All,

Here’s a very interesting game. It illustrates perfectly the continuation of

an opening plan, following it through Positionally, not rushing things and

capping things up with some nice little tactics. A demonstration on how to

squish your opponent and force him into tremendous time pressure due to the

fruitless search for a viable plan.

It also illustrates that every move counts. “Waiting” moves have to be played very carefully, and that they should not cause any weakness as a result. Note how black’s “waiting” move with 11... h6 comes back to haunt him for the rest of the game. Compare that with white’s 11. Kh1 move, which was later rectified and the “waiting” move reversed.  
This opening refutation to the Benko Gambit has served me very well and I

have won some nice games with it. For a surprise factor, it is a lethal

weapon to have in your armoury.

Enjoy.  
[Event "Perkins Club matches 2005-2006"]

[Site "Peterborough, ENG"]

[Date "2006.01.27"]

[Round "1.1"]

[White "Ross, Chris"]

[Black "Bowers, Francis"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "A57"]

[WhiteElo "2165"]

[BlackElo "2065"]

[Annotator "Chris Ross"]

[PlyCount "81"]

{A57: Benko Gambit}

1. d4 Nf6

2. c4 c5

3. d5 b5

{A surprising choice by my opponent who normally adapts the King's Indian. I

have had some good success against him with the KID and this opening choice

must have been his preparation to surprise me....but....)

4. a4!

{A rarely seen side-line of the Benko which came back into fashion around

the 1990's. This basically tells black that white is not wishing to dabble in a tactical

warfare and is, in fact, seeking a nice quiet positional game. Players of the

Benko don't normally like this counter-strategy and are often perplexed to

know how to handle white's blatant disregard for his aggressive intensions.}

4... bxc4

{theory has often suggested that the blockading plan of 4... b4 in the hope of

not getting squashed through the centre and the king-side is black's best, as the C4 square is always going to be white's, the extra pawn is of no worth. More importantly, the light squares are better for white in comparison to the normal Benko.}

5. Nc3 d6

6. e4 Ba6

{Black is seeking a place for his light-squared bishop. White intends f2-f4,

h2-h3, giving the light-squared bishop on c8 no squares at all.

Therefore, black aims to exchange this poor bishop for white's, once white has

decided to win the pawn back on c4, which he has to work slightly to

regain.}

7. f4 Nfd7

{A strange choice. Black wishes to hold up the central thrust e4-e5.

The knight on f6 is a bit precarious, and the knight retreat allows it and the “Dragon” bishop to control e5. As it is, the text move puts a big question to

the knight on b8 and its future development. Even more shuffling will be

needed by black now to complete development.}

8. Nf3 g6

9. Be2

{This is quite important. white must not immediately rush after the pawn on

c4. the pawn is always going to be there and not playing directly to regain the pawn only gives black that bit more to think about. Nd2 and the capture of the pawn on c4 is always on. Simple quick development saves time on the clock and poses the question to

black on how he is going to develop his queen's knight. Also, to whether his

bishop on a6 has in fact any future at all.}

9... Bg7

10. O-O Qc7

11. Kh1

{A critical time for black. He must make some big decisions now. White's

text move is almost a passing move, but securing the king at the same time.

The king is safer away from the a7-g1 diagonal, preventing annoying checks with

Qb6 discoveries and Bd4+ ideas.

So, does black now castle and allow a possible king-side attack from white?

With the king slightly safer, possible g2-g4 thrusts could be on for white.}

11... h6?!

{White's whole strategy has now achieved something: a critical weakening of

the black king-side, as well as a  weakening of the light squares.

this may not be presently obvious, but this will inevitably prove important.

Black is naturally wishing to secure up his king-side, hoping to

blockade there if white wishes to storm it. In a way, this is again like a

waiting move, but unlike the Kh1 prophylactic, black's choice creates a weakness

that can never be repaired.}

12. Nd2

{White has no satisfactory way on continuing his waiting game. In order

to complete full development, he must eliminate the c4 pawn and begin to

control the light squares. Naturally, black still has to worry about his

queen-side.}

12... O-O

13. Bxc4 Nb6

14. Bb5

{An annoying move for black to deal with.

White does not wish to capture on a6, as this allows Nxa6 and Nb4 giving the

knight a beautiful outpost.

the idea is to recapture on b5 with the pawn if black decides to chop,

denying the black knight an entry into a6 and then b4. the backward A7 pawn

then would become a huge target for white to aim at.}

14... Bb7

{A sad admission in itself. Black can not find a good plan, does not want to fall into white's idea of creating "pawn thorns" and is wanting to hit out at the centre with e7-e6

at some stage to open things up.}

15. a5 N6d7

16. Qe2

{Building up on the e5 square, which, naturally, in the long-term scheme of

things, is white's major objective, to pawn storm the centre and create

critical weaknesses.

Black also has to be wary of a5-a6 moves completely clamping black on the

queen-side. Once again, na6/Nb4 is prevented.}

16... a6

17. Bc4

{Protecting the d5 pawn, which is going to become weak when white thrusts

with e4-e5. Also, black's plan of e7-e6 to break things open has been prevented. Black is gradually, but inevitably, being squashed here.}

17... Nf6

18. Nf3 Nh7

{desperately trying to hold up the e4-e5 thrust, but this can not be

permanently stopped. White must simply complete development now.}

19. Bd2 Nd7

20. Rfe1

{Setting the scene for the central thrust.

Rae1 may have been more desirable, but the a5 pawn is weak and needs current

protection. In any case, once this pawn has been protected, Rad1 may be

necessary and the F1 rook doesn't seem to be doing all that much. If I am

aiming for e-file activity, then the F file isn't all that important at

the present moment. The rook can return to f1 very quickly in any case.}

20... Rfe8

21. e5

{Finally accomplishing one major element of white's plan.

Just note how e5-e6 will now become extremely strong at some point with the

weakness of the pawn on g6. See how the 11.. h6 idea, that all-none-important

waiting move has created serious weaknesses. E5-e6 is going to attack the f7 pawn, which is the supporter of the g6 pawn. The pawn chain is slowly being demolished in front of the black king. Weaknesses are now becoming very tangible.}

21... Ndf8

22. Na4

{Another nice idea of white’s whole strategy is the creation of the b6

outpost, which the slightly-in-the-way knight on c3 can happily head for.

On b6, it not only hits the rook on a8 [a defender of the a6 pawn] but also

protects d5. With the knight on b6, the queen's rook

will be allowed to move as the a5 pawn is now covered. Developing the rook along the 1st rank is possible, or even upwards to a3, in order to swing across the 3rd rank is an option. The queen’s bishop can also land on c3, defending the b2 pawn, but offering assistance to the pawn on e5. If this is the case, Rad1 will support the d5 pawn. All of white’s pieces are coordinating beautifully and black is crouching on his first three ranks.}

22... Rad8

23. Nb6 dxe5

{black desperately strives to gain some activity.

23... e6 attempting to mix things up must be black's plan here.}

24. fxe5 g5

{Black was now in serious time trouble, having spent all of his time

attempting to find adequate defences to all of white's slow methodical

advances.

he now decides that outright tactics and a go-for-broke approach is his only

way to continue.

So, g4 is threatened with the threat of the support of the e5 outpost.

This is easily defended, but black is wanting to gain the g6 and then f4

outposts for his knights.}

25. Bc3 Ng6

26. Rad1 Nf4

27. Qe3 Nf8

28. h4!

{black has landed on a reasonable plan of play and is finding some good

outposts for his knights. He must not be allowed to settle on this and be

permitted to regroup.

The disturbance of the support of the outpost is the basic way to make the

f4 knight feel uncomfortable.

this also allows back-rankers to be avoided.}  
28... N8g6

29. hxg5 hxg5

30. Kg1!

{Toying with black. White is in no real hurry to capitalise on his advantages. He has a huge

positional plus and need not rush into gaining material. King-safety is the

first thing in chess and black is seeking active counter-play to compensate

for his poor position.

The long diagonals have to be considered here. With the central e4-e5 thrust

having been accomplished, Bd4+ ideas for black are not easily achieved. However, the

bishop on b7 has more of a chance to become active if/when black plays

e7-e6. In that case, the king does not belong on the a8-h1 diagonal and

especially, the g2 pawn could become a liability.

If white goes snatching the g5 pawn immediately, with e7-e6 and the

possible opening of the b7-bishop, with the knight on f4, the g2 pawn is under

attack.

Therefore, there is no need to rush and placing the king on a better square,

Away from an open file, is another clever waiting move.

30. g3 Nh3 31. Kg2 [and not 31. Nxg5 as the pin 31... Bh6 is too awkward as 32. Kg2 Nxg5 is a loss of the knight} is what the computer suggests

but opening that long diagonal scares the monkeys out of me, so I didn't opt

for that route. If the knight on h3 could be defended by g5-g4 ideas, I was not sure how to prevent e7-e6 ideas for black.}

30... e6

31. dxe6

{Playing with fire with fire.

Blockading with 31. d6 would be absolutely adequate, but the creation of even more targets is just advantageous for white. Especially with that g6 square having been

weakened by the 11... h6 “waiting” move!}

31... fxe6

{No better is 31... Nxe6 32. Bxe6 Rxe6 33. Qxg5 Rxd1 34. Rxd1 Bc6 35. Rd8+ Re8 36. Rxe8+ Bxe8. It is a miserable position for black.}

32. Rxd8

{The computer doesn't like this! I was simply trying to weaken the e6 square, which I thought was fatally weak for black.

Good old fritz suggests 32. Nxg5 Qc6 33. Qg3 Rxd1 34. Rxd1 Qxg2+ 35. Qxg2 Bxg2 36. Nxe6 Nxe6 37. Kxg2 Bxe5. That is getting unnecessarily messy though.}

32... Rxd8

{In fact, I was expecting 32... Qxd8 33. Rf1 g4 when I would probably retreat my knight to e1 and start probing down the F-file.}

33. Nxg5 Nxg2?

{A nice little complicated position for black to deal with in severe time

trouble. A slightly better choice was 33... Qe7 34. Qg3 Bd5 35. Bxa6 Bxg2 although it’s pretty complicated for both sides.}

34. Bxe6+

{Slightly inaccuracies slip into my game now, but I can place that on the

amount of drink I had already consumed during my enjoyable playing of such a

dominating position.

34. Qh3 N2h4 35. Nxe6 Qe7 36. Nxd8+ Kh7 37. Nxb7 Qg5+ 38. Kh1 Nf4 and black

can soon resign.}

34... Kf8

{Of no use is 34... Kh8 35. Qh3+ N2h4 36. Nf7+ Kh7 37. Qg4 winning  
as the queen can penetrate on h5. By the way 37. Nxd8 Qxd8 38. Nd7 Nf4 39. Bf5+ Kh8 is another path.}

35. Rf1+ N6f4

{With seconds on the clock, black makes his final mistake, although it is

pretty much over for him in the first place. 35... Ke8 36. Qh3 N2f4 and

white has to figure out how to punish that exposed black king.}

36. Rxf4+ Nxf4

37. Qxf4+ Ke8

{And now the time control had been reached, it was time to take stock.

White has won material, but both kings are dangerously exposed.

however, black has the white two knights, the white bishop, and the white

queen hovering around his king. White has no black pieces near him.

To find the neat coup de grace, you should think about the initial part of

the game, on how the weaknesses that were created and how those weaknesses

could come back to haunt black.

What then was the biggest weakness black created, which had ultimately led

to all his consequent problems.

Yup, it’s that old Pr3 move, 11... h6.

g6 was fatally compromised as a result of that weakening move. Wouldn't it be then fitting if the g6 square turned out to be black's losing point?

Just as a quick side-track, consider how many squares the black king

actually has. Two: e8 and e7. At e7, the immediate Qf7 would be mate. Hence,

we need to force Ke7 and allow Qf7 at the same time.

With all these considerations in mind, the final touch is easy to find.}

38. Qf5

{With the threat of Qg6+ Kf8 with nh7, or Ke7 and Qf7 as

Mating ideas.

Sweet justice that a quiet move like this can finish the whole white concept

off. Beautiful chess.}

38... Rd1+

39. Kf2 Qe7

40. Bf7+ Kd8

41. Ne6+ 1-0

Opening references

A.  
10... O-O 11. Be3 Bc8 12. Bxc4 Na6 13. Qe2 Qb6 14. a5 Qb7 15. h3 Rb8 16. Bc1

Nc7 17. e5 a6 18. Ra3

Qa8 19. Re1 Bb7 20. Rd1 dxe5 21. fxe5 e6 22. dxe6 Bxf3 23. exf7+ Kh8 24.

gxf3

Nxe5 25. Nd5

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