

NEW ENGLANDER

Chess Club Update – September 2013

Chairman's Chatter

The new season is upon us. We have the club AGM to organise events but league matches may follow hard on its heels. Please be prepared!

Paul Hanks

Diary Dates

Remember the Club AGM on 4th September at which we will determine the format of teams and events for the coming season.

You should all have received reminders that the renewal of your membership of the English Chess Federation falls due on 31st August.

The traditional opening fixture is the Cambridgeshire North v South match at Godmanchester on 10th September.

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2



Last Month's solution

Position : 8/8/8/2K5/k1n5/p7/n1P5/R7 (Lewis)

1 Rb1 N any 2 Rxb4#

Website to Watch

The 6th FIDE Grand Prix tournament is due to take place in Paris from 18th September to 2nd October. This series of events has been prone to switches of venue at the last minute and this one may be no different. As they normally include the venue in the website name, you may do best to follow it on a general viewer (see Window on the Web).

The 1st Sinquefeld Cup is a small event that makes up with strength what it lacks in size. The world's two highest graded players take on the strongest pair from the USA. The tournament runs from 9th to 15th September (see <http://saintlouischessclub.org>).

Window on the Web

If you enjoy watching chess tournaments online you could do no better than visit www.chessbomb.com which offers live games from matches and tournaments, without the necessity of downloading any software. It doesn't even need you to have Java or Flash installed, and it works with all browsers. Registration isn't required. Real-time computer analysis by very strong engines such as Houdini 3 is provided.

Once an event is finished it goes into the archive. All the games can be played through using simple controls and the board is flippable. The original computer analysis of four different lines for each move is given in addition to the moves of each game.

The oldest archived tournament is the 2009 World Cup. All the London Classics, British Championships, US Championships and tournaments such as Gibraltar, Dortmund, Reykjavik and Biel are in the archive. There is an enormous number of top-class games here to play through. The multiple-line computer analysis would probably answer the "What if ..." questions you might have while playing through the games. There is so much here that to do this site justice you'll need to set aside a lot of time, but you could always dip into it when you have a few spare moments.

Ron Jones

Match of the Month

Before this game, I looked at some of my previous encounters with Francis and noted as White, he preferred e4 openings particularly the Ruy Lopez. So presciently and literally half an hour before my match, I spent about 20 minutes looking at the Steiner Variation in case the move order came up and sure enough, it did!

Statistically, this is like finding a needle in a haystack. Black is in control of whether to depart from main lines into the offbeat defences such as Bird's (3 ... Nd4) and Schliemann (3 ... f5) but there is still a vast labyrinth of popular variations to negotiate.

So you may be wondering why the Steiner Variation?... I thought this would give me the best chance considering the significant (= intimidating) difference in grading as it had a big surprise element and it cramped White's queenside piece development for the two pawns sacrificed.

F Bowers (182) v S Walker (102)

Club Championship Round 4, 08.05.2013

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5

The Ruy Lopez is probably the second opening everyone learns but that does not mean it is simple. In fact, it appears in the repertoires of a succession of world champions. Riffing through collections of their best games quickly reveals the number of options available even under the spotlight of top-flight chess and it is interesting to see how far our game can follow in the footsteps of the immortals!

3 ... a6

This traditional move is attributed to Morphy and is frequently encountered. Unpopular since the time of Lasker, the Berlin Defence 3 ... Nf6 was uncorked by Kramnik to reach a queenless (and somewhat boring) endgame with few tactical pitfalls. The fianchetto 3 ... g6 is sometimes known as the Smyslov Variation but it has fallen out of use as White can achieve a decent edge.

4 Ba4

Fischer and the young Karpov experimented with the Exchange Variation 4 Bxc6. When Alekhine played it, he preferred the Deferred form 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 Bxc6.

4 ... Nf6

4 ... d6 introduces the Modern Steinitz Defence was played by Alekhine in his 1929 match against Bogoljubow among other occasions but sometimes, he delayed it by one further move.

5 0-0

Kasparov's schoolboy games include an example of 5 d4 which is a deliberate attempt to avoid major theory. To rule out Euwe's favourite Nf6xe4, Smyslov chose 5 d3 in their first meeting whereas Spassky and Karpov have given an outing to the Wormald Variation 5 Qe2 which may also give tactical chances with Qe2-c4.

5 ... Be7

In 1995, Anand challenged Kasparov with the Open Variation 5 ... Nxe4 before an unpleasant defeat caused him to try the New Arkhangelsk Variation 5 ... b5 6 Bb3 Bc5 as a reserve weapon. By 1996, however, fashion had moved on to 5 ... Bc5.

6 Re1

6 Qe2, the Worrall Attack, has appeared in Anand's practice.

6 ... b5 7 Bb3 0-0

The bulk of games feature d7-d6 either on move 7 or 8. Petrosian favoured this system and games often followed the main continuation 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7 though even here, there are several significant offshoots (e.g. Botvinnik's 9 ... Be6).

Thankfully for those of us with adventurous spirits, 9 h3 is not the death knell for attacking chess. You can always try the Gajewski Gambit 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 d5 which first appeared in 2007. Carlsen has played it twice against elite opposition ... or is it too mischievous to mention his name at present in the current context?

8 c3

This point is the crossroads. The game moves represent the Marshall Gambit but here, White has options to prevent it.

8 a4 was the Anti-Marshall treatment favoured by Kasparov. In fact, he is reported to have taken great pains throughout his career not to give the opportunity to any opponent who essayed the gambit however sporadically. His match against Short is a showcase of how to handle White in this variation.

Tal, on the other hand, failed to make progress with the white pieces in one of his Candidate's matches and sought to avoid the Marshall Gambit with 8 h3. The reasoning is that 8 h3 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5 c6 12 Bxd5 cxd5 13 d3 Bd6 14 Re1 Qh4 15 Nd2 deprives Black of his normal attacking chances and 16 Nf3 will force a retreat. This variation is more likely to proceed 8 h3 Bb7 9 d3 d6 10 a3.

There are articles entitled "Escape from the Main Lines" that advocate 8 d4. White is aiming for disorientation using tricks such as 8 ... Nxd4 9 Bxf7+ rather than strategic insight.

8 ... d5

The earliest example of this move comes from 1893 in the pre-computer age. Presumably working independently, US champion Frank Marshall invented the Marshall Gambit after a match defeat in 1909. He reportedly saved it for 10 years in order to spring it on his rival Capablanca. The unruffled Cuban trusted his defensive technique and went on to win the [game!](#)

Petrosian once declined the pawn with 9 d3 which the computer does not recommend for White after 9 ... dxe4 10 dxe4 Qxd1 etc.

9 exd5

Spassky is still with us! He continued with the main line 9 ... Nxd5 (against Fischer and Tal!) and the line still attracts disciples among world championship contenders. The longevity of the attack rests on the weakening of White's kingside in the main line after 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5 c6 12 d4 Bd6 13 Re1 Qh4 14 g3 because the natural 14 h3 runs into 14 ... Bxh3.

As an alternative, Tal varied with the Kevitz Variation 12 Bxd5 cxd5 13 d4 Bd6 14 Re3 but only achieved equality after 14 ... Qh4 15 h3 Qf4. Fischer also drew with 12 g3 Bd6 13 Re1 Nf6 14 d4 Bg4 15 Qd3 c5 16 dxc5 but later recommended 16 Bc2 saying Black had insufficient compensation.

9 ... e4

The Steiner Variation avoids standard theory and formed part of my preparation. Should I have dismissed it given that the source game Fox v Steiner, 1929 ended in a win for White in 22 moves? That game, however, showed that several traps are in the air 10 Ng5 Ne5 11 Nxe4 Nd3 12 Nxf6+ Bxf6 13 Re3 Bf5 14 Qf3 Qd7 15 Rxd3 Be4 16 Qe2 Qf5 17 Re3 Bxb1 18 d3 Bg5 19 Rxb1 Bxe3 20 fxe3 Rae8 21 e4 a5 22 Be3 1-0.

Nowadays, we can quickly generate the statistics as to whether 10 Ng5 should be considered the more

successful reply but even this gives a murky picture. The database www.365chess.com shows White's win rate as 46.3% whereas www.chess.com prefers the superior record of the game move.

10 dxc6 exf3 11 Qxf3

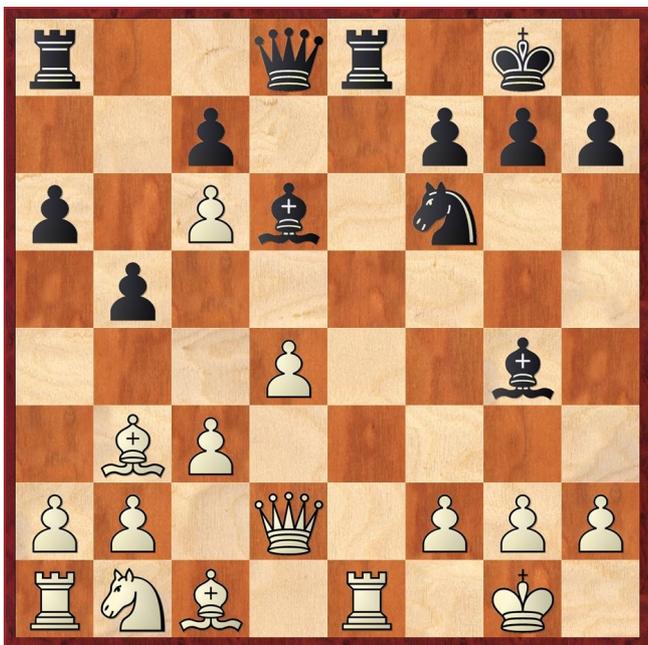
White has a major alternative in 11 d4 whilst 11 g3 is recommended by Fritz and supposedly nullifies Black's idea.

Perhaps the best discussion of the opening can be found at www.chesscafe.com/text/kaiss11.pdf.

11 ... Bg4 12 Qe3

Fischer reached this position twice and continued 12 Qg3. The games still gave White some anxious moments e.g. 12 Qg3 Bd6 13 Qh4 Re8 14 f3 Bf5 15 d4 Bxh2+ 16 Kxh2 Ng4+ 17 Kg3 Qxh4+ 18 Kxh4 Rxe1 19 fxg4 Rxc1 20 gxf5 Rd8 [if 20 ... Re8 21 d5 Ree1 22 d6] and White converted his material advantage (R J Fischer v S N Bernstein, USA Championship Round 8 New York, 1959). If only this had been in my preparation!

12 ... Re8 13 d4 Bd6 14 Qd2



14 ... Bf4!

An earlier 13 Qg5 is recommended as an antidote to this trap but don't knock it! I have obtained my target position, won the exchange and have yet to use much time on the clock.

In fact, in some games, Black ignored the flashy move and set problems with 14 ... Ne4 15 Qe3 Qh4 16 g3 Qh3 17 Bd2 Nxc3.

15 Re3 Bxe3

After the possibly stronger move 15 ... Nd5, White has either to give up the bishop pair or find a safe square for his queen away from the fork on e3. 16 Qe1 Nxe3 17 Bxe3 looks plausible but 17 ... Qh4 18 g3 Qh6 is then hard to meet.

Francis was on unfamiliar territory and it is never easy to analyse the consequences of such a tactical line over the board. In fact, at this point, I had used only 5

minutes of my time whereas Francis had eaten up 45 minutes!

16 fxe3 Ne4 17 Qe1 Qg5

Material currently is roughly level but Black has greater activity. Fritz rates the position as being favourable to me by 0.8 pawns but conversion of the advantage is still problematic. Black has two plans – continue with the kingside initiative or capture White's weak advanced pawn. The computer proposes 17 ... Be6 with 18 Bc2 Bd5 or 18 Bxe6 Rxe6 to follow. As 17 ... Qd6 is rated the second best, it obviously prefers the latter plan and in retrospect, so do I.

I was worried by the long-term prospects and cramping effect of White's c pawn but with the next two game moves, I tried to keep my options open – and possibly fell between two stools!

18 Qf1

This is where we part company with all games in Fritz's 1 million+ game database. White started to gain the upper hand when a Ukrainian youth game continued 18 Nd2 Nd6 19 e4.

18 ... Be6 19 Na3

The computer does not like this move - 19 Qf3 may both defend the kingside and support c6.

19 ... Bxb3 20 axb3 Re6 21 Qf4 Qxf4

Without queens, White has fewer worries about the kingside attack. I should have looked at 21 ... Qg6 22 Qxc7?! Rf6 when the threat of Rf6-f2 is very unpleasant. Certainly, White can improve (e.g. 22 h3) but 22 ... h5 prevents defence by pushing the g pawn and the target at g2 gives me a critical focus.

Similarly, Black has 21 ... Qh5 threatening Qh5-d1xb3 and also protecting against White's intended Na3xb5. White has little active play (22 Qf3 Qg6 virtually transposes) and Black has time to strengthen the attack slowly e.g. 22 h3 Rae8 freeing the rook on the third rank.

22 exf4 Rae8 23 d5 R6e7 24 Nc2 Nc5 25 Be3 Rxe3 26 Nxe3 Rxe3 27 Kf2 Re8 28 c4

Black's play is virtually optimum according to the software and I am now winning though 28 ... Nxb3 was a better continuation. Although there are objective improvements for White, Francis cannot be criticised. He has kept some hopes alive with his central pawns rather than losing slowly but surely ... And I give his choices some justification!

28 ... Nd3+ 29 Kf3 Ne1+

29 ... bxc4 30 bxc4 Nxb2 31 c5 Nd3 32 d6 (32 Rxa6 Nb4) Nxc5 33 d7 Rb8 looks awkward but may have clung on to the first half-point.

30 Kg3 Re2

And here goes the second half-point!

31 d6 Rxc2+

31 ... cxd6 32 c7 is fatal and 31 ... Re8 32 dxc7 gives White a pleasant choice between Ra1-d1-d8 or Rxe1.

32 Kh3 1-0

A lucky escape for White!

Steve Walker