All,  
This is my first round of the IBCA Team World Cup in Zaragoza in Spain. Here, I am playing the top board for Spain, a strong player, who beat the German top board later in the tournament with some very clever tactics. This is not an opponent to take likely. Accurate play was required. I had come across this off-beat side-line of the French earlier in the season though and was prepped on its ramifications. I went wrong in a local Yorkshire league game and had duly studied the side-line, wanting to be prepared for future occasions when facing it. Hence, why I did not find black’s surprise choice difficult to deal with during the game.  
Enjoy.  
[Event "IBCA Team World Cup"]

[Site "Zaragoza, SPA"]

[Date "2013.06.12"]

[Round "1.1"]

[White "Ross, Chris"]

[Black "Palacios Perez, Manuel"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "A00"]

[WhiteElo "2228"]

[BlackElo "2194"]

[Annotator "Chris Ross"]

[PlyCount "71"]

[EventDate "2013.06.12"]

[EventType "team"]

[WhiteTeam "GREAT BRITAIN"]

[BlackTeam "SPAIN"]

{C05: French Defence, Tarrasch variation}

1. e4 e6

2.  d4 d5

3. Nd2 Nf6

4. Ngf3 Be7

5. e5 Nfd7

6. Bd3 c5

7. c3 b6

{A slightly hyper-modern way to tackle the Tarrasch by black. Usually, black accepts the challenge and heads to snatch the d4 pawn with Qb6 ideas. White is willing to sacrifice this pawn for a lead in development and play can become very sharp indeed. The Milner-Barry Gambit has come back into trend as of late and being scoring well in the English leagues. Much has been written about this B6 strategy and I was prepped with the latest theory accordingly. Black’s text-move is a valid attempt to exchange the light-squared bishops. White cannot really avoid this exchange, but he has to ensure that it is on his terms.}

8. a4

{Since white is unable to avoid the exchange of light-squared bishops, he might as well secure himself a useful outpost, that being on b5. If white is able to force a4-a5 and a5xb6 or a5-a6, he would have gained space on the queen-side. As it were, black can not permit this expansion on the queen-side. By denying white this space-gaining opportunity, he must create a weakness, that being on b5.}

8... a5

9. O-O Ba6   
10. Bb5   
{Thus securing the b5 outpost. Black’s queen-side development difficulties are now accumulating. The knight on b8 is not easily brought into the game. The c6 square is pressurised and black is reluctant to capture on b5, as the pawn after a4xb5 would control both a6 and c6, leaving the knight on b8 short of natural developing squares.

All of the black queen-side pieces are now looking very awkward and it is a big task for him to untangle his pieces.}  
10... Qc8?!

{A logical idea to unravel his position by the concentration on the light-squares, as the black queen can come into a6 and offer an exchange. C6 is protected and the white forces may be liquidated into a poor end-game if he is not careful. White does not wish to enter into the ending with a backward D-pawn, which would be vulnerable and challenging to defend.  
However, white is not obliged to play into black’s hands so meekly and he can force complications relatively easily. Since white has a huge lead in development, he can afford the time to re-position his pieces. Any blocked position is not advantageous to him and he must avoid black from playing c5-c4 and securing up the queen-side, potentially leaving an isolated vulnerable pawn on b5 and offering black good possibilities of drawing the ending. White needs to now react actively and without consideration for his own development. As it were the knight on d2 is blocking in the dark-squared bishop and harmonious development is not easy to accomplish. A radical shift in the pawn structure has to be achieved to free up the white pieces. Since his king is secure, open positions favour him. The light-squares are a source of concentration and hence why he must target them as a matter of urgency. There are few pawn-breaks in the position and since f2-f4-f5 is a long way off, there is only one pawn-break that is quickly achievable.}   
11. c4!  
{After which, black’s defence is difficult to coordinate. The light-squares, and d5 especially, is pressurised. The collapse of the centre is the main objective of the text-move, as black is so far behind in development, that he cannot permit anything nasty happening to his king whilst it remains in the centre of the board. The weakness of the b4 square is not important as black cannot play Nc6/Nb4 very quickly, as the pressure in the centre and on the d5 square does not give him enough rest-bite to focus on those outposts. As it were, the white pieces now flood into the centre, focussing particularly on the central square d5, and black finds it difficult to contain the onslaught of such targeted pressure.}

11... O-O   
{Castling was black’s best option, as exchanges in the centre would only allow d4-d5 and e5-e6 ideas, with Ng5, Re1 and Qe2 moves, exerting tremendous leverage along the light squares. Black escapes with his king before anything nasty happens to it in the centre. However, the centre now collapses and the d5 square is isolated.}

12. cxd5 exd5   
{Thus creating a weakness on d5. The pawn on d5 has to be a target that is easily aimed for. Black’s task is now incredibly difficult to defend.  
White has to consider positional aspects here. He has already a lead in development and is such, tempi ahead. The loss of tempi to re-position pieces effectively can be then used to create stronger positional threats. Hence, why tempi in this type of position is not essential. White can effect a re-routing here, which places his pieces on the most effective squares, making black’s task of defence almost impossible to achieve.   
It is said that “retreats” are the most difficult to see, but when positionally calculated, they are not so tough to discover. D5 is an obvious point of focus and since the white pieces are not aimed at that particular square, the re-routing of the minor pieces is easily observed.}  
13. Nb1!  
{A simple retreat move, which focuses the knight on the d5 square. The developing move Nc3 will give white so much pressure on d5, that there is little black can do about his position. The white knight need not seek routes into the game via f1 or b3, as the retreat to b1 permits it to come into the game via c3 with devastating effect.   
White threatens to simply capture on c5 and steal on d5, being a clear pawn up.}  
13...  Bxb5   
{There is little choice for black. 13... Nc6 14. dxc5 Nxc5 15. Nc3 Bxb5 16. Axb5 soon drops the d5 pawn, with an easy advantage to white.}

14. axb5 cxd4

15. Qxd4 Qc4

{Black offers the exchange of queens, but once again, this is only advantageous to white, as his lead in development is so pronounced. The d5 pawn is a huge target an there is little that can defend it. It is a matter of time and technique before that pawn drops. White need not rush into tactics to snaffle this pawn, as slow positional chess will soon round it up.}  
16. Qxc4 dxc4

{And thus the pawn is further weakened by its advance. The pawn cannot hope to survive so advance unsupported.}

17. Nc3 Nc5

18. Nd5   
{The white knight reaches a very dominating position indeed, effectively cutting the black defence in two. The disjointed bishop on d8 uncoordinates the black rooks and makes the defence of the black pawns awkward to achieve. B6 is a target and the black bishop cannot emerge without devastating tactics. White is now on the verge of a positional winning advantage.}.  
18... Bd8

19. Nd2 Nb3

{ A pause for thought here. The capture on b3 is certainly possible , as the pawn would prove to be ultimately weak and indefensible. However, the purpose of the position was to activate the rook vertically, not horizontally, which is an important positional element, a lot of players forget to consider with rooks. The rooks can do equally as well stepping up and down as well as side to side.}  
20. Ra4

{20. Nxb3 cxb3 21. Be3 Nd7 is also a possible variation to play.}

20... Nxd2

{Played relatively quickly by black.  20... Nd7 21. Nxc4 Nxc1 22. Rxc1 is worthy of consideration, although white stands clearly better in the end-game.}

21. Bxd2 Nd7

22. f4 f6

{At this point, spectators thought that black had some compensation for his poor position. However, white’s superior positional strategy permits him to conduct the latter stages of this game in a calm, calculated manner, pressing the advantage with relentless ruthlessness. White must not get swept away with complications by capturing on f6 and permitting the black pieces to flood back into the game. Complete cool calculation must be adopted to restrain black from obtaining any sort of counter-play.}

23. e6

{Exchanging the c4 pawn for the advanced E-pawn, as white is not interested in material gain. His superior positional play will convert this advantage soon enough. Opening up the position by 23. Bc3 fxe5 24. fxe5 Rxf1+ 25. Kxf1 Nc5 26. Rxc4 is not in his best interest, as black has managed to exchange some pieces and has a hope of rounding up the E-pawn with Kf7 and Ke6 ideas.}

23... Nc5

24. Rxc4 Nxe6

25. Be3   
{A quiet, but extremely strong demonstration that the black pieces are still entangled. The bishop on d8 still has the unenviable task of defending the backward b6 pawn. There are now new holes in the black light-squares, e6 and c6 to name but two important entry points.}  
25... Ra7

{Desperately attempting to unravel. Immediate captures on b6 will permit Rb7 and the white b5 pawn could be left loose. Once again, restraint is the key here and the immediate snatching of pawns is not necessary. The slow accumulation of the positional advantages will make black crack eventually. Now comes the occupation of an outpost in the black camp.}

26. Rc6

{26. f5 Nc5 27. Bxc5 bxc5 28. Re1 will snaffle the c5 pawn at some stage, but it wasn’t necessary to liberate the black pieces so rapidly. It is black, who is struggling to find moves in the position.}

26... Nc7?

{Black finally crumbles under the tremendous pressure he has been under all game. He attempts to find a tactical resolution to his difficulties, but it is fundamentally flawed. White can now win the exchange and the conversion is technique alone.

26... Rd7 27. Nxb6 Bxb6 28. Bxb6 Nd4 was the expected continuation, but even then, the win is easy enough.}

27. Bxb6 Nxb5

28. Bxa7 Nxa7

29. Rc5

{Restraining the knight on a7. Currently, it can not re-enter back into the game. 29. Rd6 Nc8 30. Rd7 Nb6 31. Rxd8 Rxd8 32. Nxb6 was also possible.}

29... Re8

{If black tries to defend along the second rank with 29... Rf7 then 30. Rfc1 controls everything.}

30. Kf2

{Keeping things tight. White wanted the king on f3 to avoid any back-rankers and to put the monarch on a light-square, not permitting tactics down the a7-g1 diagonal. Also, the black rook is prevented from penetrating onto the 7th rank via e2. 30. Ra1 Re6 31. b4 Ra6 is the other way to handle it.}

30... Re6

31. Rfc1 Kf8

32. Kf3

{Black could resign here, but he was now entering into the 30 seconds increment stage of the game and was playing on hoping for a miracle. I had plenty of time on the clock though and there was no necessity to rush, not at all. Playing slowly and avoiding the tactics was the route to converting this, as black did not have the time to find anything complicated. It was only a matter of time before something fell. As it were, he only played on for a few more moves.}

32... f5

33. Nc7 Rf6

34. Rxa5 Nc6

35. Ra8 Kf7

36. Nb5 Be7  
37. Rc4 1-0

Opening references  
A.  
8. Qe2 a5 9. O-O Ba6 10. c4 Nc6 11. cxd5 Bxd3 12. Qxd3 exd5 13. Qb5 Rc8 14. dxc5 bxc5 15.

Nb3 Qb6 16. Qe2 Nf8 17. Ng5 Bxg5 18. Bxg5 Ne6 19. Be3 a4 20. Nd2 Qxb2 21. f4 O-O 22. Rab1 Qc2

Sutovsky,E (2673)-Arizmendi Martinez,J (2571)/Legnica POL 2013/0-1 (40)})

B.

8... cxd4 9. cxd4 Nc6 10. O-O Nb4 11. Bb5 a6 12. Be2 Nb8 13. h4 N8c6 14. h5 f5 15. exf6 Bxf6 16. h6 O-O 17. Nb3 e5 18. dxe5 Nxe5 19. Nbd4 Qd6 20. hxg7 Bxg7 21. Nxe5 Bxe5 22. Be3 Ra7 23. Bg4 Qg6 24. Bxc8 Rxc8 25. Qf3 Rf8 26. Qh3 Nd3 27. Qe6+ Qxe6

Shytaj,L (2475)-Vovk,Y (2541)/Ravenna ITA 2011/1/2-1/2 (39)})

C.  
8... cxd4 9. cxd4 Nc6 10. O-O Nb4 11. Bb5 a6 12. Be2 Nb8 13. Nb3 N8c6 14. Be3 O-O 15. Ne1 f6 16. exf6 Bxf6 17. f4 Bd7 18. Nf3 Be8 19. Qd2 Bg6 20. Rfc1 Rc8 21. a5 bxa5 22. Nc5 Qd6 23. Ne5 Bxe5 24. fxe5 Qe7 25. Nxa6 Nxa6 26. Bxa6 Rc7 27. Bg5 Qf7 28. Bb5 Rfc8 29. Rf1 Qe8 30. Rxa5 h6 31. Bh4 Be4 32. Ra3 Qh5 33. Bf2 Ne7 34. Rh3 Qg6 35. Rg3 Qh5 36. Be2 Qe8 37. Bg4 Bf5 38. Bd1

Denny,K (2354)-Moran Nuque,A (2393)/Bridgetown BAR 2009/1-0 (71)})