

NATO Chess 2014 Round 5 Highlights

Jan Cheung, 23 May 2015

After last night dinner with local dishes - I have missed the poutine - Thursday's schedule followed with two rounds. It would be a heavy day. The good thing for the participants was that rainy weather was predicted, so it was not a bad idea to sit the whole day.

Position 1.



Position after 23...Be8-g6. White to move.

Position 2.



Position after 54.Bc5-d6. Black to move. Choose between A) 54...Nd4+, B) 54...Nxd6, C) 54...Nh6, D) 54...Nfe7, E) 54...Nh8 and F) 54...Nge7

Position 3.



Position after 12...b7xc6. White to move. Choose between A) 13.Rb1 and B) 13.Nc4

Position 4.



Position after 16.h2-h3. Black to move. Choose between A) 16...Nxf2, B) 16...Nf6 and C) 16...Ne5.

Position 5.



Position after 21...c6xd5. White to move.

Position 6.



Position after 17...Ra8-c8. White to move.

Position 7.



Position after 20.Be3-h6. Black to move.

Position 8.



Position after 16.Re1-e3. Black to move.

Position 9.



Position after 33.g2-g4. Black to move.

Position 10.



Position after 22...Na5-b7. White to move. Choose between A) 23.Bxh6 and B) 23.Ne1.

Position 11.



Position after 23...Nb4-d5. White to play.

Position 12.



Position after 49...Ka4-b5. White to move. Choose between A) 50.c7, B) 50.Kc7 and C) 50.Ke7

Position 13.



Position after 53...Kf7-g6. White to move.

Position 14.



Position after 24...Qd7-d8. White to move.

Position 15.



Position after 34.Re2-f2. Black to move.

Solutions

Position 1 is the game Graczyk – Helbig (5.02).

White has structural advantage (b file, control over black squares), but he has to solve the problem of Bg6, attacking Qc2 and Rb1. There are 2 methods to solve this problem.

1. 24.Qd1! This is the most easiest method. After 24...Qxd1 25.Rbxd1 Bc2 26.Ra1 white has kept his structural advantage, including an extra pawn.
2. 24.e4!? This move was played in the game. This move also leads to advantage, but it is a very complex and it is not a logical move because it unnecessary keeps the tension along the b1-h7 diagonal. Black best option is now 24...Rxf1+ 25.Rxf1 Nf6, putting more pressure at pawn e4. Still, white has one exit with 26.Bf3. The resulting position is in whites favor, but 24.e4 is not a practical line to play.

Position 2 is the game Pedersen – Marquardt (5.04).

Remark that all the pawns are on one side of the board, which benefits the side of the knights. This means that a move like 54...Nxd6 (option B) generally benefits white. On close inspection, the move is playable, but it is not advised to play it because black has to play accurately. Let's look at this move. After 54..Nxd6 55.exd6 Ne5+ 56.Kf4 Kf6 we arrive at the following position.



It looks like black is in trouble, but he is saved by the fact that there is not much material left. White has two plans, but in each of them, black can defend successfully.

- 57.Bg2 Nd3+ 58.Ke3 Ne5 59.Kd4 The white king wants to support the passed pawn. Black can defend by eliminating all pawns: 59...Nf7 60.Kc5 Nxd6! 61.Kxd6 Kf5 The end game is drawn: 62.Bf3 g5 63.Bxh5 gxh4 64.gxh4 Kf4.
- 57.Bc2 The bishop wants to support the passed pawn. Black can defend by attacking the passed pawn. If the pawn is at a square with the same colour of the bishop, black has got control of the black squares. 57...Nd7 58.Ke4 Nc5+ 59.Kd4 Nb7! 60.d7 Ke7 61.Ba4 Nd6 62.Ke5 Nf5 63.Kf4 g6. White cannot make progress in this position without exchanging more pawns.

Let's look at other options in position 2. The question in this position is whether it is possible to head to a safe position with black.

White and black both have one weakness. For black, it is pawn h5 and for white, it is pawn e5. Trading pawns generally benefits black. White can attack pawn h5 with for example Kf3-f2 followed by Be4-f3. There are four options to defend pawn h5.

1. 54...Nge7 planning to play g7-g6. However, this plan does not work because it allows the white king to enter black's king side with 55.Kf4. A conclusion we can make is that the knight at g6 cannot leave this square if the white king is at e3, e4 and f3.
2. 54...Nh8. This is a waiting move. It is playable, but after 55.Bb4 black still has to defend accurately.
3. 54...Nd4+. This move was played in the game. A good thing about putting the knight at f5 was that it attacks pawn g3. At d4, the knight wants to travel to c6 attacking pawn e5, but this is not possible. We can say that 54...Nd4+ only loses time. After 55.Kf2 pawn h5 is vulnerable. Best option is 55...Nh8 56.Ba3 Nf5 57.Bf3 and black has to defend accurately.

4. 54...Nfe7!?



This move is an interesting candidate move. Square f4 is covered. If the bishop at f3 doesn't control square c6, then black can play Ne7-c6 to attack the pawn e5 twice. White cannot make progress without exchanging more material. After 55.Bb8 Nf5 56.Bb1 Nd4+ white hasn't make progress. After 55.g4 hxg4+ 56.Kxg4 Nf5 57.h5 Nge7 58.Kg5 Nd4 black has successfully set up a comfortable position.

5. 54...Nh6!



This move leads directly to a comfortable position. At h6, the knight can go to f5 to attack pawn g3 or at g4, to attack pawn e5 twice. This move is the best option. 55.Bb7 will be answered by 55...Ng4 56.Ke4 Nh6 and 55.Bc2 will be answered by 55...Ng4 56.Ke4 Nf2+.

Conclusion:

- 55...Nh6 is the best option. 55...Nfe7 is a good alternative. Both moves leads to a comfortable position.
- 55...Nh8, 55...Nd4+ are playable moves, but they doesn't ease blacks defence.
- 55...Nge7 is not advisable because it enables the white king to invade the black king side.
- 55...Nxd6 is playable, but only for computers. Black has to play very accurately to find the right moves.

Position 3 is the game Van Rijn – Sycz (5.05).

White has not yet completed his development. The question is how to mobilize the rook at a1, the knight at a3 and the bishop at c1. The best place for the bishop at c1 is not known. The same answer is for the knight at a3. It can go to c4 or to b5, depending on the circumstances. The rook at a1 has only 1 best square. At b1, it controls the b file. A rule of thumb in Steinitz elements of chess, is to play the least flexible move first. Answer: 11.Rb1.

For completeness, in the game white played 11.Nc4.

Position 4 is the same game Van Rijn – Sycz (5.05).

The knight at g4 is attacked. Time to calculate.

- 16...Nxf2!? 17.Rxf2 h6. Now white has 2 options.
 - 18.Nxe4 fxe4 19.Rxf8+ Bxf8 20.dxe4 Bd7 White is a pawn up, but his pawns are weak.
 - 18.dxe4 hxg5 19.exf5 Bc5 20.e3 Rb8 21.c4 (trying to solve a weak pawn) Na6 22.g4 Qe5! followed by Bc8-d7. White is a pawn up, but his pawn at e3 is vulnerable.
- 16...Ne5. This move centralizes the knight, it increases the pressure at d3 and it makes the knight at g5 vulnerable. This is the best option. After 17.h4 Ba6 18.Rd1 Ng4 19.Rb1 Bd6 black has activated his pieces. Play can continue as follows. 20.c4 h6 21.Nh3 e3!
- 16...Nf6. This move was played in the game. This move is playable, but it gives white time. After 17.h4 Nh5 (17...Bd6!? 18.Rb1 h6 19.Nh3 Ne6 twisting square f4) 18.c4! white is contesting the centre.

Conclusion: all three moves are playable, but 16...Ne5 is the most multifunctional move .

Position 5 is the same game Van Rijn – Sycz (5.05).

Black has a threat: f5-f4. By opening the position, white can prevent this threat. 22.dxe4! dxe4 (22...fxe4 can be answered with 23.Be3, controlling square d4) 23.Bb2. Now f5-f4 is stopped and white controls square d4. Here is an example of a continuation. 23...Bd7 24.Qc1! Nf6 25.Nd4 Exchanging an attacker of square f4. 25...Rc8 26.Qb1 Nxd4 27.Bxd4 Nd5 28.Qb2 and white has gained control in the centre.

Position 6 is the game Michalski – Dusak (5.11).

White can win a pawn with 18.Nxe5!

- 18...Nxd5 19.Nxd7 Qxd7 (19...Nxe3 20.fxe3) 20.exd5
- 18...Qxe5 19.Nxf6+ Bxf6 20.Bd4 This is the key move of the combination. The black king cannot defend both Bd7 and Bf6. 20...Qe6 21.Bxf6 Qxf6 22.Rxd7.

Position 7 is the same game Michalski – Dusak (5.11).

Black has less space, so an exchange of pieces will generally favor black. This can be enforced with the intermediate move 20...Nc3! After 21.Qb2 Nxe2+ 22.Rxe2 Bb5 23.Bxf8 black has to solve the question how to win the exchange back.



Black has to prevent c5-c6. One option is 23...Bxe2 24.Qxe2 Kxf8. 25.Rd1 can be defended with Qa4. The other option is 23...Kxf8 24.Rd2 Bxf1 25.Kxf1 Rd8 26.Rxd8 Qxd8. Both options lead to an equal position.

Position 8 is the game JM Nielsen – Koopmeiners (5.12).

Black's pawn at b4 restricts white's activity at the queen side, but it is also vulnerable because it can be attacked by Nf3-e1-c2. The pawn at b4 can be defended by trying to put a black pawn at c5, beginning with 16...Nc8!



Blacks plan is to play b7-b6, followed by c6-c5, supporting pawn b4. White can disrupt this plan by playing c4-c5 himself. After c4-c5, the black knight gets a stronghold at d5. The knight at d5 can be attacked by the bishop and the position will be complex. Here are 2 examples.

- 17.Ne1 b6 18.c5 Ra5 19.Nc2 bxc5 20.dxc5 Rxc5 21.Nxb4 Ke7. Material is equal, and the pawn position is unbalanced. With the passed pawn at the a file, white has the best chances, but black has more influence at the centre.
- 17.c5 Ne7 18.Ne1 Nd5 19.Rh3 Rh8 20.Bc4 Nc3 21.a4



The pawn at b4 is now vulnerable. Black now has to find counter play with 21...e5! After 22.Re3 Be6 23.Bxe6 exd4 24.Rxc3 bxc3 25.Bf5 white has better chances, but the position is full of play.

Position 9 is the game Bohn – Simard (5.16).

In the end game, it is important to activate all your pieces. With 33...g5! The black king can be put into play with the plan Kf8-g7-f6.

Position 10 is the game Pirs – Rosseel (5.19).

23.Bxh6 was played in the game, but the combination does not work. With 23...f4! black has created a double threat. The subtraction move Be6-h3+ threatens Rc6xh6 and Qd7-g4 / Bh3-g4 winning material.

A better move is 23.Ne1, reducing the vulnerability of c2. After 23...g6 24.Nf6+ Bxf6 25.exf6 h5 white has better chances.

Position 11 is the game Csizmadia – Bielawski (5.23).

The isolated pawn at d4 is not strong because the pieces doesn't support the invasion squares c5 and c6. It is also not weak because of the presence of the knight at e5. A king side attack is not realistic because the rooks are pointing at the queen side. Let's look whether white can solve the weaknesses

of the isolated pawn. After 26.Bxd5!? Rxd5 27.Rxc8 Bxc8 28.Qc2! white has got control over the c file, for example 28...Bd7 29.Rc1 f5 30.Nxd7 Rxd7 31.Qc8 a5 32.f4 with equal chances.

After 26.Bxd5!? exd5 27.Qd3 white has solved his isolated pawn with equal chances.

Position 12 is the game Pearce – Leveillee (5.28).

After so many hours behind the board you wish to play a move that safely leads to a draw! The black king should be put far from the black pawns. The most accurate move will be 50.c7. After 50...Kb6 51.Ke7 Kxc7 52.Kf8 g6 53.Kg7 Bd7 54.Kxh7 Be8



white should prevent the black king of supporting his pawns with 55.Kg7! and white will exchange all enemy pawns. Look at the difference with 55.Kh6. This weak move gives the black king the opportunity to defend his pawns. After 55.Kh6? Kd6 56.Kg5 Ke6 57.h3



57...Kd5! 58.g4 Ke4! Black wins by keeping one pawn.

The move 50.Ke7 also leads to a draw, but it is less accurate than 50.c7 because the black king is one step nearer to his pawns than with 50.c7. After 50.Ke7 Kxc6 51.Kf7 Kd5 52.Kxg7 Ke4



only 53.h4! will lead to a draw: 53...Bd7 54.Kxh7 Be8 55.Kh6 Kf3 56.Kg5 Kxg3 57.Kxf5.

In the game 50.Kc7 was played. This move also leads to a draw, but it is not accurate. Black has got the extra option 50...Ba6!? to complicate the game. At a6, the bishop can keep an eye at c8 and it also gives the black king the option to support his pawns. After 51.Kd7 Kc5 52.c7 g6 53.Ke7 Kc6 54.Kf6 Kxc7 55.Kg7 the black bishop can defend his pawns at the front with 55...Be2! After 56.Kxh7 Bh5



white should play very carefully to exchange all pawns. First the white king should be brought as soon as possible at g5. Only 57.Kh6! will lead to a draw. After move allows the black king to head to e4, to support his last pawn. After 57.Kh6 Kd6 58.h3 Ke6



white should avoid the last trap: 59.g4? Bxg4! After the correct move 59.Kg5 play can continue with Kd5 60.g4 Bxg4!? 61.hxg4 Ke4 62.Kxg6 fxg4 63.f5 g3 64.f6 g2 65.f7 g1Q+ 66.Kh7 This end game is draw because the white king, when threatened with losing his pawn, can flee to the corner square h8. The black queen cannot take the pawn without risking stale mate.

Conclusion: 50.c7 is the most accurate move, leading to a safe way to draw. 50.Kc7 and 50.Ke7 also lead to a draw, but they are less accurate. These moves require a lot of accurate play for white to secure the draw.

Position 13 is the game Echavarria Hidalgo – Stuhr (5.30).

White is a pawn down, but his king and his rook are very active. Besides taking at pawn g3 black has the extra threat to play Rg5-g4+ followed by Rg4-a4 to win a second pawn. To prevent this plan, white should play 54.Kf3! After 54...Rc5 55.a4 black has difficulty to improve his position.

In the game white played 54.Ra8. Black can now create a dangerous passed pawn with 54...Rg4+ 55.Kd5 Kf5! (Black has to restrict white's counter play. After the immediate 55...Ra4 white has 56.Ke6!) 56.Rh8 Rxc3 57.Rxh5+ Kg4 58.Rh6 f5.

Position 14 is the game Chwieseni – Papler (5.32).

Black's bishop at g6 is vulnerable. With 25.Bxe6! white can open the position at the king side. Black has two methods to defend.

- 25...Be4+ 26.f3 Bxf3+ 27.Qxf3 fxe6 (or 27...Rxe6 28.f5 Re8 29.Qh5+ with a strong attack) 28.Qh5 b6 29.b4 with a strong attack.
- 25...Rxe6. This is the best option for black. He should try to exchange some of his weak pieces. 26.f5 Bxf5 27.Nxf5 b6 28.b4 Rg6 29.Qf3 bxc5 30.bxc5 with threat Nf5-d6. 30...Kh7 31.Nd6 Rxc5

32.Rxg1 Bxd6 33.cxd6. The passed pawn at d6 gives white good chances to win this end game and trading queens only benefits white.

Position 15 is the game Tremblay – Deneyer (5.33).

The white pawns on the queen side are vulnerable and the king is far from that wing. One important aspect in the end game is to create a passed pawn. This can be accomplished by force: 34...cxb3.

Now white has two choices.

- 35.Rxf5+ gxf5 36.axb3 a4! 37.cxb4 axb3 38.Bc3 Bxb4 39.Bb2 Kg6. Black has won a pawn. The next target is to put his king to e4. 40.Kf2 Kg5 41.Kf3 f4 42.Ke2 Kg4 43.Kf2 h5 with threat h4-h3. 44.h3+ Kf5 45.Kf3 h4 and white is put in zugzwang.
- 35.axb3 Rxf2 36.Kxf2 a4! 37.Ke3 axb3 38.Kd3 bxc3 39.Bxc3 Ke6. Black has won a pawn and has good chances to win the game.