

Hastings International Chess Congress 2007 / 2008

The Hastings Congress is an annual event taking place after Christmas on the South Coast of England. In previous years it attracted many big named Grandmasters who participated in a separate all play all event. With a reduction in funding, this event has been abolished, but the Open congress still remains as popular as ever, with hundreds of players competing. This includes nearly 20 Grandmasters, and players from many different countries.

The top 4 boards are commented on by Grandmaster Chris Ward, and there are “Master Classes” held by several of the competitors in the evenings for people who want to learn.

Below is a photo of the top 4 boards, in the middle of round 4.



If you ever find yourself at a loose end after Christmas, this tournament has excellent facilities, and provides a great social scene, so comes highly recommended.

A group of young German players have come over this time, and have already made a big impression on the tournament, knocking several points and half points off the leading players. Below is my game from round 2 where I faced one of them.

(1) Pert,N (2539) - Dinger,F (2378) [E12]

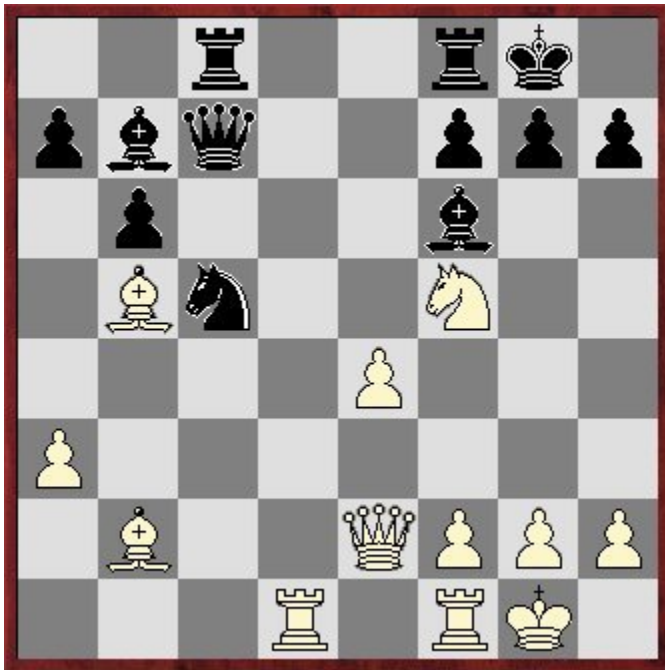
Hastings International (3), 30.12.2007

[Pert, N]

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.Nc3 Bb7 5.a3 d5 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.e3 The old main line is going through a minirevival recently, so I thought I would try and keep up with the trends. Here g6 is a popular move for black, but the game transposed to a more common variation which can also be reached as follows: [7.Qc2 Be7 8.e4 Nxc3 9.bxc3 0-0 10.Bd3 c5 11.0-0 Qc7 12.Qe2 Nd7 13.Bb2] 7...Nd7 8.Bd3 c5 9.e4 Nxc3 10.bxc3 Qc7 11.0-0 Be7 12.Bb2 0-0 13.Qe2



By a strange move order we have reached one of the main positions of the Petrosian Variation of the Queens Indian. 13...Rac8 14.Nd2 One of black's main plans in this position is to close down the centre, and hence limit the potential of white's bishops by playing c4 and e5. This move is designed to add more control to the c4 square, whilst readying kingside expansion with f4. 14...Bg5!? An interesting way to stop f4. Another alternative is to put the queen on f4 before the pawn gets there! Then if white wants to shift the queen he has to weaken the long diagonal with g3. 15.Rad1N This is technically a novelty, but according to my database the position has been reached once before by transposition. 15...e5?! Black goes for it and challenges the centre right away. Rfd8 comes into consideration as a useful alternative. 16.Nf3 [16.d5 Bxd2 17.Qxd2 c4 I expect this was his intention, closing up the position, but probably white has slightly the better of it with the bishop pair if he can find a way to activate them.] 16...Bf6 17.Bb5! I don't want black to close me in with c4. 17...cxd4 18.cxd4 exd4 19.Nxd4 Nc5 20.Nf5!



20...Bxb2 This hands white a comfortable edge. The risky Bxe4 was the other option when white has the choice between 2 reasonable ways to fight for the advantage. [20...Bxe4 21.Nh6+ (21.Bxf6 Bxf5 22.Be7 Rfe8 23.Bxe8 Rxe8 24.Bd6 with a pull for white.) 21...Kh8 22.Bxf6 gxf6 Is also possible when black has an extra pawn, but a weak king provides at least sufficient compensation.] 21.Qxb2 f6 22.Nd6 Rb8 Forced. [22...Rcd8 23.Qa2+ Kh8 24.Nf7+ Rxf7 25.Qxf7 Wins.] 23.f3?! [23.e5 I think e5 is marginally preferable. This ensures white's king is safer than black's. However the game continuation keeps a strong hold in the centre and blunts black's bishop.] 23...Kh8! 24.Rf2 Ba6 Black is advised to swap his bishop for white's more active counterpart. 25.Bxa6 Nxa6 26.Rfd2 Nc5 27.Qc3 [27.Rd5 I wanted to continue with Rd5 and Qf2 -> kingside but Na4 would have been irritating threatening a fork on c3. 27...Na4 28.Qb3 Nc3 29.Nb5 Nxb5 30.Qxb5 Rbd8?] 27...h6! Black has found some strong moves, and the task of converting the edge is not easy. 28.h3

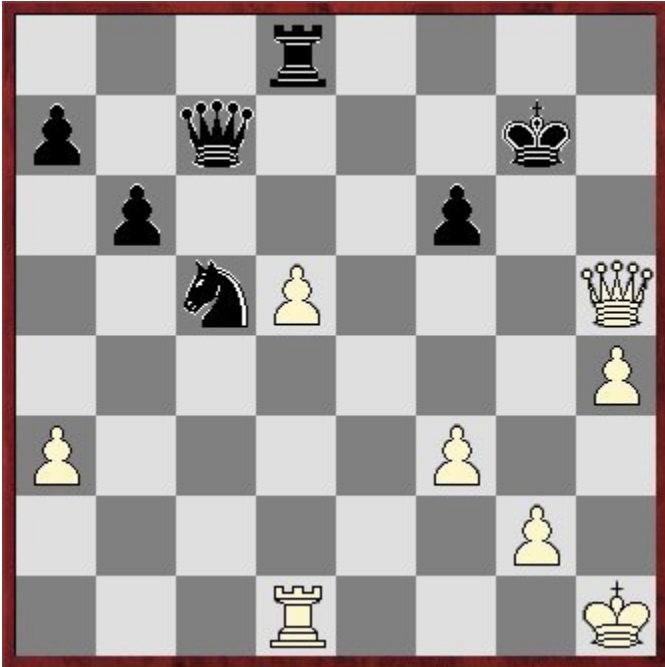


I tried to look for a way to consolidate my own king position, but it is not so simple with my pawn on f3. Moving the f pawn around a castled king, can often leave it much more vulnerable. 28...Kh7 Black hopes to play Rbd8 without any Nf7+ problems. 29.Kh1 Rbd8 30.Qc2 Kg8 31.Qc4+ Kh7 32.Qd5 Rd7?! Probably Qd7 was better covering the f5 square. 33.Qf5+ Kg8 34.Qg6!



34...Ne6! [34...Rfd8 Black would love to play this move but it fails tactically. 35.Ne8 Rxd2 36.Rxd2 Rxd2 37.Nxf6+ And mate follows.] 35.Qg4 Nc5 36.Qg6 Ne6 37.Qg4 I repeated as my time was getting low and I needed to make it to move 40. 37...Nc5 38.Rd5?! [38.f4! Would have been stronger, ready to support the d6 knight with e5 against Rfd8 ideas. I rejected this based on a

miscalculation. 38...Qc6 39.Nf5 Nxe4 40.Rxd7 Nf2+ 41.Kg1 Nxe4 42.Ne7+ Wins for white, but black could fight on with 39...Rc7. In fact white would probably be best off playing 39.Kh2 looking after the king - the most important feature of major piece endgames.] 38...Kh7! 39.h4? I start going wrong in time trouble. [39.Qf5+ Kg8 40.Qg6 Kh8 41.h4 Is a more accurate version of the same idea.] 39...Rfd8! 40.Nf5? [40.Qf5+ Kg8 41.e5 Still retains a slight edge.] 40...Rxd5 41.exd5 g6! The only move but a very important one. I'd seen this and hoped that h5 might have maintained the initiative for white but... 42.Ng3 [42.Qg3 Moving to an equal ending was probably the best option, but I was still after more.; 42.h5 gxf5 43.Qg6+ Kh8 44.Qxf6+ Kg8 45.d6 Qd7 Looks at least ok for black.] 42...h5! Before white plays h5 - so now i'm obliged to sacrifice a piece. 43.Nxh5 gxf5 44.Qxh5+ Kg7??



After a fine series of moves, my young opponent finally cracks. [44...Kg8 45.d6 (45.Qg6+ Qg7 46.Qf5 Rd7 And black is slightly better.; 45.Rd4 Qh7 Is the point, when the black king can hide on h8.) 45...Rxd6 46.Qg6+ Kf8 47.Qh6+ Ke8 48.Qg6+ Kd7 49.Rxd6+ Qxd6 50.h5 Is still not over but black has the better chances.] 45.Rd4! Now I think black is lost, but he comes up with an interesting last roll of the dice. 45...Ne6



46.Rg4+! [46.Qg4+? Ng5 47.hxg5?? Qc1+ 48.Kh2 Rh8+ 49.Kg3 Qe1+ 50.Kf4 Qe5#] 46...Kf8
 47.Qh6+! Ke7 [47...Ng7 48.Qh8+ Wins] 48.Re4! Rxd5 49.Qg7+ And black resigned since:[49.Qg7+
 Kd6 (49...Kd8 50.Qg8+ Kd7 51.Qxe6+ Kd8 52.Qe8#) 50.Rxe6+ Wins the queen.] 1-0