

Fitzsimons,Pat - Mirza,Gabriel Over 50s and over 65s Event 3rd January 2020

The following game provides an example of what can happen when you don't follow the 6 suggestions set out below in the opening. They are:

- Move pawns early to **create space** for your pieces;
- **Develop** your pieces, that is get them off the back rank quickly;
- Occupy **central squares** on the board or **aim** pieces or pawns at the central squares;
- Avoid moving the same piece or pawn **more than once** in the early stages of the game;
- **Castle** quickly;
- Don't move pawns on the **edge** of the board;

In the early stages of the game my opponent:

- moved some of his pieces more than once;
- didn't create enough space for his pieces; and
- didn't castle.

As a result, I quickly got a good position from the opening moves.

The initial moves of the game were:

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 c5 3.d5 Qa5+ 4.c3 Ne4 5.Bf4 d6 6.Nd2 Nxd2 7.Qxd2 (see position below)



In reaching the position above, note that 3 of black's 7 moves so far involve moving the same knight. As a result, black's other minor pieces have yet to move. The game continued as follows:

b5 8.e4 Nd7 9.Nf3 Nf6 10.Bd3 Bg4 11.Qe2 a6 12.O-O c4 13.Bc2 h6 14.h3 Bh5

Position after black's 14th move



At this point note that 5 of black's 14 moves so far have been knight moves (one knight moving three times and the other twice). Also he has yet to castle with his kingside bishop still on f8.

It is useful to carry out the "James Bond test" to help you decide what to do next in a position like this. The fictional secret agent's weapon of choice was the Walter PPK

handgun, so thinking of James Bond is a reminder of the letters PPK (Pieces, Pawns and Kings).

Firstly, compare the positions of the two **kings** – which one is safer?

In this case, white is safely castled while the black king is still stuck in the middle of the board. So the comparison of the kings **favours white**.

Secondly look at the pawn structures for both sides, In this case, White has advanced pawns in the centre of the board while black has advanced pawns on the queenside. So which pawn structure is best? The answer is that the advanced centre pawns are **a more valuable asset** for white than the queenside advanced pawns for black. The reason for this will become clearer shortly.

Thirdly consider the position of the pieces. Again white has an advantage because:

- The minor pieces are already developed (knight and bishops have moved from the back rank); (black's kingside bishop has yet to move); and
- The two white rooks are linked because white has castled and the queen is off the back rank; (black rooks remain unconnected as the king is not yet castled).

So what do you do with the conclusion that white has an advantage?

As the black king is still in the middle of the board, it would be a good idea for white to try and create space for the white pieces so that they can threaten the king.

Exchanging pawns is a good way to create space, so my next move was a4. Note that black's response was to move the queen back to its starting point on d8.



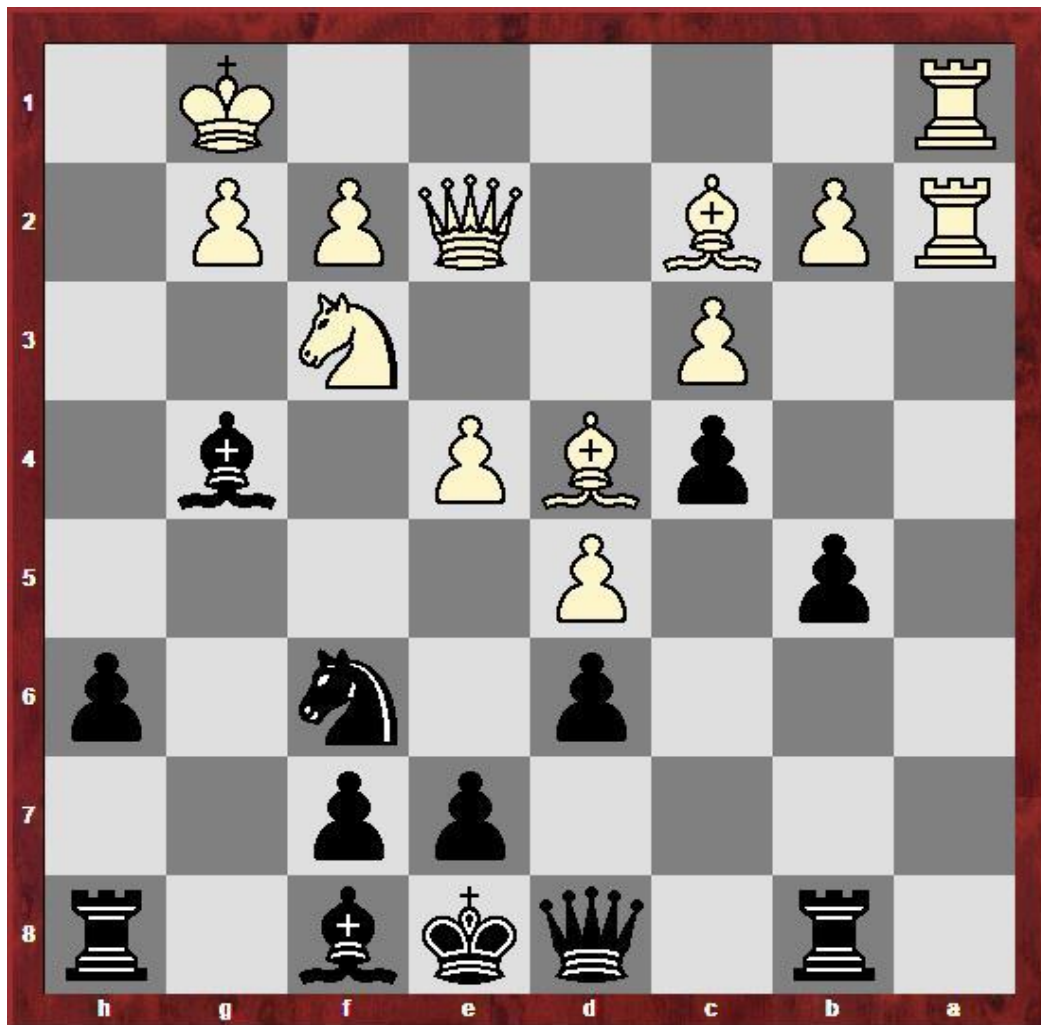
15.a4 Qd8.

Rather than exchange pawns on b5 immediately, I played the rook to a2 with a view to moving the rook on f1 to a1 thus doubling rooks on the “a” file.

I exchanged pawns on b5 a few moves later after my opponent made some moves on the kingside to create possible counter play against my king’s position. The moves were:

16.Ra2 g5 17.Be3 g4 18.hxg4 Bxg4 19.Rfa1 Rb8 20.axb5 axb5 21.Bd4

The following position was reached after my 21st move. I have now got control of the open “a” file and my bishop is pinning the knight on f6. Black played the rook on h8 to g8 to bring it onto the same file as the white king. I exchanged my bishop for the knight on f6 which had to be recaptured by the e7 pawn. This move weakens the black pawn structure and opens the “e” file exposing the king.

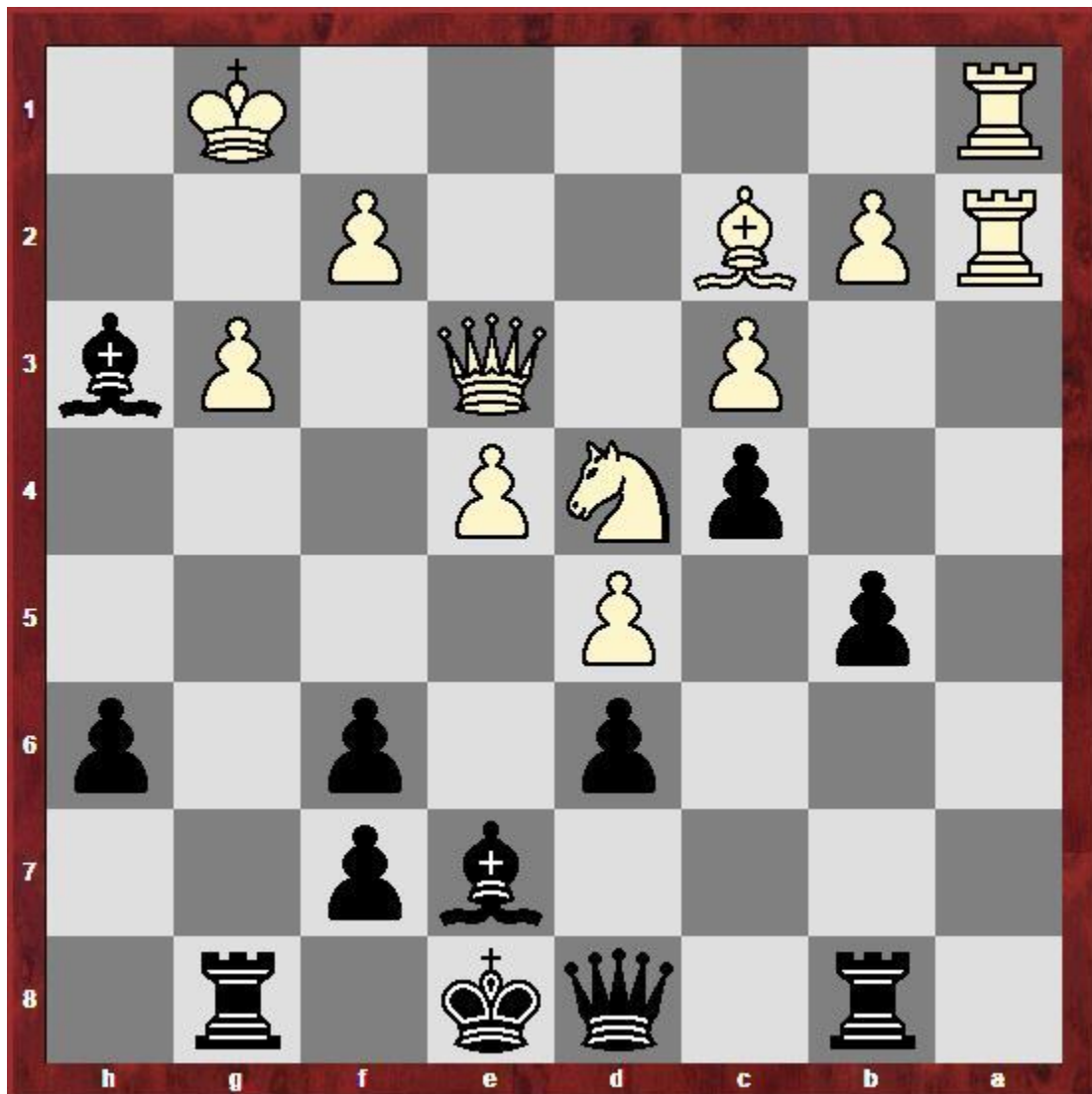


Rg8 22.Bxf6 exf6

I now made a couple of moves to improve the position of my pieces and to rebuff black's attempts to attack my king as follows.

23.Qe3 Bh3 24.g3 Be7 25.Nd4

I reached the following position after move 25. Can you see what white is threatening to do?



Black played **Bd7** to counter the threatened knight fork on c6 from where the knight can attack both the queen and the rook.

I moved my rook on a2 to a7 as the seventh rank is usually a very good place for rooks. Also if I played my knight to c6 on the next move and it was captured by the bishop on d7, I could play dxc6 and be threatening to advance the pawn to c7 supported by the rook on a7.

To counter this possibility, black played his rook on g8 to g5, the idea being that if my pawn on d5 ends up recapturing the bishop on c6, the rook can move to c5 and ultimately win the advanced c pawn.

To stop this happening, I moved the rook on a2 to a6 so that I could recapture the bishop on c6 with my rook threatening the queen on c8. The next few moves in the game leading to 29 Rxc6 are as follows:

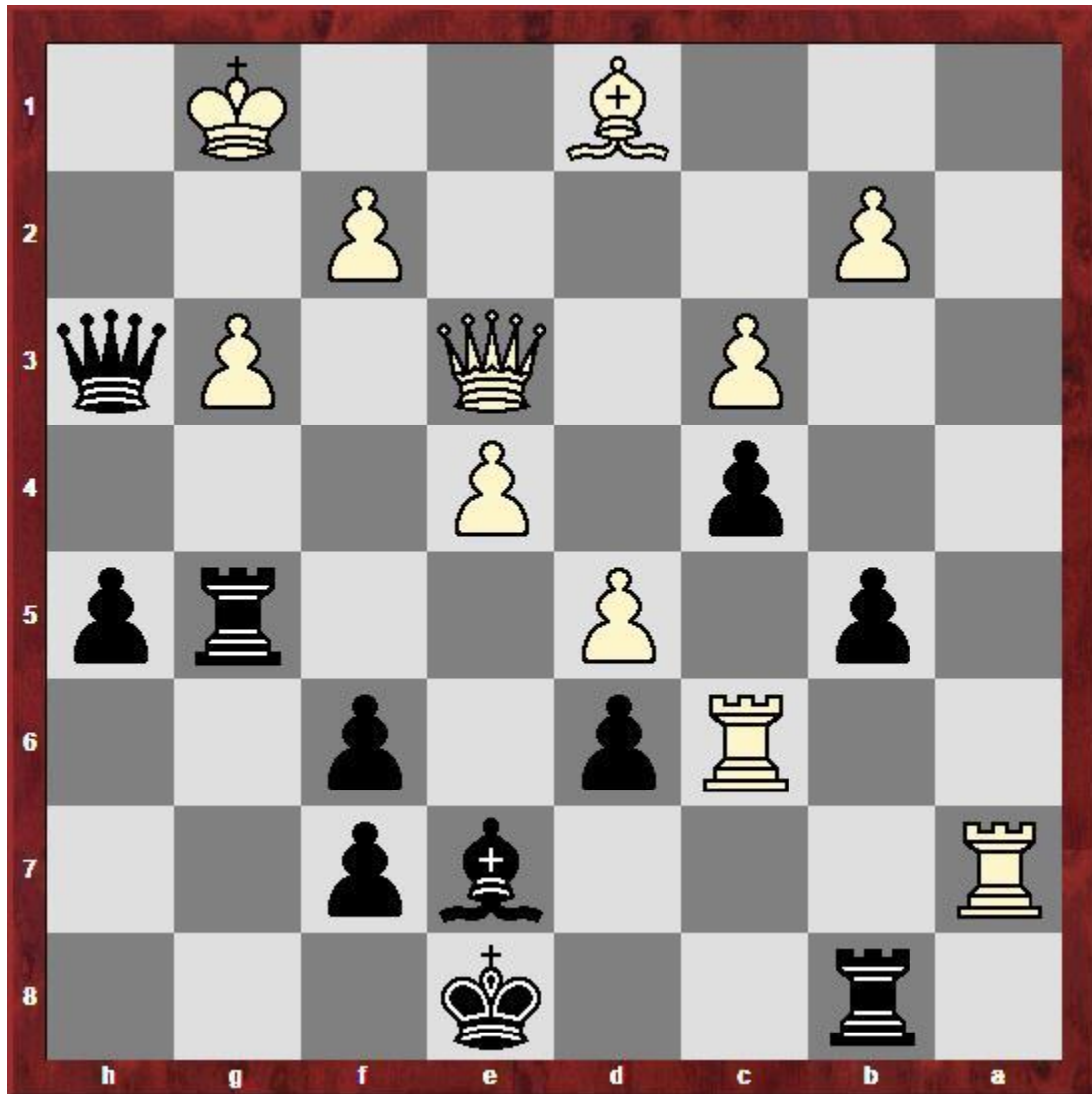
26.Ra7 Rg5 27.R1a6 Qc8 28.Nc6 Bxc6 29.Rxc6 (see position below)



The black queen on c8 is threatened with capture by the rook on c6.

My opponent decided to move the queen to h3 to see if he could counter-attack on the kingside. I played my bishop to D1 with a view to ultimately moving it to g2 so that it could attack the black queen on h3 after another two moves and also acting to defend the king if necessary.

Qh3 30.Bd1 Black played **h5** with the intention of trying to exchange the h pawn for my g pawn so as to expose my king to attack. **The following is the position after the move h5. How should white respond?**



31.Rxe7+ Kxe7 32.Qa7+ Kf8 33.Qxb8+ Kg7 34.Qxd6

34...Rg6 35.Bf3 h4 36.Bg2 Qg4 37.f3 [37.e5 Qd1+ 38.Kh2 hxg3+ 39.fxg3 Rh6+ 40.Bh3 Qe2+ 41.Kg1]

37...Qg5 38.Qf4 Qxf4 39.gxf4 h3 40.d6 [40.Kh2 hxg2 41.Kg1 Rg3 42.Rc8 Rxf3 43.Kxg2 Rd3 44.Rc5 Re3 45.Rxb5 Rxe4 46.Kf3 Re1 47.Rb4 f5 48.Rxc4 Rf1+ 49.Ke2 Rb1 50.b4 Kf6 51.Rc7 Rb2+ 52.Ke3 Rb1 53.Kd4 Rf1 54.Rc6+ Ke7 55.Ke5 Re1+ 56.Kxf5 Rb1 57.Ke4 Rb2 58.Kd4 Rf2 59.b5 Rxf4+ 60.Kc5 Ra4 61.Rc7+ Kf6 62.b6 Ra3 63.c4 Ra5+ 64.Kc6 Ra4 65.c5 Ke5 66.d6 Ke4 67.b7 Ra6+ 68.Kb5 Ra3 69.Re7+ Kf5 70.Kc6 Ra6+ 71.Kc7 Ra5 72.c6 Rb5 73.d7 Rd5 74.b8Q]

40...Rxc3 41.Kh1 Rxb2 42.d7 Rd2 43.Rc7 b4 [43...Kf8 44.Rb7 Ke7 45.Rxb5 Rd3 46.Rc5 Rxc3 47.Kh2 Rxf3 48.Rxc4 Kxd7 49.Rb4]

44.cxb4 c3 45.Rxc3 Rxd7 46.Kh2 Rd4 47.Rb3 f5 48.exf5 Rxf4 49.b5 Rh4 50.b6 Rh8 51.b7 Rb8 52.Kxh3 Kf6 53.Kg4 Ke5 54.Rb5+ Kd6 55.Kf4 Kc6 56.Rb2 f6 57.Kg4 Kd5 58.Kh5 Ke5 59.Kg6 Rg8+ 60.Kf7 Rb8 61.Rb5+ Kd6 62.Kxf6 Kd7 63.Kf7

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