



C O L U M N I S T S

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding

Two Knights Defence without Tears: Part 2

Last month I began my survey of some lines in the Two Knights Defence (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6). I emphasised in Part 1 that this is an opening where a player or student can easily become overwhelmed by the mass of unclear complications that can arise. Publications that pile example on example, omitting no practical example tactical detail do have their place - for advanced and correspondence players. However, they leave the majority of readers not being able to see the wood for the trees.

My objective in this series of articles is to give an overview of the Two Knights. If you want detailed examples to analyse, you can then download the games from my website and study them. This file now contains material of the variations discussed this month in addition to the games already in the file last time. Here is the URL: <http://www.chessmail.com/freegames.html>.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5

Before we get on with the main topic of the article, there are two digressions relating to Kibitzer.

Firstly, I asked readers for the source of Dr Tarrasch's famous "duffer's move" put-down on 4 Ng5 and several of you gave me the answer. The colorful phrase used by Tarrasch, not easy to translate into English is "ein richtiger Stümperzug". A "Stümper" is not an Australian cricket wicket-keeper but (according to my dictionary) is a botcher or bungler or clumsy fellow.

The most detailed comment came from Stefan Bücken, editor of the German theoretical/historical magazine *Kaissiber*. He informed me that Tarrasch's remark was made in his *Die moderne Schachpartie*, e.g. 2nd. ed. (Leipzig 1916), p.294, commenting on 4 d3 in Salwe-Schlechter (Carlsbad 1907): "Wohl nicht so energisch wie d2-d4 oder 0-0, aber sicherlich viel besser als der so häufig an dieser Stelle gemachte Zug Sg5, den ich für einen richtigen Stümperzug halte."

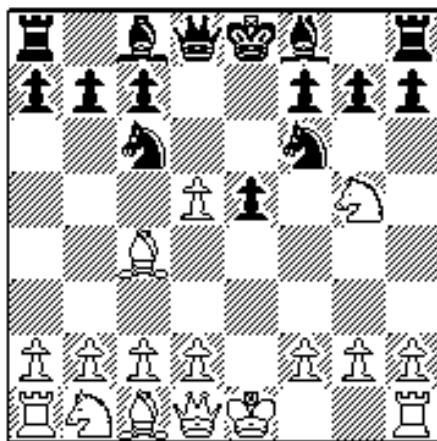
Which I loosely translate as follows "Probably not as energetic as 4 d4 or 4 0-0, but surely much better than the move so frequently made in this position 4 Ng5, which I hold to be a real bungler's move".

Modern theory doesn't often agree with Tarrasch. For example in his 1965 book on Open games in his 4-volume openings series, GM Ludek Pachman wrote that:

“Opinions about the soundness of the move 4 Ng5 have often changed over the course of time. While it found little approval with Dr Tarrasch... in modern practice, it is considered a very sound continuation, even the best reply to 3...Nf6”.

It was preferred by the 7th Correspondence World Champion Yakov Estrin, who enjoyed playing the resulting positions with either colour both in postal and regular play, while in recent GM practice, for example, GM Alexander Morozevich has been employing this move against the Two Knights.

4...d5 5 exd5 (*See Diagram*)



My second digression, before I go on to discuss 5...Na5 and 5...Nd4, concerns the Lolli Variation 5...Nxd5 6 d4 which was briefly mentioned last month.

Dan Heisman tells me he has a lot of new analysis to show that Black's best line is not 6...Bb4+ or 6...exd4 but rather to “fall into the trap” by 6...Nxd4. Then after 7 c3 he should play not 7...Ne6? 8 Qxd5 but either 7...f6 or 7...b5. His new electronic book

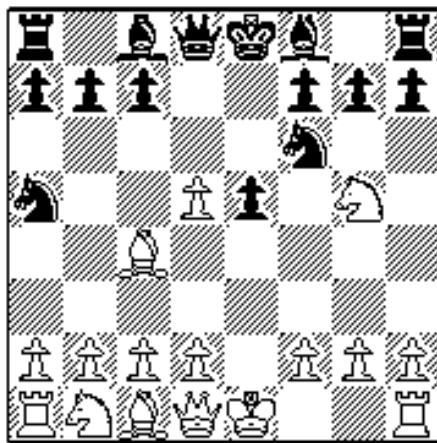
from Pickard & Son, dealing with the Fegatello and Lolli variations, will include his proof of this and I look forward to it. Mr Heisman also points out that his Traxler electronic book is not just an encyclopaedia of old games and analysis but contains more new (computer-assisted) analysis than most opening books

Now for the heart of this article. This second part covers the lines where Black, after 4 Nf5 d5 5 exd5, employs either the standard 5...Na5 move.

I had originally intended to include the 5...Nd4 Fritz Variation (possibly reaching the Fritz via 5...b5) in this article also but by the time I had completed 5...Na5 this Kibitzer was already longer than the last. Since 5...Nd4 in itself is quite a big subject, it will be reserved for a third and final part of the series next month.

Both 5...Na5 and 5...Nd4 answer the threat from White's d-pawn by moving the Knight while 5...b5 counter-attacks the white Bishop. I am going to look at 5...Na5 first because it is the move that obtains the most coverage in books, and is played most often of Black's options against 4 Ng5. Also, I suspect that I shall find it hard to maintain my “wood not the trees” approach so easily when dealing with the Fritz, which is almost pure tactics. However, I will try.

5...Na5 (*See Diagram*)



With 5...Na5 Black avoids losing a tempo and plays to get developed before launching a full-blooded tactical bout. This probably explains why it is more popular than the alternatives.

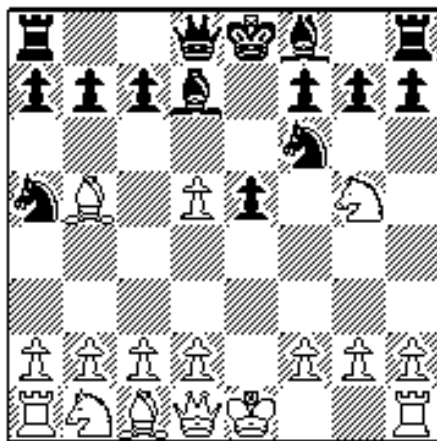
6 Bb5+

This check is virtually forced. It is possible for White to concede the Bishop pair by 6 d3 but this move is hardly in keeping with the previous aggression. Black should answer 6 d3 by 6...h6 7 Nf3 e4 when 8 Nd4 can be

met by 8...c6 and the piece sacrifice 8 dxe4 Nxc4 is unsound. So White plays 8 Qe2 Nxc4 9 dxc4 and now Morphy's move 9...Bc5 (hindering Nd4) is still considered best.

6...c6

There is a strange reluctance to try Polerio's move 6...Bd7!? which has not really been tested or refuted yet. The upside for Black is that he may very easily regain his pawn without compromising his queenside pawn structure. The downside is that the pawn on d5 cramps him, and leaves the a5-Knight vulnerable with no move at present. For both sides, this variation is relatively unknown territory so if Black prepares 6...Bd7 he could score well with it, and White needs to be aware of the possibility. (See Diagram)



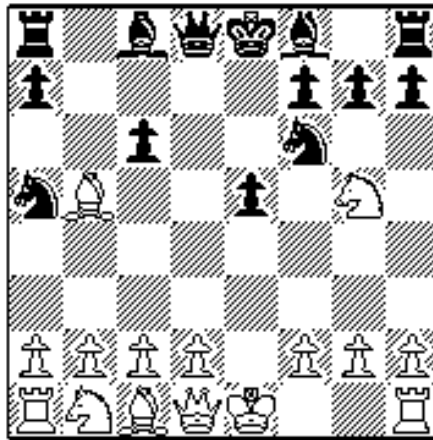
If White exchanges Bishops then after 7 Bxd7+ Qxd7 Black immediately regains his pawn with a good game (Ciric-Nesis, corr 1982) so 7 Qe2 is necessary. Then Black has a choice between 7...Be7 and 7...Bd6. The former move keeps open the possibility of capturing early on d5, whereas the latter secures the e5-pawn and intends to "play around" the advance d-pawn. It also sets a trap.

Morozevich-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 1999, went 7 Qe2 Bd6 8 Nc3 0-0 9 Bxd7 (Avoiding the trap 9 0-0? Nxd5! 10 Bxd7 Nf4 11 Qg4 h5 12 Qh4 Be7.) 9...Qxd7 10 a3!? (If 10 0-0 then 10...b6 or 10...c6.) 10...b6 (necessary to save the Knight) 11 d3 (If 11 0-0 instead, then 11...Nb7 12 b4 a5! according to Jozsef Palkovi, not 11...Rae8 12 Qa6!) 11...c6?! 12 b4! Nb7 13 dxc6 Qxc6 14 Nce4 Nd7? (14...Be7 leaves White somewhat better.) 15 Qf3 Be7?! 16 Nxh7! and White won. As Palkovi shows in his 2000 book *Zweispringerspiel bis Traxler Gegengambit*, all this happened before in a 1996 Spanish game Arnold-Iruzubieta, which doesn't say much for GM Ivan Sokolov's preparation! Maybe he was misled by the fact that the Spanish game was a

short draw but Morozevich improved on it. Instead of 11...c6, Palkovi says 11...Rae8 is the right move since Qa6 is not possible in this line.

English GM Glenn Flear prefers to play 7...Be7. Then after 8 Nc3 0-0 White often chooses the safe 9 Bxd7. However, when he doesn't hold the gambit pawn he doesn't really obtain winning chances e.g. 9...Qxd7 10 0-0 (if 10 d3 Nxd5) 10...Rfe8. On the other hand, 9 0-0 leads to obscure positions. Herbrechtsmeier-Nunn, Bundesliga 1985, went 9...Bg4!? 10 Qxe5 Bd6 but this may not be good enough. Instead 9...c6 10 dxc6 Nxc6 seems to offer compensation. It may seem strange to avoid ...c6 earlier and then play it after all, but White's move Qe2 is not especially constructive.

Returning to **6...c6**, play invariably goes **7 dxc6 bxc6** reaching the next diagram. (*See Diagram*)



White must now either retreat the Bishop or pin the c-pawn along the diagonal. We look at the latter possibility first.

8 Qf3

White tries to induce either a passive defence of the c-pawn or else the incorrect exchange sacrifice 8...cxb5?! 9 Qxa8. Instead Black can reply with a move that was analysed by an English prisoner-of-war in a Japanese camp during World War II:

8... Rb8!?

It would now be foolhardy in practice (whatever your computer might say) to grab the second pawn at c6. After 9 Bxc6+ Nxc6 10 Qxc6+ Nd7 White has no piece in play except his Queen and the g5-Knight which is under attack. Black will bring out his King's Bishop, castle and then enjoy a big lead in development and open lines.

Therefore the prudent move is to retreat the Bishop:

9 Bd3

Not to e2, because you could have done that last move if you wanted. Now we have a fairly unusual position that Black (in his enthusiasm for the Bxc6+ lines) may have neglected to study. I have never had any experience with this line but it looks to me that White's pieces are placed awkwardly and his influence on the centre is reduced because his d-pawn is blocked.

Play could go 9...h6 10 Ne4 (one of the points of this 8 Qf3, 9 Bd3 line) 10...Nd5 and it is reckoned that Black has just about enough play for the pawn.

However, it is understandable that some players are not altogether

convinced by this variation. Instead of Colman's 8..Rb8, the new move 8...h6!? is gaining credence. Now White cannot answer 9 Bxc6+? Nxc6 10 Qxc6+ because after 10...Bd7 both Queen and Knight are en prise. Maybe 9 b4!? is possible, since after 9...Bxb4 10 Bxc6+ Nxdc6 11 Qxc6+ Bd7 12 Qc4 White threatens both the b4-Bishop and mate on f7. However, Black has a simple answer in 12...Qe7 13 a3 Ba5 14 Ne4 Nxe4 15 Qxe4 0-0 when White has zero development and Black's chances look good. This analysis comes from Heyken and Fette but I imagine Spassky may have been the first person to discover this.

Van der Wiel-Spassky, Reggio Emilia 1985-86, went instead 9 Ne4 and after 9....Nd5 White's pieces do not look well placed.

Personally as White, I prefer to stick to the main line (after **5...Na5 6 Bb5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6**), namely:

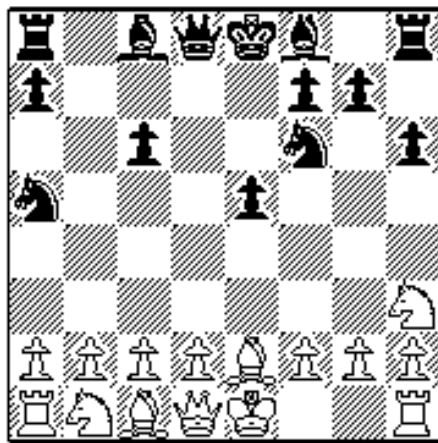
8 Be2

Black invariably kicks the advanced Knight back now by

8...h6

when I play **9 Nf3**

I know that Steinitz invented 9 Nh3!? and that Bobby Fischer revived it, but when I play 4 Ng5 against the Two Knights I usually try to avoid artificial moves. Only fluid moves that consistently develop pieces, create threats or challenge the centre really fit into the picture as I see it. (*See Diagram*)



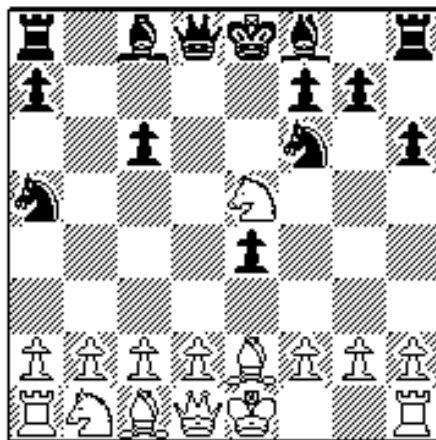
I have no experience with 9 Nh3 and do not presume to know what is Black's best line. It's tempting to chop off the Knight on h3 at once but that is probably what White wants you to do. On the principle that "the threat is stronger than the execution", the move Bxh3 is best postponed. 9...Bd6 is possible but not as popular as 9...Bc5, while even 9...Nb7 comes into consideration. If you want to know more about this line, study the famous games Steinitz-Chigorin and

Fischer-Bisguier; the latter is in *My Sixty Memorable Games*.

The usual move 9 Nf3 threatens the black e-pawn so there follows:

9...e4 10 Ne5

I don't mind my opponents making these supposedly tempo-gaining moves like ...c6, ...h6 and ...e4 because all they are really doing is creating holes and pushing my pieces (especially the Knight) to where they want to go. Take a look at the diagram. (*See Diagram*)



I like my Knight much better on e5 than on e4, where it lands in some of those foregoing variations. You might suppose the pawn on e4 is cramping White but not really. When White follows up d2-d4 in a few moves from now, Black has to exchange en passant because otherwise the anchored Knight on e5 would become too strong.

Notwithstanding all the coverage I have given so far to the alternatives up to this point, in fact nearly all my

games reach this position. When they are over-the-board games (as opposed to correspondence) the first ten moves are often played with minimal consumption of clock time by either player.

From this point, I do not intend to cover all the alternatives in much detail. There are just too many variations and I shall just say a little about the ones I consider important.

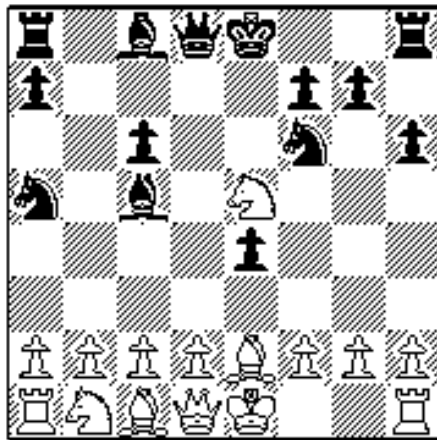
10...Bd6

This is usually played but is not necessarily best.

A line that should probably not bother White much is 10...Qd4 11 f4 Bc5 12 Rf1, (usually followed by 13 c3 and 14 Qa4, beating Black back). On the other hand, 10...Qc7 is probably best met by 11 d4 soon transposing to my main line below when Black captures the pawn en passant and then playsBd6.

However, Black also has 10...Bc5 which threatens 11...Qd4. Then White answers 11 c3 (which in turn threatens the fork b2-b4). This is quite an important alternative to the lines with ...Bd6 because White will soon be obliged to play c2-c3, which blocks the a1-h8 diagonal. The black Bishop must quickly return to d6, losing a tempo, but on the other hand White no longer has the plan (seen in my main line below) of fianchettoing the Queen's Bishop. So 10...Bc5 can be seen as a tempo sacrifice to force White to switch from his optimal plan.

I have encountered this 10...Bc5 line twice, both in postal and over-the-board play. (*See Diagram*)



In his book *Play the Open Games as Black*, GM Emms cites one of these games as an equalising line for Black: 10...Bc5 11 c3 Qc7 12 f4 Bd6 13 d4 exd3 14 Qxd3! 0-0 15 Nd2! Bxe5 16 fxe5 Qxe5 17 0-0 (Harding-Read, CC Olympiad 12 1992-93) saying "White possesses the bishop pair but Black's lead in development neutralises this". Neither Read, an ICCF Senior International Master, nor I thought it was so clear-cut. The game continued 17...Re8! 18 Bd1 Bg4 19 Nf3 Qc7 20

Nd4 (not forced) 20...c5 and I accepted my opponent's draw proposal. Read then wrote to me: "In the final position I 'felt' uncomfortable - your QB was going to be a strong piece while my QN was in limbo. Although my concrete analysis told me that I was OK I just didn't like my position."

In my more recent game, played in the Irish league against a 2150 opponent, I played my novelty 15 Nd2 again. Black preferred to play a pawn down rather than exchange his dark squared Bishop, but I won without much difficulty.

11 d4

When I was growing up as a chess player, books tended to give both 11 d4 and 11 f4 as of roughly equal value but now I think 11 d4 has clearly come out top, in conjunction with the following plan to fianchetto the white Queen's Bishop.

A recent example of 11 f4 was 11 ...exf3 (Gligoric used to prefer 11...Qc7 here.) 12 Nxf3 0-0 13 0-0 c5 14 d4 Qc7 15 Nc3 a6 16 Kh1 Bb7 17 d5 (17 Be3 Rad8 gave Black good play in Spassky-Geller, Gothenburg 1955.) 17... Rfe8 18 Nh4 Be5 19 Bf3 (Better is 19 Nf5 Rad8 20 Bxh6 Nxd5!= as in Estrin-Letic, 1963!) 19...Rad8 20 Re1 Bg3! 21 Rxe8+ Rxe8 22 hxg3 Qxg3 23 Bf4 Qxf4 24 g4 Nc4 25 Ng2 Qg3 26 b3 Ne3 27 Nxe3 Rxe3 28 Bg2 Nxg4 29 Kg1 Qf2+ 30 Kh1 Rh3+ 0-1 Ledezma Alvarez-Letic, Loeffler Memorial corr 1995-97.

11 ... exd3

If 11...Qc7 then 12 Bd2 (eyeing the a5-Knight), 12 Nc3 or 12 0-0 are all possible. Black again faces the dilemma of whether to exchange his dark-squared Bishop for a Knight in order to recover the gambit pawn.

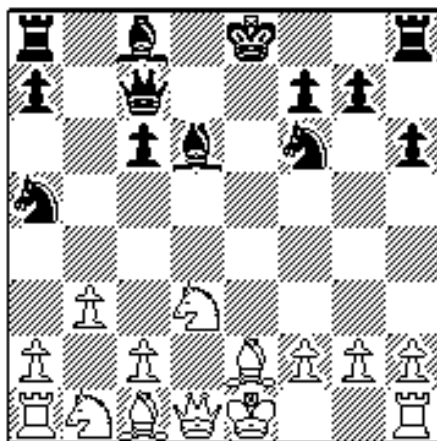
12 Nxd3 Qc7

Black tries to deter kingside castling, although in some lines White is willing to give up the h-pawn.

13 b3!

In connection with this move, I am reminded of the interesting observation

by GM Rowson in his stimulating new book *The Seven Deadly Chess Sins*. He remarks in passing that when the old masters estimated that the Knight and Bishop were of roughly equal value, this was before the days when the fianchetto was commonplace. On b2 the Bishop will not only exert influence but will also be fairly safe from being exchanged by a Knight. (See Diagram)



In my opinion, Black is now struggling to justify his gambit. White's dark-squared Bishop will be the best minor piece on the board when it gets to b2, observing the centre and bearing down against Black's King. The Knight on a5, now denied the vista of c4, is a liability for Black. It can drop off if he is careless, and at best it will have to manoeuvre slowly back to the centre where it may find itself opposing a rampaging Bishop in the endgame.

White's policy about the extra pawn is, roughly speaking, the following. Over the next few moves, while White is still completing his development, he may be willing to allow Black to regain the pawn (usually the f-pawn or h-pawn). This will, however, come at a price: either many exchanges draining Black's position of its dynamism, or in particular the exchange of the black dark-squared Bishop for a white Knight. If that happens, the Bishop on b2 generally becomes too strong so that Black prefers not to win back the pawn.

If you look back at my notes above on the 10...Bc5 line you can see this principle in action. Mike Read decided to win back his pawn at the expense of conceding the Bishop pair, but it wasn't so serious in that case because my Bishop wasn't going to b2. My other opponent kept his dark squared Bishop but then my knight manoeuvre Nb1-d2-f3 consolidated the extra pawn.

When I first played this line as White, I was always thinking in terms of trying to work up an attack against the black King, and sometimes it is possible. In one game, my Queen's Knight came to e4 and I sacrificed it on f6 to shatter the black kingside and create a raging attack on his King. Normally, however, Black will not allow this.

Later I came to prefer the "draining the dynamism" approach. If Black allows the game to lose its energy, he is left with two weak queenside pawns against a unified majority and that can be the basis for a strategic white win.

Another scenario is that Black avoids exchanges and goes for an all-out attack with material down. In that case, White must be prepared to weather the storm and win in the endgame or by counter-attack.

You cannot expect me to reveal all my secrets in an article like this so I

shall just lightly annotate one game. It is far from being perfect, and Black probably missed drawing chances. However, the very fact that it is not a tactical battle will force us to focus on the broad strategic sweep, which is my aim in this series.

Tim Harding - Pablo Adrian Gritti (Argentina) Loeffler Memorial corr, 1995-99

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 d5 5 exd5 Na5 6 Bb5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 Be2 h6 9 Nf3 e4 10 Ne5 Bd6 11 d4 exd3 12 Nxd3 Qc7 13 b3 0-0 14 Bb2 Nd5

14 ...Ne4 and 14...Re8 are the critical replies according to Emms.

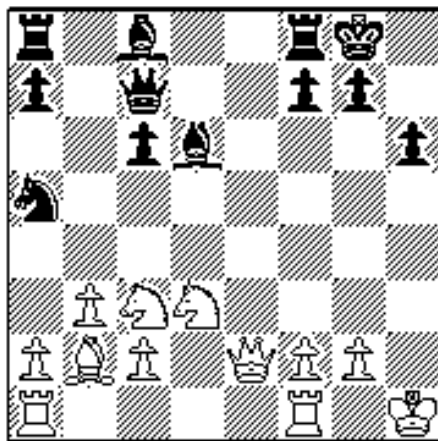
15 Nc3

Often played but this is probably not best. 15 h3 favoured White in Morozovich-Balashov, Russia Cup, Novgorod 1997.

15...Nf4 16 0-0

In his new book, Hungarian analyst Palkovi suggests 16 Nxf4 Bxf4 17 h3! Rd8 18 Bd3 c5 19 0-0 c4 20 Nb5! Qc6 21 bxc4 Nxc4 22 Be4!.

16...Nxe2+ 17 Qxe2 Bxh2+ 18 Kh1 Bd6 (See Diagram)



19 Ne4

I have also played 19 Qh5 which is safer but too drawish. I think there are fewer unanswered questions there.

19...Qe7 20 f4 f5

My knight sacrifice idea arises in the variation 20 ...Bf5 21 Nf6+!? Harding-Garriga Nualart, 1988. Looking in detail at that game is the exact opposite of my aim in this series! (Ultimately I won on time after

misplaying the attack and “achieving” a lost position.)

21 Nc3 Re8

I thought 21 ...Qh4+ 22 Kh1 was the critical line when playing Garriga.

22 Qxe7

Not 22 Rae1?? Qh4+

22 ...Rxe7

If 22 ...Bxe7 I intended 23 Rae1 (23 Ne5 Bf6).

23 Rae1

Black has two Bishops but weaker pawns; my question at the time was,

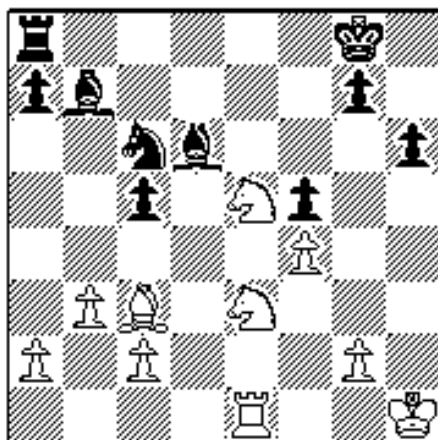
can this be exploited? Ultimately this game showed that it can be.

23...Ba6

If 23 ...Rxe1!? 24 Rxe1 followed by the outpost Ne5 when the Knight is in no way inferior to his Bishops.

24 Rxe7 Bxe7 25 Re1 Bd6 26 Ne5 c5 27 Nd1 Bb7 28 Bc3 Nc6 29 Ne3

Black is drifting towards a lost endgame as the white pieces find their optimum squares; now Ne3-c4 threatens. So Black decides to simplify although he should perhaps have preferred 29 ...Rf8 30 N3c4 Bc7 and hope to defend against my knight incursions. Probably he did not realise the danger he was facing in the ending. (*See Diagram*)



29...Bxe5 30 fxe5 Ne7 31 Rd1 Be4 32 Rd7

The Rook is only temporarily on the seventh rank but says "I'll be Back!".

32...Nc6 33 e6

White heads for a rook ending which he believes is winnable.

33...Nd4 34 Bxd4 cxd4 35 Nd5

35 Rxd4 Re8 was rejected as he can regain the pawn and then he has the

superior minor piece. I don't like to play Knight versus Bishop when he has the correct Bishop for h-pawn.

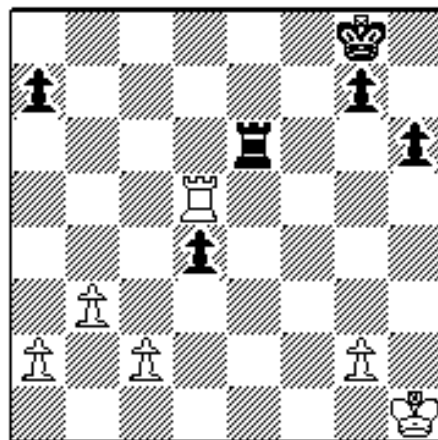
35 ...Bxd5

If 35...Bxc2 36 Nc7.

36 Rxd5 Re8 37 Rxf5!

After 37 Rxd4 Rxe6 38 c4 Re2 White has no winning chances.

37 ...Rxe6 38 Rd5 (*See Diagram*)



Here is the strategic picture. All minor pieces have come off. Black has a 2-1 kingside pawn majority which is never going to yield a dangerous passed pawn. If all the queenside pawns die, the resulting rook ending is a theoretical draw. Therefore I can play for a win without risk.

On the plus side, his weak c6-pawn has become a doomed d4-pawn. His a7-pawn is also sickly, only defensible by keeping his Rook passive.

38...Re4?!

Black had a difficult decision here. Presumably he should have played 38 ...Re2 39 Rd8+ Kh7 40 Rxd4 Rxc2 41 Ra4 Rc7 42 Ra6 although this gives me chances without risk?

39 a4

Threatening to create an outside passed pawn.

39...Kf7

If 39...Re2 40 Rd8+ Kf7 41 Rxd4 and White has an extra pawn with winning chances.

40 Rd7+ Kf6

I had expected 40...Ke6 forcing White to decide which pawn to take.

41 Rxa7 Re1+ 42 Kh2 Rc1 43 Rd7

Of course not 43 Rc7?? d3.

43...Ke5

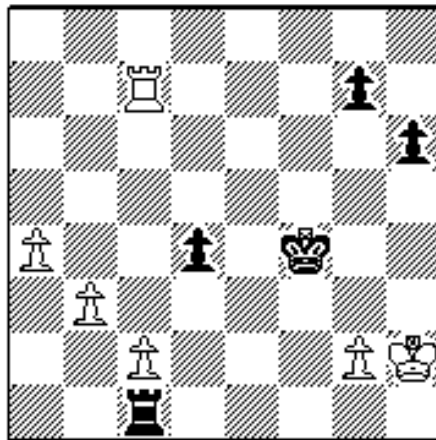
If 43...Rxc2 44 Rxd4 and I should win with some ease. Not 43...Rd1?? 44 c3.

44 Re7+ Kf4?!

If 44...Kd5 45 Re2 (Now my Pawn is protected he must march his King to c3) 45...Kc5 46 Kg3 Kb4 47 Kf3 Kc3 48 Ke4 Ra1 49 Rf2 gives White winning chances.

45 Rc7!

This is the point; now ...d3 doesn't work as Rc4+ and b3-pawn defends the Rook, enabling cxd3. Otherwise I play Rc4 and defend my pawns. Then I try to advance a-pawn or get my King out. I have a strong passed queenside pawn probably I will have two or three connected passed pawns before too long. So now he must be lost. (*See Diagram*)

**45...g5**

If 45...h5 then 46 a5 is probably simplest as I don't have to play Rc4 while his King is on the 4th rank.

46 Rc4 h5 47 Rxd4+ Kf5 48 a5!

The game now speeded up dramatically as, after four years struggling with the post, we concluded it by fax within a few weeks. I am giving up the c-pawn but pushing my pawns fast.

48...h4

If 48...Ke5 then 49 Rc4 Kd5 50 a6 Ra1 51 Ra4 wins rather simply e.g. 51...Rxa4 52 bxa4 Kc6 53 a5 Kc7 54 c4 Kb8 55 c5 Ka7 56 c6 Kxa6 57 Kg3 Ka7 58 Kf3. White mops up the kingside and then brings his King to d7.

49 Rc4

By this stage there is probably more than one way to win.

49...g4

Black threatens mate in 2 so my reply is forced.

50 g3 h3

If 50...hxg3+ 51 Kxg3 was sent as a conditional; he tries something trickier.

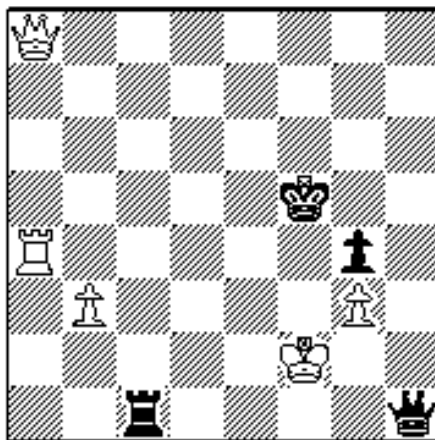
51 a6 Ra1

51...Re1 52 Rf4+ is also hopeless for him in the long run.

52 Ra4 Rc1 53 a7 Rxc2+ 54 Kg1 Rc1+ 55 Kf2 h2

If 55...Rc2+ 56 Ke3 Rc3+ (56...Rc1 57 a8Q or 56...Rc8 57 a8Q Rxa8 58 Rxa8) 57 Kd4 Rc8 (57...h2 58 a8Q) 58 a8Q Rxa8 59 Rxa8 is an obvious win with the extra Rook.

56 a8Q h1Q (See Diagram)



After the dry ending, White has the pleasant task of calculating the forced mate.

57 Rf4+ Ke5 58 Qe8+ Kd6

Or 58...Kd5 59 Rf5+ Kd6 (59 ...Kd4 60 Qe3#) 60 Qd8+! (quickest) 60...Kc6 (60...Ke6 61 Rf6+ Ke5 62 Qd6+ Ke4 63 Rf4#) 61 Rf6+ Kc5 62 Qd6+ Kb5 63 Qb6#.

59 Qd8+ Kc5

Other mating lines are 59...Kc6 60 Rf6+ Kc5 61 Qd6+ Kb5 62 Qb6#; or 59...Ke6 60 Rf6+ Ke5 61 Qd6+ Ke4 62 Rf4#; or 59...Ke5 60 Qd4+ Ke6 61 Rf6+ Ke7 62 Qd6+ Ke8 63 Rf8#.

60 Rf5+ Kc6

I didn't offer a conditional sequence against this as the mate was easier, so he played it! I did offer 60...Kb4 61 Qa5+ Kxb3 62 Qb6+.

61 Rf6+ 1-0

Now that the number and length of the variations has reduced, I announced mate and he resigned.

Don't get me wrong. I am not claiming that I was winning all along. If you find a defence for Black somewhere in the middle-game or endgame, it doesn't mean my argument fails. There are other ways that White too could have played along the same strategic lines.

It would be going too far to conclude that in the 5...Na5 Two Knights, Black loses because of his offside Knight and weak queenside pawns, but that should be one of your guiding principles when playing White in this variation!

This concludes my look at the 5...Na5 lines. Next month: the Fritz Variation.

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