



Position after 20.a3. Who is winning?

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A.Karpov 2750
G.Kuzmin 2650

French Defence.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.exd5 exd5 5.Ngf3 Nc6 6.Bb5 Bd6 7.dxc3

White waited for the bishop to move so that Black must lose a tempo when he recaptures the pawn.

The important thing about this position is the presence of an isolated queen's pawn (often known as an IQP). This pawn gives Black a temporary advantage in space, but leaves him with a permanent weakness. White's plan is very simple. First to blockade the pawn, and then attack it.

Black will only achieve real equality if he can advance his IQP or exchange it.

7...Bxc5 8.0-0 Nge7 9.Nb3

Moving his pieces to cover the 'd4' square, preventing Black from advancing his d-pawn.

9...Bd6 10.Bg5

White wants to swap off Black's good bishop (the one on d6) and plans to do so by playing Bg5-h4-g3.

10...0-0 11.Bh4 Qc7

Better would be 11...Bg4, fighting for control of d4.

12.Bg3 Bxg3

Again, Bg4 was better.

13.hxg3

Always capture with your pawns towards the centre. These doubled pawns don't weaken White's king, if anything they control the centre more, so are an advantage.

13...Bg4 14.Re1 Rad8 15.c3

Keeping up the pressure on d4.

15...Qb6 16.Bd3

The side with the isolated pawn must try for a king-side attack or to advance his pawn to get the initiative. Black has no possibility of a king-side attack and if he isn't able to play d5-d4 then White will have a clear advantage.

16...Ng6

If 16...d4 then 17.c4 and White will eventually win the pawn.

17.Qc2 Bxf3 18.gxf3 Rd6

Karpov suggested that after 18...d4 19.f4 (19.c4? Nb4) 19...dxc3 20.bxc3 White would be in a better position due to the fact that Black's knights are restricted.

19.f4

This move constricts Black's knight. If ever your opponent has a knight on "Knight 6" (g3, g6, b3 or b6) then by playing pawn to "Knight 3" (g6, g3, b6 or b3) you render the opposing knight almost completely immobile and useless.

19...Rfd8 20.a3 (see diagram)

Now White can respond to d5-d4 by c3-c4. Black's plan has been thwarted. When searching for a plan, think "Which of my pieces needs to be improved?" then place all your pieces on their best squares. White has a simple plan that he follows. All his pieces move to their best squares before he starts his attack. The knight transfers itself to 'f3', the Rooks double on the e-file and then White is ready to attack with his pawns.

20...h5 21.Kg2 h4

Black attempts to get some play via the h-file.

22.Re2 Nf8 23.Nd2 Rh6 24.Nf3

If Black advances his pawn it will be quickly surrounded and captured. He can't just leave it so he must exchange. The open file turns out to be more dangerous for Black than for White.

24...hxg3 25.fxg3 Nd7 26.Rae1 Kf8 27.g4

Now that his pieces are on their best squares White can start an attack.

27...Qe7 28.g5 Rh8 29.Kg3 Nc5 30.Bf5 g6 31.b4 Ne4+

If 31...Nd7 then 32.Bxg6 would give a strong attack.

32.Bxe4 dxe4 33.Qxe4 Kg7 34.b5 Na5 35.Qe7

Forcing an exchange of Queens. If 35...Qxc3 36.Re3 Qb2 37.Re5 and Qf6+. When you have a number of permanent advantages (eg. Material) then it is good to force exchanges and get into an endgame where it is easier to win.

35...Qxe7 36.Rxe7 Rd3 37.Rc7

White has infiltrated the 7th rank and keeps control of it while threatening to bring his other rook down to e7.

37...Nb3 38.Kg4 Rf8 39.Ree7 1-0

Black resigns in the face of the threatened Rxf7, Rxf7, Rxf7, Kxf7, Ne5+ and Nxd3.

What can you learn from this game?

- The easiest way to think of a good plan is to visualise the best squares for your pieces and then plan how to get them there.
- Stopping your opponents plan may be as easy as preventing a pawn from advancing, or exchanging his good pieces.
- IQP's are very double edged. They give more space, and a possibility of attacking, but are a permanent weakness and will eventually be lost if they are not advanced.
- First blockade the IQP, preventing it from advancing. Once it is blockaded then you can attack it.
- Always control the open file.
- If a knight is on g6 then a pawn on g3 can completely immobilise it.
- If you are winning on material then exchange pieces and play for the endgame.