

## NATO Chess 2015 Round 2 Highlights

Jan Cheung, 13 February 2016

The hot temperatures dropped fast, making it pleasurable to play two rounds this day. After a short breakfast the second round began at 8 o'clock. I am sure that many players were very motivated, witnessing the positions of this round highlight.

Sometimes a long prepared plan didn't work out well in practice. An example is the following position.

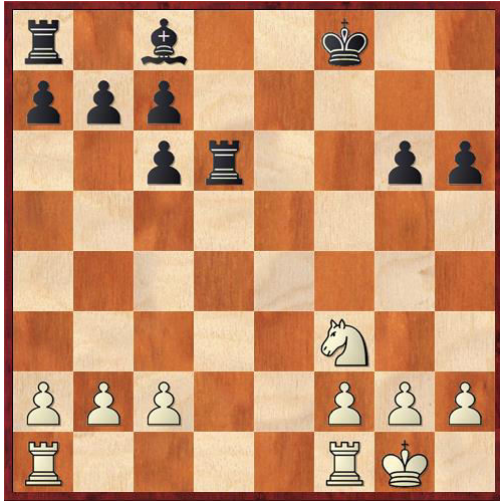


If you are looking at this position for the first time and you are not acquainted with modern opening handling, you think that two beginners were playing. Haven't beginning players learned to glue the f pawn at the start square? Haven't beginning players been taught not to move the h pawn two squares so early in the game? Actually, at this position both players have spent more than 1 hour! The player with the white pieces was satisfied with his position, but soon found that this position was beginning to fall apart... You can find this position back in one of the exercises.

Disaster could struck too fast. The following game contained 17 moves theory, then the game was over after 2 original moves...

**Crapulli – Krainski (2.22)**

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nge7 4.Nc3 g6 4.d4 exd4 6.Nd5 Bg7 7.Bg5 h6 8.Bf6 Bxf6 9.Nxf6+ Kf8 10.Nxd4 Nf5 11.Nh7+ Rxh7 12.exf5 Qf6 13.Bxc6 dxc6 14.fxg6 fxg6 15.0-0 Rd7 16.Qf3 Qxf3 17.Rxf3 Rd6**



If you are looking at the position for the first time, you think there are two possibilities.

1. A quick draw, or
2. A long end game.

You are wrong! The game lasted two more moves....

**18.Rad1 Bf5 19.Nd4?? Rad8 0-1**

Here are the exercises of round 2.

### Position 1.



Position after 10...Bf8-d6. Choose between A) 11.Nxc4 and B) 11.Bxc4.

### Position 2.



Position after 17.Nc3-e2. Black to move. Choose between A) 17...Nc5, B) 17...Nb6 and C) 17...f6.

### Position 3.



Position after 10.Ra1-b1. Black to move.

#### Position 4.



Position after 20...Rh8-e8. White to move.

#### Position 5.



Position after 62...Kc6-b6. White to move.

Position 6.



Position after 16.Qh4 Choose between A) 16...e4 and B) 16...Ba3.

Position 7.



Position after 13.d5. Black to move.



### Position 8.



Position after 16...Ba4 White to move.

### Position 9.



Position after 19...Ne6. White to play.

Position 10.



Position after 14...fxe4. White to move. Choose between A) 15.Bxe4 and B) 15.fxe4.

Position 11.



Position after 16.g4. Black to move.

Position 12.



Position after 11.Qd1-d3 Black to move. Choose between A) 11...Rb8 and B) 11...b5.

Position 13.



Position after 31...Qc7-f7. White to move. Choose between A) 32.Nxh6+ and B) 32.Nxg7.



### Position 14.



Position after 45.Kg1-f1. Black to move.

### Position 15.



Position after 28.Bd2. Black to move. Choose between A) 28...Nc7, B) 28...e5 and C) 28...f5.

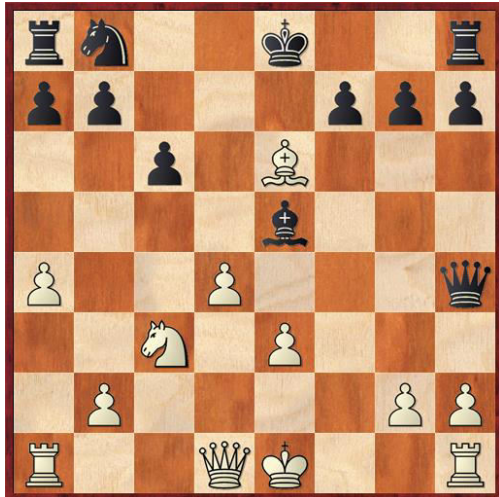
### Solutions

Position 1 is the game J.M. Nielsen – Drabke (2.2).

White has one weakness in his position, the diagonal d6-h2. The threat Qd8-h4+ should always be reckoned with. If he has any time, he should bring his king into safety. First, he should win the pawn at c4 back, but with which piece?

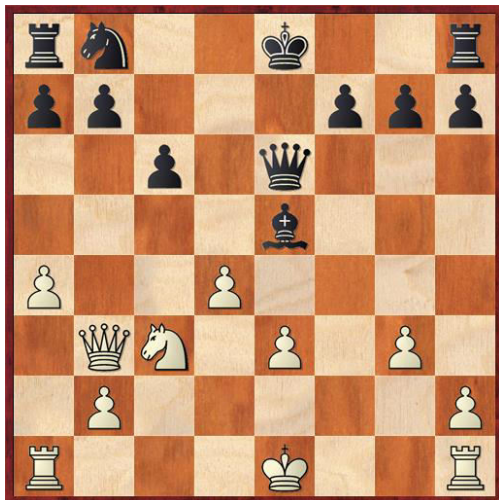
In your calculation process, you should first consider the forcing move 11.Bxc4. If this cannot be played, then you should consider 11.Nxc4. After **11.Bxc4** black has two choices.

1. **11...Bxe5 12.Bxe6 Qh4+**



White should keep the d file closed. This calls for **13.g3!** After **13...Bxg3+ 14.Kd2** the position is nearly equal, for example **14...Be1+ 15.Qxe1 Qxe1+ 16.Raxe1.**

2. **11...Qh4+ 12.g3 Qh3** Black prevents the short castling, but can castle at the other side of the board: **13.Qb3!** After **13...Bxe5 14.Bxe6 Qxe6**



White has adequate counter changes, for example **15.Qxb7 Bxd4 16.0-0! Bxe3+ 17.Kh1 0-0 18.Qxa8 Qd7 19.Rf3 Na6 20.Qxf8+ Kxf8 21.Rxe3**

The variations show that 11.Bxc4 is playable.

In the game white played **11.Nxc4**. This move however, doesn't improve whites development and it also gives black the opportunity how to continue the game. Black played **11...Qh4+ 12.Kd2 Bc7**. Black keeps the bishop pair, but 12..Be7 is preferred because it prevents white to control square d6, as we

will see later. Square b4 is a weakness. Now white should play **13.Qb3** to defend this square. After **13...b6 14.Qa3!** white has adequate counter play.

The above variations show that white has more chances to fight for equality with 11.Bxc4 than with 12.Nxc4.

## Position 2 is the game Wantiez – Bieluszewski (2.3).

A typical position of the Sicilian Scheveninger variation. White has the upper hand at the king side while black withdraws his forces at the last three rows to build a counter attack at the queen side or the centre. Note that white has not assembled all his pieces (Ra1, Qd1) at the direction of the centre. Also note that black's king position can be easily defended. White's threat of Qd1-e1-h4 can be easily defended by Nd7-f8 or h7-h5. Now we know white's main threat, we ask ourselves how black can improve his position. The bishop at e7 can be moved to g7 by crossing square f8, but that is not a good idea because this square should be reserved by a knight defending pawn h7. This plan is too slow. After 17...Bf8 (defending move) 18.Qe1 (developing move) Bg7 19.Qh4 (activating move) Nf8 white will take over the initiative with 20.Bc3! After 20...Bxc3 21.Nxc3



Black's position has weaknesses at f6 and h6 giving white to set up an attack with Nd1-e3-g4. So a waiting move at black's 17<sup>th</sup> move only helps white to improve his position.

In the game black played **17...Nc5** (option A), putting pressure at pawn e4. After **18.Qe1 Nxb3** (18...Rad8!? (centralization) is an alternative) **19.cxb3 d5 20.Qh4 h5**



the position is unclear. Now white should continue with **21.Be3**, keeping control of the centre.

Besides 17...Nc5, there were other alternatives.

#### 1. 17...Nb6

Heading to c4. White continues with his usual plan to attack h7.

**18.Qe1 Nc4 19.Kh1 !?**

There was nothing wrong with 19.Bc3, but there is no need to defend pawn b2.

**19...Nxd2**

(19...Nxb2? 20.Bc3 Nc4 21.Rxh7!)

**20.Qxd2 Rac8 21.Rf1 Bf8 22.c3**



with an unclear position.

2. In the Sicilian Scheveninger, if white plays f4-f5, then square e5 is an ideal square for a black knight. In the game, this move could be prepared by weakening white's protection at e5 with the unusual move

For white it is better to close the position because rook a1 is not developed yet. After 18.gxf6 Bxf6 19.Bc3 Bxc3 20.Rxc3 Rad8 all of blacks pieces are developed but white has problems to activate rook a1.

**20...Bd8**

### Conclusion:



The three moves 17...Nc5, 17...Nb6 and 17...f6 are all playable, but 17...f6 is more direct: it sets white under pressure by trying to create a strong square at e5. White should play accurately, keeping the position closed until all of his pieces are developed.

### Position 3 is the game Cheung – HC Andersen (2.7).

In the position, signs of a Dutch Defence, Leningrad Variation with Ng1-h3 and h2-h4 are clearly visible. It costed each player more than 1 hour to produce the following moves.

**1.d4 f5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 g6 3.Nh3 Bg7 4.Nf4 d6 5.d5 Na6 7.Nc3 Nc5 8.h4 Ng4 9.Bd2 0-0 10.Rb1**

With h2-h4 white was planning to weaken blacks king side with a timed h4-h5. Blacks reply, Nf6-g4 prevents a possible h5-h6, but it weakens square e4. Look at pawn d5. By playing d4-d5 white wanted to prevent black to open the centre with e7-e5. So at first sight, it looks like that white has a good position. White last move 10.Ra1-b1, was planned to play b2-b4 driving blacks pieces back and threatening to open the centre with e2-e4.

There is slight flaw in whites plan. The text move **10.Rb1** was slow. Better was 10.h5. After 10...g5 11.Nd3 Bd4 12.e3 Bxc3 13.bxc3 e5 14.Nxc5 dxc5 15.f3 Nf6 16.c4 e4 17.f4 the position is unclear. Back to the game. If blacks plays too quiet, his piece at c5 will be driven back. So he should find a radical move to prevent this. We can say that black has find a way to prevent a structural advantage of white:

**10...e5! 11.dxe6**

Better was 11.Nd3, keeping the centre closed. After 11...f4 12.f3 Nh6 13.gxf4 exf4 14.Qc1 an unusual position arises.

**11...c6!**



Black will pick up pawn e6 sooner or later and he has increased his influence in the centre. White has lost the battle in the centre and should play careful. The game continued with

**12.e4 Nxe6 13.0-0 fxe4 14.Nxe6 Bxe6 15.Nxe4 Qb6 16.Qe2 Ne5**



Black has got the upper hand in the centre. Now white should ignore the threat of Be6-c4 and continue with 17.Nxd6. This piece could be saved: 17...Qc7 18.Bb4 c5 19.Bc3! Qxd6 20.Rfe1 Bxa2 21.Rbd1 and white will regain his piece.

**Position 4 is the game Tommasini – Mottais (2.10).**

White has structural advantage – double f pawns for black, but two pieces are not centralized: the knight at h4 and the rook at h1. Because white has structural advantage, he should play consolidating (i.e. defending) moves to keep his advantage. In the game white played 21.Rhe1, centralizing the rook. The plan was good, but it is possible to centralized both pieces and winning a tempo with the following move sequence.

**21.Nf5!** Centralization. Also winning a tempo. **21...Bf8 22.f3** Consolidation. **22...a4 23.Rc1** Consolidation. Because white controls the centre, he is not afraid of the king attack at the flank. **23...Re6 24.Rhd1** Consolidation. **24...a3 25.b3 h5 26.g3**



and white has improved his position.

**Position 5 is the game Hater – Pietruszewski (2.11).**

The white king should be brought to the queen side. The easiest way is the move played in the game.

**63.Rh2!**

The easiest way to make a draw. Less accurate was 63.Rh4 a5 64.Re4 Rd6 and there are many ways to make a mistake. Now the following accurate moves should be played to make a draw: 65.Re1! a4 66.Ra1! Kb5 67.Ke2! Kb4 68.Rd1! Rc6 69.Rb1+ Ka3 70.Kd2.

**63...a5 64.Re2! Rd6 65.Ke3 Kb5 66.Rd2! Re6+ 67.Kd3 Rd6+ 68.Kc3 Rxd2 69.Kxd2 Kb4 70.Kc2 ½-½**

**Position 6 is the game Almonti – Papista (2.12).**

White has many pieces pointing to the king side. This indicates that black should be careful. The move played in the game,

**16...e4?**



exposes the king side even more, giving white the opportunity to increase the pressure at the king side with

**17.c5! Bxc5 18.Bc4+ Kh8 19.Rxg7! Qxg7**

Or 19...Kxg7 20.Rg1+ Kh8 21.Qxf6+ Qxf6 22.Bxf6+ Rxf6 23.Rg8#

**20.Rg1 Bg4 21.Ne5**

winning material back with interest. Luckily for black, white didn't find the winning move sequence and played 17.Ng5 giving black to exchange the dangerous bishop at b2 with 17...Ba3. That is also the answer of the exercise. Because white has a majority of attackers at the king side, black should not leave any opportunity to exchange one of them with

**16...Ba3!**

**Position 7 is the game Karbowiak – Pazeriene (2.13).**

A position in the Tarrasch Defence with blacks c5-c4. White sacrificed a piece at c4 (Ne5xc4), planning to regain the piece with the thrust d4-d5.

Looking at the position, black is strong at the black squares. A move like

**13...Qb6!**

consolidates the squares b2, c5 and d4 and it enables black to develop the rooks. Having a double pawn is not unusual for black in the Tarrasch. They are not weak because they support the pieces. After

**14.dxc6 bxc6**

14.dxe6 is less accurate because of 14...Qxb2

**15.Qc2 Rab8 16.Rab1 Rfd8 17.Na4**



**17...Qb4!**

With the idea Rd8-d2.

**18.Rfd1 Rdc8**

And black has a comfortable position. In the game black played the less accurate move

**13...Bxd5.**

After

**14.Qxd5 Qxd5 15.Bxd5**

Black got slight problems to solve. The queen side is under pressure and the white bishop dominates the board. Now black best way to continue the game is playing

**15...Rac8! 16.Bxc4 Bxc3 17.bxc3 Na5 18.Bd5 Rxc3**

And although material is equal, white is definitely better because the bishop dominates all black pieces.

**Position 8 is the game Tocco – MM Nielsen (2.15).**

Black's bishop is weak because it moves along the same colours of the colours of its pawn chain. White's knight at d4 dominates this piece. The centre is fixed. The black pieces at the queen side are not effective. So we can say that white has structural advantage. A rule of thumb in Steinitz elements of chess is that in general, a queen trade benefits the side with structural advantage. To see why, remove the queens off the board in your mind. You will see that in general, the queen's task was to cover weak squares. If you remove the queens off the board, the weak squares will be highlighted. In the game, white made use of this rule of thumb.



**17.Qg5!**

Black has two options.

1. The game continuation. **17...Qxg5 18.hxg5 Ke7** Now the most accurate way to continue the game was **19.Rh4!**. After **19...h6 20.Rdh1 Nxd3 21.cxd3 Rhg8 22.gxh6 gxh6 23.R1h2** white has kept his structural advantage.
2. **17..f6 18.exf6 Qxf6** (After 18...gxf6 19.Qg3 black has too many weaknesses) **19.g3 0-0 20.f4** and white has kept his structural advantage.

**Position 9 is the game Musselman – Bohn (2.16).**

Black has the bishop pair and has plans to open the position by exchanging at c4. To restrict black's bishop pair, white should keep the position closed. Because white has a black squared bishop, his pawns should be put on the light squares. With the forced move sequence

**20.b5 Bb7 21.Bb4 Nc5 23.Rad1**

White has closed the queen side and he also has centralized his pieces.

**Position 10 is the game Demjen – Onley (2.17).**

White has different options to exchange at e4. Both have advantages and disadvantages, but which is better? Let's sum each of them.

1. The advantage of **15.Bxe4** is that it gives white a strong square at e4 for his pieces. The disadvantages of this move is that pawn d5 will be weak and that Ne7 is suddenly active. It could move to f5 and then to d4.

On closer inspection we see that this exchange benefits black more than white. Pawn d5 is not supported by a pawn anymore and for white is not easy to put knight at e4 without losing pawn d5. After the game continuation

**15.Bxe4 Bd7 16.Be3**



black gets adequate counter play after

**16...Nf5,**

for example:

**17.Bg5 Rc8 18.Rc1 Qe8.**

2. The advantage of 15.fxe4 is that keeps Ne7 restricted and that it reinforces pawn d5. The disadvantages of this move is that it makes Bd3 weak and that square g4 gets available for blacks pieces.

On closer inspection we see that this exchange benefits white. Square g4 will be available for the black pieces, but white can defend successfully. After

**15.fxe4 Ng4 16.Qe1**



white can defend the squares e3 and f2 successfully. White threat is h2-h3. After

**16...Rxf1+ 17.Qxf1 Qb6**

white is able to defend squares e3 and f2 with

**18.Nd1**

The threat h2-h3 will drive the knight at g4 away and white problem with weak squares will be solved. Because black still has an inactive knight at e7, white has the upper hand.

**Position 11 is the game Michalski – Christen (2.18).**

The bishop at f5 is attacked. Retreating the bishop to e6 gives white structural advantage – more space. In the game black played

**16...Bc2**

After

**17.Kd2 Bb3**

white can get an excellent position after

**18.gxh5.**

Does black have a better option? We see that the rook at e8 and whites king at e1 are on the same file. This make some tactics long the e file possible. After

**16...e5! 17.dxe5 hxg4 18.hxg4**



**18...Be6!**

Black will pick up pawn e5 with equal chances for both sides.

**Position 12 is the game Fichtner – Dusak (2.19).**

Black has to find counter play, otherwise whites centre decides the game. Whites centre could be attacked by the thrust b7-b5. The question is when to attack. In an opening like the Benko gambit – **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5** - this move is already played at move 3! This gambit is known to be sound. There are also positions in the Kings Indian where black plays a delayed b7-b5 to attack whites centre, for example **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Bg5 0-0 6.Be2 c5 7.d5 b5!?** In this case the gambit is less sound because white could defend successfully with **8.cxb5 a6 9.a4 Qa5 10.Bd2**.

The question whether the pawn sacrifice b7-b5 is sound depends on the positions of the white pieces. A displaced knight at h4 usually makes the gambit playable.

Assume that 11...b5 is playable, then why delaying this move? After

**11...b5!? 12.cxb5 a6 13.bxa6 Bc8!**



followed by Bc8xa6 black gets compensation for the pawn by pressure along the a and b file, together with the activity of bishop g7.

In the game black played the natural move

**11...Rb8.**

White prevented b7-b5 permanently with

**12.a4**

but this move weakens square b4. Black responded by moving a knight towards this square.

**12...Na6**

After

**13.Qe2**

Black should play

**13...Nb4.**

After

**14.Bf4 a6 15.a5 b6 16.axb6 Qxb6**



chances are equal.

Conclusion:

Both moves 11...b5 and 11...Rb8 are playable, depending on your style of play. If you prefer an imbalanced position, play 11...b5. Otherwise play 11...Rb8.

**Position 13 is the game Sycz – Middaugh (2.28).**

Did you see black's threat? It is b4-b3 and the white queen is trapped. In the game both players missed this move. Only **32.Nxh6+** is playable. After **32...Bxh6 33.Bxh6 h4** the position is unclear.

**Position 14 is the same game Sycz – Middaugh (2.28).**

In this imbalanced position black can play

**45...Rf3!**

and things are not clear yet. After

**46.Rd1 Rxf2+ 47.Qxf2 Nxf2 48.Kxf2 h2**

the position will be equal.



In the game black played the less accurate move 45...h2? and white won later after 46.Ke2.

**Position 15 is the game Nilsson – Windey (2.29).**

White has the bishop pair, but it does not yield advantage because black's knight at d5 defends important black squares. White's threat is e3-e4, with the idea Bd2-e3, targeting the weak pawn at b6. To encounter this threat, black should play 28...f5. Although this pawn is put at a square with the same colour of the bishop, its function is to restrict the activity of white's light squared bishop.

After

**28...f5!**

Black gets a position which can easily be defended:

**29.e4** (After 29.Kf2 black gets full control of square e4 with 29...Nf6) **29...fxe4**

- **30.Bxe4 Kf7 31.Kf2 Ke7 32.h4 Kd7 33.a4 Kc7 34.g4 Ne7 35.Bc2 Bd5** with an equal position.
- **30.fxe4 Nf6 31.e5 dxe5 32.dxe5**



Black has several methods to defend. An easy method is **32...Nd7**.

Here is an example of a continuation.

**33.Bc3 Bd5 34.Bd4 Kf7 35.Kf2 Ke7 36.h4 Kd8 37.g4 Bb3**  
with an equal position.

You must be wondering whether 28...e5 is a better move than 28...f5. With 28...e5 black wants to restrict white's dark squared bishop. This move doesn't work however because white can open the position, activating the bishop pair. After

**28...e5?! 29.e4 Nf6 30.dxe5 dxe5 31.Bc4**



Bishop c4 is fully dominating blacks counterpart at b7, and at e3, the dark squared bishop fully dominates the knight by attacking pawn b6. Black has a hard task to defend, for example:

**31...Kf8 32.Be3 Nd7 33.Kf2 Ke7 34.Kg3 Kf6 35.a4 g5 36.h4 Kg6 37.h5+ Kg7**



**38.Kg4 Kf6 39.Bd5 Bc8 40.Kg3**

and white has made progress.

Last but not least: in the game black played 28...Nc7. This move is weak because it does not improve the position. The knight at d5 is active, at c7 not active.