All,

An interesting line in the Philidor Defence, which I have been finding a

bit annoying as of late.

FIDE Master Tyson Mordue has suggested this side-line to the white setup and

I have attempted it several times now, but with varied success.

This lovely game is probably one of the few times that it has worked very

successfully for me, and in doing so, I clean out yet another very strong

player, graded ECF 206 (ELO 2271).

There are some very neat positional touches in the early middle-game and

the game finishes off with a picturesque sacrifice and a king-side mating

attack!

Enjoy.

[Event "CCCA League Matches 2010-2011"]

[Site "Peterborough, ENG"]

[Date "2010.10.14"]

[Round "1.1"]

[White "Ross, Chris"]

[Black "Timoshenko, Andrei"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "B07"]

[WhiteElo "2223"]

[BlackElo "2271"]

[Annotator "Chris Ross"]

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[EventDate "2010.10.14"]

[WhiteTeam "New England A"]

[BlackTeam "Peterborough A"]

{C41: Philidor Defence}

1. e4 d6

2. d4 e5

3. Nf3 Nd7

4. Nc3 c6

5. a4 a5

{Already a very interesting positional question arises.

White has played a2-a4 to restrain the black queen-side from expanding and

to take some control of the light-squares.

Black is worried about white playing a4-a5 and gaining an even firmer clamp

on the queen-side.

To prevent this, black attempts to claim the b4 square as an outpost.

However, intriguingly enough, playing a7-a5 leaves yet another central

square that bit more vulnerable. I have contemplated this in depth

previously and am starting to grasp the idea, which I have utelised in other

similar openings, such as the King's Indian defence and Bennoni Defence.

Well, it's the c4 square. The c4 square has been weakened more by the a7-a5

thrust, as my own a2-a4 move will provide support for an outpost on c4.

IN that regard, which piece belongs on c4?

Lots of debates now. Should the bishop on f1 go there (see the opening

references below).

If so, is the bishop open to tactics by black with Nxe4 and a future d6-d5?

Probably is.

Playing it to c4 and then back to b3/a2 to stop those tactics makes the

a2-a4 thrust pointless, as then the b7-b5 counter-break will not be held up

so much and black may well achieve the break.

Yes, there are lines where that happens, but then the A-file can become a

bit of a problem.

So, what other piece can dominate from c4? Well, here experience in Bennoni setups help. I intend for the king's knight to land on there. But then what about the bishops? Where do the white bishop pair belong?

Answers coming up.}

6. Be2

{So, the light-squared bishop is kept in a more passive role, with the

intent of bring it around via f3 or even back to f1 and then eventually

fianchettoing it. However, for the meantime, it must remain on the f1-a6

diagonal to restrain the b7-b5 counter-break. A more passive position for

the piece, but perfectly acceptable, since on c4, exd4 for black and Nc5

ideas attacking e4 and the aforementioned Nxe4 tactics prove life a bit

awkward for the light-squared controller.

See below for references.}

6... Ngf6

{Logical enough, but there are options. See below for references.}

7. O-O Be7

8. b3

{The next stage in the plan. White has to find a suitable square for the queen's bishop.

Our focus now turns to the weak point in the black camp. Where is there a

structural weakness, or focus-point for white to attack?

D6 seems to be a juicy pawn to target. Since it is effectively backward, it

will require some considerable support. And the pawn can be almost pinned to

the bishop on e7 in many ways.

Bringing the white dark-squared bishop out to e3 or g5 is possible, but it

tends not to have much life out there and can do little to influence the

game. In many ways, this game is about light-squares and the control of that half

of the board. Indeed then, swapping these bishops may not be such an

advantage for white, as black's dark-squared bishop is pretty rubbish!}

8. O-O

9. Ba3

{And thus, the d6 pawn is targeted. An unusual development square for the

piece, but yet again, another very good reason for 5. a4 was played, to

ensure that Ba3 is not such an awkward move to make.}

9. Re8

{The bishop on e7 needs protection. Black has to be very aware of dxe5

timely captures as the d6 pawn will be left pinned to the bishop if black

were to play a premature Qc7 move. Black intends to recapture back on e5

with the pawn, naturally, when he would be controlling the centre very well.}

10. Re1 Qc7

11. Qd2 Nf8

12. Rad1 Ng6

{OK, critical moment.

White has now developed and got his pieces just about set on their ideal

squares. The bishop on e2 needs relocating and the knight on f3 needs to

find a secure outpost, but we have plans for that, right?

Black has attacking intensions though on the king-side. The queen's knight

has swung around to position itself menacingly on the king-side with ideas

of Nf4 and flash king-side attacks.

Are we scared though?

Decisions, decisions. How does white achieve his positional objectives; namely attacking the d6 pawn and restraining black from counter-breaking

with b7-b5?}

13. d5!

{Both positionally sound and psychologically damaging. White had to be very aware of dxe5 and after d6xe5, black would have ideas

of Bg4/Bxf3 and then Nf8/Ne6/Nd4 and the outpost on d4 becomes a bit of a

nightmare for white, as the knight on c3 is in fact poorly positioned.

White has to avoid a bad-bishop VS good-knight ending at all costs. Similar

lines in the exchange variation of the KI Defence can be seen here.

So, white opts not to offer that chance to black. The e6 square is

controlled and white simply threatens to take on c6 and make the d6 pawn a

huge target. If black then attempts to break with a future d6-d5, white

could be left with a potential outside passed queen-side pawn.

Taking on d5 allows the exchange of the poorly-placed knight on c3 and gives

white the chance then to play c2-c4 and have a huge clamp on the queen-side,

with the B-pawn and d6 pawn's very backward and vulnerable to attack.

So, black wants to attack but can't if white is going to be annoying and

blockade. Can black afford the time to allow white to take on c6 and leave

that poor d6 pawn as a huge target?}

13. c5?!

{Black decides not to!

But at a huge cost. The bishop on a3 has certainly been shut out, but that's

fine, since the bishop on e7 has little prospects at the current moment.

But we come back to the very first few moves. That all-important a2-a4 and

a7-a5 counter-thrust. Now, remember what I said about the c4 square becoming an outpost?

Well, check it out now and all of a sudden, b5 has become an attractive

square for the white knights. White has now suddenly been presented with two

very tasty outposts on the queen-side.

However, can white waste time occupying them and if he does, do they

actually do anything? Maybe not, if he's going to be mated on the king-side!

13... Rd8 14. h3 certainly keeps the tension but black has more than enough

to be worried about.

OK, strategy is now required. Black has made the decision to blockade. How

do we now rearrange our pieces?

Squares and positions are the name of the day now. Tactics have to be taken

into consideration, but if we could simply reshuffle our pieces and put them

on their optimal squares, where would they all stand?

Big point in the game now is how you actually re-position the pieces.

Positions and squares matter and consider how to actually ultimately get

there, however many moves it takes, since if you can stop black from mating

you, tempi matters little in many respects.

Which ranks are important, which coloured squares matters and how do we

shift currently-occupied pieces out of the way to facilitate other pieces

coordination?}

14. g3!

{OK, let's take this piece by piece.

Queen: The white queen in these setups always has a difficult job to find a

suitable position. It's rarely comfortable on any given square, but now with

the outposts that have been created on the queen-side, she has holes to

exploit.

However, black has king-side attacking intensions. In that regard, the white

queen is probably needed for defensive duties. The queen then needs to be able to switch to the king-side very rapidly. At the current moment, she is standing on a rather annoying square, as the d2 square is needed for another piece. So, the quickest way to get to the king-side is actually via the 3rd rank.

14th Qd3 just allows Nf4 and the queen has an annoying question to be

answered. So, the queen is now headed for d3, without having to be worried about Nf4

ideas and is actually headed for the light-squares around the king-side,

namely, the g2 square!

From G2, white is directly attacking the black king and wishes to set up a

mating net on g7. White intends to break through the centre and it is the

G-file that is going to become open. So, the queen is repositioned onto the

king-side and on the potentially open G-file.

Knight on f3: This knight has been targeted at the c4 square since move 5.

In that regard, it has to be able to drop back to d2 and then c4, which

means the white queen has to vacate the d2 square.

Dark-squared bishop: The dark-squared bishop on a3 has been shut-out and

needs to find a life again. In that way, c1 is the only diagonal where it

can actually do anything and to do that, the queen has to move.

Light-squared bishop: The bishop is destined for f1 and probably g2 and/or

h3, depending on where the black light-squared counterpart places itself. If

the light-squared bishop for white lands on f1, then the white queen is

needed to hold up any attacks on f3 and the white king-side.

White e4 pawn: This can be left weak if the knight on c3 wanders way to b5

and Nxe4 tactics for black are on. So, Qd3 has to be played to protect the

pawn.

C4 square: Black can not be permitted to play c5-c4 and gain time to

break-open the position.

Pawn-breaks: White wishes to play f2-f4 and blast through the centre. If

black is to take this pawn on f4, white wants to recapture on f4 with the g3

pawn, thereby opening up the G-file for attack and facilitating a future

e4-e5 thrust, smashing a way through the centre, similar to Bennoni defence

setups. Not taking on f4 will allow a f4-f5 and king-side pawn storm.

With all of these considerations and the white king-side under threat, the

text-move allows everything to be maneuvered slowly into place. It takes a

few moves and black's attempts to form any attack play is soon thwarted and

it's white who suddenly becomes very aggressive.

OK, now explained and all figured out, on with the plan!}

14... h6

{The next few moves are rather strange by black. Obviously, he is cramped up

and searching for a decent plan and he soon becomes aggressive again. I am

surmising that black intended Nh7 and Bg5 ideas to gain some control of the

dark-squares and rid himself of a bad bishop. Why then he changes his mind I

am unsure.}

15. Qd3 b6

16. Nd2 h5?

{Black suddenly becomes impatient. He can clearly see my intensions and my

targeted outposts. He obviously feels that positionally, he is already in a

very difficult position. Aggression may be his only cause.

I believe he should be breaking out with a f7-f5 thrust though. Having

played h7-h6, this leaves him even weaker, but to get anything out of the

game, he should be playing it like a King's Indian Defence setup.

So, are we scared of the advancing H-pawn?

16... Ba6 17. Qf3 achieves nothing for black.}

17. Bc1

{No, we are not scared of the H-pawn!

We simply get on with the re-positioning of the pieces.

In fact, the opening up of the H-file could be to black's disadvantage,

since white has the easiest king-lift to knight-2 and then a rook swing to

the H-file. Unless there are nasty tricks on h3, h5-h4 and hxg3 does not

help black in the slightest. It was so, so tempting to play 17. h4, but then black may have annoying tactics with sacrifices on h4 winning two pawns for an awkward attack. That

would give him counter-play, which I simply don't' want. Ignore him then,

get on with the plan.}

17. h4

18. Nc4 Ba6

{And we ask ourselves what the light-squared bishop is doing on a6 instead

of the king-side, where the white light-squares are a lot weaker?

Surely, black does not intend to give up the bishop pair so easily and allow

white to build-up a slow, but powerful king-side attack with the bishop

pair?

He may be able to chop one of the outposted knights, on c4 or a future b5,

but not both? Decisions for black, and neither are good.

18... Qd8 19. gxh4 Ng4 20. Bg5 didn't seem attractive for black either.}

19. Qf3

{I thought this the simplest, although instinct was crying out for 19. gxh4 Nxh4 20. Qg3 Nh7 but I was so reluctant to grab on h4 and leave the f4

square so unprotected. In any case, I wanted to get on with my plan of

putting the queen on g2 and playing f2-f4.}

19... Nh7

{Black is attempting to re-gather his pieces for a defence. Very admirable

and the black knight is headed for g5 maybe and possible annoying tactics.

But there is more to the light-squares than first appearances.}

20. Ne3!

{After which, black is in deep trouble. His position was worse, but now it

is becoming very critical.

With the black light-squared bishop wandering across to a6, he has forgotten

that f5 has actually been left weakened. So, the outposted knight on c4

keeps an eye out on that square, but threatens to suddenly spring into a

deadly king-side attack.

All of the light-squares are now tremendously under pressure.

Black needs to find a good saving plan now and some way to find

counter-play.}

20. Bxe2?

{Black's losing positional move.

His game is positionally tenable if he retreats to c8 and prays and tactics

may help him to survive, but this exchange of his best bishop is simply

suicidal.

20. Ng5 21. Qg4 Bc8 22. Nf5 doesn't help him in the slightest.}

21. Qxe2 Bf8

{Black is digging in now and hoping more than anything. He's in a very poor

position and tactics are the only thing that can save him now, or white

over-extending.

21... Bg5 22. Nf5 Bxc1 23. Nb5 looked grim for him.}

22. Nb5 Qb8

{I can not explain why he chose b8 and not d8. I am guessing that he wanted

the d8 square for his rook, so that the queen could come to c8 as in the

game. But the retreat to d8 has to be preferred.

22... Qd8 23. Qg4 increases the pressure even more.}

23. Nf5 Rd8

{As is his plan. However, it was not too late for 23... Qd8 24. Qg4 which

looks pretty powerful.}

24. gxh4

{Snatching the pawn!

White has won a pawn, but more importantly, the G-file is opened for the

final attack. White has gained tremendous positional domination and is now

ready to finish black off tactically. All the outposts, ranks and files

favour white. A successful king-side attack has now to be the order of play.

So, the G-file is opened and the pawn on h4 is used as a battering ram.}

24. Ne7

25. Ng3

{Of course I am not interested in exchanges. I want to attack and mate. The

knight is poorly placed on e7 and exchanges only help black to defend. Now,

keep pieces on and pressurize the black king.}

25... Qc8

{As is his plan. Black wishes to try and wriggle his queen into the white

king-side to provoke complications.

Also, if black is permitted to play Qh3, the H-pawn on h4 may be dropping

off and black might be able to find some defences on f4 and the king-side.

No, can't allow that to happen.

How to stop that then and maintain the attack?

Effective usage of your pieces comes in here......}

26. Rd3

{Directly discouraging Qh3 as Nf5 discoveries on the queen will be awkward

to meet!

Also, the rook is air-lifted into the attack. Always use as many pieces in

the attack as possible. I am obviously going to use the other rook on the

G-file, so this rook is lifted to the 3rd rank to swing across to the

king-side to help in the final battering.

Another tactical justification is that now 26... c4 is prevented, which

would have given black some counter-play as 27. Rc3 simply wins the pawn!}

26... g6

27. c4

{OK, here I was getting very short on time, in my last 5 minutes to reach

move 36.

I simply wanted to prevent black from having any counter-play down the

C-file with annoying distracting moves of c5-c4. After all, the c4 outpost

has no longer become important as the knight is needed on the king-side to

attack black. The knight on b5 is more than doing it's job's worth there,

hitting d6 and preventing the black major pieces from moving.

27. f4 was another tempting move, but with time being so short, I did not

want to run into complicated tactics before the time control.}

27... Bg7

28. Kh1 Bf6

29. h5 Bg5?

{OK, black was positionally bust, but now, he's tactically down!

It took a few seconds to figure out the absolute correct variations, but I

saw the general principals fairly quickly.

Black is naturally striving to exchange his poor bishop and hope to cling

onto his fragile king-side. He under-estimates the G-file though and the control of the vital squares around the F-file and H-files.

The tactical finish is something rather neat. You may wish to spend some

time on figuring out the combinations.}

30. hxg6 fxg6

{Recapturing on g6 with the knight allows Nf5 tactics and the white queen

with worm it's way in via g4 or h5 and mates with sacks on g6 can't be

prevented.

OK, combination-time!}

31. Bxg5 Nxg5

{Wow, has black managed to save himself? Black has annoying Nh3 and Nf4

tactics.

32. Rg1 was my immediate choice, but try as I could, the tactics simply did

not work after 32... Nh3.

So, refinement, refinement. I had seen the possibilities and all that

matters is the loose nature of the G-file and the black major pieces...}

32. Nf5 !

{Bang!

A beautifully aesthetic way to put black to bed.

Tactics are now abundant and more importantly, black is prevented from

playing Nh3 and getting into f4. The rook on d3 has now come into its own.

That poor knight on e7 though. Nxe7+ tactics are too strong now winning the

black queen. Note how the black major pieces on the queen-side are left

side-lined whilst the black king is relentlessly mowed down!}

32... Nxf5

{Black had no choice.

32... gxf5 33. Rg1 or 33. Rg3 is soon curtains. The loose nature of the

G-file is a constant but very relevant feature of the position.}

33. Rg1!

{Cool finishing. I am especially proud of this under tremendous

time-pressure, having less than 2 minutes to reach 36 moves.

33. exf5 Qxf5 34. Rg1 Rd7 does not break through, but still looks strong.

33. Qg4 was so, so tempting, but I could not see a finish after 33... Nh7

34. Qxg6+ Ng7 and despite how many rooks I put on the G file, black can

defend with Rd7 and Qb7 and although there are Nxd6 tactics, nothing was

concrete enough for me.

So, I go the simple and logical route, where both knights are en prise.}

33... Nxe4

34. Qxe4 Kf7

35. Rf3

{Introducing the final tactics. The knight on f5 is pinned, which allows

Nxd6 tactics. All of the white pieces are helping in the attack whilst the

black queen's rook is doing nothing at all. Black realised this and now

attempted to rectify that slight impairment...but only allows a neat

beautiful finish!}

35... Rb8

36. Qg4

{And with black utterly tied up, the g6 pawn can not be defended due to

Nxd6+ forks, the game is now over. Note how that quiet little knight over on

b5 has sat there, so quietly, but so, so, effective!}

36... Ke7

{Now my dear audience, find the finish!

That little old knight on b5. What has he actually done?

He can now be used to give the coup de grace!}

37. Na7!

{A very neat, dominating performance, cutting a very good player down in the

simplest of terms.}

37... 1-0

Opening references:

A.

5... Qc7 6. Bc4 h6 7. O-O Be7 8. Re1 Nf8 9. b3 Be6 10. d5 Bd7 11. Ba3 c5 12.

Nb5 Qb8 13. Bxc5 a6 14. Nxe5 axb5 15. Nxd7 Nxd7 16. Bxb5 Ngf6 17. e5 O-O 18.

exf6 Bxf6 19. Bd4 Bxd4 20. Qxd4

Carraminana Lopez,L (1929)-Buil Rello,J (1967)/Spain 2006/EXT 2007/1-0})

B.

6. Bc4 Be7 7. O-O Ngf6 8. Re1 h6 9. Ba2 Qc7 10. Nh4 g6 11. f4 exf4 12. Bxf4

Nh5 13. Bg3 Nxg3 14. hxg3 Nf8 15. Qd3 Ne6 16. Rf1 Rf8 17. Kh1 Bd7 18. d5 Ng5

19. Rad1 O-O-O 20. dxc6 bxc6

Pedersen,D (2324)-Abbasifar,H (2375)/Golden Sands 2000/CBM 077 ext/1-0 (49)

C.

6... Be7 7. O-O h6 8. b3 Ngf6 9. Bb2 O-O 10. Re1 Qc7 11. Bf1

Rd8 12. Qd2 Nh7 13. Rad1 Ng5 14. Nxg5 Bxg5 15. Qd3 exd4 16. Qxd4 Ne5 17. Rb1

Bg4 18. Be2 Bf6 19. Qe3 Bxe2 20. Rxe2 d5 21. exd5 Ng4 22. Qh3 cxd5

23. Nb5 Qf4 24. Bc1 Qf5 25. f3 Ne3 26. Bxe3 Qxh3 27. gxh3 d4 28. Bf2 d3 29.

cxd3 Rxd3 30. Kg2 Ra6 31. Re3 Rd2 32. Kf1 Bg5 33. Rc3 Rg6 34. Nd4 Bf6 35.

Rc2 Kh7 36. Ne2

Galakhov,V (2405)-Daryev,S (2087)/Odessa UKR 2005/1-0 (63)}

Chris Ross  
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