

A Game from The 4NCL 2011/2012

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Spirit of Atticus v Brown Jack - 4NCL British League 2012 (Division 2, Board 3)

Firstly, please excuse any errors in my annotations and assessments. My notes are based on thoughts during the game and have not been checked by a computer engine.

Going into this game, I felt under pressure both from a team perspective and personal one. I joined Spirit of Atticus at the beginning of this season (2011-2012) and my first 3 appearances had seen me accumulate a very round zero in terms of points! We already suspected that our team would be in the 2nd division demotion pool so we badly needed match points to avert a relegation catastrophe! This was my 4th game for the team so I was desperate to address my shortcomings and put some sort of score on the board. This would be no easy matter as my opponent was rated significantly higher than me and had beaten me the previous year in the Berks and Bucks Congress.

1e4 e5

This was a surprise as my recollection was that Paul played the French Defence. In fact, my recollection was totally erroneous as we apparently played exactly the same opening moves until I deviated on move 8.

2 d4 ed 3 Qxd4 Nc6 4 Qe3 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 0-0 7 0-0-0 Re8 8 Bc4!?

In previous games, I had played the 'tricky' 8 Qg3! which was Morozovich's innovation that I recall he played against Mark Hebden in the dim and distance past 'X' number of years ago at the famous Lloyds Bank Tournament. I was present at the time and remember trying to ask 'Moro' about the move and that his reaction was to ceremoniously swat me away as though I were a fly!



8....d6 !?

Black can win a risky pawn as in APSmith –Venkat Tiruchirapalli (Bury St Edmunds weekender 2010) 8...Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Nxe4 (9...Rxe4? loses to 10 Bxf6 Rxe3 11 Bxd8) 10 Qf4! Qe7?? - a complete oversight by Black perhaps caused by playing too quickly and overconfidence because at 216 BCF Grade, he was at the time 25 points higher than me. Now I played 11 Re1! which was simple and winning as Black will lose material after 12 f3.

But instead of 10...Qe7 he could have played either

- (A) 10..Nf6 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 (11...gf just looks too horrible to contemplate) 12 Qxc7! Qxf2 13 Nf3 with tremendous compensation for the pawn or 12...Qg5+ 13 Kb1 Qxg2 14 Qf4 Ne5 15 Bd5 again with great attacking chances for a pawn.
- (B) 10...Nxc3 11 Bxf7+ Kh8 12 Bxe8 Qxe8 (Black has no time for 12...Nxd1 because of 13 Qf8 mate) 13 bc d6 which I would estimate to be favourable to White.

9 Nf3!? Bf5!? 10 Qf4 Bg6

Black can't take on e4 because of White's threat of Bxf7+ followed by Ng5+

10 Ng5!? h6 11 h4!?



11 ...Ne5!?

If 11...hg!? 12 hg Nh7 and now I wasn't sure what to play but 13 Qh2 looks interesting (threatening 14 f4 and 15 f5) and if 13...Bxc3 14 bc Rxe4 ? 15 Bd3! looks strong or 14...Bxe4 then 15 Bd3 anyway.

12 Bb3 Nh5

Once again it is necessary to analyse 12..hg 13 hg but again it is dangerous because 13...Nh7 (or 13...Nh5 14 g4 wins) 14 Qh4 with f4 and f5 to follow.

13 Qe3 Qd7!?

I wasn't sure what Black would play here so I can't say 13...Qd7 was a surprise as I didn't know what he would play. The only move I really analysed was 13..hg 14 hg when I felt I had good chances because Black's Knight on h5 is exposed to a White pawn surge of f3 and g4.

14 f4 (Thematic)

14...Ng4 15 Qf3 hg!?

Finally Black can no longer resist the temptation to take the Knight! But the crisis point of the game is here as White threatens the crushing 16 f5. Because of the complexity of having to analyse this Knight capture (hg) at every turn and time taken over the moves, It seems that we must have played more than 15 moves each – but we hadn't! Time trouble looms for both players....!

16 f5!

Probably best as 16 hg might be met by 16...Bxc3 17 Bxc3 Bxe4 18 Qh3 Bg6 and maybe Blacks escapes with the 'bootie'.

16...Ne5 17 Qe3 Bxf5

(Or 17...Bc5 18 Qxg5! Is strong)

18 ef Nf4

Already we are both getting short of time and this is tricky little move.

19 Kb1

Not falling for 19 hg?? Ned3+! winning my Queen.

19...Nc4 ?!

Maybe Black should keep this Knight on the e5 square covering the g6 and f7 square. Instead he exchanges this Knight for my somewhat passive but potentially dangerous Bishop on d2. But if 19...Qxf5 then after 20 hg Black's f4 knight is en-prise to white's Queen and d2 Bishop.

20 Qg3 Nxd2+ 21 Rxd2 Qxf5 22 hg Bxc3 23 bc Re4

Activity for Black! I could feel my opponents sudden optimism after he played this move. If he had time to follow this up with 24...Rae8 he would be very happy...!

24 Rf2!

Repositioning my only ineffectual piece so that it can have some influence. On d2, this Rook was not doing anything – now it pins the Knight against the Queen and all White's pieces contribute a threat to Black's king.

24...Qe5

Unpinning the Knight. I am sure he would have liked to have played 24...Rae8 but 25 g6 is still a difficult reply to meet as 25...Qxg6 26 Qxg6 Nxg6 27 Bxf7+ and 28 Bxg6 wins.

25 g6!



Fortunately for me, Blacks capture Bxc3 has freed up a flight square on b2 for my King so I don't have to worry about checks on my back rank.

25...d5 26 gf+ Kxf7

With each of us only a few minutes left and the time control a long way off at move 40, the tension is palpable as this result is crucial to the outcome of the match.

26 Rh4!

Forcing Black to expose his King still further to save the Knight.

26g5 27 Rh7+ Ke6?! 28 Qg4+ Kf6 29 Qd7

This infiltration is obviously very strong and probably winning for White. The threat is 29 Qf7 mate.



29...Qe6 ?!

A blunder – albeit in a lost position – but in mutual time trouble I let him get away with it. Now 30 Rh6+ wins the Black Queen and it would have been quite a nice game if it had finished this way. But I mistakenly thought he could intercept the 30 Rh4+ check with 30...Ng6 forgetting the Knight was pinned by my f2 Rook!

30 Qg7+ ? Kf5 31 Rh6 Qe7

Now with both flags ‘hanging’ and both players ‘blitzing’ to reach the time control at move 40, I decided to bail out and simply win a piece

32 Qxe7 Rxe7 33 g3 Kg4

(33...c6! keeping my Bishop out of the game is a better chance but White’s extra piece will win in the end)

34 gf gf 35 Bxd5 Kg3? (3 seconds left!) 36 Rg2 mate!(about 15 seconds left!)

A big relief to have come away with the full point as the match score (after some heroic defence by Sheila Jackson in her game against Mike Truron) was 4.5 – 3.5 to us (Spirit of Atticus)