

## Pat Fitzsimons (Elm Mount) v Gerry Smith (Balbriggan) Quarter Finals of Branagan Cup - 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

This is a game I played in the above Cup competition for my club team. The initial moves in the opening phase of the game followed the three “Cs” and the “model”. In keeping with the 6 things that the 3 “Cs” and “model” represent, I

- Aimed pieces at the centre of the board;
- Occupied the central squares of the board;
- Castled early;
- Moved pieces **once** in the opening;
- Developed my pieces (that is I moved them from their initial positions on the back rank of the board quickly); and
- Avoided moving pieces to the **edge** of the Board.

Have a look at the opening 10 moves of the game by playing them on your own chess board.

**1.d4 b5 2.e4 Bb7 3.d5 a6 4.Nf3 d6 5.b3 Nd7 6.Bb2 Ngf6 7.Nbd2 c5 8.c4 b4 9.Bd3 e5 10.0-0 g6**

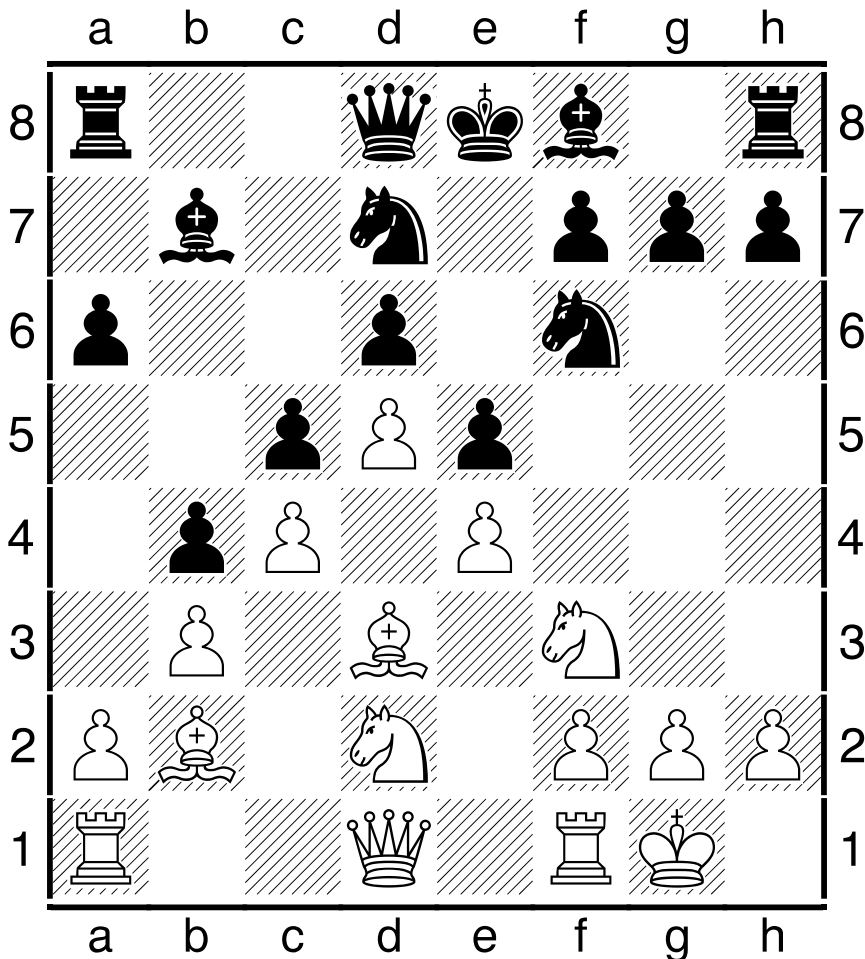
You will see that in my first 3 moves, I occupied central squares with my pawns. This also gave me some space to move my pieces off the back rank.

My opponent pushed his pawns on the queen side making space for his bishop to move to the b7 square so that it is on the long (a8 to h1) diagonal thus also aiming at the centre of the board.

You will see that I moved a pawn to b3 so that I could put a bishop on the b2 square on the long a1 – h8 diagonal that stretches across the centre of the Board.

My opponent pushed his queen side pawns early in the game, the idea being to try to stop me developing my queenside pieces and to leave open the possibility of pushing his “a” pawn forward to attack the base of my pawn chain at b3. The diagram below shows the position after I castled on my 10<sup>th</sup> move.

**Position after White’s 10<sup>th</sup> Move.**



I have a very slight positional advantage in the game at this stage given that I have already castled, have more pieces developed while my opponent has what is called a “backward” pawn on d6 (that is a pawn that cannot be advanced and is not capable of being protected by another pawn).

The game continued with my opponent playing the move g6 vacating the g7 square so that he can put his bishop on that square. Putting the bishop on this square (and on the g2,b2 and b7 squares) is called a “Fianchetto” which is an Italian word that translates as.

The next few moves were as follows:

**11.Ne1 Bg7 12.Be2 Qe7 13.Nd3 g5**

Can you see what the purpose of my last few moves was?  
Why did I move my knight and bishop for a second time in the game ?

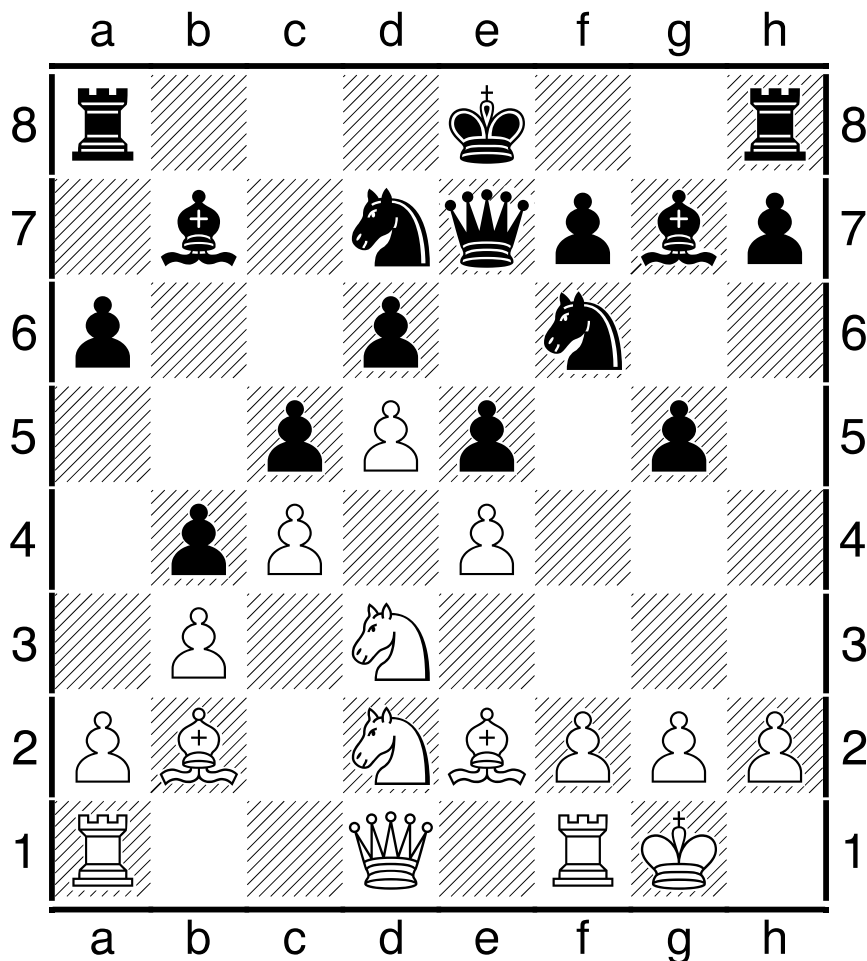
The answer is that I wanted to prepare to move my pawn on f2 to f4 so that I could open the f-file for my rooks and start an attack against the black king.

Moving the bishop to e2 was necessary to make space for the knight on f1 to go to d3 to support the pawn to be pushed to f4. It also prevents the black knight on f6 going to h5 and then f4 because the bishop can take the knight if it goes to h5.

If I played f4 and black took the f4 pawn with his e pawn, this would free up the e5 square for his knight on d7. However, with my knight on d3 and my bishop on b2 aimed at the e5 square, I can win a pawn if my opponent moves his knight to e5.

Can you see how to win a pawn if the black knight goes to e5?

Black's 13<sup>th</sup> move, g5, prevents me from pushing my pawn to f4. However, if my opponent castles on the kingside, the advance of his pawn to g5 will prove to be a weakness in his position! (see diagram below)



Given that black has not yet castled, his rook is on h8 and the logical follow-up move to g5 would be h5 with a view to pushing the "g" and "h" pawns together to try and

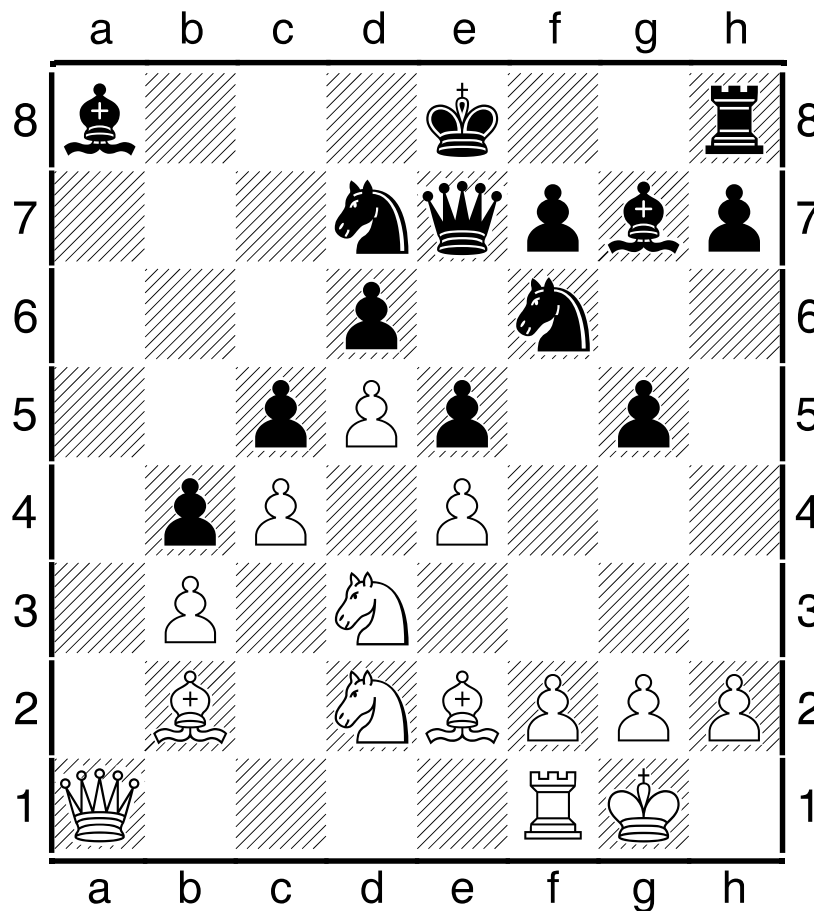
exchange black's "h" pawn opening up the "h" file for his rook to bear down on my castled position. This is the only plan that makes sense after playing "g5".

We are now in the "middle game" where the opening moves have been completed and it is necessary to decide on a plan to follow for the next phase of the game. As indicated above, my initial plan was to move my pieces around to support the movement of my pawn on f2 to f4 as the start of an attack on the kingside of the board (the kingside is the "e" to "h" files because the king's starting square is on the "e" file while the Queenside of the board is the other half of the board from the "a" to "d" files and is so called because the queen starts on the "d" file).

In the light of my opponent's move of a pawn to "g5", I decided to change my plan completely by playing "a3" on my 14<sup>th</sup> move. Can you see why I would do this ?

The idea is to open up the "a" file instead of the "f" file and to try and get some of my pieces onto the "a" file to take advantage of the fact that black is not castled so his rooks are not connected and this means I can probably gain control of the "a" file in a few moves. The game continued;

**14.a3 a5 15.axb4 axb4 16.Rxa8+ Bxa8 17.Qa1 See diagram below**



When your opponent is obliged to respond to your moves rather than following his/her own plan, then you are making what are called “forcing moves” that is moves that force your opponent to respond. It is generally better to be the one who is playing the forcing moves in the game as you are dictating how the game is being played.

It is similar, for example, to a football team that has possession of the ball and is therefore deciding how the game is played while the team without the ball has to chase and harry their opponents to try and get the ball back. If you have ever played a team sport such as soccer, basketball etc, you will know that it almost always feels better to be in control of the game by having possession of the ball.

There are obviously situations where you can be passing the ball around retaining possession, but not making progress and the same lack of progress can also occur in chess. This usually arises because you cannot settle on a plan to follow and/or when faced with move choices, you are unclear as to what the best move is in a given position on the board. This is particularly true in the middle game, where the game is at its most complex.

The best way to help you make the right choices is to have a short checklist of what to watch out for during the game. By following this check list involving a few simple principles, you can improve how you make your decisions on move choices. I have referred to the issues I was considering in the course of this game and I will summarise them at the end as general ideas that can be applied in any game.

Black is forced to retreat his queen to protect his back rank, particularly the bishop on a8.

.....**Qd8**

I followed up with the following moves:

**18.Qa6** – threatens to win the backward pawn on d6. **Nb6** allows the queen to protect the pawn and the knight also protects the bishop on a8.

**19.Qb5+** - checks are generally forcing moves and if black moves the king he wont be able to castle so the king would be stranded in mid board which should be good for me.

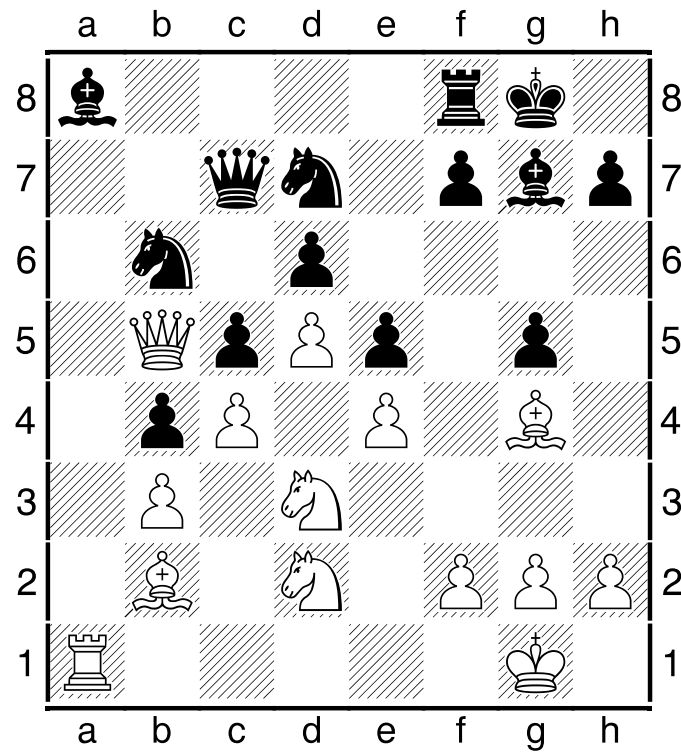
**Nfd7** – Black retreats yet another piece!

**20.Ra1** – Controlling the a-file with another piece.

**Qc7** – this move anticipates the white rook on a1 moving to a6 or a7 and offers further protection to the black knights

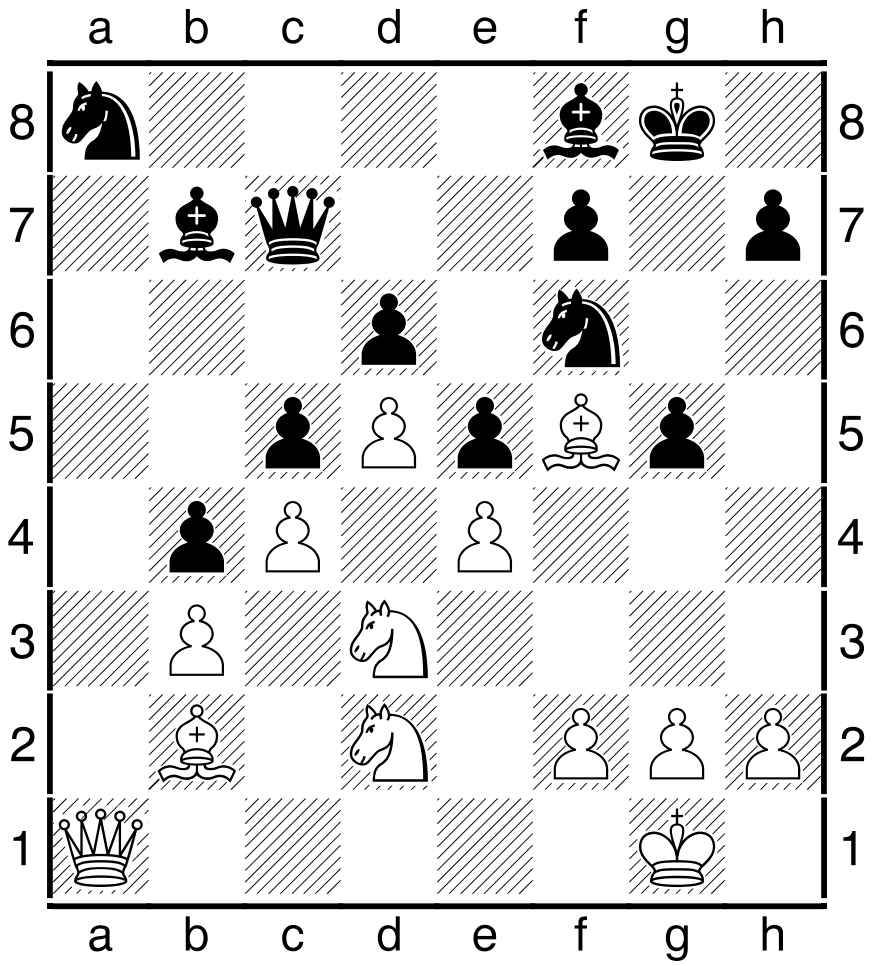
**21.Bg4** – improves the position of the bishop and threatens Rxa8! (Can you see the follow up to move ! – Assuming black recaptures with the knight on b6, the bishop or queen safely captures the knight on d7).

**0-0** gets the king from the centre of the board and further protects the bishop on a8 (see Diagram below)



22. **Ra6** This move puts further pressure on the knight on b6 and will also allow me to put the queen behind Rb8 23. **Qa5** Nf6 24. **Bf5** Bf8 25. **Qa1** Bb7 26. **Ra7** Ra8 27. **Rxa8** Nxa8

Position after Black's 27<sup>th</sup> Move, Nxa8



28.Nxe5 Nh5 29.Ng4 Bc8 30.Qxa8 Bxf5 31.Nh6# 1-0

Final Position

