The North Carolina Invitational and State Championship

Congratulation to Chris Mabe and Oliver Fernando for winning the NC State Championship!!

Thank you to Walter High and the supporting NCCA members in making this event happen again and a big thank you to Craig Jones for hosting the Invitational NC State Championship, at the Durham Academy Middle School.

I hope to share my thoughts on my games from this event each week with you. My hope is that we can help each other grow in chess through game discussions. I will not respond to blogs, but I will be available at the TACO, Asheboro, Master Trek, and reverse angle tournaments to discuss any of my games or games that you find interesting. Hope to see you many of you in the near future!

Ok, let’s get to the game from the tournament. In my first round game I faced Expert Oliver Fernado, a very quiet young man who played with focus and determination. Fernado and I had played two times before this match. I beat him in the Asheboro Open 63 and he beat me in the TACOLXVIII. He usually plays the Pric and I decided to play something new against him.

1. Nf3 Nf6
2. d4 g6
3. b3 Bg7

This was the beginning of something new, “3. b3”. My plan was to counter his Bishop going to g7 in influencing the a1-h8 diagonal and add control to the e5 square.

1. Bb2 0-0
2. Nbd2 c5

Wow! 5.Nbd2 allows 5…c5. I missed this as being a good move for him. The drawback of my knight move is that it disconnected my Queen from protecting the advancement of the d-pawn.

Ok, I must admit maybe the whole idea behind my opening wasn’t best.

I struggled over 6.e3, which I now think would have been a better move. Our opening moves or as I like to think of it as the “conversation” we are having has left me doubting my strategy. I absolutely failed to collect myself and rethink. The opening plan to control the e5 square was becoming unclear to me. Why? I wish I could put my finger on what causes this confusion. My guess is that when I try new things, the unfamiliarity causes the confusion. However, in other cases I am able to collect my thoughts and get in touch with the position (conversation).

Ok, I missed the drawback of 5.Nbd2 and now I am compounding the problem with 6.e4. I don’t think I am lost at this point, objectively speaking. But I am clearly out of touch with the position.

1. e4 cxd4
2. Nxd4

The complications are bothering me. I really don’t want to capture the d-pawn. I really wanted to find a better move. But what should I do? Well it was clear to me that my creativity was failing me. I couldn’t calculate or feel anything with confidence.

I intuitively thought about 7.e5 and on Ng4 simply play chess knowing that I have better piece development for the pawn. But I just wasn’t feeling very courageous today.

7….. d5

My opponent is crashing the center and I just don’t have time to develop peacefully. Oliver is doing the right thing. His king is safe and my king is stuck in the middle. But I started to believe his lack of development could backfire on his aggression. What if I played 8.e5 with the idea of 8…Ng4 9.e6, who would stand better? I wasn’t very happy because my calculations favored him.

1. exd5 Qxd5

Ok, do I play 9.c4, 9.Nc4, 9.Qf3, 9.Qe2, 9.N4f3 or 9.Nb5, any thoughts? I really wanted to take advantage of his Queen on d5 and I wanted to do it now. Well we have only made a few moves from the thought that my opening strategy was bad, back on move three.

I may be optimistic, but I don’t think I am lost. I do have some development issues but I don’t have many weaknesses to worry about. Maybe one of the chess engines will help, but for the record I think black has the easier game. Maybe we can discuss this position at one of the Saturday tournaments and I will be enlightened.

1. Nb5 Rd8

Oh my, I could hear Gomer Pyle saying; Surprise, surprise, surprise. Yes sir I sure felt I was in Mayberry. You mean to tell me that Oliver really didn’t have to move his Queen!

Instinctively I just felt he was wrong. I calculated many things and he just kept coming up Ok, if not better. But I think I missed 10. Nc4 and maybe I am equal, any thoughts? 10.Nc7 and I like black.

1. Qe2 Na6

At this point I feel weak or lazy. I just can’t fight through the calculations. Maybe I being hard on myself but is the position really that bad. I wanted to castle Queenside but I thought Bh6 was too strong for him. Yes, black looks better.

1. Nc3 Qc6

Oliver is keeping the pressure on me. I need to unwind and trade queens. But the text move seemed fine.

1. 0-0-0 Bf5

White just keeps building on the pressure.

1. Qc4 Qb6

Crack! What is that sound I just heard? Oh I think my back just goy broken. 13.a3 was forced.

But black looks good no matter what move I would have played.

1. Be2 Rac8

Why not get all of your pieces into the party?

1. Qh5 Rd4
2. Qg5 Nb4
3. Nc4 Rxd1
4. Rxd1 Qxf2

Ok, Oliver is sharp and doesn’t let up for an instant.

The rest of the game is academic. Oliver played well and forced me into time trouble along with a crushed position. I blundered on move 30 losing a piece, due to all of the above.

I look forward to playing our 2011 NC co-champion, Oliver Fernando again.