

Malcolm Fletcher vs Thomas Chapman – 2024 Haberdashers’ Adams Championship Play-off

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 c5 4. dxc5 Nc6 A slight inaccuracy after which white can aim for a set-up of bb5 be3-d4 c3 f4 and b4 and it becomes very difficult for black to recapture the sacrificed pawn.

5. Bb5 Bf5 A slight error as when whites knight lands on d4 the bishop on f5 and the knight on c6 will be simultaneously attacked costing black crucial time.

6. Nc3 e6 7. a3?

A mistake. White should have pressed his advantage by defending the c5 pawn with be3. Now black has achieved everything he wants from the opening. A strong centre with d5, easy development and both bishops developed outside the pawn chain.



7... Bxc5 8. b4 Bb6 9. Nf3 Nge7 Both players have played sensible developing moves. White’s natural continuation is Bg5 followed by 0-0. Instead he opts for the hyper aggressive 10. Ng5?, surrendering the centre pawn in the hopes of a kingside attack. However one of the rules of chess is... “don’t play caveman moves”. 10... 0-0



Black calmly ignores white’s minimal threats.

11. g4 another caveman move. Another important rule of chess is to have a safe king, usually via kingside castling. After g4 whites king has nowhere safe to hide for the rest of the game.

11... bg6 12. h4 white is fully committed. No turning back now.

12... d4! An excellent move. If your opponent is attacking on the flanks, often the best advice is to strike out in the centre. The engine actually preferred an even more active defence of Qc7 with the idea that after h5 whites g5 knight is undefended allowing Qxe5+ followed by Qxg5. In quickplay time controls we will forgive black for not finding this.

13. h5 dxc3 black opens up lines for his bishop and on the d-file plus offers the exchange of queens. In the current position it is whites king under the most threat and so white should be unafraid of this exchange.



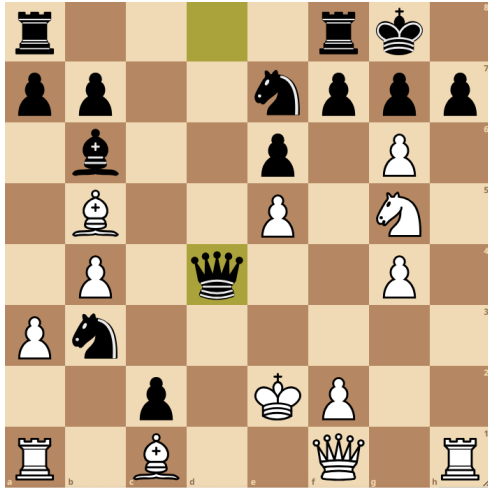
14. Qe2?? Nd4 A huge oversight by white as now black's pieces flood his position with tempo. Every move a chess player should think checks, captures and threats. Before playing Qe2 white should look at all of black's checks, all of his captures and all of this threats and then hopefully spot that nd4 is a nasty threat. White should have simply recaptured his piece with hxg6.

15. Qf1 All of whites moves are hopeless now. His king is stuck in the centre with nowhere safe to hide.

15... Nxc2+ 16. Ke2 Nd4+ 17. Ke1 c2 A very clever move setting up the long-term threat of Qd1 mate



18. **hxg6 Nf3+** 19. **Ke2 Nd4+** 20. **Ke1 Nb3** 21. **Ke2 Qd4!** Excellent play by black. Instead of getting greedy and simply grabbing the rook on a1 black keeps up the pressure on whites exposed king by centralising his queen.



22. **gxf7+** I would have tried **Rxh7** where if black played careless then **Rh8+ Kxh8 Qh3+ Kg8 Qh7#** would be a miraculous escape.

23... **Rxf7 Bd3** 24. **Rxf2+ Ke1** 25. **Rxf1** More clinical would have been **Qc3+ Bd2 Qxd2#**

25... **Rxf1** 26. **Qxd3 Nxe6** 27. **Qd1#**

An excellent game by black to capitalise on white's major error. I say it over and over again at my chess club but it's worth repeating. 3 golden rules of the opening.

- 1) Take control of the centre
- 2) Develop all of your pieces
- 3) **CASTLE YOUR KING!!!**

Link to the game:

<https://lichess.org/broadcast/haberdashers-adams-playoff-2024/round-1/eJWdLzFj/OySEccC6>