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# Introduction

Welcome to this Anti-Sicilian repertoire. The Sicilian is Black's most common response to 1 e4 and a real headache for most players. Of course we can try the Open Sicilian, but this requires a thorough knowledge of each different Sicilian variation, as well as keeping on top of all the theoretical developments. If you are a Sicilian player yourself, you will also realize another practical problem: the lines of the Open Sicilian require so much knowledge and experience that players on the black side spend their whole lives debating different move order nuances on internet forums and studying new games so that they are very well prepared for their particular variation. Thus a Dragon player will have played hundreds of games in the Yugoslav Attack and understands the resulting positions, but a white player also has to contend with the Najdorf, the Sveshnikov, the Classical, the Kan, the Taimanov and many other lines. However, often those who employ the Sicilian as Black have failed to look at the sidelines in any depth.

In this book I am suggesting lines that promise White good strategic chances. I've also tried to keep Black's counterplay under wraps, which will really frustrate the average Sicilian player. Of course I have also made sure that we have attacking chances of our own. With this repertoire you will be able to dictate the nature of play yourself and with greater understanding in and greater experience of the resulting structures, your results should be very promising.

## The Structure of this Book

I am recommending a repertoire with 3 ♗b5 against 2...d6 and 2...♘c6. The Moscow Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 ♗b5+) has a reputation as a route to drawish positions, but as I prove in this book, White can play these positions for a win and its reputation is ill deserved. A lot of Sicilian players really dislike playing the arising positions as they are deprived of their typical counterplay.

The Rossolimo Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5) is the most theoretical part of the repertoire and has been discussed in countless super-grandmaster games. I advocate taking on c6 and playing against Black's structural weaknesses on the queenside. In both the Rossolimo and the Moscow Variation we will be utilizing many ideas of the Russian Grandmaster Sergei Rublevsky.

Against 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 it is harder to find a good Anti-Sicilian, but I like my suggestion of the King's Indian Attack. The lines examined in the two chapters on it are more ideas-based than theoretical, but have served me well for the past ten years. Finally, I wrap up my coverage of the Sicilian from White's perspective with a look at Black's minor lines.

## **Acknowledgements**

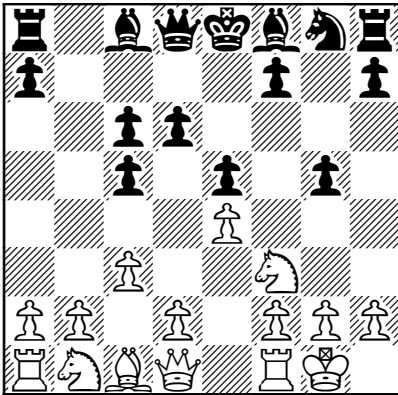
This book would not have seen the light of day had it not been for the help of many people. First of all, thanks to John Emms and Richard Palliser for help with the technical side of the book and providing reference material. I wish to thank all the members of the Wellington Chess Scene, particularly Lin, Ross, Alan, Maria and Bill. Without them my sojourn in New Zealand would have been a lot less enjoyable. An extra thanks to Bill for his book suggestions, his software and most enjoyable coaching sessions. Finally, I wish to thank my fiancée Sue who put up with my long hours writing this book, while I was fighting against the deadline(s) and wasn't much help doing anything else. She also helped out with the initial editing of the book, allowing you, the reader, to see this book before 2012!

I hope you will find this repertoire useful. I have certainly had fun finding some new ideas in order to cause Black problems. Indeed, I hope you manage to employ my new ideas before Sicilian players check the book too!

Gawain Jones  
London,  
March 2011

**Game 29**  
**G.Kasparov-J.Polgar**  
 Prague (rapid) 2002

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♙b5+ ♘c6 4 ♙xc6+ bxc6  
 5 0-0 e5 6 c3 g5?!



Excessively risky. Polgar was in a must-win situation in the mini-match which prompted this move, but as we will see, Kasparov wasn't going to shy away from a challenge.

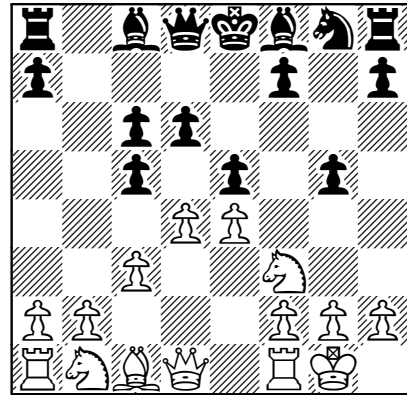
As well as 6...♗f6, 6...♙g4 and 6...f5, Black has also been known to try:

a) 6...♗e7 is another rare approach, but was seen in one high-rated clash: 7 d4 ♗g6 was P.Svidler-V.Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2005, when I like the immediate 8 dxe5 ♙a6 (8...♗xe5 9 ♗xe5 dxe5 10 ♖xd8+ ♙xd8 11 c4 is very ugly, especially as Black has no knight to stick on d4) 9 ♙g5! f6 (both 9...♖c7 and 9...♖b8 can be dealt with by 10 exd6) 10 exf6 gxf6 11 ♙e3 ♙xf1 12 ♖xf1 which gives White great compensation for the exchange, with a pawn and play on the light squares.

b) 6...♙a6 has also been tried from time to time: 7 ♖e1 ♙d3 (the only logical continuation of Black's previous move; 7...c4 is dealt with efficiently by 8 ♗a3! ♖a5 9 b4!

cxb3 10 axb3 ♖c7 11 d4 and already White has taken full control, M.Etmans-C.Baljon, Leeuwarden 1997) 8 ♖e3 c4 9 ♖a4 ♙c8 was seen in I.Rausis-M.Bosboom, Loewenstein 1997, and here White has a choice of which pawn to take: either 10 ♗e1 or 10 ♗a3 f5 11 exf5 ♙xf5 12 ♗xc4, both with a clear advantage to White.

7 d4!



The move that ...g5 was designed to prevent. If Kasparov can successfully get away with this move then I think we can hope our opponents play ...g5 too. White sacrifices a pawn, but in return Black has a lot of holes in her structure.

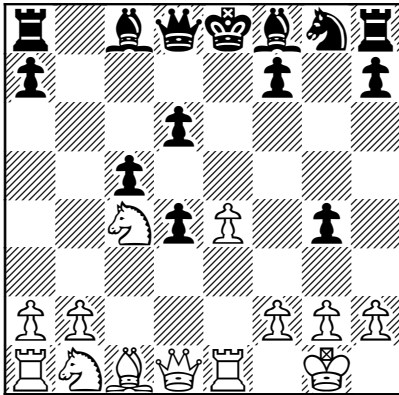
**7...g4 8 ♗fd2 cxd4 9 cxd4 exd4 10 ♗c4 c5**

Polgar holds on to her extra pawn so that she at least has something for her suffering.

The first time this position was reached Black tried 10...♙g7, but following 11 ♙f4 ♙e6 (11...d5 12 ♗d6+ ♙f8 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 15 ♖xg4 is equally horrible) 12 ♗xd6+ ♙f8 13 ♗d2 (13 e5!? ♖b6 14 ♗d2 ♗e7 15 ♗2c4 ♖c5 16 b4 also gives White a great initiative) 13...♗e7 14 ♗b3 ♖b6 15 ♙c1 ♗g6 16 ♙g3 h5 17 ♗f5 in S.Rublevsky-A.Stripunsky, Kazan 1995, Black had a really ugly position. Initially I thought White had great compensation for his sacrificed pawn,

but then realized he's not even a pawn down! And, yes, this is yet another idea invented by Rublevsky. You could do a lot worse than following his recent games for any updates on the theoretical status of the whole 3 ♖b5(+) Sicilian.

**11 ♖e1!**



Preparing the e4-e5 break. Black may have an extra pawn, but already her pawn structure has been severely compromised, she's a long way behind in development and there's no safe haven for her king. Initially my computer liked Black's extra pawn, but even the materialistic machine is less optimistic now.

**11... ♗e6 12 ♘ba3 ♗e7**

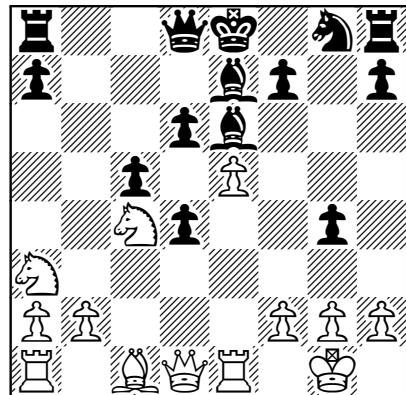
Alternatively:

a) 12...h5 was an attempted improvement in a recent game. It surprises me that anyone chooses to play this way with Black, but perhaps in this case 6...g5 was over-the-board inspiration? L.Genova-A.Nikolova, Dupnitsa 2010, saw 13 ♗f4 ♘h6 14 b4! ♗e7 and here White could win the pawn back with 15 ♖c1 g3!? (15...♘g8 16 e5! dxe5 17 ♗xe5 ♖h6 18 bxc5 ♗xc5 19 ♘b5 ♔f8 20 ♘cd6 ♗xd6 21 ♗xd6+ ♔g7 22 ♗e5+ ♘f6 23 ♘xd4 regains the pawn and leaves Black with no hope) 16 hxg3 ♘g4 17 bxc5 dxc5 18 f3 ♘f6 19 ♘b5 when White has an obvious

and clear advantage; indeed, the position is already close to winning.

b) After 12...♘f6 13 ♖a4+! (this looks very strong; instead 13 ♗g5 ♗e7 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♘xe5 with compensation was a line given by Kasparov) 13...♖d7 14 ♘b5 the threats of ♘xd6+ and ♘c7+ force 14...♗xc4 15 ♖xc4 a6, although 16 e5! axb5 17 exf6+ ♔d8 18 ♖d5 ♖a7 19 ♗f4 leaves White in total control.

**13 e5**



**13...d5**

Polgar tries to keep the position closed but Kasparov's next more or less refutes it. 13...dxe5 had to be tried, but obviously White has great play: 14 ♘xe5 ♖d5 15 ♘d3! (15 ♘xg4 ♘f6 wouldn't be so clear as Black has successfully coordinated her pieces) 15...♘f6 16 ♗h6 ♖g8 17 ♖a4+ ♗d7 18 ♖a5 and Black's king has been caught in the centre which spells trouble. For example, 18...c4 19 ♗xe7+! ♗xe7 20 ♖e1+ ♗e6 21 ♖c7+ ♖d7 22 ♖xc4 would leave White with great compensation for the exchange.

**14 ♘d6+! ♔f8**

Polgar had to continue her policy of taking the material even if 14...♗xd6 15 exd6 ♖xd6 16 b4!, as offered by Kasparov, looks terrible for Black. Black's dark squares are ruined and so her king will never find

## How to Beat the Sicilian Defence

safety. Psakhis continues the analysis with the line 16...♖e7 17 bxc5 ♜xc5, but here I think 18 ♖c2 is more accurate than his 18 ♗b2. Then after 18...♗f5 19 ♗b2 ♜b8 20 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 21 ♖xd4 0-0 22 ♜d2 White can continue to exploit Black's advanced king-side.

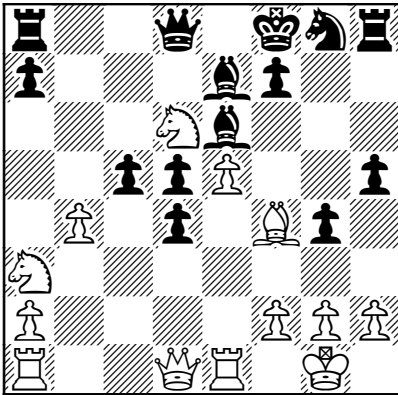
### 15 ♗f4?!

15 b4! would be a more accurate move order, immediately forcing a concession from Black.

### 15...h5?!

15...♜b8 had to be played to prevent White's b2-b4 break, even if White keeps a very promising position with 16 ♜d2 ♜b6 17 ♜ac1, as 17...♜xb2? loses to 18 ♗h6+! (or 18 ♜b1) 18...♖xh6 19 ♜xh6+ ♔g8 20 ♜b1.

### 16 b4!



Kasparov finds it second time round and Polgar's position collapses.

### 16...c4

16...cxb4 would put Polgar two pawns up very temporarily, but after 17 ♖ab5 ♜b6 18 ♖xd4 White has a decisive advantage – just compare the quality of the respective minor pieces.

### 17 ♜xd4

Now Kasparov is level on material and definitely up on position.

### 17...h4 18 ♖ab5 ♜h5 19 ♜e3

White plays a little superficially, as one might expect in rapid chess, and decides to put all his minor pieces on pretty squares in the centre of the board.

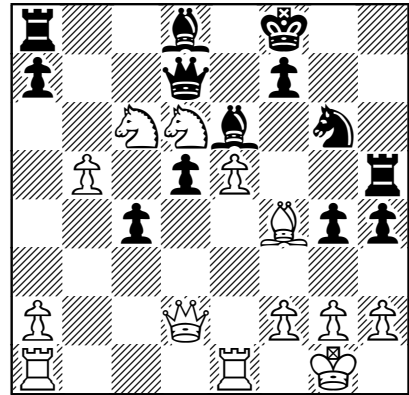
As Psakhis and Palliser point out, there was nothing wrong with 19 ♖xa7! when Black can keep material equality with 19...♗xd6 20 exd6 ♜d7 21 ♗e3 ♜xd6, but the a- and b-pawns will roll through without any meaningful opposition.

### 19...♜d7 20 ♖d4 ♗d8 21 ♜d2

An indication that Kasparov isn't sure how to proceed, but luckily his position is good enough to give away a couple of tempi.

21 f3! was the most precise way of continuing.

### 21...♖e7 22 b5 ♖g6 23 ♖c6!



Very visual knights and psychologically damaging for Black as those knights seem to suffocate her. However, she has played well over the last few moves and her pieces have started to coordinate (thanks to the couple of tempi which Kasparov gave her with his ♜d4-e3-d2 rather than capturing the a7-pawn). However, here Polgar plays too aggressively.

### 23...c3?!

All this achieves is a loose pawn.

Taking a time out to improve the posi-

tion of her king with 23...♔g8 was better. Kasparov could give up one of his monster knights with 24 ♖xd8 (or 24 a4 f6 25 exf6 ♕xf6 and Black's pieces somehow make sense) 24...♖xd8 25 ♕g5, but then 25...h3 isn't clear.

**24 ♖c1**

24 ♖d4!? ♕b6 25 ♖b4 ♔g8 26 ♕e3 would also favour White.

**24...g3?**

And this simply doesn't work.

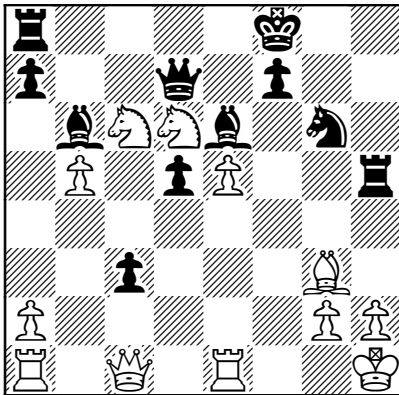
**25 fxg3**

25 hxg3 h3 looks risky, especially in rapid chess, but I don't see a follow-up after 26 ♖xc3 hxg2 27 ♕e3 d4 28 ♖xd4 and meanwhile White will have an extra couple of pawns.

**25...hxg3**

25...♕b6+ 26 ♕e3 hxg3 27 ♕xb6 axb6 28 ♖xc3 gxh2+ 29 ♔h1 would bid an end to Black's kingside play, but was perhaps a better option than the game.

**26 ♕xg3 ♕b6+ 27 ♔h1**



**27...♔g7**

I'm not sure why no one has suggested 27...d4 as an improvement here, as surely it's useful to keep hold of that c3-pawn. After 28 ♖d1 ♔g5! it's too early to take that pawn on d4, but 29 ♖f3! (29 ♖xd4 ♖xg3 30 hxg3 ♔g7 would turn the tables on White

as Black's pieces suddenly coordinate in a massive attack) 29...♖e8 30 ♖ad1 would leave White in complete control.

**28 ♖xc3 ♖ah8 29 ♖f1**

Black's play down the h-file amounts to nothing and Kasparov just has to play a couple of accurate moves and avoid tricks.

**29...♔g8 30 ♖ae1**

30 a4 would make sense to get that bishop off the annoying diagonal and thus open the net around White's king.

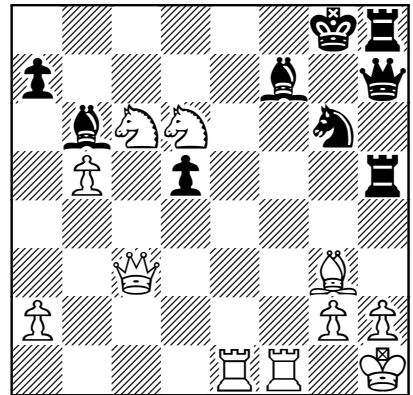
**30...f5!?**

The move had to be tried to bring another major piece to the h-file.

**31 exf6 ♖h7 32 f7+**

Palliser and Psakhis both suggest 32 ♖d4 ♖xh2+ 33 ♔g1 as a way to block out Black's bishop, but here Black still has some compensation with 33...♖h4!. The move played in the game is the most accurate, but unfortunately Kasparov doesn't follow up correctly.

**32...♕xf7**

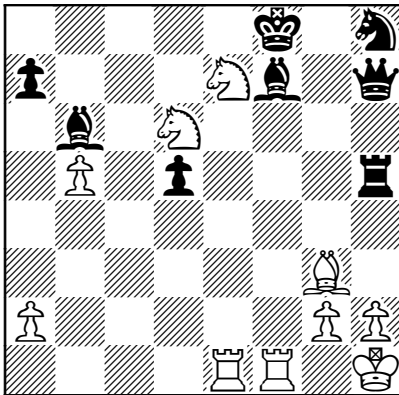


**33 ♖xh8?!?**

Kasparov sacrifices his queen to get rid of the pressure down the h-file and take over the initiative himself. The extremely hard-to-spot 33 ♕h4!! (clearing the third rank so that the queen controls h3) 33...♖xh4 34 h3 is pointed out instantly by

the computers as completely winning for White.

33... ♖xh8 34 ♜e7+ ♔f8



35 ♜ec8?

This loses control and allows Black's pieces some flexibility.

35 ♜ef5! was stronger, keeping the black pieces in the net in the corner when White would have great compensation for the queen.

35... ♛d3

35... ♜c5!, as pointed out by Psakhis and Palliser, would have amazingly given Black the advantage. After 36 ♜e8+ ♔g7 37 ♜e5+ ♜xe5 38 ♜xe5 ♛d3 Black is starting to take control and will be able to unravel her extra piece.

36 ♜f3 ♛c2?

And this is the losing mistake. The queen had to hit the e1-rook so that 36... ♛d2 37 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 38 ♜d6?? would fail to 38... ♜xh2+!, although here 38 ♜ef1 must still be better for White.

37 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 38 ♜d6 ♛g6

Polgar is forced to give up her extra queen, since 38... ♜h7 39 ♜e8+ ♔g7 40 ♜xf7+ drops everything, but is now left with a lost endgame two pawns down.

39 ♜xf7+ ♛xf7 40 ♜xf7 ♔xf7 41 ♜e5 ♜xe5 42 ♜xe5 d4 43 ♔g1 ♔e6 44 ♜b8 ♔d5 45

♔f1 ♔c4 46 ♔e2 d3+ 47 ♔d1 ♔xb5 48 h4 a5 49 ♜e5 ♜f2 50 h5 ♜e3 51 ♜g7 1-0

### Game 30

S.Rublevsky-Bu Xiangzhi

Ningbo (rapid) 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 d6 4 ♜xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 ♜g4 6 h3 ♜h5

Instead 6... ♜xf3 7 ♛xf3 e6 (7...e5 would transpose to positions examined in the first game of this chapter, Rublevsky-Tiviakov) 8 d3 d5 9 ♜c3 ♜f6 10 ♛g3 g6 11 exd5! cxd5 12 ♜b5 ♜h5 13 ♛c7 ♛d7 14 ♛a5 ♜d6 15 ♜xd6+ ♛xd6 16 ♜h6 ♔e7 17 c4! left Black with issues to solve in I.Smirin-F.Berend, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

7 e5!?

The critical test of Black's early ... ♜g4. White exploits the fact that Black has 'forgotten' to play ...e5 himself. The line is somewhat risky as we are obliged to move a pawn in front of our king, but I believe it promises White good chances.

7...e6

This is the solid option, but condemns Black to an unpleasant middlegame with his weak c-pawns. Alternatives are:

a) The critical test of White's idea must be 7...dxe5 8 g4 and now:

a1) 8... ♜g6 9 ♜xe5 with a further branch:

a11) 9... ♛d5 10 ♜e1 e6 11 ♜c3 ♛d6 12 d3 ♜f6 13 ♜f4 ♜d5 (S.Kasparov-L.Bregadze, Internet (blitz) 2007) 14 ♜xg6 ♜xf4 15 ♜xh8 ♜xh3+ 16 ♔f1 ♛f4 17 ♜e4 and Black has nothing for the rook.

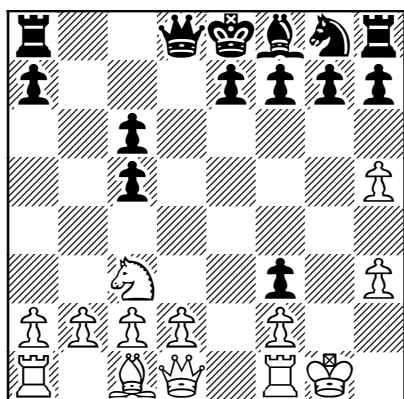
a12) 9...f6 10 ♜xg6 hxg6 11 ♛f3 ♛d5 was tried in I.Rausis-J.Lopez Martinez, Badalona 2003, and here I think White should keep the queens on with 12 ♛g3 (12 ♛e3!?) 12...f5!? 13 ♜c3 ♛d7 14 d3 ♜f6 15



g5 ♖d5 16 ♜xd5!? cxd5 17 ♜f4 and, although the position is unusual, I think White has an advantage with control of the dark squares.

a13) 9...e6 10 ♜e1 ♜d6 (E.Kulovana-N.Dzagnidze, Dresden 2007) 11 ♜f3 ♜c7 12 d3! ♜e7 13 ♜f4 0-0 14 ♜g3 f6 15 ♜c4 ♜xg3 16 fxc3 e5 17 ♜c3 and again the most relevant aspect of the position is Black's weak c5-pawn.

a2) 8...e4 9 gxh5 exf3 10 ♜c3! is an important nuance, preventing ...♜d8-d5.



White will capture the pawn on f3 next move, resulting in a very unusual-looking position. Of course we'd prefer our h5-pawn back on g2, but the queen on f3 does a good job of keeping our king secure and Black's pieces aren't really in a position to drum up an attack. Meanwhile Black has nowhere comfortable for his king either as if he castles kingside we can try using the g-file. We are hoping that we can target Black's queenside pawns, particularly the vulnerable c5-pawn. If you have read my book on the Grand Prix Attack you will know I like hitting those doubled c-pawns.

This position has been reached a few times, but almost every black player has tried a different move:

a21) 10...♜c8 was a rather passive choice

by the Russian Grandmaster in S.Rublevsky-A.Dreev, Moscow 2005, and after 11 ♜xf3 e6 12 d3 ♜f6?! (the queen just gets in the way here and leaves Black a long way behind in development) 13 ♜g3 ♜f5 14 ♜e1! ♜xh5 15 ♜e5 ♜g6 16 ♜g5 ♜f6 17 ♜e4 ♜d8 18 ♜xg7! White had regained his pawn with a large initiative.

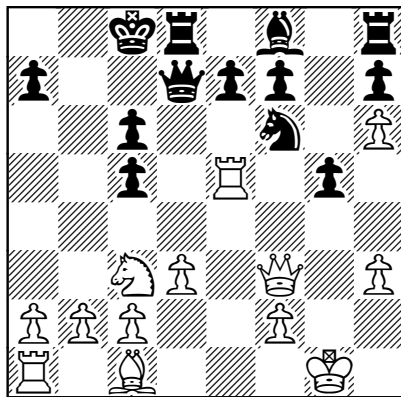
a22) 10...e6 11 ♜xf3 ♜d7 12 d3 ♜e7 13 ♜e1 ♜d5 14 ♜e4 ♜e7 15 ♜d2 ♜f6 16 ♜c3 ♜d5 was M.Schepetkova-L.Stetsko, Voronezh 2010, and now 17 h6! ♜g8 18 hxg7 ♜xg7+ 19 ♜h2 would have picked up material.

a23) 10...♜h6!? 11 ♜xf3 ♜c8 (R.Ovetchkin-M.Al Sayed, Moscow 2006) 12 ♜e4 e6 13 d3 ♜f5 14 ♜e3 would immediately target Black's weak pawn.

a24) 10...♜d7 11 ♜xf3 ♜h6 12 ♜e4 e6 13 d4! ♜f5 14 dxc5 ♜d4 was seen in E.Aranovitch-N.Guliyev, Coubertin 2009, and here White should have continued with 15 ♜d1! with a clearly better position, the idea being that 15...f5 can be met by 16 ♜e3.

a25) 10...♜f6 has been tried the most often, leading after 11 ♜xf3 ♜d7 12 d3 to a further divide:

a251) 12...g6 13 h6 g5 14 ♜e1 0-0-0 15 ♜e5!

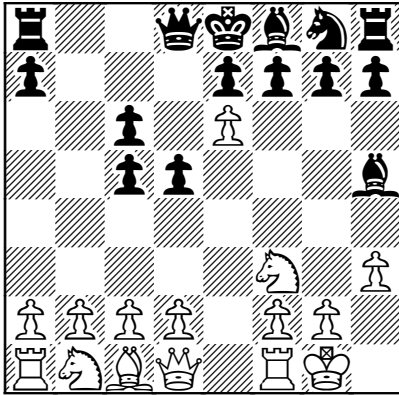


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15...g4 16 hxg4 ♖xg4+ 17 ♖xg4+ ♜xg4 18 ♜xc5 ♜b7 19 ♜h5 ♜g8 20 ♜f1 e6 21 ♜f4 ♜g6 22 ♜e2 ♜xh6 23 ♜xh6 ♜xh6 24 ♜ah1 ♜f5 25 ♜xh7 and White was a clear pawn up in R.Mamedov-Y.Kuzubov, Lubbock 2009.

a252) 12...♞d5 was suggested by Vigorito. After 13 ♞e4 e6 I think White should try 14 c4!?, fixing the c5-pawn on a dark square and thus as a constant weakness: 14...♞b4 15 ♜e3 ♞c2 (or 15...♞xd3 16 ♜ad1 0-0-0 17 ♞g5 ♞e5 – 17...f6? 18 ♜xd3 ♖xd3 19 ♖xc6+ ♜b8 20 ♞xe6 is decisive – 18 ♖e4 ♖xd1 19 ♜xd1 ♜xd1+ 20 ♜g2 ♜d6 21 ♞xf7! and White has a great advantage) 16 ♜ac1 ♞xe3 17 ♖xe3 and White is on top.

b) 7...d5 has also been tried a few times, but this allows 8 e6!, a pawn sacrifice more often seen in the Caro-Kann.



Here 8...fxe6 9 g4 (9 ♜e1 ♖d6 10 d3 ♞f6 11 ♞bd2 is also possible) 9...♜f7 10 ♞e5 ♖d6 was V.Nevednichy-I.Chirila, Cluj 2008, when 11 d4! cxd4 12 ♖xd4 ♖c7 13 ♞d2 ♞f6 14 ♞df3 would have left White with a complete bind. Black will permanently have a bishop out of play, as the only way to activate the f8-bishop is with ...g7-g6 when the f7-bishop will be hemmed in.

### 8 exd6 ♜xd6 9 d3

So Black has developed fairly actively,

but he has a weakened queenside.

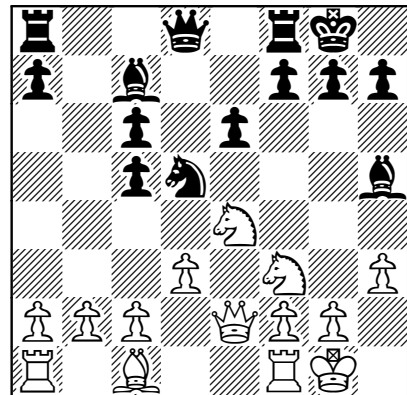
### 9...♞f6

9...♞e7 was tried the first time this position was reached in A.Shirov-B.Gelfand, Dortmund 2002. The Latvian continued 10 ♞bd2 0-0 11 ♞e4 ♞d5 12 ♜e1 ♜e8 when 13 g4!? ♜g6 14 ♞xd6 ♖xd6 15 h4 h6 (15...f6 16 h5 ♜f7 17 ♞d2 is a little better for White) 16 ♞e5 ♜h7 17 g5 hxg5 18 hxg5 looks very promising.

### 10 ♞bd2 0-0 11 ♖e2 ♞d5 12 ♞e4

12 ♞c4 ♜c7 13 g4 ♜g6 14 ♞fe5 is an alternative approach which I imagine will receive some practical tests should this line continue to garner interest at the top level. It's dangerous playing with the pawns advanced in front of your king, but here the knights are dominating the bishops so our king should be safe.

### 12...♜c7!



### 13 c4?!

This is the right idea, but the wrong execution. The critical try here is 13 g4 ♜g6 14 ♞xc5 (14 c4 ♞b4 15 ♜d1 ♖e7 16 a3 ♞a6 17 ♜g5 f6 18 ♜h4 is also an interesting approach) when the key question is whether Black can drum up sufficient play against the white king in return for our pawn advantage: 14...♜b6 15 ♞e4 ♖c7 (15...f5 16 ♞eg5 is nothing to worry about) 16 d4

♖ad8 17 c3 and I'd say White has decent chances to convert his extra pawn, although the position is messy. Practically I would probably go for 12 ♖c4 which is safer in my view.

Note too that 13 ♖xc5? fails to 13...♙xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♗d6.

**13...♖b4 14 ♖d1**

Perhaps Rublevsky intended 14 g4 here, but suddenly realized that 14...f5! 15 gxh5 fxh4 16 dxe4 ♖c2! was rather risky.

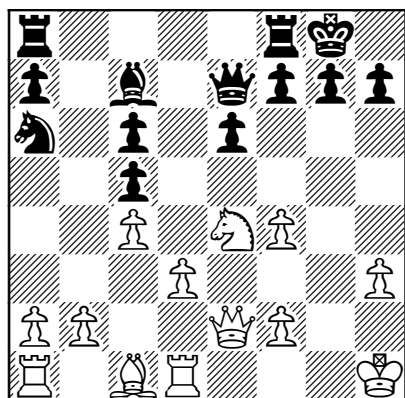
**14...♙xf3 15 gxf3**

Very risky, but 15 ♗xf3 ♖c2 16 ♖b1 f5! would give Black the better prospects as the knight has a great square on d4.

**15...♖a6?!**

The game is rapid, so naturally the players don't play the most precise moves. Here active play with 15...♗h4! 16 ♙g2 f5! 17 ♖xc5 ♖f6 would have left Rublevsky regretting his 15th move.

**16 f4 ♗e7 17 ♙h1**



The position is very complex now. Both sides' pawn structures are compromised and White would have big difficulties should that black knight manage to find its way to d4. Luckily at the moment it's right out of the game on a6. Meanwhile the Russian can hope to utilize the semi-open g-file. I think it is still easier for White to play,

as Black struggles to get his knight into the game while White has a simple plan of developing his pieces and pressuring g7.

**17...♖ad8 18 ♖g1 f5**

This move gives away too many squares. Black should have tried jumping his knight back into the position with 18...♖b4! 19 ♖g3 ♖fe8 20 a3 ♖d5! when the endgame after 21 cxd5 exd5 22 ♗g4 f5 23 ♗xf5 dxe4 24 ♗xe4 ♗xe4+ 25 dxe4 ♖xe4 26 ♙e3 should be drawn.

**19 ♖g5 ♖f6 20 a3**

Keeping the black knight from joining the rest of its army.

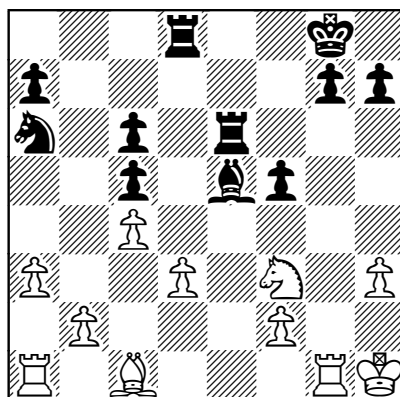
**20...e5?!**

This gives White an edge. Better was 20...♗d6, but after 21 ♙d2 h6 22 ♖f3 ♗xd3 23 ♖ae1 White has good compensation as he has taken over the initiative.

**21 fxh5**

Rublevsky should have started with 21 ♙d2! as there's no rush to decide matters in the centre. Black could try 21...e4, but 22 dxe4 h6 23 ♖f3 ♗xe4 24 ♖ae1 looks very promising for White with his play down e- and g-files.

**21...♗xe5 22 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 23 ♖f3 ♖e6**



**24 ♖xe5**

After this the position drifts towards a draw. 24 ♖e1 was the last chance to keep

## How to Beat the Sicilian Defence

an edge: for example, 24...♖de8 25 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 26 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 27 ♙e3 and Bu Xiangzhi would have had to play accurately for the half-point.

**24...♜xe5 25 ♙f4**

Black retakes the initiative after this move. 25 ♙e3 ♜xd3 26 ♜ad1 ♜xd1 27 ♜xd1 would have been more sensible, with decent compensation for the pawn and in fact the better practical chances.

**25...♜e2 26 ♙g2**

26 ♜ae1! ♜xf2 27 ♜e7 ♙f8 28 ♜gxg7 ♜xd3 29 ♜gf7+ ♙g8 30 ♜g7+ ♙f8 would have been an amusing draw.

**26...♜xb2 27 ♜ae1 ♜b7 28 ♜e6 ♜xd3 29 ♜xc6 ♜xa3 30 ♜d1 ♜b4**

30...♜a4 should have been tried when Black is better with his extra couple of pawns, although White is active enough to have good drawing chances.

**31 ♜d8+ ♙f7 32 ♜xc5 ♜d3 33 ♜xf5+ ♙e6 34 ♜ff8 ♜xf4+ 35 ♜xf4 ♜c7 36 ♜e8+ ♙d6 37 ♜d8+ ♙e6 38 ♜e8+ ♙d6 39 ♜d8+ ½-½**

### Game 31

**V.Zvjaginsev-T.Asensio Lisan**  
Barbera 1996

**1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♙b5 g6**

3...d6 4 ♙xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 g6 would be the normal move order in this chapter, although it's useful to know we could also reach this position via our 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♙b5 g6 repertoire.

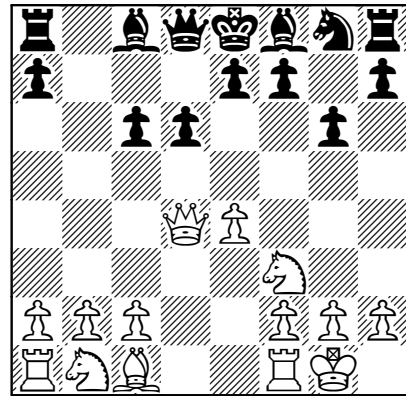
**4 ♙xc6 bxc6 5 0-0 d6**

5...♙g7 would of course be the normal move here and we'll see more of it next chapter.

**6 d4! cxd4 7 ♜xd4**

This is the reason that 5...g6 is not very common (after 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 ♙b5+ ♜c6 4 ♙xc6 bxc6 5 0-0). Here Black has to

make a concession to close the a1-h8 diagonal.



**7...f6**

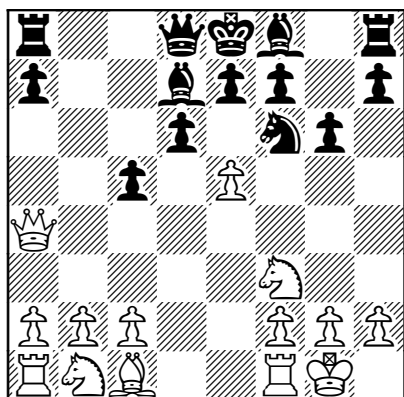
The ugliest way to deal with the threat, but probably the best practical try:

a) 7...e5 8 ♜d3 leaves Black with the problem that ...e5 and ...g6 don't combine, as now either the h6-square or the d6-pawn will become exposed:

a1) 8...♜b6?! 9 ♙e3! ♜xb2 (9...♙a6 10 c4 ♜xb2 11 ♜bd2 ♜b4 12 ♜ab1 ♜a5 13 ♜b3 ♜c7 14 ♜a3 ♙c8 15 c5! also looks terrible for Black; true he has netted a pawn, but he is so far behind in development that he's really going to suffer) 10 ♜bd2 ♜b5 11 ♜c4! d5 12 exd5 ♙a6 (12...cxd5 is obviously not an option because of 13 ♜d6+, while 12...♜xd5 13 ♜c3! f6 14 ♜fd1 ♜e6 15 ♜d6+! is not attractive either) 13 ♜c3! ♜xc4 14 ♜xe5+ ♙e7 15 ♜xh8 0-0-0 16 ♜xh7 ♜xd5 17 ♜fe1 ♙b4 18 ♙g5 f6 19 ♜xa7 was crushing in D.Marciano-C.Roche, Clermont Ferrand 2001.

a2) 8...♜c7 would be safer, but White held a pleasant edge after 9 c4 h6 10 ♜c3 ♙e6 11 b3 ♙e7 12 ♙b2 ♜d8 13 ♜ac1 ♜f6 14 ♜d5! In S.Prudnikova-L.Drljevic, Belgrade 2003. This pawn structure in general favours White as Black will find it too hard to break with ...d6-d5.

b) 7...♠f6 might seem the most logical move, but 8 e5! compromises Black's pawn structure and after 8...c5 (8...dxe5 9 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 10 ♜xe5 ♜e8 11 ♜xc6 simply wins a pawn) 9 ♗a4+ ♙d7 White has a pretty pleasant choice:



b1) 10 ♗h4 dxe5 11 ♜xe5 ♙f5 12 ♜c3 ♙g7 (K.Kerek-J.Bordos, Eger 1999) 13 ♜e1! ♗c7 (13...0-0 14 ♜c6) 14 ♗a4+ ♜f8 15 ♙f4 looks exceedingly unpleasant for Black.

b2) 10 ♗a3!? looks like an interesting option too: for example, 10...dxe5 (10...♜d5 is asking for trouble after 11 exd6 exd6 12 ♜c3) 11 ♜xe5 ♙g7 12 ♜c3 (12 ♗xc5 ♜g4 13 ♜xd7 ♗xd7 14 h3 ♜e5 15 ♜c3 ♜c8 16 ♗e3 ♜c4 leaves Black with enough compensation that a draw is likely) 12...0-0 13 ♗xc5 ♜g4 14 ♜xd7 ♗xd7 15 ♜d1 ♗c8 16 ♗xc8 ♜fxc8 leaves Black with some compensation for the pawn, but it will be an unpleasant struggle to hold the half-point.

8 ♜d1

8 h3!? could also be considered, preventing Black's next, as well as ideas of ...♜h6-g4.

8...♙g4

Or 8...♜h6 9 h3 (9 ♗c4 ♗b6 10 ♜d4 ♜f7! – 10...c5 11 ♜e6 ♜g4 12 ♜c3 ♜e5 13 ♗d5 and White's knight on e6 gives him the advantage – 11 ♗xc6+ ♗xc6 12 ♜xc6 ♙b7 13

♜d4 ♙xe4 14 ♜c3 ♙b7 15 ♜e6 ♜b8 16 ♜b5 also looks more pleasant for White) 9...♗b6 10 ♗c3 (10 ♗d3 ♙g7 seems more or less okay for Black) 10...♙g7 11 ♙e3 c5 12 a3 0-0 13 b4 f5 14 e5 and White's queenside play promises him the advantage.

9 ♗d3

The most natural way to defend the knight, but White has an interesting alternative in the shape of 9 ♗a4!? with the idea 9...♗b6 (9...♗d7 10 ♜bd2 should also be a little better for White) 10 ♙e3 ♗b5 11 ♗xb5 cxb5 12 ♜c3 with a great queenless middlegame in prospect as Black's queenside pawns are rather weak.

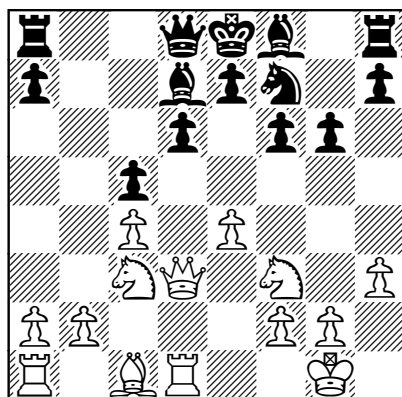
9...♜h6 10 h3 ♙d7

A slightly strange choice, retreating, but 10...♙xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♜f7 12 c4 ♙g7 13 c5 gives White the advantage without any danger.

11 c4 c5

11...♙g7 12 c5 would be awkward for Black.

12 ♜c3 ♜f7



13 ♜d5

A nice-looking move, but this doesn't really achieve anything. It was better to play on the queenside with 13 ♙e3 ♙g7 14 a3 a5 (14...0-0 allows White to choose between 15 b4 and 15 ♙xc5!?, both with an

## How to Beat the Sicilian Defence

edge) 15 b4 axb4 16 axb4 ♖xa1 17 ♖xa1 cxb4 18 ♔d5 0-0 19 ♖a7! and White has a promising initiative.

**13...♗g7 14 ♗d2 0-0 15 ♗c3 ♘e5?!**

I think this is the start of a mistaken plan. Black needs to keep the knight to support his d6-pawn. 15...e6 16 ♘e3 ♗c6 would leave a roughly balanced position.

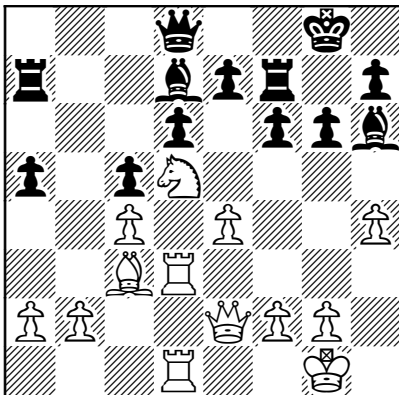
**16 ♖e2**

16 ♘xe5 fxe5 17 ♗d2! h6 18 ♗e3 would have given White a pleasant advantage, as he could start his queenside proceedings while Black's g7-bishop is blocked out of play, and 16 ♗xe5!? fxe5 17 a3 also looks good for White.

**16...♘xf3+**

16...♗f7! would still have been fine for Black.

**17 ♖xf3 a5 18 ♖e2 ♖f7 19 ♖d3 ♗h6 20 ♖ad1 ♖a7 21 h4!**



The Russian GM comes up with a strong plan exploiting Black's early ...f6, which has left his kingside vulnerable.

**21...e6?!**

Black cannot get away with this move once he has exchanged knights, but it's hard to sit still when White has started to attack his king.

**22 ♘e3**

22 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 23 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 24 ♖xd6

must also be good for White, but Zvjaginsev decides not to imbalance the position.

**22...♗f4?**

I'm not sure what Asensio Lisan missed here as it's obvious the bishop won't be able to defend d6 for long on this diagonal. 22...♗f8 was forced, although White has a great position after 23 h5 e5 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 ♘d5.

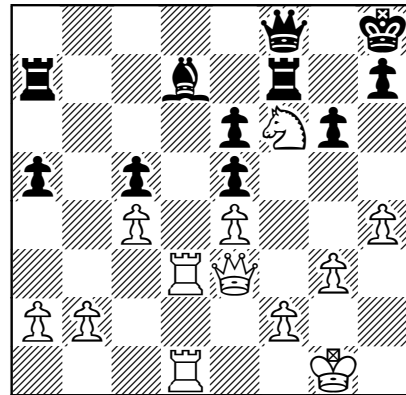
**23 g3 ♗e5 24 ♘g4 ♖f8**

This allows White a winning tactic. 24...♔h8 was more tenacious, although 25 ♘xe5 (25 f4 ♗xc3 26 bxc3 is sufficient to win a pawn) 25...dxe5 26 ♖e3 ♖c7 27 g4! followed by 28 g5 leaves White with a decisive advantage.

**25 ♖e3**

25 ♗xe5 dxe5 26 ♘xf6+! wins at once.

**25...♔h8 26 ♗xe5 dxe5 27 ♘xf6!**



He finds it second time round!

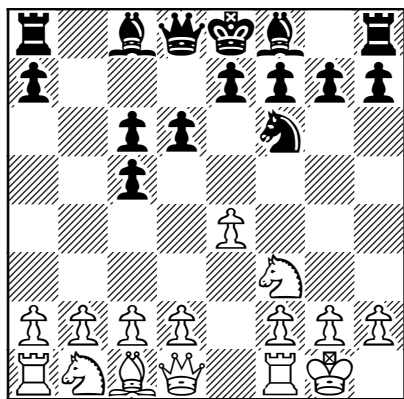
**27...♖xf6 28 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 29 ♖xd7 ♖c8 30 ♖d2 1-0**

### Game 32

**N.Somborski-E.Kolbert**

Vrnjacka Banja 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘c6 4 ♗xc6+ bxc6 5 0-0 ♘f6?!**

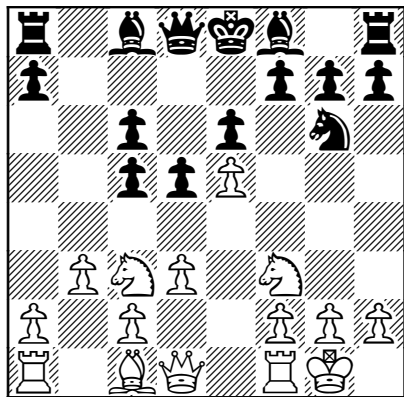


This is a careless mistake which a lot of your opponents are likely to make, thinking it will simply transpose to the first couple of games seen in this chapter. Indeed I made this mistake once and had to suffer.

5...e6 is quite similar and again White should react with 6 e5! d5 (anything else will more or less transpose to the game continuation) 7 d3 ♖e7 8 b3 ♘g6 and then:

a) 9 g3!? ♙e7 10 ♙b2 0-0 11 ♘bd2 ♙d7 12 h4 f6 13 ♜e1 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 fxe5 15 ♙xe5 ♙f6 16 f4 ♙e8 17 ♜g4 and White had total control in S.Maze-B.Buehler, Geneva 2005. For a more detailed discussion of playing against Black's doubled c-pawns, see *Starting Out: Sicilian Grand Prix Attack*.

b) I like the look of 9 ♘c3.



It looks strange to put our knight in front of the c-pawn when we want to play c2-c4, but the idea is to first put the knight on a4 to hit the c5-pawn and then fix it with c2-c4: for example, 9...f6 (9...♙a6 10 ♙a3 ♜a5 11 ♘a4 ♙b5 12 ♜e1 ♜xe1 13 ♜fxe1 ♙xa4 14 bxa4 ♙e7 15 ♜ab1 would leave Black in a rather unpleasant end-game, as the c5-pawn will drop within a few moves) 10 ♘a4 fxe5 11 ♙a3 ♙e7 12 ♙xc5 would give White an edge.

### 6 e5!

It shouldn't come as a surprise that I suggest this move after we have seen Rublevsky-Bu Xiangzhi with 5...♙g4 6 h3 ♙h5 7 e5!?

### 6...♘d5

Alternatively:

a) I tried 6...♘g4, but after 7 ♜e1 I felt obliged to play 7...♘xe5 8 ♘xe5 dxe5 9 ♜h5! ♙e6 10 d3 (during the game I was rather concerned about 10 b3 ♜d4 11 ♜xe5 ♜d8 12 ♙b2 ♜xe5 13 ♜xe5, leaving Black in a truly ugly position) 10...g6 11 ♜xe5 ♜d4 and here in R.Hart-G.Jones, Auckland 2009, 12 ♜c7! would have left me with serious problems.

b) 6...♘d7 7 ♜e2 would still force Black to make a structural concession, as 7...d5 8 e6 fxe6 9 ♜xe6 is good for White.

c) 6...dxe5 7 ♘xe5 ♜c7 8 ♜e1 e6 9 ♘a3 ♙a6 10 ♘ac4 ♙e7 11 ♜f3 ♜c8 12 b3 0-0 13 ♙b2 ♜fd8 14 d3 is an instructive set-up to remember; Black's pieces have been completely restrained, T.Oral-M.Rachela, Kormarmo 1997.

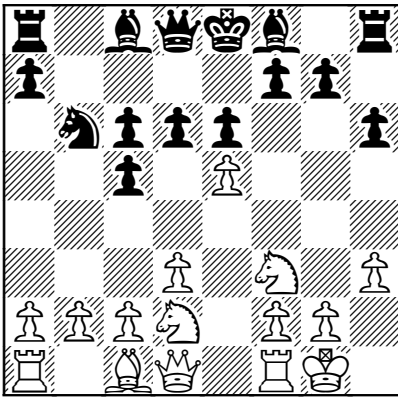
### 7 h3

Preventing the bishop coming to g4.

### 7...e6

The bishop on c8 is now left without much future. That said, the bishop is scarcely any better located after 7...♙f5 8 d3 e6 9 ♘bd2 ♙e7 10 exd6 ♙xd6 11 ♘e4.

8 d3 h6 9 ♖bd2 ♘b6



10 exd6!

Of course we don't want to allow Black to keep his structure intact with ...d6-d5. The resulting position is very pleasant for White who can start to put pressure on Black's weak c5-pawn. If we compare the position to Rublevsky-Bu Xiangzhi (Game 30), we can see that we have a big advantage thanks to the light-squared bishop being shut out of play on c8, rather than on h5. Black struggles to find any counterplay here and must endure his lousy position.

10... ♗xd6 11 ♘e4 ♗e7

11...0-0 12 ♗e3 f5!? 13 ♘xd6 ♖xd6 would leave Black with weaknesses, but at least then he has a bit of space to himself. White is still clearly better here, however, and after 14 ♖e1 e5 we should play the surprising 15 ♗c1! (15 ♗d2 allows the interesting pawn sacrifice 15...e4! 16 dxe4 fxe4 17 ♖xe4 ♗f5 18 ♖e1 ♖ad8 when White should still be on top, but Black is starting to get some activity) 15...e4 (15...♗d7 is met by 16 ♗xe5! ♗xe5 17 ♗f4 ♖e8 18 ♖e2, picking up a pawn and retaining all the positional pluses) 16 dxe4 ♖xd1 17 ♖xd1 fxe4 18 ♗e5 ♗b7 19 ♗e3 and White has a great endgame.

12 ♗e5!

White's knights take over.

12... ♗d5 13 ♗f4 c4

Black's position is already so terrible that this move is practically forced.

13...♗b7 would allow 14 a4! a5 15 c4! ♖d4 16 ♖b3 ♖a6 and I can't imagine any sane player wanting to be Black here. In fact White could win a pawn immediately with 17 ♗f3 ♖d8 18 ♗e3.

14 ♗c3 ♖d4 15 ♖f3 ♗b7 16 ♖ad1!

Energetic play from Somborski who doesn't allow his opponent any time to settle.

16...cxd3

16...0-0 17 dxc4 ♖c5 18 ♗e4 would leave White a pawn up, with continued positional advantages and the start of an attack on the kingside.

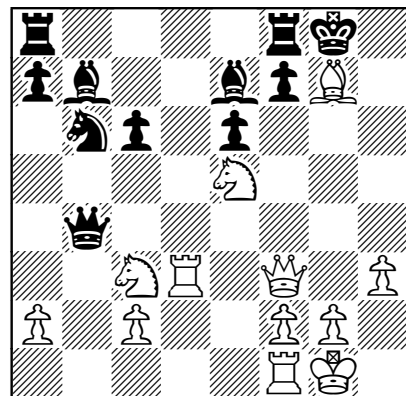
17 ♖xd3 ♖c5 18 b4!

Classic deflection!

18...♖xb4 19 ♗xh6 0-0

An unfortunate necessity; the f7-square needed defending.

20 ♗xg7!



20 ♗e4! was also winning and perhaps the most accurate approach: 20...gxh6 (20...f5 21 ♖g3) 21 ♖f4 ♗h7 22 ♗xf7.

20...♗xg7 21 ♗e4

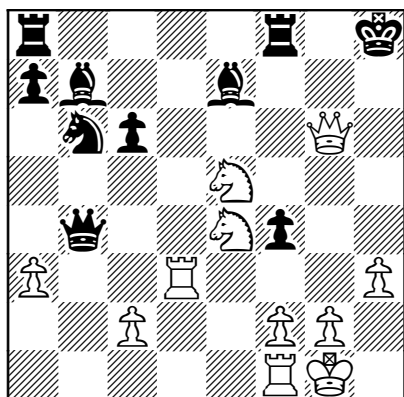
The knights block out the queen and leave the king defenceless.



21...f5 22 ♖h5 f4

The pawn has to prevent the rook coming to g3: for example, 22...♖xe4 23 ♖g6+ ♗h8 24 ♖h6+ ♗g8 25 ♖g3+ mates.

23 ♖g6+ ♗h8 24 ♖h6+ ♗g8 25 ♖xe6+ ♗g7 26 ♖g6+ ♗h8 27 a3!



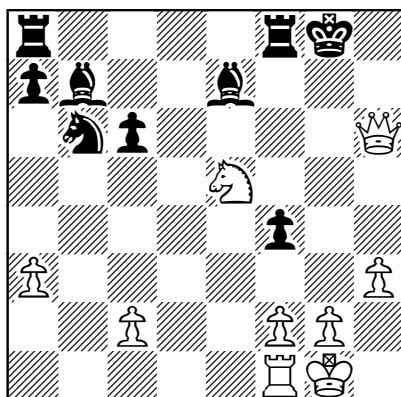
Causing the queen to lose contact with the e7-bishop and the d6-square.

27...♖a4 28 ♖d6!?

Somborski is having fun and indeed White has hundreds of different wins here, including 28 ♖g5 ♗xg5 29 ♖h5+ ♗g7 30 ♖xg5+ ♗h8 (30...♗h7 31 ♖d6 is mate in two) 31 ♖d6 when Black is forced to play 31...♖e4 to prevent an immediate mate, although 32 ♖h6+ ♖h7 33 ♖g6+ ♗g7 34 ♖e7+ still mates very quickly. In fact here the fastest finish would be 31 ♖g6+ ♗g8 32 ♖e7+ ♗f7 33 ♖g6+ ♗xe7 34 ♖e1+ ♖e4 35 ♖xe4 mate.

28...♖xe4 29 ♖h5+ ♖h7 30 ♖h6 ♖xh6 31 ♖xh6+ ♗g8

Materially the position isn't so bad for Black, but unfortunately for Kolbert everything is falling with check while the mate threats haven't disappeared.



32 ♖e6+ ♗h8 33 ♖xe7 ♗a6 34 ♖d1 ♖d5 35 ♖h4+ ♗g7 36 ♖g5+ ♗h7 37 ♖g6+ ♗h8 38 ♖xc6 1-0

## Conclusion

You will face the Hybrid Variation fairly often as it can be reached by two different move orders. This is a more dynamic attempt than the previous couple of chapters; Black takes the structural risk of doubled c-pawns in the hope that he can take the initiative. The topical line examined in Game 30 should be studied carefully, but I believe White has good chances in the unusual positions which arise. It is also important to investigate the aggressive attempts of Games 27-29, although I believe White is doing very well theoretically there too.