

## Wielding the Katana

by Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE

Chess has a quality in common with Martial Arts, namely the ability of the one to simultaneously defeat the many. The most astonishing examples I have seen occur in the films of Japanese director, Akira Kurosawa, whose films *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro*, feature Toshiro Mifune as the invincible Samurai warrior, capable of overcoming a multiplicity of foes at one and the same time. The theme has continued, for example in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* two parter, where Uma Thurman wields her Katana (Samurai blade) with complete success against the Tokyo based gangsters of the Crazy 88 martial arts team.

During my chess career I have faced 107 opponents simultaneously at Oxford in 1973, in Leon, Mexico during the early years of this century, I confronted 19 opponents, without my having sight of the boards (a blindfold simul) while at the start of October this year I won 18, drew 2 and lost none against the Brighton Chess Club, in an event organised by local Maecenas, Michael Gyure. I do not claim any of these as records, the numbers have been vastly exceeded by many others, particularly in terms of blindfold exploits. However, the Brighton experience stood out for two reasons, a personal reassurance that (having survived from the Cretaceous Period) my little grey cells had not gone completely awol, and secondly that this exhibition included one of the most interesting games I have ever played, either one to one, or in simultaneous displays.

### Raymond Keene vs. Jan ven Sythoff

Simultaneous display vs Brighton Chess Club (x20)

#### 1. d4 e6 2. Nf3

Of course, I could have invited the French Defence with 2. e4.

#### 2... f5

I was always pleased to see the Dutch Defence. In my entire career I nearly always defeated it, including a number of GM victims, with only one loss.

#### 3. g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 Be7 5. O-O O-O 6. c4 d6 7. Nc3 Ne4 8. Nxe4 fxe4 9. Ne1 d5 10. f3 c5?!

Both, a) 10... dxc4 11. Be3 Nd7 12. Qc2 Nf6 13. Qxc4 Nd5;

and, b) 10... Nc6 11. fxe4 Rxf1+ 12. Kxf1 dxc4 13. Be3 b5, deserved further consideration.

#### 11. fxe4

Perhaps a better try was, 11. cxd5! Qxd5 (11... exd5 12. fxe4 Rxf1+ 13. Kxf1 dxe4 14. Qb3+ Kh8 15. d5 Nd7) 12. Be3 cxd4 13. fxe4 Rxf1+ 14. Kxf1 Qh5 15. Bxd4 Qxh2 16. Bf2 Nc6 17. Qb3 Qh6 18. Nd3.

**11... Rxf1+ TN**

11... dxe4 had been previously played in Hollerman-Hauke, 1-0, Porz, 1987.

**12. Kxf1 dxc4 13. d5 Nc6**



Also of interest was, 13... exd5! 14. exd5 Bd6 15. Nf3 Qf6 16. Kg1 Bf5 17. Bf4 Nd7 18. Bxd6 Qxd6 19. Nd2 b5 20. a4 Qe5, with chances for both players.

**14. Bf4 exd5 15. exd5 Nd4 16. e3 Nf5?**

The text is an error. Black keeps the balance after, 16... g5 17. Be5 Nf5 18. Kg1 Bf6 19. Bxf6 Qxf6 20. e4 Nd4 21. Qh5 Bd7 22. Nf3 Qg7 23. Nxg5 h6, when White has hardly any advantage to speak of.

**17. e4 Nd4 18. Nc2?!**



Letting Black off the hook. Far stronger was, 18. e5! Bg5 (18... Bf5 19. e6 Bxf4 20. gxf4 Qd6 21. Kg1 Qxf4 22. Nf3 g6 23. Qe5) 19. e6 Bxf4 20. gxf4 Qd6 21. Qg4 Bxe6 22. dxe6 Rf8 23. e7 Rxf4+ 24. Bf3 Kf7 25. Qxg7+ Kxg7 26. e8=N+, when White's material advantage will prove decisive.

**18... Qb6?!**

The text has several merits: attacking b2, overprotecting d4 and d6, and enabling the Queen to swing over to the kingside. However, it was imperative to deter the advance of White's two central connected passed pawns: 18... g5 18. Be3 (18. Bd2 Bf6 19. Kg1 Bd7 21. Ne3 b5 22. d6 Bc6 23. a4 Qxd6 24. axb5 Nxb5 25. e5 Bxe5) 18... Bg4 20. Qxg4 Nxc2 21. Qe6+ Kg7 22. Bd2 Qd6 23. Qxd6 Bxd6 24. Rc1 Rf8+ 25. Kg1 Nd4 26. Re1 (but not 26. Bxg5 Ne2+!!), and Black has successfully clamped the centre.

### 19. Rb1?!

In the flurry of parallel activity, Black is the beneficiary of more additional lives than they may suspect: 19. e5! Bf5 20. Nxd4 cxd4 21. d6 22. Bd5+ Kh8 23. g4 Bd7 24. Rc1 Qc5 25. Bxc4 Bxd6 26. exd6, must win.

### 19... Bd7 20. Ne3 Qa6?!

Black should play, 20... g5 21. Be5 Bf6 22. Bxf6 Qxf6+ 23. Kg1 Rf8 24. Qd2 Nf3+ 25. Bxf3 Qxf3 26. Re1 Qxe4 27. Nxc4 Qxc4 28. Qxg5+ Kh8, when White has nothing better than a perpetual check.

### 21. Kg1 Qxa2?!

Just wrong. Correct was 21... Rf8 22. e5 Qg6 (22... g5 23. d6 Bxd6 24. Bd5+ Kh8 25. Qh5 Be7 26. Be4 Nf5 27. Nxf5 Bxf5 28. Bxf5 Rxf5 29. Qe8+ Bf8 30. Bxg5 Qg6 31. Qxg6 hxg6 32. Bf6+ Kg8) 23. Kh1 (23. Rc1 b5 24. e6 Be8 25. Nc2 Rxf4 26. gxf4 Qf6 27. Qd2 Nf5 28. b3 c3 29. Qe2) 23... Bg5 24. e6 Bxf4 25. gxf4 Be8 26. f5 Nxf5 27. Nxf5 Rxf5 28. Qg1 Rf2 29. Qxf2, when White's slight edge is precipitously balanced.

### 22. d6 Bd8 23. e5 c3?



Losing! Black must preserve approximate parity with, 23... Bc6 24. h4 Bxg2 25. Nxb2 Bb6 26. Qf1 Qb3 27. Ne3 Rf8 28. Qxc4+ Qxc4 29. Nxc4 Kf7, when any advantage White may retain, is a minimal one.

My next move, winning Black's queen, is most natural but, perversely, a mistake which cedes to Black, a comfortable initiative. The text move presumes upon a protection which would overload the defence of the c2 square, as follows later.

I thought long and hard before delivering this check, probably my longest cogitation ever in a simul game. I was considering 24. bxc3 which seems to vary between crushing and checkmate:

24. bxc3 Ne2+ 25. Kh1 Nxc3 and now I had missed the resource 26. Qb3+ Be6 27. Qxa2 Nxa2 28. Rxb7 Nb4 (offering White the exchange) 29. h4 a5 30. Rxb4 cxb4 31. Bxa8 a4 32. Nd5 g5 (but not 32... Bxd5?? 33. Bxd5+ Kf8 {33... Kh8 34. e6 Bxh4 35. e7 Bxe7 36. dxe7 h6 37. e8+Q+ 38. Bf7 b3 39. Qg8#}) 34. e6 g5 35. Bxg5 Bxg5 36. hxg5 Ke8 37. Bc6+ Kf8 38. e7+ Kg7 39. e8+Q h6 40. Qe7+ Kg6 41. Qf6+ 41... Kh7 {41... Kh5 42. Bf3#} 42. gxh6 a3 43. Qg7#)

33. Bc1 with:

a) 33... gxh4 34. Nxb4 Ba5 35. Nd3 hxg3 36. Nf4 Bd7 37. Bd5+ Kg7 38. Kg2 h5 39. e6, wins the house;

b) 33... a3 34. Nxb4 a2 35. Nxa2 gxh4 36. Nb4 hxg3 37. Nd3 Ba5 38. Nf4 Kf7 39. Bf3 Bc4 40. Kg2 Ke8 41. Bg4; and White's additional piece enables a win with leisure.

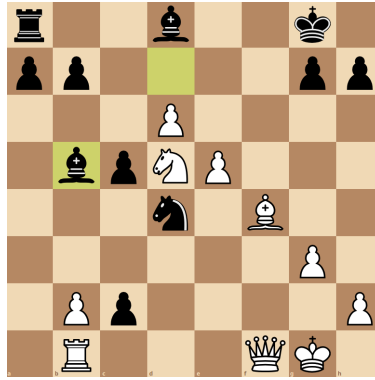
#### 24. Bd5+?



#### 24... Qxd5 25. Nxd5 c2!

This is the overload. I had of course seen it in my calculations , but not necessarily evaluated the concomitant situations with sufficient precision.

#### 26. Qf1 Bb5



This attempt to deflect the queen from the back row is better deployed via 26... Bh3, but in each case, 27. Qe1? would be met by 27... Nf3+ when the c-pawn promotes, unopposed, capturing the b1 rook.

**27. Rc1 Bxf1 28. Kxf1 Kf7 29. Be3 Rc8?!**

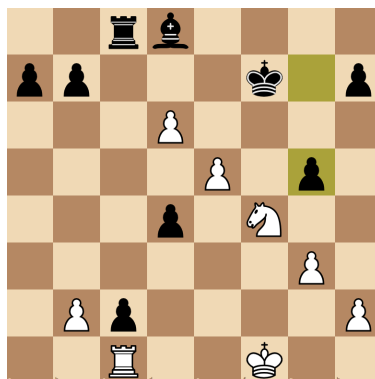
Better was, 29... Ke6! 30. Bxd4 Kxd5! 31. Bxc5 Rc8 32. b4 Ke6.

**30. Bxd4?!**

Restoring Black's initiative. After, 30. b4 b6 31. Bxd4 (31. Nf4 g5 32. Bxd4 cxd4 transposes) 31... cxd4 32. Nf4 g5 33. e6+ Kf6 34. e7 Bxe7 35. Nd5+ Ke5 36. Nxe7 d3 37. Ke1 Rf8 38. Kd2 Kxd6, White has an edge.

**30... cxd4 31. Nf4 g5**

The text is good, but, 31... d3 32. Nxd3 Ke6 33. h4 g5 34. b4 b6 35. Ne1 gxf4 36. Nxc2 Kxe5 37. d7 Rc4 38. gxf4 Ke6 is better. Black has a more than comfortable game.



**32. Nd3?**

In this position, White really required attack as the best form of defence: 32. e6+ Kf6 33. e7 Bxe7 34. Nd5+ Ke5 35. Nxe7 Rf8+ 36. Ke2 Kxd6 37. Rxc2 Re8 38. Kd3 Rxe7 39. Kxd4, when White faces a difficult rook and pawn endgame, a pawn to the worse.

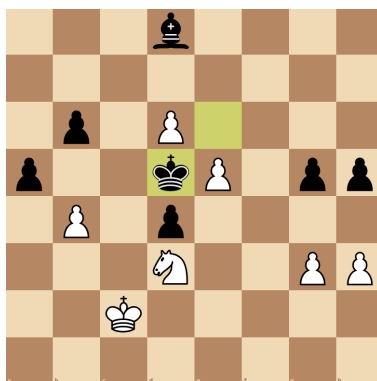
**32... a5?!**

Black hands back too much of his lead. Necessary was, 32... g4 33. Nf4 d3 34. Nxd3 Ke6 35. Ke2 Bg5 36. Nf4+ Kxe5 37. d7 Rc7 38. h3 gxh3 39. Nxb3 Bf6, when Black is still favourite in the following endgame.

### 33. Ke2 b6?

It is true to say that Black now has no residual advantage remaining; 33... a4 would have best preserved his advantage, for example, 34. Nb4 (34. Ne1 Ke6 35. Kd3 Kxe5 36. Nxc2 Rxd6 37. Ra1 b5 38. Nxd4 Rb6 39. b3 axb3 40. Kc3 b2) 34... Ke6 35. Kd3 Kxe5 36. Nxc2 Kxd6, with a comfortable lead.

### 34. Kd2 Rc6 35. Rxc2 Rxc2+ 36. Kxc2 Ke6 37. b4 h5 38. h3 Kd5??



Although not a blunder of material, this move causes the loss of the game. 38... b5 (38... h4 is also equal) 39. bxa5 Bxa5 40. g4 h4 41. Kb2 Kd5 42. Kb3 Ke6, and Black is level: neither side can make much headway.

### 39. b5! Ke6

After my next, I finally succeeded in creating a blockade which is a tribute to the strategies of both Nimzowitsch and his disciple, Petrosian.

### 40. g4 hxg4 41. hxg4 Kd5 42. Kb2 Ke6 43. Ka3 Kd5 44. Kb3 Ke6 45. Kc4 Black resigns 1-0

An extraordinary tussle, where Black put up a huge fight before finally succumbing in the endgame.

***Raymond Keene's book "Fifty Shades of Ray: Chess in the year of the Coronavirus", containing some of his best pieces from TheArticle, is now available from [Blackwell's](#). Meanwhile, Ray's 206th book, "Chess in the Year of the King", with a foreword by TheArticle contributor Patrick Heren, and written in collaboration with former Reuters***

For the British Chess Magazine (December 2023)

*chess correspondent, Adam Black, has also just appeared and is also available from the same source.*