



## COLUMNISTS

# *Let's Take A Look...*

Nigel Davies

We invite you to submit games to be considered by Nigel in this column. For all games submitted, please provide the following information: (1) Names of both players; (2) Ratings of both players; (3) When and where the game was played; (4) The time control used in the game; and (5) Any other information you think would be helpful for us to know. Please submit the games (in PGN or CBV format if possible) to: [nigeldavies@chesscafe.com](mailto:nigeldavies@chesscafe.com).

Who knows, perhaps you will see the game in an upcoming column, as Nigel says to you, "Let's take a look..."

## Thinking Time

When people ask me which time limit is the best for improving their chess, I tend to warn against playing too much blitz. It may be fun but it can lead to bad habits, the relentless ticking of the clock means that a fast move can be more effective than a good move. This in turn can lead to a superficial and overly pragmatic approach that does not work well when applied to 'proper chess'.

The problem for most players is that blitz is the form of chess that is most readily available, especially with today's intense life-styles and the advent of the Internet. You can play in the comfort

of your own home with a glass of brandy by your side. There's no need to travel to a dowdy chess club with no refreshments or heating. Most of all you can log on and off in a relatively short space of time, these days many people find it difficult to get even a few consecutive hours to play chess, let alone an entire weekend.

Yet blitz is not the only option and I'd like to make a case for a *much* slower form. Correspondence chess, especially with the convenience of email or a correspondence server, has the same convenience but none of the disadvantages. The virtually unlimited amount of thinking time allowed means that the emphasis must be firmly on the quality of play, so correspondence chess fosters opening research and deep analysis of the positions. It's very noticeable that over-the-board players who also play by correspondence tend to have well worked-out openings and more cultured styles.

It's high time that I let you in on a secret: last week I started my first correspondence tournament. These days I don't have the time or inclination to go away for several weeks at a time to play in international events but find weekend tournaments a bit too lightweight on their own. I see correspondence chess as a good counterfoil to the weekenders, fostering elements that I now miss such as the areas of in-depth analysis and opening preparation. It's terrible to feel yourself going to seed...

A lot of over-the-board players would partially accept my arguments but see it as a totally different

game. But the former champion, Grigory Sanakoev, has put up a strong case for their similarities, arguing that the elements of chess that make it popular are still present:

“There is a widespread opinion that correspondence chess is a special kind of sport - decidedly different from OTB chess. Indeed, under the conditions of practically unlimited reflection time, it would be naive to expect from your opponent nervousness - although any experienced correspondence chess player knows that there is no more cruel time pressure than the one of "LIFE" itself. How often is a move sent not because everything is clear in the position, but only because it becomes clear that for a more detailed analysis there is simply no more time.

*“One should not expect that one's opponent will fall into some trap contained in all opening books or that he will commit a grave blunder in the middle game or even that he will deviate from the principles demonstrated in books on end games. However, correspondence chess would not have become the game of millions of people if the same elements which make the OTB chess so attractive were completely absent. Ventures, such as an intuitive sacrifice, an opening novelty, positional maneuvering in the absence of a concrete plan, psychological pretenses (camouflaging the real intent of a move) and many others have their place in the game with the invisible partner.”*

This month's game was played on the “Playchess.de” correspondence server three years ago. It was sent to me by Boris Yudovin from New York who was impressed by the energy and flair with which White pursued the attack. Nitpicker that I am I felt that 16...Nd4 forced White into it and he could have won more efficiently at various stages. But nonetheless it's a great advert for games played at this speed and shows that the human elements and well and truly intact.

*Kaouras,S (2360) - Vorlop,R (2307)*

## **Ponziani Opening**

**“Playchess” Correspondence Game, 2000**

**1 e4 Nc6 2 Nf3 e5 3 c3**

The "Ponz" has enjoyed a brief spell of popularity amongst some of the more adventurous young GMs. The motivation behind playing such an opening is to confront your opponent with new and unexpected problems, even though we all know that the Spanish is White's best.

**3...d5**

The beauty of correspondence play is that you can afford the luxury of going into the sharpest lines. A more practical approach is to play 3...Nf6 when Black seems to have few problems after 4 d4 (an interesting practical try is 4 d3 with a kind of reversed Philidor) 4...exd4 5 e5 Ne4 (or 5...Nd5 ).

**4 Qa4 f6!?**

In his notes to the game, Kaouras stated that 4...Bd7 was 'best by far', though I'm far from convinced. A game Surtees - Hebden, England 1998 went 5 exd5 Nd4 6 Qd1 Nxf3+ 7 Qxf3 Nf6 8 Bc4 Bd6 9 d3 Qe7 10 Bg5 h6 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Nd2 f5 13 Bb3 0-0 14 0-0-0 b5 15 h3 a5 16 g4 f4 17 Ne4 when White had good an extra pawn and the makings of a strong attack on the kingside. He went on to cause a major upset by beating his GM opponent.

5 Bb5 Nge7 6 exd5 Qxd5 7 d4 e4!?



This came in for major criticism by both Kaouras and Yudovin but I'm not convinced that it's all that bad. Perhaps the main argument against it is the risk involved, especially when Black has a sound alternative

in 7...Bg4. A game Koch - Piket, Monte Carlo 1999 went 8 Bc4 (8 Be3 Bxf3 9 gxf3 a6 10 Bc4 Qxf3 11 Rg1 0-0-0 was Showalter - Steinitz, Vienna 1898 in which Steinitz won a complex game) 8...Qd7 (8...Qa5 9 Qxa5 Nxa5 10 Bb5+ c6 11 Be2 Bxf3 12 Bxf3 exd4 13 Na3! was better for White in the game Eales - Belyavsky, Groningen 1969-70) 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Bb5 Nxf3+ 11 gxf3 c6 12 Qxg4 cxb5 13 Qxd7+ Kxd7 14 a4 b4 15 0-0 Nf5 16 cxb4 Bxb4 with the better game for Black.

## 8 c4

The most ambitious move, sacrificing the d4 pawn. 8 Bc4 is rather innocuous after 8 Qh5 (or 8...Qa5 9 Qxa5 Nxa5 10 Nfd2 Nxc4 gaining the bishop pair) 9 Nfd2 Bd7 10 Nxe4 (10 Qc2 f5 11 Nf1 g5 gave Black promising attacking chances in Roething - Marshall, Sylvan Beach 1904) 10...Nxd4 11 Qd1 Qxd1+ 12 Kxd1 Bg4+ 13 Kd2 Ndc6 14 f3 0-0-0+ and Black had the better

endgame in Roething - Capablanca, New York 1910. White's other move is 8 Nfd2 but then Black can play 8...Qg5 after which 9 Kf1 a6 (9...Be6 looks logical) 10 Na3 axb5!?! (10...Qf5) 11 Qxa8 Qg4 12 Nc2 Nd5 13 Ne3 Nxe3+ 14 fxe3 Bd6 15 Nxe4 Qd1+ 16 Kf2 Qc2+ 17 Nd2 0-0 brought about some wild and wooly complications in Ovetchkin - Hamatgaleev, Pskov 1998.

### **8...Qd7 9 Nfd2 Qxd4 10 0-0**

White has also played the immediate 10 Nb3. The most likely outcome is a transposition back into the game after 10...Qe5 (10...Qd6 11 Be3 Bd7 12 c5 Qe6 13 Nc3 f5 14 0-0-0 gave White good compensation for his pawn in Von Popiel - Burn, Cologne 1898) 11 Nc3 (11 Na5 can be met by 11...Kf7) 11...Bd7 12 0-0 a6 , but with White having sidestepped the possibility of Black retreating his queen to a7.

### **10...Bd7**

After 10...a6 White can play 11 Nb3 (11 Nc3 Bd7 12 Nb3 allows 12...Qa7) after which 11...Qa7 12 Bxc6+ Nxc6 13 Be3 forces Black to play the ugly 13...Qb8.

### **11 Nc3**

This is White's second and last chance to force Black's queen to e5 immediately by playing 11 Nb3. After 11...Qe5 12 Nc3 a6 we would get back into the game, now Black has the opportunity to retreat

his queen to a7.

### **11...a6 12 Nb3**

Trying to win back the gambit pawn with 12 Ndx4 would be answered by 12...Rd8 13 Bxc6 Bxc6 14 Qc2 Qxc4 when White ends up a pawn down anyway but this time with very little compensation.

### **12...Qe5**

As the queen is exposed on this square there is a strong argument in favor of 12...Qa7 forcing 13 Bxc6 (after 13 Be3? axb5 Black wins a piece). After 13...Bxc6 14 Qa5 (14 Qa3? Nd5) 14...0-0-0 15 Be3 b6 Black's king looks much safer than in the game.

### **13 c5 f5**

Another possibility was 13...Rd8 after which 14 Be2 f5 would make it difficult to assess White's compensation.

### **14 g3 Ng6**

According to Kaouras this is forced, but is 14...Qf6 15 Bf4 Rc8 really so bad?

### **15 Rd1 Be7 16 Bc4 Nd4?**



Forcing White to make a very promising queen sac. After 16...0-0-0 White can play 17 Bxa6! Nb8 (and not 17...bxa6 18 Qxa6+ Kb8 19 Rxd7 etc) 18 Rxd7 Rxd7 19 c6! with a strong attack, but 16...Be6 is a tough nut

to crack. One possibility is 17 Nd5 0-0-0 18 Bf4 Nxf4 19 gxf4 Qxd5 20 Bxd5 Bxd5 with good compensation for the queen.

**17 Qxd7+!**

After 17 Qb4 Black can play 17...Nf3+ 18 Kh1 b5 etc.

**17...Kxd7 18 Be3 Nh4**

Black's problem is that both his king and queen are in trouble simultaneously. His other try is 18...f4 but then 19 Bxd4 Qf5 20 Bxg7+ Kc8 21 Rd5 Qg4 22 Bxh8 Nxh8 23 Re5 gives White a commanding position.

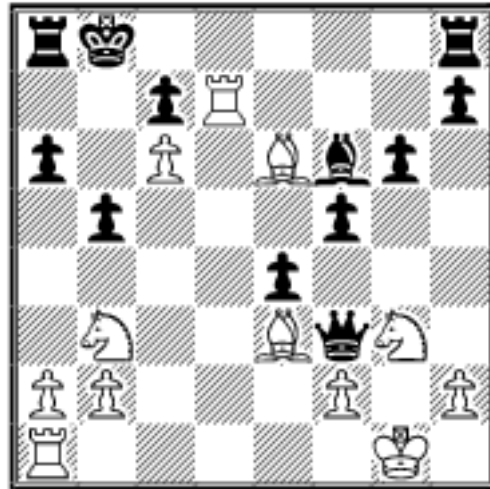
**19 gxh4 Kc8 20 Bxd4 Qf4 21 Be6+ Kb8 22 Ne2 Qf3 23 Ng3 Bxh4**

After 23 Ka7 White can play 24 Bxf5 when the e4 pawn is falling as well. The text intends to meet 24 Bxf5 with 24...Bxg3.

**24 Be3 g6**

Black's queen would be trapped after 24...f4 25 Nd4 etc.

**25 Rd7 Bf6 26 c6 b5**



26...b6 27 h3 followed by 28 Nd2 traps Black's queen.

**27 Rd5**

Here and over the next few moves White makes things harder for himself by attempting to deliver

checkmate. A simpler way to play it was with 27 Nd2 Qg4 28 Ndx e4 because once Black's central pawn phalanx is destroyed he would have little chance to resist.

**27...Re8 28 Nc5 Bg7**

After 28...f4 White could end the game with 29 Nd7+ Kc8 30 Bh3! threatening 31 Ne5+ etc.

**29 Rad1 Ka7 30 Rd7**

30 Ncxe4+ would force 30...Qxe3 and leave him hopelessly placed (30...Kb8 gets mated after 31 Rd8+ Rxd8 32 Rxd8).

**30...Be5 31 Bxf5?**

Just 31 Ncxe4+ is better.

## 31...gxf5 32 Nb7+

I don't understand why the knight is better on b7 than on b3. 32 Nb3+ Qxe3 33 fxe3 Rg8 34 Kf2 looks simpler than the game.

32...Qxe3 33 fxe3 f4 34 exf4 Bxf4 35 Nd6 Bxd6 36 R1xd6 Kb6 37 Rd1 Re6 38 Re1 e3 39 Rxh7 Rae8 40 Rg7 Kxc6 41 Re2 Re5 42 Nf1 Kd5 43 Kg2 c5 44 Rg3 Kd4 45 h4 c4 46 Rxe3 Rxe3 47 Nxe3 Kd3

The pawn endgame is winning for White, but only just: 47...Rxe3 48 Rxe3 Kxe3 49 h5 b4 50 h6 c3 51 bxc3 bxc3 52 h7 c2 53 h8Q c1Q 54 Qh6+ wins Black's newborn queen.

48 Kh3 Kd2 49 Nd5 Kc1 50 Rg2 Re5 51 Nf4 b4 52 h5 Kb1 53 h6 Re8 54 Kg4 Rh8 55 Kg5 c3 56 bxc3 bxc3 57 Rh2 c2 58 Nd3 1-0

After 58...Rd8 59 Rh1+ Kxa2 60 h7 Black will lose his rook.

### Further Reading

*World Champion at the Third Attempt* by Grigory Sanakoev (Gambit, 1999): Sanakoev's superb collection of games.

Copyright 2003 Nigel Davies. All rights reserved.

---



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)  
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)  
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About The Chess Cafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2003 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"**The Chess Cafe**®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.