

Mike Wojcio vs. Steve Stoko

Round 3 [B07]

Kenilworth Chess Club Championship

January 21, 2005

annotated by Michael Goeller

This game was the biggest upset of the tournament. Many wondered how a 1600 player can beat a FIDE Master. The answer seems to be solid play and a little speed on the clock. It also helps if the master is not feeling well....

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nd2 Nc6 4.Ngf3 e5!?

A more common treatment of the position is with 4...Bg4 5.c3 e6 followed by d5.

5.c3 Bg4



Position after 5....Bg4

6.dxe5

This leads to a roughly equal game. White does best to treat the position as an open game (such as the Ruy Lopez) with 6.Bb5! which should yield some edge.

I once played a tragically flawed brilliancy as Black with this line against Todd Lunna, maybe 20 years ago in a team match. Lunna had White and the game went: 6.d5 Ne7 7.Be2 g6 8.0-0 Bg7 9.Ne1 Bxe2! 10.Qxe2 0-0 11.c4 Nh5 12.Nd3 f5 13.f3 c6 14.b3? cxd5 (14...Nf4!?) 15.cxd5 Nxd5!! 16.exd5 e4 17.Nb2 Bd4+ 18.Kh1 Ng3+ 19.hxg3 Qg5 20.Rf2 e3 21.Ne4! Qh5+?! (better 21...fxe4! 22.Rf1 Rac8 with attack) 22.Kg1 exf2+ 23.Nxf2 Rfe8?! (better 23...Rae8! 24.Qd1 f4!! 25.Kf1 Bxf2! 26.Kxf2 fxg3+ 27.Kxg3 g5 28.Kf2 Qh4+ 29.Kf1 g4 with a winning attack) 24.Qd1! (not 24.Qd2? Rac8!-+) 24...Rac8? (best still was 24...f4!? with some initiative) 25.Rb1! Rc5?! 26.Nc4 Bxf2+ 27.Kxf2 Rd8? 28.Qd4! Rc7 29.Bb2 1-0 -- one of my more memorable losses, which I give from memory.

So I identify with Steve's loss in this game. After his wonderful play in the opening and middlegame, a single mistake costs him a win and he eventually loses the game. Chess requires focus on every move.

6...dxe5 7.Be2 Bc5!? 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 Bxf3! 10.Bxf3 a5!

White is completely deprived of counterplay.



Position after 10...a5!

11.Nc4 Qe7 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 14.Qe2 b5 15.Ne3 Bxe3! 16.Qxe3 b4

Black's Knight is better than White's Bishop, he has a slight initiative on the Queenside, and he is working on dark-square domination. But if White keeps his cool these small advantages may not amount to much at all.

17.Rfd1

If White instead plays 17.cxb4? axb4 -- Black will practically be winning since the Knight soon lands on d4 with total control of everything.

17...Rfd8 18.Be2

Re-activating the Bishop. It is difficult to see how Black can try to gain an edge out of the position.

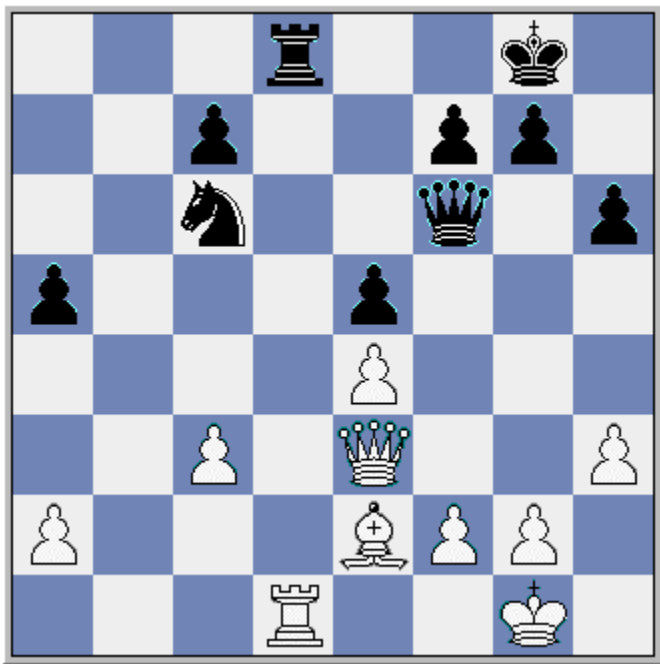
18...bxc3

The risky idea 18...a4!? --with the threat of undermining the c-pawn with a3 -- does not seem to work for Black: 19.Rxd8+! (19.a3 bxc3 20.bxc3 Na5 attacking b3; or 19.cxb4 Nxb4 20.Qc5 Nc6 21.Rxd8+ Rxd8 22.Bb5 Nd4 23.Bxa4 Ne2+ 24.Kh1 Rd2! with more than sufficient compensation for the pawn) 19...Rxd8 20.a3 bxc3 21.bxc3 Na5 22.Rb1! Nb3 23.Bb5 Nd2 24.Rb4+= and Black's weak a-pawn falls.

19.bxc3

White cannot take back with the Queen or the Knight comes into d4. The position is rapidly becoming rather sterile and drawish.

19...Rxd1+ 20.Rxd1 Rd8



Position after 20....Rd8

21.Qc5!

White wants to activate the Queen and put pressure on the a-pawn and Knight. An alternative idea would be to grab the key square on the file with 21.Rd5! In any event, White may even have a slight edge now since he has a number of ways to create chances while Black is becoming more on the defensive.

21...Rxd1+ 22.Bxd1 Qd6!?

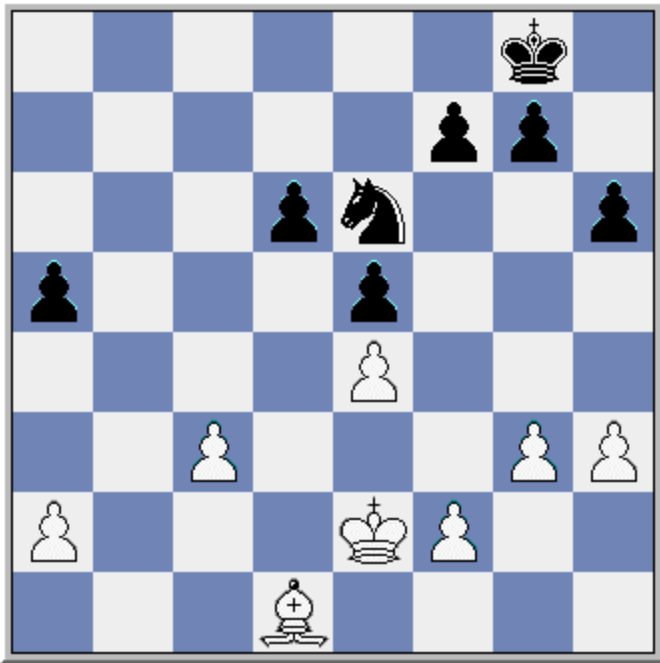
Forcing the exchange of Queens and giving up the potential advantage of the Queen and Knight combination. But Black might be forced to take this route now since White's Queen is so dominating. Steve likely expected Mike to make some mistakes later, but he might have had better practical winning chances with the Queens still on.

23.Qxd6 cxd6 24.Kf1 Nd8!

Repositioning the Knight. A different idea might have been to try locking the position by advancing the f-pawn with 24...g6?! 25.Bb3 Kg7 26.Bd5 Ne7 27.Ke2 f5 but then the White King penetrates to the Queenside rather quickly with 28.Kd3 Kf6 29.Kc4 winning.

25.Ke2 Ne6 26.g3?

Best was 26.Bb3 Nf4+ 27.Kf3 g5 and though Black's Knight has a great position, it is tough to imagine a way to break through with his King.



Position after 26.g3? Black to play and win!

26...Nc5?

This is a good square for the Knight on dark and in front of White's isolated pawn, but it appears that in focusing on his strategic objective Steve may have overlooked a simple win: 26...Ng5! forks two pawns and likely wins the game! White has no time to run after the a-pawn since 27.Kd3 Nxf2 28.Kc4? Nxf2 29.Bf3 g5 30.Kb5 g4 and Black's pawns are too fast on the kingside. This seems to have been the last chance that Black had to win. Now his attempts to break through on the Queenside get stymied and he can make no progress.

27.f3 Kf8 28.Kd2 Ke7 29.Bb3! f6 30.Bd5

Mike offered a draw at this point, but Steve persists in trying for a win. The position looks more drawish now with the White Bishop in a dominating position, counter-balancing the dominating position of the Black Knight at c5. It is probably a draw with best play, especially since White is content to sit back and simply respond to Black's threats.

30...Kd7 31.h4 Kc7 32.Bf7 Kb6 33.Be8 Na6

Making a path for the King, but it does not appear he can get very far on dark squares alone.

34.Kd3 Kc5 35.Bf7 Nc7 36.Bg8 g5 37.hxg5 fxg5!?

Creating some chances for a passer on the Kingside -- or forcing White to lock it up there.

38.Bf7 Nb5 39.g4

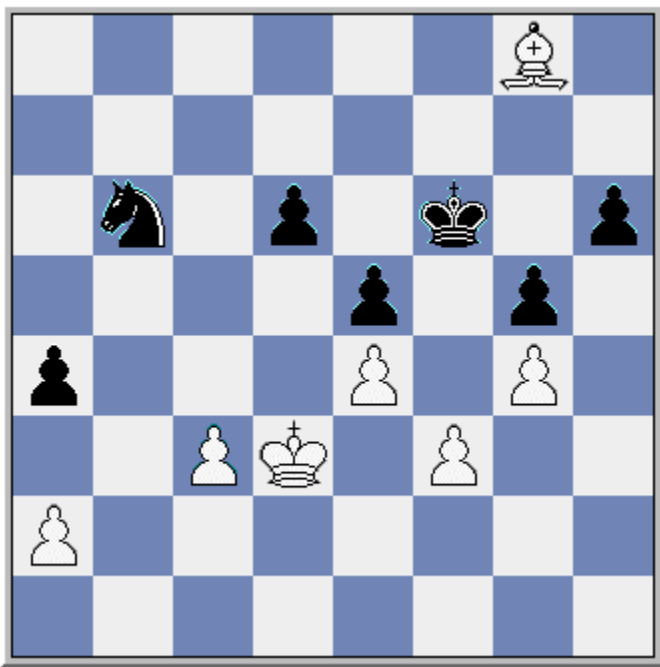
Locking it up -- now if only Black could get his Knight to the f4 square he might be able to force back the White King. But the Bishop is able to cut him off.

39...Nc7 40.Bg8 Ne8 41.Bf7 Nf6 42.Kc2 Kb6 43.Kb2 Kb5 44.Kb3 a4+?! 45.Kc2 Ka5 46.Kb2 Nd7 47.Kc2 Nc5 48.Bg8 Nd7 49.Bf7 Nb6 50.Kd3 Kb5 51.Bg8 Kc6 52.Bf7 Kc7 53.Bg8 Kd7?!

Mike had a significant advantage on time at this point -- an advantage that only grew as Black tried to find some winning idea while White is simply moving his Bishop back and forth. Black should accept the draw at this point. Instead, he has a time-trouble hallucination

that he can create a passed pawn on the kingside and gain some winning chances that way. It is admirable, though, that Steve is completely unwilling to surrender the half point, even if it means risking a loss.

54.Bf7 Ke7?! 55.Bg8 Kf6?



Position after 55....Kf6

56.Bc4! Kg6

Not 56...Nxc4?? 57.Kxc4+-

57.Bb5 +-

White is now winning. There is no way to stop White's successful Queenside penetration with the Black King on the opposite side of the board. Meanwhile, all of Black's sacrifices to penetrate on the other side will fail.

57...Kf6 58.c4!

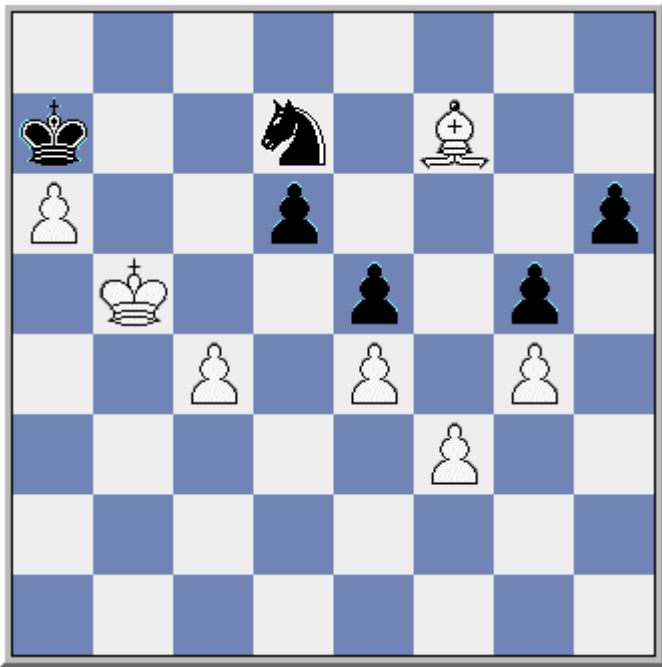
Making way for the King to get to the dark squares.

58...Ke7 59.Kc3 Kd8 60.Kb4

The a-pawn was doomed as soon as the Bishop got behind it. Now it is lost, as is the game.

60...Kc7 61.Bxa4 Nc8 62.Be8 Ne7 63.a4 Ng8 64.a5 Nf6 65.Bf7 Nd7 66.Kb5! Kb7

Black cannot go after the f-pawn with 66...Nc5?! 67.Bd5 Nd3 68.a6 and the pawn cannot be stopped.



Position after 66...Kb7

67.a6+ Ka7 68.Kc6! Nc5 69.Kxd6! Nxa6 70.c5 Kb8 71.c6 Kc8 72.Bd5 Kd8 73.Kxe5 Ke7 74.Kf5 Kd6 75.Kg6 Ke5 76.Kxh6 Kf4 77.Kg6 Nc7 78.Kf6 Ne8+ 79.Ke7 and Black resigned. Other than the mistake at move 26, which his opponent failed to capitalize on, Mike's play was excellent throughout. I'm sure this is a victory he will remember for the rest of his life.

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