

NM Chess Champions

Douglas Thigpen

Doug Thigpen is one of my favorite players in New Mexico. He is not only one of the best players in New Mexico, with a current (and peak) rating of 2172, but he is also a great guy.

Doug tied for first in the 2009 New Mexico Championship with Lior Lapid and Silas Perry. He won the New Mexico Championship outright in both 2012 and 2013. He has also won other New Mexico tournaments such as the Eliot O'Brien Memorial in 2012, the 2015 Albuquerque/Rio Rancho Open, the 2015 La Tienda Open and the 2016 New Mexico Memorial Senior where he tied with Andrew Flores and Tony Schroeder.

As a player, Doug, like me, takes a very positional, controlled approach, though he does not shy away from unusual paths. He doesn't try to blow you off the board, but once he has the advantage, he is ruthless.

In the following game, three time New Mexico Champion, Lior Lapid, discovers how ruthless Doug is once he has the better game.

Lapid, Lior - Thigpen, Douglas, 0-1
New Mexico Open, Round 4
Rio Rancho, New Mexico, 11/7/2010

Closed Sicilian, Grand Prix Attack

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 White goes for a Closed Sicilian. 2... e6 3. f4 The Grand Prix Attack
[White could transpose to an Open Sicilian with 3. Nf3 a6 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 White's superior development gives him the edge]
- 3... Nf6!?! This is definitely unusual.
[More typical is 3... d5 as in the following crazy game between two of the world's leading players. 4. Nf3 dxe4 5. Nxe4 Nc6 6. Bb5 Bd7 7. O-O Nf6 8. d3 a6 9. Nxf6 gxf6 10. Ba4 Nd4 11. Bxd7 Qxd7 12. Be3 Nf5 13. Qe2 O-O-O 14. Bf2 Qc7 15. Nd2 Qxf4 16. Ne4 Qc7 17. c3 Bd6 18. b4 Bxh2 19. Kh1 Bg3 20. bxc5 Rhg8 21. Kg1 Bh2 22. Kh1 Bg3 23. Rab1 Rg6 24. Bxg3 Nxg3 25. Nxg3 Qxg3 26. Qb2 Rh6 27. Kg1 Qh2 28. Kf2 Qf4 29. Ke2 Qe5 30. Kd2 Qg5 31. Ke2 Qxg2 32. Rf2 Qxf2 33. Kxf2 Rh2 34. Ke3 Rxb2 35. Rxb2 h5 1/2-1/2, Polgar, Judit (HUN) 2728 - Kramnik, Vladimir (RUS) 2760 , Cap d'Agde 2003 It (active) (knockout). It is hard for me to believe that Kramnik is not winning here, but perhaps he only needed a draw or was short of time]
4. e5 Nd5 5. Nxd5 exd5 6. Qf3 d4 7. Bc4 d6 Black is counting on having the better center after he exchanges his doubled d-pawn for White's e-pawn. But is it worth the time he has lost? 8. Nh3 h6 9. O-O Nc6 10. Qb3 Qc7 11. exd6?! With superior development and Black's king stuck in the center, White thinks he already has a winning attack. Doug has seen more deeply into the

position.

[11. Re1 retains an advantage for White due to his better development]

11... Bxd6 12. Re1



12... Kf8! This is what White missed when he undoubled Black's pawns by playing 11. exd6. By playing 11... Bxd6, Black developed his bishop and cleared f8 for his king, thus avoiding annoying pins on the e-file and getting his king off of the dangerous a4 to e8 diagonal. With the king on f8, Black now threatens to win a bishop for a knight by playing 13... Na5 or to simply win a pawn with 13... Bxf4. White's check with the rook on e1 may have felt good, but Black's position has been substantially improved as a result. 13. Qf3!?

The queen was needed where it was. [Even though it immediately drops a pawn 13. Nf2 is better. 13... Bxf4 14. g3 Bd6 The awkward position of Black's king gives White some compensation for the pawn]

13... Bxh3?! Black wins a pawn, but sometimes it is best to put the maximum pressure on your opponent before cashing in.

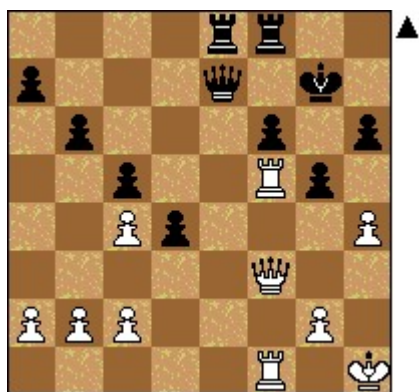
[13... Nb4! 14. Qb3 (14. Bb3?! c4 15. Ba4 Bd7 16. a3 (16. Bxd7?! Nxc2! 17. Rf1 Nxa1 18. Ba4 d3 Black is up an exchange and a pawn) 16... Bxa4 17. axb4 Bxc2 Black is up a pawn, has the bishop pair and better pawn structure) 14... Bxh3 15. a3 Best. Taking the bishop with the queen allows the fork on c2 and taking with the pawn wrecks his kingside. 15... Nxc2 16. Qxc2 Bd7 White has nothing to show for the pawn]

14. Qxh3 Bxf4 15. d3 Bxc1 16. Raxc1 Black has an extra pawn, but he will have problems defending f7 and developing his king rook. The chances are equal. 16... Ne5 17. Qg3 f6 18. Re2 Re8 19. Rce1?! White proceeds with his plan to put pressure on the knight.

[But 19. Rf1! prevents Black's freeing move, 19... g5, leaving Black in an awkward situation]



19... g5! Now Black has g7 for his king and can finally develop his king rook. The game turns irrevocably on Doug's favor. 20. h4 Kg7 21. Rf1 Qd8 22. Ref2 Rhf8 23. Rf5 Nxc4 24. dxc4 Qe7 25. Kh1 b6 26. Qf3



26... Qe4! Black offers up his f-pawn to force exchanges into a winning rook endgame. 27. Rxf6!?

[A better try is 27. hxg5 but after 27... hxg5 28. Kg1 (Trying to avoid the trade of queens leads to disaster because White's king is exposed on the h-file. 28. Qd1 Rh8 29. Kg1 Qe3 30. R5f2 Qg3 31. Re2 Qh2 32. Kf2 Qh4 33. Kg1 g4 34. Rxe8 Qh2 35. Kf2 g3 36. Kf3 Qh5 37. Kxg3 Qh4 38. Kf3 Rxe8 39. Qd2 Re3 40. Qxe3 dxe3 Black wins) 28... Qxf3 29. R5xf3 Kg6 30. Kf2 f5 the extra pawn and control over the e-file gives Black a winning position]

27... Qxf3 28. R6xf3 Rxf3 29. Rxf3 Re2 Black wins back the pawn and, with his rook on the 7th, it is just a matter of time. 30. hxg5 hxg5 31. Ra3 Rxc2 32. Rxa7 Kf6 33. b3 White's problem here is not saving his own pawns. Instead he should be concerned about stopping Black's passed d-pawn.

[With that in mind, getting his king back into play makes more sense. 33. Kg1 Rxb2 34. a4 Rb4 35. Kf2 Rxc4 36. Ke2 But with two extra pawns, Black wins anyway]

33... d3 34. Rd7 d2 35. Kh2 Ke5 36. Kg3 Ke4 White resigns. Sooner or later Black's passed pawn will cost White his rook. Nice game, Doug! [...]

[It is too late to bring the king over. 37. Kf2 d1=Q]

[0:1]

For another take on this game, see Desert Knight January 2011, page 18, with comments by Jim Johnston. You can find it at the New Mexico Chess Organization web site - <http://www.nmchess.org/>

Matt Grinberg, 8/21/2016

NM Chess Champions

Douglas Thigpen (2)

I sent the article from last week's newsletter to Doug Thigpen and asked if he would like to annotate one of his games for the newsletter. He sent the following sharp game. Except as noted, the comments are his.

Thanks Doug

Matt Grinberg, 8/24/2016



Relatively speaking, I was a bit of a late-bloomer into chess. While I enjoyed playing as a kid, those games were always casual and I approached them the same way I would have approached

any board game, like Monopoly. I didn't join any chess clubs until I was 13, and that's when my passion for the game took off.

I didn't win many awards in high school, though I was always a force to be reckoned with. It was only in my college years that I flourished, winning the state championship in my freshman year, senior year, and the year immediately following my graduation.

I now coach chess in ABQ. While I'll work with any age group, I mostly work with kids. Perhaps this is because I know that any one of them could be much stronger than myself, if they were so inclined.

Here's a pretty fun game. I wanted to choose something more active since the game with Lior is more endgame-oriented.

Good luck with your newsletter! The more chess journalism we have as a community, the better.

Best, Doug

Thigpen, Douglas - Williamson, Warren, 1-0
New Mexico Class Championship - Master/Expert, Round 3
Rio Rancho, New Mexico, 5/17/2015

Pirc-Robatsch Defense

1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. Nc3 d6 4. Bf4 [As in the game against Lapid, Doug chooses an unusual move in the opening - ed.]

[More common is - ed. 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. Be2 O-O 6. O-O]

4... c6 5. Nf3 Nf6 6. Bd3 O-O 7. Qd2 b5 With the center and more space, White has a pleasant position. However, White must act quickly to gain the most of his circumstances. I saw a chance to remove the defenders around Black's king which would provide more chances to continue active play. **8. e5** Chasing away the first defender... **8... dxe5 9. dxe5 Nd5 10. Bh6** ... and initiating the trade of the second defender. **10... Nxc3** A natural enough move. This plays into White's hands, but it's difficult to suggest an alternative.

[10... e6 would solidify the d5 square for Black's center, but Black's weakened dark squares would be painful on the eyes.;

Certainly not 10... Bxh6 **11. Qxh6** when White threatens Ng5 spelling the end for Black.

[The only defense is **11... f6**, but **12. h4** still gives White a strong attack - ed.]]

11. Bxg7 An important in-between move and the key to my idea. **11... Kxg7 12. Qxc3 Be6** This blocks White's e-pawn, but Black's defenses remain fragile. **13. h4 h6** A natural reaction, although it was the move I had hoped to bait Black into playing as it critically weakens Black's last key defender: the g6 pawn. As before, it's difficult to recommend an alternative. Black's position would remain very difficult no matter what due to his lack of space, weak dark squares, weak kingside, and relatively uncoordinated pieces. Perhaps an alternative should be sought somewhere in the opening to avoid this difficult position altogether. **14. O-O-O Qb6 15. Nd4 Bd5**



16. **e6!** Forcing the f-pawn from the defense of the g-pawn. It was important to play this quickly before Black could consolidate his position with ... e6. 16... **f6**



17. **Bxg6!** The time is ripe to attack. Black's king is simultaneously overcrowded and alone, lacking both escape routes and useful defenders. 17... **Kxg6** 18. **Qg3** **Kh7** 19. **Qd3** **f5** Practically throwing in the towel, but there wasn't a decent alternative.

[If 19... **Kh8** (or **Kg8**), then 20. **Qg6** would quickly wrap things up;

If 19... **Kg7** then there would be no good way to stop the queen's invasion of g6 after 20.

h5 [As in the game, Black has nothing better than 20... **f5** but will come under a withering attack after 21. **Nxf5** - ed.]

20. **Nxf5** **Rxf5** 21. **Qxf5** **Kh8** 22. **Qf8** **Kh7** 23. **Qxe7** **Kg8** 24. **Qf7** **Kh8** 25. **Qf8** **Kh7** 26. **e7** **Na6** [Black resigned without waiting for a response - ed.] [1:0]

Douglas Thigpen, 8/22/2016

NM Chess Champions

Douglas Thigpen (3)

Doug Thigpen annotates another inspired game for this series. He defeats yet another New Mexico Champion, this time 2014 Champion, Zach Stuart. Once again the game takes an unusual turn in the opening, but this time it is his opponent's 4... Be6 that takes the game into uncharted waters.

Thanks Doug

Matt Grinberg, 8/31/2016

Thigpen, Douglas - Stuart, Zach, 1-0
Springtime in Socorro, Open Section, Round 3
Socorro, New Mexico, 3/8/2015

English Opening

1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 [English Opening by transposition - ed.] 2... c6 3. g3 dxc4 4. Bg2 Be6?!
Unimpressed with the beaten path, Black embarks on a mission to secure the loot on c4. However, contrary to its docile appearance, the position can become razor-sharp quickly and the pawn won't be worth the danger it brings.

[Normal and probably better was 4... Nf6]

5. Qc2 White pressures the pawn and the idea of Ng5 looms in the air. 5... Qd5? Consistent but wrong. Black overprotects the c4-pawn and prevents Ng5, but gives White more fuel for his attack.

[It wasn't too late to accept the loss of a tempo and go into a safer position. 5... Nf6 6. Ng5 Bg4 7. Qxc4 e6+/=]

6. Nc3 Qh5



7. **h4!** Probably a bit difficult to see from a distance, but it addresses the needs of the position in preventing ...Bh3 and re-threatening Ng5. 7... **f6** 8. **b3 cxb3** 9. **axb3 Bc8** Retreating the vulnerable bishop to defend the sensitive b7-point. White had major threats Black needed to respond to, such as 10. Nd4 Bc8, 11. Ncb5 when there is no good way to prevent Nc7+.

[If 9... Bf7 10. **Bh3!** and Black faces a Herculean challenge in defending his light squares]

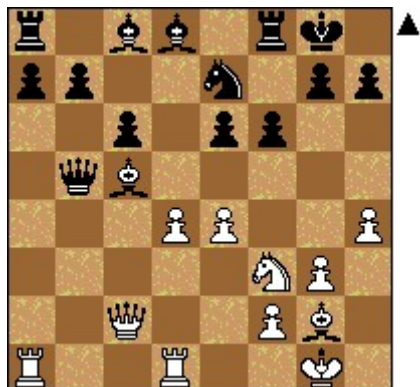
10. **d4 e6** 11. **e4** With an armada of active developed pieces White can and should rip open the center ASAP. 11... **Bb4** 12. **O-O Ne7** 13. **Na2 Ba5** 14. **Ba3 Na6** 15. **b4** With the d5-advance adequately defended for now, White brings the b-pawn forward to prepare to distract the c6-pawn from its task of defending d5. 15... **Bd8!** Not going down without a fight, Black uses every resource for defense, including this strange move. The bishop will be needed to defend the knight later. 16. **Nc3 Nc7** 17. **Rfd1 O-O** Both armies stare at d5 without blinking. If White is going to break through it must be on this square. It seems Black is adequately prepared, but White can throw a bone in the works.



18. **b5!** Distracting the c6-pawn and breaking through. 18... **Nxb5** 19. **Nxb5 Qxb5??** A tragic oversight.

[However, after 19... **cxb5** 20. **d5 exd5** 21. **exd5** the d-pawn will quickly decide the game as Black isn't coordinated enough to deal with it in time]

20. **Bc5** The threat is 21. R(d)b1 trapping the queen. Black resigned.



[...]

[If 20... a5 21. Bf1]

[1:0]

Douglas Thigpen, 8/25/2016