All,

The deciding game between New England A and Cambridge A. The match was

poised at 2-2, with this game to decide the match and put New England in a

very dominating position to win the league.

The game neatly demonstrates the necessity for pure activity, aggressiveness

and consistency in the forcing of tension and continuation of the initiative

when one has the advantage.

Enjoy!

[Event " CCCA League Matches 2010-2011 "]

[Site "Cambridge, ENG"]

[Date "2011.04.13"]

[Round "9.4"]

[White "Ribbands, Patrick"]

[Black "Hanks, Paul"]

[Result "0-1"]

[ECO "A25"]

[Annotator "Chris Ross"]

[PlyCount "84"]

[WhiteTeam " Cambridge A "]

[BlackTeam " New England A"]

{A25: English Opening}

1. c4 e5

2. Nc3 Nc6

3. g3 d6

4. Bg2 Be6

{If black is intending an aggressive King's Indian type setup against the

English, he may well do best to play 4... f5 immediately, signalling his

intent. The development of the light-squared bishop can be held back, to

hold back any pressure that can be brought down on the B7 square. The

textbook move is perfectly acceptable, but rapid king-side development is to

be preferred. Although the move gains a tempo on the c4, square, white

defends this easily enough with d2-d3. With that having been protected,

white always has the annoying tactic b2-b4, when a capture by the knight on

c6 would allow a Bxb7 tactic, opening up that lovely bishop on g2. A small

point, but white is wanting to expand on the queen-side as an intricate part

of his game plan. Why then, allow him to have free tactics with an advance

of the B-pawn?

So, f5, g6, Bg7 and then, Nf6 with h6 (to protect the g5 square if white

plays Nf3) and then O-O. Black has a comfortable and more active position on

the king-side.}

5. d3 Nf6

{Going somewhat against the point of the setup. Black should be aiming for a

King's Indian setup, where he can get an f7-f5 in for free without having to

manoeuvre his King's knight to d7, or e8 or h5. However, with black having

played an early Be6, the b2-b4 thrust becomes annoying. Here is an example:

5... f5 6. b4 Qd7 7. b5 Nd8 8. a4

Nf6 9. Qb3 Be7 10. a5 Rb8 11. f4 O-O 12. Nf3 Nf7 13. O-O Rfe8 14. Nd5 c6 15.

Nxe7+ Qxe7 16. fxe5 dxe5 17. Ba3 Qd7 18. bxc6 bxc6 19. Qc3 Qc7 20. Bc5

Where black had reached equality easily in Sunye Neto,J (2470)-Kupreichik,V

(2480)/Barcelona 1984/EXT 1999/1/2-1/2 (43)}

6. e4?!

{Structurally, rather dubious. White is intent on clamping down on the d5

square But this not need worry him too much, as Black would be spending a

lot of time to centrally break with it.

If white is really wanting to blockade on the d5 square, then the immediate

6. Nd5 has to be the only option.

White is somewhat missing the point of the intended target square, that

being the b7 weak point. One of the purposes of fienchettoing the

light-squared bishop on g2 is to exert pressure down the long diagonal.

Therefore, Nd5 helps a future b2-b4, although there is an argument for the

immediate 6. b4!? in the first place due to the tactic already mentioned.}

6... Qd7

{Black is rushing to exert pressure on the light-squares, when there is a

subtle common move-order feature that needs to be kept in mind.

As the current position shows, any Bh3 is not possible, due to the white

king's knight not having been developed. IN that sense, the black queen's

development to d7 may well be redundant, if that knight on g1 never moves

and white, say, goes hacking with h2-h4 without it's development.

In that regard then, black should delay the queen's development to d7 until

Bh3 becomes a potential threat, thereby forcing white to deal with the

positional threat either by h2-h3 or h2-h4. In either case, black has

developed and forced white to waste a tempo by defending against the

positional threat of Bh3.

Therefore, black does best to develop his king-side and solve the problem of

his king's bishop.

Now, in many similar Botvinik setups against the English, black has played

g7-g6, instead of the awkward development move Nf6. In those Botvinik

setups, black would now play Bg7, or Nge7 and wait for white to commit

himself on the king-side with a knight development.

So, here, 6... g6 or 6... Be7 is the most accurate.

Here are some examples:

6... g6 7. Nge2 Qd7 8. h3 Bg7 9. Nd5 Ne7 10. Bh6 O-O 11. Nxf6+

Bxf6 12. Bxf8 Rxf8 13. Qd2 c6 14. h4 d5 15. Rc1 dxc4 16. dxc4 Qxd2+ 17. Kxd2

c5 18. Kc3 Nc6 19. Rcd1 Bd8 20. b3 Ba5+ 21. Kb2

D'Israel,D (2240)-Sales,C/Brasilia 1999/CBM 068 ext/1/2-1/2

6... Be7 7. Nge2 Qd7 8. h3 O-O 9. Be3 Ne8 10. f4 f5 11. exf5 Bxf5 12. Nd5

Nf6 13. g4 exf4 14. Nexf4 Be6 15. Nxf6+ Rxf6 16. g5 Rf5 17. Be4 Re5 18. Nxe6

Qxe6 19. Qd2 Bxg5 20. Bxg5 Rxe4+ 21. dxe4

Heine,R (2029)-Kordel,M (1965)/Germany 2006/EXT 2006/1/2-1/2}

7. Nd5 Nd4?!

{Another slightly awkward move to have to make. White's last has

demonstrated the obscure development placement of the black king's knight.

Instinct cries out for development with 7... Be7as white would be reluctant

to exchange his strongly outposted knight for a relatively poor, blocked in,

bishop. If black would then like to preserve the bishop, a future Bd8 is

possible.

The text-move is provocative and tempts white into making a strategically

ambitious move, which is not easy to determine whether it is good or not.}

8. Bg5

{White had to accept the challenge and weaken the black pawn structure.

8. Nxf6+ gxf6 9. Nf3 O-O-O

is unclear, but must be OK for white. White can himself escape the king to

the queen-side if things become too dangerous for him on the king-side, but

with the doubled black F pawns, black has no natural pawn break. White can

take on d4 and leave the black pawn mass ruptured and very ugly indeed and

as long as the white king does not come under direct fire immediately

through the centre, white has to be standing better there.}

8... Nxd5

{Making life for the light-squared bishop rather awkward. Again, simple

development should be absolutely fine for black.

8... Be7 9. Nxe7 Qxe7 10. h3 is at least equal for black as the pin on the

f6 knight can not be maintained and the knight on d4 is keeping things

together.}

9. cxd5 Bg4

10. f3 Bh5

11. Bh3?!

{Activating the bishop, but neglecting development. Indeed, this only drives

the black queen to a more active square.

Fundamentally, white needs to rid himself of that annoying knight on d4,

which is tactically holding black ahead. With that knight's disappearance,

white can play Ne2 and O-O in relative comfort.

11. Be3 $5 c5 12. Bxd4 cxd4 and the question arrives to whether white has a

"good knight VS bad bishop" game, where the bishop on e7 is buried.}

11... Qb5

{Bringing the black queen to exert pressure on the white weaknesses. White's

lack of development is now making his position worse. White is probably

struggling now. B2, d3 and now, f3 have become very weak and not all of the

positional weaknesses can be defended simultaneously.}

12. b3

{White has now to resort to tactics to solve his development problems. The

black queen is active and needs to be driven away from it's dominating

square by tactical means.

The B2 pawn, as in many openings, can be poisonous.

12. a4 is a tactical shot that drives the queen to a dark-square and ensures

that the a2 pawn is not vulnerable after any Qxb2 pawn grabs.

The immediate 12... Qxb2? allows 13. Rb1 when b7 is targeted. 13... Nc2??

loses to 14. Kd2! and any other black queen move allows Rxb7 with counter

play. So, 12... Qc5 13. Rc1 Qb6 is clearly better for black, but white is

not out of it entirely.}

12... h6

{Forcing the bishop back to a square where it wants to go.

Unless PR3 moves have a specific strategic purpose, they should be avoided!

Black wants to open up the centre now and rid himself of the backward

C-pawn.

12... c6 is the only logical move in the position as it is active and gets

on with the black strategy. The bishop on g5 is biting on thin air and need

not be pestered.

After 12... c6, white has a lot of problems to solve.}

13. Be3 Be7

{Strangely enough, black should concentrate on the positional value of his

knight on d4 now and not so worry about development! The positional threat

of capturing on d4 needs to be dealt with. Having driven the dark-squared

bishop back to e3, black now needs to waste time in dealing with the

prospect of the knight's capture.}

14. Rc1

{A logical move, but white should be thinking about the long term plan now.

The knight on d4 is simply too dominating. It's capture has to be the

critical strategic question.

14. Bxd4 Qb4+ 15. Kf1 Qxd4 [15... exd4 16. Rc1 is not so good for black] and

black has a lot of control of the dark-squares, but it is going to take a

long time before his bishop comes to life.}

14... c5

{Black misses the chance to rid himself off his worse piece!

14... Bg5 15. Bxg5 hxg5 16. Kf1 is very miserable for white. Note that Rxc7

is never a threat due to a Qa5+ tactic picking it off.}

15. dxc6 Nxc6

{Inconsistent. Black needs to control the centre and maintain that knight on

d4. If white wishes to rid himself off it, then, he will have to give up his

precious dark-squared bishop.

15... bxc6 16. Bxd4 exd4 17. Qc2 is just better for black.}

16. Kf2?

{A miserable move to have to make and one that a player should know

instinctively that it is wrong.

With the release of the pressure on f3, white has to look to develop his

knight on g1 as fast as possible.

Naturally, the tactics have to be calculated carefully but due to black not

having castled, white can just about get away with it.

16. Ne2 Bxf3 17. Nc3 Bxd1 18. Nxb5 and white wins material due to Nc7+

tactics.

If this variation works, then white should be able to play Nc3 next move,

defending the f3 square in the process, or could simply castle and if

permitted, bring the king's knight via c3 into d5 (again reason why 15...

bxc6 had to be better.)}

16... O-O

17. Ne2 Nb4

{Targeting the weak light-squares.

Is there a slightly more subtle route to go via 17... Qa6 with ideas of a

break with d6-d5 and then Nb4 ideas? The black queen is going to be hit in

any case and it's best square seems to be a6, so why not put it there

straight away?}

18. Rc4

{White had to start getting very desperate now. The D3 pawn had to drop and

it is tactics again that have to salvage white's horrible position.

18. Nc3 Qa6 is the cool response as 18... Nxd3+ 19. Kg1 Qa6 20. Bf1 does not

help black as the knight on d3 is falling. Then 19 Bf1 is cringe-worthy, but

a steal on a2 is then thwart with danger due to Ra1 pins or Nxa2 Qxa2 and

Ra1 traps.}

18... Nxa2

{A pawn grab which complicates matters considerably. Black should be

striving for a break d6-d5 as fast as possible now but it's getting

complicated. The knight on a2 can become very short of squares.}

19. Bd2?

{As this does not trap the knight, there is no reason why the dark-squares

around the white king should be left any weaker than what they are already.

19. Ra4 certainly does put the question to the knight on a2 and finding the

tactics to save it would have been challenging for black. 19. Ra4 Nb4 20.

Nc3 would force black to find 20... Qc6 21. Rxb4 Qxc3 22. Qd2 when white may

hope to hold.}

19... a5

20. Qb1 Nb4

{Black can distract white here and should certainly do so, to ensure that he

can recapture on b4 with the bishop by the move 20.. d5. The pawn itself

does not matter at all, but the opening up of the dark-squared bishop on e7

is essential. Black should be able to gather up the white D pawns easily

enough and ought not be flustered by the material invested in opening up the

position.}

21. Rhc1

{White should definitely take the opportunity now to capture on b4 and

render black's extra pawn a doubled one. It would then be difficult to

defend and is not that secure.

21. Bxb4 axb4 22. d4 is an ambitious try and black might have annoying

counter-breaks with 22... d5 but at least things are clearing up a bit for

white. 22. d4 is obviously not strictly necessary.}

21... Bd8

{Retreating, when only forwards will now do. When on top, maintain the

initiative and stride forwards and not seek tactics that involve retreats to

the back-rank.

21.. d5 is the only move on the board to be considered. The breaking up of

the position has to be black's sole objective, whether it loses a pawn, two,

or not.

21... d5 22. Bxb4 Bxb4 23. exd5 is just horrific for white.}

22. Nc3

{Securing up the d5 post. This shows that d5 had to be played at all costs

by black as now white may have hopes of holding, slim as they are.}

22... Qa6

23. Bd7

{Another very obscure move to make and once again, instinct determines that

it can not be strategically correct. Bb5 is never realistically ever going

to trap the black queen and in the mean time, as the bishop is being

distracted over there on the queen-side, the white vulnerable king is just

going to be mowed down relentlessly

Again, a player has to consider, when facing obscure moves like this, how to

react in the most active, energetic way, if the immediate tactics (such as

BB5) clearly do not work.}

23... Bb6+

{Putting the bishop on a better square, but not seeking the most active

response. White's king is weak and needs to be opened up as fast as

possible. The only realistic pawn break now is f7-f5, so that has to be

checked out first.

23... f5 24. Be6+ Bf7 25. Bxf7+ Rxf7 is just fine for black as fxe4 is

coming very shortly.

Now, if white takes this with either e4xf5 or Bxf5, then Bf7 should be good

enough to snaffle an exchange on c4 or in the case of e4xf5, a break with

d6-d5 seems pretty devastating.

Black need not calculate too far in these type of positions, as the pawn

breaks have to be good for him, since the white pieces are so uncoordinated

and the white king open to the elements, and the attack!}

24. Kg2 Rad8

25. Bf5 Ba7

{Since f7-f5 has been thwarted, black should aim to get the F-file open as

fast as possible. 25... Bg6 26. Bxg6 fxg6 27. Rf1 seems best for black.}

26. Nd5 Nxd5

27. exd5 Qb6

28. Rf1 Qb5

29. Ra4 b6?

{Not a move you want to be playing, in all honesty! 29... Bb6 is solid and

good. The white pawns are weak enough, that black should be able to pick

them off at will. There is little left for white after 29... Bb6 and a

resignation can not be far away. However, with the black dark-squared bishop

shut out, white has a chance to go desperation-hacking!}

30. Rc4?

30. Rh4! and white is suddenly generating some threats of his own. The black

king-side may suddenly become very weak indeed.

Now, if 30... Bg6 31. d4! Qxd5 32. Bxh6! and white's back in the game, and

better probably!}

30... Qxd5

31. Be4

{It's hard to suggest any continuations now. Black's queen is now able to

scuttle across to the king-side for any defence against a last-minute dirty

hack. Once black is able to re-activate his dark-squared bishop, the writing

will be on the wall for white.}

31... Qe6

32. Bc6

{White's position is hopeless. He could resign quite happily now with a

clear conscience.}

32... Bg6

{Naturally, 32... d5 is more accurate, but no doubt, both players were

becoming short of time in the time scramble to reach move 36.}

33. Be4 f5

{It's rather curious how black has persistently rejected the d6-d5 thrust

throughout the game. Here it just wins material without any fuss. Again,

time-pressure must have been a factor.}

34. Bc6 d5

{At last!}

35. Rc3 e4

36. fxe4 fxe4

37. Qe1Rxf1

38. Kxf1 Qh3+

39. Kg1 b5+

40. Be3 d4

41. Bxe4 Bxe4

42. dxe4 dxe3

{The key point to remember from this encounter is that once you have the

momentum, you must retain it at all costs and push forwards and onwards,

seeking those pawn-breaks, especially through the centre, and maintain the

initiative, even at the cost of a pawn, or two!}

43. 0-1

Chris Ross

April 2011