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Topalov takes it up a gear

Candidates tournaments are as thick on the ground as Ashes series right now, and there will be another one along early next year, this time with former World Champion Veselin Topalov in the mix.

Veselin understandably lost motivation for a while with his World Championship title, but has been running hot again this year. He defeated the durable Viktor Laznicka 4-2 in a match in his opponent's home country.

The final game was especially impressive as he outclasses his solid adversary in a game where White is overwhelmed, without making obvious mistakes.

V. Laznicka - V. Topalov
Novy Bor 2013

1.c2-c4 e7-e6
2.Nb1-c3 d7-d5
3.d2-d4 Bf8-e7

Avoiding Kasparov's favourite line 3...Ng8-f6 4.c4xd5 e6xd5 5.Bc1-g5.

4.c4xd5 e6xd5
5.Bc1-f4 c7-c6
6.e2-e3 Bc8-f5
7.g2-g4

The Queen's Gambit Declined has a reputation as a very solid opening, but if White shows aggressive intentions, things can get spicy.

7... Bf5-e6
8.Bf1-d3 Nb8-d7
9.Bd3-f5

9.h2-h3 securing the pawn is standard here, Laznicka aims to unlock Black's

position by swapping the solid bishop on e6.

9... Be6xf5
10.g4xf5 Be7-b4

Better than the routine 10...Ng8-f6, the bishop exerts an annoying pin and Black's knight can target the far flung pawn next go.

11.Ng1-e2 Ng8-e7
12.Qd1-c2 Nd7-b6
13.f2-f3

White plans to build a big centre, but time is not on his side. 13.Rh1-g1 was more direct.

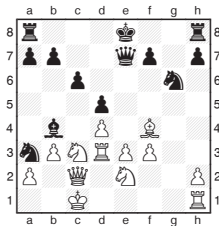
13... g7-g6
14.f5xg6 Ne7xg6

Typically Topalov is more interested in keeping his pieces active than maintaining the superior structure with 14...h7xg6.

15.O-O-O Qd8-e7
16.Rd1-d3

The rook is not happily placed here, 16.Kc1-b1 maintains more harmony.

16... Nb6-c4
17.b2-b3 Nc4-a3



18.Qc2-b2 Ng6xf4

Black could have delayed this capture, as 18...Rh8-g8 19.Bf4-g3 is powerfully met by 19...Na3-c4 winning a pawn because 20.b3xc4 Bb4-a3 wins the queen.

19.Ne2xf4 Rh8-g8
20.Qb2-f2 O-O-O
21.Kc1-b2 Kc8-b8

Black's king heads for safety, whereas White's monarch still feels uneasy.

22.Nc3-b1 Rd8-e8
23.Nb1xa3 Bb4xa3+
24.Kb2-b1 Ba3-d6
25.Nf4-e2 Qe7-e6

Veselin continues to play simple moves, but the tension increases on White's unstable pawn

structure.

26.Ne2-c3 Qe6-f5
27.Rh1-d1 Rg8-g6

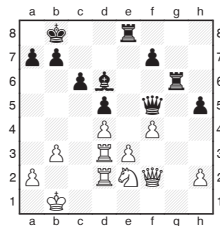
Switching the attack to the only open file.

28.Rd1-d2 Qf5-h3
29.f3-f4

Restricting the Black bishop but fixing his pawns.

29... Qh3-f5
30.Nc3-e2 h7-h5

The pawn advances to prevent White's knight plugging the 'g' line.



31.Ne2-g3 Qf5-g4
32.Qf2-e2 h5-h4

33.Qe2xg4 Rg6xg4
34.Ng3-f5

The knight retreats 34.Ng3-e2 Rg4-g2 35.h2-h3 Rg2-h2 and 34.Ng3-f1 Re8-g8 don't look very hopeful, but in the game the steed will be caught behind enemy lines.

34... Bd6-b4
35.h2-h3

The alternative 35.Rd2-f2 Re8-h8 is met by 36.Rd3-d1 Rh8-h5 37.e3-e4 d5xe4 38.Nf5-e3 Rg4-g8 and the extra pawn should be decisive.

35... Rg4-g6
36.Rd2-e2

White should have tried 36.Nf5xh4 Rg6-g1+ 37.Rd2-d1 Rg1xd1+ 38.Rd3xd1 Re8xe3 39.Rd1-h1 Re3-e4 although his pawns are too weak to give more than practical chances.

36... Re8-h8
37.e3-e4 Rg6-f6

38.Nf5-g7
38.Rd3-d1 d5xe4 39.Nf5-e3 Rf6xf4 also loses.

38... Rh8-g8

White resigned as 39.Ng7-h5 Rf6-h6 is the end of the road for the nomadic knight.