Hi all,

I've just come back from the Ilford Congress 2010, where I played some very

strong players. I actually played well on the first two days of the

tournament, scoring an amazing 3.5/4, drawing with top cede (David Sands

graded at 212), and beating FIDE Master Robert Eames (ECF 201) en route. I

also beat a 172 and Andrew Mayhew, a young man, up and coming, who finished

strong in the tournament, ECF 188.

The final day saw me against Andrew Lewis (207), who I lost to as black,

having played a poor opening choice. I then drew with David Ledger, (2238)

offering him a draw in a completely won position! This left me with 4/6,

joint 3rd, in a very strong tournament.

But despite all of that, I would like to show you my game against Robert

Eames, who is a renowned hacker, who loves to get involved with tactical

warfare and crushes many of his opponents by playing aggressively.

So, as white, last year, he played a very dodgy line of the Rossolimo

against me and was lucky to escape with a draw.

How to take him on this year then...

A very interesting, deeply-thought out 11th move. Was it justified?!

Enjoy...

[Event "Ilford Congress 2010"]

[Site "Ilford, ENG"]

[Date "2010.05.30"]

[Round "4.2"]

[White "Ross, Chris"]

[Black "Eames, Robert"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "B51"]

[WhiteElo "2205"]

[BlackElo "2295"]

[Annotator "Chris Ross"]

[PlyCount "77"]

[EventDate "2010.05.30"]

{B51: Sicilian: Rossolimo}

1. e4 c5

2. Nf3 Nc6

3. Bb5 d6

4. O-O Bd7

5. Re1 Nf6

6. c3 a6

7. Bf1 Bg4

8. d3 e6

9. Nbd2 Nd7

{So far, so good. All according to theory.

Here is how round 2 of this congress went against Andrew Mayhew:

9... Be7 10. h3 Bh5 11. Qc2 O-O 12. g4 Bg6 13. Nh4 d5 14. Nxg6 hxg6 15.

Nf3 Qc7 16. Bg2 Rfd8 17. e5 Nd7 18. Bf4 Rac8 19. Qd2 b5 20. h4 d4 21. c4

bxc4

22. dxc4 Nf8 23. h5 a5 24. h6 gxh6 25. Bxh6 a4 26. Bg5 Nh7 27. Bxe7 Qxe7 28.

Bf1 Kg7 29. Bd3 Rh8 30. Kg2 Nf8 31. Rh1 Nd7 32. Qf4 Rxh1 33. Rxh1 Rh8 34.

Rxh8 Kxh8 35. Bc2 a3

and white went on to convert the ending.

IN that game, I played classically, advancing on the king-side, but I don’t'

normally like to commit myself so quickly, as a general rule. So, I have

played in practice matches a "waiting" move, which I have adopted against

Mayhew, and now used, although it isn't really in the theory. I'm unsure and

still not convinced about it's novelty-factor, but it was good to put it

into practice.}

10. Qc2

{Treating the position similar to a reversed "Philidor", but as these games

prove, the queen may not be well placed here. Getting on with the

advancement on the king-side or through the centre has to be preferred, as

the opening references at the bottom illustrate.}

10... Rc8

{Which probably proves why 10. Qc2 may not be the best positional move at

hand.

One of white's objectives in this type of position, is to play a delayed

d3-d4 and claim a stake in the centre. With the rook vis-à-vis the white

queen, this break is not so easily accomplished.

The question now is then, how to proceed for white?

Have a good long think about this position. I have thought about it before

and did at the time again. My decision is big and has long-term positional

considerations. But are they justified tactically?

Don't forget, I'm playing a tactical play too!

Move coming up....}

11. Nc4!?

{A very interesting positional decision.

In practice match situations, I have played 11. h3 and Nh2 ideas with the

idea of launching the F pawn and although I have scored well with it, I

don’t' think I can claim strong opposition to this setup.

So, why the text-move?

Well, I wish to block up the C-file, against that rook on c8. I also want to

free-up my bishop on c1 to become developed. I also want to re-route the

knight into e3 and have g2-g4 at my disposal, leaving the pawn on h2 for

defensive purposes.

After all, where else is the knight headed?

So, the common idea of h2-h3 and g2-g4 is still being achieved, but with the

knight landing on the central square on e3 and facilitating g2-g4 instead.

This means that a later h2-h4 will not have lost a tempo.

All of that is fine, but the immediate question is to whether black shatters

the pawn structure on the king-side...}

11... Bxf3

12. gxf3 Nde5

{Black reacts classically to the flank-decision and potential flank-attack

that white has, by attacking in the centre.

Lets consider the ramifications of white's 11th move.

White now has a shattered king-side pawn structure.

Although shattered, the pawns - especially the doubled F pawns, control the

centre and gives white a pawn mass in the middle.

More importantly, and crucial to white's decision, is that white now has the

bishop pair.

White must therefore, open up the position and allow his bishops to rake an

open board.

In that sense, white must not be scared of an open position, or indeed, an

open king.

My decision is actually to allow my king to become horribly exposed, but

allow the bishops to both defend the monarch, but attack across the board as

well. Notice how I ultimately accomplish this.

Also, Kh1 and Rg1 ideas are in the offing for attacks down the open G file.

With black having played Rc8 already, queen-side escape for black isn't so

easily achieved.

So, all things considered, positionally, the decision seems to be founded on

firm ground.

However, tactically, there could be blemishes. Black does have two knights,

that can quickly come into the king-side and the black queen has an easy,

fast route into the attack.

Does white have enough to fend on the coming onslaught?

12... Qh4 13. Ne3 gets the knight back to defensive duties.}

13. Nxe5 dxe5

{Black wishes to blockade the position and hinder the white bishop pair.

Good positional sense and something that white can not allow. White must

seek to open up the position for those bishops. Dangerous and unclear play

now occurs.}

14. f4

{More calmer would be 14. Kh1 Qh4}

14... Qh4

{White has to step very carefully here. Black is summoning all his forces

very quickly and white has to defend very carefully. Once the flash-attack

has been repelled, then, and only then, can the bishops emerge to begin

their positional damage.

Currently, the F-pawn is en prise and this can not be allowed to be captured

and then march to f3 with mating nets. The position must be opened up,

don’t' forget...}

15. fxe5 Nxe5

{Another black piece heads towards the king-side and yet again, forks on f3

are threatened. Note the looseness of my rook on e1 too, preventing the

white F-pawn from advancing. If that can advance easily, white's troubles

would be just about solved.}

16. Qe2

{Re-placing the queen on a better square, with a future central thrust in

mind (see my notes to move 10).

Also, the rook on e1 has protection and the light-squares around the white

king given some needy protection.

16. Re3 Bd6 17. Bg2 Nc6 seemed dangerous, as the f4 square would be

available for the black queen to sneak into, with the bishop on c1 cut-out

of play. No, calm calculated defensive play was required here.}

16... Bd6

{Again, I had banked on my opponent playing this most aggressive line. It

all looks very scary for white, who seems to be getting mated on h2. Nf3+

tactics are looming, but white can hold it.

Notice once again, that white can not launch his F-pawn, due to Nf3+

tactics, with the rook on e1 being left loose if the knight on f3 is taken.

Apart from this more direct approach, I was considering for black 16... c4

17. dxc4 Bc5 18. Be3 but I didn't know what was going on then...}

17. h3!

{Defense complete!

Another important point of 16. Qe2...The g4 square is not only controlled by

the pawn on h3, but also the queen. This allows future Qg4 ideas by white

forcing the exchange of queens, uniting the white pawn chain again and

ridding black off all attacking possibilities.

All of black's immediate attacking possibilities have been squashed. How

does he maintain any aggressive intensions?}

17... g5

{Played in the true spirit of my opponent's style. Black attempts to

continue the hack!

However, all entry squares have been covered and now it's time for white to

start breaking out.

17... c4 18. d4 Nd3 or simply 17... o-o 18. Bd2/Bg2 with the idea of f2-f4

is best for white.}

18. d4 cxd4

19. cxd4 Nc6

{More lines have been opened up, which is good for the bishops. Central

control has been established for white and things are starting to look very

nice indeed.}

20. Rd1

{Defending the D-pawn and putting another heavy piece on a central file.

Now, d4-d5 threats could be on or e4-e5 and then d4-d5. Also, f2-f4

possibilities have been opened up without the loose rook on e1.

Nb4/Nc2 forks don't have to be dealt with and the white pieces are starting,

at last, after their defensive duties have been completed, to begin to

coordinate themselves very nicely indeed.}

20... Ke7?

{I can't find an explanation for this move. Black simply wanted to play

aggressively and wanted to connect the rooks.

He should have realized by now that attacking possibilities were unlikely

and that simple positional chess was now required. 20... Bf4 is the only

move that makes any kind of sense.}

21. e5!

{Ironically, it's white now beginning to play aggressively. With the black

king stepping up into e7, there are now tactical possibilities for white.

Notably, f6, a3, the a3-f8 diagonal and more importantly, the b7 square!

My original intension was to play Qg4 at the earliest moment and get those

queens off, improving my pawn structure at the same time. But now, it's me

who wants to give my opponent some of what he's been trying to dish to me

for the past 10 moves...}

21... Bb4

{Good job that rook moved away from E1, right! Black is obviously tempting

me into a2-a3, Ba5 and b2-b4 driving the bishop to the better square b6.

Nah, not interested...indeed, that bishop on b4 is a tactical liability

21... Bc7 22. Qf3 Rhg8 23. Qb3 was my original plan.

Note how I target that poor old b7 pawn...}

22. Qf3

{At this point, I began to feel very comfortable about taking the whole

point home.

The white queen steps onto a more aggressive square, targets f6, b3, the 3rd

rank and that all important b7 square. Things are just about to collapse for

black.}

22... g4

{Desperate. Black sacrifices a pawn in the hope of creating more tactical

possibilities. The f6 square is now covered, but that is soon dealt with!

Again, calm defensive measures are now needed for a move or two, but

defensive moves that create attacking possibilities too...

But remember, these all-important, long-ranging bishops....}

23. hxg4

{Calmly taking the pawn. My king is absolutely fine with the cover of the

two bishops and the white queen. Pawn cover is not required! 23. Qxg4 Rhg8

would not be clever.}

23... Rhg8

24. g5

{Defending, but also renewing the threat of Qf6+ tactics.

24. Be2 Kf8 25. Qe4 h5 26. Bh6+ Ke7 is the messier approach.}

24... Ke8

{Simply admitting that 20... Ke7 was a poor decision!

Also, the e7 square is made available for the bishop retreat. So, it was

very effective then on b4, now wasn't it?! No need then to have kicked it

away with a2-a3...}

25. Bf4

{Eventually developing the queen's bishop!

I have stated that the bishop is required for the king-side, and that is

where it is going. e3 is not the best square for it, as I intend to blast

open the centre. Therefore, e5 requires protection and the bishop has to

retreat to cover the white king. Quieter was 25. Qh3 Qxh3 26. Bxh3 h6}

25... Be7

26. Bg2

{Covering the white king and improving it's safety. Now, the bishops being

to work their magic down the long diagonals. My positional objectives are

begin to exert themselves...}

26... Rd8

{Attacking the d-pawn. So, I simply continue with my positional strategy,

refining the tactics to ensure all aims are covered simultaneously.}

27. d5 exd5

28. Bg3 Qxg5

29. Rxd5 Rxd5

30. Qxd5 h5

{And yet more aggressive intensions by black. He wishes to throw the H-pawn

down the board and win a pinned bishop on the G-file.

But here I illustrate the nimbleness of the bishops and in fact, the bishop

can stand anywhere on a long diagonal and still does it's work, from

whatever square it stands.

However, first, simple development. If you can develop and defend at the

same time, then all to the good.}

31. Rd1 h4

32. Bh2 Nb4?

{Black's losing move, but now, he was down to about 2 minute for his last 4

moves.

Having desperately attempted all aggressive play in this game, it must have

been incredibly frustrating that the tactics weren't quite working for him.

32.. h3 doesn’t win the bishop on g2, as the rook's development to d1 allows

a check on d7 with the white queen and then Qxh3 is made possible.

A simple demonstration of the effect of long diagonals and the range of

bishops and the queen.

Why black goes for a wander here with his knight, I don’t' know. He must

have just thought to deflect the white queen away from the bishop on g2 at

all costs. Of course, if the white queen wanders from the protection of the

g2 bishop, or the indirect defence of the h3 square, black could win

tactically. No, no, continue with the strategic plan...}

32... Qg4 33. Kh1 Kf8 was my original plan.}

33. Qxb7

{whoops, there goes that b7 pawn I had targeted!

The queen stays on the long h1-a8 diagonal and sustains the Qc8+/Qd7+ tactic

to steal the pawn on h3 if it dares to advance.}

33... Kf8

34. Kh1

{Again, calmly defending against any attacks down the G-file. However, more

importantly, is that once black has been driven away from the G-file, guess

who's going to take over it and counter-attack?!}...

34... Kg7

35. a3

{OK, OK, a3 is now justified, as the black knight has nowhere to retreat

too...}

35... Nc2

{What else?

35... Qg4 36. f3

(36. Qxe7 is not possible Qxd1+ 37. Bg1 h3 38. Qf6+ Kf8 39. Qh6+ Rg7 40.

Qh8+ Rg8 41. Qxh3 Nc6)

36... Qe6 37. axb4}

36. Qe4

{The final move of the time control. So, I missed the cute finish 36. Rg1

Kh8 37. Be4 Qh6 38. Qxe7 Rxg1+ 39. Kxg1 Qc1+ 40. Kg2 Ne1+ 41. Kh3 Qc8+ 42.

Kxh4 Qg8 43. Kh5 Nf3 44. Bf4 Qg7 45. Bf5 Nh4 46. Qd8+ Qg8 47. Qxh4 f6 48.

Qxf6+ Qg7 49. Bh6 Qxf6 50. exf6 Kg8 51. Kg6 Kh8 52. Bg7+ Kg8 53. f7#}

36... Kh8

{And the time control reached. Time to walk away from the board, compose

myself, grab a coffee, stand outside for 2/3 minutes, let the adrenaline

drain away and walk back to the board, cool, calculated, calmed and do the

professional thing to finish off the job.}

37. Bf3 Rc8

{There is no other way to defend the stranded knight on c2. Note how my

bishop can step on f3 and still cover all of the important squares on the

king-side. Now, the G-file has been opened and the black rook has wandered

away, is there any wonder that black is caught on the king-side now?}

38. Rg1 Qh6

39. Bf4

{OK, not the most accurate way to finish off the game, but by now, it was

clear that my opponent was fed-up and wanted to throw in the towel. I was

playing confidently and must have given out the impression that I expected

victory shortly.

39. e6 f6 40. Rg4 is cleaner, but it doesn't matter.

My opponent looked at my 39th move for about 30 seconds, said "it's becoming

too holy" and held out his hand. A nice job well accomplished!}

39... 1-0

Opening references:

A.

10. h3 Bh5 11. g4 Bg6 12. d4 cxd4 13. cxd4 Be7 14. d5 Nce5 15.

Nxe5 dxe5 16. Nf3 Rc8 17. b3 exd5 18. Qxd5 f6 19. Nh4 Nc5 20. Qxd8+

Rxd8 21. Nf5 Bxf5 22. exf5 Nd3 23. Bxd3 Rxd3 24. Be3 Ba3 25. Rad1 Rxd1 26.

Rxd1

Ke7 27. f4 exf4 28. Bxf4 Rc8 29. Rd2 Rc6

1/2-1/2 Zhang Zhong (2639)-Topalov,V (2735)/Wijk aan Zee NED 2004

B.

10. h3 Bh5 11. Nc4 b5 12. Ne3

Be7 13. g4 Bg6 14. Nf5 O-O 15. Nxe7+ Qxe7 16. Bf4 Nb6 17. Bg3 f6 18. d4 cxd4

19. Nxd4 Rac8 20. Nf5 exf5 21. exf5

1-0 Andreikin,D (2625)-Lintchevski,D (2485)/Dagomys RUS 2009

C.

10. h3 Bh5 11. g4 Bg6 12. d4 cxd4 13. cxd4 e5 14. d5 Ncb8 15. h4 h6 16. Bh3

Be7 17. h5 Bh7 18.

Nf1 a5 19. Ng3 Na6 20. Bf1 Nac5 21. Bb5 O-O 22. a4 Kh8 23. Nd2 Bh4 24. Ndf1

Nf6

25. f3 Rc8 26. Be3 Ng8 27. Re2 Bg5 28. Ra3

Sedlak,N (2519)-Ivanisevic,I (2550)/Topola SCG 2004/1-0 (53)

D.

10. h3 Bh5 11. g4 Bg6 12. d4 cxd4 13. cxd4 Be7 14. d5 Nce5 15.

Nxe5 dxe5 16. Nc4 O-O 17. d6 Bh4 18. Bg2 b5 19. Ne3 Qb6 20. Re2 Nc5 21. Nf5

exf5 22. exf5

Rad8 23. Be3 Rxd6 24. Rd2 Rxd2 25. Qxd2 b4 26. Qd5 Be7 27. Rc1 Rc8 28. fxg6

hxg6 29. Qxe5 Qd6 30. Qxd6 Bxd6 31. Bf1 Rc7

Kovalevskaya,E (2467)-Kosteniuk,A (2469)/Kazan RUS 2004/1/2-1/2 (38)}

E.

10. h3 Bh5 11. g4 Bg6 12. d4 cxd4 13. cxd4 Be7 14. d5 Nce5 15.

Nxe5 dxe5 16. Nc4 O-O 17. a4 exd5 18. Qxd5 Nf6 19. Qxd8 Rfxd8 20. f3 Bb4 21.

Re2 Rd1 22. Ne3 Bc5 23. Kg2

Rdd8 24. Nc4 Nd7

Rublevsky,S (2671)-Sorokin,M (2583)/Tomsk RUS 2004/1/2-1/2 (62)

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