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The Complete Hedgehog

Volume II



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Introduction to Volume 2

Hello, dear friend! I present for your examination the second volume of *The Complete Hedgehog*. In the first volume I only managed to tell you about the English Hedgehog. I admit that I got carried away in my efforts to tell you everything I know, and so I depicted my most favorite little beast in detail and color. But the English Hedgehog is only a small part of a huge spiny family. I will not be able to describe all its relatives quite as thoroughly... although I do have a secret desire to write ten volumes under the overall title, “A Little About the Hedgehog”! But it’s impossible to publish such a collection. So, for now, I shall have to content myself with two component parts of a single whole.

There are many Hedgehogs in this world, and they come in all shapes and sizes! It can be a big predator, strong and aggressive. Here, for example, look at how well armed the beast is:



It’s no shark, of course, but still it inspires respect. Don’t go near it – it’ll bite!

Introduction

But sometimes it's a tiny, completely defenseless creature. One time, traveling in the Crimean mountains, my daughter Evgenia and I found a young one like this. I almost stepped on it, but something stopped me at the last minute.



There were no adult hedgehogs nearby, so we decided that the little one was lost. This warm little ball of life had absolutely tiny needles, a small nose, and a pink belly. We took a picture with it and let it go in the same place where we'd found it. Who knows, perhaps it survived after all, and became big and strong like the one in the previous photo. We will never know its fate.

For readers who have not studied Volume 1, I urge you to find a copy and definitely read it – at least the first, introductory chapters: “The Hedgehog, Its Birth and Development;” “Getting to the Hedgehog Opening Structure;” “The Hedgehog Philosophy;” “Space and Order;” and “Evaluating a Position.” They are not very long and are very directly relevant to this volume. Remember – the Hedgehog is a unified whole! The same general rules apply in all its varieties. But I will not repeat myself here, so I suggest that the reader

should have an awareness of the conceptual foundations of the Hedgehog and the relevant terminology.

Hedgehogs on the chessboard differ from each other in principle depending on White's setup. As a rule, Black acts according to the well-known canonical plan, adapting to the external environment, i.e. to White, who thanks to his abundance of space has a very wide choice of pawn structures, piece configurations, and attacking plans.

In the book that you hold in your hands, I examine in detail the Hedgehog with a pawn on f3, the Hedgehog with a bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal, and the Queen's Indian Hedgehog. Along with the already examined English Hedgehog, they form an imposing foursome that encompasses all the thematically important strategic and combinative ideas of this opening. This knowledge will enable you to find your way successfully in the most unexpected and strange bristly hybrids. In accordance with the physical principle of communicating vessels, the similarities in structure inevitably lead to the flow of useful methods from plans that are very familiar to you, into new ones that you have not studied before.

Part 1

The Hedgehog with a Pawn on f3

Let us begin studying the woodland beast by establishing what is distinctive about placing a pawn on f3 and a bishop on e2 in White's camp. Black arranges his pieces in the standard way, as in all the other Hedgehogs.

The scheme's baptism by fire took place in the famous game K. Opocensky – F. Saemisch, Bad Pistyan 1922, which I showed you at the beginning of the first volume – we will return to it with a new cognitive perspective. Visible in that first battle are the embryos of many fruitful ideas, which were revealed in their full splendor only in the late twentieth century.

In my exposition of the material I put in the forefront the logic of the system's development, leaving the chronology as a secondary matter. We will move from simple to complicated, from moves that suggested themselves to more accurate ones, from dream to reality! We will synthesize the overall picture from its individual elements.

In the first section I will show you the main set of plans and ideas for Black, when possible in their pure form, so that you can understand what's worth aiming for – and feel the true taste of the Hedgehog! Feel its charm...

At the same time, I will intentionally withhold some of the opening nuances from you at first. Because every morsel has its moment! Above all it is essential to master the general scheme of play and to understand the counterattack mechanism for Black in the middlegame.

Then in the second section we will study the most constructive plans for White and the full-fledged battle between the two sides at the cutting edge of modern (at the time of writing this book) opening theory. Without illusions or omissions.

Naturally, in the course of our work I will indicate all the historically significant authors to you, noting their contribution to the development of the theory of this opening.

Section 1



Black's Main Ideas

Tell me honestly, do you want to know the whole truth about the Hedgehog right away? That is, without embellishments or simplifications! For those who really want it, I will tell you that the Hedgehog is a difficult system and playing it isn't worth your while...

The whole truth, without exceptions, is like poison – it can make you sick. For example, if an elementary school kid, picking up a calculus textbook for the first time, starts enthusiastically getting his teeth into differential equations – then most likely he'll go insane! Or if he's lucky, he'll simply give up math.

To benefit from this work you should get to know the truth gradually, step by step. Maybe even one single grain at a time! From simple to complicated. From obvious to subtle. But at the beginning you just have to want to do it.

That is why I am going to deliberately divide what I myself know, and want to pass on to you, into tiny portions. At first this will look like a lie! So as not to give you tons of information, not to poison you with that very truth. Like an experienced spy, I must remain silent about what's important and give the impression that I don't know anything – missing the most important moments in the games and even failing to mention the mistakes! I hope that over time the knowledge you receive, like the pieces of a puzzle, will fall into place – and the overall picture will become clear to you.

When we undertake any difficult task, it is good to know why it is necessary and find a serious reason. No one goes looking for precious stones in a mountain unless they are sure or at least hope that there is treasure hidden in its depths! That is why I will start by showing you how the famous treasure hunters achieved their finds, and how brilliant and valuable their victories turned out to be. Then you, too, will want to retrace the winners' footsteps and discover your own personal gold veins. After mastering the necessary skills and accumulating experience, you'll be able to use them for many years.

We will focus all our attention on fruitful ideas for Black. What sensible piece setups are there for him, what positional and combinative possibilities? I will stress that I am not going to examine weak, cooperative games in which White himself persistently helped Black. No! We'll see absolutely rational play by White, but without severe, concrete pressure. Careful play, but not the best – it is noticing the difference between those which indicates that you are becoming an expert on the Hedgehog.

First, let us try to understand what Black can do if White simply stands still in the center and undertakes no purposeful plan. Playing to hold on and restrict has always been a popular strategy. Hedgehog players will encounter it in 50 years' time and in 100 years' time. It's all very simple: White holds onto his space advantage, pays careful attention to Black's activities, and reinforces his position without rushing... The most important consequence of this kind of play is that Black gets plenty of time to create the best piece configuration and to organize counterplay.

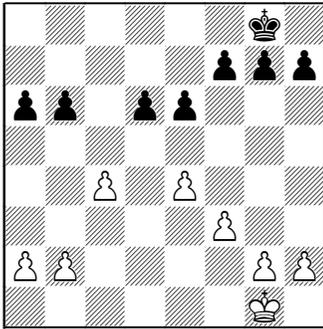
Chapter 1-1

The Main Ideas of the Structure

The Canonical Setup for Black

Opening the Center with the Attack ...d6-d5

Let's have a look at the standard pawn configuration in the f3-Hedgehog.



As usual, Black's pawns on the sixth rank control all the important squares on the front-line fifth rank. His pieces are hiding under the pawn quills, only occasionally coming into view. What can we say on our first look at the structure?

The d6- and b6- pawns are tied down. White puts pressure on b6 with his bishop from e3, his knight from a4, and sometimes also his queen from the b3 or f2 squares. The d6-pawn will clearly be directly threatened by a rook from d1, and sometimes also by a bishop from f4.

On the other hand, these weaknesses are also a strength for Black! His war doctrine envisages the attack ...d6-d5 – this weapon is characteristic

of all Hedgehogs, and it is particularly relevant to the setup with a pawn on f3. The reality is that the alternative attack ...b6-b5, so popular in the English Hedgehog, is difficult in this system, as there is always a bishop controlling the b5 square from e2. Yet that same bishop has no way of preventing the thrust ...d6-d5. That is why there is no equivalence between these two pawn jabs here and there never can be.

It's more difficult to find weaknesses in White's camp, but they are there! As usual, the c4-pawn is somewhat weak, being pressured by a black rook from c8. And although the e2-bishop always supports the little one, Black can bring his knight out to e5 and double the pressure! Another flaw in White's position is an intangible one – the dark squares in the center and on the kingside were weakened as a result of the move f2-f3. As we will soon see, in the event of the position's opening up, that defect – though it may appear rather abstract at the moment – can fatally affect the health of the white king.

In the chapter in the first volume titled, "Getting to the Hedgehog Opening Structure," we showed numerous examples of the f3-Hedgehog arising from the most varied openings:

the Sicilian Defense, the English Opening, the Nimzo-Indian Defense, and so on. I won't repeat myself. I will simply point out again that this kind of pawn structure is theoretically relevant, and by no means a trick of the mind.

In the interests of getting down to business we will leave two-thirds of the twentieth century aside and start looking right away at the most important games from the era when the modern Hedgehog established itself – from the early '70s.

The first battle trials of the key configuration with a pawn on f3 at the high, elite level were the games of the wonderful Yugoslavian experimenter... no, not Ljubomir Ljubojevic, but Milan Matulovic! In the mid-'60s he regularly played the Hedgehog, arising from the Sicilian Defense: **1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 e6 5.♞b5 d6 6.c4 ♞f6 7.♞1c3 a6 8.♞a3 ♟e7 9.♟e2 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♟e3 ♟b7**, and moreover as a rule he aimed for the canonical piece configuration for Black by means of **12.f3 ♞e5! 13.♞c1 ♞ed7!**.

It's difficult to say why others didn't follow his example, although Matulovic's practical achievements were impressive. Evidently conditions weren't ripe yet! But when in the early '70s Ljubojevic and his comrades-in-arms brought new interesting ideas into Black's play, and without being restricted by the setup with the white knight on a3 – a really attractive, tasty chess dish was cooked up, which attracted many people.

The Yugoslavian maestro, unlike his predecessors, did not leave what

he'd started half-done, did not get disheartened after his first failures, and consequently made advances on the road to knowledge of the Hedgehog. He endured both creative failures and zeroes on the tournament table, he kept looking and gradually felt his way to fruitful plans for Black – as a result becoming a powerful icebreaker who smashed the frozen sea of ignorance and mistrust of the Hedgehog.

The first thing which suggests itself for Black, and which was used in practice by the fathers of the system, is **the standard rook setup on c8 and e8, with a dark-squared bishop retreat to f8**. Then Black looks for the right moment for the ...d6-d5 thrust, which allows him to develop wild piece activity and attack the white king. If he doesn't manage to implement this plan by the time he comes out of the opening, then he will have to maneuver and wait, wait, wait...

In accordance with the above, the gallery of achievements in the f3-Hedgehog opens... with the most horrible defeat for Black! But despite the misfire, the course of the battle put connoisseurs of the spiny beast in an optimistic mood.

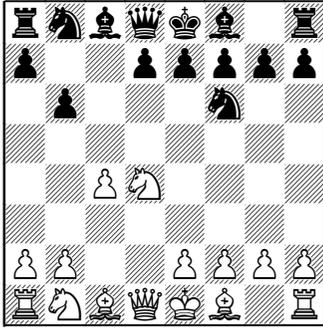
V. Hort – L. Ljubojevic

Wijk aan Zee 1973

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 c5 3.♟f3 cxd4 4.♞xd4

This position comes about most often from the English Opening by means of 1.c4 c5 2.♞f3 ♞f6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4.

4...b6



The bishop immediately goes to b7, before its white opponent has managed to come out to g2. With that move order the English Hedgehog cannot work. The other popular move in our times, 4...a6, also leaves open the possibility of setups in the spiny systems. But the well-known continuations 4...e5, 4...e6, and 4...dxc6 take the play out of the zone of the Hedgehog's habitat.

5. dxc3 b7 6. f3!

An excellent way of limiting the black bishop's aggression on the long diagonal and guaranteeing the appearance of a pawn on e4.

In the game V. Smyslov – M. Botvinnik, Moscow 1967, the legendary players built a prickly structure by means of 6. g5 d6 7. f3 b7 8. e4 e6 9. d2 a6, but they didn't find the strength within themselves to fight seriously: 10. e2 e7 11. 0-0 0-0 12. f3 d1 e8 13. a1 c7 14. h1 f8 15. f1 b8 16. e3 f8 17. f2 a8 18. b3 e7 19. a4! d5 20. a2 a5! 21. db5 cd7 22. d4, and in that position full of life a draw agreement followed.

Everything indicates that this was an accidental episode for the former world champions that had no sequel.

So there is no point in studying their encounter in detail.

6...d6

A straightforward battle for space would have led to an advantage for White: 6...d5 7. cxd5 dxd5 8. dxd5 cxd5 9. e4, and the f1-bishop comes out to b5 to great effect.

Even worse is 6...e6 7. e4 d5? 8. cxd5 exd5 9. b5+ bd7 10. e5!.

7. e4 e6 8. e3

The ideal position for this bishop. In this kind of structure White occasionally brings his bishop to b2, but, in my view, that is clearly a mistake. Only on e3 can the bishop compensate to some degree for the weakness of the dark squares that was created as a result of the move f2-f3. Furthermore, it has a concrete target on b6.

8...e7 9. e2

Coming out one square further – 9. d3 – provokes activity from Black's queen's knight, which appears on e5 or c5 with tempo. Furthermore, on d3 the bishop impedes the work of the major pieces on the d-file.

9...0-0 10.0-0 db7

This is better than coming out to c6. It's extremely important for Black to keep as many pieces as possible on the board. The Hedgehog has to retain its resilience and potential for the forthcoming complications in the center. By positioning itself on d7, the knight doesn't interfere with the work of the bishop on b7 and the rook on c8 for the glory of his quilled majesty.