

# **SABOTAGING THE SICILIAN French & Caro-Kann with 2.b3**



Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski

# **Sabotaging the Sicilian, French & Caro-Kann with 2.b3**

**Jerzy Konikowski  
&  
Marek Soszynski**



**2018  
Russell Enterprises, Inc.  
Milford, CT USA**

Sabotaging the Sicilian, French and Caro-Kann with 2.b3  
by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski

ISBN: 978-1-941270-83-7 (print)  
ISBN: 978-1-941270-84-4 (eBook)

© Copyright 2018  
Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski  
All Rights Reserved

No part of this book may be used, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any manner or form whatsoever or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the express written permission from the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

Published by:  
Russell Enterprises, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3131  
Milford, CT 06460 USA

<http://www.russell-enterprises.com>  
[info@russell-enterprises.com](mailto:info@russell-enterprises.com)

Cover by Janel Lowrance  
Editing and proofreading by Al Lawrence

Printed in the United States of America



# Table of Contents

Signs & Symbols	5
Introduction	7
Section 1: Sicilian Defense – Introduction	9
Chapter 1: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 ♖c6	11
Chapter 2: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 ♗f6	18
Chapter 3: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 d6	21
Chapter 4: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 e6	26
Chapter 5: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 b6	33
Chapter 6: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 d5	37
Chapter 7: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 g6	40
Chapter 8: 1.e4 c5 2.b3 a6	44
Game 1: Spassky-Quinteros, Linares 1981	46
Game 2: Spassky-Hernandez, Buenos Aires 1978	47
Game 3: Kramnik-Inarkiev, Nizhny Novgorod 2013	49
Game 4: Morozevich-Popov, Moscow 2014	51
Game 5: Skvorzov-Kariakin, Moscow 2012	52
Game 6: Carlsen-Leitao, Caxias do Sul 2014	53
Game 7: Gara-Porat, Budapest 2009	55
Game 8: Morozevich-Gundavaa, Dubai 2014	56
Game 9: Morozevich-Moiseenko, Dubai 2014	57
Game 10: Gelashvili-Arutinian, Tbilisi 2001	59
Game 11: Carlsen-Svidler, Moscow 2009	60
Game 12: Morozevich-Potkin, Moscow 2014	61
Game 13: Gelashvili-Arman, Batumi 2002	63
Game 14: Aronian-Van Wely, Monte Carlo 2006	64
Game 15: Velickovic-Ilic, Vrnjacka Banja 2014	65
Game 16: Morozevich-Ipatov, Dubai 2014	67
Game 17: Venkatesh-Shyam, New Delhi 2014	67
Game 18: Macedo-Mekhitarian, Joao Pessoa 2015	69

Game 19: Murphy-Rowan, Birmingham 2015	69
Game 20: Paichadze-Yakovich, Kavala 2010	70
Section 2: French Defense – Introduction	72
Chapter 9: 1.e4 e6 2.b3 e5	74
Chapter 10: 1.e4 e6 2.b3 d5 3.♘b2 without 3...dxe4	76
Chapter 11: 1.e4 e6 2.b3 d5 3.♘b2 dxe4 4.♗c3 ♗f6	79
Chapter 12: 1.e4 e6 2.b3 d5 3.♘b2 dxe4 4.♗c3 f5	87
Chapter 13: 1.e4 e6 2.b3 b6	91
Chapter 14: 1.e4 e6 2.b3 ♗f6	94
Chapter 15: 1.e4 e6 2.b3 ♗c6	97
Game 21: Papaioannou-Atalik, Athens 2001	100
Game 22: Christiansen-Kraai, ICC INT 2010	102
Game 23: Grochtmann-Beckmann, Werther 2008	104
Game 24: Rennert-Ster, DESC 2002	105
Game 25: McShane-D’Costa, Hinckley Island 2009	107
Section 3: Caro-Kann Defense – Introduction	109
Chapter 16: 1.e4 c6 2.b3 e5	111
Chapter 17: 1.e4 c6 2.b3 d5 3.exd5	114
Chapter 18: 1.e4 c6 2.b3 d5 3.♘b2 dxe4 4.♗e2	118
Chapter 19: 1.e4 c6 2.b3 d5 3.♘b2 dxe4 4.♗c3 ♗f6 5.♗ge2 ♗g4	121
Chapter 20: 1.e4 c6 2.b3 d5 3.♘b2 dxe4 4.♗c3 ♗f6 5.♗ge2 ♗f5 6.♗g3 ♗g6	125
Chapter 21: 1.e4 c6 2.b3 d5 3.♘b2 dxe4 4.♗c3 ♗f6 5.♗ge2 ♗f5 6.♗g3 e6	128
Game 26: Orlyanskaya-Volodin, Pardubice 2008	132
Game 27: Semenova-Nogin, Kiev 2008	134
Game 28: Alexandria-Heemskerk, Subotica 1967	135
Game 29: Vasiukov-Bronstein, Baku 1961	137
Game 30: Kaikamdzozov-Spiridonov, Sofia 1964	139
Afterthought: Scandinavian Defense	141
Bibliography	143

# Introduction

This book covers 1.e4 followed by 2.b3 against the Sicilian, French, and Caro-Kann defenses (and we even consider the Scandinavian Defense too as an afterthought). It is the first full book to do so. We examine much of what are, as well as what we think should be, the main lines; in addition, we draw attention to interesting sidelines and review some old as well as very recent theory, but in particular we selectively survey what actually happens in modern practice over the board, whether or not that is best play. What we cannot be, though, is comprehensive; this is only one volume, after all. Nevertheless, there's more than enough material here, very much of it new or rare, to instruct and enthuse any 2.b3 newcomer and to update and re-inspire every 2.b3 old-timer.

We are optimistic for White, and we concentrate on his best continuations while trying to be objective. It is in that spirit that we say that 2.b3 is sound against the Sicilian, fun against the French, and curious against the Caro-Kann. In all three cases we are trying to sabotage Black's play. The word "sabotage" legendarily derived from throwing a clog into the machinery, or in other words putting a monkey wrench in the works; here the wrench is a queenside fianchetto.

White aims his light-square bishop toward the right flank; he typically delays ♖g1-f3 so that he may play ♗d1-f3 or advance his f-pawn, and use his light-square bishop to build a full-scale kingside attack; he often castles queenside, hoping for a kingside pawn storm. Yet, despite all these characteristics of 2.b3, for a little while White still retains the option of d2-d4 for a more conventional-looking 1.e4 opening.

In adopting 2.b3 for yourself, as detailed in this book, you will be covering the three major semi-open defenses, which is most of what a 1.e4 player can expect to face. Moreover, with the rise of speedier chess – Armageddon deciders, online lightning, and so on – all players ought to have opening surprises in their arsenal.

If you can force the opponent to stop and think in the opening, while you already know what you are doing, so much the better for you in the middlegame and endgame when there is less time.

Finally, spare a thought for your humble writers. There are countless transpositions and permutations possible in the games and variations that follow. We draw attention to some but we couldn't possibly flag them all. Our fear is that somewhere or other there will be a position reached by different move orders and to which we give contrary assessments. If you find such a position, then commiserations to you and apologies from us.

Jerzy Konikowski  
Marek Soszynski  
November 2017

## Section 1

# Sicilian Defense

## Introduction

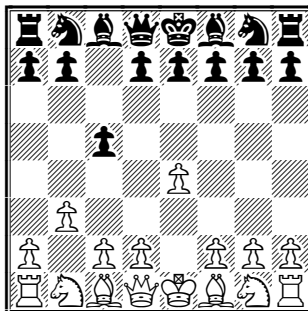
Most recorded chess games start 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3. After that it is a struggle both in practice and in theory for White to achieve a safe advantage. The various Open Sicilian lines involving 2.♘f3 followed by 3.d4 attract an overwhelming amount of analysis that expands daily. So, when even grandmasters are exploring exotic alternatives such as 2.a3 and 2.♗a3, ordinary players should not be embarrassed at using the less exotic and positionally sounder 2.b3 – they can refer to the examples of very strong players including Magnus Carlsen, Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik, Alexander Morozevich, Nigel Short, and Boris Spassky, who have all occasionally played 2.b3 or 3.b3 with success against the Sicilian Defense.

Although rare (particularly so when the Sicilian was not as popular as now), 2.b3 has been played for ages. Lionel Kieseritzky lost twice with it against Adolf Anderssen in London in 1851. However, the first strong player to use it very often was the Polish-born, Israeli International Master, Moshe Czerniak (1910-1984). If the line is named for anyone, it should be for Czerniak (and certainly not for Robert Snyder, despite

his eponymous 1977 booklet). More recently, the strongest grandmaster to employ it the most is the Georgian, Tamaz Gelashvili (b. 1978); notably, he has played 2.b3 against the French Defense too.

There were times when 2.b3 was tried out simply as a reasonable, anti-theoretical move, with improvised play by both sides thereafter. In particular, White hoped to dissuade Black from playing a kingside fianchetto, as in the popular Dragon Variation. Nowadays, though, nothing escapes the attention of computers loaded with multi-million game databases and multi-processing engines. Therefore, we have to approach it with analytical seriousness.

### 1.e4 c5 2.b3





## Sabotaging the Sicilian, French & Caro-Kann with 2.b3

By developing the bishop to b2, White will apply pressure down the long dark-square diagonal toward the opposition king's likely home. In addition, this fianchetto starts to clear the queenside's first rank so that the game may see opposite-side castling and mutual attacks. Note that White may be able to play an early f2-f4 in many lines. Of course, both sides have various options, which we will investigate. For instance, White may prefer to castle kingside; he might fianchetto his other bishop too, or place it on b5 or c4.

Anyway, below are Black's reasonable replies to 2.b3. Note that a variety of move orders will lead to transpositions within and between the chapters, and the thematic b2-b3 may actually be played later than move two; 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.b3 is a common order. Generally, though, we recommend that White delays the deployment of his f1-knight in order to maintain the option

of f2-f4 or ♖d1-f3, and also to avoid some over-analyzed lines.

**Chapter 1** 2...♗c6

**Chapter 2** 2...♗f6

**Chapter 3** 2...d6

**Chapter 4** 2...e6

**Chapter 5** 2...b6

**Chapter 6** 2...d5

**Chapter 7** 2...g6

**Chapter 8** 2...a6

Note that 2...e5 is likely to transpose, in particular to Chapters 1 and 3.

Here we may as well mention the inventive but ineffectual 2...h5?!. Paichadze-Savchenko, Aix-les-Bains 2011, continued 3.♗b2 ♗c6 4.♗f3 d5 5.exd5 ♖xd5 6.♗c3 ♖d8 7.♗b5 ♗h6 8.0-0 a6 9.♗xc6+ ♗xc6 10.♗e5 ♗h6 11.♗e4 f6 12.♗c4 h4 (12...e6 13.♖f3!) 13.♗e1±. Black got lucky later, when White went wrong after sacrificing a knight.

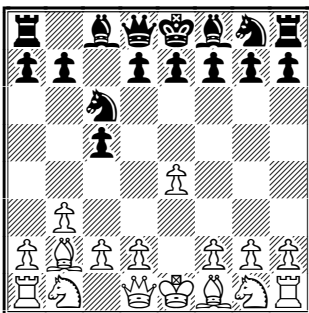
# Chapter 1

## 1.e4 c5 2.b3 ♞c6

### 1.e4 c5 2.b3 ♞c6

Black develops his queenside knight first, most probably with the idea of supporting a pawn on e5 to cut the scope of the bishop that White is about to place on b2.

### 3.♞b2



### 3...e5

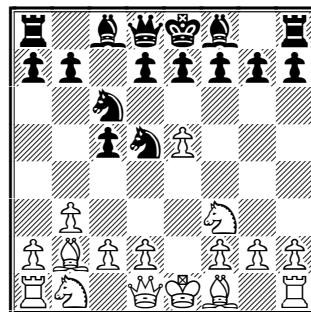
This is Black's usual plan, but of course he has other options:

- I 3...♞f6
- II 3...a6
- III 3...d5
- IV 3...d6

In addition, positions arising from 3...e6 are studied in Chapter 4.

### I 3...♞f6 4.e5 ♞d5 5.♞f3

White could attack the c6-knight to break up Black's queenside. Here is an example: 5.♞b5 ♞c7 6.♞xc6 dxc6 7.♞c3 g6 8.♞e2 ♞g7 9.♞e4 0-0 10.0-0 ♞e6 11.♞e3 ♞a5 12.♞b1 ♞d8 13.♞e2 ♞d4 14.♞xd4 cxd4 15.♞xd4 ♞xe5 16.♞xe5 ♞xe5 17.♞c3 ♞xe3 18.dxe3 ♞e6 19.e4 g5 20.♞e2 ♞g7 21.♞d4 ♞d7 22.♞c1 ♞g6 23.♞d2 ♞g4 24.f3 c5 25.♞b5 ♞xd2 26.♞xd2 ♞d8+ 27.♞e3 ♞e6 28.c4, with a slightly better endgame, Svedberg-Larsson, Tylosand 2015.



### 5...g6

- (a) 5...d6 6.♞b5

## Sabotaging the Sicilian, French & Caro-Kann with 2.b3

(a1) 6...♙d7 7.exd6 e6 (Black must complete development but could try 7...exd6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♙xg7 ♖g8 10.♗h6 ♗h3 11.♗e1 ♗d7 12.♗h1 ♗f6 13.c3 ♗xg2+ 14.♗xg2 ♗h3 15.♗e2+ ♗de7 16.f4 ♗xh6 17.♙xc6+ bxc6 18.♗a3 0-0-0 etc.) 8.♗c3 ♗f6 9.d4 ♙xd6 10.0-0 cxd4 11.♗xd4 ♗c7 12.♙xc6 bxc6 13.h3 0-0 14.♗f3 ♗h2+ 15.♗h1 ♗e5 16.♙ad1 a6 17.♗d3 ♖fd8 18.♗f3 ♗e8 19.♗c4 ♗d6 20.♗e4 ♗xe4 21.♗xe4 ♗e7 22.♖fe1 ♗c5 23.♗g4 f6 24.♗d4 ♙xd4 25.♖xd4 ♖xd4 (25...♗f7!?) 26.♗xd4 ♗f7? (26...e5) 27.♗e4 h6 28.♖e3 ♖d8 29.♙xf6! gxf6 (29...♗xf6 30.♖f3+-) 30.♗h7+ ♗f8 31.♗h8+ ♗f7 32.♖g3 1-0 Yap-Sasikiran, Al-Ain 2014.

(a2) 6...♗g4 7.h3 ♗h5 8.♗c3 ♗f4 (the ending after 8...♗xc3 9.♙xc6+ bxc6 10.♙xc3 d5 11.e6! d4 12.♗e5! ♗g6 13.exf7+ ♙xf7 14.♗xf7 ♗xf7 15.♗f3+ ♗g8 16.♗xc6 ♗c8 17.♗xc8 ♖xc8 18.♗b2 g6 19.♗e2 ♗g7 20.♗d3 is better for White) 9.g4 (if 9.g3 ♗e6 and Black's control of d4 gives him comfortable play) 9...♗g6 10.d4 a6 (in the game Short-Thorfinnsson, Reykjavik 2000, White, after 10...e6? 11.♗d2 ♗d5 12.♗xd5 exd5 13.0-0-0 ♗e4 14.♖he1! ♗b6 15.♙xc6+ ♗xc6 16.♗g5, achieved a decisive advantage) 11.♙xc6+ bxc6 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.♗c1 ♗d5 (13...♗e6!?, eyeing d4, must surely be better) 14.♗h4 (14.e6 f6! is not so clear) 14...e6 15.♗xg6 hxg6 16.♗e4 c4! (16...♗a5+ 17.♗d2 ♗b4 18.♗f1!± Skvorzov-Barski 2012) 17.bxc4 (17.♗f1!?) 17...♗a5+ 18.♗d2 ♗a4 19.♗e2 ♖b8, with counter-chances for Black.

(a3) 6...♗b6 7.a4 (7...♗a4!?) 7...a6 8.a5 ♗c7 9.♙xc6+ ♗xc6 10.exd6 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗h5∞.

(b) 5...e6 6.♗b5 (6.♗c3 Game 1: Spassky-Quinteros, Linares 1981) 6...♗b6 (see how this line's expert, Boris Spassky, responded to 6...♗e7 in our next example, Game 2: Spassky-Hernandez, Buenos Aires 1978) 7.♙xc6 ♗xc6 8.0-0 a6 9.c4 (White should strike with 9.d4!?) 9...♗f4 10.d4 cxd4 11.♙c1 (11.♙xd4 b6 12.♗c3 ♗b7, with counterplay) 11...♗g6 12.♖e1 ♙c5 13.♗a3 b6 14.♗xd4 ♗c7 15.♗b2 ♗b7 16.♗g4 h5 17.♗g5 ♗e7 18.♗e3 h4 19.h3 ♖h5 20.♗d2, Morozevich-Kretov, Moscow 2014; now Black should simply play 20...♖xe5!, with the advantage.

### 6.♙c4 ♗b6 7.♗b5 ♗g7 8.♙xc6

White does not need to part with this bishop so readily. He could play 8.0-0!? 0-0 9.♖e1, and then even retreat the bishop to f1 as appropriate.

### 8...bxc6 9.0-0 c4

9...0-0 10.♖e1 d6 11.h3 a5 Nakamura-Grischuk, Moscow 2012; now best is 12.exd6!? exd6 13.♙xg7 ♗xg7 14.c4 a4 15.♗c3, intending d2-d4.

### 10.♖e1 0-0 11.d3

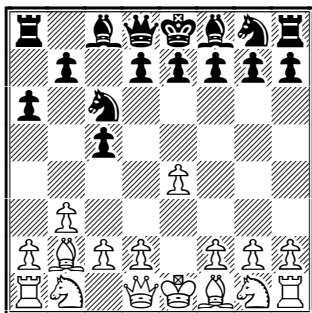
White should force a decision about the c4-pawn with 11.♗e2, not fearing 11...♗a6 12.♗a3 c3, etc.

11...cxd3 12.♗xd3 d6 13.c4 dxe5 14.♗xd8 ♖xd8 15.♗xe5 ♗f5 16.f4 ♗d7 17.♗a3 ♗xe5 18.♙xe5 ♗f8 19.h3 h5 20.♗b1 f6 21.♗b2 ♗f7 22.♗c3 e6 with the advantage and an eventual win, Morozevich-Nakamura, Dubai (rapid) 2014.

## Sicilian Defense

### II 3...a6

Black prepares ...b7-b5 and hopes to make White think twice about how to develop his f1-bishop. This line is related to those in Chapter 8.



### 4.f4

(a) 4.♟c3 ♟f6 (4...e6 5.f4 b5 6.♟f3 d5 7.exd5 exd5 8.♞e2+ ♟ge7 9.0-0-0 ♟g4 10.♞f2 ♟d6 11.♞e1 f6 12.h3 ♟d7 13.g3 g6? [13...♟a5] 14.♟xb5! ♟g7 [14...axb5 15.♟xb5 ♞b8 16.♞xc5 ♟f7 17.a4+-] 15.♟xc6 ♟xc6 16.♟a3 d4 17.♟e4 ♟xe4 18.♞xe4 f5 19.♞e2 0-0 20.♟e5, with a decisive advantage, Lakos-Nikolova, Germany 2014) 5.♟f3 (also possible is 5.f4 d6, transposing to Game 8) 5...d6 6.d4 ♟g4 7.d5 ♟d4 8.♞d3 ♟xf3 9.gxf3 ♟d7 10.f4 g5 11.♟e2 gxf4 12.♟xd4 ♟e5 13.♞h3 cxd4 14.♟xd4 ♟g7 15.0-0-0 ♟d7 16.♞h5 ♟f8 17.♞g1 ♟g6 18.♟xg7+ ♟xg7 19.e5 ♞c7 20.e6 ♞c3 21.♞b1 fx6 22.♟d3 ♞f6 23.♞g5 winning, Salcedo-Bancod, Quezon City 2014.

### (b) 4.♟f3 e6

(b1) 5.c4 ♞c7 (5...♟e7 6.♟e2 d5 7.exd5 exd5 8.d4 ♟xd4 9.♟xd4 cxd4 10.♞xd4 ♟c6 11.♞e3+ ♟e7 12.cxd5 ♟b4 13.0-0 0-0 [13...♟c2? 14.♞e4 ♟xa1 15.♟xg7+-] 14.♞g3 ♟f6 15.♟xf6 ♞xf6 Paichadze-Shanava,

Baku 2007, 16.♟c3±) 6.g3 d6 7.d4 cxd4 8.♟xd4 ♟f6 9.♟g2 ♟xd4 10.♞xd4 ♟e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.e5 (12.♟c3 ♞b8 13.♞ac1 ♟fd8 14.♟fd1 b6 15.♟a3 ♟b7 16.♟b4!? Kumar-Donnelly, Olympiad 21 ICCF 2016) 12...dxe5 13.♞xe5 ♞xe5 14.♟xe5 ♟d7 15.♟d4 ♞b8 16.♟c3 b6 17.♞ad1 ♟d8 18.♟c6 f6 19.♟fe1 ♟f7 20.♟a4 ♟c5 21.♟xc5 ♞xd1 22.♞xd1 bxc5 23.f4 ♟b7 and Black has weathered the storm, Romanov-Can, St Petersburg 2013.

(b2) 5.d4 cxd4 6.♟xd4 d6 (6...♞a5+ 7.♟d2 ♟f6 8.♟xc6 dxc6 9.♟d3 ♟b4 10.a3 ♟xd2+ 11.♞xd2 ♞xd2+ 12.♞xd2 c5 13.b4 ♟d7 14.bxc5 ♞c8 15.♞ab1 ♟c6 16.f3 ♟d7 17.♟d4± Ramnath-Saranya, Chennai 2015) 7.♟d3 ♟f6 8.0-0 ♟e7 9.c4 ♟d7 10.♟xc6 ♟xc6 11.♟c3 0-0 12.♞e2 ♞a5 13.♞fe1 ♞ab8 14.a3 ♞h5 15.♟d5 (15.♞xh5!? ♟xh5 16.g3±) 15...exd5 16.exd5 ♟xd5 17.cxd5 ♞xe2 18.♞xe2 ♟d8 (18...♟xd5 19.♟c4+-) 19.♞d1 ♞e8 20.♞xe8+ ♟xe8 21.♟f5 ♟f6 22.♟c1 with a slight preference for White, who in fact went on to win, Gelashvili-Danelia, Dallas 2013.

### 4...e6

(a) 4...d5 5.exd5 ♞xd5 6.♟c3 ♞d6 7.g3 (White can stir the pot by 7.♟d3!? ♞xf4 8.♟f3 ♟f6 9.0-0 e6 10.♞e2 and ♞a1-e1) 7...♟f6 8.♟g2 ♟d4 9.♟ce2 g6 10.♟f3 ♟xf3+ 11.♟xf3 ♟g7 12.♟e5 ♞b6 13.♟c3 0-0 14.♞e2 ♟d7 15.0-0-0 ♟c6 16.g4 ♟xf3 17.♞xf3 ♞ac8 18.h4 ♞c6 19.♞e2 c4 20.h5 cxb3 21.axb3 b5 22.hxg6 b4 (22...fxg6 23.g5 ♟h5 24.♟xg7 ♟xg7 25.♞xe7 ♞xf4∞) 23.g5 fxg6 24.gxf6 exf6 25.♞h2 fx5?? (vital was 25...h5! 26.♟d4 ♟fd8 27.♞g1 f5 28.♟xg7 ♞xg7 29.♞g5 bxc3 30.dxc3 ♞xd1+ 31.♞xd1 ♞c7, with a level ending) 26.♞xh7+ ♟f7 27.fx5 bxc3