

Game 36

Martz – Chess [A42]

North American Open 1974

Andy Ansel, chess book collector extraordinaire and superb chess researcher, also collects notebooks left by masters. His column in *American Chess Magazine* is called, “Unknown American Chess Games.” He writes an appreciation and history of a noted American master, and I annotate most of the games he finds. This game by IM Bill Martz was a brilliant selection. I was in awe of Martz’s plan as I played it through, again and again. You see, positional chess requires you to have a somewhat long-term plan that involves understanding what pawn structure you want, figuring out the potential weaknesses are in your opponent’s position, and what the right destination squares for your pieces are. Then you have to come up with a concrete implementation of the plan, with a sequence of moves that helps you achieve your goals. All of that is in this game!

1.c4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7

In the June 1972 issue of *British Chess Magazine*, William Hartston wrote an article, “The Anti-anti-Grünfeld.” He spent more than three pages on it, but apparently Mr. Chess [yes, that’s his name – ed.] didn’t read the literature, or perhaps was suspicious of it: 2...e5.

3.d4 d6 4.♟c3 ♟d7

Does anyone still play this junk? Oh, yeah! Over 4,000 games with this for Black and some famous GMs to boot. It creates complications and often puts opponents on their own without their pre-

cious little book lines. However, Martz has a system against this sort of thing.

5.♟e3 e5

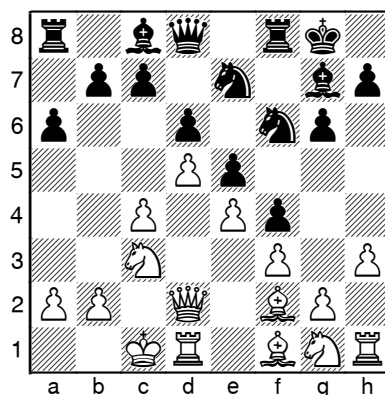
There is 5...♟g6, but that isn’t why Black started out the way he did.

6.d5 ♟e7

Considering the similarity to the King’s Indian, one would think that Black – especially given the e3-bishop – would want to discourage b2-b4. However, 6...♟e7 shows that his idea in avoiding ...♟g8-f6 was to play ...♟g8-e7 and ...f7-f5 without having to retreat the knight from f6 to advance the pawn.

6...a5.

7.♞d2 0-0 8.0-0-0 f5 9.f3 ♟f6 10.h3 f4 11.♟f2 a6



Black obviously has the position he wants. The move sequence certainly constitutes a unified approach. The question is: Does anyone else want this? Black had a set series of moves in mind, no doubt aiming at a kingside attack, but his opponent didn't cooperate. If you were White here, what would your plan be?

Martz now plays a series of opening moves that encompass an overall strategic plan. All your openings should have that. Thinking of the “ten-move rule” I constantly harp about, if you are here at move 11 and have no idea what to do, then you need to re-evaluate how you study your chess openings. Watch the master!

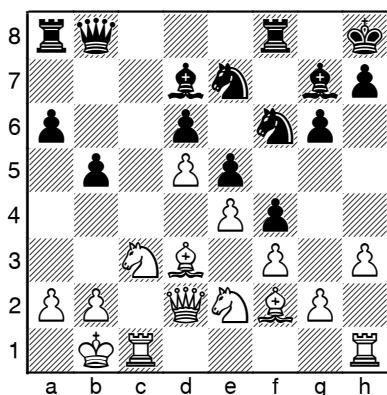
12.♖b1! ♕d7 13.♞c1!

While Black may have forestalled a kingside attack by White, Martz plays two fine positional moves to lift the curtain on his plan: He’s coming down the c-file! With respect to the prior question, did you pick this as your plan?

13...♞b8 14.c5 ♖h8 15.♕d3

Time to get the rest of the team on the field. Black has no counterplay.

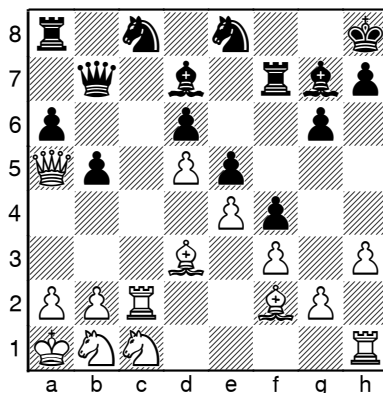
15...♞b6 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♘ge2 b5



Second Plan Question: What next? (Hint: There are two weak squares of

special interest in Black’s camp: c6 and a5. What relationship do they have to each other?)

18.♔a1 ♘c8 19.♘b1 ♞f7 20.♞a5 ♘e8 21.♞c2 ♞b7 22.♘c1



White has a stranglehold on the dark squares as the Indian bishop is useless, but what were those two Nimzowitschian knight retreats about?

22...♞b8 23.♘b3 ♕f6

After all that time to save a tempo for the knight move and ...f7-f5, Black has to give it back with interest just to get the bishop back in the game.

24.♞hc1

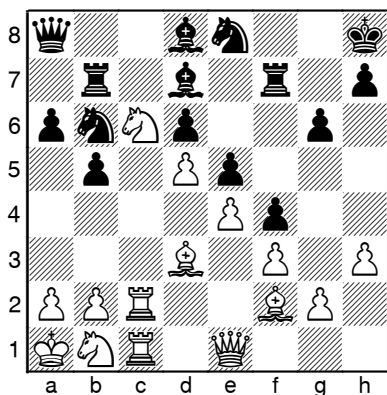
Yes, the rooks dominate the c-file, but they have no entry square on c7 or c8, so other than looking powerful, what is their purpose? Stay tuned.

24...♘b6 25.♞e1 ♕d8 26.♘a5

Ah! Now it is all revealed: a5 is a knight move from c6 and ♘a5-c6 is

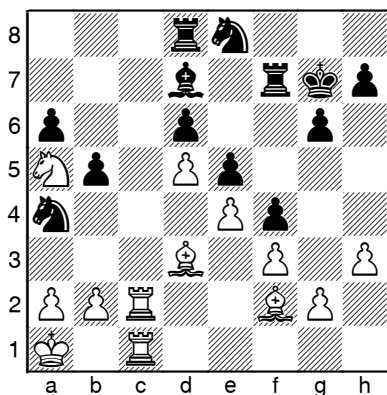
now supported by two rooks and a pawn. Very impressive planning on Martz's part.

26...♖a8 27.♘c6 ♜b7



The knight looks like it's a sheepdog holding a small group of 6 or 7 sheep at bay, but he trades it off!

28.♘xd8 ♜xd8 29.♖a5 ♜b8 30.♘d2 ♔g7 31.♘b3 ♘a4 32.♖xd8 ♜xd8 33.♘a5



Absolutely brilliant positional chess! He does the same maneuver again: ♖ to a5, ♘ to b3, ♖ moves, then ♘a5 and ♘c6.

Is that cool or what!? Go back and look at the position after the knights went back to c1 and b1. Did you see that plan?

33...♜b8 34.♘c6

An encore bow at c6. Bravo!! Black could have resigned here in good conscience.

34...♜c8 35.♘b4 ♜xc2 36.♜xc2 a5 37.♘c6 ♜xc6 38.♜xc6 ♜c7 39.♜xb5 ♘c5 40.♜xc5 dxc5 41.♜e6 ♘f6 42.d6 1-0

(Source: unpublished Martz notebook.)

There you have it – it's a textbook lesson on exploiting square weaknesses. Go back and play over the game several times. Go to the first diagram, where you are asked what your plan would be. Now, having played over the game, you should know the plan; however, I'm asking you to play it out in your head, just as you would if you were over the board. Then you'll be on your way to becoming a positional player!

Game 37

Strenzwilk – Silman [B70]
National Open 1990

A wonderful lesson game! The Accelerated Dragon is a great thematic defense both for young people making their way up the ranks and for older people who don't want to have to remember umpteen different lines in the Najdorf.