

HARPER'S HORRORS



The following is the first of three games from a transcript of a lecture delivered by Bruce Harper at the Vancouver Chess Club, Dec 21, 1979. Editing has been kept to a minimum. Stephen Ball assisted in originally preparing this work for publication by the British Columbia Chess Federation.

Introduction

I think the general idea of each of these games is that I've tried to look for some kind of unusual or weird idea which doesn't really happen very often. Sometimes these ideas may not quite be sound, which may be why they don't happen very often, but you can judge that for yourself.

GAME 1

The first game was played in Ottawa in 1976 against John Armstrong, who was White.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6, 3. Nc3 Bb4, 4. Bg5 Okay, this is the Leningrad system, or Spassky's system, if you want to call it that. It has its ups and downs -- every once in a while White wipes someone out with it and it becomes popular again -- then it fades out. 4. ... h6, 5. Bh4

"What's the whole idea of the 4. Bg5 variation?"

Well, I think you could say that White is trying to get away with something, because he's playing to pin the Knight on f6, based on the fact that the normal place for this Bishop [on b4] is back here, on e7. He's saying to the guy: 'If you can pin me, I can pin you, and you'll find it more difficult to lift the pin than I will.' The usual way -- there are a lot of moves here, of course -- the normal one is 5. ... c5 which is what I played, the idea being to immediately try to take advantage of the black squares weakened on the Queenside by the development of the Bishop to g5. That's why you normally throw in 4. ... h6, so that the Bishop has to commit itself to h4. This system isn't really too popular -- I think it works best when Spassky plays it, which is why they named it after him, but otherwise it has certain drawbacks -- but I don't think this game shows one of them.

6. d5 Now there are all sorts of moves. The move which I was

usually playing was just to take on c3 and double White's pawns, then set up the formation with d6 and e5. Karpov used that system in the Olympics and Killed someone with it -- there are people who think that White can get something, but somehow White has to play all these perfect moves to keep his initiative and if he doesn't, he just gets into a bad position because of the weaknesses ...

"What's the result of 6. ... b5?"

Well, 6. ... b5 is the other move -- that's the kind of move that is not played by the people who take on c3. In order to take the gambit, you have to take on e6, sort of like a Blumenfeld Gambit, and Black takes back (7. ... fe6) and you take here (8. cb5) ... I don't know ... I know Spassky has won some games with that as White, usually when his opponent makes a mistake somewhere. I don't know what the theoretical consensus is on that. I know another move is 6. ... ed5, 7. cd5 d6, and then ... Bf5. That doesn't look so good -- I've seen some pretty horrible things ... well, Walter Dobrich tried that against Spassky and it didn't work [laughter]. I don't know what conclusions you can draw from that.

I played another move: I went 6. ... Nd5 in this position. It's known to theory, but not well known ...

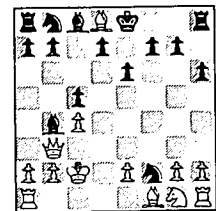
"It's unsound!"

Well, I don't know if it's unsound -- we'll get to that in a minute. Actually, Suttles suggested this move to me when I was making him look at a Nimzoindian, trying to cure him. I think Alekhine [also] found it, did some analysis, and concluded that it wasn't good enough for Black -- so it hasn't really been seen, based on that, but I don't think too many players even know it exists, actually. I suppose a player who is an expert in the Leningrad system has checked it out -- I don't know. Okay, things start happening now, obviously.

7. Bd8 which is forced -- he has to accept the sacrifice. 7. ... Nc3 The first point is that it's the old trick: if he takes the Knight, you win back everything -- plus. So, he can't take it. The second thing is that he can't move his Queen onto a Black square because he's either going to get pinned or there's going to be a discovery picking up the Queen. He can't move it to b1, and he can't go to d3, because 8. ... Ne4+, 9. Kd1 Nf2+ wins the Queen. So he only has two squares -- c2 or b3, which is where he played it. 8. Qb3 This is the right move. 8. ... Ne4, 9. Kd1 Forced. 9. ... Nf2

Now you start to see the idea. You've already got a piece and two pawns for it [the Queen] and you've got the Rook [on h1] in the bag, and the Bishop [on d8] is attacked. Actually, material-wise, Black could come out ahead -- for the moment. The question is whether he should try for that. At this point Alekhine recommends 10. Kc1, which is in ECO if anyone is going to go home and look it up, and it simply ends with "+". They have certain space limitations, but I don't know if you could really say that. I'm not sure that's true, because after 10. Kc1, I think Black can follow what happened in the game, and he gets a reasonable position, since he would be a tempo ahead.

What White actually played was 10. Kc2 and I blundered, even though I had taken him by surprise.



Position after 10. Kc2

I think the right move is 10. ...

Nh1.

"Is that to take away g3?"

Yes. It's to take away g3 and also ... that's the first point. Suppose he tries to transpose with 11. Qf3 (so if 11. ... Kd8, then 12. Qf7) then you have 11. ... Nc6 to throw in [followed by 12. ... Nd8]. Similarly, after 10. ... Nh1, 11. Bh4 Nc6 and you're picking up a really important tempo on his Queen -- and if 12. e3 (to stop ... Nd4) then you play 12. ... g5, attacking his Bishop. When it goes to e1 you take it, then you bring the Knight out [to f2] and you get the Knight back. So you end up with a Rook, Knight and Pawn [for the Queen] and he is weak on the dark squares. Black would be a little better.

Okay, so this [10. Kc1] is the right line, and 10. Kc2 is wrong. In the game I went into it as if he played 10. Kc1, but it's a little different, for obvious reasons. I didn't take the Rook -- I took the Bishop 10. ... Kd8 which is very materialistic. Now I have two pieces and two pawns. He played 11. Qg3 I think Suttles and I had only looked at 11. Qf3 -- that was the embarrassing thing. 11. Qg3 is a much better move. I had to take this 11. ... Nh1 and he took on g7 12. Qg7

So, the problem is -- if you count up the material, there is a Rook, Knight, Bishop and Pawn [for the Queen] but things are starting to go the other way a little bit.

"How did you evaluate this game while you were playing it? At this position right now -- were you happy with this?"

The thing is, I had looked at this position about a year before the game, so I felt like everything was going great.

"What about the opponent -- what did he think of all this?"

I don't know. What would you think if someone played something like this against you?

"That's what I mean. Did he go into shock the minute you played the Queen sacrifice? What did he do? Did he start using a lot of time on his clock, did he sweat, what happened there?"

I caught him in another sacrifice in a postal game. I'd like to have seen his reaction to that one ... but I wasn't there. That's a theme that runs through these games -- objectively White is probably better now, and he'll certainly be better in about five moves, but psychologically it's not to everyone's taste to be in a position like this after only ten moves ... but it's hard to know who's fooling whom ...

Alright 12. ... Re8 That's forced. Then he took. 13. Qf7 So now, it's only R, N, and B for Q. Notice that this [Qf7] traps the Knight [on h1]. This Knight starts to become the focus of the game, although maybe it shouldn't be. I played 13. ... Nc6 to which he replied 14. e3 to stop the check [on d4], which is reasonable.

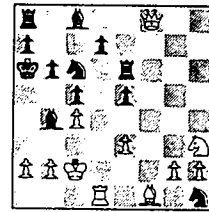
Now this is the crucial moment in the game, because Black is still ahead, technically, in material, but this N on h1 is out of it. More importantly, the B [on c8] and R [a8] are also out of it. Black

has to solve ... what he has to do is get his pieces out -- fast, before this N [h1] goes. If he can get his pieces out fast enough, it won't matter so much if the N is lost, because this B on f1 is a little bit bad, and this pawn [e3] is isolated, so there are certain positional compensations. So Black doesn't have to worry too much, but if he doesn't get any of his men out then it's a lot harder. The move I played here is pretty useless -- it's really a weak move. The right move is probably 12. ... Re7, and if 13. Qf8 Kc7, and maybe you get to play d6 and Bd7. Basically you develop normally, and the game goes on from there. Another move which is possible, and one which occurred to me either during or after the game, is to play 12. ... d5 here and blow the centre open. This may look a little bit strange, but it has a point. If he accepts the sacrifice, which he pretty well has to do or else the Pawn goes to d4, which is not so great for him, then he takes on d5 [13. cd5], I take [ed5], he takes with check [14. Qd5+], and I play Kc7. This Bishop [on c8] comes out quickly, and the Rook comes over, and suddenly it is Black who is ahead in development. That would be just a gambit -- not the kind you see every day, but ...

Anyway, I didn't do that -- I don't think I realized how bad my position was going to get. I played a really ugly move. 12. ... b6 This is sort of a naive move. 13. Rd1 Maybe I forgot I couldn't play 13. ... Bb7 here, I don't know. I had to play 13. ... Re7 He played a really good move. 14. Qf4 to stop my King from getting to c7. It was about this time that I started thinking I might have misjudged White a little bit, because I hadn't seen that move. I thought he would just check on f8 and take the h pawn, then I'd develop the Bishop to b7, bring the Rook out, and things would be going all right. But now it starts getting pretty hideous. I have to get my King to c7, or else it's really going to be bad. I had to play 14. ... e5 which is not the move I had planned on playing. He took on h6 now. 15. Qh6 Not only has he gained a tempo, but he's also wrecked my position by forcing this move [e5]. I went 15. ... Kc7 and he went 16. Qd6 so ... I think it's about this time that I began to realize that I had done something wrong somewhere in this opening. I went 16. ... Kb7 which is the only move. Now, I haven't really made too much progress in getting my Bishop [c8] out -- that's the problem.

17. Nh3 which develops a piece and also keeps the Knight [h1] trapped. 17. ... Re6 since I couldn't stand that thing [Q] being there [d6]. 18. Qf8

Now, this is one of those positions which I tend to get a lot -- I don't know about you. It's approaching a critical position, where something is going to give, one way or another. You'll see it in the other games -- that these things continually happen, at least in the games I'm going to show you. If you play normally, they happen, but they don't happen quite so obviously. I went 18. ... Ka6 because I've got to get out of there. I didn't want to go 18. ... Kc7, because I'm still going to have a problem with the d pawn, and that d pawn is starting to get on my nerves, so as far as I'm concerned, he can have it if he wants it. I just had to get my pieces out.



Position after 18. ... Ka6

At this point, White has a forced win, which begins with 19. a3 -- always a good move in the Nimzoindian. The only place for the Bishop is a5. The point is, if I play 19. ... Ba5 immediately, he wouldn't play 20. b4, because I would still have a retreat square for my King [to b7]. The point at which b4 comes is if I play 19. ... Bb7. Then he'd make a move like 20. Qf7, and now the threat is 21. b4, and it's really bad, because if I take it with the pawn [21. ... cb4], then he goes 22. c5 and on 22. ... b5 he goes 23. a4, and ... [laughter] ... that's when I would have offered him a draw to see if I could have won the tournament anyway. I think it would have been a little late then ...

"Wouldn't 19. Rd7 also be playable in this position, instead of 19. a3?"

You mean trade Rooks ... ? Well ... how about this? [19. ... Bd7, 20. Qa8 Re8]

"Oh." [laughter.]

No, I think 19. a3 must be the move -- I'm not saying the move he made loses, but 19. a3 wins.

19. Be2 At this point I began to have hope. I had seen 19. a3, but there was nothing I could do about it. The problem he's having here is a psychological one -- he has a good position, but he wants this Knight [h1], and a lot of people have died getting Knights like that. The reason is that if a Knight in the corner is trapped, you're wasting a lot of time capturing it, especially if you have to move all your pieces, then use a Rook which is already on a good file.

"The Knight cannot run away."

But the thing is, if he takes it, he's ahead. He's ahead in material.

"Oh, so what?"

Yes, but it's something tangible. It's nice to have a piece in your pocket, although it didn't work out that way. Okay ...

19. ... Bb7 That hits his Queen. Now he went 20. Qg7 which is a mistake -- it's the wrong square. His idea is that he wants to control h8, but this actually makes things worse. The funny thing about this game, and you'll see it again in some of the later games, is that ... I don't know

whether this is just my style or what but there's a ... the underlying positional factors in this game are [actually] favouring Black, to some extent. White just happened to have a winning position. That was the problem. And as soon as White missed the win, it's as Steinitz said -- if you don't take advantage of the opportunity and force the win, you'll often start to lose. I think the reason for that is that unless you're playing someone much better than you are, for every drawback in your position you'll have some compensating feature. I get lost positions, but I generally get them trying to do something. Most players fall into a lost position because they're trying to carry out an idea, and the other guy's idea just happens to be better. If you get into lost positions without trying to do anything, then that's another problem ... maybe we'll have another lecture on that ...

"I have a question. I was wondering what Tal would do as White here."

Tal would have played 19. a3 and that would have been it. I mean, Tal gets these positions when he has a few pieces less for White. I don't think he'd have any trouble with this one.

"I'd like to clarify something. Did you know, while you were playing the game, that 19. a3 wiped you off the board?"

Well, the move I didn't see was 14. Qf4. I didn't see that my King would get on b7, blocking in all my pieces. Once my King got there, I saw that unless I went 18. ... Ka6, and tried to find a safe spot for my King, he was just going to take my Knight [on h1] and I would have no counterplay at all and would just be in a bad position with nothing to show for it. I had to do something. I saw 19. a3, but I was hoping he wouldn't play it ... you can resist with Black, but it's not much fun. Okay -- the point I was making about these strategic things is that his game goes just like that [snap]. The reason is that he missed the win, and all the positional advantages that Black was trying to get manifested themselves.

20. ... Ree8 This is a very good move, because I'm coming here [21. ... Rg8] and taking the g-file. If his Queen were on f7, where it should be, he'd save a tempo. That's the big difference [between 20. Qg7 and the right move which was 20. Qf7]. I think he's slipped into a lost position ... he's probably losing now, but he didn't realize it, so what he did was he took the Knight 21. Rh1 because he could see now that suddenly the nightmare was starting to happen, and bad things were coming his way ...

"What if he went 21. a3 now?"

Well, if he plays 21. a3 now, I could play 21. ... Rg8, and he couldn't take the Bishop. He'd have to move his Queen, and I'd take the pawn on g2, and I'm starting to get the Knight on h1 out, so I might even give up the Bishop [on b4] and save the Knight and I'm okay ... I don't think he had another chance to play a3 ... he

should have played it earlier.

"Instead of 21. Rh1, is 21. Rd7 any better?"

Let's see ... well, I think I can play 21. ... Rg8 -- you mean just give up the Queen?

"Well, yes, because the Knight on h1 is still trapped. And it seems to me that White is going to come in very strongly on the White squares, and that the Bishop on b4 is just out of it."

Well, after 22. Rd7 Rg7, 23. Rg7 I can play 23. ... Rf8, and I get the Knight out.

"Yes, but the endgame is better for White."

I know the endgame is better ... but ... there's no doubt about it ... I don't know ... I guess I have to win the Queen ... there's really not much else to do ... What's my King doing on a6 in an ending? ... not much ...

"He could have simplified ..."

I think my opponent was off balance ... he was lost before he knew it. If you're looking at a chess quiz, and you see the position and it says 'mate in four', most people will be able to find it -- it may take them an hour, but they'll find it. The trouble is, in a tournament game, they don't have 'mate in four' written under the position. I've missed mates in four many times, mainly because I'm not looking for them, and that's part of becoming a good player -- you really have to know when to look for whatever it's appropriate to look for, and that's not easy. He didn't know what was going on now, and neither did I -- it's really complicated. Up to this point, White was winning, and he

really wasn't thinking in terms of just being a pawn ahead.

Now comes the part I'll enjoy showing ... He played 21. Rh1 and his position goes incredibly fast. 21. ... Rg8 Hitting his Queen. 22. Qh7 Rg2 Okay. So now I'm actually down material, but I have the best position I've had since about the fifth move. He played 23. Qd3 which is a mistake. He should have played 23. Kd1, which is the right move to defend the Bishop [on e2], but Black has compensation. Now I played 23. ... Rh8, a good move, hitting the Knight [on h3].

"Can you play 23. ... e4?"

I'll get around to that. [Laughter.] Now, unless he plays 24. Ng1, which is a psychological disaster ... He played 24. Rg1 trying a combination. He was in time trouble, by the way. I think in virtually every game I'll be showing you, there was always time trouble.

24. ... Rh3 a minor sacrifice 25. Rg2 Nd4 I was glad to play that move, I'll tell you. Everything starts working now -- it's nice to have your army at work. 26. Kd1 Bg2, 27. Bg4 e4, 28. Qb1 only square 28. ... Re3. (0-1). I thought it was nice, because that Queen [on b1] had been giving me a lot of trouble ... [laughter] ... and it was good to see it somewhere where I could keep it under control. That game ... well, I haven't played many like that one, don't worry. I didn't exactly know what was going on for most of that game, and I was lost for about half of it, as we saw ... but ... maybe the moral is never resign.

IM Walter Shipman-Mark Willey (2100)
Chess Center Open May 1, 1983 ECO D78

1.d4,d5 2.Nf3,Nf6 3.c4,c6 4.Qc2,q6 5.Bf4,Bf5
6.Qb3,Qb6 7.c5,Qxb3 8.ab,Na6 (Shipman had recently played the black side of this opening in an international tournament and had gotten a bad game. In that game he played 8...Bxb1). 9.Bd2, Bxb1 10.Rxb1,Bq7 11.e3,Nb8 (Nc7?) 12.b4,a6 13.Ra1,0-0 14.b5,cb 15.Bxb5,Rfc8 16.Bd3,Nc6 17.b4 Na7 18.Bc3,Ne8 19.Nd2,Nec7 20.Nb3,Nab5 21.Bb2, Re8 22.0-0,h5 23.f4,e6 24.Na5,Rab8 25.Rfc1,Bf8 26.Rc2,f5 (When I first played chess I thought this was the strongest pawn formation) 27.g3, Re7 28.h3,Rh7 29.Rg2,Kf7 30.Nb3,Be7 31.Ne2,Bf6 32.Nf3,Rg8 33.Kf2,Ke7 34.g4,hq 35.hg,Rqh8 36.Raql Rh1 (draw?) 37.Ke2,Rxq1 38.Rxq1,Kf7 39.Kd2,Na7! 40.Kc2,Nc6 41.Bc3,Nb5 42.Be1,Rh3 43.Be2

Rxf3 (Very hazardous, nevertheless a good move) 44.Bxf3,Nbxd4+ 45.exd4,Nxd4+ 46.Kd1,Nxf3 47.Rg3 fg (not 47...Nx8 48.g5) 48.Bd2,Nxd2 49.Kxd2, q5! 50.fg,Bxq5+ 51.Kd3,e5 52.Rxq4, (Black now has an outside passed Bishop) Bf6 53.Rq1,e4+ 54.Ke3, Bc3 55.Rb1,Ke6 56.Rb3? (b5 was better, hoping for 56...pxp? draw, but 56...Ke5 still wins - Mark Ginsburg) Ke5! 57.b5,Bd4+ 58.Kd2,Bxc5 (after this fresh amputation white is clearly lost) 59.ba,ba 60.Rb8,a5 61.Rb5,Kd4 62.Ke2,Bb4 (a4!) 63.Rb8,Kc4 64.Rc8+,Bc5 65.Ra8,d4? 66.Rxa5, d3+ 67.Kd1,e3 68.Ra2,Bd6 (Ping-good move, 68... Bb4 followed by black's K marching to the K-side allows an eventual Rd2! forcing stalemate - Frias) 69.Rg2,Kd4 70.Ke1,Ke4 71.Kf1,Bf4 72.Ra2, Bq3 (72...Kf3 73.Rf2+) 73.Rb2,Bf2?? (73...Kd4 wins easily, if 74.Rg2,Bf2!) 74.Ra2,Kd4 75.Ra4+, Kc3 76.Ra3+,Kc2 77.Ra2+,Kb3 78.Ra8,Bc3 79.Re8,Bf4 80.Re4?? (Ke1 draw) Kc2 0-1 (Brutal, if RxB,e2+ 82.Kf2,e1(Q)+ 83.KxQ,d2+ 84.any, Q.)