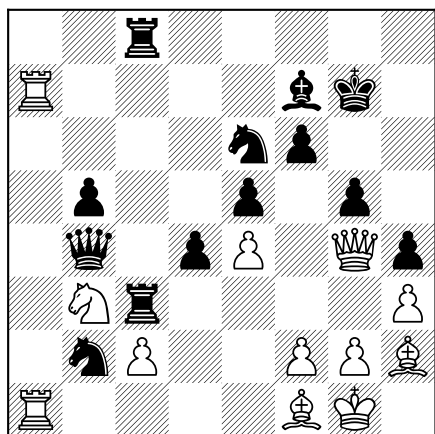

Player White (Elo White) - Player Black (Elo Black)

Event Date



D1: Position after 1. e4

Comments by GM Garry Kasparov from KASPAROV CHESS

1. e4

Nothing betokened a storm when I made this move. Topalov who is always eager to fight no matter if he has Black or White, if he plays me or any other adversary answered with

1. ... d6

I was sincerely surprised. Pirc-Ufimtsev Defense is not a usual one for Topalov, and this opening is hardly worth using in the tournaments of the highest category. White has too many opportunities for anybody's liking: one can lead an acute or a positional game, one can vary different ways of developing the initiative. Nevertheless, Topalov obviously counted on surprise, as he thought that I would play worse in a situation I was not ready for, and besides, he hoped to avoid my opening preparation, which he had faced before.

2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 That was when I began to think. I was actually engrossed in thoughts on the third move, I had often played 3.f3 threatening with King's Indian Defense.

However, this opening couldn't scare Topalov off as he was used to it, moreover, that was what he reckoned on. That is why I decided to play at sight. I went for a position I had a definite idea about but never met in practice and, frankly speaking, had never seriously analyzed.

4. Be3 Bg7

A) 4. ... c6 5. Qd2 b5 6. f3 Bg7

5. Qd2 c6 As far as I know, Black usually plays c6 and b5 before the move Bg7, but I don't think that this shift changes something seriously.

6.f3

A) It was also possible to play

6. Nf3 b5 7. Bd3 probably it was even better, but here I have to repeat that in this opening both adversaries relied not on exact knowledge but on common sense.

6. ... b5 7.Nge2 A strange move.

A) If White wanted to play

7. Bh6!? he could do it at once, leaving the e2-square free for the other Knight and providing an opportunity to develop the other Bishop on d3. Theoretically this Knight could move to h3 one day.

Generally speaking, the move 7.Nge2 has no sense, its reason is purely psychological. I remembered that before the game, when we discussed the strategy with Yury Dokhoian, he said suddenly looking through Topalov's games: "You know, Garry, he does not like when the opponent makes the moves he can not predict. This affects him strangely." That is why I played 7.Nge2 and surprised

Topalov. This move does not contain any threats but continues the development. However, it seemed to me that he did not like the character of the fight, as it did not correspond to the ideas he had before the game.

7. ... Nbd7 8. Bh6 Better late than never. It is useful to exchange the Bishop.

8. ... Bxh6 9. Qxh6 White achieved some sort of success as Black can not castle in a shorter direction. However, this achievement is rather ephemeral because the King can hide on the Queen-side as well. White King will also castle there as a result. Maneuverable fight is waiting ahead and White can not count on significant gains.

9. ...Bb7

A) Actually, if Black shows activity

9. ... Qa5 then there is a move

10. Nc1 and then the Knight moves to b3 with tempo. White will manage to stabilize the game and he will deprive Black of the opportunity to use the diversion of the white Queen on h6.

10.a3 N I did not want to castle at once, because it was not clear how to defend the King after Qa5 from the b4 threat. That is why White makes a wait-and-see move that prepares a long castling and again, on Qa5 there is a move Nc1 that repulses the b4 threat.

A) 10. O-O-O Qa5 11.a3

a) 11. Qd2 b4 12. Nb1

11. ... b4 12.axb4

a) 12. Nb1

10. ... e5 Topalov, after thinking for 11 minutes, decided to strengthen the position in the center and to prepare to castle long. Black had alternative plans, but this one looked most logical.

11. O-O-O Qe7 12. Kb1 a6 It was probably possible to castle at once, but Topalov defends his King from the potential threat of d5 just to be on the safe side. I doubt that this threat was that real, but Black found this move desirable.

A) White did not have a lot of opportunities either; he had to unravel the tangle of his pieces. That was why I decided to transfer the Knight to b3, taking advantage of the fact that now Black's attempt to play actively with a7-a5 would be repulsed:

12. ... a5?! 13. Nc1 b4 14. dxe5! dxe5

a) 14. ... Ng8 15. Qg7 Qxe5 16. Qxe5+ dxe5 17. Na4 +/-

15. Na4 bxa3 16. b3 +/-

13. Nc1 O-O-O 14. Nb3 The development of both sides is coming to its end. However, Black has to show some enterprise, as he is under some pressure. If White develops with g3, Bh3, and Rhe1, then it won't be easy for Black. Black's King is slightly weakened and, of course, he should have considered playing c6-c5, but then White would have a choice: close the position by playing d5, or even to exchange. It is probably more promising to close the center. White's space advantage lets him push for an attack. Then I hoped to make use of Black's weaknesses on the Queen-side. It was possible to move the Queen from h6 to b6 or to a7. This was an absurd thought: it flashed across my mind and immediately disappeared, but subconsciously I formed the idea that the Queen on b6 together with the Knight on a5 could make a lot of trouble, especially if the white Bishop appears on h3. This did affect the calculation of variations, but, the mere fact that such an idea surfaced served as a prologue to a wonderful combination.

14. ... exd4! A very good decision: relief in the center. Taking advantage of the fact that White is a bit backward in development, Black does not hesitate to open the game and relies on the possibility that active pieces will compensate for the weakened position of the King.

15. Rxd4 c5 16. Rd1 Nb6! A good move. Black prepares d6-d5, and I had to think hard for 10 minutes. Now we already have dim contours of a combination. I still could not imagine how it would look like but I realized that the moves g3 and Bh3 could not be bad.

17.g3 Now the Bishop will move to h3, the Queen will return to f4, the Knight will go to a5, and the blow will take place somewhere in that area. At that moment, however, I did not know exactly what this blow would be like. Nevertheless, the idea to dispose the pieces in such a way already reigned over my mind.

A) What does White do next? Let's say if
17. a4?! then Black gets a good position
after 17. ... b4 18. a5 bxc3 19. axb6 Nd7

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