

Rubinstein,Akiba
•Hirschbein,Moishe

Lodz

[A.J. Goldsby I]

Rubinstein wins a tremendous game ...

and - in addition - it is a wonderful miniature as well! (I have seen this game a great number of times over the years, my bibliography - at the end of the game - only represents a fraction of the times that I have studied this game.)

The game begins as a normal Queen's Gambit Declined. [Both sides follow the four basic principles of the opening. If you study the game carefully, you will see that every one of these moves will accomplish 2-3 of these core concepts. For example, Black's first move, 1...Nf6; does the following:
 A.) Controls key central squares, specifically, e4 and also d5;
 B.) Develops a piece ... towards the middle of the board;

D64

1927

C.) Prepares K-side castling;
 D.) Later, it will become obvious - once a Black Pawn occupies the d5-square -- that the BN on f6 helps protect this key unit.]

1.d4 Nf6 ; 2.c4 e6 ;
3.Nc3 d5 ; 4.Bg5 Be7 ;
5.e3 0-0 ; 6.Nf3 Nbd7 ;
7.Rc1 c6 ; (center)

So far, this is all book.

(Black's last move helped to cement his control of the vital d5-square, while keeping many of his other options open, as well.)

[RR7...c6 ; (colorized var.)
 ---> For the video.

"Note the number of attacks (or captures) on the key central squares. White has a small advantage in this position - according to opening theory."]

(Diagram)

Now we have a standard position from this opening.

X A B C D E F G H Y
 8 r + l ♖ - t k + (
 7 p p + n ♜ p p p '
 6 - + p + p ♞ - + &
 5 + - + p + - ♞ - %
 4 - + P P - + - + \$
 3 + - ♞ - P N + - #
 2 P P - + - P P P "
 1 + - R Q K L + R ! [
 x a b c d e f g h y

8.Qc2 , (Waiting, maybe -'!')

Rather than play the King's Bishop up ... and possibly lose a tempo, White instead plays the Queen to a good square, perhaps postponing the development of the LSB to a later time.

This is <also> playable, but the main line is definitely 8.Bd3. [Consult any good opening manual here ... like "Modern Chess Openings," or even the Encyclopedia of Chess Openings. ("ECO")]

Several authors praised Rubinstein

for this move and even awarded it an exclamation here. (Some authors have stated that this idea actually originated with Rubinstein, although I cannot verify this. The earliest known example {that I could find after looking at possibly hundreds of games!} of 8.Qc2 was played in a game between E. Lasker and <also> A. Hodges in 1915. I have also found a game - played by Capa when he was young - where he also employed this move, as well.)

"Rubinstein lives up to his move, introduced into tournament practice with brilliance in the game Rubinstein vs. Znosko-Borovsky, St. Petersburg, 1909." - S. Tartakower.

[The most commonly played line would be the following continuation: (>/=) RR8.Bd3 dxc4 ; 9.Bxc4 c5!?! ; Maybe this is Black's most energetic alternative here? (Or Black can play: 9...Nd5!?! ; which would be the <standard> Capablanca freeing maneuver.).

10.0-0 cxd4 ; 11.exd4² ,
and White is just slightly
better in this position.

[See MCO-15, beginning on
page # 393, col.'s # 1-18 ...
and all applicable notes.]]

8...Re8 ; (Going for ...e7-e5?)
Black plays the Rook to a
central file, perhaps thinking
of a later Pawn break in the
center of the board.

This move is not terrible,
however it may not have
been Black's most vigorous
follow-up in this position.

"It is still not clear as to
which answer is Black's
best ..." - S. Tartakower.

[Probably better was: (>/=)
RR8...a6! ; 9.a3!? h6 ;
10.Bh4 Re8 ; 11.Bd3 dxc4 ;
12.Bxc4 b5 ; 13.Ba2 Bb7 ;
14.0-0 c5÷ ; (unclr, maybe "2")
when Black has nearly
equalized here.]

9.a3! , (The purpose?)
White plays a move that has
prophylactic aims, perhaps
with several ideas in mind:

#1.) Prevent any pin/exchange
(of White's Knight on c3) which
starts with ...Bb4 by Black.

#2.) Now that the White Queen
is on c2, it might be a good idea
for White to prevent a Black
Knight from getting to the
b4-square.

#3.) White's LSB now has a new
hiding square on a2, which might
be followed up by Bb1 and then
Rubinstein has mating threats
against the Black King.

#4.) Maybe Rubinstein is thinking
about playing b2-b4, gaining
space and this also discourages
Black from playing his standard
break of ...c7-c5.

#5.) I saw one game in the DB -
sometime in 2013 - where two
masters played this system.
The first player got tremendous
Q-side play with b2-b4. This
was followed by re-posting
the Rooks to b1 & c1. Then

White played b4-b5, with a really smashing game.

Several authors liked this move so much that they awarded it an exclamation mark - GM S. Tartakower.)

"Much better than 9.Bd3, and the best way to continue in the fight for the tempo." - GM Savielly Tartakower.

[RR9.Bd3 , - Fritz 13.]

[. *****

RR9.a3 , (colorized var.)

---> For the video.

"Note how the a-pawn is a high-class waiting move for White."]

9...h6! , (Asking the question.) Black "kicks" White's DSB. (This forces White to make a decision about the placement of his Bishop. Further, Black gains space, gets a "luft" square for the Black King and does all of this with no loss of time.)

[One {former} student recommended that Black play his immediate break on the center ... which, in theory, should not be a bad idea: (</=) 9...c5!? ; ('?!') 10.cxd5 exd5 ; 11.Be2² , (White is better.) and the first player holds the upper hand because Black will get either an isolated QP or the "hanging pawns" structure. [Tartakower recommended 9...a6!; here, instead of the continuation played in the actual game.]]



I award this move an exclamation mark ...

for a couple of reasons:

A.) It is the first choice of strong chess engines like Fritz 13, Houdini and Deep Shredder.

B.) Several old books and magazines universally condemned this move!

.
.

.

10.Bf4! , (Centralization.)

White plays a nice move, it hits the key e5-square and also prevents Black from getting any ideas about playing for the center break of ...e7-e5.

.

This Bishop is also very annoying for the second player ... it makes it hard for Black to generate any meaningful game plan with this DSB (dark-squared B) slicing through the heart of his position.

.

(10.Bf4! - GM S. Tartakower.)

.

[RR10.Bh4 , - Fritz 13.]

.

.

10...dxc4!? ; (hmmm)

Black surrenders the center ... without even being asked.

(Normally, Black waits until White has played $\text{N}d3$ before playing this move ... in order to {first} gain a tempo by forcing the White LSB to move a second time.)

[Probably the following moves were all a slight improvement over the text move:

A.) 10...Qa5. - Fritz 13.

B.) 10...Ne4 - Deep Shredder.

C.) 10...Nh5!?! - Houdini.]

.

In Black's defense, the idea of ...d5xc4; is a standard idea for Black in the QGD, and allows the second player to begin a process whereby he can eventually free his QB from its prison of Pawns ... most of which are (now) currently located on light squares.

.

.

11.Bxc4 Nb6!? ; (What the!?!?)

Black is trying to get his pieces out and get some play as well.

.

[I think a fair improvement would probably have to be the following game: (>/=)

RR11...a6 ; 12.0-0 b5 ;
 13.Be2 Bb7 ; 14.h3² ,
 when White should have a
 small edge in this position.

.
 Zurab Sturua (2450) -
 Andrei Kharitonov [D64]
 URS-ch YM Tallinn, 1981.
 (0-1 in 41 total moves.)]

[.

11...Nb6 ; (colorized var.)
 ---> For the video.

.
 "Perhaps the one good thing
 about moving the Knight to
 the b6-square is that it does
 cause White to lose a tempo
 in order to preserve his LSB."]

(Diagram)

.
 Normally - all the books
 teach that this is a bad
 (inferior) square for this piece.
 [However, this move is the
 first choice of several engines,
 to include Fritz 13.]

.
 This is another one of those
 moves - in this game - that



was nearly universally
 condemned in many of the
 older chess magazines.
 (Whether it is really good
 or bad ... I leave for the
 reader to resolve for
 themselves.)

.
 .
 .
12.Ba2 , (prep, maybe -!')
 When I was a "Class C" player,
 a move like this definitely
 would have confused me.

.
 Today, I realize that this is
 a good move ...
 for the following reasons:
 #1.) It hits the center square
 of d5.
 #2.) It gets this diagonal killer

completely out of the way of White's other pieces.
 #3.) It prepares the retreat of the LSB to b1, setting up a killer battery on the important b1-h7 diagonal. (Once White has both his Queen and Bishop pointed directly at the Black King, mate threats will arise. To stop these mate threats, the second player will be forced to weaken his King-side position.)

[RR12.Bd3 , - Fritz 13.]

[.

12.Ba2 , (colorized var.)

---> For the video.

"Note that the Bishop on a2 is safe, but is still a long-range piece and projects its presence to the other side of the chess board."]

12...Bd6!? ; (nullification)
 Black exchanges off White's monster Bishop on f4, perhaps (now) with some preparation, the second player will be able

to accomplish the ...e7-e5; pawn break.

While Black's move appears to be good and completely logical, all the engines see a rather sharp rise in the overall evaluations of the current position on the chess board. (Black loses a significant amount of dark-square control by this exchange of the dark-squared Bishops here.)

"Under the slogan of simplification. But, as we shall soon see, this only simplifies the opponent's victory. Consistent was, of course, 12...Nbd5." - GM S. Tartakower.

[The following line had to represent a significant improvement over the course of the actual game:
 >/= ¹ 12...Nbd5! ; 13.Be5 Qa5 ; 14.0-0 Nxc3 ; 15.Qxc3 Qxc3 ; 16.Rxc3² , (with advantage) when White has a solid edge. However, it is not that large, and Black is in no danger of an immediate loss, as he was in the actual game.]

Seeing that he has no good square to retreat his QB to, Rubinstein goes ahead and swaps it off. [13.0-0, looks like an error, White gets doubled Pawns after Black swaps on the f4-square. The next three ply, (1.5 moves); look to be OK, and nearly best/forced for both sides.]

13.Bxd6 Qxd6 ; 14.0-0 Nbd7 ;
(Black retreats?)

Black is thinking about preparing the ...e7-e5 break, but this rather tame move does not appear to get the job done, although the strong engine, Houdini, seems to prefer this move over all the other alternatives here for Black.

"With the vain hope of ...e6-e5."
- GM Savielly Tartakower.

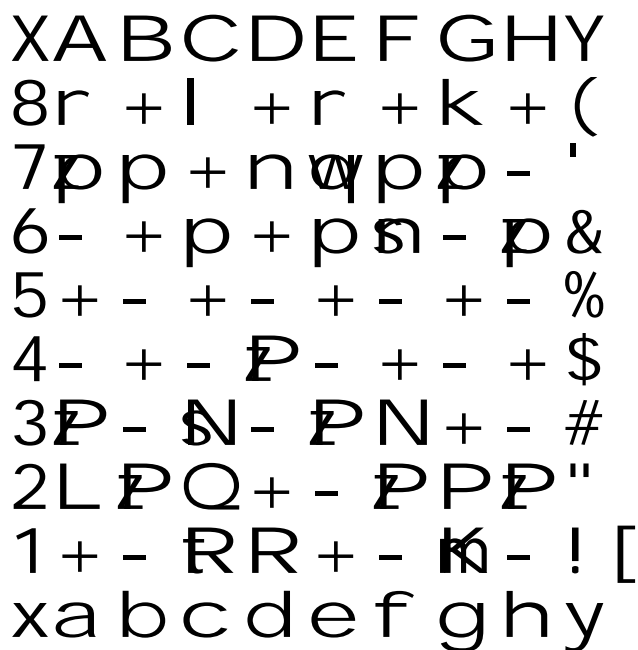
[Maybe RR 14...Rd8; or even RR 14...Nbd5; were a very, very slight improvement over the text move here.]

Now White discourages Black from playing ...e7-e5; by placing his Rook on d1. (Now 15...e5??;

would be a very bad move. After 16.dxe5, "+-" Black would not be able to recapture on e5, as his Queen would be hanging, as a result, Black would lose at least a piece.)

I should also note that Tartakower also awarded White's 15th move an exclamation point.

15.Rfd1! Qe7 ; (Too routine?)
Black gets off the line/file of White's Rook on the d1-square.



Maybe placing the Queen on c7, would have been a slight improvement over

the actual game. [After (>/=) 15...Qc7; Black would have better control of the vital e5-square.]

.
.
16.Ne5!! , (Why is it good?)
There are four basic principles that govern middlegame play. (Attack, try to get active posting of your pieces, make and exploit weaknesses, and also you should be looking for a favorable transition to the endgame.)

.
I have studied literally thousands of master-level games, and one of the first things that a strong player will do ... especially in closed or semi-closed positions ... is to place a Knight on a strong square. (Outpost!)

.
This move is worthy of TWO exclamation points, as it also may entail - by force - a Pawn sack by White. (Rubinstein had to look deeply into the position to ensure that this Pawn sack was going to work ... White could have easily been left down a Pawn, with nothing to show for it.)

.
I think that this is also ... yet another example ... of the second Morphy Principle in action. ("When you have all your pieces properly developed - and your opponent does not - then you should purposely try to open the game up as much as possible.")

.
[RR16.Ne4!?² , - Fritz 13.]

.
.
16...Nxe5 ; (Kill the intruder!)
It is only natural that Black would want to remove the offending Knight.

.
However, there is a well known rule of thumb that a defender should never open lines, so this exchange is a clear violation of that concept.

.
In Black's defense, the exchange on d5 appears very strong ... and even seems to win a pawn, as well. (Several chess engines - to include an earlier version of Stockfish - seem to prefer this exchange of Knights on e5.)

[RR16...Rd8 ; - Houdini 1.5]
 [RR16...Nd5 ; - Fritz 13.]

White has no good move other than to retake the Knight on e5.
17.dxe5 Ng4 ; (Hitting the §.)
 This move - which is the first choice of most chess engines - is criticized by Tartakower who comments that:
 "Better was 17...Nd7."

[RR17...Nd7!?! ; ('?!')
 18.f4± , - Fritz 13.

(This engine considers White's position to be won ... by nearly two full points, although White has not {yet} won any material here. However, White does have a very powerful attack, all of his pieces have full play, and there are an abundance of useful open lines. Meanwhile, most of Black's pieces are in bad or nearly useless positions.)]

18.Bb1! , (Battery!)

This move, which threatens a simple mate in two, (Qh7+,

and then Qh8#); virtually forces Black to push his KNP and further weaken his position.

One of the first books - published in America - was by the Irish-born Mason. In that historic volume, he advised players to try and get your pieces working together and pointed at the enemy King.

[Not as accurate would be:
 < 18.Qe4?! Qh4!„ ; (cntrply) when Black has a fair amount of play and may not be in any real danger at all.]

18...g6™ ; (100% forced.)
 Black had no choice at all, not in this position.

[Of course not:
 < 18...Nxe5?? ; 19.Qh7+ Kf8 ;
 20.Qh8# , (mate).]

[.

Also bad for Black was:
 < 18...f5?! ; 19.exf6 Nxf6 ;
 20.Ne4!± , - Fritz 13.
 when all the engines seem to indicate that White already

has a winning attack.]

.
.
Now ... rather than even try to defend his Pawn on e5, White simply sacrifices it.

19.Ne4! , (Hitting d6 & f6.)

Rather than try to defend, White freely sacrifices his important King's Pawn.

[< 19.Qe4!? Qh4!÷]

[.
19.Ne4 , (colorized var.)

---> For the video.

.
"Please observe White's total square dominance of all the (key) important squares here."]

.
.
19...Nxe5 ; (Booty!)

Black appears to have won a Pawn, however, now all of the engines are already finding the win for White.

.
Black has won material, but all of White's pieces are in very good positions. Probably the straw that breaks the back of the second player is that Hirschbein has a grossly

weakened Kingside ... in addition to his under-developed Q-side.

.
[RR19...Rf8 ; 20.Qc3+-]

.
.
20.Qc3! , (Attacking the Knight!)

One of the first things you learn to do as a chess player is to go after the unprotected piece.

.
Averbakh said - in his landmark book on tactics - that double attacks form the foundation of every good combination.

.
[RR20.f4!? Ng4 ; 21.Qc3² e5!„]

[.

20.Qc3 , (colorized var.)

---> For the video.

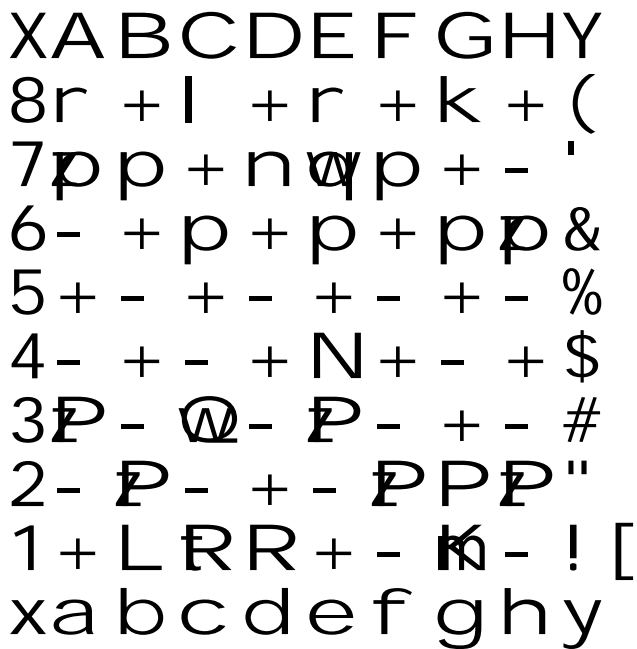
.
"Note how all the key squares are being attacked by White, Black does not have an adequate defense here."]

.
.
20...Nd7 ; (A safe square?)

Black retreats to a place that

looks secure. In addition, if Black had just a few moves, he could easily untangle his position and try to use his extra Pawn to win the game.

[RR20...Ng4 ; 21.h3 f5 ; 22.Nd6+- , (White's winning.) All the engines eventually find this line, and they universally agree that White has a decisive advantage here.]



Unfortunately for Black, the position has now become a tactical puzzle, with "White to move and win."

.
. With his next move, Tartakower comments that Rubinstein is: (giving) "An object lesson in how to make the most of a weak f6-square." (! - S. Tartakower.)

. Of course, after 21.RxN/d7!, Black cannot capture with the Queen, as 22.Nf6+, would fork both the King and the Queen and end the game. **21.Rxd7! Bxd7 ; 22.Nf6+ Kf8 ; 23.Nd5!** , "+/-" Black Resigns. The second player quits because he has to either lose his Queen ... or get mated. (23.Nd5!! - GM S. Tartakower.)

(Diagram)

. This game is a true jewel ... and one of the finest miniatures that I have ever deeply analyzed. All of Black's moves were logical and plausible, there was no gross blunder, Rubinstein simply outplayed Moishe Hirschbein.

```

XABCDEFGHIY
8r + - + r ♞ - + ( {
7p p + l ♞ p + - '
6- + p + p + p ♞ &
5+ - + N + - + - %
4- + - + - + - + $
3♞ - ♞ - ♞ - + - #
2- ♞ - + - ♞ ♞ ♞ "
1+ L R - + - ♞ - !
x a b c d e f g h y

```

.
.
.
Copyright (c) A.J. Goldsby, 2004.
All rights reserved.
(I started on this game in 2004 ...
but for whatever reason, I never
finished the task. For dropping
the ball on this one, I can only
apologize and comment that
it had to have been caused by
the great turmoil in my own
personal life.)

.
Copyright (c) A.J. Goldsby, 2013.
All rights reserved.

.
1-0

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

#1.) "The 1000 Best Short Games of Chess," by Irving Chernev. (Game # 926, page # 504.)

#2.) "Akiba Rubinstein, The Later Years," by IM's John Donaldsen and Nikolay Minev. (Game # 280, page # 160.)

#3.) "Rubinstein's Chess Masterpieces, 100 Selected Games," by Hans Kmoch. (Dover - 1960. This game is not there, but I did play over all the other QP games by the great Rubinstein.)

#4.) Shakhmatny Listok, 10/1927.

#5.) "Neue Wiener Schachzeitung." June, 1927.