

New Mexico Champions – Stephen Sandager

Stephen Sandager is the King of the New Mexico Chess Championship. He has won 13 times in five decades - 1972, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2010! Sandager's rating peaked at 2293 in 1997.

The following game was played in the World Open in Philadelphia in 1991. Sandager's opponent, Steven Mayer, is a formidable player who peaked at 2337 not long after this tournament. In this game between two heavy weights, Sandager proves to be the better Steve.

Sandager, Stephen – Mayer, Steven, 1:0
World Open 1991, Round 7
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 7/1991

King's Indian Defense

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 The game has now transposed to the King's Indian Defense. Black allows White a big center in the hope of later undermining it and/or going for a king side attack. **5. Nf3 O-O 6. Be2 Bg4 7. O-O**

[More typical here is **7. Be3 Nfd7 8. Ng1 Bxe2 9. Ngxe2 c5 10. O-O**]

7... Nfd7 Black signals his intention to fight for control of e5 and to eventually play f5. **8. Be3 Nc6 9. d5 Bxf3 10. Bxf3 Na5**

[The game continuation is better than **10... Nce5** which just results in the knight being chased away with a loss of time. **11. Be2 Nb6 12. Qb3 c6 13. f4 Ned7**]

11. Be2 Bxc3 12. bxc3 e5 13. f4!? White plays to open the position for his bishops, but at the same time he leaves his e-pawn as a potential weakness.

[It is better to exchange first. **13. dxe6 fxe6 14. f4** Now he plays f4 without exposing his e-pawn.]

13... b6!? Black misses the chance to gain absolute control over e5 and put pressure in White's e-pawn.

[**13... exf4 14. Bxf4 Qe7 15. Qd4 Rfe8 16. Bd3 Ne5** In spite of the bishop pair, Black is better.]

14. f5! White has turned the tables on Black. Usually it is Black who gets the kingside attack in the King's Indian Defense.



14... Qh4 15. Rf3 Nf6?!

[Having said "A" he might as well say "B." 15... Qxe4 16. Bd3 Qh4 17. Rg3 e4 18. Bg5 Qxg3 19. hxg3 exd3 20. Qxd3 f6 21. Bh6 Ne5 22. Qe4 Rf7 White has a queen and a bishop for a rook and two knights, but his pawn structure is a wreck]

16. Rg3 Threatening to win the queen with Bg5. 16... Nxe4 17. Rg4 Qd8 18. fxg6?! This allows Black to defend the knight with f5.

[Better is 18. Qc2 forcing the knight to retreat. 18... Nc5 (18... h5? 19. Rxe4! Now that Black's kingside has been further weakened, this works. 19... gxf5 20. Rxe5! dxe5 21. Qxf5 Qe7 22. Bd3 f6 23. Qg6 Qg7 24. Qxh5 White has a winning attack) 19. Rf1 All of White's pieces are poised for the attack, while Black's knights and queen rook are semi useless;

Taking the knight drops the rook after 18. Rxe4 gxf5]

18... hxg6? Black is now lost. He is counting on 19. Rxe4 f5, but White has something much better.

[18... f5! 19. gxh7 Kh8 20. Rg8 Rxc8 21. hxg8=Q Kxc8 Black has the pawn structure, but White has the bishop pair. It is roughly equal]



19. Bd3!! Nf6?! Suddenly Black is without a decent move. There are many tries, but nothing works.

[19... Nc5 20. Bxg6 fxc6 21. Rxc6 Kf7 22. Qh5 Black's will lose his queen or be checkmated;

19... f5 20. Rxc6 Kf7 21. Qh5 Ditto;

19... Nxc3 20. Qc2 e4 21. Qxc3 exd3 22. Bh6 f6 23. Qxd3 The threats are unstoppable;
19... Kg7 20. Bxe4 f5 21. Rxc6!! Kxc6 22. Qg4 Kh7 23. Bxf5 Rxf5 (23... Kh8 24. Qh5
Kg7 25. Qg6 Kh8 26. Qh7#) 24. Qxf5 White has a winning attack;
19... Nb7 20. Bxe4 f5 21. Rxc6 Kf7 22. Qh5 Black's will lose his queen or be
checkmated - again;
19... Kh7 20. Bxe4 f5 21. Rxc6 Kxc6 22. Qg4 Kh7 23. Bxf5 Rxf5 24. Qxf5 White has a
winning attack - again]

20. Bg5 Nxc4 A desperation try.

[If he does not give up his queen for a rook, the knight is lost anyway. 20... Kg7 21. Qf3
Rh8 22. Rf1]

21. Bxd8 Raxd8 22. Qxc4 The rest is a mopping up operation. **22... Kg7 23. Rf1 Nb7 24. Qg5
Nc5 25. Qf6 Kg8 26. Rf3 Nd7 27. Qg5 Kg7 28. Rg3** Black resigns in face of the threat of 29.
Bxc6! [1:0]

Matt Grinberg, 3/22/2016