

## **'I get my kicks above the waste-line sunshine!' Hastings 2010.**

By Philip Rossiter, with occasional contributions from Tim Rice and Bjorn Ulvaeus.

I left my partner behind in Denmark ('I'd let you watch, I would invite you, but the Queens we use would not excite you.'), managed to avoid the delays created by the coldest December in that country for 29 years, and took two flights, eventually landing at Gatwick Airport. Then a train to Brighton, then another train, and at about 3pm I arrived...at Hastings.

Hastings was quiet, and looked a bit run down ('Whaddya mean!...you've seen one crowded, polluted stinking town'). I found the place I would be staying at, a nice place called the Millfont Guest House, which was warm, dry, and clean and had nice people. Then I went to the beach to breathe the sea air...ever since I had begun to play chess, more or less from the time I first picked up a chess book, I had wondered, and dreamt about, this moment...what it would be like to play at Hastings.

I could not stay for the entire 86<sup>th</sup> International Chess Congress so I decided to play in the Christmas Morning and Christmas Afternoon tournaments, two of a series that players can play in if they don't compete in the Masters, the main tournament. The Congress was held at the Horntye Sports Complex, in a large room that looks like a basketball court. But now it was covered with chessboards. It was a good 15 minute walk from where I was staying, which suited me fine as I like to make my own way to a tournament and collect my thoughts before the games ahead. In the afternoon rounds, the Masters was also on so you could watch the GM's in action. The top four boards were all up on big screens ('this grips me more than would a muddy old river or reclining Buddha') and the other top boards were plugged in so you could follow them on the internet. It was great to see British players like Bernard Cafferty, Robert Bellin, and Aaron Summerscale in action.

As for my own chess, I had no expectations, as I had not played much over the board chess lately. As it happened, I played quite well, and over the two tournaments scored four wins, two draws and two loses ('not much between despair and ecstasy'), narrowly missing a prize in the Christmas Morning tournament. There were times during my games when I would think of the history here, and wonder 'What would Capablanca, or Botvinnik, or Tal, or Korchnoi do?' 'Not get into a position even remotely like yours!' was the usual response I would give myself.

My partner joined me on the last day, and while I played chess in the morning round, she was having breakfast with the Chairman of the Hastings Chess Club, gaining vital information such as 'where is a good place to get an evening meal in Hastings on New Year's Eve?' Fortunately for me, she also has considerable skill as a photographer, and so I have pictorial memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life. A childhood dream fulfilled. On the last evening we went to a wonderful Italian restaurant, and then watched the fireworks of New Year, with floodlights on the old Castle, before going to a bar for a New Year's drink, the bar did play music we knew so we danced for a while to bring in 2011.

Friendly people, a sense of wonder and history...and chess, chess, chess...a fantastic way to end 2010.

Here is one of my games.

**86<sup>th</sup> Hastings International Congress Christmas Morning Tournament, Round 2, 29/12/2010.**

**I. Deswarte-P. Rossiter**

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. c3 Nf6 4. d3 Nc6 5. g3 Qc7 6. Bg2 g6 7. a4 Bg7 8. O-O O-O 9. Na3 a6 10. Bd2 Rb8 11. b4 cxb4** I wasn't overly impressed with White's opening, which seemed passive. It was here that I hit upon an idea... **12. cxb4 Nxe4** Rybka hates this of course and thinks White is winning. That's probably true, but White has to play a bit of chess to prove it. **13.dxe4 Bxa1 14. Qxa1 f6 15. Rc1 Qd8 16. Nd4** 16. Qd5+ Kg7 17. Qd5 Bg4 18. Nc4 or 16. b5 axb5 17. Qc4+ Kg7 18. Nxb5 were better according to Rybka. My opponent seemed to want to exchange pieces...surely this is better for the side with the Rook, in this case Black. **16...Nxd4 17. Qxd4 Be6 18. Bf1 Rc8 19. Bc4 Bxc4 20. Rxc4** Rybka still likes White but I was feeling more comfortable. With the exchange of Rooks White's checkmating potential goes down considerably. **20...Qd7 21. Kg2** 21. Bh6 Rfd8 22. Qc4+ was surely better. **21...Kg7 22. Rxc8 Rxc8 23. Nc4** White presses but Black has no real weaknesses, I was feeling Ok here. **Qe6 24. Nb6 Rc6 25. Nd5 Kf7 25...Rc2 26. b5 axb5 27. axb5 Rc2 28. Qd3 Rc8 28...Qc8 29. b6 Rc6 30. Bc3 h5** I played this move feeling confident that I couldn't lose this game, and as a way of telling my opponent that. He seemed to sense this, as now he blunders, losing the e-pawn when, for the first time in the game, Black is the only one playing to win. **31. Qf3 Rc4 32. e5** 32. Qd1 or 32. Nc7 were his last hope. **32...dxe5 33. Qd3** Oh dear, this loses of course. White plays on, out of inertia perhaps. **33...Qc6 34. f3 e6 35. Qxg6+ Kxg6 36. Ne7+ Kf7 37. Nxc6 Rxc6 38. Ba5 Rc5 39. Be1 Rb5 40. Bf2 Rb2 41. h4 Kg6 42. g4 Rb4 43. gxh5 Kxh5 44. Kh3 Rb3 45. Kg2 f5 0-1.**