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Inside Chess

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Yasser Annotates:

Adams-Seirawan
Bermuda 2000

White: Michael Adams

Black: Yasser Seirawan

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 Be7

A specialty of mine that I've trotted out on various occasions. The idea is to wait for 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.e5 Nfd7 when White is robbed of the f2-f4 possibility. As Michael played in the game, the line now transposes to a Rubinstein French with Black having an active b4-Knight instead of an undeveloped b8-Knight.



4.Bd3 Nc6 5.Ngf3 Nb4 6.Be2 dxe4 7.Nxe4 Nf6 8.Nxf6+ Bxf6 9.c3

Immediately putting the boot to the b4-Knight. Now the differences with a normal Rubinstein French are clear: White isn't going to have an easy time castling Queenside followed by a Kingside launch.

9...Nd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.Bd3 b6 12.Qc2 g6 13.Re1 Bb7 14.Bh6 Bg7 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.Be4 Qc8



I was now pleasantly dreaming of ...Nd5-f6 and a simple sound equality. Michael upset my equanimity with an unexpected trade.

17.Bxd5!

Not just an attempt to unbalance the position, the text has a very concrete idea: play on the dark squares. Its easy to imagine White's pieces buzzing about with Qc2-d2, Ne5-g4 and a Rook



lift. Suddenly my easy equality didn't seem obvious at all.

17...Bxd5 18.Ne5 f6

Not a happy decision at all as a whole array of squares are weakened and what is far more important, White's doubled Rooks on the e-file will shoot squarely at Black's wobbly e-pawn. The alternative: 18...Qd8 19.Re3 Bb7 20.Rae1 Qd5 21.Rg3, left me with the uncomfortable feeling that h2-h4-h5 would just be mate.

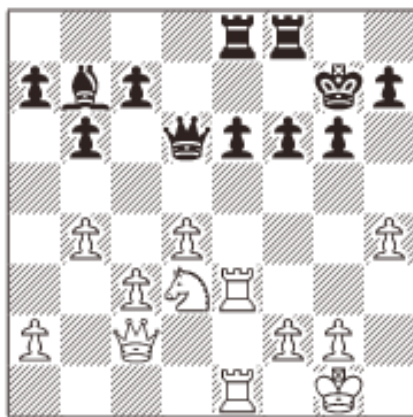
19.Nd3 Qd7 20.Re3 Rae8 21.Rae1 Qd6

An attempt to keep the d3-Knight under guard. Possibly 21...a5 22.Nf4 g5!? 23.Nxd5!? exd5 24.Qe2, was a better decision. In either case, White keeps a promising advantage.

22.b4! Bb7?

Bereft of an active plan I wanted to give myself the option of meeting Qc2-a4 with ...a7-a6 and if things got really dicey with the e6-pawn I'd have the option of ...Bb7-c8 defending. But who on earth wants to play the position after ...Bb7-c8? Better was 22...Re7, with a cramped position.

23.h4!



Expanding on the other flank as well. White is unable to win the game targeting only one weakness - the e6-pawn - therefore with the text White aims to loosen up the Kingside in order to create a second front.

23...Rf7 24.h5 g5 25.h6+!

Another unpleasant surprise as my twenty-third move was designed to stop this one. A quick calculation of:

25...Kxh6? 26.Ne5! fxe5 27.Rh3+ Kg7 28.Rxh7+ Kf8 29.Rxf7+ Kxf7 30.Qh7+ Kf8 31.Rxe5, convinced me that White would have a winning attack. Thus the h6-pawn is untouchable. Of course allowing the h6-pawn to live is like having a snake at your throat, a thing which is intolerable and must be gotten rid of. Over the course of the next few moves this need to get rid of the h-pawn was foremost in my mind.

25...Kf8 26.Qe2 Ba6! 27.a4 Bc4?

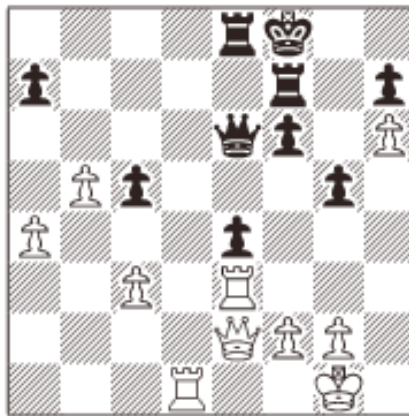
I can't really explain this one as the Knight should have been captured at once.

28.Qg4 Bxd3 29.Rxd3 Qf4 30.Qh5?!

After the game Michael was satisfied with this move, whereas I thought 30.Qe2 was much stronger.

30...Qf5 31.Rde3 c5!

The curse of the Rubinstein French is that the counter-strike ...c7-c5 - when played - only manages to equalize. When it's not played at all, Black suffers for a long time. I was quite relieved to get in this break, even at the expense of an open d-file because once the d4-pawn is removed, the e6-pawn can advance breaking the pressure on the e-file.

32.dxc5 bxc5 33.b5 e5 34.Qe2 Qe6 35.Rd1 e4

Now I was in a buoyant mood. The back of White's bind had been broken and my confidence began to soar. My last move stops Re3-d3, which stops any activity down the d-file. Furthermore, Black is ready for ...f6-f5-f4 and ...e4-e3, when lo and behold I'd have a passed pawn! Even more brilliantly, my Rooks are perfectly poised to back up these thrusts. My good feelings kept getting better, the h6-pawn would hang and in certain

circumstances the move ...f4-f3 might create a mating attack. All in all, things were definitely looking my way... Now with Michael beginning to think, an unwanted thought intruded its way into my calculations: I had just read a superb book by Alex Yermolinsky where he had spoken about "trends" in a chess game and their impact on the outcome of games. Well to make a long story short a player has to recognize positive and negative trends and to ride the positive trends. No draws in this game! The trend was in my favor and I'd ride it all the way!

36.c4 f5 37.Qb2 Kg8

Without a doubt if I had this exact position in another game I'd make the same move as I believe the resulting positions are better for me. My M-Chess Pro program disagrees. With 37...Qxc4 38.Qh8+ Ke7 39.Qe5+ Kf8 40.Qh8+ a perpetual check would have ended the game drawn. But that would have stopped the trend...

38.Rd5

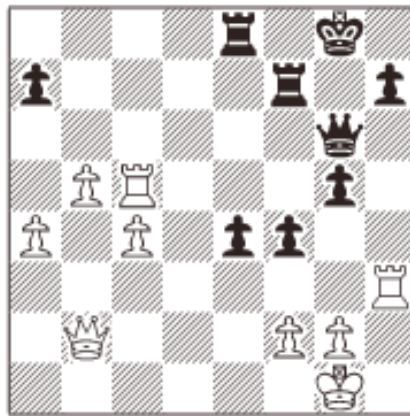
Now the computers were back to having a slight preference for White's position. Annoyingly, I haven't been able to proof this valuation wrong...

38...Qxh6

What a pleasure to get rid of that one!

39.Rxc5 f4

Is there a greater joy in chess than pushing a potential passed pawn with tempo? Perhaps, but, at this moment, the text certainly held all the charm in the world.

40.Rh3 Qg6

Having reached the time control it was now time to take stock of the position. I liked what I saw: in the first place, my pieces seemed far more coordinated and my pawns more threatening. The only concern being that if my kingside threats missed the mark, I'd have to face the music of the connected passers on the queenside. Michael went into thought and found the best move.

41.Re5!

Well played as Michael trades of his c5-Rook for the e8-Rook and thereby neutralizes the plan of shoving the e-pawn home.

41...Rfe7

Suddenly deciding my moves became difficult. In the first place which side stands better? And even that question wasn't important, the important question for me became, "What am I doing?" Was I playing for a win or a draw? Having spurned a perpetual check some time ago it seemed that I was playing for a win. But was this justified and could I force a draw whenever I liked? If I was playing for a win then it made sense to keep material on the board. Thus a line like: 41...Rd8! 42.c5?? g4 43.Rhh5 Rd1+ 44.Kh2 g3+ with mate next move was definitely grand. But what to do about a line like: 41...Rd8 42.Qe2 Rd4 43.Rc3 Rfd7 44.Rc1 g4 45.c5 f3 46.Qe1, when it wasn't obvious to me what was happening.

After the game Michael explained that 41...Rd8! 42.Rd5 would have been his choice when he showed various ways of drawing. However in that case, 42...Rxd5 43.cxd5 would have broken up the connected passers and the trade would have benefited Black and justified my feelings of possessing an advantage.

Still, I couldn't persuade myself to give up the ghost of ramming the e-pawn home and I was inevitably drawn to the text.

42.Rxe7 Rxe7 43.Qd4!

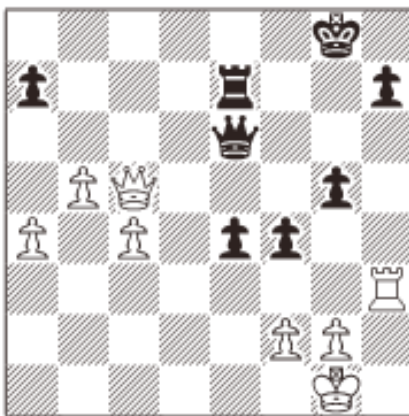


A powerful centralizing move that lords over the position and carefully eyes the e-pawn. The move seemed to have a deleterious effect on my mood. Once more the same questions of what my goals for the game were seem to collide with calculations. On the one hand, I'd run through a variation like 43...e3 44.fxe3 g4 45.Rh4 Qb1+ 46.Kh2 g3+ 47.Kh3 Qf5+ 48.Rg4+ (Counter-check!), curse the gods and start looking for a draw.

The next group of calculations would run 43...g4 44.Qd5+! Kh8 45.Rh5! e3 46.Qd8+ Re8 47.Qd4+ Kg8 48.Qd5+ with at least a perpetual check for White. I also held doubts about my position in general. Therefore "freezing" the activity of White's Rook by 43...h5!? 44.c5 h4 made a lot of sense. Now the ideas of ...e4-e3 and rushing the g-pawn seemed to coordinate. A lot of these lines had the stinger ...Qg6-b1+ associated with them. Suddenly the move 45.Rb3 hit me and without any checks on the b1-square doubts leapt forward.

I fell back to my dreams of glory of pushing the e-pawn home.

43...Qe6 44.Qc5



44...e3??

The conflicts had gone on long enough and I decided to force a draw with this howler. I now realize that after the forced 44...Rg7 45.a5, White is by no means worse. Both Michael and I were under the impression that the game should be drawn. Neither of us knew exactly how Black should get to safety. My problem is that all Rook endings favor White: 44...g4? 45.Qg5+ Kh8

46.Rh6! Qe5 47.Qxe5+ Rxe5 48.a5 e3 49.fxe3 fxe3 50.Kf1, and I'd rather play White.

45.Qxg5+ Rg7

Despair. Too late I realized that the intended 45...Kh8 46.Qxf4!, hits the f8-square and wins on the spot. Suddenly all the conflicts had ended.

46.Qd8+ Kf7 47.Qc7+ Ke8 48.Qxg7 e2 49.Qh8+ 1-0

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