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A chess board with black and white pieces

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**Valentina Gunina**

**vs Ju Wenjun 2013;** *Valentina Gunina*

White has a mating attack.

**OVERCOMING DISABILITY**

I have been watching The Piano on the past two weeks on ABC, with the first programme taking place at the Sydney Central Station. People of various ages and abilities take part and one of the pianists is chosen to play at a concert at City Recital Hall in Sydney at the end of the series. The first winner, called D J, was a gifted pianist who had studied in Moscow but suffered a stroke, paralysing his right side. However he has overcome his disability to a great extent by arranging music for the left hand with the one hand playing both the tune and all the harmonies.

This determination in the face of a disability reminded me of a chess player who was able to overcome a serious impairment to compete at the highest level in women’s competitions. Womens Grandmaster **Valentina Gunina** had won the Russian and European women’s championships, both on multiple occasions, as well as the Womens World Blitz Championship, before being diagnosed in 2023 with lupus, a disease in which the auto-immune system attacks the normal cells, affecting the skin and joints, frequently causing fatigue. She initially thought of giving up chess as her hands shook and it hurt to pick up the pieces and it was difficult to let go of them. She also had difficulty using the mouse playing online. Despite this serious handicap she was able to win the 2023 Womens World Blitz title for a second time with 14/17 (+12 =4 -1), an incredible performance with a 3 minute + 2 seconds time control. In an interview after her success she said, “When you put me at a chess board … I feel much better because I don’t think about my illness and how hard it is.”

(Gunina was a signatory together with more than 40 other Russian players condemning the invasion of Ukraine.)

**SOLUTION:** 1.Nd5!! Qxd2 2.Nxe7+ Kh8 3.Rxe8+ Nf8 4.Rxf8#: if Black plays 1…Qa3 White insists on sacrificing her queen with 2.Qc3! and if 2…Qc5 3.Qa5! b5 4.Qxa7! Qd6 5.c5.