although there is no question yet of a big analytical advantage
41. 43-38 9-14 here Darya still had 4 min 50 s on her clock and Viktoriya 4 min 20 s **42. 38-33 17-22 43. 49-44** and here Darya had 3 min 40 s left **22x31 44. 26x37 16-21 45. 33x22 18x27 46. 39-33 13-18**



White to move

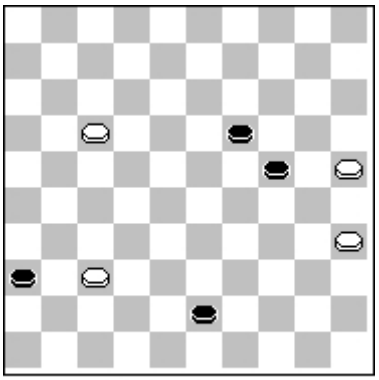
A key moment of the game; analytically the position is admittedly still a draw, but Darya possibly did not see how to hold it, because she used an enormous amount of time, and within a few moves only half a minute of her 4 minutes was left.

47. 44-39 Darya used 2 min 20 s on this move and had 1 min 20 s left **18-23 48. 39-34 21-26 49. 47-42 14-20 50. 30-25 27-31 51. 25x14 19x10 52. 42-38 31x42 53. 38x47 10-14 54. 34-30 14-19 55. 30-25 26-31**



White to move

Here Darya follows a dangerous plan. The draw, here or on the next move, is the breakthrough with 35-30 and 25-20, but by now Darya has almost no time left. Perhaps she thought she would be too late to get a king
56. 47-42 31-36 57. 42-37 23-29 58. 33-28 29-34 59. 28-22 (25-20, 35-30 and crowning a king is a simple draw - but when you have only a few seconds left, you run for a king.) **34-39 60. 22-17 39-43** and here the clocks showed: Darya 1 minute, Viktoriya 3 minutes



White to move

The decisive phase has arrived, in which White goes wrong twice and Black once:
61. 17-11 ? 43-48 62. 11-7 48x31 ? played instantly, of course in order to go to 13 afterwards **63. 7-2 31-13 64. 2-16** ? **36-41** now the game is decided, but first a few comments on this sequence:

- Instead of 61.17-11, 61.17-12 was necessary (or first sacrificing with 37-31 and then going for a king is a quick draw) 43-48 62. 37-32 48-43 63. 32-28 43-39 64. 28-23 19x28 65. 12-8 28-33 66. 35-30 24x35 67. 25-20 33-38 68. 20-14 with a draw
- Instead of 48*31 ?, 48*26 was correct: 63.7-1 36-41 with a simple win
- Instead of 64. 2-16? White had to play 64.25-20 24*15 65.35-30 15-20 66.2-11 and White wins a man, with a draw

In the actual game White gets no more chances:

65. 16-43 13-4 66. 43-30 4-13 67. 30-43 13-2 68. 35-30 24x35 69. 25-20 2-16 70. 43-25 (70. 43-49 41-46 71. 20-15 19-24 72. 49-44 24-29 is also hopeless) **16-27 71. 25-34 41-46 72. 34-45 27-4 73. 20-15 19-24** the position is now, of course, hopelessly lost; Black is going to get 4 kings. The only problem Black has is that she must make her moves in about 2 seconds - both players have only 10 seconds left here! In the sequence that followed, Viktoriya's clock regularly dropped to 4 or 5 seconds!! **74. 45-34 46-28 75. 34-45 28-6 76.**

45-34 6-1 77. 34-30 24-29 78. 30-19 29-34 79. 19-46 34-39 80. 46-41 39-44 81. 41-46 44-50 82. 46-41 35-40 83. 41-46 40-45 84. 46-41 50-17 85. 41-46 45-50 86. 46-41 1-6 87. 41-47 50-45 88. 47-42 45-23 89. 42-48 17-3 90. 48-30 3-25 91. 30-35 6-11 92. 35-8 11-2 93. 8-17 2-8 94. 17x3 23-14 and the world title is in the bag.

The final conclusion is that Viktoriya won the match thoroughly deservedly. She had a winning position in no fewer than 4 games, Darya in none. In this match Viktoriya's positional play was simply much better than Darya's.