HOW TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE IN THE MIDDLEGAME

ATTACK VARIANTS

ATTACKING WITH AN ISOLATED PAWN

GRANDMASTER REPERTOIRE: AGAINST THE SICILIAN

LOVE

BEAT 1.e4 WITH THE DRAGON

COMPREHENSIVE ENDGAME COURSE - PART 2
Hello chess friends,

The new issue of Modern Chess Magazine is here! We present four articles that combine opening, middlegame, endgame, strategy and psychology in chess.

- In the second part of “Endgame Series” GM Davorin Kuljasevic explains importance of pawns in endgames through interesting examples from both classical and modern Grandmaster practice. Start with the impersonation of the famous movie “Searching for Bobby Fischer”, go through the classical theoretical positions from 70’s and 80’s and find out how Polish GM Bartel used impeccable endgame technique to defeat World #28 Navara. And, of course, make sure to “Test Yourself” at the end of the article.

- GM Boris Chatalbashev continues analyzing the initiative in different stages of the chess game. In this issue he pays attention to initiative in middlegame and suggests how to find the best move in complex middlegame positions relying on chess logic. He subtly explains how to let go of the “materialistic mindset” in chess and rather look for dynamic solutions that pose, sometimes insurmountable, practical problems to opponent.

- GM Petar Arnaudov launches a new roubric for the 1.e4 fans – full repertoire for White pieces. The first article features Alapin Variation of Sicilian Defence. One of Black’s main answers 2...d5 is analyzed in-depth with a plenty of fresh examples from grandmaster practice. You will find a good mix of important forced lines and typical ideas, plans and motifs.

- Those of You who prefer more aggressive and attacking style of play will enjoy the second part of Dragon Variation in Sicilian Defence. IM Spas Kozhuharov prepared a sharp and double-edged repertoire for Black pieces against the main lines 9. 0-0-0 and 9. g4. In addition to presenting typical attacking ideas, Kozhuharov proves that certain lines are unjustifiably neglected by the mainstream theory by analyzing improvements that contain a lot of venom.

- Viktor Gavrikov’s strategical tips will boost Your attacking abilities in positions with an isolated pawn. He visualizes three important plans: transferring the rook on the third horizontal, movement of the isolated plan and knight sacrifice on “f7”.

Enjoy reading!
Table of content

Endgame Series – Part II (GM Davorin Kuljasevic) .................................................. 3
Searching for Bobby Fischer .......................................................................................... 4
Alcazar Jimenez – Kuljasevic/ Oropesa del Mar 1998 ...................................................... 5
Shkril, 1979 ..................................................................................................................... 8
Navara – Bartel/ Israel, 2015 .......................................................................................... 12
Beier – Polasek/ Luxembourg, 1986 .............................................................................. 13
Test yourself .................................................................................................................. 15

Fighting for the initiative – Part II (GM Boris Chatalbashev) .................................... 16
Cifuentes - Zvjaginsev/ Hoogovens op Wijk aan Zee, 1995 ........................................ 17
Karjakin – Nezad/ Tromsoe, 2014 ............................................................................... 20
Korchnoi – Georgiev/ Lugano, 1986 .......................................................................... 22
Marin - Steffansson/ Istanbul, 2000 ........................................................................... 26

Alapin Variation of Sicilian Defence – Part I (GM Petar Arnaudov) ....................... 28
Variations with 4..♘f6 ..................................................................................................... 29
Variations without 4..♘f6 ............................................................................................... 38

Dragon Variation of Sicilian Defence – Part II (IM Spas Kozhuharov) ................. 47

Attack with an isolated pawn – (GM Viktor Gavrikov) .......................................... 61
Transfer of the rook on the third horizontal .............................................................. 62
Movement of the isolated pawn .................................................................................... 66
Knight sacrifice on “f7” ............................................................................................... 69

Editor: GM Davorin Kuljasevic
Among many existing definitions of the endgame, I have recently encountered an interesting one by Romanian Grandmaster Mihai Suba. In his interesting book „Dynamic Chess Strategy“, Suba suggests that „The endgame is a part of the game where temporary placement of pieces is not of primary importance.“ He then elaborates: „More significant are:
1) Material advantage
2) Promotion races between pawns
3) Qualitative advantage in pawn structure or pieces
4) The possibility to bring the king into the fight“

There are some interesting points about Suba's definition. Chess theoreticians have generally agreed upon a broad definition of the endgame, although some grey areas still remain. For example, positions such as

are on the borderline between middlegame and endgame. Both endgame and middlegame principles may apply in such positions.

Our goal here is not to indulge into a philosophical discussion about the nature of endgames. The reason I brought up Suba's definition is that it definitely points out two
key features of the endgame that I would like to focus on. These are:

1) **Increased value of pawns** due to their promotion ability („Promotion races between pawns“ - Suba), and

2) **Increased value of the king** due to his ability to actively join the fight („The possibility to bring the king into the fight“ - Suba)

One can easily make a distinction between the endgame and the middlegame based on these two factors. In the middlegame, pawns and the king are the most vulnerable pieces, while in the endgame, their strength (or lack thereof) often decides the outcome of the game. In this issue, we will specifically deal with the pawns.

**Increased value of pawns in the endgame**

Have you seen the movie „Searching for Bobby Fischer“? If you have, the story that I am about to tell will be familiar. If you haven’t, I would warmly suggest you to see it. In this famous chess movie, a young and talented chess player from New York (Joshua Waitzkin) is making his first chess steps as he tries to win the National Championship in the youngest age category. In his pursuit of the title, in the final round he meets with another similarly talented boy, who is also his nemesis. In the final scene of the movie boys reach a pawn endgame where both of them have passed pawns on a- and h-files:

**Searching for Bobby Fischer - final**

[GM Davorin Kuljasevic]

As the young movie hero playing Black quickly pushes the pawn forward

1...a5 it becomes obvious that none of the kings are able to catch the passed pawns and that the pawn race is inevitable. The dramatic moment is amplified by both players quickly pushing their pawns to the end of the board...

2.h5 a4 3.h6 a3 4.h7 a2
...and putting queens in their places.

5...h8\p+ a1\p+

At this point White player wants to give check with his queen, but he is warned that his own king is in check. Only then he realizes that black pawn was promoted with a deadly check along the diagonal. He reluctantly moves his king

6.\f5 and Black happily takes the queen

6...\xh8 and the game.

When I saw this movie as a kid, I was fascinated by the pawn race and the final combination winning the queen by a skewer along the diagonal.

Little did I know that a few years later something similar would happen to me. In 1998, as a 11-year old I played in my first World Youth Championship in Oropesa del Mar, Spain. In the penultimate round, for a long time I defended a pretty much lost endgame against a Spanish player Victor Alcazar. However, after a long struggle, a glimmer of hope appeared:

Alcazar Jimenez,V – Kuljasevic,D [B45]
Wch U12 Oropesa del Mar (10), 1998

Naturally, I pushed the pawn forward

57...h3 Young and naive as I was, I got excited about the possibility of a drawn endgame after "forced move" 58.a6. However, my opponent completely surprised me with

58.e5!
What a shock this was! "Is white trying to lose?", I thought to myself at first.

58.a6 h2 59.a7 h1\# 60.a8\# would be a dream come true

I confidently played

58...\#g3 trying to figure out why my opponent allowed me to promote my pawn before him, when the cold shower came...

59.\#f3!

"OK, I will not fall for that trick", I thought. "But, isn’t the endgame with the h-pawn against the queen drawn?" – another light in the dark appeared. I proceeded to play the next sequence of moves with a new-found confidence.

61...\#g2 62.a8\#+

The only winning move for white, stopping the h-pawn and at the same time luring the king onto the long diagonal. Is this "Searching for Bobby Fischer" deja vu?

59...\#xf3 60.a6 h2 61.a7

62...\#g1 63.\#a1+ \#g2 64.\#b2+ \#g1 65.\#c1+ \#g2 66.\#d2+ \#g1 67.\#e1+ \#g2 68.\#e2+ \#g1 69.\#g4+ \#h1
Despite sentimental, this endgame also holds educational value. It shows how important it is for a chess player to learn all aspects of endgame – the principles, the theoretical positions and the standard winning methods. Obviously my opponent was more proficient in these aspects at that point and he deservedly won the game.

Pawn races with single passed pawns, as those that we have just seen, are a trademark of pawn endgames. Naturally, when there are more pieces on the board, these passed pawns are less dangerous as pieces can catch them more easily than the king can. For example, the bishop can catch a single passed pawn in one move. Even the short-legged knight can be very effective in catching a passed pawn, like in the next endgame study:

In this tense position white has a single winning move:

and with ♕f1 checkmate on the next move, I had to resign after all.

1–0
1.\b2! This is a well-known method with knights - they are better at defending passed pawns from the back than the front.

A clear example of this is 1.\b6? h5 2.a4 \b4 and black will force the knight to abandon defence of a-pawn, so the game is drawn.

1...h5 The most consistent approach.

Obviously with 1...\xb2 black king steps out of the square of white pawn and white wins the familiar pawn race after: 2.a4 h5 3.a5 h4 4.a6 h3 5.a7 h2 6.a8\w kontroling the promotion square h1.; 1...\b3 just loses the tempo, so after 2.a4 \b4 white steps into the square of h-pawn 3.\e6 h5 4.\f5 and the rest is a matter of technique. Notice how white knight and pawn are "untouchable".

2.a4 \b4 Again, the most stubborn defence.

If black attempts to win the pawn race with 2...h4 3.a5 h3 4.a6 h2 he is in for a disappointment as white knight joins the battle: 5.\d1+! \d2 6.\f2 Right on time. 6...\e2 7.\h1 \f1 8.a7 \g1 9.a8\w Again, right on time. The queen protects the knight. (Funnily enough, the only other underpromotion that wins is 9.a8\ (a8\ is a draw!) Of course, white would need to apply his knowledge of checkmating the king with \ + \!)

3.\c6

Obviously threatening to step into the square of the h-pawn so the following move is forced

3...\h4 3...\a5 4.\d5 is simply won.

4.\b6! The key move! White king and knight are switching their roles.

4...h3 5.a5 h2 6.\d3+

Essential check. The knight proves to be an amazing piece once again.

6...\c3 7.\f2 \d2 8.a6 \e2 9.\h1 \f1
and white wins.

A beautiful example that not only shows the miracle of knight jump, but also exemplifies an important winning strategy in endgames (that we will talk about in depth in later issues) – „the distribution of work load“. To clarify this definition, let me summarize how it played out in this example: The knight has done a wonderful job of protecting white's passed a-pawn at first and then white king stepped in by threatening to catch black h- pawn. But at the appropriate moment, white pieces switched their roles and white king took guard of the a-pawn, while the knight used its power to reach from b2 to h1 and catch the h-pawn.

In conclusion, single passed pawns are usually dealt with (caught or blocked) by pieces relatively easily. But even strong pieces such as rook can be defenceless against connected passed pawns. The classical example is:

\[ 10.a7 \text{g1} 11.a8\text{#} \]
Modern Chess

and black reaches a theoretically won ♕ v. ♖ endgame.

Endgames with connected passed pawns come in all shapes and colors and they definitely deserve a chapter of their own. We will return to them later. Before we do that, we need to attend to several elementary principles relating to passed pawns. The first one of them is **breakthrough**. Let us first look at the textbook example:

**Breakthrough 1**

Clearing the way for the a-pawn.

1. **b6! axb6** or 1...cxb6 2.a6 bxa6 3.c6

2. **c6!**

White wins with a double pawn sacrifice:

and white gets the queen in 2 moves.

We can see another typical breakthrough motive in the following position:
In order to win this game, white will use the threat of the breakthrough.

1.\textit{d5 d8} Black has to give way

because with 1...\textit{f6}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{d5 d8}
  \item \textit{e6 c8}
  \item \textit{e7 b8 d7}
\end{itemize}

he would step out of the square of the c6-pawn and white would use his sacrificial lamb 2.b6! cxb6 to promote the c-pawn. 3.c7

and white wins by simple means.

Let's now see the breakthrough in practice. A fresh game Navara – Bartel, Jerusalem, 2015, features an instructive moment in same-colored bishops endgame:
Black completely dominates and he only needs to find where to break through. Pushing c3 would be premature as it would allow white king to get to b3. White b-pawn presents another distraction. Bartel fixes white’s pawn structure with

54...f4! This move also puts white in some sort of zugzwang.

54...c3 55.b3

55.b2 Forced.

55.g1 loses the h-pawn to 55.e1; while 55.b6 loses the b-pawn in 2 moves. 55.c6 56.b4 a5

55.c5 56.e1 d4+ The king was lured to b2 so this important move comes with a check.

57.a3 c5 58.b6 xb6 59.b4 c3!

This is the point that Bartel predicted when he played 54...f4. White is forced to enter the pawn endgame

60.xc3 xc3+ 61.xc3 which black decides with...

61...c5 62.d3 d5 63.c3 g5!

...breakthrough! White resigned because after

64.hxg5 h4 65.g6 e6
possible setup for his pieces and now he needs to break through

1.g6+ 1.f6? would be the wrong breakthrough on the account of 1...gxf6 2.g6+ g7 3.b7+ g8 4.h6 a8! and black draws according to the rule that even "passive defence" (rook on eight rank) draws against the g- and h- pawns. Active defence is required with f- and e-pawns.

1...f6 1...e7 only postpones the inevitable 2.g8 f6 3.f8+ and we reach the game position

2.f8+ e5 3.f6!

An intelligent breakthrough.

It seems that 3.f7 is winning on the spot, but Black has counterattack 3...a1 and it would be a huge mistake to play 4.xg7? because white is checkmated out of the blue after 4...xf4!; Neither does 3.g5 bring victory. Again, black switches to active defence with 3...a1! and achieves a draw by checking the king from behind 4.e8+ d6 5.e4 g1+ 6.g4 f1 7.f4 g1+=

In this rook endgame, white achieved the best
3...\textbf{xf6} 4.\textbf{f7!}

The key move that puts black in zugzwang! He can not stretch his rook to the first rank as he did before.

4...\textbf{e6} In case of 4...\textbf{f5+} white wins by "triangulation" 5.\textbf{g4} \textbf{f6} 6.\textbf{g5}+- and the g-pawn finally falls.

5.\textbf{xg7} \textbf{f1} Now it is too late for checks from the behind because white king hides on g7 after

6.\textbf{a7} \textbf{h1+} 7.\textbf{g5} \textbf{g1+} 8.\textbf{h6} \textbf{h1+}

8...\textbf{f6} is insufficient due to 9.\textbf{f7+!} \textbf{e6} 10.\textbf{g7}

9.\textbf{g7}

and winning this position is a matter of technique (read: knowing the "bridge technique").

With this nice example we complete Endgame series for this issue. The most important lesson to take away is that the importance of pawns in endgames rises significantly compared to the middlegame. In the „Test yourself“ section you can find puzzles involving pawn races and breakthrough motives to test your understanding of these principles.

In the next issue, join us for further elaboration on importance of pawns in endgames, including themes of „electric pawns“, the common square of passed pawns, and connected passed pawns.
Modern Chess

Test yourself

Puzzle 1
White to move

Puzzle 2
Black to move

Puzzle 3
White to move

Puzzle 4
White to move
Puzzle 5

White to move

Fighting for the initiative – Part II

(GM Boris Chatalbashev)

Initiative in the middlegame

The fight for initiative is most often associated with the middlegame. With many pieces on the board, dynamic factors tend to be more important than positional ones (but not always!). In addition to piece placement, safety of the king plays an important role. So in many positions when the kings are under attack every tempo is critically important - you must be the first one to take the initiative! You can see excellent examples of initiative in the article of my colleague on Dragon variation, which is perfect for young players to learn the dynamic play and how to attack the king! For such attacks to be successful, needless to say, your pieces must be active.
I find the following game, although a little unknown, to be quite instructive. It is a nice display of how Black gets active and then executes a direct assault, mating the enemy's king.

17. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d2}} \)?!

(20... \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d8}} \) 21. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e7+ \texttt{\textbackslash x7}} \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x7 \texttt{\textbackslash x7}}} \))

18... \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b5}} \) 19. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f3}} \)

Again 19. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f5}} \) b4 20. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x6 \texttt{\textbackslash x6}}} \) 21. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash a4 \texttt{\textbackslash x5}}} \)

The position is complex, but more or less balanced. White has a passed pawn which can become dangerous in future, though it is a little weak now. Also he has some ideas with \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f5}} \), trying to use the weaknesses around the opponent's king. Black pieces are well placed, he will try to play b5 and \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash ad8}} \) targeting the central pawn. White's last move is not very good, though; he should have played the prophylactic 17. a4 first. The text threatens 18. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f5}} \), but Black's energetic play did not give him time for that!

17... \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d6}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash g3}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash f5}} \) is possible, but just not quite enough 18... \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash xh2+}} \) 19. \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash h1 \texttt{\textbackslash e5}}} \) 20.\( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d6 \texttt{\textbackslash b8}}} \)
leaving g4 insufficiently protected... But this is what happens when you put your opponent under pressure. He has to decide which of your threats are real and which are fake – and he usually blunders.

24.a3

24... ♖xf2! 25. ♖xf2 ♖xe3!

Objectively 26.♖xe3 was better, but the position after 26...♕g4+ 27.♖d2 ♖xh6 is no fun for White - his king is left floating in the middle of the board and black pieces are still active.

19...b4 20. ♖e2 ♗e4 21. ♕c2 ♖d6 22. ♖g2 ♖d7 23. ♖e3 ♖ad8 Black has improved his position a lot. You may take a note how he has taken over the initiative – attacking on h2, then the knight on c3, going forward with both his knights, the queen is ready to jump on h3 in some lines and finally the last piece comes into play - the rook on d8. Sometimes to be active you do not need to sacrifice material - just do not be shy and go forward!

24. ♖g2?

This move looks quite normal, but leads to a disaster. Just for the innocuous reason of
26... \( \text{g4}+ \) 27. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xh2}+ \) Before considering how to proceed, it is always useful to take a pawn.

28. \( \text{f2} \) \( \text{g4}+ \) 29. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e6}! \)

A neat move! The black queen attacks on e3 and is still defending the knight on g4.

30. \( \text{f4} \) This allows a brilliant finish, but there is no escape.

30. \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4}+ \) 31. \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{e8}+ \) 32. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{ex3}--; \) 30. \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e8} \)

30... \( \text{e8} \) 31. \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e3}+!! \)

Very beautiful – this excellent game is completed with queen sacrifice!

32. \( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{xe3}+ \) 33. \( \text{xg4} \) \( \text{c8}+ \) 34. \( \text{g5} \)
34. \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{e7} \)

34...\( \text{h6}+ \) 35. \( \text{hxh6} \) \( \text{e5} \)
White is queen and a rook up, but there is no defence to the threats of ♕f8# and ♚h5#!

0–1

**Karjakin,S (2786) – Nezad,H (2365)**
41st Olympiad Open 2014 Tromso NOR (2.1), 03.08.2014

Sometimes the initiative play comes more out of necessity. That is when the strategical factors are not in favour of the player and he searches for dynamic solutions, even if he feels they are not that convincing.

28.f5

28... ♘xe3 29. ♘xe3 ♘xe3 30.bxc6 bxc6 31. ♦b8+ ♧g8

31... ♘e8 32. ♦d6

32. ♧f1 ♘e4 33. ♦d1 h5 The computers favour 33... ♧e8
preventing \(d6\). Even if it is the best move (not quite sure about that), it is the one that is too difficult for humans to make. The bishop on \(g8\) is already funnily placed and now the knight goes to passivity too. Yes, White does not have any threat, but he can calmly improve with 34.a4. Generally Black's choice in the game is reasonable as he is also looking for the initiative!

34. \(d6\) \(b7\) 35. \(xc6\) \(b2\)?

Now this is a serious mistake. With his next move White frees his c pawn, the queen goes back into defence and the knight on d4 is strong enough. The pin does not matter at all.

35...\(b4\) was much stronger,

when Black manages to reach the weak squares around White's king. In that case he is immune to loss, having at least perpetual in many variations. For example: 36. \(\text{f3}\) \(c3\) (36... \(a3\)) 36... \(e1\) 37. \(xe1\) \(xe1\)

36. \(a4\) \(e3\) 37.\(c6\) \(c3\) 38. \(xa7\) \(e4\)
39. \(e2\) \(xc6\) 40. \(xd5\) \(c2\) 41. \(e3\) \(f6\)
42. \(a5\)

White consolidated and went on to convert the extra pawn.

42... \(c8\) 43. \(d4\) \(b1\) 44. \(c3\) \(e1\)
45. \(c5\) \(xc5\) 46. \(xc5\) \(h4\) 47. \(e2\) \(e4\)
The opening has finished and both sides have placed their pieces perfectly for the given pawn structure. Neither White nor Black can try some active idea immediately. In chess, such situations happen very often. Then, usually after some manoeuvering, one side tries regrouping and executing a certain plan. But meanwhile, his opponent can also try grabbing the initiative, using the temporary disharmony which comes with the change of piece placements and plans.

15... a7 The idea is to play b5 thus provoking White to answer with a4, then the knight simply goes back. In future the weakness of b4 square might become very useful for Black.

16.d4!? First it might look like White has lost a tempo - playing d3 and the next move d4. But in fact he tries to take the initiative only because Black's knight is misplaced on a7, feeling the complications will turn in his favour.

16...cxd4?! A natural move, but not the best. Black should have continued with his plan of playing b5 immediately. In that case a future d5 break
would not amount to much as e file is closed.

16...b5!

17.cxb5 axb5 18.dxc5 (18. ∘xb5?! ∘xb5
19. ∇xb5 ♘a6) 18... ∘xc5=

17.exd4 b5 Fighting for d5 square.

18.d5!

18...exd5 18... ∘xc4 looks very dangerous, though it is not losing 19. ∘xc4 bx4 20.dxe6 fxe6 21. ∇xd8+ ♘xd8 22. ∘g5 (22.Bh3) 22... ∘b5 23.a4

19.cxd5 ∘xd5 20. ∘xd5 ∘xd5 21. ♘e1!

21... ∘f8 22. ∘e5 ∘d6 23. ∘xd6
23. ∘bc1 was even stronger

but the proof is rather in computer-style:
23... ∘c6 (23... ∘d8 24. ∘cd1!) 24. ∘xg7!!
24... $\text{gxg7}$ \hspace{1em} 25. $\text{e4}$ $\text{c5}$ \hspace{1em} 26. $\text{xc5}$ $\text{xc5}$ \hspace{1em} 27. $\text{g5}$ with decisive attack. I suppose it is hard even for someone like Kasparov to find such possibilities. It just shows how powerful White's initiative really is! Kortchnoi simply did not want to let Black's knight back into the game.

23... $\text{xd6}$ \hspace{1em} 24... $\text{xd6}??$

24. $\text{e8}+$ with checkmate.

24. $\text{h4}?!$

Again there was a better move, but the text surely looks more natural, more human-like. Objectively the advantage is slipping away, but White still has a pressure.

24. $\text{e5!}$ $\text{xd4}$ \hspace{1em} (24... $\text{d8}$ \hspace{1em} 25. $\text{c4!}$ $\text{f8}$ \hspace{1em} 26. $\text{xd5}$ $\text{xd5}$ \hspace{1em} 27. $\text{e3\#}$) \hspace{1em} 25. $\text{xf7}$ $\text{xf7}$ \hspace{1em} 26. $\text{xb7}$ $\text{g8}$ \hspace{1em} (26... $\text{xb7?}$ \hspace{1em} 27. $\text{f3\#}$)

24...$\text{g5}$ 24...$\text{h6}!$

One of the ways for Black to use White's inaccuracies and equalise. But the good thing about having the initiative is that even if it is not easy to attack, it is even tougher to defend!
25. \textit{bd1}! (25. \textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 26.f3 \textit{g5} 27. \textit{g2} \textit{c6}) 25... \textit{xd1} 26. \textit{xd1} \textit{we6} 27. \textit{xe6} \textit{fxe6} 28. \textit{d6} Bxg2 29. \textit{xg2} a5—

26. \textit{xd1} \textit{we6} 27. \textit{d2} \textit{f6}? 27...gxh4!

was the only way to keep the balance. 28. \textit{g5}+ \textit{g6} 29. \textit{e5} \textit{c6}! 30. \textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 31. \textit{xb8}+ \textit{g7}

28. \textit{xb7} \textit{xb7} 29. \textit{d5} \textit{b8} 30. \textit{f5}

Now even though Black's position is not lost, practically it is all over. Full domination plus weak king, White's play is easy and Black must find only moves all the time. Virtually impossible.

30... \textit{c6} 31. \textit{e4} \textit{e6} 32. \textit{g4} \textit{h8} 33. \textit{d6} \textit{e5} 34. \textit{e4} \textit{e8} 35.f4 gxh4?! Losing.

Even after 35... \textit{g4} Black must be ready to suffer a long time... 36. \textit{e7} (36. \textit{d4}+ \textit{f6} 37.fxg5 \textit{c8} 38. \textit{d2}±).

36... \textit{f8} 37.h3 \textit{e8} 38. \textit{d4}+ \textit{f6} 39. \textit{f5} \textit{e1}+ 40. \textit{g2} \textit{e3}+ 41. \textit{exe3} \textit{exe3} 42. \textit{d8} \textit{e8} 43. \textit{xe8} \textit{xe8} 44. \textit{xf6}+ \textit{g8} 45. \textit{g5}+±
36.gxf4  g4  37. d4+  f6  38. xf6  e1+  
39. g2  e2+  40. g3  

A nice game by a great player!  

1–0  

Marin,M (2557) – Stefansson,H (2557)  
Istanbul ol (Men) Istanbul (7.1), 04.11.2000  

Often fighting for the initiative is not directly connected with an attack on the enemy's king. Sometimes it is just domination all over the board.  

17. a1!
17... $\textit{a2}$ It is not clear whether Stefansson considered last White’s move as a blunder or not, but he should have been more careful. Next several moves are forced and for the minimal material advantage he has to part with both bishops, the central pawn and some tempis...

Instead 17...b6 was interesting – with the idea 18. $\textit{c2}$ (Both 18. $\textit{d2}$; and 18.e3 are better. White should not be greedy also!) 18...$\textit{c5}$ 19. $\textit{xc5}$ $\textit{xc5}$ 20. $\textit{xa8}$ $\textit{xa8}$ – we saw some similar sacrifices in the first issue of the magazine. With the control of the white squares all over the board it is Black who has the initiative.


22... $\textit{d7}$ 23. $\textit{c3}$ a4 24. $\textit{a5}$ $\textit{fe8}$ 25. $\textit{f3}$

25.d4 was better $\textit{h8}$ (25... $\textit{xe2}$? 26. $\textit{xb6}$ $\textit{xb6}$ 27. $\textit{c4+}$ $\textit{e6}$ 28. $\textit{d5}$) 26.e3 achieving a very nice setup in the center.

25... $\textit{e5}$ 26. $\textit{b4}$ $\textit{e6}$? 26... $\textit{e7}$!

and nothing would be clear.

27. $\textit{xb6}$ 27.$\textit{d4}$!

is even more convincing.

27... $\textit{xb6}$ 28.$\textit{d4}$ $\textit{e8}$ 29. $\textit{xa4}$
Alapin Variation of Sicilian Defence
(GM Petar Arnaudov)

Dear chess friends,
I’m GM Petar Arnaudov and I will present a repertoire for White pieces against the so popular Sicilian Defence. My choice is Alapin Variation (1.e4 c5 2.c3). Nowadays, more and more people avoid complicated lines after the open Sicilian 2. ♕f3, followed by 3.d4, because they are analyzed in-depth by many books and computer databases, where the opening battle goes on after move 20 and even 30.

My idea is not to give you 20 moves in every subline but rather introduce the strategy of the position, so that you can feel the Alapin Variation better and play the forthcoming positions with understanding and pleasure.

The 2.c3 variation fits my conception perfectly well. The arising positions are playable, there are no forced draws and it’s more important to understand the opening than to memorize plenty of variations.

Full domination. And Black has not an even single active idea! In such positions White can do whatever he wants, but he should better not hurry. For example h4–h5, ♕g2 looks good for beginning. The game went on differently, but still White converted with ease...

1–0
Game 1 – Variations with 4...\textit{\texttt{\textupslope{f}6}}

[\textit{\texttt{B22}}]

1.e4 c5 2.c3

White's idea is 3.d4, struggling for the centre. Black has many possibilities and I will split them in three parts. The first contains the side lines 2...b6, 2...g6, 2...\textit{\texttt{\textupslope{a}5}}, 2...d6. All these moves do not attack the e4-pawn directly and leave the center in White's hands. They will be analyzed in details in the third part of article, which will be published in August. The second part of the article will deal with one of the main moves in the position 2...\textit{\texttt{\textupslope{f}6}}. This attacking continuation provokes "e4–e5" and doesn't allow White to fully control the center.

In this issue I will analyze in-depth the central breakthrough 2...d5, where positions with IQP (isolated queen pawn) arise. Such IQP positions were analyzed in detail by GM Viktor Gavrikov in the previous issues of the magazine.

2...d5

3.exd5 \textit{\texttt{\textupslope{x}d}5} Black's struggle for center succeeded but the queen is exposed on d5, thus White can gain some tempi.

3...\textit{\texttt{\textupslope{f}6}}

This move is less popular, because it leads to an inferior position after 4.\textit{\texttt{a}4}+ \textit{\texttt{\textupslope{b}d}7} 5.c4 e6 6.dxe6 fxe6 7.\textit{\texttt{\textupslope{c}3}} \textit{\texttt{\textupslope{d}6}} 8.d3. Black had no sufficient compensation for the sacrificed material in the game Howell,D (2614)-Ivanisevic,I (2629) Kallithea 2009, 1–0 (46)

4.d4 \textit{\texttt{\textupslope{f}6}}
The first part of the article will deal with the lines arising after 4...\( \text{d}f6 \).

5.\( \text{d}f3 \) Black is on the crossroads. He can either develop the bishop 5...\( \text{g}f5 \), 5...\( \text{g}4 \), or leave it defending the queenside and hurry up with the kingside development by 5...e6. All these possibilities deserve attention.

5...\( \text{g}4 \) Maybe the most popular system after 2...d5, played quite often by the former World champion Garry Kasparov. Black goes for an ideal setup – first developing the light-squared bishop and later ...e6, followed by \( \text{e}7 \) and castling. Nevertheless, this choice can be risky, since the bishop does not protect the queenside anymore. I will offer a not so popular line, starting with 6. \( \text{d}d2 \).

5...\( \text{f}5 \)

A relatively new move that gained popularity lately. 6.e3 \( \text{c}6 \) 7.\( \text{b}d2 \) This natural looking move is a mistake, in view of 7.\( \text{a}3 \)!

The outcome of the tactical battle will favor White. 7...\( \text{cxd}4 \) 7...\( \text{e}6 \) 8.\( \text{a}4 \)!
It’s obvious that the French GM analyzed the variation in-depth, so his two victories against players with Elo rating 2700+ are not an accident. In both games he showed great understanding of the position’s nuances.

8...0–0–0 9.\textit{c4 }\textit{e4} 10.0–0 \textit{h3} At the first glance Black gets the initiative but the forthcoming move dispenses the illusion.

\textit{11.e1!} 

22...\textit{xd8} (22...\textit{xa7} 23.\textit{d7+) 23.\textit{c5} Even players from Club “2700+” are in danger in the Sicilian Alapin Variation if they don’t play carefully. This was exactly the case in the game Vachier Lagrange,M (2719)-Moiseenko,A (2699) Biel 2013, 1–0 (23) 7...\textit{xd4} 8.\textit{c4} (8.\textit{xd4?} It’s not yet too late to save the day with 8...\textit{xd4} 9.\textit{xd4} \textit{c8.} It’s obvious that Black stands better but the position is more or less level.) 8...\textit{xe3}!!
Even the computer engines need time to estimate the queen sacrifice precisely.
9.\textit{xd}5 exd2+ 10.\textit{xd}2 0–0–0 11.\textit{xc}6? (11.c4!? e6 12.\textit{f}4 d6 13.\textit{g}5 \textit{b}4+ 14.\textit{f}1 d3+ 15.\textit{g}1 exd5

Black has a very good position and alas, this is the best possibility for White.) 11...\textit{xd}2 12.\textit{xb}7+ \textit{xb}7 13.\textit{xd}2 e6 with decisive material advantage for Black. 14.\textit{e}2 d6 15.\textit{hd}1 c7 16.\textit{d}4 e4 17.g3 \textit{g}6 18.c4 h5 19.\textit{d}2 h4 20.\textit{g}1 hxg3 21.hxg3 \textit{h}2 22.\textit{f}1 \textit{e}4 23.\textit{e}2 \textit{b}6

A shocking loss in a 20-move miniature game for Sergei Tiviakov, who is one of the "knights" of the variation 0–1 (23) Tiviakov,S (2652)-Ruiz Sanchez,O (2420) Panama City 2013.

5...e6 is the other main line. Black keeps the light-squared bishop on "c8". Black's position remains solid, but there is no pressure at the center, which give us tempo for an attack.

6.\textit{a}3! This is the best square for the knight. From here it can be re-routed either to "c4", or to "b5". Black has a couple of possibilities but neither of them leads to full equality. 6...\textit{d}8

\textbf{a) 6...\textit{xd}4 7.\textit{b}5!}
The knight on “b5” bothers Black. (Of course not 7.cxd4? ossipxa3) 7...a6 8...xd4 ossipxa5 9...xgxd5 expatoxd5 10.c4 (10.a3) 10...0-0 11.xgxd5 exd5 12.0-0 xg8 13.xf4

White can hope for advantage due to the better pawn structure and moer active pieces. 13.0-g4 14...fd4 expatxd4 15.xd4 expatc5 16.f3 expatd7 17.xg3 expate6 18.xf5 1/2 (58) Tiviakov,S (2668)-Matnadze,A (2361) Banyoles 2006;

a) 6...a6 7.xc4!

b) 6...c6 7.e3 cxd4 8.b5 wd7 The idea of the move is to defend the c6-knight (8...wd8 9.xbd4 White returns the pawn comfortably and has an easy play. 9.xd5 10.g5 wb6 11.c4 xg4 12.xd4 c5 13.xd5 xg4 14.0-0 c5 15.e2 h6 16.f4 0-0 17.c4

The “b5” square is out of reach, but now the weakness of “b6” becomes significant.

7...bd7 8.e2 e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.a4 wc6 Black has difficulties to develop. 11.fe5 xgxe5 12.xxe5 wc7 13.xf4 d6 14.xf3 xd8 15.dxc5 xxc5 16.e2 White has development advantage and strong bishop pair. Further plan is to advance “b” and “c” pawns.

16...e7 17.f6d1 e8 18.c4 d7 19.d6 wh4 20.xc5 xxc5 21.b6

A true opening catastrophe! Black’s queenside remained undeveloped until the end of the game 1–0 (21) Tiviakov,S (2656)-Pires,G (2145) Porto 2013;
The position looks equal but actually White has a huge advantage. Black's king is not defended by any piece, while White can easily regroup his pieces for an attack. Tiviakov continued brilliantly to become the European champion in the following game.

17...d7 18.ad1 ad8 19.d3

Pretty good calculation, White remains a pawn up. 22...xg3 23.xg3 c5 (23...fe8 24.e5+-

With an inevitable checkmate!) 24.xf8 xf8 25.b3 Tiviakov converted his advantage slowly but methodically 1–0 (59) Tiviakov,S (2635)-Sutovsky,E (2630) Plovdiv 2008

9.bxd4 d5 10.d2 d6 11.xc6 xc6? This move loses an important tempo (11...bxc6!? 12.c4 f6 13.d3 with a minimal advantage for White.) 12.d4 b6 13.b5+ Black cannot castle anymore, it's obvious that he lost the opening battle. 13...f8 14.0–0
15.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{\text{f6}} \) 16.\( \text{c5} \) (The simple move 16.\( \text{h3} \) keeps the advantage) 16...\( \text{\text{xh2}}+ \) 17.\( \text{\text{h1}} \)

with a double-edged game: 1–0 (50) Salgado Lopez,I (2622)-Wojtaszek,R (2715) Dubai 2014;
7.\( \text{\text{c4}} \)!

I think that this move is more active and gives more chances for an opening advantage than 7.\( \text{\text{c2}} \) \( \text{\text{c6}} \) 8.\( \text{\text{ce5}} \) cxd4 (8...\( \text{\text{xe5}} \) 9.\( \text{\text{xe5}} \) a6 10.\( \text{\text{e3}} \) \( \text{\text{c7}} \) 11.\( \text{\text{a4+}} \) \( \text{\text{d7}} \) 12.\( \text{\text{xd7}} \) \( \text{\text{xd7}} \) 13.\( \text{\text{xd7+}} \) \( \text{\text{xe7}} \) 14.0–0–0 cxd4 15.\( \text{\text{xd4}} \) 1/2 (21) Tkachiev,V (2657)-Malakhov,V (2689) Dagomys 2008) 9.\( \text{\text{b5}} \) \( \text{\text{d7}} \) 10.\( \text{\text{xd7}} \)!

10...\( \text{\text{xd7}} \) (10...\( \text{\text{xd7}} \) 11.\( \text{\text{xd4}} \) \( \text{\text{xd4}} \) 12.\( \text{\text{xd4}} \) a6 13.\( \text{\text{a4}} \) b5 14.\( \text{\text{c2}} \) \( \text{\text{f6}} \) 15.\( \text{\text{xd8+}} \) (15.\( \text{\text{h4}} \) !)

White has a bishop pair and good chances for an attack.

15...\( \text{\text{xd8}} \) 16.\( \text{\text{e2!}} \) 1–0 (50) Tiviakov,S (2650)-Quparadze,G (2489) Nakhchivan 2013
11.\( \text{\text{xd4}} \) \( \text{\text{c5}} \) 12.\( \text{\text{xc6}} \) bxc6 13.\( \text{\text{f3}} \) \( \text{\text{d5}} \) 14.\( \text{\text{a4}} \) 0–0 15.0–0 \( \text{\text{ab8}} \) 16.\( \text{\text{d}} \)
Here too, the bishop pair and better pawn structure promise White long-term advantage 1–0 (36) Berkes,F (2677)-Horvath,C (2537) Gyula 2013

6.\( \text{\texttt{bd2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c6}} \) 6...\( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \) 7.\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{wh5?!}} \) After this move Black's queenside remains unprotected. (7...\( \text{\texttt{d7?!}} \) 8.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) e6 9.\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{b5+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c6}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{dc4}} \) with an initiative: 1–0 (40) Gaponenko,l (2428)-Belic,J (2320) Pozarevac 2009) 8.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{bd7}} \) 9.\( \text{\texttt{cxd4 e6}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{xb7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b8}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{c6}} \) White has an extra pawn and an attack. 11...\( \text{\texttt{b4}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) 0–0 13.\( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) Black resigned only a couple of moves later because the compensation for the sacrificed piece is insufficient 1–0 (26) Sveshnikov,E (2580)-Belikov,V (2480) Elista 1995

7.\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) 8.\( \text{\texttt{b3!}} \)

8.\( \text{\texttt{a4?}} \) Unfortunately, this move is a blunder. 8...\( \text{\texttt{d1!}} \)

(8...\( \text{\texttt{g5?}} \) looks tempting but loses almost by force after: 9.\( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xfg2}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xe1}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{dx5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c5}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{dx6}} \) \( \text{\texttt{bxc6}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{xa6}} \) White crushed his opponent in the game Tseshkovsky,V (2500)-Istratescu,A (2550) Niksic 1997, 1-0, (19)) 9.\( \text{\texttt{xd1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g2}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{f3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) and White should work hard for a draw; 8.\( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) 9.\( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{xd4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd4}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \) a6 Black’s future is optimistic.

8...\( \text{\texttt{a5}} \) The only move, but good enough. 9.\( \text{\texttt{b5+}} \) 9...\( \text{\texttt{xd5?!}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) (10.\( \text{\texttt{xf3?!}} \)
Modern Chess

\textit{\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}d5\texttt{\_\texttt{\textbackslash c}xb3\texttt{\_\texttt{\textbackslash c}xd4\_\texttt{\textbackslash c}d4\_\texttt{\textbackslash a}6\textbf{Black reaches a comfortable equality.}}\)) 10...\_\texttt{xg2 11.\_\texttt{a}4+ \_\texttt{d}7 12.\_\texttt{g}1 \_\texttt{d}5}

\textit{\textbf{9...\texttt{\textbackslash w}d7\textbf{10.\_\texttt{xf3 \_\texttt{xc4 11.\_\texttt{xc4 \_\texttt{xd4}}}}} 12.\_\texttt{d4} This is the key position of the 6. \_\texttt{d2} variation. I think that White retains a minimal advantage. The queenside majority promises an advantage. White should develop the dark-squared bishop and centralize the rooks on d1, e1. Only after this can he advance the pawn majority. Besides, Black king is still in the center, which is a good pre-requisite for additional tactical motifs.}

\textit{\textbf{12...\texttt{e6 12...e5 This apparently active move gives White a subject of attack 13.\_\texttt{c}2 \texttt{\textbackslash w}d5 14.\_\texttt{e}3 \_\texttt{\textbackslash w}xc4 15.\_\texttt{xc4 \_\texttt{\textbackslash c}xe5 16.\_\texttt{f}5 \texttt{\textbackslash w}e8 20.\_\texttt{xf7+ \_\texttt{xd7 21.b3. and White has a stable advantage in the ending because the combination \_\texttt{\textbackslash w}+\_\texttt{\textbackslash c} is stronger than \_\texttt{\textbackslash w}+\_\texttt{\textbackslash c} when fighting on both flanks!}}) 17.0–0 0–0 18.\_\texttt{f}6 19.\_\texttt{f}5 \_\texttt{\textbackslash w}e8 20.\_\texttt{\textbackslash x}h6+ \texttt{\textbackslash x}h6 21.\_\texttt{\textbackslash x}h6 With a promising attacking position.}

\textbf{14.\texttt{\textbackslash w}b5+}

\textbf{14.\texttt{\textbackslash a}4+}

\textbf{14...\texttt{\textbackslash w}d7 15.\_\texttt{xf6 \_\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 16.0–0–0 \_\texttt{\textbackslash x}b5 17.\_\texttt{\textbackslash x}b5}

\textit{White's rook is already developed and the bishop can comfortably return to “c1”, from where it controls both wings. 16...\_\texttt{e}7

37}
Modern Chess

White’s advantage is microscopic but stable. In the following game the better pawn structure and more active pieces gave the opportunity for a clear winning plan. After almost 100(!) moves White converted the advantage into a full point. I leave the rest of the game without commentaries but you can enjoy the filigree technique of the Alapin Variation maestro Evgeny Sveshnikov.

17...b8 18.a7 c5 19.b5 xf2
20.h1 e3+ 21.b1 e7 22.d3 b6
23.df3 hg8 24.xf6 bf8 25.g3 h5
26.h6 h8 27.xh8 xh8 28.b4 h4 29.c4 hxg3 30.hxg3 e3 31.c5 f5 32.f3 g1
33.a4 a8 34.a5 xc5 35.xc5 xa5
36.d4 xc5 37.e3 f6 38.xe6+ g5
39.e3 g4 40.e2 c4 41.f4 b5 42.d3 g5 43.f2 f6 44.b3 b4 45.f3 g5
46.b2 d4 47.c2 d5 48.b3 d4
49.a4 c4 50.b3 d4 51.c2 d8
52.f4 c8+ 53.d2 b8 54.d3 b3
55.c3 e8 56.d2 b8 57.b2 b8
58.c4 b8 59.c3 b5 60.b2 b4
61.h4 f6 62.d4 g5 63.f4 b5
64.d2 b8 65.f3+ h5 66.d4 b4
67.e6 b5 68.h4+ g6 69.f4+ g5
70.h3+ g6 71.f4 f6 72.f2 e5
73.d3+ f6 74.f3 b8 75.e3 b5
76.f4 g5 77.h3+ f6 78.f2 e5
79.f3 g5 80.xb3 a5 81.c2 a2+
82.d1 b2 83.e1 a2 84.f1 b2
85.g2 a2 86.c3 b2 87.f3 b4
88.d3 a4 89.f4 b4 90.h3+ h5
91.d3 a4 92.f4+ g5 93.g2 a6
94.e3 g6 95.b3 c6 96.b5 c3
97.f4

1–0 (97) Sveshnikov, E (2517)–Nunn, J (2602)
Katerini 2014

Game 2 – Variations without 4...f6

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 xd5 4.d4 The second part of the article will deal with the alternatives: 4.e5, 4.g6, 4.e6, 4.cxd4 and the most important 4...c6.

4.c6

4.g6
This move gained popularity lately. Black's idea is to put pressure on "d" pawn and develop his pieces without playing \( \text{h}e7 \). Black must play actively in search for dynamics, otherwise he risks to fall into a strategically worse position!

5.\( \text{b}3! \) 5.\( \text{f}3! \)? The most natural move gives satisfying results, as the latest two games of GM Anton Korobov show: 5...\( \text{g}7 \) 6.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \) (6...\( \text{cxd4} \) 7.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{e}4+ \) 8.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 9.\( \text{cxd4} \) 0–0 10.0–0 \( \text{f}5 \) 11.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{xe3} \) 12.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{f}4 \) 13.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) White was the one to fight for equality in the game 0–1 (38) Potapov,P (2477)-Korobov,A (2708) Sochi 2015) 7.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 8.\( \text{e}2 \) 0–0 9.0–0 \( \text{f}5 \) 10.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 11.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 12.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 13.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{xe6} \) = Zhigalko,S (2678)-Korobov,A (2680) Dubai 2014, 0–1 (30)) 5...\( \text{cxd4} \) (5...\( \text{g}7 \) 6.\( \text{b}5 \) The threat of \( \text{c}7 \) forces Black to develop the knight on a relatively unpromising square \( \text{a6} \)! 6...\( \text{a}6 \) 7.\( \text{e}3 \) forces Black to take on \( \text{d}4 \). 7...\( \text{cxd4} \) 8.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 9...\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{b6} \)?! 9...0–0 10.\( \text{xa7} \)!

White must accept the sacrifice. 10...\( \text{e}6 \) 11.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 12.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{xe5} \) 13.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{d}5 \) 14.\( \text{d}4 \) and the compensation has yet to be proved) 10.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 11.0–0 0–0 12.\( \text{h}4 \)

White has already developed his pieces, so his position was naturally better in the game Smirin,l (2663)-Kanter,E (2417) Baku 2013, 1–0 (27)) 6.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 7.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 8.\( \text{e}5 \) (8.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 8...\( \text{f}6 \) 9.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 10.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{g}7 \) 11.\( \text{xa7} \) \( \text{e}5 \) 12.\( \text{e}3 \) (12.\( \text{xc8} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 13.\( \text{b}6 \) \( \text{d}8 \) ) 12...\( \text{e}6 \) 13.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{e}7 \)

Black is better developed, but this is hardly enough compensation for the lack of a pawn. If the counterplay is not organized fast, White
will soon convert the extra pawn.
14.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{d5} \) 15.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 16.c4 \( \text{b6} \) 17.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{hc8} \) 18.\( \text{d2} \)

1–0 (34) Berkes,F (2665)-Donchenko,A (2498) Zalakaros 2014; 4...\( \text{e6} \)!? 5.\( \text{f3} \) After the moves 5...\( \text{c6} \) and 5...\( \text{f6} \) the game transposes to the above-mentioned variations. (5.\( \text{a3} \) White can try using the move order in his favor. 5...\( \text{xd4} \) 6.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{a6} \) 7.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 8.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{c5} \)?)

With a decisive advantage in the game Sveshnikov,E (2555)-Osnos,V (2440) Rostov on Don 1993, 1–0 (25)); 4...\( \text{xd4} \) After this move, the game can transpose to already known variations. Only the move 6...\( \text{e5} \) has an independent value: 5.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c6} \) 6.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e5} \)!? Black tries to attack the center as faster as possible. 7.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 8.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 9.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{e4} \) 10.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 11.\( \text{dx} \) \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 12.\( \text{xe2} \)! After this quiet move there is no equality for Black. 12...\( \text{d7} \) 13.0–0 \( \text{c6} \) 14.\( \text{c1} \) The queen offers the “\( d1 \)” square to its college – the “\( a1 \)” rook and goes for ”\( g5 \)” itself 14...\( \text{e6} \) 15.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{d6} \) is an unpleasant threat.

15.\( \text{xd5} \) 16.\( \text{c4} \)±

\( (\text{b...\text{e7}}! \text{9.}\text{f3} \text{0–0} \text{10.}\text{c4} =) \text{9.}\text{xc5!} \text{xc5} \text{10.}\text{xc5} \text{xc5} \text{11.}\text{c7}++– \)
Modern Chess

1–0 (45) Gharamian,T (2615)-Draftian,A (2333) Belgium 2009; 4...e5

5...f3 exd4 (5...c6) 6.cxd4 cxd4
7...xd4 xd4 8.f3

Despite the queen exchange, White retains an advantage. He is a tempo up and threatens \( f_b5+ \), followed by 0–0 and \( e_1+ \). 8...a6 (8...b4+ 9.c3 f6 10.db5 a6 11.a3 xc3+ 12.xc3 White has a bishop pair in an open position, which is a huge advantage. 1–0 (91) Bedouin,X (2328)-Oger,C (2007) Elancourt 2007) 9.c3 b4 10.e2 e7 11.0–0 xc3 12.bxc3 0–0 13.a3 e8 14.f3±

The bishops on a3 and f3 control the whole board, thus it’s hard to suggest any constructive idea for Black. 1–0 (39)
5.\textit{\textit{f}}f3 Black is on the crossroads. He has at least four continuations worth mentioning.

5...\textit{\textit{e}}6 5...\textit{\textit{e}}f6 6.\textit{\textit{e}}3 \textit{\textit{e}}6 (6...\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{xd}4 7.\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{xd}4 \textit{\textit{e}}6 8.\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{c}3 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}6 A classical IQP position is on the board. 9.\textit{\textit{a}}3 \textit{\textit{e}}7 10.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}3 0–0 11.0–0 \textit{\textit{b}}6 12.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{e}2 \textit{\textit{b}}7 13.\textit{\textit{a}}\textit{ad}1 \textit{\textit{h}}6 14.\textit{\textit{a}}b1 Adams prepares a battery along the b1-h7 diagonal. 14...\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{d}8 15.\textit{\textit{c}}2 \textit{\textit{ac}}8 16.d5!

Once again following the familiar itinerary with the knight: - b1–a3–b5–d4 7...\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{xd}4 8.\textit{\textit{b}}\textit{b}5 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}8 9.\textit{\textit{b}}\textit{xd}4 \textit{\textit{c}}\textit{xd}4 10.\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{xd}4 \textit{\textit{e}}7 11.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}3 \textit{\textit{c}}\textit{c}7 (11...0–0 12.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{e}2 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}5 13.0–0 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}7 14.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{e}4 \textit{g}6 15.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{e}5 \textit{\textit{f}}3 16.\textit{\textit{f}}3±

Remember this central breakthrough. The knight on f6 should protect the “h7” square, so this is the perfect moment to open up the position.

16.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{e}5 17.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{xe}5 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{xe}5 18.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}4 \textit{\textit{g}}5 19.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{xf}6 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{xf}6 20.\textit{h}7+ White has an advantage. 1–0 (59) Adams,M (2660)-Poluljahov,A (2480) New York 1996)

7.\textit{\textit{a}}a3

White has more active pieces and a clear target in sight – the “e6” pawn: 1–0 (32) Brandenburg,D (2527)-Schut,L (2290) Wijk aan Zee 2012) 12.0–0 0–0 13.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{e}1 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{d}7 14.\textit{\textit{g}}
With initiative. 14...g6 15.\(f_3\) \(c_6\) 16.\(e_2\) \(f_8d_8\) 17.\(e_5\) \(d_5\) 18.\(f_4\) h6 19.\(f_3\) \(g_7\) 20.\(e_4\) \(b_5\) 21.\(a_4\) \(a_6\) 22.\(b_4\) \(x_a_4\) 23.\(e_5\) \(a_c_8\) 24.\(h_4\) \(h_5\) 25.\(g_4\) \(h_6\) 26.\(c_4\) 27.\(c_6\) 28.\(h_2\) 1–0 (26) Almasi,Z (2663)-Ronchetti,N (2414) Reggio Emilia 2008;

5...\(f_5\) This move is extremely popular nowadays. 6.\(e_3\) \(cxd_4\) (6...\(f_6\) leads to a position which is analyzed in-depth in the first game. 7.\(x_d_4\) \(x_d_4\)?) This is the beginning of a wrong idea. (7...\(e_6\) 8.\(d_2\)!

8...\(g_7\) 8...\(x_d_4\)?? 9.\(x_d_4\) \(e_7\) 10.\(c_4\) \(c_6\) 11.\(e_3\) \(a_5\) 12.\(x_f_5\) \(x_f_5\) 13.\(d_3\) with a minimal advantage for White) 9.\(b_3\)?! (9.\(a_4!\) \(d_8\) 10.\(e_2\) \(a_6\) 11.\(d_1\)±

It is not easy to suggest a continuation for Black.) 9...\(x_d_4\) 10.\(x_d_4\) \(a_6\) 11.\(e_2\) \(c_6\) 12.\(x_d_5\) \(x_d_5\) 13.\(b_6\) \(d_6\) 14.0–0 0–0 15.\(f_1\)
Modern Chess

6.\(e2\) cxd4 7.cxd4 e6 8.\(\text{\&}c3\) \(\text{\&}a5\) (8...\(\text{\&}b4\) 9.0-0 \(\text{\&}a5\) 10.d5!?

White’s position is easier to play and contains no risks 1-0 (75) Gormally,D (2504)-Jones,G (2648) England 2014) 8.cxd4 \(\text{\&}xb1\) (8...a6 9.\(\text{\&}c3\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 10.\(\text{\&}a4\) \(\text{\&}d8\) 11.\(\text{\&}e2\)? (11.\(\text{\&}c5!\) \(\text{\&}c7\) 12.\(\text{\&}c1+-\) with a huge development advantage and a winning position.) 11...e6 12.0-0 \(\text{\&}f6\) 13.\(\text{\&}b6\) \(\text{\&}c6\) 14.\(\text{\&}c4\) \(\text{\&}d6\) 15.\(\text{\&}c1\) 0-0= 1/2 (34) Zhigalko,S (2661)-Korobov,A (2715) Kiev 2013) 9.\(\text{\&}a4\)+!

A typical idea, aiming to open lines and diagonals against the enemy’s king! (10.\(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}ge7\) 11.\(\text{\&}b3\) 0–0 12.\(\text{\&}fd1\) \(\text{\&}fd8\) 13.\(\text{\&}h3\) \(\text{\&}h5\) 14.\(\text{\&}ac1\) with an interesting double-edged position 1–0 (34) Ghaem Maghami,E (2594)- Leon Hoyos,M (2579) Khanty-Mansiysk 2010) 10...\(\text{\&}xd5\) (10...\(\text{\&}d8\) 11.\(\text{\&}d2\) \(\text{\&}exd5\) 12.a3 \(\text{\&}e7\) 13.\(\text{\&}h3\) \(\text{\&}xf3\) 14.\(\text{\&}xf3\) with huge compensation for the pawn.) 11.\(\text{\&}xd5\) (11.\(\text{\&}d2\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 12.a3 (12.\(\text{\&}d4\) 12...\(\text{\&}e7\) 13.b4 \(\text{\&}d8\) 14.b5 \(\text{\&}xf3\) 15.\(\text{\&}xf3\) \(\text{\&}e5\) 16.\(\text{\&}f4\) \(\text{\&}xf3\)+ 17.\(\text{\&}xf3\)

Black’s king remains in the center 9...\(\text{\&}d8\) 10.\(\text{\&}xb1\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 11.\(\text{\&}f3\) e6 12.\(\text{\&}c4\) \(\text{\&}c6\) 13.\(\text{\&}b5\) \(\text{\&}d6\) 14.\(\text{\&}d2\)+ 1/2 (43) Zhigalko,S (2660)- Guseinov,G (2623) Legnica 2013; 5...\(\text{\&}g4\)
White’s active pieces are sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but hardly more than that.) 11...\(\text{\textbf{f}}6\) 12.\(\text{\textbf{wx}a}5\) \(\text{\textbf{x}a}5\) 13.\(\text{\textbf{e}3=})\) 9.h3 \(\text{\textbf{h}5}\) 10.d5! White sacrifices a pawn for an initiative. As a result, he seizes an open “e” file and deprives Black of castling. It is more than enough compensation and the theory considers this variation as a dubious for Black. 10...\(\text{\textbf{ex}d}5\) Here White has two methods to fight for the initiative. (10...0–0–0 11.\(\text{\textbf{c}d}2\)! \(\text{\textbf{ex}d}5\) 12.\(\text{\textbf{c}c}1\) Underlines the weakness of Black’s king. 12...d4 13.\(\text{\textbf{e}b}5\) \(\text{\textbf{b}4}\) 14.\(\text{\textbf{c}c}5?\) This is an inaccuracy which spoils the advantage and even leads to a better position for Black. (14.\(\text{\textbf{e}a}7+!N\) \(\text{\textbf{xa}7}\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{xb}4}\) d3 16.\(\text{\textbf{xd}3}\) \(\text{\textbf{g}6}\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{e}5=–}\)

14...d3 15.\(\text{\textbf{x}h}5\) \(\text{\textbf{d}xe}2\) 16.\(\text{\textbf{wx}e}2\) \(\text{\textbf{xd}2+}\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{xd}2}\) \(\text{\textbf{wb}4}\) 18.a3 \(\text{\textbf{xb}2}\) 19.\(\text{\textbf{g}4+}\) \(\text{\textbf{d}7}\) 20.\(\text{\textbf{d}6+}\) \(\text{\textbf{c}7}\) 21.\(\text{\textbf{f}4}\)

Black is 400 Elo rating points “lighter” than White, but this is not a justification for accepting a draw in a winning position. 1/2 (21) Pavasovic,D (2595)-Makaj,M (2266) Sibenik 2008 21...\(\text{\textbf{wc}1+}\) 22.\(\text{\textbf{e}2}\) \(\text{\textbf{x}h}1\) 23.\(\text{\textbf{b}5+}\) \(\text{\textbf{d}8–+})\) 11.0–0 (11.\(\text{\textbf{d}d}4\) \(\text{\textbf{xe}2}\) 12.\(\text{\textbf{exe}2}\) \(\text{\textbf{e}7}\) 13.\(\text{\textbf{xe}6}\) \(\text{\textbf{b}c}6\) 14.0–0 \(\text{\textbf{xb}8}\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{d}2}\) \(\text{\textbf{f}6}\) 16.\(\text{\textbf{xe}1}\) \(\text{\textbf{d}8}\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{ac}1}\) h6 18.\(\text{\textbf{f}4}\) with more than enough compensation for the pawn.) 11...\(\text{\textbf{d}8}\) 12.\(\text{\textbf{d}d}4\) \(\text{\textbf{exe}2}\) 13..\(\text{\textbf{exe}2+}\) \(\text{\textbf{e}7}\) 14.\(\text{\textbf{cb}5}\) \(\text{\textbf{xd}4}\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{xd}4}\) \(\text{\textbf{f}8}\) 16.\(\text{\textbf{e}3}\)

Black’s position is very unpleasant and hard to defend. White’s rooks will seize the open files soon, the knight will take the “f5” outpost.
while the bishop will be re-routed to "d4" or "f4". 1–0 (35) Mammadov,Z (2432)-Plischki,S (2440) Marianske Lazne 2014

26.\texttt{be5}

Once again it's a typical position for the variation. No queens on the board, more active white pieces and pawn majority on the queenside. It can be evaluated as +=

11...\texttt{a6} 12.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e7} 13.0–0–0

Sveshnikov prefers 13.0–0–0, but the plan with 13.0–0 and pawn advance on the queenside looks more logical.

[13.0–0 0–0 14..\texttt{f3±}]

13..0–0 14.\texttt{f3} \texttt{d5} 15.\texttt{g3} \texttt{b5} 16.\texttt{c6} \texttt{g5+} 17.\texttt{b1} \texttt{a5} 18.\texttt{d6} \texttt{e8} 19.\texttt{he1} \texttt{d7} 20.\texttt{b8} A beautiful move.

20..\texttt{d8} 21.\texttt{xd5} exd5 22.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{xd7} 23.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{ad8} 24.\texttt{xg5} \texttt{xd6} 25.\texttt{xb5} \texttt{d2}

Easy win for the eminent Grandmaster. You can see how dangerous the middlegame can be without queens.

\textbf{Conclusion:} I hope you enjoyed the introduction to 2.c3 2...d5 Variation of Sicilian Defence. I do not pretend to prove that White has a definite advantage in every line, but I tried to showcase modern treatment of the variation with plenty of plans, ideas, manoeuvres and tactical blows. The variation is perfectly playable and can be used equally well against amateurs and grandmasters. The next issue will cover other possibilities for Black and I wish you many victories until then!
This is our starting position. White’s idea is to start an immediate kingside attack without losing any tempi for \( \text{c4} \). The thematic play ...\( \text{d7} \), ...\( \text{c8} \), ...\( \text{e5} \)--\( \text{c4} \) will lead to a position from the 9. \( \text{c4} \) variation, but with two extra tempi for White, which can be decisive in such types of positions. Fortunately, the Dragon player has alternatives. For example: 9... \( \text{e6} \) or 9... \( \text{xd4} \). Although playable, these moves are quite risky. That’s why I’m suggesting the most ambicious and popular continuation 9...d5.

9.g4

This move avoids the long theoretical lines after 9. \( \text{c4} \) and the arising positions are similar to those after 9.0–0–0. 9...\( \text{e6} \) This is the main move. (9...d5? is a big mistake after which White will have a material advantage: 10.g5 \( \text{h5} \) 11.\( \text{xd5} \))
10.0–0–0 White’s hopes for an advantage rest with this continuation. (10.\texttt{\textbackslash xe}6 fxe6 11.0–0–0 The attack on the “e6” is not effective, so it’s time to take a look at the other main line for White. (11.\texttt{\textbackslash c}4 \texttt{\textbackslash c}8 12.\texttt{\textbackslash b}3 (12.0–0–0? \texttt{\textbackslash d}5!) 12...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5 13.0–0–0 \texttt{\textbackslash x}b3+ With a comfortable position for Black. 14.axb3 (14.cxb3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 15.\texttt{\textbackslash h}f1 \texttt{\textbackslash x}c3 16.bxc3 \texttt{\textbackslash d}5 17.\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash d}3+ The position is close to equal, but still I would prefer to play with black pieces here.) 14...\texttt{\textbackslash d}7 15.\texttt{\textbackslash d}f1 (15.\texttt{\textbackslash h}f1 \texttt{\textbackslash x}c3! 16.bxc3 \texttt{\textbackslash a}5! White rook left the “h1” square, so White will need much time to organize any attack along the “h” file, while in the meantime Black is ready to crush the shield of the enemy’s king by ...\texttt{\textbackslash a}5–\texttt{\textbackslash a}4.) 15...\texttt{\textbackslash x}c3 16.bxc3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}5 with the idea 17.\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f4! 18.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}c3 19.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}4!!

With a decisive attack.) 11...\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 Black attacks “f3” and threatens \texttt{\textbackslash c}4. 12.\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 \texttt{\textbackslash c}8!?)
A very interesting move which I suggest instead of the main line (\textsuperscript{13}c8). 13.h4 The pawn race starts. White’s attack is in progress. (13.\textsuperscript{b1} \textsuperscript{c4} 14.\textsuperscript{xc4} \textsuperscript{xc4} Black stands good in this position. Further possibilities are ...\textsuperscript{c8}, ...\textsuperscript{d7}, ...b5-b4.; 13.\textsuperscript{h6} \textsuperscript{hxh6} 14.\textsuperscript{hxh6} \textsuperscript{c5} 15.\textsuperscript{h4} \textsuperscript{ac8} with counterplay. 16.h5

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chess_board1.png}
\end{center}

13...\textsuperscript{fd7} 14.f4 \textsuperscript{c4} 15.\textsuperscript{xc4} \textsuperscript{xc4} 16.e5 The position remains very sharp. 16...\textsuperscript{ad8}! The best move. 17.exd6 \textsuperscript{f6}! The idea of the previous move becomes clear now. (17...exd6?! 18.h5! White has a dangerous attack.) 18.\textsuperscript{g2} \textsuperscript{xd6} 19.\textsuperscript{xd6} exd6 20.\textsuperscript{d1} d5 21.\textsuperscript{b1} b5 with a promising position for Black in the game Zhou,Yang Fan 2475-Pert,Richard 2430/2014, 0–1) 10...\textsuperscript{xd4} 11.\textsuperscript{xd4} \textsuperscript{a5} Black is forced to play ...\textsuperscript{d8} – ...\textsuperscript{c7} – ...\textsuperscript{a5} in plenty of other variations, but here he is a clear tempo up, immediately activating the queen in one move (...\textsuperscript{d8} - \textsuperscript{a5}) 12.a3 This a necessary move, although White tried also 12.\textsuperscript{b1} (12.\textsuperscript{b1} \textsuperscript{fc8} 13.h4??! This is the most natural move, but Black has a typical combination to obtain advantage.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{a)} 13.\textsuperscript{d5}
\end{itemize}

The main attacking mechanism doesn’t work well for White here. 16...gxh5 17.g5?? \textsuperscript{f7} – +

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\end{center}
Thematic idea, basically transposing directly from opening into the endgame. In such types of endgames Black stands more than fine.

13...\(\text{wxd2}\) 14.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 15.\(\text{xd7}\) (15.\(\text{exd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\)) 15...\(\text{b4}\);

b) 13.g5 \(\text{h5}\) 14.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 15.\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{xd6}\) 16.\(\text{xd6}\) After 16...\(\text{d8}\) or 16...\(\text{xd7}\) Black has equal play.; 13...\(\text{xc3}\)! 14.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{xa2}\+ 15.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{xc4}\!) 16.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{a5}\) 17.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{dxe4}\+ 18.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{xc3}\) 19.\(\text{xa1}\) \(\text{xd4}\) Only Black can be better in this position.) 12...\(\text{ab8}\) Black prepares ...\(\text{b5}\)–\(\text{b4}\) and White is forced to enter a level endgame. 13.\(\text{h4}\) The most logical continuation.

a) 13.\(\text{d5}\) This move is a blunder in this particular moment of the game. 13...\(\text{xd2}\+ 14.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 15.\(\text{exd5}\) \(\text{h6}\) Black is winning material and obtaining a decisive advantage.;

b) 13.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{f8}\) 14.\(\text{h4}\)

\(\text{b1}\) 14.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 15.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 16.\(\text{xf6}\+ \(\text{g7}\)!

17.\(\text{xf7}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 16.\(\text{e3}\) 17.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{xf1}\) 18.\(\text{xf1}\) with a level game.; 14...\(\text{b5}\) 15.\(\text{d5}\) This move is compulsory, because after 15.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{b4}\), Black’s attack is faster. 15...\(\text{xd2}\) 16.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 17.\(\text{exd5}\) \(\text{a5}\) It’s also possible 17...\(\text{c7}\), but the text move is more active. 18.\(\text{c3}\) It gives
Black more chances, because not the continuation ...b5–b4 is even stronger. (18.g5 h5 19.xg7 xg7 20.h3 c4! 21.g4 f4 22.e1 f5!? 23.gxf6+ xf6

This endgame looks preferable for Black.)

18...d7 19.f4 c5 Despite queen exchange, Black retains enough counterplay, connected to ...b5–b4 advance. This happened in the game Baadur Jobava – Le Quang Liem/Moscow 2008 0–1;

13...b5 White is practically forced to enter a futureless ending. 14.d5 xd2+ 15.xd2 xd5 16.exd5 a5 with a comfortable position.

9...d5

An immediate counter-attack in the center is necessary, even if connected to a pawn sacrifice. In positions with opposite-side castling opening files for the rooks and diagonals for the bishops is more important than material.

10.exd5

10.e1

The other main line in the position: White tries to get advantage of the X-Ray attack (d1 – d8) 10...e5 There are other continuations
as well, but this one is the most ambitious.  
11.\( \text{\#} \text{xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 cxd5} \)

I think that this move is unreasonably underestimated. The most common reply is 12...\( \text{\#}xd5 13.\text{\#}g5 \) and both central pawns are in danger. 13...\( \text{\#}e6 14.\text{\#}c4 (14.\text{\#}xe5?! \)

It’s dangerous for White to open up the a1-h8 diagonal for black’s monsterous bishop. 14...\( \text{\#}h6 15.\text{\#}h4 g5 16.\text{\#}e1 \text{\#}e4 \) Suddenly, white queen is trapped in the center of the board and Black gets material advantage. 14...\( \text{\#}c7 15.\text{\#}xf6 (15.\text{\#}xd5 \text{\#}xd5 16.\text{\#}xd5 \text{\#}xd5 \)

White’s hopes for an advantage are connected with controlling the “d” file. However, Black has a very solid position and counterplay along “b” file. Please follow the commentaries below closely, so that you can get deeper into the character of the position and its nuances.

17.\( \text{\#}d5 \)

a) 17.\( \text{\#}e4 \text{\#}ad8 18.\text{\#}c3 \text{\#}d5 19.\text{\#}de1 \text{\#}fe8 Black didn’t have any difficulties in the game R. Mainka-A.Kalka/ Dortmund, 1999; \)

b) 17.\( \text{\#}e3 \text{\#}ab8 18.\text{\#}he1 f6 19.\text{\#}e4 (19.f4 \text{\#}b7 20.b3 cxb3 21.axb3 \text{\#}b4 Gives a very strong attack. For example: 22.fxe5 \text{\#}a3+ 23.\text{\#}d2 \text{\#}bd8+ 24.\text{\#}e2 \text{\#}g4+) 19...\text{\#}b6 20.\text{\#}c5 \text{\#}c8 21.\text{\#}xe6+ \text{\#}xe6 22.\text{\#}c3 \text{\#}d6 23.\text{\#}xd6 \text{\#}xd6 1/2–1/2 was M.Myller-S.Berndt, German League 1998; \)

17...\( \text{\#}xd5 18.\text{\#}xd5 \)
White cannot expect any advantage after the queen exchange. 18...\textit{f}e8 19.\textit{c}3 \textit{g}8 20.\textit{a}5 This major pieces endgame didn't give any trouble to the future World champion, just 18 years old at the time: Leko- Carlsen rapid match 2008;

10.\textit{b}1

An ambitious move. The idea is that 10...\textit{d}xe4 is impossible due to 10...\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}xd4  (10...\textit{d}xe4?? 11.\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}xc6 \textit{\textcolor{red}{w}}xd2 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}xe7++) 11.e5  (11.\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}d4 This move doesn't set any problems for Black 11...\textit{d}xe4 Black has at least equal game.) 11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{f}}5 12.\textit{xf}6 \textit{exf}6!

The dark-squared bishop is just temporarily closed. Meanwhile, Black opens the “e” file. (12...\textit{xf}6 This is the alternative 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}xd5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{d}}xe}3??  (13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{w}}xd5! 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{w}}xd5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{d}}xe}3 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{w}}d2 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{d}}xd}1 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{w}}xd}1 The position is close to equal, but I would rather have the queen. If you like positions with material imbalance, this is a completely playable option.) 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{e}}x}f6++ ) 13.\textit{c}5  (13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}xd5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{d}}xe}3 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{x}}}e}3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{e}}6} followed by ...\textit{f}5. Black has more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn, due to the open files and diagonals.) 13...\textit{d}4 The powerful bishop pair and the extra pawn are sufficient compensation for the exchange. (Flabby 13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{w}}e8 leads to a position with a pawn less and no compensation 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}xd5) 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{x}}}f8  \textit{\textcolor{red}{w}}xf8 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{d}}}b}5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{e}}}e}3} 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}c}1 \textit{\textcolor{red}{h}h}6 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{x}}}d}4 \textit{\textcolor{red}{f}5} 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{c}}}c3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{x}}}c1 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{x}}}c}1 \textit{\textcolor{red}{d}7} 20.\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}d}3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}8 21.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{w}}}d}2 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{x}}}b}5 22.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{x}}}b}5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{\textcolor{red}{c}}}c}5}
Black had a comfortable position in the game 1/2 (71) Short,N (2707)-Carlsen,M (2801) London 2009

10...xd5 11.xc6 bxc6 12.d4

White can accept the pawn sacrifice but it gives Black an easy play and an attack.

12...cxd5 13.xd5 c7!

Black can even leave the rook on “a8” undefended, because of his active pieces and relatively exposed white king.  a8 14.c5

This continuation is more logical than 14.xa8. White goes for a queen exchange, where the extra pawn will be more valuable and Black’s attack will be less dangerous. (14.xa8?! Accepting the “Greek gift” leads to

12.xd5

This positional suggestion is the main line of the variation nowadays.
a dangerous position for White. 14...\textbf{f}5 15.\textbf{xf}f8+ \textbf{xf}8 16.\textbf{d}2 (16.\textbf{d}3? \textbf{e}5) 16...h5!

An important move which doesn't allow 17.g4, frees another escape route for the king and consolidates the position of the light-squared bishop on “f5”. Black has impressionable statistics in this position. Let me show you a recent example: 17.\textbf{e}2 \textbf{f}6 18.g3 \textbf{b}7 19.c4 \textbf{b}4! С идея (19...\textbf{a}6 20.a3 \textbf{a}4 21.g4 hgx4 22.fgx4 \textbf{x}g4! 23.\textbf{x}g4 \textbf{xc}4+ 24.\textbf{c}2 \textbf{xf}xg4 25.\textbf{xa}7 Despite the equal material, White’s position is very unpleasant because his pieces are not coordinated. 25...\textbf{d}7! 26.\textbf{c}5 \textbf{xb}2+! 27.\textbf{x}b2 (27.\textbf{xb}2 \textbf{b}7+) 27...\textbf{c}6 Black has a winning position in the game E. Kislik – S. Husari/ 0–1 Budapest, 2010) 20.\textbf{d}4 \textbf{xd}4 21.\textbf{xd}4 \textbf{a}4!,

Attacking the “a2” pawn and threatening \textbf{c}2.) 14...\textbf{b}7 Of course, Black’s plan is different. The real threat is \textbf{b}2. White has a few possibilities, but each of them leads to enough counterplay for Black. 15.\textbf{a}3 Finally, the main move in the position.

a) 15.\textbf{b}5? \textbf{xb}5 16.\textbf{xb}5 \textbf{b}8

Black returns the pawn and the enemy's king feels even more unsecure without queens on the board.

b) 15.\textbf{c}3 \textbf{f}5
Pay attention to how each black piece points at the enemy's king. After including the last reinforcements in attack (c8 and b8) White will be demolished. 16.a3 ab8 17.a6 c6 18.d3 d5 19.c2 b5 White retains the extra pawn but the position is hard to defend. Ruiz,Joshua Daniel 2366–Arenas,David 2436 ½ - ½, 2014;

c) 15.d4 f5 with the idea of fc8 with dangerous attack

b) 15.b3 This move significally weakens the black squares around white king. 15...f5 16.d3 ac8!

The position is very typical for the variation. White is a pawn up, while Black’s pieces are more active and attack along the dark squares indeed looks menacing. The position was practically examined in the last few years and Black proved to have at least equal chances. 15...f5 16.d3

a) 16.c4 fc8 17.b3 a5 gives Black excellent chances.

b) 16.b1? ab8 17.c1 xc2+! 18.xc2 fc8+ 19.b1 xc1+!++
c) 16.a6 \(\text{c}7\) 17.\(\text{c}\) \(\text{c}\) 18.\(\text{b}\) 18.\(\text{b}\) \(\text{b}6\)! 18.\(\text{b}\) \(\text{b}\) \(\text{b}6\) a\(\text{b}\) a\(\text{b}\) 20.\(\text{b}\) \(\text{b}+\) a\(\text{b}\) a\(\text{b}\) Black has a preferable ending.) 19.\(\text{b}\) c\(\text{b}\) 20.\(\text{b}\) \(\text{c}\) 21.\(\text{c}\) d\(\text{d}\)+ 22.\(\text{a}\) a\(\text{a}\) \(\text{h}\)!! Black has at least equality.

16...\(\text{a}\) \(\text{a}\) with the idea to provoke 17.\(\text{b}\) 3. 17.\(\text{b}\) \(\text{b}6\)! The threat is 18...\(\text{c}\) 18.\(\text{b}\) d\(\text{d}\) 18.\(\text{b}\) x\(\text{c}\) 20.\(\text{c}\) c\(\text{c}\) 21.\(\text{c}\) e\(\text{e}\) The material is equal, but it’s obvious that white king is insecure in the center of the board.; 18.\(\text{a}\) 5. \(\text{f}\) 6. 19.\(\text{f}\) f 19.\(\text{f}\) 6. \(\text{d}\) + 20.\(\text{c}\) d 2 21.\(\text{c}\) e 21.\(\text{c}\) e \(\text{f}\) 22.\(\text{c}\) \(\text{c}\) 19.\(\text{c}\) 2+ 23.\(\text{c}\) \(\text{c}\) \(\text{c}\) 2+ 24.\(\text{d}\) d \(\text{c}\) 25.\(\text{f}\) e+ 5 This long variation leads to a relatively equal game.; 18.\(\text{c}\) 4? Such a move can only weaken the dark squares around the king. 18...\(\text{f}\) 6 19.\(\text{c}\) 5 19.\(\text{c}\) \(\text{c}\) + 20.\(\text{b}\) 1 \(\text{f}\) e 3 Remember that the attack is even stronger with the presence of opposite-coloured bishops. It’s like attacking with a piece up. For example, compare the g7-monster to his colleague.) 18...\(\text{c}\) 3!!

This fantastic move was found by Grandmaster Golubev. Black sacrifices a piece but the attack is so strong that White should be very careful in order to survive. 19.\(\text{c}\) 5 The only move which keeps the game tense. (19.\(\text{d}\) 3? A very popular mistake. 19...\(\text{b}\) 8 with the idea ...\(\text{f}\) 8 – ...\(\text{r}\) d 3 and ...
20.\(\text{d}\) h 1 planning to bring the rook into defence (\(\text{f}\) 2) 20...\(\text{f}\) d 8 21.\(\text{f}\) 3 \(\text{r}\) d 3! 22.\(\text{d}\) 3 \(\text{r}\) d 3 The material balance is restored but Black’s attack is going on.

23.\(\text{c}\) a 7 (23.\(\text{r}\) e 7 \(\text{c}\) 3 24.\(\text{d}\) 1 \(\text{f}\) 8! 25.\(\text{f}\) f 4 \(\text{c}\) 5! 26.\(\text{c}\) c 8 \(\text{r}\) d 8+++)
A splendid end of the game is approaching:
27...\texttt{e2} \texttt{d2}+ 28...\texttt{e1} \texttt{xc2}+ 29...\texttt{d1} \texttt{c1}+
30...\texttt{e2} \texttt{e1}#) 23...\texttt{c3} 24...\texttt{d1} \texttt{a1}+ 25...\texttt{e2}
(25...\texttt{d2} \texttt{d8}+) 25...\texttt{xc2}+ 26...\texttt{d2} \texttt{c3}
27...\texttt{d3} \texttt{d1}–+

I decided to recommend this variation because it’s a solid one and there is not so much
theory to remember compared to the main
lines.

\textbf{13.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{h6}+ 14.\texttt{e3}}

14...\texttt{d1} e5 This is the end of many blitz games.

\textbf{14...\texttt{xe3}+ 15.\texttt{xe3} \texttt{d6}} It’s important to
activate the pieces as soon as possible, even at
the cost of a pawn sometimes.

\textbf{16.\texttt{xe7}}

16...\texttt{xb6} a\texttt{xb6} with a dead drawn position;
16...\texttt{c3} \texttt{e6} 17...\texttt{h4} \texttt{ad8} 18...\texttt{d3} \texttt{d5} 19...\texttt{h5}
\texttt{c5} 20...\texttt{e1} \texttt{b8} 21...\texttt{b3} \texttt{b4}
And Black simplifies the position right on time, just before White’s attack increases.

16...e6 17.d3 17.a3 This move retains the extra pawn but the practice shows that Black has sufficient compensation for it. 17.ad8 18.d3 d5!

This strong manoeuvre keeps Black’s chances. The idea behind it is to double the rooks on “d” file, meanwhile threatening ...a5 19.b3 fd8. White has a couple of equally good continuations but none of them leads to advantage. 20.he1

a) 20.de1! This move was tried on the top level. 20..c5?! with the idea ...c4 (20..d4!? 21.e5 b8d5 22.xd5 xd5 23.e1 f2 with a level game: 1/2 (31) Alekseev,E (2688)- Lintchevski,D (2539) Olginka 2011) 21.c4 d2 22.xe6 fxe6 23.d1? this move leads to a balanced position. (23.g3 f2 24.d1 d4 25.f4 d6 26.a5 White managed to consolidate the position and retained the extra pawn in the game Volokitin,A (2687)- Pavlidis,A (2338)/ 1–0 (46), Rijeka 2010) 23 xd1+ 24.xd1 xd1+ 25.xd1 c4 26.e7 g1+ with perpetual check;

b) 20.b2 f2!N with the idea to meet 21.d2? (21.hg1 f5 and White will be the one who will fight for a draw.) with 21..e3! 22.hd1 c5!

Black has a strong initiative.; 20..f5! and Black is out of any danger.

17..e3+ This move has been considered weak for a long time, but Australian Grandmaster Smerdon proved that Black is no worse after it.

18.d2
18.\textbf{b1? xa2+}
18...\textbf{fe8!} This is the improvement of the variation.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Modern Chess}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

19.\textbf{f6}

19.\textbf{h4?! xa2!} 20.\textbf{f2 e5} 21.\textbf{e4 e6!}
22.\textbf{d4 a5} 23.\textbf{b4 a4} Black has dangerous attack – ...\textbf{b8} and ...\textbf{a5} and White is in trouble.;
19.\textbf{a3 ad8} 20.\textbf{hd1 f5} 21.\textbf{c3 xd3} 22.\textbf{cxd3 c5!}
19...\textbf{ad8} 20.\textbf{h4 f5} 21.\textbf{g5 e6} 22.\textbf{b1}

22.\textbf{xf5?? e1+}

22...\textbf{xd3} 23.\textbf{cxd3 d5}

It seems that Black has more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

\textbf{Conclusion:} The variations 9. \textbf{c4} and 9. 0–0–0 have been analyzed in-depth in the first and the second part of the article. I hope that I managed to awaken the Dragon inside You! The positions are dangerous, but sharp and double-edged and both players play for a win. Now You are armed with enough theory and a reserve of tactical and strategical ideas, which You can successfully implement in practice. Good luck!

\begin{center}
\textbf{Modern Chess}
\end{center}
The attack with an isolated pawn
(GM Viktor Gavrikov)

Dear chess friends, this article marks the beginning of a training course designed to acquaint the readers of the magazine "Modern Chess" with one of the most important type of positions in middlegame - isolated pawn.

The importance of this topic is related to the fact that it can arise from a huge number of openings. Several examples are Queen's Gambit, Slav Defense, Tarrasch Defense, New Indian Defense, Nimzowitsch Defense, Sicilian Defense and many other openings. Therefore, good knowledge of these positions is necessary for any chess player, regardless of his repertoire.

Our magazine provides a full course of study on the isolated pawn, which contains three logically linked articles. The first two published materials focus on the methods of playing with an isolator.

This article will explain in depth the three most important attacking ideas for the side playing with an "isolani", which are – the transfer of the rook on third horizontal (rank), the movement of the isolated pawn, and the sacrifice of the knight on "f7". No less important are the positional and attacking techniques, which will be discussed in the second article of our series – the switch to a symmetric pawn structure after the exchange on “d5”, the movement of “f” pawn and the movement of “h” pawn. Once our readers are familiar with the offensive potential of the isolated pawn, they can move forward to the closing article of the course, which stresses the methods of playing against such a pawn.

1) The transfer of the rook on third horizontal

For a better understanding of this manoeuvre, it is necessary to make some general clarifications.

The main advantage of the isolated pawn is that it provides spatial advantage. While the isolani controls the “e5” and “c5” squares ( “e4” and “c4” for black, respectively), they can be perfect outpost for the knights. Another essential advantage is the possession of the semi-open “e” file which is often used as a springboard for the development of an attack against the enemy’s king.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned advantages, the side playing with an isolated pawn should seek for attack on the kingside and avoid pieces exchanges. The readers should know that in endgame such a pawn is a weakness rather than a strength.

One of the classic methods of attack is the transfer of the rook to the kingside. This is manoeuvre is possible due to the spatial advantage provided by the isolated pawn. We can say that quite often the isolani acts as a “screen”, behind which the regrouping of the pieces is performed, aiming to start an offensive against the king. A relevant example, which fully illustrates the idea of the transfer of the rook on the third rank, is the classical game between the two Russian Grandmasters, Lev Polugaevsky and Anatoli Lutikov, played back in 1957.
Polugaevsky, L – Lutikov, A [D37]
URS-ch sf Sverdlovsk (15), 1957

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.e3 ♗e7 5.♗c3 0–0
6.♗d3

Move d4–d5 deserves attention, leading to Benoni’s pawn structure, favorable for white: 6.d5 exd5 7.cxd5 d6 8.e4 White’s advantage is due to the fact that the “e7” square is not suitable for the bishop – in this type of structures the best place for it is on the big diagonal (a1-h8).

6...d5 7.0–0 dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♘bd7

Very crucial moment! When Black develops the knight on “d7”, they seek for harmonious development of the queenside. Their plan includes moves a7–a6, b7–b5, ♗b7, ♗b6, ♗ac8 и ♗fd8. However, the early development of the knight on “d7” is premature, because White can oppose a7-a6 with a2-a4. In that situation, the black knight will be far from the weakened square “b4”.

Therefore, the modern theory recommends starting with 8...a6, which aims to provoke a2-a4 and thus weaken the square “b4”. The difference here is that the black knight is still on “b8” and may move easily to “b4”, from where it does not only control the “d5” square, but also prevents offensive ideas of white queen – bishop battery on the “b1- h7” diagonal and the transfer of the rook to the third rank through “d3”. 9.a4 ♗c6

9.♗e2 A typical move for queen’s structure

It is obvious that soon enough this will lead to a position with an isolated pawn and White will start to place its pieces on the best squares. The queen occupies the “e” file, which will become semi-open after the inevitable pawn exchange on d4, while the rook should be placed on “d1”, where it will create a dangerous confrontation against black queen.

9...a6 10.a4 cxd4 11.exd4 ♗b6 12.♗b3
The best place for the bishop in this kind of position. The control of the “d5” square is crucial when the black knight is on “b6”.

12...\textit{d}7 13.\textit{e}5

13...\textit{e}8? A very instructive mistake.

The bishop on “e8” disturbs the coordination between the heavy black pieces and limits the movement of the rook from “f8”. Black should prefer the following option: 13...\textit{c}6 14.\textit{x}c6 bxc6

The position that occurred is very interesting and popular, but often incorrectly evaluated. The “c6” + “e6” structure, against “d4” is called a “saw”. It is important to know that this type of structure is favorable for Black, only if the light-squared bishop is not on “c8", otherwise it will become the prisoner of his own pawns. Black also controls the semi-opened “b” file, which fully compensates for white’s pair of bishops. This would lead to a very interesting and complex game.

14.\textit{d}1 \textit{bd}5

15.\textit{d}3! White chose the best moment to swing the rook over to the kingside. Where exactly the
rook should be placed next, on “g3” or “h3”, will depend on black’s subsequent actions.

15...\textit{c}8 16.\textit{g}3! An important moment from a practical point of view. When we transfer the rook to the third horizontal in positions with isolated pawn, it is necessary to choose the square from which the rook confronts the black king. White threatens \textit{h}6.

16...\textit{h}8 17.\textit{g}5 \textit{b}4 18.\textit{d}1

After this move all white pieces are in play. Thus, it is time to trigger an attack on the kingside.

18...\textit{c}7 19.\textit{h}3!

Reader would do well to pay attention to the positioning of white rook against black king. A real storm will start soon on the kingside!

19...\textit{g}6

With his last move, Black caused irreparable weaknesses around his king. However, it should be noticed that it is not easy to find a better move in the absence of black counterplay in the center or the queenside.

Obviously, 19...\textit{g}8 stumbles upon a typical move for this type of position 20.\textit{e}4

White’s idea is logical. He seeks to exchange \textit{f}6, the only piece defending the kingside. Here is how it could develop: 20...\textit{bd}5 21.\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6 22.\textit{d}3 ...\textit{h}6 (after 22...\textit{g}6 23.\textit{h}6 black rook is blocked.) 23.\textit{xh}6! \textit{gxh}6 24.\textit{e}3+-

Checkmate is inevitable.

20.\textit{f}3!
White not only highlights the unstable position of the knight on “f6”, but also prepares the breakthrough d4-d5.

20...g8? A serious mistake in a very difficult position. 20...c6 would not save black either, because of 21.e3. After the exchange on “f6”, white queen moves to the “h6” square.

21.e4 Undoubtedly, the most natural move. White, however, missed a more elegant and quick win: 21.d5!

21...exd5 22.xd5 bxd5 23.xd5! ...xd5 24.xh7+! xh7 25.h3+ g7 26.h6#

A picturesque position!

21...h5 Black tries to close down the “h” line, but now the “f7” became terribly weak. 21...xe4? 22.xh7+! xh7 23.h3+ g7 24.h6#

22.xf7!

22...c6 The last shot! Black’s position is falling apart. The rest does not need any comments.

22...xf7 23.xf7+ g7 24.xd8 xd8 25.g4 f6 26.h6+ h8 27.g5+--; 22...xg5 23.xg5--
23.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash w}}xe6 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}7 24.d5 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}7 25.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}xe7 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}e7 26.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}6 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}8 27.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}}6 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6 28.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}7 29.d6 1–0

2) The movement of the isolated pawn

Considering the spatial advantage and the reference squares, the isolated pawn provides many other dynamic possibilities, linked to the movement of the isolani. Here, it is crucial to ask a basic question, the answer to which confuses even the experienced chess players: In which circumstances is necessary to push the isolated pawn? Although the answer to this question is not obvious, we will try to give a general rule, easy to understand for everyone: The isolated pawn should be moved forward, when the side playing with it has development advantage. This rule is based on the fact that the player, whose pieces are better developed, seeks to open the position and seize the initiative. Despite this, there are positions in which the isolated pawn is a weakness and the side playing with it tries to get rid of it by means of pushing it forward and trading it for the adjacent pawn. This usually happens in the endgame. Now, we would like to give you an example of a game, played by one of the greatest Hungarian theoretician Lajos Portish.

\textbf{Portisch,L (2625) – Sosonko,G (2505) [E57]}
Biel Interzonal Biel (18), 04.08.1976

1.d4 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}}6 2.c4 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}6 3.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}3 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}4 4.e3 0–0 5.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}3 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}5 6.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}}3 \textit{c}5 7.0–0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}c4 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}6 10.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}5 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}7 11.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}1 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}6

This is one of the most popular positions in Rubinstein system of the Nimzo-Indian defense. By placing the knight on “c6”, Black seeks to put pressure on the isolated pawn. However, the knight is not very well placed on “c6”, because the black’s light-squared bishop cannot control the “d5” square. All these facts contribute to the plan of moving the isolani forward. It is safer to play: 11...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}c3 12.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}7 followed by \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}7. This is a different type of middlegame position – a pair of isolated pawns “c3”+”d4”. Please notice that this specific pawn structure will be subject to a separate topic in our magazine.

12.a3 A key move! White prepares to play \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}3, while preventing \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}4. Once the queen is on “d3”, White intends to play \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}ad1, in order to prepare the d4-d5 move or to build a battery on the diagonal “b1-h7”, using a2 - b1 manoeuvre.

12...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}7 13.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}3
13...\textit{\textbf{d}}h5?! Black made a typical mistake for such positions. With his last move, Black seeks to exchange the dark-squared bishops with 14. \textit{\textbf{d}}xe7 14... \textit{\textbf{d}}xe7. Afterwards, the knight from “h5”, goes to “f6” and Black would completely totally control the key square “d5”. It should be also noted that the exchange of the dark-squared bishops diminishes white’s offensive potential and as we know, the side playing against the isolated pawn seeks for the exchange in order to get to the endgame. However, the move 13... \textit{\textbf{d}}h5 is premature, because White is not obliged to exchange the bishop – instead he can put it on “d2”!

Therefore, it was better for Black to choose this move order: 13...h6 14.\textit{\textbf{d}}h4 \textit{\textbf{d}}h5 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}xe7 \textit{\textbf{d}}xe7 followed by \textit{\textbf{f}}f6. Black has a normal game ahead.

14.\textit{\textbf{a}}d2! This is the difference! Black not only failed to exchange the dark-squared bishops, but also removed his knight from the center. “d4-d5” threat begins to take real shape.

14...\textit{\textbf{f}}f6 The gain of the pawn also looked attractive: 14...\textit{\textbf{a}}a5 15.\textit{\textbf{a}}a2 \textit{\textbf{x}}f3? 16.\textit{\textbf{a}}xf3! \textit{\textbf{a}}xd4

The knight on “h5” is under attack, but so is white bishop on “d2”. However, Black loses because of the limited mobility of the other knight on the rim (\textit{\textbf{a}}a5). 17.\textit{\textbf{a}}d1 \textit{\textbf{f}}f6 18.b4!!+- and Black is defenseless as the knight has nowhere to go - 18... \textit{\textbf{c}}c4 is followed by 19. \textit{\textbf{f}}f4.

15. \textit{\textbf{a}}ad1 \textit{\textbf{a}}a5?! The beginning of a wrong plan – Black neglects the development of his heavy pieces, while helping White to implement his idea (\textit{\textbf{a}}a2–b1). It is necessary to point out that by putting the knight on “a5”, grandmaster Sosonko intended to strengthen the control over the strategically important square “d5”. However, as we will see later, White has a very convincing antidote.
More recommended: 15... \textit{\textbf{c}}c8

16.\textit{\textbf{a}}a2 \textit{\textbf{d}}d5?
Modern Chess

Black continues to follow his wrong plan – in pursuing his strategical goals, he forgets about the tactical resources of his opponent. The problem is that we cannot block an isolated pawn with a piece.
Again, it was better to develop the rook 16...\textit{c8}.

17.b4! This particular move escaped Sosonko’s attention.

17...\textit{x}c3?

The third and last mistake. Now, the only passive white piece (\textit{d}2) steps on the big diagonal. White has a huge advantage in development and he is ready to push d4-d5.

It was necessary to play: 17...\textit{c}6 18.\textit{xd}5 exd5

The position has changed from the structural point of view. We have the so-called “symmetrical pawn structure” on the board, which will be discussed in details in the next issue of our magazine. For now, we will say that in this type of middlegame, the side that has a better piece development has also the advantage. In the position on the diagram, White has a very typical attacking idea: 19.h4!? at his disposal, intending to play \textit{b}1 and to confront g7-g6 with h4-h5. Of course, before pushing the “h” pawn, it is advisable to use new weaknesses on the dark squares with \textit{h}6. It is important to note that the pawn cannot be won: 19...\textit{x}h4 20.b5 \textit{a}5 21.\textit{b}4
18.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{c6} 19.d5!

When your pieces are in their optimal squares, as is the case in this position, it is a sign that the moment is ripe to push the isolated pawn! The Black’s position is falling apart.

19...\texttt{exd5} 20.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{c7}

20...\texttt{f6} 21.\texttt{c4}+

21.b5! \texttt{a5} 22.\texttt{e5}! The last accurate move - now material losses are for black inevitable.

22...\texttt{c5} [22...\texttt{c8} 23.\texttt{xg7}+--; 22...\texttt{d8} 23.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb7} (23...\texttt{xd3} 24.\texttt{xd3} \texttt{xb7} 25.\texttt{d7}+--) 24.\texttt{d7} \texttt{d6} 25.\texttt{g4} g6 26.\texttt{f4}+–]

23.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb7} 24.\texttt{d7} \texttt{a5} 25.\texttt{d4}

1–0

3) The sacrifice of the knight on “f7”

The sacrifice on “f7” is the last attacking idea which will be discussed in this issue of our magazine. Of course, such a blow on black’s position cannot come from nowhere - there are certain premises. Our readers should remember that the sacrifice on “f7” is always followed by the gain of the pawn on “e6”. In order to achieve this scenario, two conditions need to be met:

The white light-squared bishop must be put on the “a2-g8” diagonal:

The black light-squared bishop must have left the “c8-h3” diagonal.

To understand the practical application of the theoretical concepts mentioned above, we propose to your attention the game between Rubinstein – Burn, played in Ostend, in 1906. The position that we are interested in arose after the moves:

\textbf{Rubinstein, A - Burn, A [D40]}

Ostend, 1906

1.d4 d5 2.\texttt{f3} \texttt{f6} 3.c4 e6 4.\texttt{c3} \texttt{bd7} 5.e3 \texttt{e7} 6.\texttt{d3} 0–0 7.0–0 \texttt{dxc4} 8.\texttt{xc4} c5 9.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b6} 10.\texttt{b3} \texttt{cxd4} 11.\texttt{exd4} \texttt{d7}

With his last move, Black clearly shows the intention to place his light-squared bishop on the “a8-h1” diagonal. It is obvious that the bishop situated on “c6” will exert a stable control over the “d5” square. Along with its advantages, this maneuver hides its own risks. As already mentioned, the abandonment of the “c8-h3” diagonal weakens the “e6” pawn, which is under attack by the white bishop on “b3”. This is why Black has to be extremely careful.
12...\textit{e}1! A great idea of Akiba Rubinstein. Some of the keenest readers, probably already noticed that as in previous games, White always places the rook on “d1”. However, the polish chess virtuoso did not play as usual. Anticipating the future vulnerability of the “e6” pawn, he decided to place his heavy pieces on the “e” file.

12...\textit{c}6 13.\textit{e}5! Now, on any move, Black should consider the sacrifice of the knight on “f7”.

13...\textit{d}5 Black tries to neutralize the pressure on the “a2-g8” diagonal. However, the move 13...\textit{d}5 gives White the opportunity to take the bishop with the knight. In this situation, \textit{b}3 remained without an opponent and now the sacrifice on “f7” becomes even more dangerous. It was better to play 13...\textit{bd}5.

The tempting gain of the pawn 13...\textit{xd}4 can be confronted with the thematic sacrifice on “f7”. 14.\textit{xf}7!

14...\textit{xf}7 15.\textit{xe}6 \textit{d}5 (15...\textit{bd}5?! 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}4 17.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 18.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 19.\textit{xd}5±) 16.\textit{xd}5 \textit{bxd}5 (16...\textit{fxd}5? 17.\textit{e}3+-) 17.\textit{e}3 \textit{xb}2 18.\textit{ab}1 \textit{a}3 19.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 20.\textit{xd}5 \textit{d}8 21.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xa}2 22.\textit{xa}7 \textit{xa}7 23.\textit{xa}7 \textit{b}4 24.\textit{xb}4 \textit{xa}7

Although this position looks drawish at first sight, in practice Black has to work hard in order to make a draw.

14.\textit{xd}5 \textit{bxd}5 Black took with the right knight. It is necessary to notice that in this kind of position with an isolated pawn, the removal of the “f6” from the kingside usually invites problems for his monarch.

Here is one of the variations: 14...\textit{fxd}5 15.\textit{g}4 A typical move.

From the “g4” square, the queen not only threatens black king, but also intensifies the pressure on the “e6” pawn. Now, it is already too
late for the black knight to come back to “f6”:
15...f6? 16.xf7!

16...xf7 (16...xg4 17.xd8±) 17.xe6 fd5
(17...bd5 18.e5±) 18.e5±

15.g5 c8?

A very serious mistake, Burn completely ignores white's tactical threats. Had he predicted white's next move, Black would have defended the pawn on “e6” by playing 15...d6.

16.xf6! A known rule – if you exchange one of the interconnected knights, the other one losses its support. Now, after any black's move, White sacrifices on “f7”.

16...xf6? 17.xf7!; 16...gxf6? 17.g4+ h8
18.xf7+! xf7 19.xe6 f8 20.xd5

17.xf7! The logical conclusion of Rubinstein's strategy. The pressure along the “a2-g8” diagonal is crushing.

The rest of the game does not need any comments.

17...xf7 18.xe6 xd4 19.xd5 xf2+
20.h1 f8 21.f1 c2 22.ac1 xc1
23.xc1

1–0