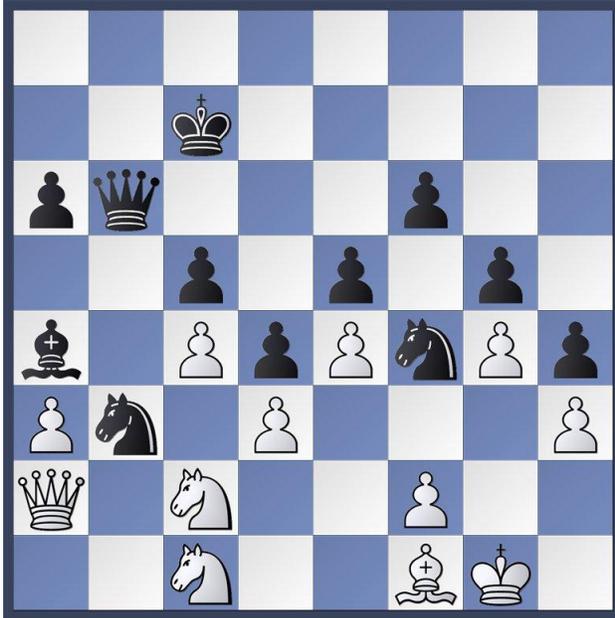


How good is your chess?

In 2001, I annotated a game won by the Brazilian Grandmaster Jaime Sunye Neto from the American Continental Open held in Buenos Aires. Let me remind you.



Diaz-Sunye Neto, American Continental Open 2001.

White resigned here. Black forces the exchange of queens, cruises in with the king, and eats everything in sight.

Flicking through the games of this year's tournament, I found Sunye Neto participating again - and playing a game that was remarkably similar to the one from four years ago. The only difference was that this time he was on the receiving end. Bizarre. The winner is the latest star to emerge from Cuba, Lazaro Bruzon Bautista: 23 years old, and with a current rating of 2677.

By the way, a little word of advice: don't review the game above and think you can follow the same strategy to victory. The beauty of Black's position is that the space advantage gives him the chance to play as he wishes!

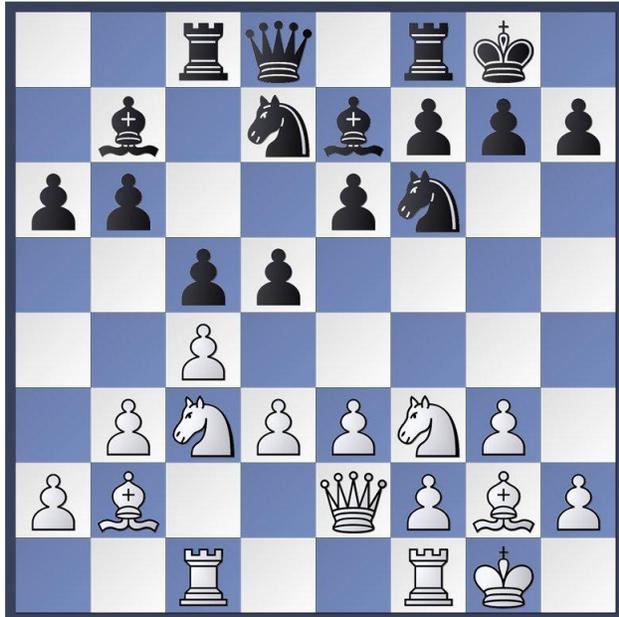
Cover the page with a card with a card or sheet of paper, lowering it gradually to reveal it a line at a time. Begin after the first diagram. Whenever White has moved, stop and try to guess Black's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

J. Sunye Neto – L. Bruzon Bautista

American Continental, Buenos Aires, 08.08.2005

1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.b3 Nf6 4.Bb2 Be7 5.g3 0-0 6.Bg2 b6 7.0-0 Bb7 8.e3 Nbd7 9.Nc3 c5 10.Qe2

Rc8 11.d3 a6 12.Rac1



12...Rc7

Three points. White's system is difficult to get to grips with. He is not trying to rip apart your position from the start – this is not 1 e4 and tally-ho. Instead, Sunye has brought all his pieces into sensible positions, awaiting events. He has no weaknesses, and not a single pair of pawns has been exchanged. If I were to compare the game to a football match, White is playing a 4-5-1 formation, so beloved of the Chelsea manager, José Mourinho. For the first ten minutes the ball has been passed around the middle of the park, no shots on goal, with just the odd skirmish between the players. At this point the commentators usually say: 'it's a game of chess out there'.

So here we are: it's a game of football out there.

12...Rc7 is a good idea, making way for the queen to move out of the middle, and so starting the process of connecting the rooks. If the queen stays put, there is a chance she will come under fire from White's rooks on the c and d files. In that respect, White is slightly ahead in development as the rooks are already connected, and the queen has a safe square on e2.

For the reasons given above, 12...Qc7 (two points) is well motivated, but it puts the queen opposite the rook. I don't think White can exploit this positioning (the queen drops back to b8 quickly if White attempts d4, for example), but I would prefer not to do it. You never know.

Black does best to hold the tension. I don't like 12...dxc4 for two reasons: if White plays 13.dxc4 the position is just dull; and if 13.bxc4 I prefer White's structure to Black's. He can choose whether to play on the queenside with a4 and press on the b-file; or advance pawns on the kingside and in the centre. In short, the extra centre pawn gives White options.

By the way, I like the idea of creating a Maroczy bind with 12...e5, but unfortunately the bind does not last long: 13.cxd5 Nxd5 14.Nxd5 Bxd5 15.e4 Be6 16 Nxe5 wins a pawn.

13.Rfe1

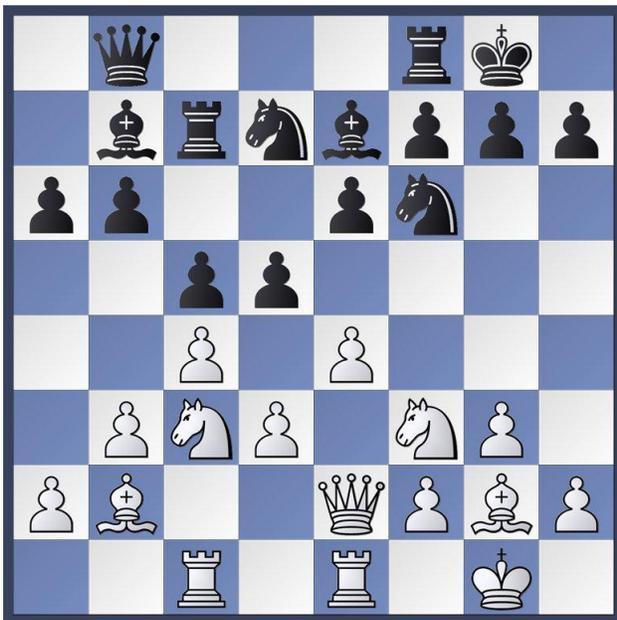
White continues the waiting game.

13...Qb8

Two points. Black removes the queen from the centre, and so brings the rooks closer to connecting. The same score for 13...Qa8 – there isn't much difference between the two moves.

Patience is the key to the position at this stage. Black should complete his development before undertaking active operations. Keep that tension in the middle.

14.e4



14...d4

Four points. I think White made a fundamental mistake when he advanced his e-pawn. With this move, Black gains a pleasant space advantage. The situation is akin to a King's Indian Defence (with colours reversed), except that White's pieces are misplaced. For instance, the bishop on b2 should really stand on c1; and the rook should be on f1.

Therefore, no credit for 14...dxe4 15.dxe4, for example. In that case I would like White's position. The e-pawn could be pushed again and a kingside attack launched.

15.Nb1

15...e5

Two points. Essential. Black shoves up the e-pawn before White does.

The central pawn structure is now the same as in Diaz-Sunye Neto.

16.Bh3



16...Ne8

Two points. You would like some action? Be patient. It is not that kind of position. Let's get the pieces to their best squares first. And we also have to think how to squash our opponent's plans too. One of the merits of 16...Ne8 is that Nh4 is discouraged.

Those of you with hotter blood might have lashed out with 16...b5 (one point). Not bad, but White can hold the queenside quite comfortably with 17 Na3.

17.Rc2

White conducts his own regrouping.

17...Bf6

Three points. A necessary part of Black's manoeuvres: the e-pawn had to be protected before going further. For example: 17...Nd6 18.Bxd7 Rxd7 19.Nxe5 wins a pawn – even if the situation is far from clear (Black's light-squared bishop on the long diagonal gives him reasonable compensation). Still, I don't think it is necessary for Black to sacrifice a pawn to get a good position.

Defending the e-pawn with 17...f6 would not be right, as the bishop enters: 18.Be6+ Kh8. And then the knight: 19.Nh4. Black can defend, but why make such concessions?

17...g6 (one point) is reasonable, making room for the knight to come to g7, and so clearing the back rank. However, it would give White's queen's bishop a spot to head for: 18 Bc1! followed by Bh6.

18.Bc1

18...Nd6

Two points. Black completes his mini-manoeuvre. Result: his knight has arrived at a pivotal position, with key squares, f5, e4, c4 and b5 in its sights.

19.Nbd2

This is a passive move: I don't see a plan for White. 19.Nfd2 would have been more testing, with the traditional King's Indian f-pawn ready to advance. How would you react? Sketch out a plan for dealing with the move.

19...Bg5 (two points) is a good move, making way for the f-pawn. If 20 f4 exf4 21 Nf3 Bh6 22 gxf4, and now the important thrust, 22...f5, halting White's advance, and looking to open the diagonal for the bishop on b7.

19...g6 (two points) is also sensible, preparing to drop the bishop back and so making way for the f-pawn. After 20.f4, Black can choose between 20...exf4 21.gxf4 Bh4 22.Rf1 f5 23.e5 Ne8, and eventually blockading the e-pawn with the knight on e6; or 20...Bg7 21 Nf3 Re8. There are lots of tactics based on the pins on the e-file and the superb position of the bishop on the long diagonal. For example: 22 Bxd7 Rxd7 23 fxe5 Nxe4 and Black stands better.

Black is better prepared than White if the position should open, and that is chiefly because of the space advantage, allowing him to manoeuvre more easily. Look at the squash of White's pieces. What duty is the knight performing on b1?



20.a3

20...Bg7

Two points. Continuing with the re-grouping.

There is no need to prevent White's queenside play with 20...a5, chiefly because b4 doesn't achieve much. In fact, because the space advantage gives Black's pieces greater freedom to manoeuvre, the opening of the queenside is probably only to Black's advantage.

21.Bxd7

White's position is cramped and difficult, but exchanging off bishop for knight is an odd decision. At the moment, in this blocked position, it might not seem very significant, but one day the bishop on b7 will turn into a mighty piece now that it's chief opponent has been removed.

21...Rxd7

One point.

22.b4



22...Qc8

Two points. Black carefully steps away from the opening b-file and aims the queen at the weak light squares on the kingside. 22...Qc7 (two points) is also good.

22...Bc6 (two points) aiming the bishop at the a4 square, and making room for the rook to move to the b-file, is also good.

I also see nothing wrong with 22...f5 (two points).

23.bxc5

23...bxc5

One point. There is no need to play 23...Qxc5 - that would only give White encouragement - 24.Nb3 Qc7 25.a4, for example.

24.Nh4

24...f5

Four points. This move is almost overdue. It has been in the air since Black first began his manoeuvre ...Nf6-e8-d6. Incidentally, this knight is in a superb position, putting pressure on e4 and c4. Black already threatens to capture on e4, isolating the c-pawn, and creating a huge passed pawn.

25.f3

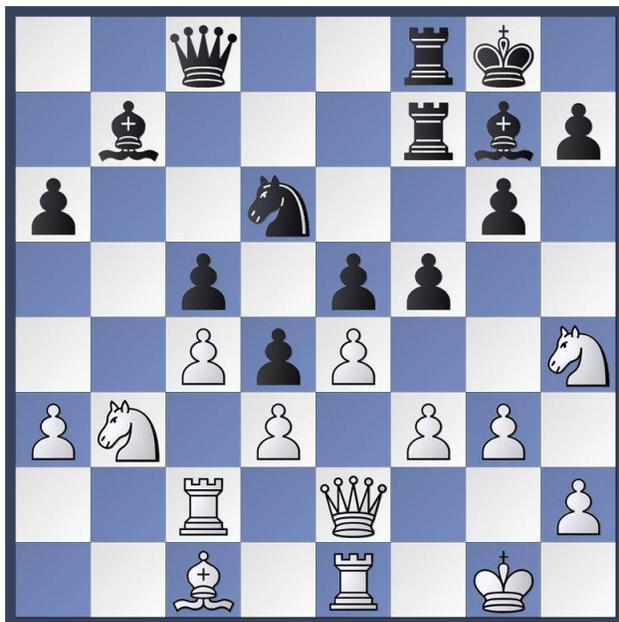
In this way, White hopes to hold back the tide. But it is a vain hope.

25...Rdf7

Three points. Black proceeds with his harmonious build-up. Don't release the tension yet by moving or capturing with the f-pawn – that would make White's defensive task easier as he would know what he was dealing with. This way, he is kept guessing.

25...fxe4 would be a good move if White's knight could be forced back: 26.fxe4 g5 27.Nhf3 h6 28.Rb2 Rdf7 is good for Black. But instead, White should play 27 Nf5! giving up a pawn, but at least gaining a square for the other knight: 27...Nxf5 28 exf5 g5 29 Nf5 Nxf5 30 exf5 Rxf5 31 Ne4. White has fighting chances.

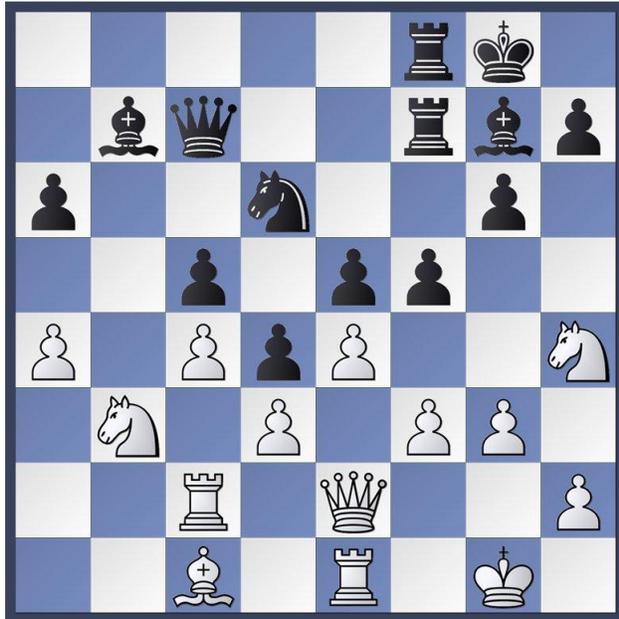
26.Nb3

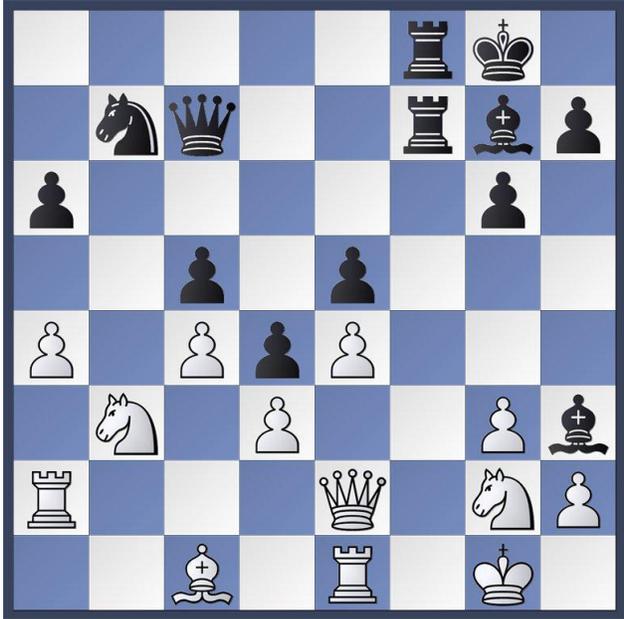


26...Qc7

Two points. More re-grouping. It looks to me as though it might have been more accurate to play this instead of ...Qc8 a few moves ago. It isn't feasible to play the queen into h3 as the c5 pawn needs looking after. Not to worry. Black can afford to take his time as his advantages (space and the two bishops) are permanent.

27.a4





32...Nd8

Three points. Black is really enjoying himself, bringing all his pieces to their ultimate positions before making a breakthrough.

32...Rf3 (three points) with the idea ...Qf7 and ...Bg4, is also a strong plan. White does best to play 33.Nd2 Bxg2 34.Kxg2 Re3 35.Qd1 Rxd3, giving up a pawn, but at least getting rid of the deadly light-squared bishop.

32...Qd7 (three points) threatening ...Bg4, is a good idea.

33.Bd2

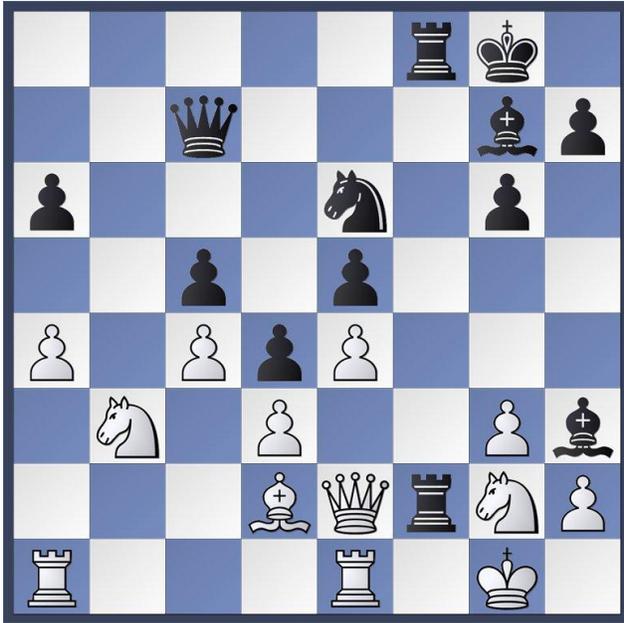
33...Ne6

One point. With the knight positioned on e6, White must keep the bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal guarding the g5 square. That further restricts White's pieces: he is almost in zugzwang.

34.Raa1

34...Rf2

Five points. Finally, Black enters. And because Bruzon has prepared the way so carefully, the move is immediately decisive. **White resigned.**



The queen has to go: 35.Qxf2 Rxf2 36.Kxf2, and now 36...Qf7+ 37.Kg1 (or the knight drops) 37...Qf3 38.Nh4 Qxd3 (threatening the knight on b3) 39.Rab1 g5 40.Nf5 Qf3, and ...Qg2 mate. Game over.

Comparing the two games again, Sunye Neto went for a queenside attack with ...b5, and broke through convincingly. Bruzon could have done the same here, but when presented with an opportunity to attack on the kingside, he would have been foolish to ignore it. Remarkably, he hardly employed any tactics in the game, simply manoeuvring his pieces to their best squares as the pawn structure changed. A majestic performance.

Now add up your points.

- 53-60 Grandmaster
- 45-52 International Master
- 36-44 FIDE or National Master
- 28-35 County player
- 19-27 Strong club player
- 11-18 Average club player
- 0-10 Unlucky

© Daniel King 2010