

Sergey Kasparov

Steamrolling the Sicilian

Play for a Win with 5.f3!

New In Chess 2013

Contents

Introduction	7
History of the variation	9
PART I – Pawn Goes to e5	11
Chapter 1 – The ‘Boring Ending’.....	12
Section 1 – Rare lines	14
Section 2 – Basic continuation	18
Chapter 2 – The Early ...a7-a5.....	42
Section 1 – 7.c4	43
Section 2 – 7.a4	45
Section 3 – 7.♘c3	48
Section 4 – 7.♙b5+	51
Chapter 3 – The Main Line 6...♙e6	58
Section 1 – 7...a5	59
Section 2 – 7...♘bd7	80
Chapter 4 – The Venice Attack 6...♙b5+	98
Exercises for Part I	111
PART II – Dragon Structures.....	115
Chapter 5 – The Queen Jump to b6	116
Chapter 6 – The Maroczy Bind	129
Exercises for Part II	141
PART III – Hedgehog Schemes	143
Chapter 7 – Ignoring the Breakthrough – 9...♙e2	144
Chapter 8 – White Prevents ...d6-d5 – 9.♘c2	149
Chapter 9 – The Queen Sortie ...♙b6	155
Chapter 10 – Wrapping Up – Various Hedgehog Schemes	161
Exercises for Part III.....	169

PART IV – Black Avoids 5.f3 with 3...♘f6	171
Chapter 11 – White Captures: 4.dxc5	172
Section 1 – 4...♔a5+	172
Section 2 – 4...♗xe4	180
Chapter 12 – The 4.♕b5+ Check	198
Section 1 – 4...♕d7	198
Section 2 – 4...♗bd7	208
Exercises for Part IV	214
Solutions to Exercises	217
Your Results	225
Conclusion	227
New In Chess Code System	228
Index of Variations	229
Index of Names	232
Game Index	235

Introduction

Dear reader!

If you have opened this book, I dare conjecture that you may have some problems fighting against the Sicilian Defence.

Well, I understand you perfectly. Time and again I hear from strong chess players how difficult it is to gain an advantage with the white pieces in ‘normal’ openings.

What are the arguments in favour of the system under study in this book? Let’s get things straight.

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6 **5.f3**

Exotic? I wouldn’t be so quick with such a categorization. Firstly, fashion never stands still. Some years ago, in search of an illusory initiative in the Petroff Defence (the Russian Game) – 1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟f6 3.♞xe5 d6 4.♟f3 ♞xe4, I started playing the rare, strange-looking continuation **5.♞c3** ♞xc3 6.dxc3. Nowadays this is almost the main line for White.

Also after 1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♟c6, the move **3.♞b5** looked like a sideline. Whereas today, even in the games of chess players with an Elo rating of above 2700, its popularity is smaller than that of 3.d4, but only slightly.

Let me cite the freshest example. Early this year (on 13th January, 2013), an encounter of Elo giants took place in the super-tournament in Wijk aan Zee, between Aronian and Carlsen. In the King’s Indian Defence Magnus treated the opening in quite a novel way: 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 ♞g7 4.e4 d6 5.♟f3 0-0 6.h3 ♟c6 7.d5 ♞b4!? 8.♞e2 e6!?. And this structure (d6-e6) lasted until the 15th move. If giants (both above 2800 Elo) consider such unconventional set-ups suitable for playing in duels with a classical time control, then... the idea **5.f3** in the Sicilian does not seem extremely exotic.

Being an honest person, I must warn in advance the potential reader who has taken this book in his hands. The material expounded on below will mainly correspond to the style of those chess players who wish to struggle in quiet, positional games, exerting just a little pressure on Black’s position. Sparkling attacks with an abundance of sacrifices are infrequent in these constructions. Unlike in my first book, *The Dynamic Benko Gambit*, here the author tries to find new followers, gradually expanding his audience...

If we may allegorize, White’s strategy is reminiscent of a ‘steamroller’ – a machine that rolls forward slowly but inevitably.

There have been several critical remarks (both positive and negative) by experts and fans concerning my previous work. For example (I’m paraphrasing):

- 1) ‘Too many games with little notes – a database dump’
- 2) ‘Why are there no games given with this-or-that move in the book? They are in the database!’

As you can see, these two opinions are diametrically opposed. Besides, I am limited by the specified volume of every book. The author must jam his material into, say, 200-250 pages. However, to satisfy both types of critics we would probably need 1,000-2,000 pages as there are millions of games. And to analyse them all...

That is why your obedient servant has tried, in the previous book and in this one, to create something in-between, so as to cover the range of problems of the opening under discussion as fully as possible, but also not to overburden the book and your memory respectively.

Of course, you won't find 20-move variations leading up to an ending in this book. These days everyone has a computer; at the time I worked on this book I used 'Houdini'. But today you will probably already have a stronger program, like 'Nairit' or perhaps 'Florida'. Accordingly, the evaluations may differ somewhat.

The author's mission is to explain the IDEAS and PLANS in the structures arising after 5.f3 as interestingly as possible. I hope this will raise your chances in tournaments and will improve your chess understanding on the whole.

If you see a move suggested in the comments without any elaborate variations or evaluations behind it, that means that I consider it 'also possible' and roughly equivalent in strength to the move which was played in the game.

The mark *** indicates that the game in question is important.

As an 'innovation', at the end of each Part the reader will be offered exercises under the heading 'check yourself'. The answers, provided with an assessment in points, are placed at the end of the book (pp. 217-225). Judging by your total number of points the author gives you a tool to guess your chess strength at the present moment.

In the course of writing this book, the author has consulted two experts on the Sicilian Defence (on both the White and the Black side):

GM Yury Solodovnichenko (Ukraine, 34), Elo rating ~ 2550-2630. Best results: 1st places in Metz (2011), Rome (2011), Altenkirchen (2012), a 3000+ performance in the Top French League (2011), and the winner of many other international tournaments.

GM Viacheslav Zakhartsov (Russia, 45), Elo rating ~ 2530-2610. He took 2nd place at the large-scale European Open in Cappelle-la-Grande-2007 (France) and 3rd place in Pardubice 2011 (Czech Open). The head of a chess family which in the future may become more famous with his 16-year-old son Vladimir, who is making steady progress. His wife Inga is also a chess coach.

One last thing: in different languages, the names of pieces have different associations, though they all look the same on the chessboard. For example, when speaking about the *knight* I sometimes describe it as an animal, because in the Russian language 'knight' means 'horse' and this is also what it looks like on the board. So please, don't be afraid of all the racers and horses you will come across in this book.

Sergey Kasparov
July 2013

History of the variation

Let's find out who discovered the idea 5.f3 in the Sicilian Defence.

One of the first games that we can see with this move was played as far back as the 1930s of the last century, at a tournament in the Swiss city Bern by Walter Henneberger and Oskar Naegeli. Later on this variation was repeatedly applied in high-level contests.

Nowadays the systems with 5.f3 are labelled under the name 'Prins Variation', in honour of Lodewijk Prins (27 January 1913 – 11 November 1999), a Dutch chess player and international arbiter. In 1982, FIDE awarded Prins with an honorary grandmaster title. From 1937 to 1968 (for 31 years!) Prins represented the Netherlands at Olympiads, and in 1965 he became Dutch champion. In 1948 Prins took first place at the Hoogovens tournament in Beverwijk, which has always been one of the largest chess competitions in Holland. He became especially popular as a writer and publicist. Prins co-authored several books with ex-World Champion Max Euwe, including a biography of José Raul Capablanca.

It's enough to look at the names of chess players who have used this variations in different time periods in order to be imbued with respect for the move 5.f3: Alexander Alekhine, Paul Keres, Viktor Kortchnoi, Vasily Ivanchuk. And of course, Lodewijk Prins himself.

Well, are you impressed?

In modern chess the Prins Variation is often applied by players who wish to avoid the main ramifications of the Sicilian Defence. On the Internet you may come across it in the 'Anti-Sicilian' section! One of the lines, specifically 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 e5 6.♙b5+, bears the name 'Venice Attack'.

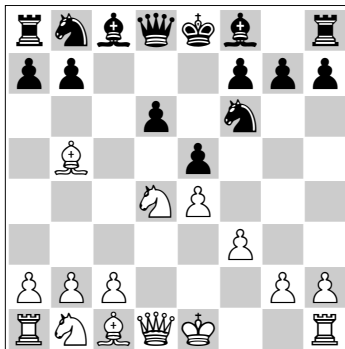
Thus, the move 5.f3 in the Sicilian Defence has a rather long history and some very reputable advocates.

I hope that after reading the book which is in your hands now, you will be part of an increasing number of admirers of this variation.

Chapter 4

The Venice Attack 6.♖b5+

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 e5 6.♖b5+



White has a bishop check on b5 as an alternative to the knight retreat. The idea is the following: speedy development on the kingside – the bishop goes out with a check, clearing the way for its king to castle in the long term. The knight on d4 goes to f5, where it is, at least optically, actively placed.

Frankly speaking, I would not recommend to you the direction of 6.♖b5+. That is why I present only a small number of games, sufficient (I hope) to get the reader acquainted with the ideas and the pattern of the fight.

The problem is that in this line, Black is actually the one who chooses the pawn structure and the character of the further struggle. Usually he doesn't allow the opponent to construct the strong skeleton g2-f3-e4-c4, which is characteristic for the variation 5.f3.

When the pawn structure in the centre is e4 against the spearhead d6-e5, an exchange of light-squared bishops seems favourable for White. It would make the weakness of point d5 more pronounced, and so on.

So it is no wonder that 6...♗d7 is infrequent. Look how a well-known Soviet grandmaster classically outplays his Yugoslav colleague – step by step, as they say.

Game 79

♖ Salov, Valery (2710)

♜ Ljubojevic, Ljubomir (2580)

Buenos Aires 1994 (6)

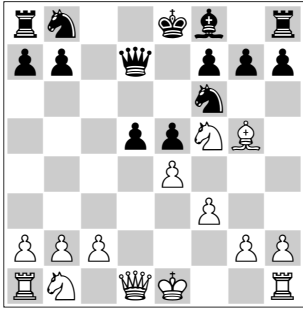
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4
♘f6 5.f3 e5 6.♖b5+ ♗d7 7.♗xd7+
♙xd7

This is periodically applied against me on www.playchess.com.

8.♘f5 d5 9.♗g5

The struggle for domination of the light squares. As we have repeatedly seen,

Black's dark-squared bishop, when left out in the cold (no other bishops on the board), often feels uneasy – especially after the doubling of pawns on f7 and f6.



9...dxe4

Or 9...d4 10. ♖xf6 gxf6 and the knight on f5 is quite comfortable.

10. ♖xf6 ♖xd1+

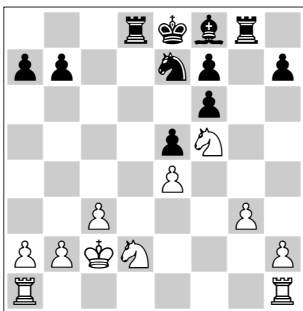
That's the point – 10...♗xf5?? cannot be played in view of 11. ♖d8 mate.

11. ♗xd1 gxf6 12.fxe4 ♘c6 13.c3

13. ♘c3 ♖d8+ 14. ♘d5 ♘e7 15. ♘xe7 ♖xe7±.

13...♖g8 14.g3 ♖d8+ 15. ♘d2 ♘e7

16. ♗c2±



It would be disadvantageous to hold on to point f5: 16. ♖f1 ♘xf5 17. ♖xf5 ♖h6 and White faces problems already.

16...♗d7

In case of 16...♘f5 17.exf5 ♖g4 18. ♖ae1±, the e4-square is already beckoning to the knight.

17. ♖ad1 ♗c6 18. ♘f3 ♖xd1 19. ♘xe7+!



Valery Salov

After 19. ♖xd1 ♘xf5 20.exf5 ♖h6, how could the cavalry reach the cherished height e4?

19...♖xe7 20. ♖xd1 ♖d8 21. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22. ♘h4 ♖e7 23. ♘f5 ♖f8 24.b4 ♗d7 25. ♗b3 ♗c6 26. ♗c4 a6 27.a4 b6

27...b5+ contributes to the formation of a white passed pawn: 28.axb5+ axb5+ 29. ♗b3 ♗b6 30.c4 bxc4+ 31. ♗xc4±.

28.g4 b5+ 29. ♗b3 ♗d7 30. ♘e3

30.axb5 axb5 31.c4+–.

30...♖h6 31. ♘d5 ♖g5 32.c4 ♗c6 33. ♘c3

Valery prefers to keep more pawns on the queenside. The manoeuvre ♘f5-e3-d5-c3 with pressure on b5 is likely to be dictated by this idea. I advise you to remember this resource in similar structures.

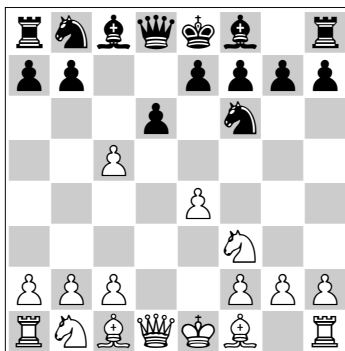
33...bxc4+ 34. ♗xc4 ♖h4 35. ♘d5 ♖g5 36.h3 ♖h4 37. ♘e7+ ♗d7 38. ♘f5 ♖e1 39.b5 axb5+ 40. ♗xb5! ♖d2 41. ♗b6 ♖e1 42.a5 ♖f2+ 43. ♗b7 ♗e6 44. ♗c6 1-0

In a game from the championship of China, Black preserved the flexibility of his pawn structure on the kingside and thereby avoided problems.

Chapter 11

White Captures: 4.dxc5

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.dxc5



Now there are two adequate replies for Black: 4...♖a5+ (Section 1) and 4...♗xe4 (Section 2).

The simple 4...dxc5?! is doubtful. After 5.♖xd8+ ♜xd8 6.♗c3, on a full board, the black king has lost its castling rights. For this discomfort there is no compensation.

Section 1 – 4...♖a5+

The sense of this continuation, I believe, lies on the surface. Black intends whenever possible to win the pawn back, without changing the ‘Sicilian structure’. As a consequence he will lose 1-2 tempi when the queen, which prematurely ends up on c5, undergoes the attacks of enemy pieces.

In reply White can try to get the pawn on c4 anyway (which I personally prefer), or continue with pure piece development.

A) 5.♗c3

An active line. The integrity of the pawn chain, and at times the amount of the material, is depreciated. The initiative becomes more important. The following fascinating duel is a fine illustration.

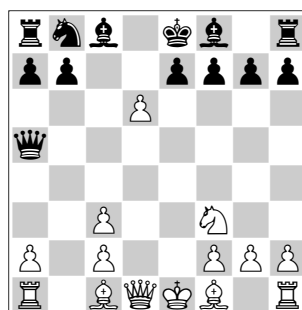
Game 130

□ Nataf, Igor Alexandre (2592)

■ Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime (2577)

Besancon ch-FRA 2006 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.dxc5
♖a5+ 5.♗c3 ♗xe4 6.cxd6 ♗xc3
7.bxc3



7...♖xc3+

7...♖c6 8.♙d3 e6 9.0-0 ♗xd6 10.♗g5
♙e7∞ Rublevsky-Ninov, Valjevo tt 2011.

8.♙d2 ♖c5 9.♖b1

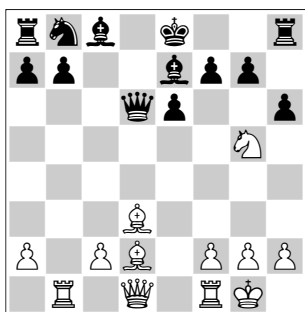
9.dxe7 ♗xe7 10.♙d3 is about equal.

9...♖xd6 10.♙d3 e6 11.0-0

As compensation for the pawn White is about 3 tempi ahead of the adversary in development. Is it enough?

11...♙e7 12.♗g5 h6?!

More accurate is to continue development by 12...♗c6 13.♖f3 ♗xg5 14.♗xg5 0-0 15.♖fd1 with compensation for White.



13.♗xf7?

An unnecessary and very unclear sacrifice. Good and less obliging was 13.♗e4 ♖d8 14.♖g4, hindering Black's castling.

13...♗xf7 14.♖h5+ ♗f8

The only move.

15.♖f3+ ♗g8

15...♙f6 16.♙b4+-.

16.♙g6?!

16.♖xb7! was effective and strong: 16...♙f6 (16...♙xb7 17.♖xb7 ♖d5 18.♖xe7 ♗c6 19.♖c7±; 16...♗c6 17.♖xe7) 17.♖d1 ♗c6 (17...♖c6 18.♙e4 ♙xb7 19.♙xc6 ♙xc6 unclear) 18.♙f4 (threatening with the disastrous check ♙d3-h7+) 18...♖d5 (18...♖c5 19.♖c7+-) 19.♙h7+ with attack.

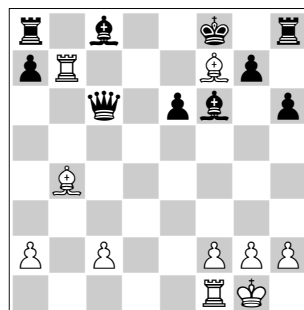
16...♙f6 17.♖xb7 ♗c6

The bishop has moved from e7 to f6 and so now White does not have the destructive blow ♖xe7.

18.♙f7+ ♗f8 19.♖xc6!

Very nice, though it doesn't lead to victory.

19...♖xc6 20.♙b4+



20...♙e7 21.♖xe7

Black has an extra queen, but with correct play the struggle will end in a draw.

21...a5 22.♙a3 ♖a4

From here on the partners are walking a narrow path.

23.♙g6 ♗g8

The only move – 23...♖xa3 24.♖e8#.

24.♖d1 ♙a6 25.♖dd7 ♖h7!

25...♖xd7 is pointless: 26.♖xd7, and only White can play for a win.

26.♙xh7+ ♗h8

The only move: 26...♗xh7 27.♖xg7+ ♗h8 28.♖h7+ ♗g8 29.♖d7#.

27.♙b2 ♖xa2 28.♙xg7+ ♗xh7

29.♙c3+?

29.h3.

29...♗g8?

There likely was mutual time trouble and both opponents did not have time to calculate the king's move forward. However, Black's monarch could have broken loose and he could have won with 29...♗g6 30.♖g7+ ♗h5 – don't forget that first-rank mate is threatened.

30.♖g7+ ♗f8 31.♖gf7+ ♗g8 1/2-1/2

The next 'technical' game played at the championship of the Celestial Empire differs greatly from what we have just seen.