

## *Instructive Computer Games of Chess:*

### Stoofvlees II a11 – chess22k 1.13

August 6, 2019

### TCEC S16 League 2, Round 23.1

D05 - COLLE SYSTEM: RUBINSTEIN OPENING

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Chess against a strong opponent can be a brutal endeavour, as black found out in this game the hard way. Black started with some small inaccuracies in the opening, which culminated in a strategic blunder in the middle game. An engine as strong as Stoofvlees would not let such opportunity pass.

Main points:

1. Opening discussion
2. Positional defensive weaknesses
3. Attacking tactics

1	d4	♘f6
2	♘f3	e6
3	e3	c5
4	♙d3	d5

End of the opening book.

5	b3	cxd4?!
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Black is perhaps releasing the tension a bit too eagerly. Now the dark square bishop does not get an access to the c5 square, as would happen if white could be persuaded to play dxc5. And indeed, the

mainline 5... ♘c6 scores significantly better than the move played.<sup>1</sup>

6	exd4	♘c6!?
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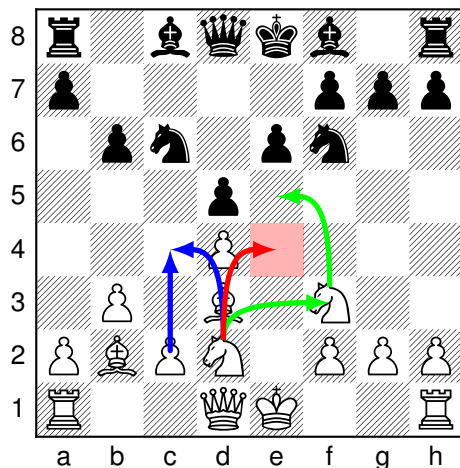
However, now after the exchange, perhaps better was to ask white to make a slightly awkward pawn move with 6... ♙b4+ 7 c3. The pawn on c3 would block the bishop's vision, at least temporarily.

7	♙b2	b6?!
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Much more common plays were ♙d6, ♙e7, or ♙b4+. Pawn to b6 superficially helps the light square bishop development allowing ♙g7. But it's not easy to see how black could break the center to liberate the bishop. Perhaps better idea was to play ♙d7, instead, and ♙b5 later given a chance. Further, as black still had the c-pawn anymore, the move would have been sensible to support c5. But this is not the case here.

8	♘bd2N	
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<sup>1</sup>5... ♘c6 29%-41%-30%/612 games; 5... cxd4 35%-45%-20%/49 games; Lichess masters database accessed on August 8, 2019.



This is a flexible move:

1. The knight is ready to hop in to f3 after the Nf3 knight moves to, say, e5 (green); and
2. Extra control is added on d4 to discourage black's potential  $\text{N}e4$ , f5 ideas (red); and
3. Support for the potential c4 push is added (blue).

8 ...  $\text{B}b7$   
9 a3

Restricting black's play by preventing  $\text{N}g4$  and  $\text{B}g4$ . Also, preparing to meet black's a/b pawn pushes by adding the option of fixing the queen-side pawns.

9 ...  $\text{B}d6$   
10  $\text{N}e5$  O-O  
11  $\text{Q}e2$   $\text{N}d7??$

While seemingly logical in asking white what to do with  $\text{N}e5$ , the problem here is that an important king-side defender is displaced. White has pieces and pawns ready for an attack against the king.

12 O-O

Castling supports the f-pawn push. That was probably the best attacking idea available. Pawn to f5 would begin to question black's already weakened control of the center.

12 ...  $\text{N}cxe5$   
13  $dxe5$   $\text{B}e7$

$\text{B}c5$  would have been met with immediate b4 gaining a tempo for white (13...  $\text{B}c5$  14 b4  $\text{B}e7$ .)  $\text{B}c7$  would have blocked the rook's access to c-file. With all likelihood, the best move was played.

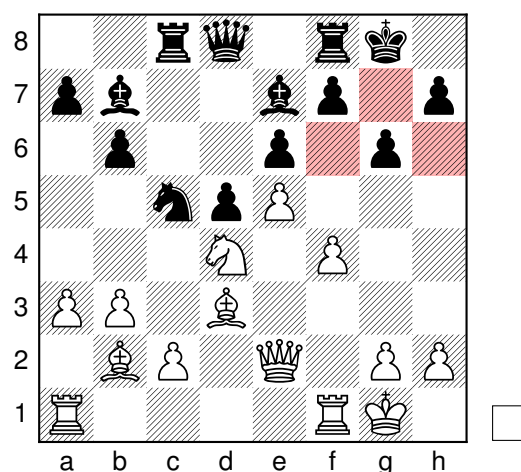
14  $\text{N}f3$

Now aiming for  $\text{N}d4$ , blocking the d-pawn, and thus, keeping  $\text{B}b7$  off the play. Note that white's counterpart bishop is significantly better, since it can reroute itself via c1 if necessary, and it already supports the f-pawn push nicely by protecting e5.

14 ...  $\text{N}c5$   
15  $\text{N}d4$   $\text{R}c8$

Rooks belong to open files.

16 f4 g6?!



While not outright losing, it can be questioned whether black had to weaken the king-side pawn

structure, and particularly the dark squares. In fact, this move can be considered as a strategic blunder, as it opens new avenues for white's attack.

If black was afraid of ♖xh7+ or ♜h5, the moves here to play were either ♜xd3 or h6.

Stoofvlees was expecting ♜c7, which adds defenses for the 7<sup>th</sup> rank and prepares for counterplay in the c-file. But before playing ... ♜c7, the move that had to be calculated carefully was ♖xh7+. But it turns out that the bishop sacrifice would not have been mating, as black is just in time to organize defenses. Variation 16... ♜c7 17 ♖xh7+ ♜xh7 18 ♜h5+ ♜g8 19 ♜f3 ♜e8 20 ♜h3 f5 21 ♜h8+ ♜f7 22 ♜h5+ ♜g8 23 ♜h7+ ♜f7 would end peacefully.

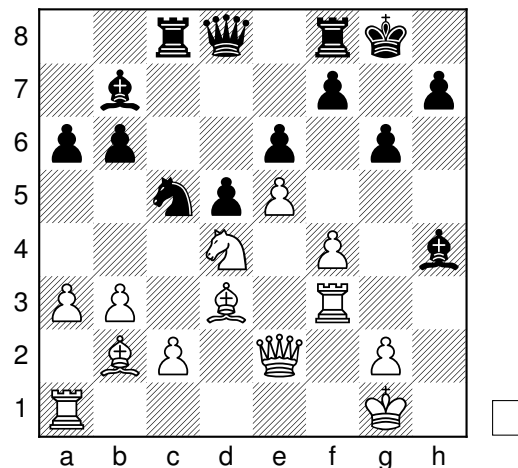
17 ♜f3 a6

White wastes no time, but the same cannot be said about black. Black either needed to start diluting and preparing for the attack by, e.g., ♜xd3, ♜h8, and ♜g8 to avoid pins and putting counterpressure on the g-file; and/or start preparing active counterplay with ♜c7 intending to make something happen on the semi-open c-file. ♜c7 would also add a defender on the nth7 rank provided ♖e7 moves somewhere with f5.

18 h4

Stoofvlees offers a pawn in hope for opening files for attack. With this Greek gift that should not be accepted, Stoofvlees's evaluation jumped a bit. However, Stockfish suggests that black is still holding with ♜xd3.

18 ... ♖xh4?



Black was too greedy. White has now the h-file available with strong attack potential, and an engine as strong as Stoofvlees will not miss the opportunity.

19 ♜h3! ♖e7

Pawn to g4 is coming, so the bishop needed to run either now, or a concrete plan was needed to meet the follow-up move ♜h2. But regardless, there is no more defense anymore for black if white plays precisely.

An example line: 19... ♜c7 20 ♜g4 ♜xd3 21 cxd3 ♖e7 22 ♜h6 ♜g7 23 f5! exf5 24 ♜h3 ♜h8 25 e6! f6 26 ♜f1 ♜g8 27 ♜xf5! ♖c5+ 28 ♜d4 ♜g7 29 b4 ♖e7 30 ♜e2 a5 31 ♜e3 ♖c8 32 ♖d4 axb4 33 axb4 ♜d6 34 ♖xf6 ♜xe6 35 ♜d4 ♖f8 36 ♜h4 h5 37 ♜f4 ♜d6 38 ♖e5 ♜xb4 39 ♜xd5+ ♜f7 40 ♖xh8 ♜c5+ 41 ♖d4 ♜xd5 42 ♜xd5 and white wins easily with an extra rook.

20 g4 ♜xd3  
21 cxd3 b5  
22 f5 ♖g5

The position is already desperate. While allowing the bishop to get trapped with f6, the alternatives were not much better. For example:

(a) 22... exf5 23 ♜h2 h5 24 gxf5 ♖g5 25 ♜h1 ♜c7 26 ♜g2 ♜e7 27 ♜g1. The attempt to

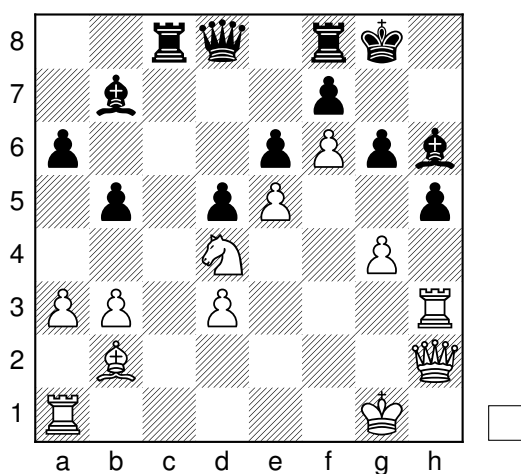
save the bishop will end quickly: 27... f6 28. e×f6 ♖×f6 29. ♔×g6+ with forced mate in 13.

(b) 22... ♖c5 23 f6 ♜e8 24 ♔h2 h5 25 ♔f4 ♔b6 26 ♜×h5 with mate in 10.

23 ♔h2 h5  
24 f6 ♖h6

27 ... ♔a5  
28 b4 ♔a4  
29 g5 ♜c1  
30 ♖×c1 ♖h2+  
31 ♔×h2 ♔×b4  
32 a×b4 ♖c6  
33 ♔h6 ♖a8  
34 ♔g7#

White wins.



25 ♜×h5!

Nice finishing touch. With the best play, mate would follow in 12 more moves. The final idea here is to force the queen to g7 with an unstoppable mate. The bishop can be dealt with g5.

25 ... g×h5

25... ♖e3+ would have postponed the inevitable by one move. The most resilient continuation was 26. ♔f1 g×h5 27. ♔×h5 ♔a5 28. b4 ♔c7 29. ♜e1 ♖f4 30. g5 ♖×e5 31. ♖e2 d4 32. ♔h6 ♖g2+ 33. ♖f2 ♖g3+ 34. ♖×g2 ♔c6+ 35. ♖h3 ♔g2+ 36. ♖×g2 ♖×e1 37. ♔g7#

26 ♔×h5 ♖f4  
27 ♜f1

Faster was to immediately cut the bishop from defending with 27. g5 with mate in 6.