

New Mexico Chess Champions

Zach Stuart

Zach Stuart moved to New Mexico in 2014 and immediately became one of the state's leading players. He entered the 2014 New Mexico Open Championship as the top rated player and took first place and the New Mexico Championship with a score of 4-1. Along the way he defeated experts, William Barefield, Philip Bauer and Matt Grinberg. Even a loss to Kevin Chor in the last round did not deny him sole possession of first.

In the game below from the 2014 New Mexico Open Championship, Zach Stuart battles it out with Matt Grinberg in an extremely sharp line of the Ruy Lopez. Going into this fourth round game, Zach Stuart was the only player with a perfect 3-0 record. Your humble correspondent, Matt Grinberg, was the only player with 2.5. It was likely that the winner of the game was going to win the championship.

I alternate between disaster and redemption throughout the game only to succumb to Zach in the end. You could make the argument that Zach attacked too aggressively, but it is definitely true that I defended too passively.

This game with slightly different annotations written by me was published in the November 2014 Desert Knight.

Grinberg, Matthew – Stuart, Zach, 0-1
New Mexico Open Championship, Round 4
Socorro, New Mexico, 9/28/2014

Ruy Lopez, Exchange Variation

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Bxc6 The Exchange Variation has a quiet, positional reputation. [The Closed Ruy Lopez is more popular. 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O Be7 6. Re1 b5 7. Bb3 d6 8. c3 O-O 9. h3 Na5 10. Bc2 c5 11. d4 White's pawn center gives him a small edge]
- 4... dxc6 5. O-O Bg4 This line, on the other hand, can get quite sharp. [5... f6 6. d4 exd4 7. Nxd4 c5 8. Nb3 Qxd1 9. Rxd1 The bishop pair offsets the Black's doubled c-pawns; 5... Qd6 6. Na3 Be6 7. Qe2 f6 8. Rd1 Ditto]
6. h3



6... h5! Zach uses one of my favorite weapons against me. This is the only opening line I play from both sides. Black offers up his bishop to open the h-file. Trying to determine in which positions White can take the bishop and in which he cannot is very difficult for both sides.

[Bad is 6... Bh5?! 7. g4 Bg6 8. Nxe5 Qh4 9. Qf3 f6 10. Nxg6 hxg6 11. Kg2 Black's attacking chances are more illusory than real, whereas White's extra pawn is quite real]

7. d3

[Taking the bishop is a mistake 7. hxg4? hxg4 8. g3 The knight must stay where it is to stop Qh4. 8... gxf3 9. Qxf3 There is some similarity to the previous note, except that here White doesn't have an extra pawn. 9... Qd7 10. d3 Nf6 11. Qf5 Qxf5 12. exf5 Rh5 13. f3 Bc5 14. Kg2 O-O-O 15. Rh1 Rxf5 16. g4 Nxg4 17. fxg4 Rf2 18. Kg3 Rxc2 19. Rd1 e4 20. Na3 Re2 21. Nc4 b5 22. Na5 g5 23. Bxg5 Bd6 24. Bf4 Re3 25. Kf2 Bxf4 26. dxe4 Rxd1 27. Rxd1 Rxe4 28. Kf3 Ra4 29. Nxc6 Bd6 30. a3 Rf4 31. Kg3?? (But 31. Ke3 Rxc6 Would win for Black anyway) 31... Rd4 0-1, Makarov, Alexander (RUS) – Denisov, Sergei (RUS) 2223, Serpukhov (Russia) 2002]

7... Qf6 8. Nbd2 g5 Well, that's embarrassing. He plays a move I'm not familiar with, in one of my favorite lines.

[I am used to this line, where White has a small edge after 8... Ne7 9. Re1 Ng6 10. d4 Bd6 11. hxg4 hxg4 12. Nh2 Rxh2! (Not 12... Qh4?? 13. Ndf1 White wins) 13. Qxg4! (13. Kxh2?? Qxf2 14. Re2 exd4 15. e5 Bxe5 16. Rxe5 Nxe5 17. Kh1 O-O-O 0-1, Barendregt, Johan Teunis – Teschner, Rudolf (GER) 2295, Hamburg (Germany) 1965)]

9. Re1!? Assuming I can answer this new move with my normal move, I immediately get myself into trouble.

[Best is 9. Nc4 Bxf3 10. Qxf3 Qxf3 11. gxf3 f6 12. h4! =]

9... Be6! Black no longer needs the bishop sacrifice to open the king side because White can't stop the threat of g4. **10. d4 g4 11. Nxe5 O-O-O 12. c3 Ne7**

[I had expected Zach to play 12... gxh3 figuring I could give up the extra pawn to get the queens off the board. But even with the queens off the board, Black has a strong attack. 13. Qf3 hxg2 14. Qxf6 Nxf6 15. Ndf3 (Taking the pawn is worse. 15. Kxg2 Rg8 16. Kh1 Ng4 17. Nxg4 Rxc4 18. f3 Rg3 19. Re2 Be7 20. Rg2 Rdc8 Black has the bishop pair, control of the g-file and White has no viable plan to develop his queenside) 15... Ng4 16. Bg5 Re8 17. Nd3 Rg8 White is a pawn down and it is not clear that he will ever be able to take the pawn on g2]

13. Nf1! The only hope of securing the king is to try to close the position, even if it means giving back the extra pawn.

[13. h4! Qxh4 14. Qe2 Rg8 15. g3 Qh3 16. Qf1 h4 17. Qxh3 gxh3 18. Kh2 hxg3 19. fxg3
Chances are roughly equal in this unbalanced position.]

13... gxh3 14. Qf3 Qg7 15. g3 f6 16. Nd3 Bg4 17. Qh1!? A really ugly place for a queen.

[17. Qe3 must be better, but even here Black has a strong attack]

17... Ng6 18. f3 Bd7 19. Nf4 Nxf4 20. Bxf4 h4 21. Qh2 hxg3 22. Nxc3!? This leaves White's bishop as a target.

[Or the queen can be left as a target. 22. Qxc3?! Qh7 23. Qf2 Rg8 24. Bg3 f5 25. Kh1 Qg7 Black threatens f4;

Relative best is 22. Bxc3 Bd6 23. Kf2 Bxc3 24. Nxc3 c5 White's king is on the run. It is only a matter of time before Black breaks through]



22... Rh4! 23. Qd2? It is hard for White to secure both the bishop and the knight. This is definitely not the answer.

[The best hope is to give up on the bishop and use a tactical trick instead. 23. Kh1! Rxf4 24. Nh5 Qg2 25. Qxc3 hxg2 26. Kxc3 Rh4 27. Nxf6 Black should win with two bishops for a knight and two pawns. But White has some reason for hope in his connected passed pawns and strong center]

23... h2 24. Kh1 Rxf4? Zach correctly expressed reservations about this sacrifice after the game.

[The immediate 24... Bd6 leaves White in a very difficult position due his exposed king, loose position and Black's bishop pair on the open board. 25. e5 fxe5 26. dxe5 Be7 27. Qe3 Be6 Though Black has no immediate threat; all you have to do is compare the exposed position of White's king hiding behind Black's passed pawn to the secure position of Black's king behind a phalanx of his own pawns to realize that Black is much better.]

25. Qxf4 Bd6 26. e5 fxe5 27. dxe5 Rf8 28. Qe3? A blunder that allows Black to regain the advantage.

[Black doesn't have enough for the exchange after 28. Nh5 Another case where White missed the offensive power of his knight. 28... Qg6 29. Qh4 Rh8 30. exd6 Rxh5 31. Qe4 Qg3 32. Re2 Qxd6]

28... Qxc3 29. exd6 Rxf3 30. Qh6 cxd6 31. Re2

[31. Qxh2? Qg5 Threatening Rh3 to which there is no good answer. Sometimes an enemy pawn in front of your king is its best protection. 32. Rg1 Qd5 33. Rg2 Rh3 Black wins]

31... c5! Opening up the a8-h1 diagonal for the bishop. 32. Rg2 Bc6? "Brilliant" but, like the

last sacrifice, both unnecessary and bad. Once again White is allowed back into the game. An extremely sharp position with time ticking away on the clock does not lend itself to accurate play.

[It is better to keep the queen on the board. After for instance 32... Qe5 33. Qg7 Qe4 34. Qg6 Rf5 35. Qg3 Bc6 36. Kxh2 Rh5 37. Kg1 Qf5 With the decisive threat of Bxg2. 38. Rf1 Rh1 39. Kxh1 Qxf1 40. Kh2 Bxg2 41. Qxg2 Qxg2 42. Kxg2 Black has a winning pawn endgame]

33. Rxg3 Rf2?? This "should" have lost.

[Simply winning back the queen is probably sufficient to draw. 33... Rf6 34. Kxh2 Rxh6 35. Rh3 Rf6]

34. Rg2 Rxg2 35. Qf8??? The end. There is no recovery from this blunder.

[White is a rook up after simply 35. Qh3 Kc7 36. Qxg2 Bxg2 37. Kxg2]

35... Kc7 36. Qe7 Kb6 37. Qd8 Ka7 38. Qc7

[Better, but still losing, is 38. Qxd6 Rxb2 39. Qxc6 bxc6]

38... Rxb2 39. Qxc6 bxc6 Three pawns down with no time, no counter play and no hope, White resigns. [0:1]

Matt Grinberg, 11/13/2016