All,

Following on from Tyson's nice wins from the 4NCL, I thought I would chuck

my nice win in, as it demonstrates a ruthlessness, that a commanding

position can indeed conquer any attempt at aggressive counter-play. Ruthless

was the attempt by my aptly named opponent, but central control and the

vital-square domination inevitably made all black's endeavours to be

aggressive fruitless...

[Event "4NCL/DIV3/ICENI VS WBCA"]

[Site "Hinckley, ENG"]

[Date "2011.01.16"]

[Round "4.2"]

[White "Ross, Chris"]

[Black "Ruthen, Stephen"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "C61"]

[WhiteElo "2223"]

[BlackElo "2066"]

[PlyCount "81"]

[EventDate "2011.01.16"]

[WhiteTeam "Braille Chess Association"]

[BlackTeam "Iceni"]

{C61: Ruy Lopez: Bird's Defence}

1. e4 e5

2. Nf3 Nc6

3. Bb5 Nd4

4. Nxd4 exd4

5. O-O Bc5

6. c3

{After the game, my opponent said that he had tried this against me before.

Really? I had no recollection of playing him before and I certainly don't

have a record of it!

Before, apparently, I played 6. d3 against him, which is a perfectly

acceptable line. However, I have learned, with experience, that the breaking

down of the pawn barrier on d4 and the establishment of a strong centre, is

more important than trying to play around the awkward d4 pawn. Black’s play

must inevitably lead to a strong centre for white.}

6... c6

7. Ba4 d6

{I hadn't prepared for this and this slightly reserved central move is not

in black's true plan of breaking open the D and E files. I had based my

pre-match preparation on the following game:

7... Ne7 8. d3 d5 9. Nd2 Bb6 10. cxd4 Bxd4 11. Kh1 O-O 12. f4 f5 13. e5 b5

14. Bb3 c5 15. Nf3 Nc6 16. a4 Ba6 17. Nxd4 Nxd4 18. axb5 Bxb5 19. Be3 Ne6

20. Qf3 Bc6 21. Ra6 Qd7 22. Rxc6

Huebner,R (2620)-Nunn,J (2590)/Brussels 1986/CBM 001/1-0})

But it was not to be. So, what is black's intension?}

8. d3 Qh4

{Which came as a surprise, as it is a very aggressive move indeed!

Black clearly indicates that he's playing for aggressive intensions and that

a king-side attack is his sole objective.

Opening references can be seen below.

So, how to respond to such an aggressive move.}

9. Qe1

{Taking an idea from the Dutch Defense that has a similar concept.

White over-protects his f2 square and moves the queen from the d1-h5

diagonal, in preparation for a light-squared bishop to land on g4, when a

f2-f3 move would not be possible due to dxc3+ discoveries, leaving the queen

very short of good squares. However, d1 is vacated for another reason, which

will become apparent.

White also has the subtle threat of e4-e5 and making a flash snatch-attack

against the centrally stranded black king. f2-f4 moves by white are also in

the offing, forcing an exchange of queens, if the black king-side suddenly

becomes too strong.

Also, white intends to rid himself of that annoying bishop on c5 for the

less potentially-strong counterpart on c1.

Possible is 9. cxd4 Bb6 10. d5 but something irked me about allowing that

dark-squared bishop on b6 to be opened up and to justify it's existence. No,

the longer it is closed out, the better.}

9... Ne7

{The point was 9... Nf6, with ideas of coming to g4, run into e4-e5 ideas,

which are awkward to meet.}

10. Nd2 Bg4

{Black is still intent on gathering his forces on the king-side for the

attack. He wishes to prevent a knight from landing on f3, harassing the

black queen.

However, as I demonstrated to my opponent afterwards, h4 is the wrong square

for the lady in any case. H5 is a much better square as on h5, black can

attempt to gather forces with a re-location of the dark-squared bishop to

the b8-h2 diagonal and the black knight wandering into g6 and then maybe f4

or h4.

Complicated ideas, but now the black pieces stand awkwardly on the

king-side. Note that white is not forced to make any pawn breeches on the

king-side, which makes any penetration by black almost impossible.

The safest path for black was 10... dxc3 11. bxc3 O-O 12. d4 and eventually

try to break down the white centre.}

11. Bd1

{The bishop retreats to evict the annoying light-squared bishop from g4,

deliberately played now before the black queen can step back a square to h5,

to threaten sneaky Be2 tactics, winning an exchange on f1.

11. Nb3 b5 12. Nxc5 dxc5 looked complicated and I was unsure to whether my

d3 pawn would then become backward and weak.

No, the bishop on a4 could become a tactical liability in any case along the

4th rank, as if black gets in dxc3 and then the bishop on g4 has a sneaky

tactic, the bishop on a4 could be hit by the black queen. That is, if I go

for any future e4-e5 breaks to expose the black king.

So, no, safety first and the retreat looks slow, but it does give the f3

square for the white knight.

Black has a big decision now...}

11... h5?!

{Again, very aggressively played by black, but the only tactical

justification of the move is if I were to take the bishop on g4, opening up

the H file for a devastating and fatal attack down the H-file.

In that in mind, I would never take on g4 then!

And as stated already, it is the h5 square where the black queen now

belongs, not the pawn. Breeching the black king-side pawn barrier like this

just means that castling there is less secure than it should be.

If not king-side, then, where? It can't stay in the centre and not allow

either rook to develop. The queen-side then?

If so, then, white is going to whip up an attack himself and as long as the

white king-side defences stay strong and the pawn barrier remains

unaffected, all should be fine, right?

11... O-O was the only other realistic move black could consider, but then

he has a long, slow defensive game to play.}

12. Nb3 dxc3

13. bxc3 Bb6

{And now white has built his centre.

Now comes the question of the black king again. Where does he belong?

Wherever he runs, he must face some kind of attack. Until then, white has to

rid himself of the most affective black pieces.

White has the better development, open lines (The B-file), the strong centre

and targets (d6).

So, all in all, seeking exchanges here of the bishops is perfectly logical.}

14. Be3 Bxe3

15. Qxe3 Rh6

{Black shows his hand. He still wishes for king-side intensions, though he

should have started realizing that the white position is just too solid for

any tactical attacks here. The black queen on h4 is so awkwardly placed that

she is in constant danger of entombing herself!

Black defends his weak d6 pawn and has Rg6 in mind.

However, the black king can no longer run to the king-side quickly. Less

secure was his safety, but best, would have been 15... O-O 16. f4 but it

would not be so quick the attack on him.}

16. f4

{Gaining more space in the centre and gathering momentum and space.

If a black rook settles on g6, it could be menaced with f4-f5 and then black

has to contend with f5-f6 ideas.

Another point to the move though is the opening of the 2nd rank for possible

defences. See the white plan next.}

16... f5?!

{A very scary move indeed!

Black told me afterwards that he felt as though there was nothing else to

play, as my idea of pushing to f5 and f6 was going to be too strong.

I wasn't prepared for this, I have to say and it took a moment for me to

realise that it actually does nothing to help black in his positional setup.

I decided then to ignore him and get on with my own strategy.

Best was 16... b6 17. Nd4 where white has a distinct advantage.}

17. a4!

{Played both offensively and defensively.

It was now clear that the black king had nowhere to go really but the

queen-side. IN that eventuality, the white A pawn is going to be used as a

battering ram to force weaknesses in the pawn chain. Since no pieces stand

in it's way and the black C pawn has already advanced to c6, the pawn

advance has the effect that the black H-pawn thrust didn't.

Similarly to the black idea of developing the king's rook to h6 behind the

H-pawn, white has defensive ideas of Ra2 if the occasion arises to defend

the white king-side from afar.

In itself too, the move is a bit of a waiting move, as the settling of the

white knight on d4 immediately would allow black to castle, as the a7 pawn

would no longer be under threat by the white queen.}

17... Qf6

{Black belatedly realizes that the black queen is poorly placed on h4. It

now retreats to pester the c3 pawn. Are we bothered?}

18. Nd4

{Well, actually, we are! The pawn is essential to maintain the white pawn

centre, which has built up impressively.

However, the c3 pawn gives the white knight, a beautifully central square,

from where it can dominate a lot of squares.

Ha ha, this releases the pressure on the a7 pawn though.

Giving, of course, black the opportunity to castle...}

18... O-O-O

{It is hard to criticise such a move, but there again, I think black's

position is at critical point. I can and could not see, a better plan for

him. Desperation defence was called for now, but wait...hang on, is an

outright attack on the black king best?

Na, not yet, there are more subtleties to appreciate.

White's initial game-plan was the centre, which he has built up

impressively. Black's outrageous f7-f5 thrust has left the central

light-squares incredibly weak.

Also, white can even force a passed pawn here.

I suddenly saw that white can slam down his E-pawn and choke black on it.

Things began to crystallise and now the positioning of the white pieces came

naturally and quickly.

White's plan: Promote his E-pawn!

OK, the black king is vulnerable at the same time, so if we can combine the

two, that would be very nice indeed.

Such a befitting end to the game then in 21 moves time!!}

19. Bb3

{Targeting the e6 and light-squares through the centre. Also, suddenly, that

poor old bishop on g4 is lacking squares. Is a cheeky h2-h3 going to trap

it?!}

19... fxe4

20. dxe4 Re8

{Indeed, white's pawn formation is not the greatest, but it is compensated

by open lines against the black weakened king, but also, by a very strong,

very dangerous passed E pawn.

Tactics are now becoming crucial. Black was thinking that I wanted to push

my F-pawn, trying to win the bishop on g4, when Nxf5 tactics are on. But no,

I am not interested in attempting to entrap the bishop on g4. My plan is to

push the E pawn and push him home.

20... c5 21. Nb5 a6 22. Na3 is losing time, but weakens the d6 pawn and the

black king all that bit more. I was happy to lose the tempi, with the knight

re-entering into the fray via c4, which would just support a e4-e5 thrust.}

21. Qd2

{My initial intension was 21. e5 Qh4 22. Bf7 Nd5 23. Bxd5 cxd5 but then I

saw ghosts with the black queen snatching some pawns somewhere...I can't

explain it well, but I decided to be cautious and unpin the queen off the

E-file, positionally thinking about the rook Vis-à-vis the lady. Also, the

d6 square is a target and I can hit a7 at any stage in the game. The queen's

rook is now needed to aid in the E-pawn's advance.}

21... Bd7

22. Rae1 Qh4?

{And back she goes.

Did she not learn from the first time that it is not a good square for her?!

22... Kb8 and wait for white to push is the best chance to hold things.}

23. Nf3

{And now the knight is headed for an even better square and the black pieces

just become entangled.}

23... Qg4

24. Ng5 Rg6

25. Bd1

{There were so many attractive combinations here. I was spoilt for choice!

25. Bf7 Rf8 26. Bxg6 Nxg6 27. h3 was also going through my mind, but I

thought I would force the situation.}

25... Rxg5

{As good as resigning. But now I was in time trouble and my opponent was

simply waiting for me to make the time control.

25... Qh4 26. Bc2 was the cool way to play, or I could win the exchange with

26. g3 Rxg5 27. fxg5, but then I would have to contend with the black H-pawn

advancing to create holes in the king-side. I hadn't decided.

But black made it easy for me.}

26. Bxg4 Rxg4

27. Qxd6

{Creating that passed E-pawn and preparing it's march down the board.

Ruthless control. Black is now hopelessly placed.}

27... Rg6

28. Qd2 Ng8

29. f5 Rg4

30. Rf4 Nf6

31. e5 Rxf4

32. Qxf4 Nd5

33. Qg5 c5

34. Qxg7 Bxf5

35. Qf7 Bd7

36. Qxd5 Be6

37. Qxc5+ Kb8

38. Qd6+ Kc8

39. Rf1 Bd7

40. Rf7 Rd8

{And having reached the time control, I had the greatest of pleasures to

play the winning move, accumulating all the plans of ramming my E-pawn home

and attacking the black king!}

41. e6 1-0

Opening references:

A.

8... Qf6 9. Bb3 Ne7 10. Qh5 a5 11. Bg5 Qg6 12. Qxg6 Nxg6 13. cxd4 Bxd4 14.

Nc3

Be6 15. Bxe6 fxe6 16. Ne2 Bb6 17. Rad1 d5 18. g3 Kd7 19. Kg2 Rhf8 20. Bc1 e5

21. f4 exf4 22. gxf4 Rae8 23. Ng3 Bd4 24. b3 c5 25. Kh3 Kc6 26. Kg4 Rf7 27.

h4 dxe4 28. dxe4 Nf8 29. e5 Ng6 30. Nf5 Rd7 31. Nxd4+ Rxd4 32. Rxd4 cxd4 33.

Rd1 Rd8 34. Bb2 Kc5 35. h5 Nf8 36. f5 Nd7 37. Bxd4+ Kc6

38. Kf4

Meijers,V (2486)-Mehne,C (2194)/Stuttgart 2005/CBM 106 ext/1-0 (45)})

B.

8... Nf6 9. h3 Be6 10. Nd2 O-O 11. Nf3 dxc3 12. bxc3 d5 13. e5 Nd7 14. d4

Be7

15. Bc2 Rc8 16. Rb1 b6 17. Qd3 g6 18. Qd2 Re8 19. Nh2 c5 20. Bd3 f6 21. f4

Bf8

22. Ng4 Qe7 23. Qf2

Garcia,G (2520)-Lower,S (2240)/Philadelphia 1995/EXT 2000/1-0 (38)

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