

SADLER ON BOOKS

by MATTHEW SADLER



Aaaagh!! No!!!! NOOOOO!!!! Finally it has happened. After years of telling irate customers that failed hard disk drives are a fact of life and that it is the customer's own responsibility to back up his own data, I've also been struck with disaster. Just this morning in fact as I was settling down to write this article. Strangely enough, this is the first time that I've ever had a hardware problem with one of my PCs so in a way it is almost quite healthy. All those things countless customers told me do seem to be true - 'It was working perfectly the night before', 'I didn't change anything', 'I hadn't had any problems before'. I've heard these things many times and disbelieved them more than once! I'm just glad it happened to me and not to my wife - otherwise, I could never have got rid of the suspicion that she had done **something** terribly unwise! Unfortunately, this has happened to the PC where all my main applications were installed so I've suddenly lost my voice recognition software, Chessbase, Fritz and Word. Thankfully, I have pretty much everything backed up (thank God for Norton Ghost) but even with the best preparation, you're always looking at a few hours to get yourself up and running again, and these are hours that you really resent: this was not your fault!

What really frightens me about all this though is thinking about how I used to do things while I was still a chess professional. With virtually no computer knowledge

and even less interest in computers, I just took my laptop all over the world, dropping it on hotel floors, making no backups and trusting in Windows 95 to keep my analysis safe. What's even more frightening is that I don't think that I was the only one.

Well, in any case, I decided to make something positive out of the experience and try to think how I would cope if such a disaster happened while playing a tournament abroad, far away from my Chessbase CDs! You can buy a new hard drive, you can get a new OS, but you probably won't find Chessbase, Fritz and all the games you need in the average computer shop. Well as long as you can get access to the Internet for a short while, then life as a chess professional without Chessbase and Fritz is just a couple of downloads away. Chessbase Lite - a downloadable version of Chessbase - is the obvious 'boring' choice but this does have certain limitations (e.g. a maximum database size of 8,000 games). Wandering slightly off the beaten track, I came into the world of **Scid**, **Xboard** and **Crafty**.

Scid (short for Shane's Chess Information Database) is a free chess database program downloadable at <http://scid.sourceforge.net>.

As well as a Windows version, there is also a Unix/Linux version which is the one I'm using for this article. Scid works with chess databases in the pgn format which is the most common format for chess games on

the Internet (Chessbase's cbh format is proprietary so many other chess programs often cannot work with it). The place to download these is (where else?) at TWIC (www.chesscenter.com/twic/twic.html). Pgn files are in fact just text files which opens up a few nice possibilities: not only can you just open them and view them with a simple text editor, you can also do any of the things that you can do with normal text files. For example, I had downloaded about 200 TWICs on my hard drive. With a couple of simple DOS or Linux shell commands it was possible to merge all these files into one large database - no need for a special chess program for this. So the upshot was that after a few minutes, I was back in business with a chess database of 260,000 games.

Of course, another key function in a chess database program is the option to analyse games with a chess engine. Scid comes pre-installed with **Scidlet** but it is also possible to download **Crafty** (I got it from <ftp://ftp.sylvan.com/pub/chess>) and once installed, it fits in seamlessly with Scid. Don't know whether Crafty is as strong as Fritz, but judging from the result of a few games against it, it is strong enough!

Finally, looking for a replacement for Fritz? Then, you can play

against Crafty by installing a board interface for it and that is **Xboard** (downloadable from www.tim-mann.org/xboard.html).

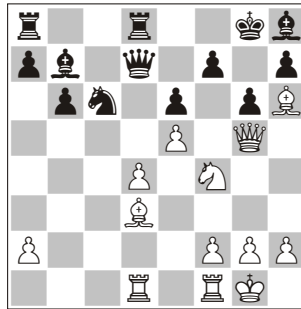
You can even use this interface to play on the ICC instead of the standard interface provided by the ICC which I am definitely going to try sometime.

So far, as you can maybe tell from my enthusiasm, I've had a great time using Scid. It is extremely fast (the searches are going like lightning despite the fact that the PC I'm using now is much inferior to my main PC) and the features are great. For example, you can easily build up a repertoire file specifying which lines you do play and which lines you are not interested in and then run this file against your database. Checking up on some Veresov examples, I made a small repertoire file specifying 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♙g5 c5 while excluding 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♙g5 c6, 3...♗bd7, 3...♙f5 and 3...e6. Eight seconds later, I had 28 games to play through. Transpositions (e.g. 1.d4 d5 2.♘c3 ♘f6) were also taken care of. Very nice! The 'Help' is also very helpful which is always important when using an unfamiliar interface.

Anyway, back to the books. **Secrets of Chess Defence** by Mihail Marin (Gambit) is the author's first chess book. Each of the 16 chapters is dedicated to a different type of defensive scenarios such as 'Fortresses', 'The King as a Fighting Unit', 'Economy of Resources in Defence' and 'Two Minor Pieces for a Rook'. I have the highest praise for this book. The examples selected are original and largely unknown (to me at least, but I imagine for most people). Bareev-Nisipeanu from

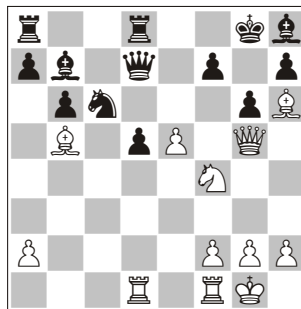
the Elista Olympiad 1998 and Marin-Shirov from the Spanish Team Championship 2001 are two examples that spring immediately to mind. The author's comments are honest and personal, never afraid to admit that he missed something during a game, and always clearly the result of a deep analysis of the material. I liked the book so much that I used it as the basis for one of the analysis sessions that we do at my local chess club the evening before a match. This was actually quite interesting. We concentrated on this position:

Filip-Kortchnoi, Bucharest 1954



position after 18...♗c6

In this position, Filip played the interesting **19.d5 ed5 20.♙b5**.

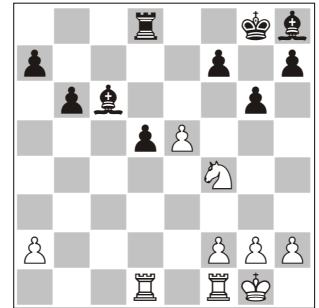


During the analysis session, I tried to stress the point that Kortchnoi would have had to evaluate his response in his head without being able to move the pieces. This is always the most difficult part of course: you tend to spend as much time trying to 'feel' the possible

positions at the end of your calculations as in the calculation leading up to them. After some time spent enjoying the variations, I offered the following three choices:

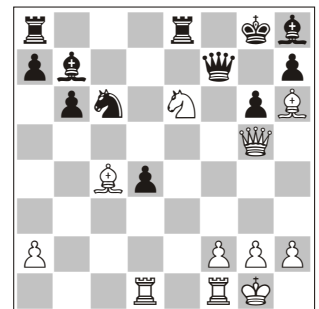
1. The bad (maybe not yet losing?) endgame:

20...♗e7 21.♙c6 ♗g5 22.♙g5 ♙c6 23.♙d8 ♗d8.



2. The really risky (but maybe survivable?) middlegame:

20...d4 21.e6 fe6 22.♙c4 ♗e8 23.♗e6 ♗f7 (23...♗e6 24.♗fe1 ♗e8 25.♗e6 ♗e6 26.♗e1 ♘d8 27.♗d8! ♗d8 28.♙e6 mate is a neat variation).

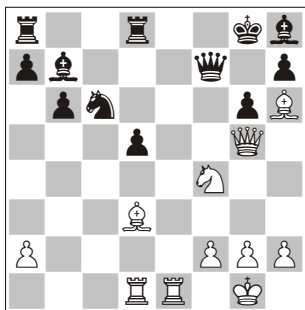


3. Breaking up the attack but losing material:

20...♙e5 21.♙c6 ♙f4 22.♗f6 ♙h6 23.♙d7 ♗d7.

Which should you choose? It was quite interesting to see that opinions were divided between all the options. There was no real enthusiasm for the third option, even with the benefit of being able to see the

final position 'live' on the board. It was also interesting to see how much effort was required to get past the initial analysis of '20...♙e5 21.♙c6 ♘f4 22.♟f6 winning'. Marin makes a number of interesting observations (as well as providing a lot of analysis): '[After 20...♙e5 21.♙c6 ♘f4 22.♟f6 ♙h6 23.♙d7 ♚d7] the position has changed radically. When playing *zwischenzugs* such as 22.♟f6, a typical psychological mistake is to believe that the opponent has missed it. This usually results in a mistaken evaluation of the new situation and subsequently, on an inappropriate plan.' He also makes another very clever observation about White's choice of 20th move: 'If Filip had foreseen the game continuation, he might have chosen 20.e6!? ♟e7 21.e7 ♟f7 22.♚fe1



which was later recommended by Kortchnoi. The most important thing from a psychological point of view is that the character of the position would have remained the same, with White creating threats on the kingside.'

I really like this last point: it is a very practical way to help you to make decisions between a large variety of tempting possibilities when attacking (always one of my biggest problems). If possible, try to go for the possibility that doesn't require

you to change your current mindset. And of course, the defender should be aiming precisely to set this sort of challenge to the attacker. And Kortchnoi managed it of course! It's actually not too surprising that within 6 more moves, Black was clearly better and eventually won.

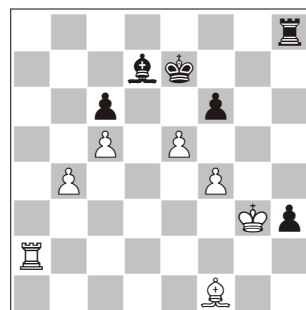
The Veresov by Nigel Davies (Everyman). Great name, decent book, crap opening. A long time ago, I got very enthusiastic about the Veresov - you know the sort of thing: 'Good surprise weapon, catch people off guard, avoid theory, blah blah blah.' I lost my enthusiasm once I saw that after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♙g5 c5, probably the best I had was to play 4.e3 cd4 5.♙f6 gf6 6.♟d4 e6 with an extra tempo on the Chigorin. Hmmph. Davies makes a case for 6.ed4 ♘c6 7.♟h5 but it doesn't look very convincing to me. I think you'd really need a player of the caliber of Mark Hebden to play this: the sort of man who can spend the necessary time playing ♘b1, c4 and ♘c3 whilst maintaining a poker face (and winning in the end!). Nowadays, it seems that they're playing it with ♘ge2 and g3 but I do find it a little hard to swallow. All the same, take a look at this fun game: Mensch-Gofshtein, Paris 2000

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙g5 c5 3.♘c3 d5 4.♙f6 gf6 5.e3 e6 6.♘ge2 ♘c6 7.g3 ♟b6 8.dc5 ♙c5 9.♙g2 ♟b2 10.0-0 ♟a3 11.e4 de4 12.♘e4 ♙e7 13.♘d4 ♘d4 14.♟d4 e5 15.♟d2 f5 16.♘g5 ♟c5 17.♙d5 ♙g5 18.♟g5 ♟d5 19.♚ad1 ♟a5 20.♚d6 ♟c7 21.♚fd1 ♙e6 22.♟g7 ♚c8??
 22...♟e7 should still be fine for Black after 23.♟e5 ♟c8!! (Crafty).
23.♟h8 ♟e7 24.♟e5 ♟c3 25.♚d7 1-0

We now move on to three slightly more conventional opening books, all of them excellent in their own way: **The Queen's Indian** by Jouni Yrjölä and Jussi Tella (Gambit) is a typical Gambit opening offering: thorough, not especially easy to read but - as far as I can tell from the lines I know - extremely good. **Starting out: the Pirc/Modern** by Joe Gallagher (Everyman) and **Play the Najdorf: Scheveningen style** by John Emms (Everyman) are also extremely professional books in typical Everyman style. I always like the work of these two authors and they have both done an extremely good job of making move orders and transpositions extremely clear to the player inexperienced in each particular opening. I can never understand how such a chaotic player as Joe can produce such ordered and structured books, but long may he continue!

Finally as a dessert, the following position taken from a book that just came in and which I will review next time. Just have to share this one with you: what is White's best way to win?

Tal-Trifunovic,
Palma de Mallorca 1966



position after 44...f6

Answer in the next review! Have fun! ■