



C O L U M N I S T S

*Let's Take A
Look...*

Nigel Davies

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

Training with Blitz

"Even as a boy, when I was at the beginning of my career as a chessplayer, I found I had to acquire for myself as thorough a mastery as possible of the practice and theory of play in positions of opposite castling. When I stayed behind at school with my school friends after lessons, and managed to play up to a hundred games in a single afternoon, the strategy was simple enough: I castled on the opposite side in the middle of violent (and mutual) King attacks. Whoever got his attack in first, won. The result was that I acquired an unfailing mastery of those positions where castling takes place on opposite sides, and from that time on I knew how to find my way about them."

Alexander Kotov in *The Art of the Middle Game*

Playing numerous quick games is a great way of getting used to certain types of position. I'm sure that Kotov was right about his claim that it helped him achieve this particular facet of mastery. But what if you've already left school or just don't want to stay behind after lessons?

Well there is an alternative in that you can play blitz chess on the internet, but before going any further I want to issue a serious word of caution. I don't normally recommend internet blitz to players who want to improve their 'real' chess and the exception requires stringent definition.

What you get with hundreds of blitz games is a huge series of repetitions of the chess playing process, and these can provide drilling and reinforcement for both

good habits and bad. Playing indiscriminately can, in my view, lead to a careless and superficial approach in which a fast move is preferred to a good move. And if someone plays too much in one sitting they'll start to get tired and sloppy.

There is a danger that this sloppiness can start to become ingrained.

On the other hand, if you have a very clear idea of what you want to improve controlled training games can be a very productive exercise. But before logging on you need to decide what it is that you want to practice and how many games you want to play.

It might take a bit of arranging to bring about positions with certain strategic themes 'off the cuff', so it might be better to agree on particular openings. For castling on opposite sides there are a multitude of Sicilian lines, if someone wants to improve their tactical ability they could do a lot worse than play some games in the King's or Evans Gambits. If they want to play the endgame better then a few games in the Exchange Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 d4 exd4 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4) should be quite suitable.

More structurally minded trainees might choose to play for a minority attack in the Exchange Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5) or Caro-Kann Defence (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5). Alternatively you could set up positions with an isolated or hanging pawns. The choice is virtually unlimited, all you need is a good server and an agreeable opponent.

Does this form of training have advantages over playing against the computer? In my view it does and on several counts. Besides the fact that the computer may beat us to a pulp in the games there's the ...er ... joy of social contact with another human being (OK, admittedly it's limited). From a training point of view the main drawback is that computers have a quite peculiar way of playing which does not prepare us for games with humans.

In positions with opposite side castling, for example, computers won't really understand the urgency of pushing ahead with the attack. They're far more likely to be totting up the pawns they've gained which weigh heavily in the machine's evaluation function. They're probably going to win anyway because we miss a check or make some other error in pursuing the attack, but meanwhile they've destroyed the strategic flow of the game. When it comes to playing humans again we'll get a different kind of chess entirely in which the race of attacks is back on.

This month's game is a wonderful example of opposite side castling from last year's Indian U19 Championship. I don't know if Black practiced opposite side castling in the manner suggested by Kotov, but he certainly pursues his attack with great gusto. Lovers of unusual lines in the opening might also note White's 2.b3; just because he lost this game doesn't mean that it's unplayable. The improvement I've suggested on his 11th move would have left this issue in

doubt.

Tiwari,A (2237) - Vaidya,C (2090)
Indian U19 Championship, 2003
French Defence C00

1 e4 e6 2 b3

Saveilly Tartakover played this in a few games and it certainly gets Black 'out of the book'. It looks like a bit of an oddball move but there is some point to his play.

In this game Black reacts with sensible developing moves which is always a good strategy if you get surprised early on.

2...d5 3 Bb2 dxe4

This is one way of doing it, but now we get to see one of the 'points' behind White's set-up. An excellent alternative is 3...Nf6 after which 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5 6 Nc3 Nc6 7 Nf3 a6 8 g3 b5 9 Bg2 c4 10 0-0 Bb7 11 bxc4 bxc4 12 Rb1 Be7 gave Black a solid game in Tartakower - Alekhine, Kemerli 1937.

4 Nc3 Nf6 5 Qe2!?

The point behind White's play; he prepares to hoist the pirate flag by castling queenside and then charge his g-pawn up the board This is all very exciting but it's not very impressive if Black plays sensibly.

5...Be7

Intending to castle kingside whilst keeping his options open with regard to the development of his minor pieces He has also tried a number of alternatives, for example:

a) 5...Nbd7 6 0-0-0 a5 7 a4 Be7 8 g4 0-0 9 Bg2 c6 10 Nxe4 Nxe4 11 Bxe4 Nf6 12 Nf3 Nxe4 13 Qxe4 Qd5 14 Qxd5 cxd5 was fine for Black at this juncture in Cherniaev - Kotanjian, Yerevan 1996.

b) 5...Bb4 6 0-0-0 (White must avoid 6 Nxe4?? because of 6...Nxe4 7 Qxe4 Qxd2#) 6...Qe7 7 Nxe4 Ba3 8 Nxf6+ (8 Nf3 Bxb2+ 9 Kxb2 Nbd7 10 d4 0-0 11 Ne5 c5 12 Nxd7 Nxd7 13 Qe3 cxd4 14 Qxd4 and Black was in trouble because of his backward development in Spielmann - Grau, San Remo 1930) 8...Qxf6 9 d4 Bxb2+ 10 Kxb2 0-0 11 Nf3 Rd8 12 Qe4 c5 13 Bd3 g6 14 Qe5 Qxe5 15 dxe5 and White had an edge because of his space advantage and superior development in Tartakower - Keres, Parnu 1937.

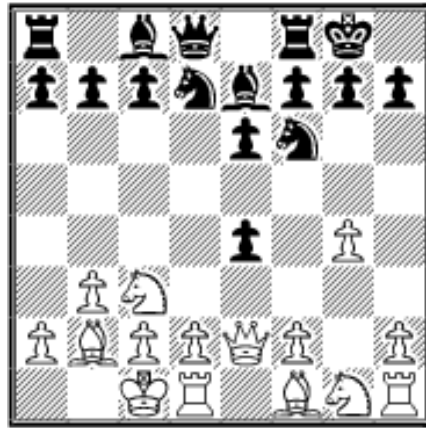
c) A modern example is the game Velimirovic - Timman, Sombor 1972 in which the young Timman played 5...Nc6 and after 6 Nxe4 Nxe4 7 Qxe4 Qd5 8

Qxd5 exd5 did not stand badly in the endgame.

6 0-0-0

White might also try the immediate 6 g4, but after 6...Nc6 7 g5 Nd5 8 Nxe4 e5 Black got a good game in Mark Tseitlin - Doroshkievich, USSR Ch , Riga 1970.

6...Nbd7 7 g4 0-0



This looks dangerous because Black is 'castling into it', but White's king isn't safe either. Another approach is to aim to castle queenside, a game Reti - Maroczy, Gothenburg 1920 continuing 7...h6 8 Bg2 c6 9 h4 Qa5 10 Nh3 Nc5 11 g5 hxg5 12 hxg5 Nd5 13 Kb1 Bd7 14 Bxe4 Nxe4 15 Nxe4 0-0-0 16 Bxg7 Rh7 17 Be5 c5 18 Qg4 c4 with compensation for the pawn.

8 h4 a5 9 a4

As Kotov states in *The Art of the Middle Game*: “While advancing pawns on the one wing one must keep one’s eyes open for any opportunity of creating difficulties for the opponent in his pawn storm on the other side of the board. When it becomes necessary one can with advantage make one or more defensive moves.”

Although White’s queenside is subsequently prised open with 11...b5, this is not a bad idea as it prevents ...a5-a4. The mistake comes later.

9...c6 10 g5 Nd5 11 Nxe4?

In view of Black's reply this looks like a serious mistake. White should try 11 Qxe4 intending 12 Bd3.

11...b5!

Well played. Black doesn't count the cost in pawns but aims to open lines, which is exactly how one should play such positions. As Kotov states: “Success in a pawn attack goes to whoever is the first to be able to seize the initiative, or, alternatively, to whoever is first to force the opponent to go on the defensive.”

12 Nh3?

I'm not sure that White has read *The Art of the Middle Game* as now Black’s attack comes first. After 12 axb5 cxb5 13 Qxb5 a4 White would get his king position demolished, but the best practical try was 12 g6!. After that the

variation 12...hxg6 13 h5 Nf4 14 Qf3 Nxb5 15 Ng3 would give White a dangerous initiative. 12...fxg6 may be better, despite the fact that it captures away from the centre.

12...bxa4 13 Qh5 e5

This wasn't absolutely necessary but it's understandable that Black feels more comfortable with the a1-h8 diagonal closed.

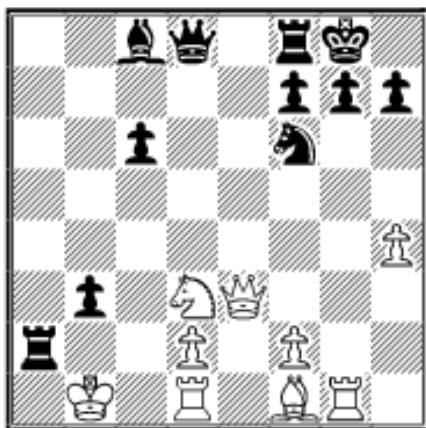
14 Rg1 axb3 15 Nf6+ N7xf6

And not 15...gxf6?? because of 16 Bd3!, when mate would follow shortly.

16 gxf6 Nxf6 17 Qxe5 a4 18 cxb3 axb3 19 Nf4 Ra5 20 Qe3

I'm really itching to play 20 Rxc7+ but this leads nowhere after 20...Kxc7 21 Nh5+ Kh8 etc. Now White can kiss goodbye to his dreams of an attack because his bishop on b2 gets exchanged.

20...Ba3 21 Nd3 Bxb2+ 22 Kxb2 Ra2+ 23 Kb1



This allows a spectacular combination but by now there is nothing else. After 23 Kxb3 there follows 23...Qd5+ 24 Kb4 Qa5+ 25 Kc4 (or 25 Kb3 Qa4+ 26 Kc3 Rc2 mate) 25...Ba6+ 26 Kd4 Rd8 mate and 23 Kc3 loses the queen after 23...Nd5+.

23...Ra1+!!

A rook for a tempo.

24 Kxa1 Qa5+ 25 Kb2 Qa2+ 26 Kc3 Nd5+ 27 Kd4 Qa4+ 28 Ke5 f6+ 29 Kd6 Rd8+ 0-1

White is mated after 30 Kc5 Qb5+ 31 Kd4 Nb6+ 32 Ke4 Qf5 mate.

Recommended Reading

The Art of the Middle Game by Paul Keres and Alexander Kotov (Penguin, 1964)

Think Like a Grandmaster by Alexander Kotov (Batsford, 1971)

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