

1 e4 e5
2 Nf3 Nc6
3 Bb5 a6
4 Bxc6

Although I had only ever lost once as Black against the Ruy Lopez Exchange Variation, I had never been too happy with the positions that I had obtained from the opening against it. Therefore, I decided to give it a try as White, based on the logic that either I would be shown a good defence against it, or else I would win! (Little did I know at the time that I would be shown a good defence ... and I would win!)

4 ... dxc6
5 O-O Qd6
6 d3

This is a main line, but 6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4 setting up the workable kingside majority against the unworkable queenside majority is perhaps more in the spirit of the variation.

6 ... f6
7 Be3 c5
8 Qe2

According to Falchetta in 'The Exchange Variation in The Ruy Lopez (C68)', this leads to an advantage to White. However, Black's 12th move will alter this assessment.

8 ... Be6
9 c3 Ne7
10 d4 cxd4
11 cxd4 exd4
12 Nxd4 Nc6!

New and very strong! At a stroke White's initiative disappears and Black's queenside majority perhaps even gives him the advantage. After only a dozen moves White is forced to begin playing for a draw.

13 Nxe6 Qxe6
14 Nc3 Bd6
15 Qh5+ Qf7
16 Qxf7+ Kxf7
17 f3 Rhd8
18 Rad1 Ne7

Getting ready to roll his queenside pawns.

19 Rf2 Be5
20 Rfd2 Rxd2
21 Bxd2

Not the sort of move one dreams of playing, but after 21 Rxd2 Bxc3! 22 bxc3 Ke6 Black has the option of

moving his knight to c4 via c6 and a5 where it will dominate White's bishop in the endgame.

21 ... b5
22 b3 c5
23 f4

Trying for counterplay in the centre before he is swept away on the queenside.

23 ... Bd4+
24 Kf1 f5
25 e5!

Establishing a protected passed pawn, which will be a big asset in any ending. By accurate play over the last few moves White has minimised his disadvantage.

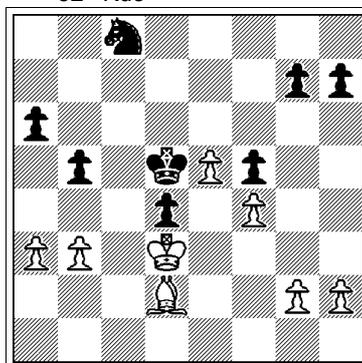
25 ... Ke6
26 Ne2 Nc6
27 Nxd4 cxd4?

Better was 27 ... Nxd4 when Black would still have the advantage, but White should hold with best play. With the text Black tries too hard to win. His d-pawn, which cramps White at present, is a potential weakness in the long term.

28 Rc1

A good move. Sooner or later Black will have to play his rook to the c-file, and after the inevitable rook exchange. White's passed pawn will be stronger, and Black's d-pawn more vulnerable.

28 ... Kd5
29 Ke2 Rc8
30 a3 Ne7
31 Rxc8 Nxc8
32 Kd3



(position after 32 Kd3)

Notwithstanding Black's error on move 27, there is still, sadly, no way for White to win. Even if he wins Black's d-pawn, all that Black has to do to draw is keep his king on d5 and his pawns on b5 and f5 whilst

swapping his knight from c6 to e7 and back again (to prevent White playing his king to b4). White, however, decides to try a couple of tricks before acquiescing to the draw.

32 ... Ne7
33 Ba5 Nc6
34 Bc7 Kc5
35 g4

Hoping for 35 ... fxc4? 36 Ke4 d3 (36 ... g6 37 Bd6+ Kb6 38 e6 wins for White) 37 Bd6+ Kb6 38 Kxd3 and White is clearly better.

35 ... g6
36 gxf5

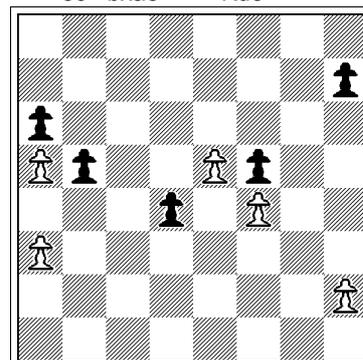
White can win a pawn with 36 b4+ Kd5 37 g5 Ke6 38 Bb6 Kd5 39 h4 Ne7 40 Bxd4, but as noted in the note to White's 32nd, after 40 ... Nc6 41 Bb6 Ke6 Black has set up a fortress and it is not possible to make any further progress.

36 ... gxf5
37 Ba5

Of course now 37 ... Kd5 or any other sensible move allows Black to draw as per the note to White's 32nd... but isn't the pawn ending after 37 ... Nxa5 also a draw?

After 10 days thought, Black decided that it was.

37 ... Nxa5??
38 b4+ Kc6
39 bxa5 Kd5



(position of pawns after 39 ... Kd5)

I have deliberately left the kings off the above diagram so that we can examine all relevant positions of them.

We have reached the domain of 'corresponding squares' which is one of the most difficult concepts in chess. (How difficult can be judged from the fact that my opponent mis-assessed the position completely - and he is a former European

b) 49 ... Kc5 50 Kb1! and:

i. 50 ... Kc6 51 Kc2! and wins as above

ii. 50 ... Kd5 51 Kb2! Kc6 (51 ... Kc5 52 Kb3) 52 Kc2! and wins as before

Black correctly decided that I'd seen all this, so...

45 ... Resigns