All,

The “Hedgehog” is a respectable defence, adopted by many over the past century and it has proven extraordinarily difficult to break down. Commentators have constantly stated that a slow, methodical approach against such a cramped, but essentially, solid defence, is the best approach. You cannot expect to blow this opening out of the water very quickly and squashing it down by squeezing up against it is considered a reasonable approach to tackling it.  
The below game has a number of intriguing points to it and I think you will find it all interesting on how to handle such a challenging defence. I have studied this opening extensively with many coaches over the years and have considered it in depth. Although this game is a more aggressive approach to my normal style, I think it apt for annotation, in that it is not a defence you can take very slowly, more suitable for my positional style of play, as otherwise, the white centre, especially, e4, will collapse quickly.   
Enjoy a very thematic game against a very strong opponent.

[Event "LCDC League Matches 2012-2013"]

[Site "Birmingham, ENG"]

[Date "2013.02.05"]

[Round "11.1"]

[White "Ross, Chris"]

[Black "Holt, Philip"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "A47"]

[WhiteElo "2247"]

[BlackElo "2235"]

[Annotator "Chris Ross"]

[PlyCount "109"]

[EventDate "2013.02.05"]

[WhiteTeam "Daventry A"]

[BlackTeam "olton A"]

{A47: Queen’s Indian Defence}

1. Nf3 Nf6

2. d4 b6

{Black gets his opening surprise in first.  
Phil Holt is a strong local league player, graded at ECF 203 (FIDE 2235), and I duly prepared for him. Database analysis indicated to me that the Barry Attack or the 150 Attack was my best approach as statistically, this was the lines he had least success against. Suitably booked up, I opened up with 1. Nf3, which is not my usual opening choice.  
The Queen’s Indian is an interesting choice and I have studied many a Korchnoi-Karpov game in these lines. I find the latest theory of the temporary D-pawn sack very intriguing and am happy to play such variations. IN this particular game though, the white queen is not forced to wander to c2, which makes life that much easier.}  
3. g3 Bb7

4. Bg2 e6

5. O-O c5

{Black tackles the centre immediately. IF white can achieve c2-c4 and Nc3, d4-d5 will be tough to prevent.}  
6. c4

{Forcing black into a decision. Either he allows the advance d4-d5 or opens up the position exerting pressure down onto his D-pawn.}

6... cxd4

7. Qxd4   
{The more accurate recapture. Recapturing on d4 with the knight only allows the light-squared bishop exchange, which is not in white’s interest. The recapture also speeds up white’s development.}  
7... Bc5

{Not the recommended continuation. The white queen is driven to a better square. The black pieces are developed with tempo, but since the bishop is miss-placed on c5, there is no gain in this idea. Indeed, it can be argued that black actually loses a tempo to re-position the bishop on c5, thus levelling out the tempi lost in the manoeuvring of the pieces. The white queen is more than happy to step off the D-pawn, allowing a white rook to swing quickly to that file, making the d7-pawn’s advance that more difficult.  
The majority of the strong players now are settling for 7... Be7 with an immediate entry into the Hedgehog setup.}

8. Qf4

{The best square for the queen according to the latest theory. The old move is 8. Qh4, but this has been played many times before.  
The queen actually stands well on f4, since all the dark-squares in the centre are pressurised. Black has to be very wary indeed that his d6 square does not become a target to a future Nc3/Nb5. The white queen’s bishop is destined for another diagonal, as the c1-h6 one has little prospects for it. Another factor is that the white queen can step backwards to d2 if necessary, to exert more pressure down the D-file. ON h4, despite being aggressively placed, it is not always obvious how she can retreat to defensive duties if required.  
In the opening references below, I illustrate how this type of setup came to my attention. I give the whole game scores, as they are all worthy of study.  
In the first, Korchnoi demonstrated to me how he perfected this system. The last example, C, it can be seen how the opening can be used in an aggressive manner to whip up a king-side attack if black plays it apathetically.}

8... O-O

9. Nc3

{Pressure is put on the d5 square, making d7-d5 almost impossible to accomplish, without creating an isolated Queen’s pawn. Rd1 would arrive very quickly for white and captures on d5 will allow a e2-e4 gaining theme.  
Black is already struggling for development. His bishop on c5 is poorly placed, as there are no prospects for it along the a7-g1 diagonal. Indeed, the bishop is a tactical liability and it is ensured to come under attack with a future b2-b4. Black can’t play a7-a5 to secure the bishop, as the b5 square and all the dark-squares in the black camp would become extraordinarily vulnerable. A future Na4 for white would exchange the bishop for the knight or weaken the b6 pawn in that regard.}  
9... Be7

{Black makes the positional decision to retreat the poorly-placed bishop and to setup the “Hedgehog” formation, a solid, if unambitious structure. Black is already a tempo down though on the main variations and the white queen has been driven to a more dominating position.

I found this the best practical choice, from the limited available to black, but black must now sit and shuffle around on his first three ranks for some considerable time to come. White’s only avoidance now is to prevent d7-d5 with effect for black.}  
10. e4

{Here, being a 1. e4 player, the Maróczy-Bind experience comes in useful. Being a principal 1. e4 player, I have many an experience as white in such positions and have, as of late, exploited them very well.  
Black must be prevented from playing d7-d5 equalising at all costs. He must not be able to free his position and the move e4-e5 is going to cause his development all kinds of difficulties.  
Black has no option now but to enter into the Hedgehog system, where he will sit passively, a tempo down, on the main variations.}

10... d6

11. Rd1 Qc7

{It is essential to prevent e4-e5 tactics. The queen stands loosely on c7, but has the intension to scuttle back to b8. If she can arrive at a8 and exert pressure on e4 quickly, then this manoeuvre is justified. As it is, black is a whole tempo down to the main lines and is suffering already from that loss of time. The queen achieves her objective in the sense of retreating from the tactics on c7, but she never gains the time to reach a8, leaving her completely out of the game for the next 20 moves.}

12. b3 a6

13. Bb2

{It was essential not to leave the knight on c3 loose to possible tactical possibilities to black breaking with b6-b5 or d6-d5. A3 is a common square for this bishop’s development, but I did not feel it justified in this position.}

13... Nbd7

14. Qe3

{Here an interesting element of white’s development is implemented.  
Surprisingly, 14. Rac1 is not the correct plan. Although instinct calls out for such a natural development move, the rook achieves nothing on the C-file. There are no Nd5 tactics and the rook is required to aid in the bigger picture, and that being the king-side attack. If the queen’s rook can be swung across to the king-side quickly, then that will aid in the attack. Black is so passive that the king-side attack has to be called upon.

Realising this soon enough, I knew that Rac1 was not the idea. Re1 or Rg1 has to be preferred, but the rook on d1 is in the way.  
Moreover, if white is to play f2-f4 and launch he F-pawn, the bishop on g2 is a tactical liability. That bishop needs defending and hence, why the rook on d1 is utilised to defend that bishop.}  
14... Rac8

{It is hard to question this move, as the rook develops to a natural square, but since there are absolutely no prospects down the C-file,, it is challenging to find a better square for the rook. The black queen needs to retract out of tactical Nd5 ideas, and b8 and a8 is the logical path.

With black being a whole tempo down, b6-b5 and d6-d5 breaks are incredibly difficult to achieve and hence, there are no penetration points down the C-file. C2 can never be entered due to white’s future control of the 2nd rank.   
In effect then, black is finding moves, waiting for white, but not actually accomplishing much in the meantime. In short, he’s expecting for white to over-press.}

15. Nd4   
{Another point of the queen retreat. The knight is developed to a centrally aggressive point, facilitating the launching of the F-pawn. The knight is poised to jump into the king-side for the attack. Black is becoming extremely cramped now and his options are limited, since the e4 pawn has been more boosted by the defence of the fianchettoed light-squared bishop.}

15... Rfe8

{Positionally, putting the rook vis-à-vis the white queen. This is a valid strategy and cannot be questioned. However, since the white queen is not destined to stay on the E-file, there is an argument that the rook on f8 should go to d8, to see if it can enforce d6-d5.

White has to be incredibly careful about the timing of f2-f4, as black’s automatic response e6-e5, gaining tempo on the knight on d4 may weaken the e4 pawn, especially with the rook being on e8. So, playing Rfe8, discourages white from playing f2-f4 until he has found a suitable refuge for the white queen. Finding that refuge is easy enough once it has been determined that the king-side attack is the correct approach to squash this passive defence.}  
16. h3

{Played to control the g4 square. The white queen is now prevented from being targeted with Ng4 tactics. The white king may wish to run to h2 to avoid any combinations along the a7-g1 diagonal, where the white queen and king are lined up for possible pins.}  
16... Qb8

{Retreating from any major tactics and having the aspiration of reaching a8, to exert pressure on e4. Although an acceptable positional plan, black never gains the time to achieve this, making the whole strategically objective irrelevant and fruitless from the start. Black is in an incredibly challenging position and this retreat makes life for him all that more difficult to organise a defence.}  
17. g4!

{After which, black has a very difficult time to come. His development is so entangled that he cannot coordinate his pieces effectively. White can slowly build on the king-side and push black off the board Without the pressure on e4, black has little. Qa8, Nc5 need to have been played to distract white enough to defend that pawn. In the opening, black has lost a tempo with Bc5, which means, that he has lost a tempo in the middle-game, thus disadvantaging him in the execution of his strategically objectives.  
If black could now bring a knight to c5 and gain tempo on the pawn on e4, white would have to make a decision on how to proceed. With the pressure being released on the e4 pawn, white’s gain of space and harassment of the black pieces have been made that much more effective.}

17... Nf8

{Passively played. Black needs to find a square for the knight on f6. 17... g6 is an option, giving him the h5 and then g7 square. Fianchettoing a knight is not usually a wise option though. 18. Bf3 before pushing the G-pawn is a possibility.   
I felt though that 17... Nc5 was the natural move, when maybe 18. Re1 to defend the E-pawn would be the way to continue.  
IN that regard, all of the white pieces would be developed and poised to spring. Black’s plan of action would be very difficult to figure out then.}

18. g5 N6d7

19. Qg3

{The white queen finds a refuge away from the E-file. If black can get an exchange later on, with for example e5xf4 (if white ever wants to advance with f2-f4), the half-open E-file and e4-pawn could be problematic. The white queen is switched to the king-side for the attack, but also to facilitate the advance of the pawns there.

There were also dangers along the a7-g1 diagonal if black were ever to lash out with d6-d5, and especially so if the white F-pawn had advanced.}

19... Nc5

20. Rd2   
{An important positional feature here is that the queen’s rook does not belong on c1. 20. Rac1 would be a natural looking move, but in fact, the rook has no purpose on that file. Nd5 tactics are never threatened and the rook is used in a defensive measure only.  
The rook to d2 controls vertically, which is an important feature when considering where your rooks belong. Lots of players neglect that feature. This particular move defends the bishop on g2 in many variations, especially so if white pushes with f2-f4 and then e4-e5. The long diagonal is a potential weakness and the bishop on g2 a tactical liability.

The rook also keeps control of the D-file and holds up d6-d5. The queen’s rook is freed to move to e1 or if possible, to g1.}  
20... Ng6

{The knight is only a target on this square, but black has plans for it. I was surprised by this, as I felt as though black’s only hope was the thematic 20... d5. I did not believe it and was happy enough to exchange queens and steal the centre by the capture e4xd5. Although my g5 pawn drops off, I felt as though my passed D-pawn and slowly advancing B and C pawns would prove too much for the black pieces. I envisaged the white knights leaping into c6 and e4 and d6.}  
21. h4   
{The momentum must be maintained. The pawn advance weakens the black king-side. In the meantime, the bishop on g2 is doing an excellent job of king-safety, not that there is any danger for the white monarch.}  
21... e5

{After which, black is positionally busted. Tactics alone will only save black in his desperate bid to salvage something from this game. The weaknesses in the light-squares and the fatal backward nature of the D-pawn give white all of the fun. Although the f4 square is secured for the black knight, white can play around it and improve the control of the light-squares all that much better. The avoidance of tricks was the ultimate aim of the game now. Technique alone will convert this positional advantage.}

22. Nf5 Ne6

23. Rad1 Ngf4

{Black hopes for exchanges. Possible tactics on e2 if white were remiss enough to leave the square unguarded. Winning the pawn on d6 now has to be carefully calculated, as a stray rook could be entombed on that square with a timely Nd4 for black.}  
24. Bf3

{Keeping control. E2 is protected and h5 guarded. H4-h5 could be an option now. White does not wish to weaken his light-squares and ultimately, the e4 pawn, by allowing an exchange of minor pieces.}

24... Bf8

{Black retreats, not finding an active plan. The E-file is opened up, in case white is foolish enough to accept a pawn on d4, if black were to plant a knight there. Again, the timing has to be calculated carefully.}

25. Bg4

{Here, controlling the e6 square was the plan. If white were to get Nd5 in, he may wish to exchange a knight off on e6 first. That was not completely clear and I was keeping my options open. The move itself also guarded the h3 square in case of any Nh3+ tactics.  
More retrospective was 25. Kh2, but I was not entirely happy with the king being on h2, especially if black tried to sacrifice a pawn on d4 and then a future d6-d5 break could be on, with potential discoveries on the white king.}

25... b5?  
{So far, none of black’s moves can be really questioned. White has simply gathered up a number of small advantages, accumulating a big positional plus. Tactically, black crumbles, having been squashed down for all of the game so far. The point was to weaken the e4 pawn by exchanges on b5. What black failed to see as the follow up was that the pawn on d6 would be attacked by both white knights, forking rooks and a stray light-squared bishop on e4. Again, the avoidance of tricks here was the main plan.  
25... Rcd8 was black’s only real move for consideration. White could then contemplate a further king-side push, or the idea of Kh2. The options were open.}

26. cxb5 g6

{Recapturing on b5 allows the white queen’s knight to attack the d6 pawn, as well as give white two queen-side passed pawns for the ending.}

27. bxa6

{Simply winning material.

Approaching the first time control, it was essential not to allow any counter-play for black.}

 27... gxf5

28. exf5

{Once again, the avoidance of complications when approaching the time-control was critical here. I didn’t have time to calculate the ramifications of 28. axb7 Rxc3 29. Bxc3 fxg4 30. Qxg4 Qxb7, although I was convinced it was perfectly OK for white.}

28... Nd4

29. axb7 Qxb7

30. Na4

{The simple approach. Tactics were tempting on d4, but the avoidance of those kept pulling at my instinct.  
The knight’s elimination on d4 is essential to erase any tactical possibilities for black. Doing it by the exchange of the dark-squared bishop is the logical route. The white knight is currently off-side, but can soon switch back to the centre via c3, or even b6 if the black queen wanders away.}

30... Qe4

{Black is attempting to play as actively as possible, which is very credible. Notice how impressive the black queen and black knights are, but yet, three moves later, they have all disappeared. Unfortunately, white can wriggle around the black pieces and avoid the tactics with some rerouting of his minor pieces.}  
31. Bxd4 exd4

32. Rxd4 Ne2+

33. Bxe2 Qxe2

34. Nb6

{With a few minutes left on the clock to reach move 35, I didn’t want to calculate 34. Nc3, as I did not wish the black queen driven to a more advantageous square, such as h5 or e6. Hitting the rook on c8 seemed to be more productive and the knight is still headed for the d5 square.}  
34... Rc2

35. Nd5

{With less than 2 minutes on the clock, I did not wish to study 35. Nd7, as I did not want the dark-squared bishop to run out to e7 and then maybe d8.}   
35... Bg7

36. f6

{The remainder of this game is littered with tactical inaccuracies. I am not unduly worried about this, as at the time, I felt it imperative to play quickly and at all costs, keep ahead on the clock. I realised that, for example 36. Nf6+ would probably win the exchange on e8, but I didn’t want the dark-squared bishop to get ambitions on e5 or d6 via f8.   
My sole objective now was to play quickly, simply and move the knight around to force some more weaknesses. If I could get the rooks off, then all fine and good, but it was the clock which was my enemy now. Staying ahead on that was the principal plan.}

36... Bf8

37. Ne3 Rxa2

38. Nf5 Re4

39. Nh6+ Kh8

40. Nxf7+ Kg8

41. Nh6+ Kh8

42. Rxe4

{This was the only time I paused for thought. I needed to figure out how to penetrate to the back-rank to mate the black king. I soon saw that the h1-a8 diagonal for the white queen would be important, but tactically, g5-g6 would soon see black off. A few quick moves to gain time on the clock and then came the coup de grace.}  
42... Qxd1+   
43. Kh2 Qf1

44. Rf4 Ra1

45. Qg2 Qd1

46. Nf5 d5

47. Ne7 Qc1

48. Rf3 Qc7+

49. Qg3

{Gaining time on the clock. The only purpose of the move.}

49... Qc1

50. Qg2 Qc7+

{Draw duly offered, and, duly declined!}

51. Rg3 d4

52. g6   
{And with black down to less than 2 minutes to finish the game, the final touch comes. A nice, slow, thematic squash of the Hedgehog!}  
52... hxg6

53. Nxg6+ Kh7

54. Nxf8+ Kh6

55. Qe4 1-0

Opening references

A.  
[Event "Politiken Cup 18th"]

[Site "Copenhagen"]

[Date "1996.??.??"]

[Round "11"]

[White "Korchnoi, Viktor"]

[Black "Kogan, Artur"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "A46"]

[WhiteElo "2645"]

[BlackElo "2485"]

[PlyCount "79"]

[EventDate "1996.06.??"]

[EventType "swiss"]

[EventRounds "11"]

[EventCountry "DEN"]

[Source "ChessBase"]

[SourceDate "2004.01.01"]

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. g3 b6 4. Bg2 Bb7 5. O-O c5 6. c4 cxd4 7. Qxd4 Bc5 8. Qf4

Nc6 9. Nc3 Ne7 10. Ng5 Bxg2 11. Kxg2 O-O 12. Rd1 Ng6 13. Qd2 Qc8 14. Nge4 Be7

15. b3 d5 16. cxd5 Nxe4 17. Nxe4 exd5 18. Ng5 Bf6 19. Bb2 Bxb2 20. Qxb2 Qg4 21.

Nf3 Nf4+ 22. Kh1 Nh3 23. Rf1 Rae8 24. Rad1 f5 25. Rxd5 Re6 26. Qd2 Rfe8 27. Rd8

Rxe2 28. Rxe8+ Rxe8 29. Kg2 h6 30. Nh4 Ng5 31. Qd5+ Kh7 32. Qxf5+ Qxf5 33. Nxf5

Re2 34. h4 Ne6 35. Ra1 Nc5 36. Kf3 Rb2 37. Ke3 a5 38. h5 a4 39. bxa4 Nxa4 40.

Rd1 1-0

B.  
[Event "Jubilee Open"]

[Site "Zuerich SUI"]

[Date "2009.08.13"]

[Round "7"]

[White "Bauer, Ch"]

[Black "Shchekachev, A."]

[Result "1/2-1/2"]

[ECO "A46"]

[WhiteElo "2602"]

[BlackElo "2530"]

[PlyCount "46"]

[EventDate "2009.08.09"]

[SourceDate "2006.10.09"]

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. g3 b6 4. Bg2 Bb7 5. O-O c5 6. c4 cxd4 7. Qxd4 Bc5 8. Qf4

O-O 9. Nc3 Be7 10. Rd1 d6 11. b3 Nbd7 12. Ba3 Nc5 13. Rac1 a6 14. b4 Ncd7 15.

Nd2 Bxg2 16. Kxg2 b5 17. Bb2 Nb6 18. cxb5 axb5 19. Nxb5 Rxa2 20. Bxf6 Bxf6 21.

Qxd6 Qxd6 22. Nxd6 Nd5 23. N6e4 Nxb4 1/2-1/2

C.  
[Event "74th Tata Steel GMB"]

[Site "Wijk aan Zee NED"]

[Date "2012.01.17"]

[Round "4"]

[White "Ernst, S."]

[Black "L'Ami, E."]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "A46"]

[WhiteElo "2606"]

[BlackElo "2596"]

[PlyCount "99"]

[EventDate "2012.01.14"]

[SourceDate "2006.10.09"]

1. d4 e6 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. g3 b6 4. Bg2 Bb7 5. O-O c5 6. c4 cxd4 7. Qxd4 Nc6 8. Qf4

Ne7 9. b3 Ng6 10. Qd2 Bc5 11. Nc3 O-O 12. Bb2 Qe7 13. a3 a5 14. Na4 Bc6 15. Ng5

Bxa4 16. Bxa8 Bxb3 17. Bf3 Bxc4 18. Bxf6 gxf6 19. Ne4 d5 20. Nxc5 Qxc5 21. Rfd1

f5 22. h4 f6 23. Bh5 Kg7 24. Kg2 a4 25. Rac1 b5 26. Rc3 Rd8 27. Qb2 d4 28. Rcc1

e5 29. Kh2 e4 30. f4 Ne7 31. g4 Qc7 32. e3 dxe3 33. g5 Rf8 34. Kg3 Qc6 35. Qd4

Rc8 36. Qa7 Rc7 37. gxf6+ Kh6 38. fxe7 Rxa7 39. e8=Q Rg7+ 40. Kh3 Qxe8 41. Bxe8

Rg4 42. Rd6+ Kg7 43. Re1 Rxf4 44. Rxe3 Bf1+ 45. Kg3 Rg4+ 46. Kf2 Rf4+ 47. Kg1

Kf8 48. Bh5 Bc4 49. Be2 Ke7 50. Rh6 1-0