

Games From Recent Events by Miguel Ararat



(178) Nadir, Advait (1983) - Pothuri, Abhiram (2091) [B22]
The Villages Open 2023,
26.02.2023 [Ararat, Miguel]

This game is a model game in the modern approach against the isolated queen pawn (IQP). Modern players refrain from the old recipe stop, block and capture the IQP.]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 [White refrains from the popular 3.Bb5 and save the theoretical duel in the Rossolimo for another day.]

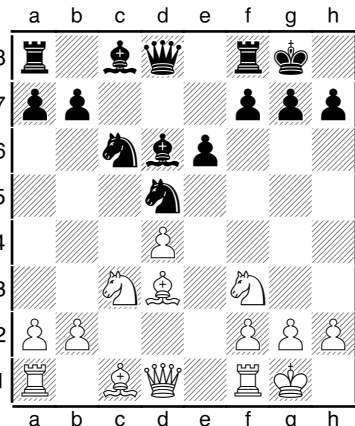
3.c3 [A move that keeps the game in positional waters and recently used by Kramnik to beat a 2700 rated player.]

[The following games are good examples of the level of play in the Rossolimo these days. 3.Bb5 g6 4.0-0 Bg7 5.c3 Nf6 6.Re1 0-0 7.d4 d5 8.e5 Ne4 9.Be3 cxd4 10.cxd4 0-1 (49) Caruana, F (2792)-Carlsen, M (2865) Wijk aan Zee 2022 10...Qb6 11.Bxc6 Qxc6 12.Qb3 Bg4 13.Rc1 Qd7 14.Ne1 f5 15.Nd3 g5 16.f3 f4 17.fxe4 fxe3 18.Nc5 Qe8 19.Nc3 e2 20.Nxd5 e6 21.Ne3 Rf4 22.Nxg4 Rxg4 23.h3 Rh4 24.Nxe6 Kh8 25.Qxb7 Qg8 1-0 (25) So, W (2760)-Gukesh, D (2725) Kolkata 2022]

3...Nf6 [3...d5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.Na3 Nf6 6.Be2 e6 7.0-0 Be7 8.d4 cxd4 9.Nb5 Qd7 10.Nbx4 Nxd4 11.Nxd4 0-0 12.Bf4 Bd6 13.Bb5 Qe7 14.Nf5 exf5 15.Bxd6 Qd8 16.Bxf8 Qxf8 17.Qd4 Be6 18.Rfd1 Qc8 19.h3 a6 20.Be2 Bd5 21.c4 Be4 22.Bf1 h5 23.b4 Qe8 24.a4

f4 25.f3 Bc2 26.Re1 Qc6 27.Qxf4 Bxa4 28.b5 Qc5+ 29.Qe3 Qb4 30.Reb1 Qa5 31.c5 Nd5 32.Qd4 Nc3 33.Rc1 1-0 (33) Kramnik, V (2753) -Gukesh, D (2730) Berlin 2023]

4.e5 Nd5 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6 7.exd6 e6 8.Nc3 Bxd6 9.Bd3 0-0 10.0-0



Out of the opening white has an isolated queen pawn (IQP) and should attack the white king and avoid simplifications. Against the IQP black want to transition to a favorable endgame, secure his king, prevent the pawn break d4-d5 and control the d5 square. About the control of the square in front of the IQP. The modern approach does not required placing a blockading piece in front of the IQP. For example, in some variations of the Queens Gambit Accepted a black knight goes to Nb6 instead of d5.]

10...h6 11.Re1 [11.Qe2 Nf6 12.Rd1 Nb4 13.Bb1 b6 14.a3 Nbd5 15.Qd3 I founded this alternative after the 12.d5 move did not work. This type of analysis can be used by any player to annotate his games before using a computer engine. You go over the game see how the game develops and then try to predict a critical position. Then, you go back and improve the game of a player or suggest a new plan. This process allow you to compare your ideas with the engine suggestions, instead of any added the computer variations to your chess game pgn file. Yes, it takes time and will improve your game.]

11...Nf6 12.Be3 [White can not play d4

-d5 using the Bh7+ trick because black can use the same tactical motif and come up on top.]

[12.d5 exd5 13.Nxd5 Nxd5 14.Bh7+ Kxh7 15.Qxd5 Bxh2+ 16.Kxh2 Qxd5]

12...Nb4 13.Be2 b6 14.a3 Nbd5 15.Rc1 Bb7 [Black control the d5 square after a timely redeployment of both knights and development of his light square bishop to b7.]

16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.Bd3 Qf6 18.Bb1 Nf4 [After, Qf6, I expected Rfd8 with pressure on the IQP. Black aims to capture the pawn on g2 to remove the defender of the f3 knight. I lost a game as white in the World Open 2012 to a similar tactic. My opponent played Bc8xh3 and removed the guard of my Nf3 (ouch) A similar idea is play by black in the open Sicilian against a white knight on c3. Black plays Nc4xb2 followed by Rc8xc3.]

19.Bxf4 Qxf4 20.Qd3 [White creates a bigger threat than BxNf3 followed by Qxh2.]

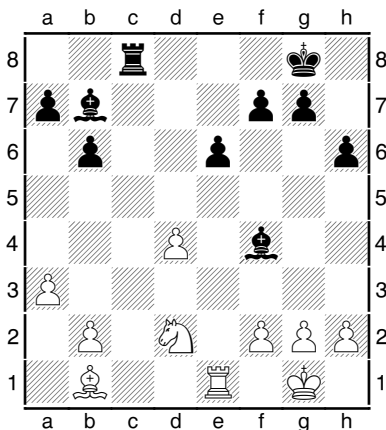
20...Rfc8 21.Rxc8+ [21.Qh7+ Kf8 22.Qh8+ Ke7 23.Qxg7 Rxc1 24.Rxc1 Bxf3 (24...Qxc1+ I founded the move while going for the main variation that missed Qg1.) 25.gxf3 Qxh2+ 26.Kf1 Qh1+ 27.Qg1]

21...Rxc8 22.Qd2 [22.Ne5 After going over the game the queen exchange was bad for white because it does not reduces black's initiative. The white knight finally reaches his ideal square in an IQP position.]

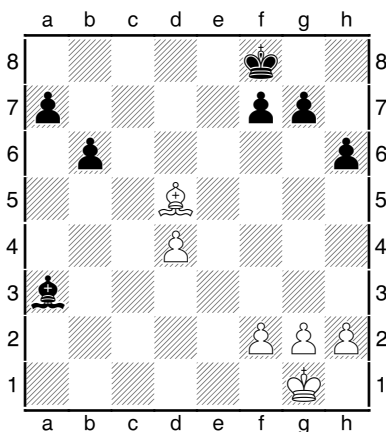
22...Qxd2 [22...Qg4 with the threat Bxf3.]

23.Nxd2 Bf4 [[#] White transition to a worse endgame with an IQP facing a bishop pair. The threat is to exchange rooks on c1 then take on b2 or a3 (I used this motive in a tournament game when I was 1300-1400 rated)]

(Diagram Next Page)



24.Ne4 Rc1 25.Rxc1 Bxc1 26.Nd6 Bd5 27.Nc8 [I missed this counter play by white.]
27...Bxb2 28.Ne7+ Kf8 29.Nxd5 exd5 30.Ba2 Bxa3 31.Bxd5 [#]



White fights back and makes the transition to an opposite color bishop ending. My evaluation is that black's connected passed pawns tip the balance in his favor. However, opposite color bishops are notoriously drawish as the defender uses blockade and wrong bishop themes to save the game. The question is how many technical difficulties can set white to black to avoid defeat?]

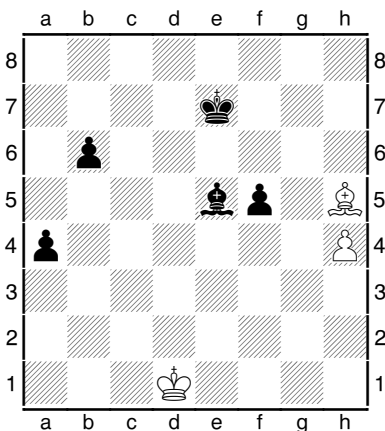
31...Bb2 32.Bc4 [The problem I see with Bc4 is that White wants his king in the fight quickly and preparing for Bxd4 with f3 save a tempo compared to the game continuation.]

[32.f3 Bxd4+ 33.Kf1 a5 34.Ke2 b5 35.Kd3 Bc5?! 36.Bc6 For example, 36...b4 37.g4± [#] White is closer to set up a light square blockade.]

32...Bxd4 33.Kf1 a5 34.Ke2 Ke7 35.f3 f5 36.g4 [White needs this pawn on g4 sooner (see variation at move 32) . Now g4 is not good because white opens up a second theater of operations on the kingside. Fighting on both flanks stretch white's forces and black can convert his extra material easily despite the presence of opposite color bishops.]

36...Kf6 37.h4 g6 38.Bd3 [38.Kd3 Be5 39.Bb5 Bg3 40.h5 gxh5 41.gxh5 Kg5]

38...a4 39.Bc4 h5 40.gxh5 gxh5 41.f4 Ke7 [with the idea Bd4-f6-h4.]
42.Kd1 Be3 43.Be2 Bxf4
44.Bxh5 Be5 [#]



45.Be2 a3 46.Bc4 b5 47.Ba2 [This encounter is very instructive in three phases of a chess game. 1. In opening, the reader can learn the importance of knowing profoundly the kind of middlegame structure resulting from the aperture he is playing. Above all, players must be skilled in the methods for playing the preferred chess structures of their choice. 2. The middlegame this game is a great example about the dynamic way to play against the IQP. Black plays dynamically, instead of following the old method of blocking the IQP and slowly grind his opponent down. 3.This game shows two major aspects of modern chess. First, to defended difficult or losing positions by transitioning to a technical demanding endgame. Second, to win above the 2000 mark a chess player needs both a solid end-game foundation to convert complicated endgames and good time management skills.] 0-1

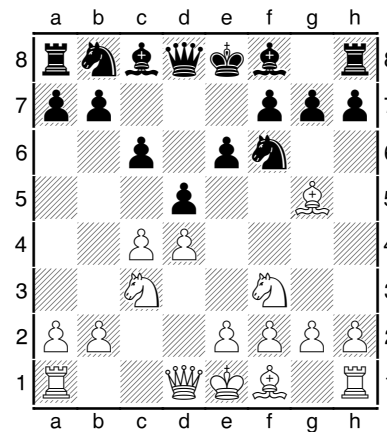
(179) Ngo,Bach - Rajmohan,Vikram [D52]
Florida Scholastic State 2023 (1), 19.03.2023
[Ararat,Miguel]

1.d4 [White handles his queen effectively in this game.]

1...c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.c4 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 [Black goes for the Semi-Slav and it is up to white to decide the type of middlegame. For instance, 5.cxd5 is the exchange variation and the pawn structure becomes a Carlsbad formation with well defined plans for each player. White can go for more complicated middlegames with 5.e3 (Meran) or 5.Bg5 the Anti-Meran gambit challenging black to take on c4.]

[4...dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.e3 e6 7.Bxc4 We have a Classical Slav.]

5.Bg5 [#] Bach goes for the sharpest option, The Anti Meran gambit.]



5...Nbd7 6.e3 Bd6 [Black can play the Cambridge Spring Variation of the Queens Gambit Declined as Carlsen did against Gelfand, scoring a nice win with the black pieces.]

[6...Qa5 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Rc1 Nxc3 9.bxc3 Ba3 10.Rc2 b6 11.Bd3 Ba6 12.0-0 Bxd3 13.Qxd3 0-0 14.e4 0-1 (57) Gelfand,B (2740)-Carlsen,M (2872) London 2013]

7.Bd3 [If we use this position to select the 19 top games we discover that most of the black players that prefer 6...Bd6 over Qa5 are rated below 2400 than white. Importantly, black only scores 0.5 points out 19 with Bd6. In contrast, a similar game

sample shows that black players rated over 2400 favor 6...Qa5 and they score 10.5/19 . This data suggest that above master level black goes for the Cambridge Spring and below master level player prefer 6...Bd6]

7...0-0 8.0-0 dxc4 9.Bxc4 b5 10.Bd3 a6?! [Black loses the threat of the game and wasted a move. Instead, 10...Bb7 neutralizes white's plan with Ne4 because Black can execute the thematic maneuver Nxe4 and the exchange of dark square bishops that solve all black problems out of the opening. However, Black still losing in 17 moves if he gets carried away with "killing the game"]

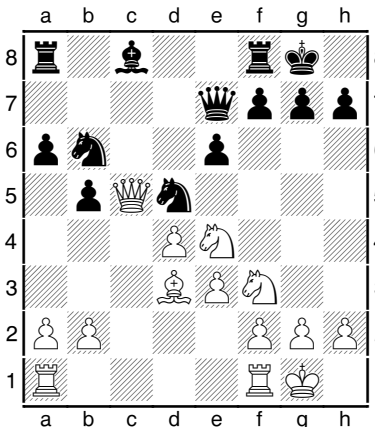
[10...Bb7 11.Ne4 Be7 12.Qc2 (12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.Rc1 e5 14.Nd6 Qb6 15.dxe5 Nxe5 16.Nxe5 Bxe5 17.Qh5 [#] 1-0 (17) Alonso Rosell,A (2509)-Bello Castano,D (1911) San Sebastian 2010. The double attack on h7 and the dark square bishop ends the game.) 12...Nxe4 13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.Bxe4=]

11.Ne4 [11.Rc1 Qb6 12.e4 e5 13.Bxf6 taking with the knight runs into a pawn fork. 13...gxf6 14.Nh4 Nb8 15.Qh5 Kg7 16.dxe5 Bxe5 17.Kh1 Rg8 18.f4 Bxc3 19.Rxc3 Be6 20.e5 Nd7 21.exf6+ Kf8 22.Qh6+ Ke8 23.Be4 Rc8 24.Nf5 Kd8 25.Ne7 Qd4 26.Rxc6 Nxf6 27.Nxg8 Rxc6 28.Nxf6 Rc8 29.Qg5 Rc5 30.Qg8+ Ke7 31.Qe8+ 1-0 (31) Cesal,J (2200)-Kuba,J (2278) Czech Republic 2015]

11...Be7 12.Qc2 [12.Nxf6+ Nxf6 13.Ne5 Bb7 14.Qf3 is an alternative to Qc2, yet it is unnatural to post your queen on the gaze of an enemy bishop.]

12...Nd5 [12...Nxe4 Black can simplify the game with this thematic simplification at the cost of a pawn and fight for a draw. In any case you can get more promising positions out of the main variations of the Queens gambit declined. in a few words, Black's opening did not go his way. 13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.Bxe4 Bb7 15.Bxh7+ Kh8 16.Bd3]

13.Qxc6 N7b6 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 15.Qc5 [#]



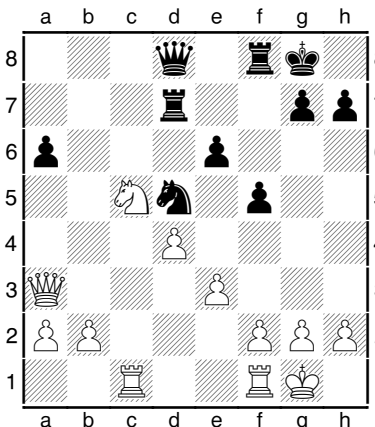
White starts a series of instructive queens moves that take the dynamic potential out of black's queenside units.]

15...Qd8 16.Rac1 Ra7 17.Qa3 [white vacates the c5 square for the knight and position the queen on a5 to prevent Nb6-c4 (queens will be exchange)]

17...Bd7 18.Qa5 Ne7 19.Ne5 [White has a material advantage, good squares for both knights on e5 and c5 and controls the only open file. White is winning.]

19...f6 20.Nxd7 Nxd7 21.Qa3 Nd5 22.Bxb5 f5 23.Bxd7 Rxd7 24.Nc5 [#] This double attack on a6 and e6 seals black's fate. It is instructive how white wins this game without allowing any counterplay from his opponent.]

24...Re7 25.Qxa6 Qe8 26.Nd3 Qg6 27.Rc8 Rxc8 28.Qxc8+



[The control of the c file translates in this penetration to the back rank with the queen.]

28...Re8 29.Qd7 Nf6 30.Qc7 Ne4 31.Nf4 Qg5 32.Qd7 [Please notice that in the conversion of the advantage white does not try to promote a pawn or use his rook on f1. Bach goes for a direct attack on the queen exploiting the superior mobility of the queen! As a coach, I am guilty of encourage my students to use "all their pieces". This game shows that there is more that brute force in chess and it is call harmony.]

32...Re7 33.Qd8+ Kf7 [33...Re8 34.Qxe8#]

34.Nd3 g6 35.Qh8

1-0

(180) Davydov,Neryk (1861) - Patel,Soham (1679) [C50]

Southern Class, Orlando,FL 2023 (4), 19.03.2023 [Ararat,Miguel]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 [At this point in the game white can direct the game to an active or calm middlegame. For instance, Davydov can play 4.b4, the Evans gambit creating open lines and a strong center as compensation for the pawn. Alternatively white can proceed as in the game and play a slow positional game. In the Evans gambit two games by Nakamura are clear example of the type of active middlegames this gambit creates. Nakamura - Anand 2011 and Nakamura Hess in 2012.]

4.0-0 [4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Ba5 (5...Bd6 6.d4 Qe7 7.0-0 Nf6 8.Nbd2 0-0 9.Re1 Ba3 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.dxe5 Ne8 12.f4 Bxc1 13.Rxc1 1-0 (33) Nakamura,H (2775)-Hess,R (2635) Saint Louis 2012) 6.d4 d6 7.Qb3 Qd7 8.dxe5 Bb6 9.a4 Na5 10.Qa2 Nxc4 11.Qxc4 Ne7 12.exd6 cxd6 with a dynamically balanced position with chances for both sides, thanks to the asymmetrical pawn structure and the bishop pair versus knight and bishop. 1/2-1/2 (36) Nakamura,H (2775)-Anand,V (2793) London 2014]

4...Nf6 5.d3 [The modern and more popular interpretation of the Italian opening. White wants a positional middlegame with a board full of pieces. The middlegame make take different shapes, from a full attack against the king to slowly conquering more space.]

5...d6 6.h3 h6 [Black avoids the pin after Bg5, nevertheless the move is not the only option. For example,]

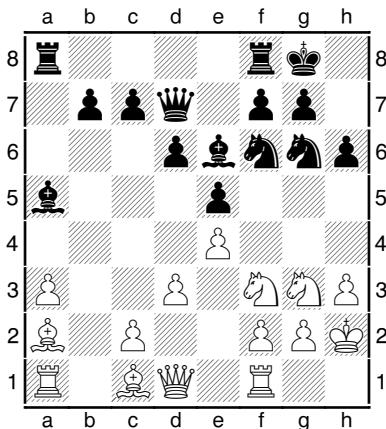
[6...Bb6 7.Nc3 Be6 8.Bb3 0-0 9.Be3 Bxe3 10.fxe3 Bxb3 11.axb3 d5 12.exd5 Nxd5 13.Qe1 Ndb4 14.Rc1 f5 0-1 (64) Rathnakaran,K (2453)-Mikhalevski,V (2592) Philadelphia 2008]

7.Nc3 0-0 8.a3 Ne7 9.Ne2 [Ne2 is not a bad move. Yet if white wants to play b4, the exchange of knight for bishop after Na4 is the standard plan in this position.]

[9.Na4 Bb6 10.Re1 Ng6 11.b4 Qe8 12.Nxb6 axb6 13.c3 Be6 14.Bxe6 Qxe6 15.a4 b5 16.Be3 1/2-1/2 (16) Abasov,N (2635) -Esipenko,A (2705) Chartres 2022]

9...Be6 10.b4 Bb6 11.Ba2 Ng6 12.Ng3 Qd7 13.Kh2 a5!? [This move highlights the downside of 9.Ne2, black attacks on the dark squares to force white to release the tension on the a2-g8 diagonal. White is not losing, but lost control of the position too early in the middlegame.]

14.bxa5 Bxa5 [#]



[14...Rxa5!? 15.Bxe6 fxe6 16.Bb2 Bc5 17.Nd2 Ra4 18.c4 Rfa8 with

lasting pressure on the weak a3 pawn.]

15.Bxe6 fxe6 16.Bb2 [Bb2 defends the weak pawn on a3 originated after 14. bxa5, yet it is a positional mistake. The best square for this bishop is e3.]

[16.Be3 The dark square bishop positioned on e3 has more influence on both the flanks and the center than on the diagonal a1-h8. White's king can be under a lot of pressure after Ng6-f4 and Qf7-g6.]

16...Bb6 17.Nd2 Nf4 18.Nc4 Ba7 19.Qd2 [A very instructive moment in the game. Black has several good continuations such as Qf7 with the idea of Qg6 mounting a strong attack and b5 forcing the knight out of the strong c4 square. The best practical move is Qe7 because it has a hidden tactical idea that forces white to find the only move f3 protecting the g4 square. If white fails the game will be over.]

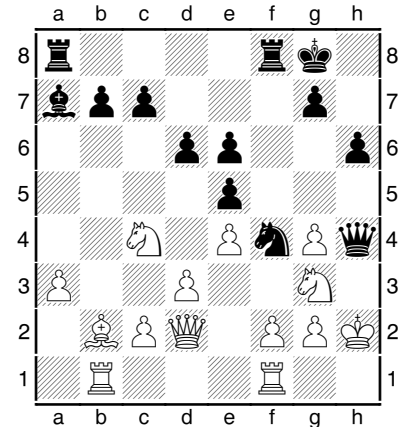
19...Qe7!? [19...Qf7 is a solid choice to build the attack against the white king. 20.Rab1 Qg6; 19...b5 This pawn push has not individual significance, but is playable as part of the Qf7 plan. 20.Ne3 Qe8 21.Rab1 Qg6]

20.Rab1?? [White makes a catastrophic blunder and the game is over. This is the main danger when a player wants to play positional chess out of 1.e4. Tactics can spring at any time and the positional player needs always to be tactically alert.]

[20.Qd1 h5; 20.f3 Qe8]

20...Ng4+ 21.hxg4 [21.Kg1 Qh4 black is going to capture on g3 thanks to the bishop on a7. White pay a heavy cost for allowing black's king side bishop to stay in the game (9.Na4, Nxb6) 22.Ne3 Bxe3 23.fxe3 Qxg3-+]

21...Qh4+ [#] Try to calculate the forced win from this diagram.]



22.Kg1 Nh3+ 23.gxh3 Qxg3+ 24.Kh1 Qxh3+ 25.Kg1 Qxg4+ 26.Kh2 Rf3 27.Qe3 Bxe3

0-1



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