All,  
  
Here is a very interesting game, which demonstrates excellently how aesthetically, a particular line may be appealing, but yet, it has deeper positional consequences. Arguably, this could be stated as the game of the Six-Nations tournament, which took place at the end of December 2013.  
My opponent, was the current French top board, a remarkable gent, who I had the misfortune to fall fowl of in Brno, The Czech Republic, in 1998. In that particular game, I played the King’s Gambit, inadvertently complying with my opponent’s admirable tactical capabilities. In that regard, when preparing for this particular encounter, I had to consider carefully how to approach the game. Naturally, I had to avoid any complicated positions and strive for a slower positional approach. Ideally, a queenless middle-game, where minor-piece manoeuvrability could be of quintessential importance. As a direct consequence, I chose the Queen’s Gambit, with the strict intension of aiming for a quiet position, where I could toy with a small plus.  
Enjoy!  
  
[Event "Six Nations Congress 2013"]

[Site "Ostend, BEL"]  
[Date "2013.11.15"]  
[Round "4.1"]  
[White "Ross, Chris"]  
[Black "Hervais, Adrien"]  
[Result "1-0"]  
[ECO "D27"]  
[Annotator “Chris Ross"]  
[PlyCount "123"]  
[EventDate "2013.11.15"]  
  
{D27: Queen's Gambit Accepted: Classical main line}  
1. d4 d5  
2. c4 dxc4  
3. Nf3 Nf6

4. e3 e6

5. Bxc4 c5

6. O-O a6

{A slight pause here. I have played both 7. A4 and 7. Qe2 in this line. As stated in the introduction though, I was aiming for a quiet line and an IQP position was something that I wanted to avoid really, as I would be obliged to press on the king-side. Although a more than adequate line, I wished for something less unbalanced. Again, a queenless middle-game was something I was considering, so I had no qualms in entering into the classical variation. The question was, to whether my opponent would feel comfortable in such passive lines.}   
7. dxc5 Qxd1

8. Rxd1 Bxc5

9. a3   
{Quietly completing development. The position has symmetrical similarities, but is not exact in its entirety. The white rook has already been developed to D1 and white has that half-move advantage. Naturally, white develops the light-squared bishop on the long-diagonal, as the e3 pawn is needed to secure the d4 outpost.}  
9... b5

10. Be2 Bb7

11. b4 Be7

12. Bb2 O-O

{Black is perfectly content to enter into a symmetrical position. However, there are slight nuances in the position, which are important. After all, the saying “symmetry is the quickest way to the cemetery” has validity.  
The queen-side pawns being fixed as they are, there are outposts to be exploited. With white being that half-move ahead, he has the first opportunity to occupy these outposts. Curiously, not only c5 is an outpost, but also a5, where a knight can happily sit, pestering the light-squared fianchettoed bishop. Since the natural developing square for the night (c3) achieves very little, the white queen’s knight is routed for the a5 outpost.}

13. Nbd2 Nbd7

14. Nb3 Rac8

{White has to be wary of the black rook penetrating onto the 7th rank here, via c2. White does not wish to challenge the C-file immediately, as exchanges along that file would lead to little for white. White is, naturally, aiming for minor-piece activity. Exchanges on c1 would also cancel out the rook on d1’s gained tempo in the opening, as then Rdc1 would be necessary. For those reasons, white has to continue with his plan of establishing the outposts.}  
15. Na5

{White could play the position slightly quieter with 15. Bd4, preventing the black queen’s knight coming into b6 and then c4. This is again an important feature, as white strives to occupy the QB5 and QR5 squares for his knight, black can also do the same.   
It is here where the importance of the b6 square starts to appear to be important. This square will feature throughout the remainder of this game.}

15... Bd5

16. Nd4   
{White has now established a sizable plus. The white knights threaten to penetrate onto c6, where tactical possibilities are abundant. Rc2 is currently prevented, and although black can prod the knight with e6-e5, a future Nf5 will gain tempo on the dark-squared bishop on e7.  
White is ready for Rac1 and a knight excursion into the c6 square. Black has now the difficult task of formulating a plan.}   
16... Bd8

{It is extremely instructive to realise that this exchange is potentially black’s losing positional strategy. The exchange of dark-squared bishop for the well-outposted white knight appears, aesthetically, attractive. The knight is prevented from entering into c6 and the white pawn-structure is shattered.}

17. Rac1 Bxa5

18. bxa5   
{The white pawn-structure appears terrible, but indeed, it is the white a5-pawn, which will eventually win this position for white. There are other positional elements to take into consideration here. Of critical importance, is that the b6 square is controlled. This prevents the black queen’s knight venturing into b6 and c4/a4. Also, white has the bishop pair. Slight as this advantage seems, it is crucial. The white dark-squared bishop can find a better position and can begin to exert pressure on all of the weakened black dark-squares. In addition, white can liquidate his doubled A-pawns at will by a timely a3-a4, hence making the unattractive pawns disappear.  
However, the most decisive point is that the b6 square has become a point of penetration, especially so, for the end-game, as the a6-pawn is backward and is vulnerable to attack. Especially so, for the white king. Since the quickest way for the king to march is via a diagonal, the g1-a7 diagonal is now crying out for the white king to march along to that b6 square. White’s game-plan is now settled, the positional objective realised, it is only now the execution that is to be achieved.}  
18... Nc5

19. Bc3   
{The bishop is manoeuvred to a better diagonal. Also, the a5-pawn is given protection.}  
19... Nb3

{Black seeks exchanges to ease his cramped position. He is hopeful, of course, of exploiting the weak white pawns in any ending.}  
20. Nxb3 Bxb3

21. Re1   
{The D-file is not important now. There is no penetration squares for the black rook and the rook on c1 needs protection. White is also preparing to open up the centre, so this rook retreat is perfectly natural.}  
21... Ne4

22. Bb4 Rfd8

23. f3   
{white begins to prepare the king-march to b6. First, the white centre is expanded, and the d5 square taken away from black. This leaves the bishop on b3 slightly stranded, although white is not interested in attempting to ensnare it. White is content on focussing on the b6 square.}  
23... Nf6

24. e4 h6

25. Kf2   
{The march begins. The long diagonal beckons the white king along it.}  
25... Nd7

{Black strives to bring his knight into the game, wanting to plant it on one of the outposts, c4 or a4. White cannot allow Ne5/Nc4, when black could claim equality. For that reason, white needs to use his bishop pair to control the knight and the dark-squares.}  
26. Be7   
{The start of many “probing” moves. The rook is teased to a worse square. The tempo-gaining trick is repeated several times throughout this game, not only to gain time on the clock, but also to lull black into a false sense of security.}  
26... Re8  
27. Bd6   
{Taking the e5 square from the black knight.}  
26... Red8

{Black is struggling to find satisfactory moves here. He does not wish to compromise his position and is seeking to tactically exploit the loose nature of the bishop on d6. Although valid, this is a rather submissive way to play the position. The immediate 27... Nb8 or 27... Nf8 may have been preferable.}   
28. Bc7 Re8   
29. Bd6   
{Again, with the idea of gaining time on the clock and to coax the perception that white would be satisfied with a draw by repetition. This is far from the case, of course.}  
29... Red8   
{Twofold repetition. A quick check of the match score saw the team not in a very good position, so there was no doubt in continuing.}  
30. Ke3   
{The next step along the long diagonal. The march is inexorable.}  
30... Nb8

{The critical point of the end-game. Black is on the verge of re-routing his knight into the middle, pressurising the a5 pawn and potentially having a route into e5. For example, if the dark-squared bishop is required to protect a5, either from b4 or b6, then the control of the e5 square has to be relinquished. The dark-squared bishop then becomes overloaded. Also, the black knight has the capacity of controlling the b6 square and the entry points to that objective-square, either c5 or d4. The decision on how to continue is easy enough to make as a consequence of these deliberations.}  
31. Bc7  Re8   
{Again, the “probing” moves are relentless. Black cannot afford to move down the D-file with 31... Rd7 as 32. Bb6 controls the d8 square and black has back-rank difficulties, as well as the knight on b8 not having any room to develop itself.}   
32. Bxb8!  
{Eliminating black’s best defender. White voluntarily gives up the bishop pair, but this only facilitates the white king’s penetration.}  
32...  Rxb8  
33. Rc6 Bc4   
{As black now became short of time, he sought tactics to unbalance the position. An admirable approach, but cool control is only required to convert this end-game advantage.}  
34. Kd4   
{Admittedly, white was keen on continuing with his game plan here and to allow the white king to penetrate as quickly as possible.  
34. Rd1 Bxe2 35. Kxe2 would actually be the better way to play this end-game, as the white king can return up the board and continue with the penetration strategy.}  
34... Red8+

35. Kc5 Rd2

36. Bxc4 Rc2

{Black naturally continues to seek complications to make life as difficult for white as possible. However, attractive tactics were not the way to proceed here. Simplicity would have given black some hope, and would have made the clock-play a lot easier too, as variations would not have to be calculated.

36... bxc4 37. Rxa6 Rxg2 38. Rb6 Rc8+ 39. Rc6 would have given white more to think about.}  
  37. Kd6

{Once again, white is intent on penetrating with the white king. Possibly more accurate is  37. Rxa6 bxc4 38. Rg1 c3.}  
37... Rxc4  
{Exchanges only aid white in his quest. 37... bxc4 and white still has to show his technique.}

38. Kc7 Rxc6+

39. Kxc6  
{Either capture would have actually suffice for white. Calm would be 39. Kxb8 Rc2 40. Rg1.}

39... b4

40. axb4   
{The coolest way to play the position. 40. A4 only allows the B-pawn to advance and the black rook has access to the b4 square. This route opens up the files and gives the white rook access to the queen-side. This is a lot easier than attempting to blockade.}  
40... Rxb4

41. Rc1   
{Shielding the white king, but also permitting the defence of the a5 pawn.}  
41... Rb5

42. Rc5 Rb2

43. h4   
{The king-side expansion is not strictly necessary, but once again, good clock-management meant that white could play some quick moves to put the pressure on black to find the correct plan in his time-shortage.}  
43... Kf8

{Black was eager to bring the king to the centre and attempt to cut off the white counterpart as much as possible. Since white is not necessarily forcing matters on the queen-side, black would have been best advised to solidify matters on the king-side with 43... g6 when 44. Kc7 initiates the final touch to the queen-side penetration. Black may wish then to keep the king on the other side with 44... Kg7 when 45. Rc6 wraps things up on the A-file.}  
44. Kc7 Ke7

45. Rc6   
{Thus building the bridge for the white king to transgress the B-file.}   
45... Rxg2

46. Kb6

{46. Rxa6 may be more accurate, but there was something rather fitting about permitting the king to complete its ultimate aim of penetrating into the b6 square.}

46... Kd7  
{In serious time pressure now, black does not find the pathway to offer the most resistance. 46... Rb2+ 47. Kxa6 f5 put a bigger challenge to white.}

47. Rc7+ Kd6

48. Rxf7 g5

49. hxg5 hxg5

50. Rg7  
{More concerned now with finding quick-moves, white does not execute the ending accurately. 50. Kxa6 is more to the point.}

50... Rf2  
{The liquidation of the pawns only makes the end-game easier for white to resolve. Naturally, black was wishing for an exchange of all the pawns, in an attempt to secure a stale-mate type position, or at best, a Philidor’s Defence rook-pawn ending. With the outside passed A-pawn though, this was always going to be difficult to achieve.

50... Ke5 51. Kxa6 Kf4 52. Rf7+ Ke5 53. Rb7 is the best way to continue.}

51. Rxg5 Rxf3

52. Kxa6 Rb3

{Black’s intensions are obvious, but indirect play may have been the better route. 52... Kc6 53. Rb5 Re3 54. Rb6+ Kc7 could have offered chances.}

53. Rb5 Rc3

54. e5+ Kc6

55. Rb6+ Kd7

{The final mistake by black. The position is tough to play and with seconds on the clock, black had no hope of holding it. 55... Kc7 56. Kb5 would be the way to play for the victory.}

56. Ka7 Rc7+  
{56... Rc5 57. a6 Rc1 offered nothing for black.}

57. Rb7 Kc6

58. Rxc7+ Kxc7

{And once again, there was something fitting about the way the A-pawn had the final say in the position.}  
59. a6 Kc8

60. Kb6 Kb8

61. Kc6 Ka7

62. Kd7 1-0

Opening references

A.

12... Nbd7 13. Bd4 O-O 14. Nbd2 Bd5

1/2-1/2 Drasko,M (2500)-Damljanovic,B (2560)/Cacak 1991/CBM 023 ext})

B.  
13... Nc6 14. Rac1 Rfd8 15. Nd4 Nxd4 16. Bxd4 Bd5 17. f3 Ne8 18. e4 Bb7

19. Bb6 Rdc8 20. Nb3 Rxc1 21. Rxc1 Rc8 22. Rxc8 Bxc8 23. e5 f6 24. f4 g5 25. g3

Ng7 26. Nd4 gxf4 27. Nc6 Bf8 28. exf6

Getzuhn,D (1922)-Fiss,W (1714)/Berlin 2006/EXT 2007/1-0 (38)

C.  
15. Rac1 Rfd8 16. Na5 Ba8 17. Nd4 Nb8 18. f3 Nd5 19. e4 Nb6 20. Ndb3 Na4 21. Rxd8+ Rxd8 22. Be5 Bg5 23. Rc7 Be3+ 24. Kf1 Bb6 25. Rc2 f6 26. Bg3 Kf8 27. Bf2 Bxf2 28. Kxf2 Ke7 29. Ke3 Kd7

Milostny,M-Vajcner,J (1936)/Pardubice 2005/EXT 2006/1/2-1/2 (67)