

## NATO Chess 2014 Round 3 Highlights

Jan Cheung, 1 April 2015

The arbiters of the NATO Chess Championship had a difficult life this day, because round 3 started one hour after round 2. First, just like the players, they had little time to eat between round 2 and 3. Second, the rule that a player may not be paired against a member of his own country - with the exception team Canada 1 versus team Canada 2 veterans- required a manual pairing.

So it was understandable that at 1400 o'clock the pairing of round 3 was not ready. Round 3 had to be postponed with 30 minutes.

Playing a good game in round 3 requires some strategy. If you have spent all you mental energy in your game in round 2, then you have slight chance that you will be fall at sleep during thinking behind your board in round 3. So you see more players walking around, taking some cold drinks, more visits to the toilet to wash their faces. Another strategy is to play a tactically game, which requires less mental thinking than a strategy game. You will see that in some games.

Here are some exercises from games from round 3.

### Position 1.



Position after 22...Qg6-g5. White to move.

**Position 2.**



Position after 46...g6xf5. White to move.

**Position 3.**



Position after 11...e6-e5. White to move.

**Position 4.**



Position after 13.Qd1-d3. Black to move.

### Position 5.



Position after 15.Bc1-g5. Black to move. Choose between a) 15...g6 and b) 15...Rxc3

Position 6.



Position after 23...Nd3-c5. White to move.

Position 7.



Position after 38...Nd5-e3+. White to move. Choose between a) 39.Kh3 and b) 39.Kh1

Position 8.



Position after 40.Rc6-c1. Black to move.

Position 9.



Position after 40...Ra1-a3. White to move.



**Position 10.**



Position after 46...h4-h3. White to move. Choose between a) 47.f7, b) 47.Rh2, c) 47.Ke4, d) 47.Be2

**Position 11.**



Position after 52...Kc4-b3. White to play.

**Position 12.**



Position after 44...Qd6-c6. White to move.

## Solutions

### Position 1 is the game Cheung – Sypien (3.3)

Black is threatening 23...Qg5-h4. After 24.h3 there will follow 24...Bxh3 25.gxh3 Qxh3 26.Rf2 gxh2+ following with a possible threat Rf8-f6-g6 with mate. For white, an exchange down is not important, as long he keeps attacking chances after blacks attack has been stopped. With 23.Bxa6! white can protect the king by clearing the second rank for the queen. Black now has 2 possibilities. A) 23...Qh4? 24.hxg3! fxg3 25.Bxg3! Qxg3 26.Bb5 and blacks attack has been stopped. B) 23...Nxa6. Now white should continue with 24.cxd6, trying to play Nc4-b6 to exchange blacks important attack piece, Bc8. Of course black will not let this happen.



Black has 2 possibilities.

A) 24...Qh4 25.hxg3! fxg3 26.Bxg3 Qxg3 27.b5! White has two pawns for a piece, but his forward pawns are very active. The position is not clear. Here is a possible continuation: 27...Bh6 28.Ne2! Qg7 29.bxa6 Bxd2 30.a7 Bh3 31.Rf2 Ra8 32.Kf1 Bc8 33.Nd4! cxd6 34.Rxd2 exd4 35.Qxd6 Rxa7 36.Qd8+ Qf8 37.Qg5+ with perpetual check.

B) 24...cxd6 25.Nc4 Clearing the second rank for the white queen and threatening Nb6 to exchange an important attacker. 25...Qh4 (After 25...gxh2+ white can defend with 26.Kxh2 Rf6 27.Nb6 Rg6 28.Qb2 Qd8 29.Nxc8 Qxc8 30.Bf2 h4 31.Rg1! If the g file opens, white can play Rg1-g4 defending square h3) 26.h3 Rf6 27.Qb2



Black now has an opportunity to continue the attack. 27...Nxb4! (27...Rg6 26.Nb6) 28.Qxb4 Bxh3 29.gxh3 Qxh3 30.Qb2 Rg6 31.Qg2 Qc8





It looks that white cannot stop h5-h4-h3, but there is a solution: 32.Ne3!! Now black has 2 options.

A) 32...Qc5 33.Qh3 h4 34.Kg2 Qxe3 35.Qc8+ Kh7 36.Rh1.

B) 32...fxe3 33.f4! e2 34.Nxe2 h4 35.Qf3 exf4 36.Qxf4 Qc5+ 37.Kg2 h3+ 38.Kxh3 Rf6 39.Qxf6 Bxf6 40.Rxf6 Qe3 41.Bxg3 Qxe2 42.Re6 with equal chances.

In the game white played 23.cxd6 cxd6 24.b5? (24.Bxa6 Nxa6 25.Nc4! was necessary, leading to positions we have just analyzed) and whites king was soon mated after 24...Nc5 25.Nc4 Qh4 26.h3 Bxh3 27.gxh3 Qxh3 28.Rf2 gxf2+ 29.Kxf2 Rf6! 30.Bxc5 Rg6+ 31.Kf2 Qh4+ (white missed this move while considering his 23<sup>th</sup> move) 32.Kf1 Qh1+.

### Position 2 is the game Van Rijn – Graczyk (3.5).

White is an exchange up, but pawn c4 is attacked and the rook at b1 is tied at the passed pawn at b4. The rook at a2 is not active yet. A passive defence for pawn c4 fails because black can put his king at c5 and his rook at g8 to get a firm grip on the position. So, the situation is that white should find counter play as soon as possible. The rook at a2 can be activated with two options: 1) After a5-a6 with Ra2-a5 or 2) by putting it on the g file with Kg2-h1 or Kg2-h2. Which method depends on the circumstances. White has to prevent rook exchange because his remaining pieces are passive.

With 47.Kh1! white can still choose both options. 47.Kh2 has the disadvantage that after 47...Rxc4, black has the option to give a check at c2, winning a tempo. After 47.Kh1 black has two options.



1. 1). 47...Rxc4 48.Rg2 Rc3 Black is trying to promote the b pawn. 49.Rg7+ Kd6 50.Rxa7 b3 51.a6 b2



52.Rg1! (52. Rg7? Rc1+ 53.Rg1 Kc7 54.a7 Rxb1 55.Rxb1 Kb7 and black wins) The position looks preferable for black, but white can still fight. For example 52...Rc7 53.Ra8 or 52...Nxf4 53.Rb7 Rxe3 54.Rd1+ Ke5 55.Rb5+

2. 47...Rg8. Now the rook at a2 can be activated with 48.a6! (Rook trading with 48.Rg2 Rxg2 49.Kxg2 Kd6 only favors black. Whites pieces are too passive, for example: 50.Kf1 Kc5 51.Ke2 b3 52.Rg1 Kxc4 53.Kd2 Nb4 54.Kc1 Kd3) 48...Kd6 49.Ra5 Rg3 50.Kh2 Ke6 51.Rg1! Now a rook trading is possible because the activity of the black king is restricted. 51...Rxe3 52.Rg6+ Kf7 53.Rc6 with an unclear position.

### Position 3 is the game JM Nielsen – Drabke (3.6).

Black is threatening to win a piece with e5-e4. This can be prevented with 12.h3! Now black has several options.

1. 12...Bxf3 13.Qxf3
2. 12...Bh5 13.g4 exd4
3. 12...exd4 Now white has two options.
  - a. 13.exd4
  - b. 13.hxg4 dxc3 14.bxc3 Bd6

All options are playable positions. In the game white played 12.dxe5? After 12...Nxe5 White is in big trouble, due to the annoying pin at f3 and soon lost the game. From psychological point of view, Whites error on the twelfth move can somehow be explained. With the correct move 12.h3 white has to reckon with a lot of choice from black and in some variations white has to play with an isolated d pawn. If that playing style does not suit the player, he will look for alternatives. Best advice is to study many middle games with isolated pawns. An isolated pawn is not always weak. It also has strengths.

### Position 4 and 5 is the game Bohn – Kedzierski (3.11).

This is a standard position which can be reached from many openings.

- From the Caro Kann, for example 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 Nf6 6.Nc3 Nxd5 6.Nf3 e6 7.d4 Be7 8.Bd3 0-0 9.0-0 Nc6 10.Re1 Nf6 11.a3 b6 12.Bc2 Bb7 13.Qd3.
- From the Queens Gambit Declined, for example 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.e3 d5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Nc3 Nc6 7.Bd3 cxd4 8.exd4 Be7 9.0-0 0-0 10.a3 Nf6 11.Bc2 b6 12.Qd3 Bb7 13.Re1.
- From the English Opening, for example 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 c5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.d4 cxd4 6.exd4 d5 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Bd3 Nc6 9.0-0 0-0 10.Re1 Nf6 11.a3 b6 12.Bc2 Bb7 13.Qd3.
- Even from the Sicilian Defence, for example 1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 Qxd5 4.d4 e6 5.Nf3 Nf6 6.Bd3 Nc6 7.0-0 cxd4 8.cxd4 Be7 9.Nc3 Qd8 10.a3 0-0 11.Bc2 b6 12.Qd3 Bb7 13.Re1.

So it is worth to study this position thorough fully.

Pawn h7 is under attack. For the moment, it is adequate defended, but not for long. White is threatening to increase the pressure with 13.Bg5.

Black has several options.

- 13...h6. Black wants to prevent Bc1-g5, but this move still doesn't protect Nf6. After 14.Ne4 black is in big trouble because the g7-g6 is not possible anymore because pawn h6 becomes undefended. This option is the worst option.
- 13...Rc8. Black decides to complete his development. This is the move played in the game.



It looks like white has only 14.Bg5 to attack Nf6, but white has another method to attack Nf6, due to the position of Re1.

14.d5!

Now 14...exd5 fails after `15.Bg5 g6 16.Rxe7! Black has practically only one option.

14...Na5 15.Bg5

**Now we arrive at position 5.**



Pawn h7 is again under attack. The pawn at d5 does not make blacks live easy. Now black has 2 options to defend.

- 15...g6 This was the move played in the game. This move strengthens h7 , but it loosens the defence of Nf6. After 16.d6! black should keep the queens at board to have counter chances.

16...Bxd6 17.Bxf6 Qxf6 18.Qxd6 Bxf3 19.gxf3 Nc4 20.Qg3 Nxb2 21.Ne4

Black has only two pawn for a piece and doesn't have adequate compensation because whites knight at e4 is very active.

- 15....Rxc3! Black gives up the exchanges in return for a strong square d5. After 16.Qxc3 Qxd5 17.Rad1 Qc4 black has some compensation.
- 13...g6. Black protects pawn h7 as precaution and d4-d5 is not yet a real threat. Having seen the experiences of 13...Rc8, this is the best option. After 14.Bh6 Re8 15.Rad1 Rc8 the position is dynamic. White and black have many options to improve their positions.

**Position 6 is the same game Bohn – Kedzierski (3.11).**

Whites pawns are fragmented. As a rule of thumb, a knight is better to defend them instead a bishop. Furthermore, whites bishop at b3 is not active because the light squares are heavily restricted by blacks pawn formation at the king side. Furthermore, white has not put the rook at a1 into play. All of these evaluations results in finding the key move 24.Rab1. The knight at e4 has many roles. It defends square c3 and it attacks the squares d6 and f6. Sooner or later black has to trade the knight at e4, which will result that white will restore whites broken pawn formation, for example 24....Nxe4 25.fxe4 Rc3 26.Qf4.

At the game, the weaker move 24.Ba2 was played. After 24...Nxe4 25.fxe4 Rc3 26.Qf4 Rxa3 black has 3 pawns for a bishop and the game was drawn.

**Position 7 is the game Karbowiak – Farrell (3.13).**

White should first move his king before threatening Nf6+ exf6 Rxc8 and threatening Rb7+. There are only 2 options, 39.Kh3 or 39.Kh1. Option B), 39.Kh1 has the disadvantage that black can delay whites play with 39...Ra1+, so let's calculate option A), 39.Kh3 first. After 39.Kh3 g5 40.Nf6+ exf6 41.Rxc8 g4+ (41...Rxc8? 42.Rb7+) 42.Kh4 whites king is safe and whites attack will soon decide the game.

In the game 39.Kh1 was played. After 39...Ra1+ 40.Rc1 we have arrived position 8.

**Position 8 is the same game Karbowiak – Farrell (3.13).**

With 40...Nc4 white will lose material with no compensation, which means that 39.Kh1 in position 7 was a weak move.

**Position 9 is the same game Karbowiak – Farrell (3.13).**

After 40...Ra3 white can win with the same combination found in position 7: 41.Nf6+ exf6 42.Rb7+! Bxb7 43.Qd7+

**Position 10 is the game Szczesniak – Macaspac (3.15).**

Material is equal, but it has problems with his black squares. Still he has pawn f6 as counter play. The problem is how to improve his position because black also has a passed pawn at h3 as distraction. Because bishop d3 and Rf2 already have a task, it is advisable to consider first whether white can improve his king position. Let's look at 47.Ke4 first. Can whites king support the passed pawn? Black will reply with 47...Kd6. Now 48.Kf5 is not possible because of 48...Nc5! Whites bishop has to defend square e4: 49.Bf1? Rxf6+ 50.Kxf6 Ne4+. So after 48...Nc5 white has to play 49.Bc2. After 49...Nd7 50.Kg6 Rg8+ followed by 60...Rg2 white will lose material. So after 47.Ke4 Kd6 white has nothing better than 48.Ke3 while not improving his position and black can complicate the game with 48...Rh8 49.Rh2 Rh4.

Let's look at another option, 47.Rh2. After 47...Rxf6 48.Rxh3 Na5 whites pieces have all defensive tasks, so that is not a better option than 48.Ke4.

Let's look at another option, 47.f7. This is a move that white should consider twice before playing it because it put the pawn at the same colour of the bishop while black can defend square f8 with Kc5-d6 and Nb3-c5-d7. This was also the move played in the game. After 47...Na5 48.Ke4 Nxc4 49.Bxc4 Kxc4 50.Kxe5 h2 51.Rxh2 Rxf7 we have a similar position of position 11, where white has to play accurate for a draw.



As said before, as a rule of thumb, it is not advisable to put whites passed pawn at f7 without improving his position. That is the introduction of another alternative, 47.Be2!? White tries to put his bishop from a defensive to a defensive and simultaneously attacking role, complicating the game.



Now black has several options.

- 47...Na5 48.Ke4 h2 49.Rxh2 Rxf6 50.Kxe5 (49...Kd6? 49.Kf5 and because black knight is misplaced, white has taken over the initiative and white has adequate counter chances by attacking pawn c7.
- 47...h2 48.Rxh2 Rxf6 49.Rh7 with adequate counter play, for example 49...Kd6 50.Bg4 Nc5 51.Bh5 or 49...c6 50.Ke4
- 47...Kd6 48.f7! Ke7 49.Rf3 Rxf7 (49...Rh8 50.f8Q+ Rxf8 51.Rxh3 Nc5 52.Rh5 with adequate counter play) 50.Rxh3 and white has adequate counter play, for example 50...Nc5 51.Rh6 Rf6 52.Rh7+ Kd6 53.Bh5.

Conclusion: only 47.f7 (option A) and 47.Be2 (option D) are sensible moves, with 47.Be2 the best option.

**Position 11 is the game Szcesniak – Macaspac (3.15).**

Blacks only weakness is pawn c7. White should improve his position with 53.Ke6 Rg7 54.Kf6.



Now black has 2 main options.

- 54...Rg3 55.Rb4+! Kxa3 56.Rc4. After 56...Rd3 57.Ke6 Kb3 58.Rxc7 white has adequate counter play against blacks passed pawn, for example 58...a3 59.Rb7!
- 54...Rg8! Black is going to defend pawn c7 from the back. After 55.Rh7! Rc8 56.Ke7 Kxa3 57.Kd7 Ra8 the problem like move 58.Rh1! threatening Rh1-b1 will keep white adequate chances to save the game.

**Position 12 is the game Dekker – Bielawski (3.22).**

White has an exchange advantage but the files are closed and his king is vulnerable. His best option is to try to move his king towards the queen side with 45.Kf1. After 45...Qh1+ 46.Qg1 Qxg1+ 47.Kxg1 blacks position is preferable, but white can defend.