

Michael Adams



Nakamura on his mettle

Hikaru Nakamura is known for his sharp style, but during his tournament victory in an event in The Netherlands, he showed his broadening positional skills. He ground down their best player, Anish Giri, in a lengthy technical display in the first round and also played a fine controlled squeeze in this key last-round victory.

H.Nakamura - S.Tiviakov
Unive Crown Hoogeveen 2012

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| 1.e2-e4 | e7-e6 |
| 2.d2-d3 | c7-c5 |
| 3.Ng1-f3 | Nb8-c6 |
| 4.g2-g3 | g7-g6 |
| 5.d3-d4 | |

Nakamura judges that Black's weak dark squares might become a problem if he opens the game, so he is prepared to accept the loss of tempo associated with this move.

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| 5... | c5xd4 |
| 6.Nf3xd4 | a7-a6 |
| 7.Nd4xc6 | b7xc6 |
| 8.c2-c4 | |

8.Qd1-d4 Ng8-f6 9.e4-e5 c6-c5 rebounds, but 8.Bf1-g2 Bf8-g7 9.O-O Ng8-e7 10.Qd1-d6 was interesting.

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| 8... | Bf8-g7 |
| 9.Bf1-g2 | Ng8-e7 |
| 10.O-O | d7-d6 |

Tiviakov can't break out immediately due to 10...d7-d5 11.e4xd5 e6xd5 12.Nb1-c3, but he does control a lot of central squares.

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| 11.Nb1-c3 | O-O |
| 12.Bc1-g5 | Qd8-c7 |

Black doesn't want to create kingside targets with 12...h7-h6.

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| 13.Qd1-d2 | Ra8-b8 |
| 14.Rf1-d1 | Rf8-d8 |
| 15.Ra1-c1 | c6-c5 |
| 16.b2-b3 | Bc8-b7 |
| 17.h2-h4 | h7-h5 |
| 18.Qd2-d3 | |

Both sides have developed naturally to this point, but now Black would like to place his knight on the powerful outpost d4, which would also shield his weak 'd' pawn. However, due to his lack of space, this is difficult to achieve. The immediate 18...Rd8-d7 isn't possible due to 19.Bg5xe7 Rd7xe7 20.Qd3xd6.

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| 18... | Bb7-c6 |
| 19.Qd3-e2 | Bc6-e8 |
| 20.Rd1-d3 | |



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| 20... | Rd8-c8 |
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I was watching the game online at this point and thought Tivi was planning 20...Rd8-d7 to affect the knight transfer. I guess he got worried by 21.g3-g4 h5xg4 22.Qe2xg4 Ne7-c6 23.Rd3-g3 but shouldn't have missed the opportunity to complete his plan - he never gets another chance.

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| 21.Qe2-d2 | Rb8-b6 |
| 22.Bg5-f4 | Bg7-e5 |
| 22...Bg7-d4 | 23.Nc3-e2 |
- is awkward, as Black wants to keep his bishop.

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| 23.Rc1-d1 | Kg8-h7 |
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- After 23...Ne7-c6, the exchange sacrifice 24.Rd3xd6 Qc7xd6 25.Qd2xd6 Be5xd6 26.Rd1xd6 Rb6-b8 27.Rd6-d1 Rb8-a8 28.Bf4-d6 looks good.

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| 24.Kg1-h1 | 24.Bf4xe5 | d6xe5 | 25.Qd2-e3 |
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- wasn't bad, but instead Nakamura calmly maintains the pressure.

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| 24... | Ne7-g8 |
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- This knight move is clearly a step in the wrong direction, but it's not easy to suggest a good move. I think Black had to try 24...Be5-d4 25.Nc3-e2 e6-e5.

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| 25.Bf4-e3 | Be5-g7 |
| 25...Ng8-f6 | 26.f2-f4 |
- doesn't look healthy.

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| 26.Nc3-e2 | Rc8-d8 |
| 27.Be3-f4 | e6-e5 |
| 28.Bf4-g5 | f7-f6 |
| 29.Bg5-e3 | |

Although White's bishop has returned to where it was two moves ago, the pawns have been drawn forward creating new possibilities for White's pieces.

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| 29... | Ng8-e7 |
| 30.Ne2-c3 | Qc7-c8 |
| 31.Kh1-h2 | |

Another nice touch, introducing the idea of Bg2-h3.

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| 31... | Rb6-c6 |
| 32.f2-f4 | Qc8-b7 |
| 33.f4xe5 | f6xe5 |
| 34.Be3-g5 | Rd8-d7 |

Black remains in deep trouble after 34...Be8-f7, but now an immediate collapse ensues.

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| 35.Bg2-h3 | Rd7-c7 |
| 36.Rd1-f1 | |

It was possible to grab the pawn immediately with 36.Rd3xd6 Rc6xd6 37.Qd2xd6, but Hikaru is still in no hurry.

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| 36... | Be8-d7 |
| 37.Bh3-g2 | Bd7-g4 |
| 38.Rd3xd6 | Rc6xd6 |
| 39.Qd2xd6 | |

Black resigned a bit prematurely, but after 39...Ne7-g8 40.Nc3-d5 Rc7-c6 41.Qd6-d8 Rc6-c8 42.Qd8-a5, he remains a pawn down for nothing.