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## Inside Chess

## Yasser Seirawan



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## Yasser Annotates

## Portisch-Timman, Candidates 1989

*Lajos Portisch (2610) – Jan Timman (2610)*

Candidates' Match 1989 (3)

English Opening [A29]

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.0-0 Be7  
8.a3 0-0 9.b4 Be6 10.Rb1

The same move that brought Karpov success in his match. The main point seems to be to prevent Black from choosing a set up with ...f7-f5. The move threatens b4-b5 and a grab on e5. The move b4-b5 can't be played immediately as Black would then respond with ...Bb3. The drawback of 10.Rb1 is that if Black is content to play with ...f7-f6, what is the rook doing on b1 and not c1?

10...f6 11.Ne4 Ba2!

An excellent idea introduced into practice by GM Robert Hübner. Black misplaces White's rook before occupying the center.

12.Rb2 Bd5 13.Nc5 Rb8!?



A bit passive. White has delayed the move d2-d3. This presents Black with an interesting possibility: 13...e4! 14.Ne1 Nc4!? (Crazy complications can result from 14...Bxc5 15.bxc5 Nd7 16.Rxb2 Nxc5 17.Rb5 Nd4 18.Rxc5 Bb3 19.Nc2 Nxc2 20.Bxe4 Nd4 21.Qe1 Re8 with a position rich in tactics.) 15.Rb1 Bxc5 16.bxc5 b6!? with good play for Black.

My belief is that White's play with Nb1-c3-e4 and a2-a3-b2-b4-Ra1-b1 is a bit too ambitious. Too many moves are necessary to exploit the nice outpost on c5. With 13...e4! Black could have underscored the fact that White has spent many tempi on the queenside.

14.e4 Bf7 15.d3 Nd7

Again a playable move, but a bit passive. In this opening, Black has to play sharp, aggressive chess. The reason is that White has the better pawn center and, usually, more space. Black can't afford to let White build up these "natural" advantages. The way to combat his slight spatial inferiority is to exchange pieces.

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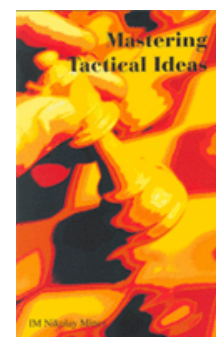


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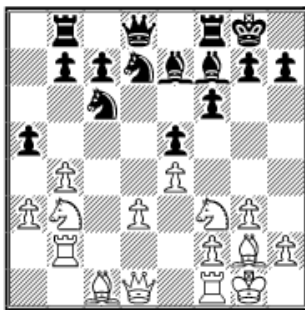
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Better was 15...Nd4 16.Nxd4 Qxd4 17.Rc2 (If 17.Qc2 Rfd8 18.Rd1 Bh5 19.Rd2 is tough position to judge.) Bxc5! 18.Rxc5 Qd7 with a level game.

**16.Nb3! a5!**



Black's position has been slipping. For better or for worse he has to force the action. White can't be allowed Qd1-c2, Bc1-e3, d3-d4, etc.

**17.b5 Na7 18.a4 Ba3**

Look at my note to Black's 15th move. But White isn't unhappy about the exchange of bishops. He brings his rook to the half-open c-file.

(An open file is one in which neither side has pawns on that file. A half-open file results when only one player has pawns on the file. In this position, White's half-open file is the c-file. Black's half-open file is the d-file. This definition is a crucial one. From it, the student can understand where operations should take place. It goes without saying that rooks are best placed on open and half-open files.)

**19.Rb1 Bxc1 20.Rxc1**

The opening can be summed up as favorable for White. Black's minor pieces are especially ineffective, while White need only play d3-d4 for a nearly decisive edge.

**20...c6! 21.bxc6 bxc6?**

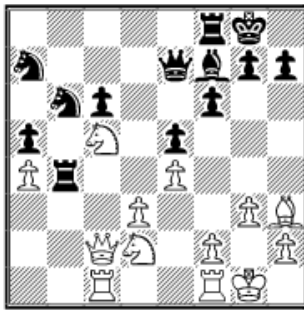
I definitely don't like this move on two counts: 1) Look at the scraggly pawn structure that it leaves behind. 2) Look at the knight on a7; it may not move again! Its only positive feature is that Black's rook is now activated on the open b-file.

But when deciding whether or not to activate a knight or rook in the middlegame, one should give preference to the knight. The reason is simple: it takes many moves to bring a knight into play, while a rook can generally be activated with a single step. Therefore, 21...Nxc6 22.d4 (22. Bh3!?) exd4 23.Nfxd4 Nxd4 24.Nxd4 Nb6 is a nice position for White, but leaves him without targets.

**22.Nfd2 Rb4 23.Bh3!**

Indirectly defending the a-pawn (23...Rxa4?? 24.Bxd7 and Nc5) while activating the bishop.

**23...Nb6 24.Nc5! Qe7 25.Qc2**



**25...Nc4??**

A tactical miscalculation that immediately costs the game. Better was 25...Rfd8 26.Rfd1 when Black has an inferior position.

**26.Ndb3! Na3**

Having said A, Black must say B. If the knight retreats, Black's a-pawn is plucked from the board.

**27.Qc3!**

Precise play by Lajos. Bad for White is to walk into the pins on the a2-f7 and a3-e7 diagonals: e.g., 27.Qa2? Rfb8 28.Qxa3 Rxb3; also White can be a bit more sophisticated and try 28.Rc3 N3b5! 29.axb5 a4 30.Nxa4 R8xb5 31.Nc5 Rxc5!. These variations are enough to convince one that the queen doesn't belong on the a-file. With 27.Qc3!, Black's knights are stranded without prospects. Black is now lost!

**27...Rfb8 28.Nd2!**



Keeping the knight from going to b1.

**28...Rb2**

The other choice, 28...Nc4 29.Na6 Nxd2 30.Qxd2 Rb2 31.Qxa5, costs Black material too.

**29.Qxa3 Rxd2 30.Rb1!**

Challenging the open b-file.

**30...Qd6 31.Qc3 Ra2 32.Qxa5 Nb5 33.Qb4 Rc2 34.Na6 c5 35.Qa5 1-0**

A model performance by Lajos. He exploited Timman's inaccuracies in masterful style.

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