

Charlie Storey

the Sniper

play 1...g6, ...Bg7 and ...c5!



EVERYMANCHESS

CRIAMIE STOREY

the Sniper

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Gloucester Publishers plc www.everymanchess.com

First published in 2011 by Gloucester Publishers plc (formerly Everyman Publishers plc), Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978 1 85744 643 2

Distributed in North America by The Globe Pequot Press, P.O Box 480, 246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
tel: 020 7253 7887 fax: 020 7490 3708
email: info@everymanchess.com; website: www.everymanchess.com

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Everyman Chess Series

Chief advisor: Byron Jacobs

Commissioning editor: John Emms

Assistant editor: Richard Palliser

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.

Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays, Bungay, Suffolk.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the following, all of whom were significant in the creation of this book.

Jesus – ‘The Morning Star’ – I’m all yours!

Robert & Rhona Stead – Pure Love x

Chris Ray, GM Danny Gormally, Andy Lawson, Martin Seeber, Mark Atkinson

Dahlia, Debi, Margherita, Roz, Caitlin, Margaret, Lorna, Amy, Sam, Christy, Olivia

All of my chess pals – thanks for putting up with me!

All of my 1-1 students, especially: Hugo, Liam, Paul, Matthew and DJ Dave

All of my Facebook friends

GM John Emms, IM Byron Jacobs, IM Edward Dearing

Arsenal FC, NUFC, FC Barcelona, John Newberry, Mike Smith

The 2009 England Under-16 Olympiad Team

The King’s School, Tynemouth: Callum & Big Dave

Cramlington Learning Village – Jackie Stent

Harry Hill, Simon Cowell, Chuck!

Dad ‘n’ Veron, Nigel Reeves, JJ ‘n’ Sarah

Messi, Fabregas, MOTD

Mr Brown, Mr Jacques, Mr Steele and Mrs Meecham

But most of all to **Audrey**, I hope you can read this in Heaven. x

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www.Chessclub.com

Introduction

The Sniper: The Ultimate Fighting Soldier – The Ultimate Fighting Repertoire

Welcome Soldier! – Your Sniper training programme will commence on completion of your absorption of this introduction – Do not read any part of this book until you have read this entire introduction. That’s an order Soldier!

Let us start with some key definitions to give us an important reference point in this approach to create a dynamic Black repertoire where you will fight for the full point:

The Sniper

Black plays ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...c5 against anything, including 1 e4, 1 d4, 1 c4, etc. It is played ideally in the first three moves, but some rare instances when it is played later on are also covered as a Sniper opening.

The Pure Sniper

Against any of White’s first three moves, Black plays 1...g6, 2...♗g7 and 3...c5. This book promotes this move order in nearly every variation.

The Sicilian Sniper

Against any of White’s first three moves, Black plays 1...c5, 2...g6 and 3...♗g7. Some of the games in this book come about from this move order but could just have easily arisen via the Pure Sniper move order.

The Anti-Sniper

White aims to stop the Pure Sniper deployment. For example, an Anti-Sniper that would obviously lead to a won position for White is 1 b3, 2 ♗b2 and 3 ♗xg7! This is one of the few instances where White can prevent a Pure Sniper.

Deferred Sniper

Used by Black when he can only realistically play his three flagship moves if they are delayed. For example, Chapter 3 heavily focuses on 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 c3 d5 followed by 4...c5 – a rare instance of the ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...c5 not being played within three moves. This sequence could well have been classified as an Anti-Sniper, but as ...c5 arrives on move 4 it is better to call it a Deferred Sniper – the Sniper development structure of ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...c5 is quickly realized within the opening.

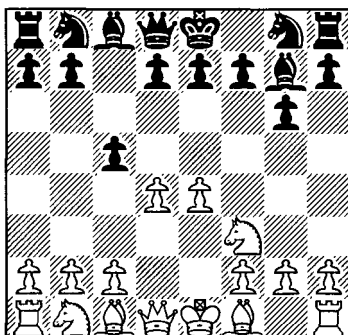
Extended Pure Sniper Transposition

A deferred Sniper that arrives deep into the opening. For example, a mainline Sicilian Dragon could transpose to a position that came from a Pure Sniper, but occurring at move 7 or beyond.

Sniper Move Order Transposition (SMOT)

This book is designed to promote the virtues of the Pure Sniper rather than the Sicilian Sniper. However, to reach some of the meaty variations and key discussion points I have had to draw upon many games where the Sicilian Sniper move order was played, when the same position could well have arisen from a Pure Sniper. I've inserted the acronym 'SMOT' in many games which did not come from a Pure Sniper, to show the reader that a simple transposition could have arisen.

The Sniper is a completely new approach to your Black repertoire. Yes, it is an opening system based around ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...c5, played as soon as possible. And, yes, it is a dynamic approach to developing an entire opening/middlegame/endgame system. It is quite simple to understand and to play. In essence, it's a universal system rather than an opening – a unique and intelligent organic approach to acquiring a superb Black opening repertoire.



In the above diagram we see a Pure Sniper position, as Black's first three moves were **1...g6**, **2...g7**, and **3...c5!**. The exclamation mark is given to show that Black has achieved an excellent structure in the opening. Had White played any other moves, that is of no consequence for the definition of a Pure Sniper – if Black's first three moves are **1...g6**, **2...g7** and **3...c5!** he has played a Pure Sniper, regardless of White's moves. This is important to remember.

A key feature of the system is that it is equally effective against **1 e4**, **1 d4**, **1 c4** and **1 f4** – this is quite remarkable and possibly unique for the deployment of the first three moves! These moves are pre-programmed and can be played (almost) regardless of anything White does – this is superb for blitz chess and for the increasingly popular bullet form of chess!

The Sniper can often transpose into a mainline Sicilian Dragon, a favourable Benko for Black, an Accelerated Dragon or even a King's Indian, and there are many others which you may add at your own creative discretion. These and a few of my own original ideas make up the seven chapters herein. It is hoped that this work will help crystallize the classification of all the key Sniper variations.

I gave the Sniper a critical test at the 2009 British Championship in Torquay, where I used it to achieve an outstanding result of 4/4. That gave me a Black (Sniper) rating performance of over 2600 – a fantastic achievement in the hands of a 2300 FIDE Master. I hope the little you have read so far will encourage you to come with me on a journey to make a thorough investigation of the Sniper and to persuade you to become a Sniper Trainee!

Incidentally, I've called this system 'The Sniper' because the f7-, g6- and h7-pawns look like the 'V' support for a Sniper gun as used by British and American militaries. Furthermore, the g7-bishop and its influence on the long diagonal represent the gun part, combining with the c5-pawn to attack the d4-point.

The Dilution Principle

Historically it was thought that by simply capturing Black's pawn when it reaches c5, White would stand better, and as a result this opening did not have the best reputation. Putting my professional computer science skills to the test, I analysed all the positions herein using *Rybka*, and made a surprising discovery. I term it 'The Dilution Principle' and it works as follows: Let's say *Rybka* assesses a position as a small advantage to White in, for example, a Benko Gambit following Black's sacrifice of a pawn. The ten 'best effort' moves are then played by *Rybka* for both sides and the assessment dramatically changes from a small advantage to White to a decisive advantage for Black. The advantages become diluted incrementally across a number of moves, and in no opening system have I found this phenome-

non to be so pronounced as it is with the Sniper. This is attributable to the latent dynamic possibilities in the Sniper.

If you are looking for a novel approach to a Black opening repertoire system that is wide enough to offer rich possibilities, but not so wide that you will have to spend hour upon hour keeping track of hundreds of the latest wrinkles, and further, possessing a repertoire system that is completely viable, then I think you have now found it!

In forming my views about the Sniper, I recognized that before computers became widely available, exhaustive analyses of Dilution Principle-style positions (many of which are gambits that provide compensation as far as 15 moves down the line) were not humanly possible to correctly assess. Many variations that require close analysis were neglected by opening theory in the pre-computer era. The Sniper bridges the gap between the power of the computer, the comfort zone of the individual and the capability of the human memory. I am happy to share with you the discoveries I have made as a result of thousands of hours spent refining this system with constant guidance from *Rybka* (and sometimes *Fritz*).

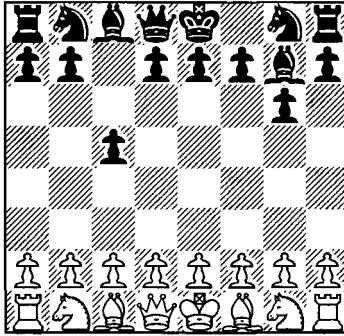
I have endeavoured to present my research in a manner that will be easy to digest for club players rated within the broad spectrum of 1400 up to 2200. There's a slant towards rich, new positions that are complicated but level, with the reasoning that this should be more favourable to Black players as this complexity nullifies White's opening advantage. Moreover, the more familiarity you have with the Sniper and the more frequently you play it, the more it equips you with better survival mechanisms even in to the late middlegame, which is where most of the games with complicated uncharted positions are decided. Because the Sniper has a very wide application, and because it provides familiar pawn structures against 1 e4, 1 d4 and 1 c4, it can bear much fruit in time-pressure situations when the late middlegame is so complex. Even the endgames provide familiarity in terms of pawn structure.

Move Orders

While learning the Sniper, I recommend you employ the Pure Sniper move order (1...g6, 2...♗g7, 3...c5!) whenever possible, rather than the Sicilian Sniper (1...c5, 2...g6, 3...♗g7). However, the reader should be aware that in most instances the moves are directly interchangeable. Where this happens I have inserted 'SMOT' and have expanded further to help understand the move order subtleties.

I recommend the Pure Sniper move order over the Sicilian Sniper because it:

- ♠ Avoids much recognized chess theory;
- ♠ Leads to thousands of uncharted positions;
- ♠ Employs many Dilution Principles in Black's favour;
- ♠ Camouflages Black's opening moves to some extent; and
- ♠ Optimizes the chance to play the three key moves: ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...c5.



The Pure Sniper

This book will deal chiefly with all major responses that have arisen from White after 1 e4 and 1 d4. To give a flavour of the Sniper I will briefly present two important games; the first one is a Pure Sniper, and the second one a Deferred Sniper. These two games will help acquaint the reader with the Sniper and also show how one of the world's leading theoreticians got into trouble against a much lower-ranked Sniper practitioner.

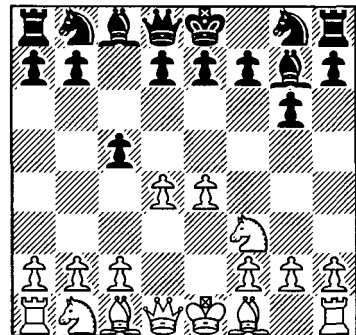
Game 1

M.Al Modiahki-B.Macieja
Turin Olympiad 2006

1 e4 g6 2 ♘f3 ♗g7 3 d4 c5

I should say that the actual game came from the Sicilian Sniper move order of 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 d4 ♗g7, and I have changed it here just to show how Black can achieve the same position by playing a Pure Sniper move order,

which is the main focus of this book.



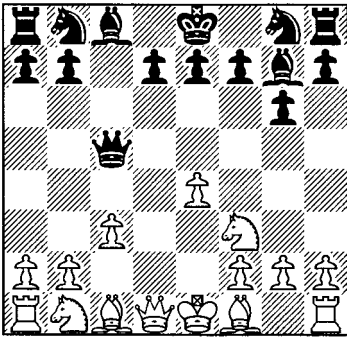
The Sniper

In fact there will be many instances of the actual game coming from a Sicilian Sniper, and for clarity I have sometimes taken the liberty of amending the moves and replacing them with the Pure Sniper.

4 dxc5

A common theme in the Sniper is to sacrifice this c5-pawn, either permanently or temporarily, in return for good dynamic compensation. Here, though, Black just regains it immediately.

4... ♖a5+ 5 c3 ♜xc5

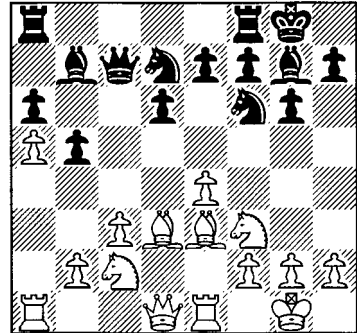


It looks as though the queen is not well placed, but Black has managed to trade a wing pawn for a central pawn and will argue that he can defend against White's initiative and use that central advantage later in the middle-game or even the endgame.

6 ♖a3 ♜f6 7 ♜b5 0-0 8 ♙e3 ♜c6 9 ♙d3 b6

A very useful move that provides a permanent haven for the queen and ensures Black has the better pawn structure.

10 0-0 ♙b7 11 ♜e1 d6 12 a4 a6 13 ♜bd4 ♜c7 14 a5 b5 15 ♜c2 ♜bd7



I have found a new rating system for pawns which I use as their base values. I call it the 'Storey Pawn Scale', and I have found that it is an extremely good rule of thumb both in my own games and in coaching.

Of course we normally assign a value of one unit for one pawn, but the following is a much more pertinent rating system:

- Rook pawns = $\frac{1}{4}$
- Knight pawns = $\frac{1}{2}$
- Bishop pawns = 1
- Central pawns = $1\frac{1}{2}$

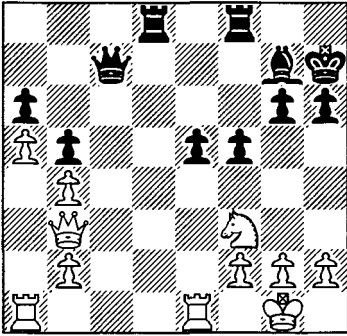
The Storey Pawn Scale clearly shows that a trade of a bishop pawn for a central pawn is quite beneficial for Black, and this is the true compensation that Black seeks in the Sniper. The Sniper is all about the battle for the centre, be it in the opening phase, middlegame or endgame. The Storey Pawn Scale is an excellent simple guide to pawn values

and their effect on the central battle.

16 ♖f4 e5 17 ♖g5 h6 18 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 19 ♜b4 ♜ad8 20 ♜b3 d5!

Black is always on the lookout to seize the centre.

21 exd5 ♜xd5 22 ♖e4 ♜xb4 23 cxb4 ♜xe4 24 ♜xe4 ♜h7 25 ♜ee1 f5



Black has won the centre and will convert this to a won game. This is the primary strategy of the Sniper.

26 ♜ac1 ♜d6 27 ♜cd1 ♜e7 28 ♜d4 ♜d6 29 ♜c2 ♜fd8 30 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 31 ♜e3 e4 32 ♜c2 ♜d8 33 h4 ♜xh4 34 ♜c6 f4 35 ♜xe4 ♜d4 0-1

See Game 28 for a more detailed discussion of this game and variations.

Game 2

S.Tiviakov-C.Storey

European Union

Championship, Liverpool 2008

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♖g7 3 c3 d5

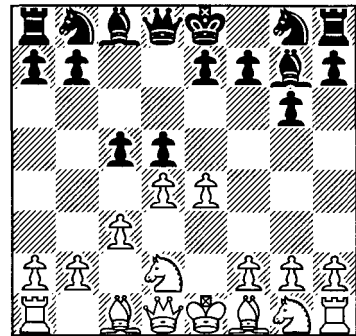
This is the only major variation following 1 e4 against which 3...c5 is not appropriate, and after playing through

the game I hope you will appreciate why that is so – I certainly did.

Some background to this game will be of interest. Liverpool 2008 was my first venture into the European Union Championship and I was particularly keen to prepare well for each opponent. I quickly realized that Tiviakov is an excellent opening theoretician and rarely does any player of the Black pieces get complete equality against him, let alone any advantage.

Using the Sniper, however, you will see that I managed to outplay him in the opening phase of the game, with a variation that I consider to be my most important contribution to opening theory:

4 ♜d2 c5



The Deferred Sniper

The move order of 1...g6, 2...♖g7 and 3...c5 has not been played, but we still see the main character of the Sniper. This game's move order is therefore defined as 'The Deferred Sniper' simply for reference purposes

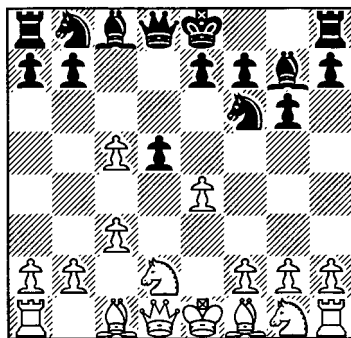
and for future classification of Sniper games.

As I have resurrected this 4...c5 gambit in modern times and brought some new enhancements, and as a struggling FM who would like to leave my stamp on the chess kingdom, I have called it the 'Storey Gambit', which is simply useful for reference purposes. Many years ago Grandmasters Gulko and Razuvaev played 4...c5, but it has fallen into disuse and my recent contributions should make it very appealing.

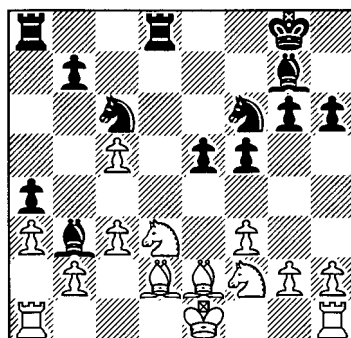
In short, Black sacrifices the c5-pawn and as a consequence prevents White from using that square for his knight. Keep an eye on that square as you play through the game. Black progressively improves his pieces better than White, and as a result he is the one who obtains central control. White may hang on to the pawn on c5 for some time, but just as in the Benko, Black's superior development ensures that the weak pawn will eventually fall, after which Black's pieces can take further advantage of the better squares they occupy to win another pawn or to initiate an attack on White's king.

5 dxc5 ♟f6!

Black is in no immediate hurry to capture the weak pawn on c5. He can still keep a very good position by continuing with development, gaining advantages in the centre and then capturing on c5 at an opportune moment, possibly as late as the endgame.



6 exd5 ♜xd5 7 ♞b3 ♜xd1+ 8 ♔xd1 0-0
 9 ♞f3 ♜d8+ 10 ♔e1 ♞c6 11 ♙e2 e5 12
 ♙e3 ♙e6 13 ♞g5 ♙d5 14 f3 h6 15 ♞h3
 ♙e6 16 ♜d1 ♞d5 17 ♙d2 f5 18 ♞f2 a5
 19 ♞c1 a4 20 a3 ♞f6 21 ♞cd3 ♙b3 22
 ♜a1

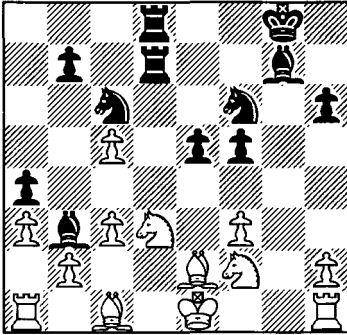


Having outplayed a 2600-Grandmaster up until here, I became too excited. That is the only explanation I can give for playing the poor move 22...♜a5?. Unfortunately, this allowed Tiviakov to find good counterplay, and he went on to get the better of the position in my time pressure.

Instead **22...♜d7!** is the simple and logical move. Let us see how the game

could have proceeded had I found the correct continuation rather than 22...♖a5.

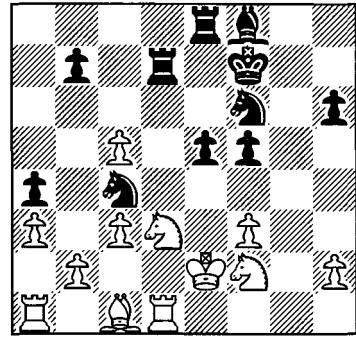
23 g4 ♖ad8 24 gxf5 gxf5 25 ♔c1



White's position is inferior as his pieces are passive, his king position is poor, and his pawn structure is weak. This can be contrasted with Black's well placed minor pieces, superb rooks and central control that all together spell danger for White.

25...♔f7 26 ♖g1 ♔f8 27 ♔f1 ♔c4 28 ♖b4 ♔xe2+ 29 ♔xe2 ♖a5 30 ♖bd3 ♖e8

31 ♖d1 ♖c4

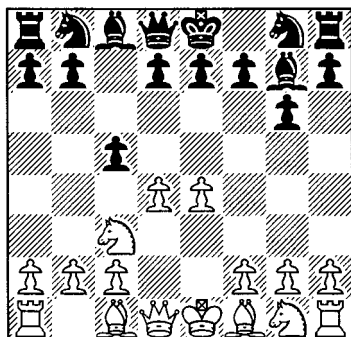


Black's advantage is clear: he has control of the centre, better squares piece for piece, and the more active – yet safer – king. All that adds up to a significant plus, even though White has an extra pawn. I hope this position convinces you there is something worthwhile to the Sniper. The important thing for the Sniper practitioner is that the opening was a tremendous success. If you get the opportunity to play this variation – do so.

Chapter One

Main Line 1: Queenside Knight – 3 ♘c3 c5!

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 c5



A quick word on why I have assigned 3 ♘c3 to Chapter 1, instead of 3 ♘f3 which could well have laid claim to being the main line. Well, quite simply I had to choose one. I decided on 3 ♘c3 as the main line for three reasons:

1. In my own games, and I have played over 2,000 Sniper games, it is the most frequently played move when

I face opponents rated 2200-2700 (either in long-play games or those played at the Internet Chess Club).

2. Against the Modern and the Pirc, ♘c3 is generally given preference over ♘f3 in mainline terms, and these two are very close relatives of the Pure Sniper move order.

3. In my own games, I get more mainline Dragons via 3 ♘c3 than I do when meeting 3 ♘f3.

Sniper Dragons: Delaying ...0-0

Game 3

S.Ter-Sahakyan-Y.Zhou

World Under-16

Chess Olympiad, Akhisar 2009

This game will show that by simply

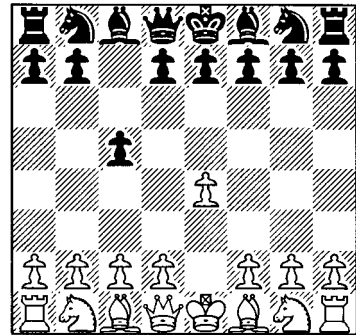
delaying castling, new possibilities can be opened up for Sniper practitioners that would like to play a mainline Sicilian Dragon. It will also show that a much lower-rated player can defeat a Grandmaster by applying the key principles of the Sniper outlined in this book, namely timely central thrusts by the use of the extra central pawn, constant central awareness, excellent use of the Sniper bishop and delaying castling until the rook is needed for attack. It also gives me the opportunity to take up the role of your guide as brothers in arms on our journey towards mastering the Sniper!

This game has particular emotional interest for me, because Yang Fan Zhou played top board for the English under 16 team at the 2009 Olympiad, and for the first time I was appointed coach to the England squad, and accompanied them to the event as coach and manager. I had won over Yang Fan to the idea of using the Sniper, albeit via the Sicilian Sniper move order, and he gave a near perfect performance, gaining a superb victory against a young Armenian Grandmaster who was the top-rated player participating in the event.

1 e4 c5

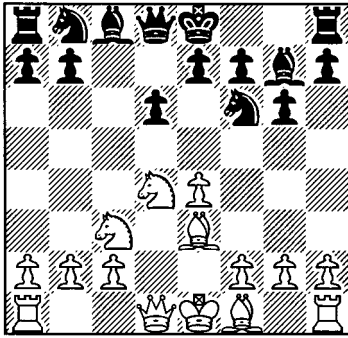
You may straight away be puzzled as to why 1...c5 was chosen when the moves ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...c5 are all pre-determined by the system. Well, the point is this: when you become experienced with the Sniper you will find that you can choose the Sicilian Sniper

move order 1...c5, even though the main essence of the Sniper is to play the Pure Sniper sequence 1...g6, 2...♗g7, 3...c5! In fact, I strongly recommend you stay with the Pure Sniper move order until you have mastered all of the material in this book. Only then should you consider 1...c5 as a Sniper move, perhaps to avoid your opponent's preparation.



To further help the reader appreciate some of the move orders that make up the Sniper, Yang Fan heads for an Extended Pure Sniper Transposition at 7...♖c6. An Extended Pure Sniper occurs when a position that could have come from a Pure Sniper is reached not at move three, but deeper into the opening. Extended Pure Snipers can be a bit difficult deciphering, and this is the main reason I recommend the reader to always view the variations from the 1...g6, 2...♗g7, 3...c5! perspective, at least until they have read this entire book.

2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♗f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7



We now have a mainline Sicilian Dragon which could have also come via a Pure Sniper move order as follows: 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♖g7 3 ♘c3 c5 4 ♗f3 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 d6 6 ♙e3 ♗f6. Of course this only transposes if both parties are willing, and it is the nature of a Sniper practitioner to search for interesting uncharted positions that can be found by playing the Pure Sniper move order, and to aim for those positions. For example, Black could deviate at move four with 4...♙a5, or instead of 6...♗f6 with 6...h5!?. There are countless creative possibilities, and even though this book will equip you with many, this could be fertile ground for your own research too.

What is the difference between a Pure Sniper and a Sicilian Sniper? Why not just play the Sicilian move order?

1. In a Pure Sniper Black can often avoid exchanging on d4 and instead develop other pieces first, as will be shown later in this chapter. It will also be shown that this can be highly beneficial for Black.

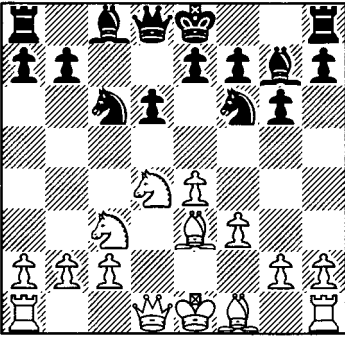
2. Black may not wish to play ...d6 at all but in fact play ...d5 in one turn, taking play along similar lines to a favourable Accelerated Dragon.

3. Black will attempt to play the 'Sniper Sacrifice' (a trendy way of describing the Sniper bishop on g7 exchanging itself for the c3-knight with ...♙xc3, which will often involve the temporary or permanent sacrifice of the c5-pawn) at every possible favourable moment, with the aim of achieving an excellent or dynamically equal position, so the knight on g8 is left at home for as long as possible.

This is the beauty of the Sniper bishop. It has a selfless desire to sacrifice itself to secure the centre for the rest of the troops, who can then quickly use it launch an attack on the newly weakened white pawn structure on a2, c2 and c3.

Another great bonus of learning the Sniper is that all the ideas can be tweaked simply by playing the Sniper with White as well! This can be achieved simply by starting with a very useful waiting move of 1 a3!, and then playing just like a Black Sniper but with the bonus of having control of the b4-square. I have tried this myself to date in two rated games, with an ECF rating performance of 240 (2520 FIDE) – that is with no specific study but rather simply applying the principles of Black's Sniper play over to White and being aware of the differences created by the bonus move 1 a3.

7 f3 ♖c6



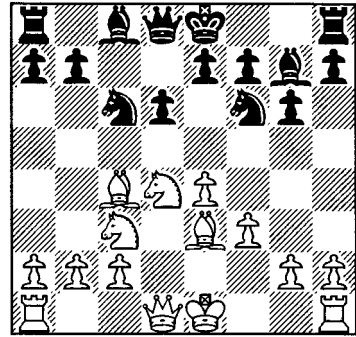
The pressure created by the c6-knight on the d4-square is considered by theory to be very useful. I strongly recommend ...♖c6 as part of the Sniper repertoire when Black plays a Dragon. This is in conjunction with ...h5 or – if you’re feeling creative – ...h6, but both with delayed castling. You will find this a very effective antidote to playing those who have sharpened their h2-pawn battering ram, normally a simple and effective way to easy rook development and a free attack against Dragon players.

This ...♖c6/...h5/delayed ...0-0 Sniper Dragon will also ensure that your prized g7 Sniper soldier will be firmly protected from its opposite number – White’s dark-squared bishop. This approach of delaying ...0-0 makes it a far more attractive proposition for anyone looking to play the Sicilian Dragon.

8 ♗c4

The young Armenian Grandmaster tries a sideline in an attempt to confuse Yang Fan.

8 ♖d2 0-0 is covered in the Magnus Carlsen section, but if you’re looking for a novel alternative I can strongly recommend the following Black piece deployment: ...♗d7, ...♞c8, ...h6 or ...h5 and delaying ...0-0.



8...♗d7

There’s no need to castle, as the tempo is far better served by accelerating an attack on to the c4-bishop which has no communication with its allies.

This system of development (...♗d7, ...♞c8, ...h6 or ...h5, and delayed ...0-0) is not so dependent on concrete variations but mainly ideas based. If it becomes more mainline in the future then concrete variations will surface, but for the foreseeable future there is much fertile ground for simply playing chess within a safe framework of development.

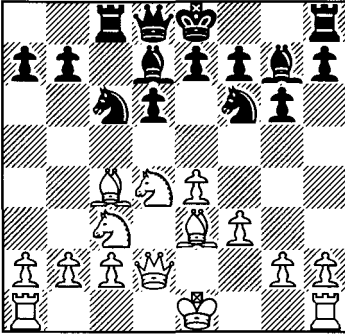
According to my own study of players below 2700 there is an overwhelming tendency to castle when a piece pressures a weak square around the king, but Sniper trainees and 2700+ players know these squares are easily

The Sniper

defended and therefore they only castle when they have to, or if the rook is needed for rapid deployment.

8...♖b6! is a highly underrated move and one I recommend with confidence. This is covered in the next game.

9 ♖d2 ♜c8

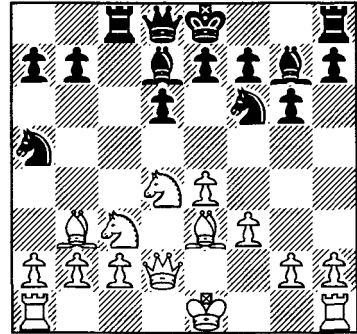


More normal is 9...0-0 here; however, the England camp had decided not to play by pure theory but always look to delay ...0-0 for as long as safely possible, thus allowing one extra move for central concerns. This, coupled with the ...♞a5 attack on the light-squared bishop, proves extremely problematic for the Armenian Grandmaster.

The alternative 9...♜b8, using a delayed ...0-0 scheme of development, may seem attractive. Let's call it the 'delayed ...0-0 Chinese Dragon'. Well, I do not recommend the delayed ...0-0 Chinese Dragon in this situation, as the following short variation will prove. I have included it to show an instance of when delaying ...0-0, albeit a rarity, does not work effectively: 10 0-0-0 h5

neglects the centre and White is allowed a breakthrough after 11 ♞xc6 bxc6 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♞e4 ♞d5 14 ♞xd5 cxd5 15 ♖xd5, when the d-file pressure gives White a small advantage.

10 ♞b3 ♞a5!?



I really like this...♞a5 idea, which is a popular way of playing against the White Sicilian setup. When White cannot crack open the h-file, the best plan for him is to centralize rooks and then play f4 followed by e5 with a great central advantage. This ...♞a5 'knight on the rim' idea prevents the central initiative that White's f4 may bring and also it allows ...♞xb3 at a moment of Blacks choosing.

11 0-0-0 a6

Black has still not committed his king to the kingside and thus is still preventing a cheap 'all-out attack' by White. On the other hand, Black has clear coordinates on White's king location.

12 ♞b1 b5 13 g4

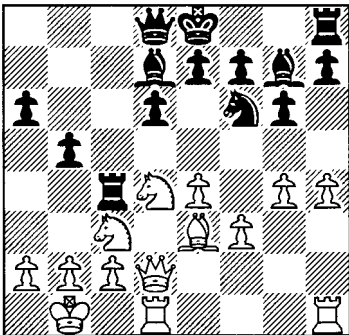
This attempts to discourage ...h5 should White play h2-h4, which is good

From the viewpoint of preventing a solid defensive setup by Black on the kingside, but it does allow Black an extra tempo on the queenside. Yang Fan uses this to set his attack in motion and gain a great share in the centre, which turns into more tangible advantages as the game develops.

13...♖c4

Yang Fan prefers the traditional approach and rightly rejects 13...♗xb3 as this makes it difficult to attack the white king. For example, 14 ♗xb3 0-0 after 14...♗e6 15 ♖d4 0-0 16 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 17 ♗e2 ♖e8 18 ♖d4 ♖f7 19 h4 e5 Black is passive but solid) 15 h4 a5 16 h5 a4 17 ♖d4 b4 18 ♖d5 ♗xd5 19 exd5 b3 20 axb3 axb3 21 ♗xb3 ♖c7 when White is more comfortable and can expect to go on to win.

14 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 15 h4



15...b4

15...h5 may be better, as it stops 16 h5 which could have caused some awkward defensive problems for Black. Furthermore, 15...h5 would halt White's 'straightforward attack' in its tracks

and force him to search for another solution. For example, 16 g5 ♗h7 17 ♖d5 ♗f8 (an added bonus of delaying ...0-0 is that this move is available) 18 ♗he1 ♗e6 19 ♖b3.

Clearly 15...b4 is stronger than 15...0-0?!. Black has no urgent need to castle unless the rook is required for duties, and it is exactly moves like ...b4 that are the reason why Sniper players rarely castle kingside at an early stage. If Black had castled at an early stage then he would likely be mauled on the kingside with a speculative sacrifice that no Dragon/Sniper player would want to face.

16 ♗ce2 a5

Still not castling yet. The tempo saved could be critical as it is allowing and disallowing a number of short and long-term plans, and this is mainly beneficial to Black.

17 ♖g3?!

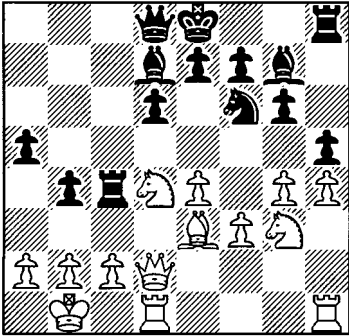
A major strategic error – it was better to play 17 h5! with good attacking prospects.

Yang Fan's next move is highly instructive – it prevents further h-file danger, encourages closure of the g- and h-files and also helps to prevent attacks in the centre by moving the knight to the h7-square releasing the g7-bishop's energy.

17...h5!

17 moves in and Black has pressured the centre and expanded on the queenside. The pressure of the extra attacking move gained by not castling

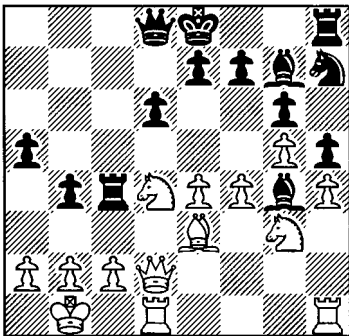
has actually had an exponential effect on Black's queenside counterplay and could be held responsible for 'wasting' the knight's time moving from c3-e2-g3, thus engineering a major strategic error in White's plan which in turn brings about Black's eventual win.



18 g5 19 f4

If White can play e5 Black may be in big trouble especially with his king in the centre!

19...g4!



Sending in a 'disruptor' – this starts action against White's centre by removing the white rook's influence over the central file. It is highly instructive

how Black fights for the centre and increases advantages there before delivering a final assault on the king.

20 c1 0-0

Just what did Black achieve by delaying ...0-0? Well, he has:

1. The two bishops;
 2. Advanced queenside pressure;
 3. A very safe king (no files open);
- and

4. Forced a non-standard plan upon White, as well as persuading the knight to go to the poor square at g3.

21 f5 e5

More central control and more indirect pressure on the centre. *Rybka* still thinks this is level, but I claim Black has an almost decisive advantage. I would argue that, with the better centre, more realistic attacking chances on the white king, options to trade minor pieces, and with White's weak e4-pawn, this is highly favourable for Black.

22 g2?!

Probably the fatal error by the Armenian Grandmaster – White is now doomed to a long-term defence that is probably just hoping for an error to survive. Yang Fan shows a level of technique way above his years and rating to bring home the point for England – each move is quite instructive.

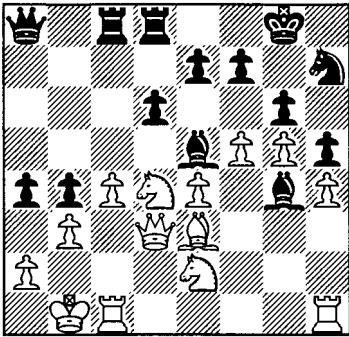
22...a8

A superb way to pressure the weak central pawn and allow the f8-rook to participate.

23 b3 c8 24 d3 fd8

How many players would rush to attack an enemy king? Yang Fan prefers to mobilize his redundant pieces (rook and knight) thus keeping good control of the centre before the clinical finish. The knight on h7 still has to make an important contribution to the attack and has an easy way in via d7.

25 c4 a4



This 'tin opener' move attempts to open the a-file and weaken the white king position.

26 bxa4 ♖xa4

The white king begins to feel the draught.

27 ♕b3 ♕a8

The queen shows that she can demonstrate her power on the centre even from the corners.

28 ♖d3 ♖b8

'X-Ray check' is the first major warning sign for White.

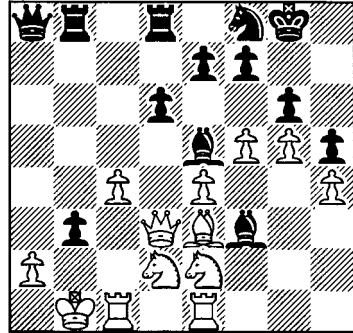
29 ♖he1 ♘f8

The cavalry is set to arrive and the *Rybka* chess engine is very happy with Black (-0.98). In English, that means clear advantage for Black.

30 ♘b3 ♙f3

Yang Fan's pressure on the centre in this game has been grandmasterly.

31 ♘d2 b3!



The clinical finish commences – now is the time for Yang Fan's calculation ability to be demonstrated.

32 axb3 ♖xb3+!

Dramatic measures to increase the weakness of the white king.

33 ♕xb3 ♖b8

There is a defence to the pin but Yang Fan has a great way to develop his final piece into the attack.

34 ♙b6 ♙xe4+ 35 ♘xe4 ♕xe4+ 36 ♖c2 ♘d7!

The knight finds its way into the game.

37 ♘c1 ♖xb6

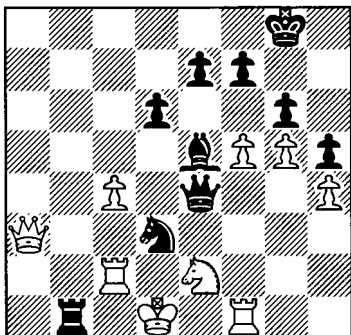
Black has a material deficit but enjoys the following advantages:

1. The centre;
2. The much safer king;
3. The initiative;
4. More simple targets to attack; and
5. No obvious targets of his own for

White to attack.

All this blended together makes for a decisive advantage.

38 ♚a3 ♘c5 39 ♔d1 ♘d3 40 ♖f1 ♜b1+



White's position is a shambles. Yang Fan holds his nerve to deliver a simple technical finish.

41 ♘c1 ♘xc1 42 ♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 43 ♚xc1 ♚d3+ 44 ♔e1 ♘g3+ 45 ♖f2 0-1

The Armenian Grandmaster resigns and history is made, as an English under-16 defeats a Grandmaster at this event for the first time.

This game saw a Sicilian mainline Dragon via the Sicilian Sniper move order, but it equally could have arisen via a Pure Sniper move order. The Sicilian Dragon is one of the variations that the Sniper player may allow.

Black played a delayed ...0-0 with ...♘a5, and this way of playing the Dragon clearly has some excellent benefits. Using the move saved by delaying ...0-0 enables Black to defend by central means or gain some queenside initiative. In other words, bringing in extra support to the centre or remov-

ing a piece that is pressuring the centre can help prevent an attack coming from its source. This is a subtle form of defensive prophylaxis which fights against ...0-0 apathy that is prevalent from beginner and even up to Grandmaster level. Sniper players only castle when their king is genuinely about to come under fire, or when the rook is urgently needed for central matters. These Sniper principles defeated one of the best juniors in the world.

Sniper Dragons: Kupreichik's ...♚b6!

Game 4

A. Shmit-V. Kupreichik
Odessa 1968

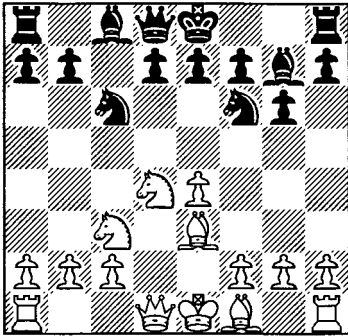
This game will persuade the reader to add 8...♚b6 to their repertoire in the Sicilian Dragon. The reader will find the variation tactically volatile but promising for Black, and the sidelines will prove that theoretical opinions favouring White in the past can be turned upside down.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♘g7

Although this game is not the Pure Sniper move order, this position could easily have been reached that way. The Sicilian Sniper move order should be compared with the Pure Sniper until the reader is fully acclimatized to the similarities and differences involved.

A way to reach this position via a Pure Sniper move order would be 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♖c3 c5 4 ♜f3 cxd4 5 ♜xd4 ♜c6, but as always Black can choose to deviate earlier if he is seeking original positions (see below).

6 ♗e3 ♜f6



7 ♗c4

Another line is 7 ♜xc6 bxc6 8 e5 ♜g8 9 f4 f6 and now:

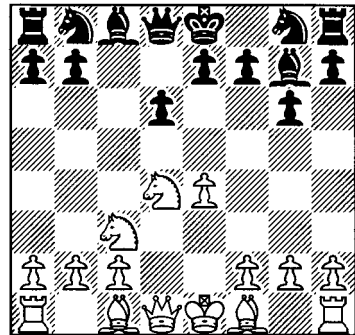
a) 10 exf6 ♜xf6 and Black has a superior central pawn mass which guarantees at least an equal game.

b) 10 ♗d4 is not much better. 10...fxe5 11 ♗xe5 ♜f6 12 ♗c4 d6 leaves Black well placed for further central advances with gain of time; for example, 13 ♗d4 d5 with a completely level middlegame. 11 fxe5 is more popular but my *Rybka* engine claims after 11...♞a5 12 e6 ♜f6 13 exd7+ ♗xd7 14 ♗c4 ♞d8 that Black is slightly better due to the d-file pressure and the bishop's access to the g4-square which can monitor any white rooks coming to d1.

If these methods by White of avoid-

ing the mainline Dragon are not to your taste, or if you have arrived at this book as a Dragon player who has to meet such sidelines, then the Pure Sniper is definitely for you.

The key advantage of the Pure Sniper is that Black will have the option of going into new and promising sidelines if both sides are heading for a Sicilian Dragon. For example, the 7 ♜xc6 sideline could have been avoided if Black had attempted to enter the Dragon with a Pure Sniper move order: 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♖c3 c5 4 ♜f3 cxd4 5 ♜xd4 d6.



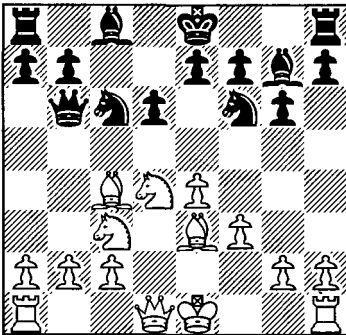
A new Dragon position has arisen where Black can choose to delay his g8-knight's development, bring his knight to d7, or even play a Sniper Dragadorf (a mix of Dragon and Najdorf with ...a6). Black could also play 5...b6 and ...♗b7. Basically, there are many ideas here, and this shows the richness of available options in an opening that allegedly has been analysed to death. The Sniper brings many new interesting Dragon possibilities.

7...d6 8 f3

It is possible this may actually be a weak move. After all, it does weaken the a7-g1 diagonal and there is an excellent way to take advantage of this. Black's ensuing response has been disrespected by mainstream theory but I predict a popularity explosion of 8...♖b6, and White players may have to find a different approach unless they can make 8 f3 work.

Another problem for White is that there is no easy way back to the main line, as attempts to do so with 8 ♖d2 can be met by 8...♘g4 which is favourable for Black. The alternative 8 h3 could be the way forward, but after 8...0-0 9 ♙b3 ♙d7 10 0-0, 10...♖a5 is known to be quite good for Black, with plenty of queenside play.

8...♖b6!!



Kupreichik has a good reputation for innovative opening ideas. For ease of reference I call this position 'the Kupreichik Sniper Dragon'. This is my recommendation against the ♙c4/f3 Sicilian setup when white omits ♖d2.

A further generic Sniper tip: always be on the lookout to play ...♖b6 in the Sniper. Not only does it seriously debook and confuse an opponent, but the tactics and positional elements normally favour the Sniper.

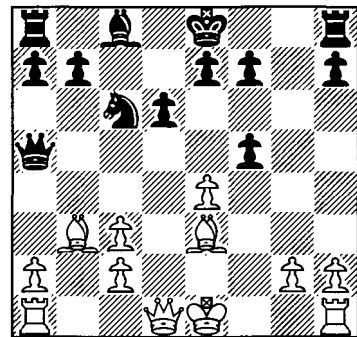
Let's see how the Belarusian Grandmaster handles his pet line:

9 ♘f5

The following tactics may look a bit scary for Black but deeper investigation will prove Black is not only equal but in fact has the better prospects.

There are a couple of complicated alternatives, but all are favourable for Black or at least equal:

a) 9 ♙b3?! is overly cautious and enables a Black tactic involving releasing the bishop on g7: 9...♘xe4! 10 ♘f5 (10 fxe4?! ♙xd4 leaves Black with a safe extra central pawn after 11 ♘d5 ♖a5+ 12 ♙d2 ♖d8 13 c3 ♙g7 14 0-0 10...♙xc3+ (this Sniper bishop trade again enables Black to gain an advantage in the centre) 11 bxc3 ♖a5 and Black has a good middlegame.



He enjoys a numerical advantage in

pawns on the central files, pressure against c3 and a safe king.

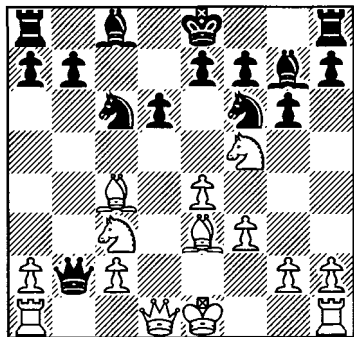
b) 9 ♖b5 ♜c7! 10 ♘d5 ♘xd5 11 exd5 a6 12 ♙xc6+ bxc6 13 ♘xc6 ♖b7. Black will look forward to regaining the pawn with a solid position and a safer king. After 14 ♙d4 ♙xd4 15 ♜xd4 0-0 16 0-0 ♙xc6 17 dxc6 ♜xc6, according to the Storey Pawn Scale, Black is slightly better here as other factors are equally balanced.

c) 9 ♘cb5 0-0 (Black calmly castles and gets ready for the melee) 10 ♘f5 ♜a5+ 11 ♙d2 ♜b6 12 ♙e3 ♜a5+ 13 ♙d2 ♜b6 14 ♘xg7 a6 15 ♘c3 ♙xg7 16 ♜c1 ♙g8 17 ♙e3 ♜c7 18 ♜d2 ♙e6 19 ♖b3 ♜ac8. Black's extra central pawn and superior development more than compensate for his lost Sniper bishop.

d) 9 0-0 is covered in the next game.

Returning to 9 ♘f5:

9...♜xb2



Grabbing a pawn in 'Bobby Fischer, Poisoned Pawn style'.

10 ♘xg7+

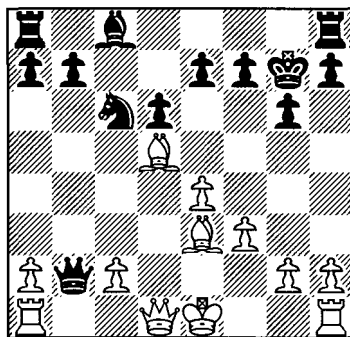
Rarely is it good to give an entire piece away with check – let alone our

favourite stealth soldier, but his sacrifice is again for the greater central good as Black benefits from a superior pawn structure and play against the loose white pieces on c3, c4, g7 and e3. This position is directly connected to the position after 16...h5 (see below), and this is where the debate will appear at the highest level.

10...♙f8 11 ♘d5

This active continuation is the critical test of Black's cheeky play. 11 ♙d2 attempting to embarrass the queen comes to nothing and just weakens the g1-a7 diagonal: 11...♙xg7 12 ♜b1 ♜a3 13 ♜b3 ♜c5. Black's pawn structure is excellent, and together with the extra pawn and extra support the h8-rook will bring to h6 ensures Black will likely go on to take the full point.

11...♘xd5 12 ♙xd5 ♙xg7



Black has nothing to fear on the long dark diagonal, as he has a useful check to recapture the white bishop should White attempt to use the diagonal at d4 by capturing the c6-knight.

The Sniper

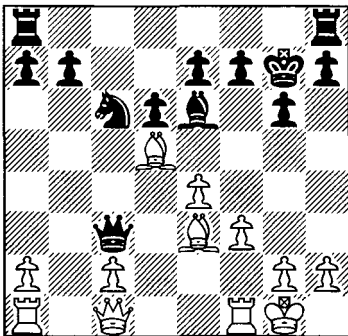
This is the critical position and is subject to some debate at the top level. It is my recommendation to aim for this position in the Sniper when a Dragon can be reached. If it does not stand the test of time, then playing a normal mainline Dragon and delaying ...0-0 is my backup recommendation.

13 ♖f2

This threatens to take on c6 and win the queen but Black has a simple solution. Alternatives are:

a) 13 ♖b1 ♜c3+ 14 ♖f2 transposes to this game.

b) 13 0-0 ♜c3 14 ♜c1 is the line recommended in modern texts but my Sniper analysis can refute any challenge that claims a victory for White: 14...♗e6!!.



An excellent bishop move, improving over some recent analysis that suggested this line may blow the Sniper away – the Sniper lives! For example:

b1) 15 ♗d1 ♖hb8 16 ♖b1 ♖g8 is the critical position and I like Black.

b2) 15 ♖b1 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♗d4 17 ♗h6+ ♖g8 18 ♖h1 b6 when Black can

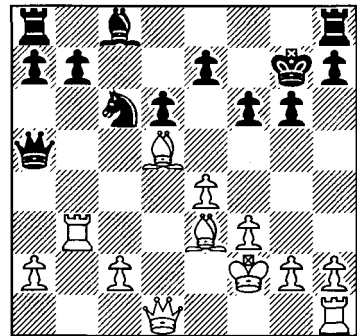
defend and has the better pawn structure and an extra pawn.

b3) 15 ♗h6+ ♖g8 16 ♖b1 ♗d4 17 ♜d2 ♗xd5 18 exd5 ♜xd2 19 ♗xd2 b6 20 ♖b4 ♗f5 21 g4 ♗g7 22 ♖e1 e6 23 dxex6 fxe6 24 ♗d4 ♖f7 25 ♗h6 e5 26 ♗xd6 ♖hd8 27 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 28 ♖xe5 ♗e6, when the better pawn structure and more active king give Black an excellent endgame.

13...♜c3

Again preparing to recapture on c6 should White take the knight there. Although it looks extremely brave staying on the dangerous diagonal, Black is doing fine mainly because the d4 square is well under control. If White takes on c6, the queen captures at c6 and is safely removed from the dangerous diagonal with an excellent position for Black.

14 ♖b1 ♜a5 15 ♖b3 f6!



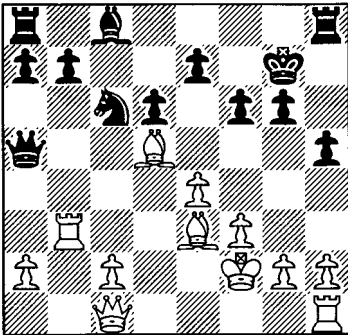
The star move: it fights against the weakness on the long dark diagonal, supports e5 and stops g5 access. On the flipside it does weaken e6, but there's no knight to really put this to great use.

Sniper practitioners will come to realize the importance of this little ...f6 pawn advance in many Sniper positions; it is one of the most important features in the Sniper setup. Remember it well and try and appreciate its impact every time it is played – it is often the difference between winning and losing in the Sniper.

16 ♖c1

A position arises that I predict will be the subject of many theoretical battles in the near future. I also predict Black's chances will be proved slightly better due to having an extra central pawn relevant to the Storey Pawn Scale. White advocates may look for an all-out attack on Black's monarch, but my belief is that Black can defend any attack successfully.

16...h5!



This pawn advance is a key defensive move which is highly instructive for all Sniper Sicilian Dragon positions, and is also a recurring theme. The rook brings direct protection to the h6-square, while the h5-pawn suppresses

the g4 advance and also prevents a later h-pawn battering ram. This is not a traditional defensive setup, but a moment should be taken to remember that Black has an extra central pawn and should look forward to a successful defence. He will bring as many pieces as possible to defend the weak squares around the king, in conjunction with timely central defences and eventual central pawn advances.

17 ♜d1 ♚c7!

Black has over-protected his b7 weakness and removes the queen to a safe haven. He also prepares to improve communication with the queenside and free the bishop up for development.

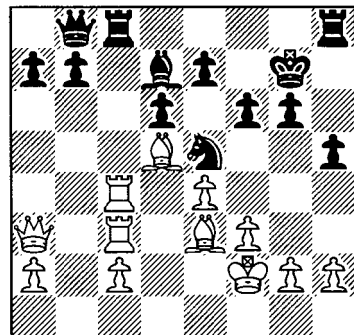
18 ♚a3 ♙d7 19 ♜c3

It is difficult for White to find a good plan that does not risk the safety of his own king.

19...♞ac8

Black is now already better on account of his superior pawn structure and extra pawn.

20 ♜d4 ♚b8 21 ♜dc4 ♘e5



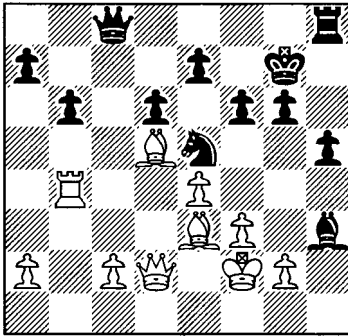
The Sniper

As this queenside attack never gained any momentum, White must surely try a different plan. The two bishops aren't really getting going, and it's good to note that the lack of a Sniper bishop has not been critical in Black's defence as the centralized knight more than compensates.

22 ♖b4 b6

Black's pawn structure is strong and stable, and he is simply a pawn up.

23 h3 ♖xc3 24 ♗xc3 ♗c8 25 ♗d2 ♙xh3!?



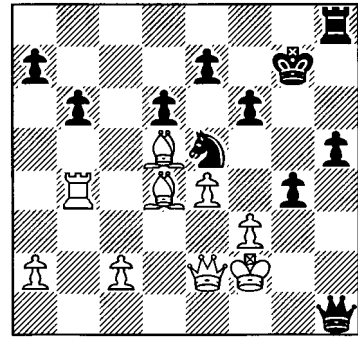
White's king safety is weaker than Black's, and this is always a key factor in accurate assessments. I have to admire Kupreichik's f6-pawn; it completely neutralized any White attack. Sniper trainees are often ready to use their wing pawns to attack the central squares.

26 gxh3 ♗xh3 27 ♗e2 g5

Since my youth I have always loved playing positions like this for Black, whereby the opponent's king is exposed and the advancing pawns are going to dramatically gain in value as

they approach promotion or add favourably to a direct attack. Let's call this attack 'Pawn Promotion And Attack' (PPAA). This type of attack is normally favourable when the opponent cannot generate any obvious threats or breakthroughs near the king or in the centre. Being aware of this type of position will reap many points – especially if your repertoire invites them!

28 ♙d4 ♗h2+ 29 ♙f1 ♗h1+ 30 ♙f2 g4



The '3 Piece Attack' rule – this general rule dictates that a successful middlegame attack on the king requires three pieces. Although there is normally a distinction between pieces and pawns, for the purposes of this attacking rule a pawn may be considered to be the value of a piece when it creates an anchor point around the king. Here the 3 Piece Attack rule enables Black to bring the full point home.

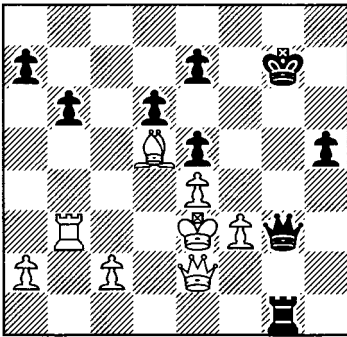
31 ♙xe5 fxe5 32 ♖b3 g3+ 33 ♙xg3 ♖h6

The 3 Piece Attack rule is also related to the '2 Heavy Pieces' rule, which also normally yields a decisive attack

(just as a reminder, a heavy piece is one valued at five points or higher).

34 ♔f2 ♖g6 35 ♗f1 ♗h2+ 36 ♔e3 ♖g1
37 ♗e2

If 37 ♗f2, there follows 37...♖g2 38
♗e1 ♗f4+ 39 ♔d3 ♖h4 40 ♕e6 ♗xf3+.
37...♖g2 38 ♗d1 ♖g1 39 ♗e2 ♗g3



The heavy pieces continue to create game-winning threats – ...♗e1 is the immediate concern.

40 ♗d2 ♖g2 0-1

A great advert for the Kupreichik Sniper. The tactics favour Black and he also has the opportunity to shape the events for the coming battle.

If this is not to your taste and you love your own mainline variation of the Dragon, by all means stay with it. Alternatively, consider how the up-and-coming World superstar plays the Dragon. We will consider Carlsen's approach with the Dragon soon, and Sniper students may wish to play like Carlsen or, as I have recommended previously, by delaying ...0-0. These various approaches can make up a range of quality Black responses, which

in this day of computer preparation can help your results immensely.

Game 5

A.Lombard-V.Kupreichik

European Junior

Championship, Niemeyer 1965

This game again demonstrates Black's efforts to take advantage of the move order and exploit White's avoidance of ♗d2 in the Sicilian Dragon.

1 ♖f3 ♖g6 2 e4 c5

This is a Black move order in the Sniper that doesn't really have a name, so let's give it one now – 'The Modern then Sicilian'. It seems to have some move-order trick value as it prevents White from playing d4 and gaining a large centre, although that is nothing to be feared.

3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♕g7 5 ♖c3

SMOT – Sniper Move Order Transposition. Please spend a few seconds to work out how this position would have been reached with the Pure Sniper move order.

5...♖c6 6 ♕e3

Alternatively:

a) 6 ♖b3 allows Black to implement the signature Sniper Sacrifice with 6...♕xc3+!! . This crippling of White's queenside pawn structure ensures good prospects for Black. After 7 bxc3 ♖f6 8 ♕d3 0-0 9 ♕h6 ♖e8, White would prefer to have the dark-squared bishop contributing to central matters

The Sniper

as that is where the struggle will take place. Black is slightly better here, justifying the martyrdom of the bishop on move 6.

b) 6 $\text{c}6$ $\text{d}6$ 7 $\text{g}3$ $\text{h}5$ 8 $\text{h}3$ $\text{d}6$ 9 $\text{g}2$ $\text{d}7$!! Okay, two exclamation marks are hardly warranted for the actual move, but its application upon the average player's memory completely justifies it. The astute soldier will clearly see that Black's opening moves are an exact replica of the Sniper recommendation for Black in the mainline Sicilian Dragon, which if you have a memory like mine is a tremendous feature of the Sniper.

If 10 $\text{e}3$ Black can try 10... $\text{b}5$!. This is a great way of grabbing a queenside initiative, as capturing on $\text{b}5$ would enable Black to bring his rook to the b -file with great play.

6... $\text{c}6$ 7 $\text{e}4$

7 $\text{f}3$! is a common mistake by White, trying for the main line without $\text{e}4$. Black can exploit this error by 7... O-O 8 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}5$!

White occasionally chooses a quiet setup. For example:

a) 7 $\text{e}2$ $\text{d}6$ (it is the 'way' of the Sniper to delay castling for as long as possible, and this position is no exception; however, 7... O-O 8 O-O $\text{d}5$! also equalizes for Black) 8 O-O 9 $\text{b}3$ (9 $\text{f}4$ $\text{b}6$! intending 10 $\text{d}3$ $\text{g}4$! is known to be fine for Black) 9... $\text{e}6$ (as played by Kasparov) 10 $\text{f}4$ $\text{c}8$! (here the queen prevents $\text{f}5$, covers the $\text{g}4$ -square and still leaves a retreat square

for the $\text{e}6$ -bishop) 11 $\text{h}1$ $\text{d}8$ 12 $\text{f}3$ $\text{c}4$ 12 $\text{f}2$ $\text{e}5$! (a surprising choice as the $\text{d}6$ -pawn appears to be weak, but the gains in the centre fully justify this voluntary weakening) 13 $\text{d}2$ $\text{e}6$ 14 $\text{f}5$ $\text{e}5$ 15 $\text{d}4$ $\text{c}8$!. The queen once again finds the same perfect square for the exact situation. Black's centralized knight and activity ensure a comfortable middlegame for him.

b) 7 $\text{b}3$ can easily transpose to the note 'a', for example 7... $\text{d}6$ 8 $\text{e}2$ O-O 9 O-O $\text{e}6$.

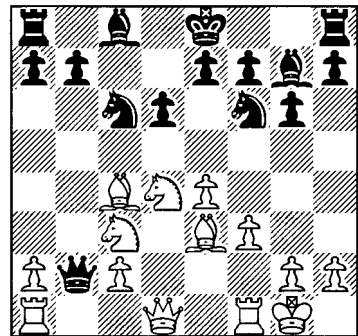
7... $\text{d}6$ 8 $\text{f}3$ $\text{b}6$

Kupreichik remains faithful to the cheeky Sniper recommendation.

9 O-O

This is an obvious-looking move that has been played countless times by my opponents in blitz games at the Internet Chess Club. Black acquires the advantage with:

9... $\text{b}6$



Black wins this game not just because he wins a pawn, but because it damages White's pawn structure on the queenside which enables good

Black counterplay.

10 ♖d2

After 10 ♖cb5 ♗b4 11 ♖c7+ ♔d7 surprisingly Black is doing very well: 12 ♖xc6 ♔xc6 (the king is brave, and correctly so) 13 ♖xa8 ♗xc4 14 ♔xa7 ♙e6 15 ♖b6 ♗a6 16 ♖b1 ♗xa7 and despite the temporary danger to his king, Black will go on to win with the two pieces against the rook.

10... ♗b4

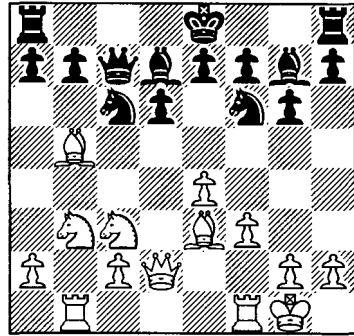
It's always good to escape from enemy territory with a gain of tempo.

11 ♙b5

White attempts to justify the pawn loss by trapping the queen.

If 11 ♙b3 then 11... ♖xd4 12 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 13 ♙xd4 ♙d7 with a clear pawn advantage for Black.

11... ♙d7 12 ♖ab1 ♗a5



Black's queen has finished her 'tour of duty'. White's position is damaged whereas Black's is completely solid. One of the reasons I have such faith in the Sniper is that Black's pawn structure is so strong, but even more importantly Black more often than not has an additional central pawn.

14 g4 ♖e5 15 g5 ♖h5

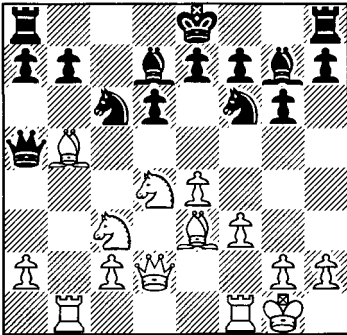
In Dragon positions, responding to g5 with ... ♖h5 is highly favourable if the knight cannot be easily dislodged by a white knight or bishop.

16 ♖d5 ♗c8

A nice observation here is that the black king still defends e7. As I've mentioned before, it is always a good policy to castle kingside in the Sniper, but only when necessary and never automatically. To a Sniper player this should be as important a factor as the fight for the centre.

17 ♖d4 e6

Weakening the d6-pawn/square in this manner is justified here. It has a dramatic central impact, the knights attacking value is reduced and it will

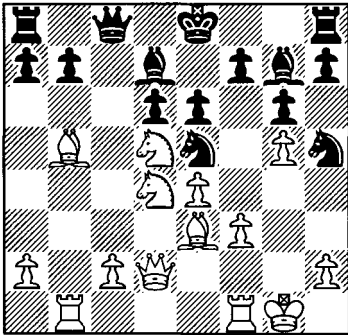


Black's pawn at b7 can be easily protected; therefore White must find another idea. However, I see no easy plan for White here that justifies being a central pawn down and also having weaker queenside pawns.

13 ♖b3 ♗c7

The Sniper

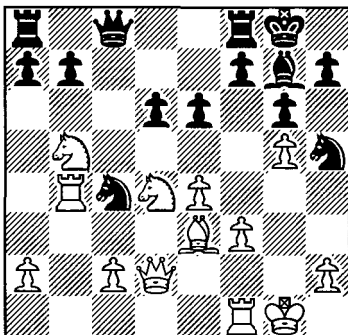
take considerable effort to organize an attack on d6. White attacks that involve retreating the d5-knight can be easily parried and leave White's pieces entrenched in their own territory, hardly the type of play required to justify a pawn (and pawn structure) sacrifice. This extra central pawn will provide a number of useful functions throughout this book.



18 ♖c3 0-0

It is now necessary to allow the kingside rook to be ready to participate.

19 ♜b4 ♙xb5 **20** ♖cxb5 ♜c4



Using the c-file with the queen can

be just as effective as controlling it with the rooks.

21 ♛d3 ♜xe3 **22** ♛xe3 ♛c5

The queen returns to the centre with tempo, allowing a consolidation of Black's advantages.

23 c3 a6 **24** ♜a3 ♜f4

A nice move that activates the passive knight.

25 ♛xf4 ♙xd4+ **26** ♚h1

If 26 ♜xd4 e5! and again the central thrust wins. My experience of the Sniper is that these timely thrusts can cause chaos in the White camp.

26... ♙e3 **27** ♛g4 a5

The knight will soon be lost.

28 ♜b3 a4 0-1

This game showed how solid the Black pawn structure is. Even when White gets a lot of activity, it is still very difficult to turn that activity into something more tangible. The cheeky pawn raid for Black at b2 was a complete success.

Magnus Carlsen's Sicilian Dragon

Although Carlsen's approach is not my Sniper recommendation, I'm presenting a section on how Magnus plays the Dragon; not just to learn how this super-talent plays, but also to let us share a part of his phenomenal rise. There are also some variations of the Sicilian Dragon covered here that are very useful for Sniper practitioners.

Of course many will prefer Magnus's approach with the Sicilian Dragon over my Sniper recommenda-

tions. I would argue that mine are better but readers can form their own opinion on that. It would be the highest honour for me and the Sniper if Magnus did adopt it as a means of arriving at the Sicilian Dragon, but only time will tell on that one ... fingers crossed!

In this first game we will see Carlsen deal with the early 10 ♗b3 move that has become popular of late.

Game 6
V.Anand-M.Carlsen
Wijk aan Zee 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6
5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♗c6

Carlsen tends to prefer Dragons with ...♗c6 as opposed to other development squares, and I strongly agree that this knight should come to c6. After analysing some of the other trendy Dragons without ...♗c6, I've realized the lack of central pressure enables very good options for White. So ...♗c6 gets my approval, but mainly with delaying ...0-0 because I want to play for the full point. This development has the added bonus of being relatively uncharted, and therefore the resulting positions and assessments are less reliant on memory and more on mid-game chess understanding.

8 ♖d2 0-0

8...♗d7 was covered in Game 3 and is the Sniper recommended way to play.

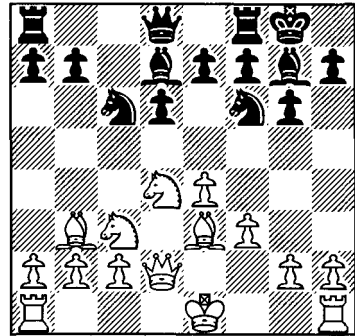
9 ♗c4

9 0-0-0 is covered in Games 10-13. White players have taken this approach with some regularity when facing the up-and-coming genius.

9...♗d7

Of course 9...♖b6 here would have no point, as White can simply play 10 0-0-0.

10 ♗b3



This early bishop retreat, which avoids the Chinese Dragon after 10 0-0-0 ♖b8!?, has gained some popularity lately. Will Carlsen have a good answer against it?

10...♗xd4

Carlsen finds a useful way to exploit White's multiple bishop moves. If the bishop does not control the b5-square then Black can immediately expand on the queenside.

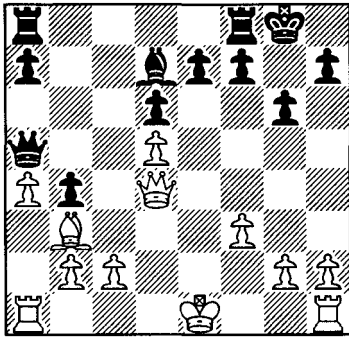
Carlsen has also played the alternative 10...♖c8 (see the next game).

11 ♗xd4 b5 12 a4

Or 12 h4 a5 13 a4 bxa4 14 ♗xa4 e5 with counterplay.

12...b4 13 ♗d5 ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♗xd4 15

♖xd4 ♗a5



Both pawn structures are quite weak and to offset the strong position of the white queen, Black can be happy with the better of the bishops and a lead in development.

16 0-0 ♖ac8 17 ♗fe1 ♗fe8 18 ♔h1 ♗c5
19 ♗h4 ½-½

Carlsen proved a simple way to reach equality against 10 ♗b3 by changing tack and exchanging on d4. Black's can look forward to a quick ...e5 and a series of exchanges leading to a drawish position. Black's advantageous central pawn mass will be offset by his slightly more exposed king, and just a queen and rook each is notoriously drawish.

Game 7
T.Radjabov-M.Carlsen
Baku 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2
0-0 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 ♗b3 ♖c8 11 h4

Another theoretically important moment. 11 0-0-0 ♘e5 12 ♗b1 is an approach which has caused Black some problems. Games 8-9 show how Carlsen has dealt with this.

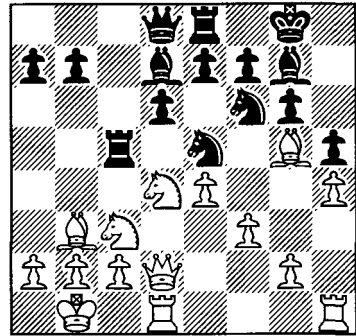
11...h5

We can see that Carlsen's setup is similar to my recommendation, with the exception that I promote delaying ...0-0 as long as safely possible.

12 0-0-0 ♘e5 13 ♗g5 ♖c5

Introduced by Sosonko in 1977, the rook on the fourth rank helps out both in defence and attack. This quickly became the main line.

14 ♗b1!? ♗e8!



Black does better to think about defensive measures first. The text move overprotects e7 and waits for the action to arrive.

15 g4?!

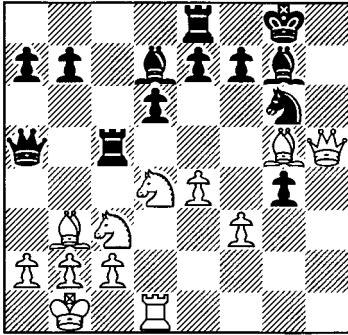
It was reported by Stohl that Radjabov confessed after the game he got confused and mixed up the sharp lines.

15 ♗he1 ♗a5 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘d5 ♗xd2 20 ♘xf6+ exf6 21 ♖xd2 f5, as played in

A.Beliavsky-K.Georgiev, Wijk aan Zee 1985, leads to equality.

Better is 15 ♗h6!? ♖c4 16 ♗xc4 ♜xc4 17 ♗xg7 ♙xg7 18 ♖d5 and we transpose to Games 8-9, albeit with one extra move from both sides.

15...hxg4 16 h5 ♖xh5 17 ♜xh5 gxh5 18 ♗h2 ♖g6 19 ♗xh5 ♗a5!?



20 f4

The best way to defend the bishop.

20...♜xg5

20...♜xc3?! is thematic but 21 bxc3 ♗xc3 22 ♗xf7+ ♙xf7 23 f5 gives White the attack and some advantage.

21 fxg5 e6 22 ♖f5?!

A mistake – White is in no position to make this sacrifice and his demise can be specifically attributed to this overzealous attack. 22 ♗xg4 would have been wiser.

22...exf5 23 ♗xg6 ♗e6 24 ♗h5 fxe4 25 ♜f1 ♗e5 26 ♜xf7 ♗xb3 27 axb3 g3 28 ♙a2 ♖f8 29 ♜xf8+ ♙xf8 30 ♗g4 e3 31 g6 e2?

A surprising error by Carlsen which could have allowed White to escape with a draw.

32 ♗f3+?

32 ♗d7! would have forced a draw by using attacking threats on the light squares at c8, b7, f7 and h7.

32...♙e8 33 ♗f7+ ♙d8 34 ♗g8+ ♙d7 35 ♗f7+ ♗e7 36 ♗f5+ ♙d8 37 ♗a5+ b6 38 ♗d5 e1♗ 39 ♗a8+ ♙d7 40 ♗b7+ ♙e8 0-1

The mainline Dragon, with some quality defensive moves from Magnus, brings home the full point against another really strong prodigy.

The following two games will feature another main line for Carlsen, where he plays an interesting ...e5 move that leads to drawish positions. Carlsen is effectively drawing with this style, and to draw with Black against the likes of Karjakin and Leko is an excellent achievement. However, I cannot recommend this approach to non-grandmasters because it lacks fun and complications.

Game 8

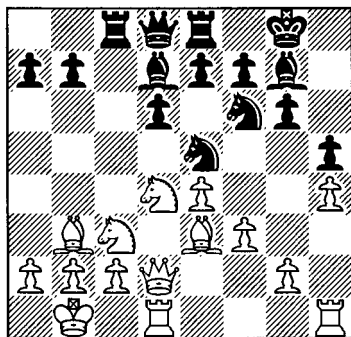
S.Karjakin-M.Carlsen

FIDE Grand Prix, Baku 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7

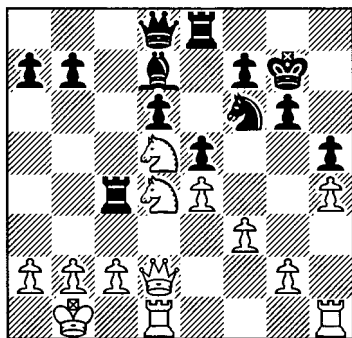
SMOT: Again please take a moment to appreciate how the Pure Sniper move order would have been played to reach this position.

7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 ♗b3 ♜c8 11 0-0-0 ♖e5 12 ♙b1 ♜e8 13 h4 h5



This important defensive move prevents what I call 'zero development' by the h1-rook – in other words, the rook is developed without moving when the h-file is opened.

14 ♖h6 ♘c4 15 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 16 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 17 ♘d5 e5



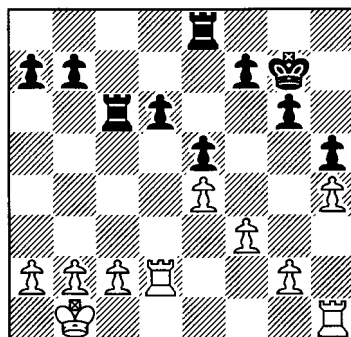
Fighting back in the centre. Carlsen will often deploy his e-pawn on this square in the Sicilian Dragon, and I therefore suggest it should become a candidate idea for all Sniper players.

18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘e2 ♖c6

Carlsen is very solid despite the backward d-pawn weakness. Not exactly the type of position Black wants,

but it's solid enough for a draw.

20 ♘c3 ♖e6 21 ♘d5 ♖xd5 22 ♗xd5 ♗f4 23 ♗d2 ♗xd2 24 ♖xd2



24...f5

This position is a near certain draw at the top level. However, for lesser players, rook and pawn endings have twists and turns that can see the advantage swing to and fro like a pendulum.

25 ♖e1 ♗f6 26 c3 ♖e6 27 ♗c2 fxe4 28 ♖xe4 ♖ec8 29 ♘d3 b5 30 a4 a6 31 axb5 axb5 32 ♖b4 ♖c5 33 ♖e2 ♖d5+ 34 ♗c2 ♖c4 35 ♗b3 ♖xb4+ 36 ♗xb4 ♗d7 37 b3 ♗c6 38 ♖a2 ♗b6 39 ♖e2 ♖d1 40 f4 exf4 41 ♖e6 ♗c6 42 ♖xg6 ♖h1 43 c4 bxc4 44 bxc4 ♖xh4 45 ♖g5 ♖g4 46 ♖xh5 ♖xg2 47 ♖f5 ♖f2 48 ♗c3 f3 49 ♗d4 ♖f1 50 ♗e3 ♖a1 51 ♗xf3 ♖f1+ 52 ♗e4 ♖xf5 53 ♗xf5 ♗c5 54 ♗e6 ♗xc4 55 ♗xd6 1/2-1/2

Carlsen is quite happy to draw with his Sicilian Dragon, and an important feature is his willingness to accept a backward d-pawn by playing 17...e5.

He does exactly the same in the following game, which was played a month later, and again he finds an easy route to drawing with Black.

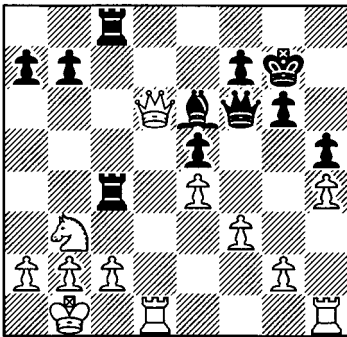
Game 9

P.Leko- M.Carlsen
1st matchgame,
Miskolc (rapid) 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♖f6
5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♚d2
0-0 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♜c8 11 ♗b3
♘e5 12 ♖b1 ♜e8 13 h4 h5 14 ♗h6 ♖c4
15 ♗xc4 ♜xc4 16 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 17 ♖d5
e5 18 ♖xf6 ♚xf6 19 ♖b3

Leko chooses a different retreat to
Karjakin.

19...♜ec8 20 ♚xd6 ♗e6



I was surprised to find that this d6-pawn sacrifice is quite viable. In my opinion, Black has enough for the pawn, and I could recommend this way of playing the Dragon if you are aiming for a draw.

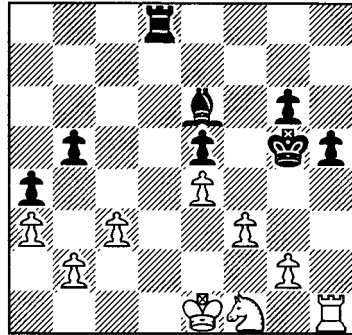
21 c3 b5 22 ♚d2

Black's initiative ensures a massive head start in the race to open a file on each other's king. Is this worth a pawn? Magnus seems to think so.

22...a5!? 23 ♚g5

23 ♘xa5! would have finished Carlsen off. For example, 23...♜a4 24 ♖b3 b4 (or 24...♜ca8 25 ♚g5 ♜xa2 26 ♚xf6+ ♖xf6 27 ♖c5 and the endgame is excellent for White) 25 cxb4 ♜xa2 26 ♖xa2 ♜a8+ 27 ♖b1 ♗xb3 28 ♚e3 ♗xd1 29 ♜xd1 ♚xh4 is good for White.

23...♚xg5 24 hxg5 a4 25 ♖d2 ♜c7 26 a3 ♜d7 27 ♖c1 f6 28 gxf6+ ♖xf6 29 ♖f1 ♜xd1+ 30 ♖xd1 ♜d8+ 31 ♖e1 ♖g5



Black's active king and control of the only open file compensate for the pawn deficit.

32 g3 ♜d3 33 ♖d2 ♗c4 34 ♖xc4 bxc4
35 ♖e2 ♜d6 36 ♜h2 ½-½

In the last few games we will see Carlsen's approach to handling White's 9 0-0-0 as opposed to 9 ♗c4.

Game 10

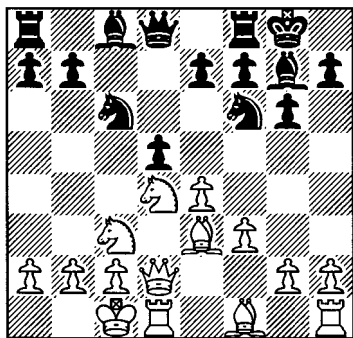
V.Ivanchuk-M.Carlsen
1st matchgame,
Leon (rapid) 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♖f6

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5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♚d2
0-0 9 0-0-0

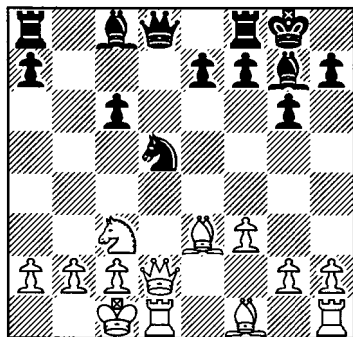
Ivanchuk decides against 9 ♙c4 and Carlsen heads for Konstantinov's 9...d5. 9...d5



10 exd5

10 ♚e1 is examined in Game 12, and 10 ♖b1 in Game 13.

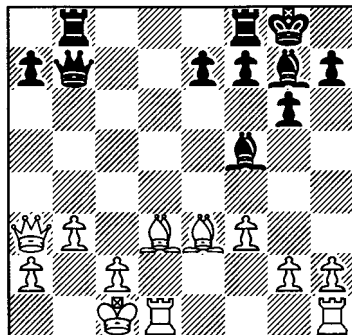
10...♗xd5 11 ♗xc6 bxc6



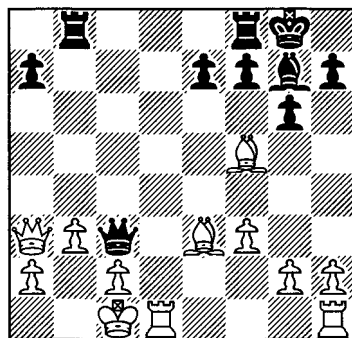
12 ♙d4

The alternative 12 ♗xd5 runs into problems in the forthcoming variation. Watch out for 17...♚c6! and then 18...♚c3!, which are important moves that could justify White's decision not to play this way: 12...cxd5 13 ♚xd5 ♚c7

14 ♚c5 ♚b7 15 ♚a3 ♙f5 16 ♙d3 (the following sequence by Black will probably put this move to sleep) 16...♖ab8 17 b3



17...♚c6!! (a star Sniper move which ensures an excellent position for Black) 18 ♙xf5 ♚c3!



This 'in-between move' tactic puts an end to this as a theoretical contest as White is now struggling for equality: 19 ♙d3 ♖bc8!! (it may appear that Black is just a piece down but in fact White has a lost position!) 20 ♚a4 ♖fd8! (with the simple idea of removing the c2 defender by ...♖xd3) 21 b4 ♖xd3! 22 ♖xd3 ♚a1+!! 23 ♖d2 ♚xh1 24

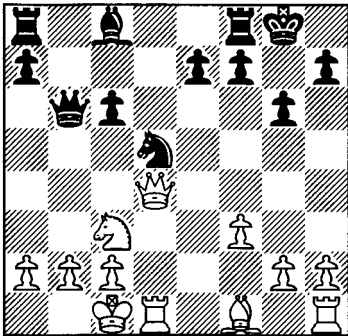
♖xa7 ♖xg2+ 25 ♙f2 e5 26 a4 e4 27 fxe4 ♙h6+ 28 ♚d1 ♖g4+ 29 ♚e1 ♖xe4+ and Black wins easily.

12...♙xd4

12...e5 is the most usual move, but 12...♙xd4 seems to be a plausible alternative. This is one of the very few times when the Sniper bishop is exchanged by Black and he gets no 'little advantages'. However, the position is still completely level. Although the kingside is weakened, Black's coming initiative with ...♖b6 neutralizes any attack.

13 ♖xd4 ♖b6

This seems to head for a level end-game.



14 ♖a4

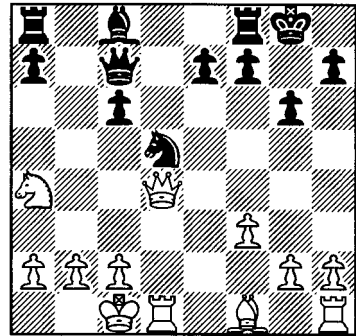
Alternatively:

a) 14 ♙c4 is covered in the next game.

b) 14 ♖xd5 cxd5 15 h4 (15 ♖xb6 axb6 is equal) 15...h5 (or 15...♖xd4 16 ♙xd4 e6 17 h5 g5 18 h6 ♙d8 19 ♙d3 e5 20 ♖a4 ♙b7 when Black's better centre enables equality) 16 ♖xd5 ♙e6 17 ♖d4 ♖c7 18 ♙d3 ♙ad8 19 ♖b4 ♙xa2 20 b3

♙xb3 21 ♖xb3 ♖f4+ 22 ♙d2 ♙d4 23 g3 ♖xg3 24 c3 ♙d7 25 ♖a4 ♙c7 26 ♖d4 ♙fc8 27 c4 ♖xf3 28 ♙e1 ♖h3 29 ♙f1 ♖a3+ and Black stands better.

14...♖c7



Carlsen avoids an endgame situation with a similar assessment to the text – tiny advantage for Black due to the better centralized knight.

15 ♙c4 ♙d8

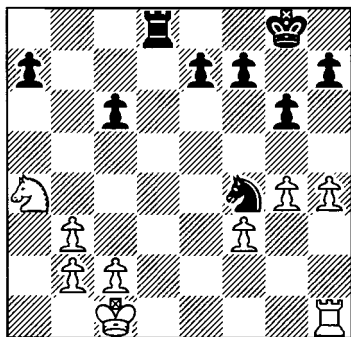
The position is pretty balanced, although I would be quite happy to try and win here with Black.

16 ♙b3 ♙f5 17 g4 ♖f4

Black takes advantage of the knight on the rim and takes over the initiative.

18 ♖e3 ♙e6 19 h4 ♙xb3 20 axb3 ♖g2 21 ♙xd8+ ♙xd8 22 ♖e4 ♖f4+ 23 ♖xf4 ♖xf4

Black has a tiny advantage but a draw is the likely outcome. The Dragon is often associated with wild tactical complications, but in Magnus's hands it seems like a nice drawing method against his 2700 opponents. Magnus seems happy to do this and then up his rating when he has the white pieces.



24 ♖c3 h5 25 ♜e1 hxg4 26 fxg4 ♘e6 27
 ♘e4 ♘g7 28 b4 ♜h8 29 ♘g5 ♘xg5 30
 hxg5 e6 31 ♜e4 ♜b8 32 ♜c4 ♜b5 33
 ♜xc6 ♜xb4 34 c4 a5 35 ♚b1 e5 36 ♜c5
 e4 37 ♜xa5 ♜xc4 38 ♜e5 e3 39 ♜xe3
 ♜xg4 40 ♜e5 f5 41 gxf6+ ♚xf6 42 ♜e8
 g5 43 ♚c2 ♜f4 44 ♜f8+ ♚e5 45 ♜xf4
 ♚xf4 46 b4 g4 47 b5 ♚e5 48 b6 ♚d6 49
 b7 ♚c7 50 b8♚+ ♚xb8 51 ♚d3 ½-½

In the next game, against the same opponent in the same match, Carlsen again heads for a drawish ending but overpresses and surprisingly loses.

Game 11
V. Ivanchuk-M. Carlsen
 3rd matchgame,
 Leon (rapid) 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♚e3 ♚g7

SMOT: There will be plenty of Pure Sniper move orders in later chapters. For now be aware this can come from a Sniper move order.

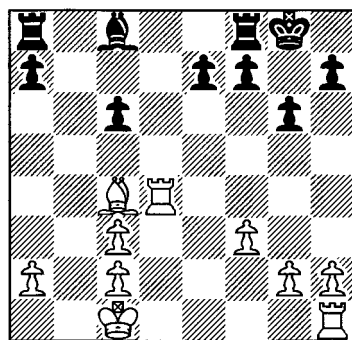
7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♚d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5
 ♘xd5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♚d4 ♚xd4 13
 ♚xd4 ♚b6 14 ♚c4

Ivanchuk shows his improvement over the previous game versus Carlsen, but although he goes on to win the game this position is completely balanced.

14...♚xd4

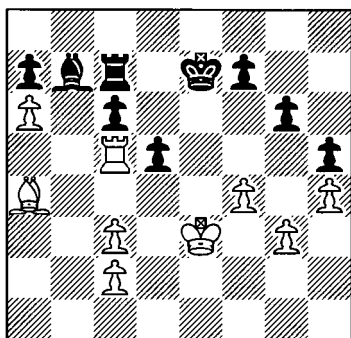
Once again Carlsen is happy to exchange queen and enter a drawish ending.

15 ♜xd4 ♘xc3 16 bxc3



The ending is completely level, and this game should really have finished in a draw. It is interesting to watch Magnus overstretch at the thought of a draw with Black, even versus a 2746-rated player.

16...♜b8 17 ♜e1 ♜b7 18 ♜e5 ♜c7 19 a4
 ♚g7 20 a5 ♚f6 21 ♜c5 e6 22 h4 h6 23
 f4 h5 24 ♚d2 ♚e7 25 ♚e3 ♜d8 26 g3
 ♜d6 27 ♚d3 ♜dd7 28 ♚d2 ♜d6 29 ♚e3
 ♜dd7 30 ♜d3 ♜d6 31 ♚e4 ♜dd7 32 ♚f3
 ♜d6 33 ♚e3 ♜dd7 34 ♚b3 ♜d6 35 ♚a4
 ♚a6 36 ♜d4 ♚f1 37 ♚f2 ♚a6 38 ♚f3
 ♚b7 39 ♚e3 ♜d5 40 ♜dxd5 exd5 41 a6



Game 12

P.Leko-M.Carlsen
5th matchgame,
Miskolc (rapid) 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♖f6
5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♚d2
0-0-0 0-0-0 d5 10 ♚e1

41... ♙xa6

Black could play 41... ♙a8!? 42 ♗d4 ♗d6 43 c4 ♖e7 44 cxd5 cxd5 45 ♖c8 ♖e4+ 46 ♗d3 ♖xa4 47 ♖xa8 ♖xa6, with an extra pawn. This variation should put 14 ♙c4 under a cloud and confirm my opinion that White has no advantage in this line.

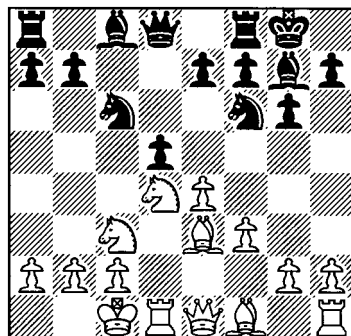
42 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 43 ♙xc6 ♗d6 44 ♙e8 ♙c4

44... ♗e7 45 ♙a4 ♗d6 46 ♗d4 with a level ending.

45 ♗d4 a5 46 ♙a4 f6 47 ♗e3 ♗e7 48 ♗d2 ♗e6 49 ♗e3 ♗e7 50 ♙c6 ♗d6 51 ♙e8 ♗e6 52 ♙xg6 a4 53 ♗d2 ♙e2 54 ♗c1 a3 55 ♗b1 d4 56 cxd4 ♗d5 57 c3 ♗c4 58 ♗a2 ♗xc3 59 d5 ♙c4+ 60 ♗xa3 ♙xd5 61 ♙xh5 ♙e4 62 ♙f7 ♗d4 63 h5 1-0

Carlsen misplayed the ending and suffered a loss from a drawn position, but White will need something better than 10 exd5 to get some advantage in this line.

The next game will show Carlsen's handling of 10 ♚e1.



This peculiar queen retreat has the virtue of uncovering an X-ray attack on the queen with the d1-rook.

10...e5

The alternative is 10...e6!? and now:

a) 11 exd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗xd5 exd5 is fine for Black. He can look forward to counterplay on the e-file in this favourable 'Isolated Queen's Pawn' (IQP) position.

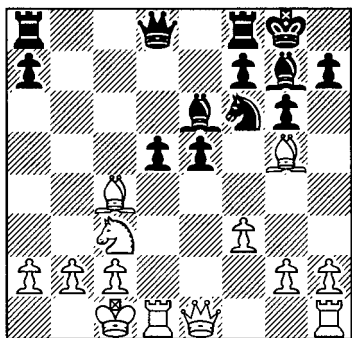
b) 11 ♗b1 (in my early development of understanding complex middle-games I learned something very useful from Kasparov's games – he very often commenced an aggressive attack after a king move such as the one seen here) 11... ♚e7! steps out of the line of fire from the d1-rook and safely prepares

The Sniper

...e5, and taking on e4 may also become viable for Black. For example, 12 g4 dxe4 13 g5 d5 14 dxe4 dxe3 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 Wxe3 Bb8 with equal chances, as the superb knight is offset by the radiance of the Sniper bishop.

c) 11 h4 e5 (many games have gone down the complications of 11...Wc7 12 h5) 12 dxc6 bxc6 13 exd5 cxd5 14 g5 e6 15 e4 gives a nagging edge.

11 dxc6 bxc6 12 exd5 cxd5 13 g5 e6 14 e4



14...Wc7 15 e4xf6 dxc4 16 e4xg7 c4xg7 17 d5 e4xd5 18 d5xd8

With most of the dynamism removed, winning chances for either side are diminished.

18...Wfe8 19 Wc3 c4g8 20 Wa5 We7 21 Be1 Wh4 22 dxe5 Bxe5 23 Wxe5 Bd8 24 h3 c3 25 Wxc3 Wg5+ 26 f4 Wxg2 27 b3 Wf2 28 Be4 Wg2 29 Bc4 Wd5 30 c2 Wf5 31 a4 h5 32 We3 a6 33 Bc5 Wf6+ 34 We5 c4g7 35 Wxf6+ c4xf6 36 Bc4 c5 37 b4 f6 38 c3 g5 39 fxg5 fxg5 40 Bc7 Bg8 41 Bh7 h4 42 b5 axb5 43 axb5 c4f4 44 Bd7 g4 45 hxg4 h3 46 Bh7 c4xg4 47 c4b4 c4g3 48 c4 Bg6 49

ca5 Bg5 50 cb4 Bg6 51 Bxh3+ cxh3 52 c5 Bg4+ 53 ca5 Bc4 54 cb6 cg4 55 c6 cf5 56 cd5 Bc1 57 b6 Bd1+ 58 c6 ce6 59 b7 Bb1 60 cc7 cd5 61 c6 Bb2 62 cd7 Bb6 63 c7 Bxb7 64 cd8 Bxc7 1/2-1/2

In the final game of this section, Carlsen shows a very creative way of dealing with 10 cb1.

Game 13

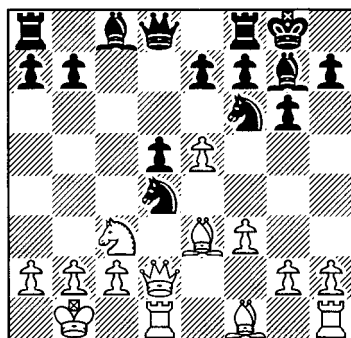
N.Short-M.Carlsen

London Chess Classic 2009

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 c3 g6 6 e3 eg7 7 f3 c6 8 Wd2 0-0 9 0-0-0 d5 10 cb1

Short's attempt to improve over other 10th moves that Magnus has easily neutralized.

10...dxd4 11 e5



This surprising in-between move suddenly requires some calculation. Magnus chooses to pressure the e3-bishop.

11...♗f5 12 exf6 exf6

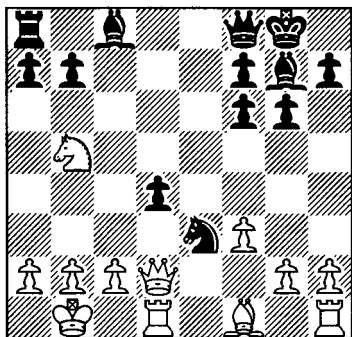
Ambitious play from Magnus: he accepts a terrible pawn weakness at d5 in return for dynamic counterplay.

13 ♖c5 d4

Another surprising move, as Magnus offers ‘the exchange’. Short is happy with the extra material.

14 ♖xf8 ♗xf8 15 ♖b5 ♗e3

Black has full compensation for the two units sacrificed. The initiative, an excellent placement for the knight and the potential pressure from the Sniper bishop offer superb compensation and a lot more fun. If this is the best White can get from playing 10 ♖b1, then it has to join the potato peelings on the compost heap.



16 ♖c1 ♖h6!

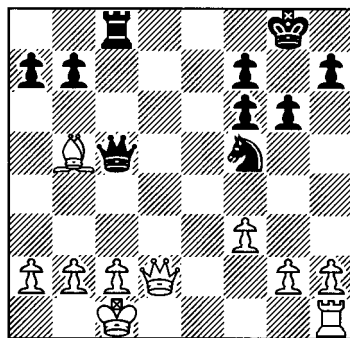
The Sniper bishop shows its versatility and changes its line of sight, eyeing up the c1-rook.

17 ♗xd4 ♗f5 18 ♗c3 ♖xc1 19 ♖xc1 ♖d7

Black secures a small advantage. A slight lead in development, a safer king in the short and long-term, and pres-

sure on the b5-knight weave together in order to help make Black’s position a bit more pleasant.

20 ♖d3 ♖c8 21 ♗d2 ♖xb5 22 ♖xb5 ♗c5



23 ♖d3 ♗e3 24 ♖e1 ♖e8 25 ♗f2 f5

25...♖e5!? 26 c3 f5 27 ♖e2 ♖e6 28 f4 continues to pose White problems.

26 f4 ♗d4 27 g3 ♖e6 28 ♗d2 ♗g4 29 h3 ♖xe1+ 30 ♗xe1 ♗f2 31 ♖f1 ♗e4 32 ♖g2 b6 33 c3 ♗d3 34 g4 ♗g3 35 b3 ♗e2+ 36 ♖b2 ♖f8 37 ♖c6 fxc4 38 hxg4 h5 39 gxh5 gxh5 40 a4 a6 41 f5 h4 42 ♖g2 ♗g3 43 f6 ♗d6 44 ♗f2 ♖g8 45 b4 a5 46 bxa5 bxa5 47 ♖c2 ♖h7 48 c4 ♗a3 49 ♖e4+ ♖g8 50 ♗f4 ♗xa4+ 51 ♖d2 ♗xe4+ 52 ♗xe4 ♗a2+ 53 ♖c3 ♗a1+ 54 ♖b3 ♗d1+?

After 54...♗xf6! Black has all the winning chances. In the game Carlsen errs and ends up having to find some accurate moves to draw.

55 ♖b2 ♗h5 56 c5 h3 57 c6 a4 58 ♖a2 ♗d1 59 ♖e8+ ♖h7 60 ♗xf7+ ♖h6 61 c7 ♗c2+ 62 ♖a3 h2 63 ♗g7+ ♖h5 64 ♗h8+ ♖g6 65 ♗g8+ ♖xf6 66 c8 ♗xc8 67 ♗xc8 h1 ♗ 68 ♗a6+ ♖e5 69 ♗b5+

♖d5 70 ♜xa4 ♖xb5+ 71 ♜xb5 ½-½

Magnus made White's 10 ♜b1 look poor. An excellent exchange sacrifice made full use of the weakened e3 square. Except for the final stages Short was never in the game and was lucky to draw.

The Sniper Sacrifice: 4...♗xc3+

Game 14
G.Jones-C.Storey
 British Championship,
 Scarborough 2004

This game will show the value of a good centralized knight over a good bishop, or even over the bishop pair. The damaged pawn structure White has to accept is a result of the Sniper Sacrifice – in other words, the g7-bishop exchanges itself for White's c3-knight. This martyrdom is to ensure the black knights will have good control over the centre and the white bishop operating on the dark squares will not be able to use the a1-h8 diagonal, thus forcing it to a diagonal it is not completely comfortable with.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7

The Sniper hides within its little mound, protected and camouflaged from attack. It will eye up any adversary on the long diagonal and restrict their movements. It will often coordinate a team attack on d4, c3 or b2. This is the nature of the Sniper System.

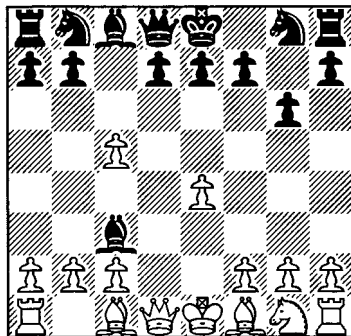
3 ♘c3 c5

We at last come to the Pure Sniper move order.

4 dxc5

This is one of the more interesting positions that can materialize through playing the Pure Sniper move order.

4...♗xc3+



One of the major themes of the Sniper is the willingness of the Sniper bishop to achieve martyrdom! Time after time we will see this exchange, as the Sniper bishop reasons that a number of dynamic factors arrive in Black's favour to justify the trade. A quick snapshot of the diagram position reveals that the c-file could be used for Black's rooks, Black has an extra central pawn for later central thrusts, and the queen will gain some initiative if she moves to a5.

5 bxc3 ♖a5

For those looking for some extra opening camouflage they can try:

a) 5...♘c6!? preventing 6 ♖d4 (see Games 18-19).

b) 5...♘f6!? reaches a novel position

with equal chances, as after 6 e5 ♗e4 7 ♙c4 ♖a5 8 ♗e2 ♗xc5 9 ♖d5 e6 10 ♖f3 ♗c6 Black is fine. To date, there is practically no theory on 5...♗f6.

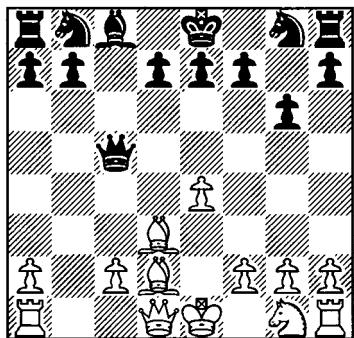
6 ♙d3 ♖xc3+

It's not really the pawns that Black is after; it's more about reducing the central control that these pawns can give.

7 ♙d2

Black has achieved his mini-aim of trying to keep the white bishop off its favoured diagonal, and this gives him time to organize an excellent defence/counterplay setup.

7...♖xc5



8 ♖b1

This aggressive move looks to bring the rook to the centre or kingside via b5, when the position can become completely unclear.

8...d6

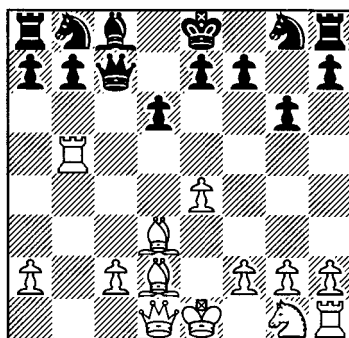
Black is three moves behind in development, and normally this would be enough to give White more than enough compensation for the pawn and damaged pawn structure. How-

ever, White's pieces are developed on non-aggressive squares, and they will have to move a second time to achieve a threatening position.

9 ♖b5

It looks like the rook is actively placed, but it is actually just on a square that will allow Black to catch up on development with a move like ...♙d7 or ...♙a6 in the near future.

9...♖c7



10 ♖a1

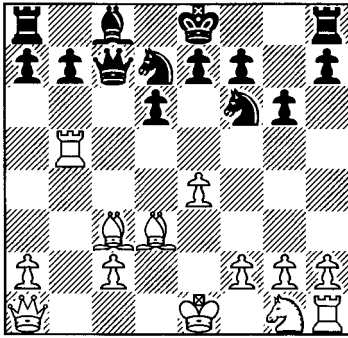
This queen move takes full advantage of the missing Sniper bishop. The question is, are the black knights capable of defending the squares the Sniper has left behind?

10...♗f6 11 ♙c3

11 ♙h6 is examined in the next game.

11...♗bd7

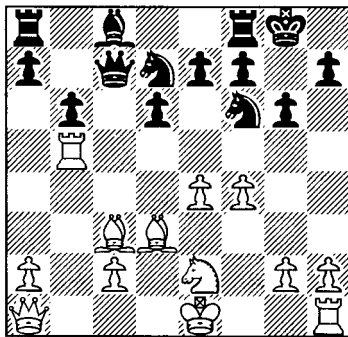
White has claimed the long diagonal but what now? How can he make further progress? The black knights neutralize the pressure and Black can start to play against White's weak pawn structure.



Black may claim a small edge as he has far fewer targets that can be attacked and the better pawn structure. White would like to make use of the long dark diagonal, but Black has more than enough resources to win the battle as the black knights are ready to support key central squares and thus neutralize the power of the two bishops.

The knights' defensive coordination and extra central pawn are what really attracts me to Black's setup. Not only does he have an extra pawn, but White's c2/a2 pawn structure is very weak too.

12 f4 0-0 13 ♖e2 b6



Black angles for some defensive comfort via exchanges with ...♙a6 then capturing on d3.

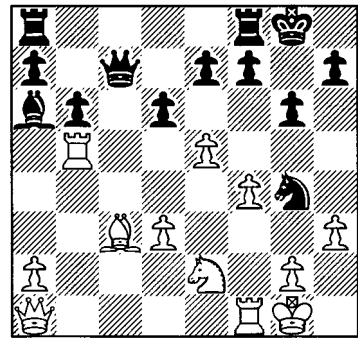
14 0-0 ♖c5

A well-centralized knight is as good as or better than White's excellent c3-bishop.

15 e5

White is playing to force the pace but holes are also developing in his own position.

15... ♗g4 16 h3 ♗xd3 17 cxd3 ♙a6



The in-between move and the in-between idea are the kings of all chess tactics. Always, always, always search for these, especially in Sniper middle-games.

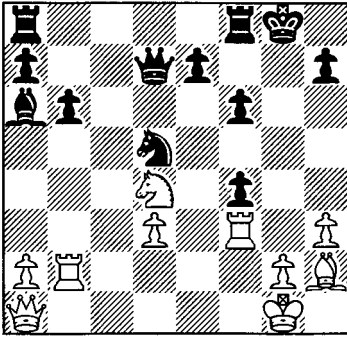
18 ♜b2 ♖e3

The knight enters a hole that was left behind when White invested heavily in the attack with 12 f4.

19 ♜f3 ♗d5 20 exd6 ♙xd6 21 ♙e5 ♙d7 22 f5 f6

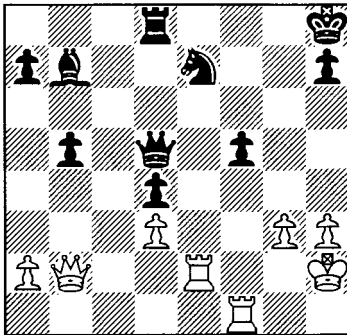
I have so much respect for the ...f6 move. It can throw a spanner in the works of so many White attacks.

23 ♙h2 gxf5 24 ♗d4 f4!



Suppressing the white pieces at the cost of a pawn, but with the resulting exchanges it becomes clear that Black will gain a decisive advantage.

25 ♗xf4 e5 26 ♗h6 exd4 27 ♗xf8 ♖xf8
 28 ♖bf2 ♖c3 29 ♖c1 ♖d5 30 ♖g3+ ♗h8
 31 ♖b2 ♖e7 32 ♖g4 ♖d8 33 ♖a3 f5 34
 ♖h4 ♖e6 35 ♖hf4 b5 36 ♖b2 ♖e1+ 37
 ♖h2 ♖e5 38 g3 ♗b7 39 ♖e2 ♖d5 40
 ♖f1



This position lends much weight to the argument of playing the Pure Sniper. It was inexcusable on my part for not converting it into a full point; although in my defence may I say it was not wise to organize a ‘blind date’

during the national championship!

40...♖g6

40...f4! 41 gxf4 ♖g8 42 ♖g1 ♖xg1 43
 ♗xg1 ♖f5 wins for Black.

41 ♖ef2 f4 42 gxf4 ♖h4 43 ♖e2 ♖g6?!

43...♖g8! 44 ♖e5+ ♖xe5 45 fxe5
 ♗g2 46 e6 ♗xf1 47 e7 ♗xd3 48 ♖f8
 ♗g6 reaches a winning position for Black.

44 ♖g4 ♖g8 45 ♖g5 ♖d6 46 ♖e2 ♖f8
 47 ♖ef2 b4 48 ♖g3 ♖g8 49 ♖g1 ♖e7 50
 ♖h4 ♖xg1 51 ♗xg1 ♖c6 52 ♖e2 ♖f5 53
 ♖g5 ♖h1+? 54 ♖f2 ♖f3+ 55 ♖e1
 ♖g3+?

Talking with your blind date during a game is not recommended!

55...♖h1+! 56 ♖d2 ♖c6 57 ♖xf5
 ♖c3+ 58 ♖d1 ♖a1+ 59 ♖d2 ♖c3+ is a draw.

56 ♖xg3 ♖xg3 57 ♖e8+ ♖g7 58 ♖e7+
 1-0

A painful loss for the author, but nevertheless a major triumph for one of the key Pure Sniper systems of 4...♗xc3+!. White must be very confident in his attacking skills if he is to allow Black to rupture his pawns in this manner, otherwise Sniper players will be very happy to pick up easy points. After reflecting on my loss in this game it made me more determined to prove the Sniper System was 100% theoretically and practically sound so I persevered with it.

Here’s another demonstration in the power of centralized knights over bishops in a Pure Sniper:

Game 15
T.Gavriel-C.Storey
 British Championship
 Torquay 2009

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♖c3 c5

The Pure Sniper.

4 dxc5 ♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♚a5 6 ♗d3

Although in my opinion 6 ♗d3 is not the best move for White to meet this Sniper Sacrifice, it is probably the most aggressive. There may be some way on a 'quantum level' to justify Black's weak dark squares, and if that is true I suspect 6 ♗d3 will be the way for White to prove it. My current assessment of this position is that it is practically better for Black, remembering of course that human beings are not capable of 'quantum-level chess', at least not with any consistency!

6 ♚d4 is covered in the next game.

6...♚xc3+ 7 ♗d2 ♚xc5 8 ♖b1

Of course Tryfon had seen my game against Gawain Jones. He still liked White's position and was happy to play the same moves.

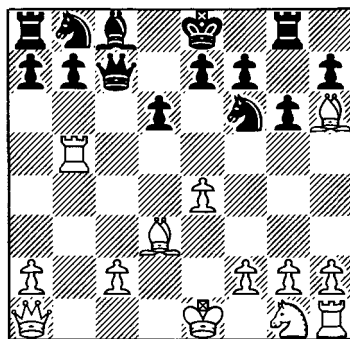
8...d6 9 ♖b5 ♚c7 10 ♚a1 ♖f6 11 ♗h6

Excellent dark-square attacking by Tryfon, but moving the bishop to this offensive square is neglecting central duties. It normally takes three pieces to mount an effective attack on a king.

11...♗g8

This move emphasizes the neglect of the bishop's central responsibilities. Perhaps trapping the bishop with ...g5

and ...♗g6 may become a factor.



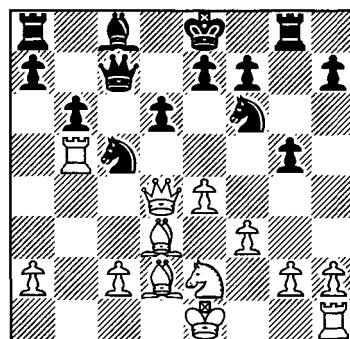
12 ♗d2 ♖bd7 13 ♖e2 ♖c5

The point of the Sniper Sacrifice is revealed with this move: this knight is immune to pawn attacks and is easily better than any white minor piece. It is worth pointing out that a knight may get to this square from d7, a6 or e6 in the Sniper.

14 f3 b6 15 ♚d4

Black must guard against White playing f4 successfully.

15...g5



This deals with the f4 threat and gives life to the g8-rook. Please note the pawn structure around the black king.

16 h3 h5 17 h4 gxh4 18 ♖f2 h3 19 gxh3
 ♗fd7 20 ♖g1 ♖f8

Note here that Black is much better. Bruce Lee had a famous quote that has a parallel here: 'The art of fighting without fighting!' Well, here's my effort: 'The art of castling without castling!'

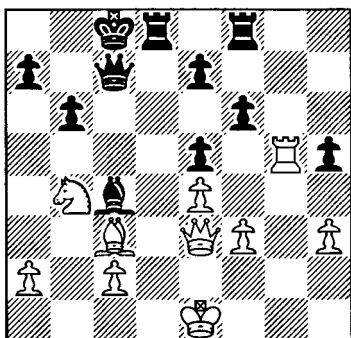
21 ♖g5 ♖e5 22 ♗f4 ♗cxd3+ 23 ♗xd3
 ♙a6

If the rook's position can't be exploited in the opening, it can be used for some initiative-gaining middle-game objective.

24 ♖bxе5 dxe5 25 ♗b4 ♙c4 26 ♖e3
 0-0-0

Another advantage of delaying ...0-0 is that Black can 'teleport' his king to the queenside. An exchange up and with a safer king, Black can also look forward to attacking the weak pawn structure.

27 ♙c3 f6



My favourite move in the Sniper weakens the white bishop's range.

28 ♖xh5 ♖g8 29 ♗d5 ♙xd5 30 exd5
 ♖xd5 0-1

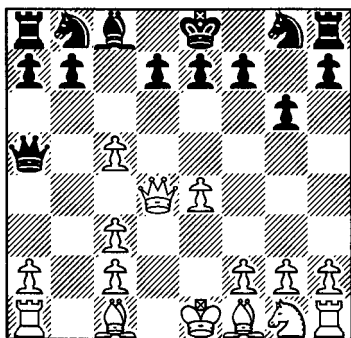
A good demonstration in the dangers of White attacking Black's strong pawn structure. Black's king in the centre was well covered by the unmoved pawns and Black was able to operate effectively on the flanks.

The next game will see a key feature of the Sniper in an area that has had limited theoretical coverage – the 8...b6 pawn sacrifice. It will show the pressure Black gets against White's weak queenside pawn structure and how Black can gain great activity playing in what I would term 'Benko-style' (there are many features akin to the Benko Gambit Accepted). The reader should be aware of the weakness of the b6-pawn and how relatively weak all three white queenside pawns are in terms of compensation.

Game 16
P.Span-K.Van der Weide
(variation)
Dieren 2002

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 ♗c3 c5 4 dxc5
 ♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♖a5 6 ♖d4

A good attempt at refuting Black's play. In fact if it wasn't for the ...b6 pawn sacrifice idea then the whole Sniper system would be busted. It is my opinion that with the ...b6 pawn sacrifice Black is at least equal, and it is this discovery that makes the Sniper extremely viable.



6...dxf6 7 dxd2!?

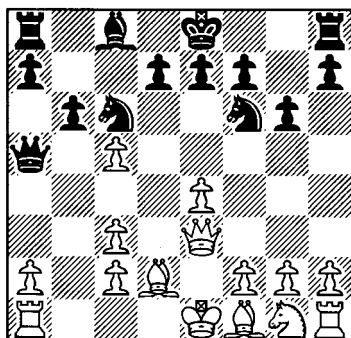
Black must be precise to equalize here. I first encountered 7 dxd2 against Scottish IM Steve Mannion and found it to be quite a tough nut to crack. Thankfully there is a way, otherwise I would not be writing this book!

7 ♖b4 is seen in the next game.

7...dxc6

7...b6 can also be played but it makes sense to get a free development move in first.

8 ♖e3 b6!!



Without going into details too deeply, I will say that this is the only move and it has to be played now, not

for example 8...0-0 and then 9...b6.

9 cxb6 ♜xb6!

I believe this is the move which easily equalizes for Black, and the rest of this game will be replaced by my own analysis.

Black shouldn't fear the endgame after a queen exchange on b6. He gets excellent activity for his rooks down the a- and/or c- files. What then happens is that Black has more space and strong pressure which often translates into winning of one of the pawns. If the first pawn is won then naturally the second pawn will also come under incredible pressure. Then guess what? I think you get the picture.

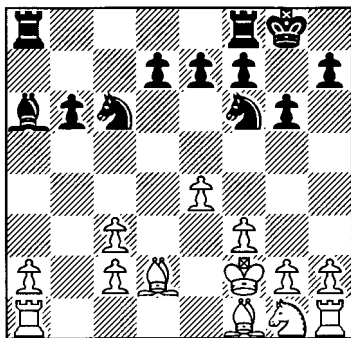
This type of play resembles positions seen in a Benko Gambit, although there are some differences and I would argue it's even better for Black than in the Benko. The Benko was so respected by Kasparov that he never accepted the free pawn on offer. I hope I am putting forward a good argument for the Pure Sniper ...b6 sacrifice here.

The alternative 9...axb6 was played in the Span-Van der Weide game. A quick snapshot shows that Black has sacrificed a pawn for some useful advantages: pressure down the a- and c- files, an extra central pawn and superior development. The game continued 10 dxf3 ♜c5! (again Black seeks the endgame despite being a pawn down) 11 dxd3 dfg4 12 ♖e2 0-0 13 0-0 d6 14 ♜fb1 dge5 15 ♜b5 dxf3+ 16 ♜xf3 de5 17 ♜e3 ♜xe3 18 dxe3 da6 19 ♜xb6

♗xd3 20 cxd3 ♙xd3 21 f3 ♜fc8 22 ♜b7 ♚f8 23 a4 ♜xc3 24 a5 ♙a6 25 ♜a7 and a draw was agreed here.

Back to my analysis, with assistance from *Rybka*.

10 ♜xb6 axb6 11 f3 0-0 12 ♚f2 ♙a6



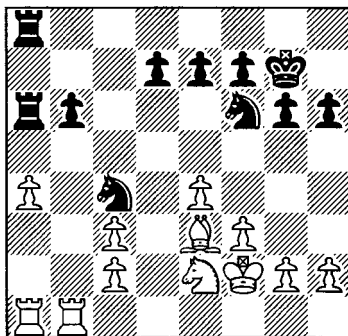
Here my *Rybka* engine claims a small advantage for White, but this is an example of the Dilution Principle. Up to move 34 the best *Rybka* moves, monitored by me, are played by either side, whereupon the assessment changes to small edge for Black. This phenomenon is found frequently in the Benko Gambit Accepted and other openings involving long-lasting pressure or initiative. It's a style of play that Anand – the current world champion – has employed in his own games, so there is hope for humans against the machines!

12...♗e5!? 13 ♙f4 d6 14 ♙d3 ♙e6 15 a4 ♙d7 16 ♗e2 ♙xa4 17 c4 reaches a balanced endgame.

13 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 14 ♗e2 ♜fa8 15 ♜hb1 ♗e5 16 ♙g5 ♚g7 17 a4 h6 18 ♙e3 ♗c4

It is this superb position of Black's

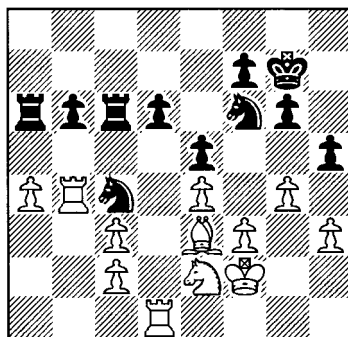
knight on c4, playing against White's poor queenside pawn structure, that justifies the pawn deficit and promises Black full equality.



19 ♜b4 ♜c8

Black must maintain the knight and offer White an option to overstretch.

20 ♜d1 d6 21 ♙d4 e5 22 ♙e3 ♜c6 23 g4 h5 24 h3



24...♜a8 25 ♙c1 hxg4 26 hxg4

It's a level position but there are some attacking prospects for Black if he can organize ...f5 later on.

26...♗e8

The start of the knight's 'tour of duty'.

The Sniper

27 ♖h1 ♜c7 28 ♙g5 ♝a6

28...♞e6!? is also possible.

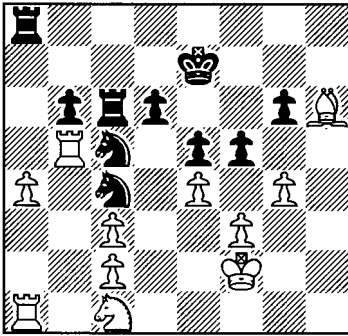
29 ♞b5 ♜c5

The knight gets to its favourite square in the Sniper Sacrifice position where it monitors the centre, especially e4.

30 ♙h6+ ♚g8 31 ♙g5 ♚g7

The king defends the weak dark square f6.

32 ♙h6+ ♚f6 33 ♞a1 ♚e7 34 ♜c1 f5



The Dilution Principle is in full effect: the 'best moves' have been played since 12...♙a6 and Black now has a small advantage – Hooray for the Sniper! This line of analysis shows how well the black knights can influence the position from the c-file and how White's weakened queenside pawns can be pressured.

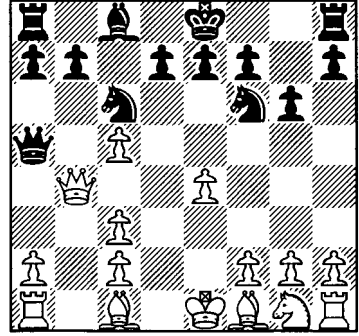
Game 17 C.Desmarais-J.Fang Chelmsford 2001

1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♙g7 3 ♜c3 c5 4 dxc5

♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♚a5

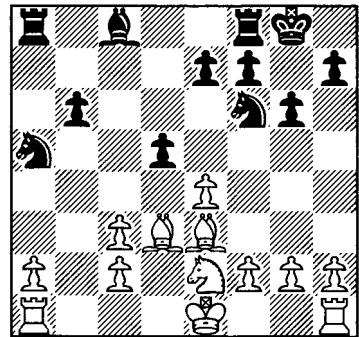
5...♜c6 is a bid to confuse White, creating a modern and unique Sniper position. This is seen in Games 18-19.

6 ♚d4 ♞f6 7 ♚b4 ♜c6!?



Attempting to enter a ...b6 gambit position via this route is also recommended for Black. Again the Dilution Principle will take effect, coming to full fruition in Black's favour some 5-7 moves later.

8 ♚xa5 ♞xa5 9 ♙d3 0-0 10 ♞e2 b6 11 cxb6 axb6 12 ♙e3 d5



Black's pieces will soon all be active and targeting White's weak pawn structure.

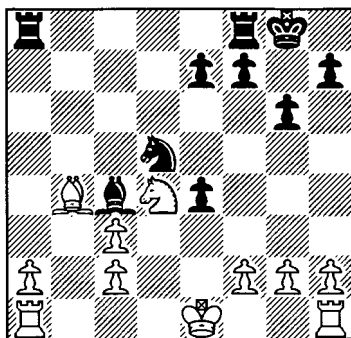
13 ♙xb6 dxe4

Suddenly Black's pressure in the centre and gain of time pass a favourable assessment to him. With the Dilution Principle activated Black is very happy. One of the great advantages of playing the Sniper is that there are many favourable and stealthy Dilution Principle positions.

14 ♙b5 ♙a6!

The trading of the light-squared bishops gives Black great squares for his knights to utilize.

15 ♙xa5 ♙xb5 16 ♙b4 ♘d5 17 ♘d4 ♙c4



Black has a good share of the centre, and White's queenside pawn 'assets' simply suppress their own rooks' activity and are more like sitting ducks.

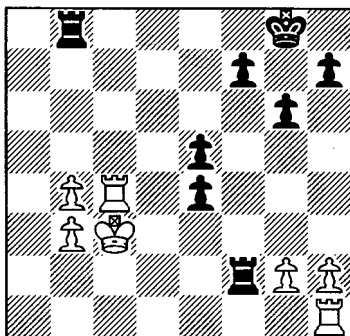
18 a3 ♖ac8

Much better was 18...♖fc8! when both rooks pile on the pressure against the weak pawns.

19 0-0-0 ♘xb4 20 axb4 e5 21 ♘b3 ♙xb3 22 cxb3 ♖xc3+ 23 ♙b2 ♘d3

Black has the better ending and White is struggling to draw.

24 ♖c1 ♖b8 25 ♖c4 ♘d2+ 26 ♙c3 ♖xf2



The seventh rank falls, and Black's control of the centre is still a very relevant factor even in the endgame.

27 ♖xe4 f6 28 ♖c4 ♙f7

It is always important not to have the king imprisoned on the back row.

29 g4 ♖f3+ 30 ♙c2 ♖h3 31 ♖c7+ ♙e6 32 ♘d1 e4

This ensures victory. The black king has cover from the bombardment of the tanks as it moves through the centre and offers support to promoting the pawns.

33 ♖dd7 ♙e5 34 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 35 ♖xh7 ♙f4 36 ♖e7 f5 37 gxf5 gxf5 38 ♙c3 ♙e3 39 ♙c4 f4 40 b5 f3 41 ♙c5 f2 42 ♖f7 ♙e2 0-1

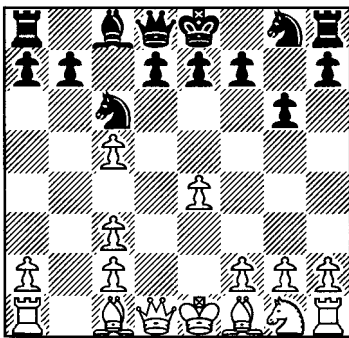
It is often the side whose king first controls the centre in the ending that wins the game, and not the side with the most pawns.

The next two games will show an ingenious way of preventing ♘d4 (by way of 5...♘c6!?) before playing ...♙a5. The first of these emphasizes the im-

portance of playing ...b6 rather than ...d6. Black chooses the latter but gets mauled.

Game 18
R.Mascarinas-U.Adianto
Vung Tau 2000

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♖c3 c5 4 dxc5
 ♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♘c6!?



Preventing ♗d4 with this move is a very interesting and viable alternative to 5...♗a5. The only downside of this move is that it becomes far more difficult for this knight to get to its best square in the Sniper Sacrifice position, which is of course c5.

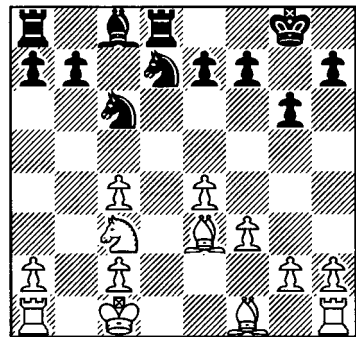
6 ♗e3 ♗a5 7 ♗d2 ♘f6 8 f3 0-0 9 ♘e2
 9 ♗d3 is seen in the next game.
 9...♗d8?!

The X-ray attack on the queen could spell danger for White, but it is much better to play the recommended ...b6 gambit sooner rather than later: 9...b6!
 10 c4 ♗xd2+ 11 ♙xd2 d6

Black is soon struggling, and this

game clearly shows the value of keeping central pawns rather than wing pawns. Translated, this means that Black should always look to exchange the pawns furthest away from the centre (the b6-pawn) rather than ones in the centre (the d6-pawn), as indicated by the Storey Pawn Scale.

12 cxd6 ♗xd6+ 13 ♙c1 ♗d8 14 ♘c3
 ♘d7



This position has similar properties to a Sämisch King's Indian gambit which has proved to be good for Black, but here the b-file is useful for the white rook.

15 ♘d5 ♙g7 16 c5 e6 17 ♘c7 ♗b8 18
 ♘b5 ♘f6 19 ♗b1 ♘e8 20 ♙c4 a6 21
 ♘c3 ♗d7

Black has become cramped, White's extra pawn is useful and all of his pieces have valuable functions when the h1-rook arrives.

22 ♗d1 ♘a5 23 ♙xa6

Under pressure Adianto blunders a pawn. He was surely wishing he had played the ...b6 gambit at this juncture.
 23...e5 24 ♙f1 ♘c6 25 ♘d5 ♙e6 26 a4

♙dxc8 27 ♖b5 ♜f6 28 ♜b6 ♜c7 29 c3
 ♜a5 30 ♜c2 ♜e8 31 ♜d5 ♜cc8 32 ♖e2
 ♜c7 33 g4 h5 34 gxh5 ♜xd5 35 exd5
 ♖f5+ 36 ♜b2 ♖xb1 37 ♜xb1 f5 38 ♜c2
 f4 39 ♖f2 ♜h8 40 h4 ♜xh5 41 c6 ♜c8 42
 ♜b5 ♜xc6 43 ♜xb7+ ♜f6 44 dxc6 ♜xc6
 45 a5 e4 46 ♖d4+ ♜e6 47 fxe4 ♜xh4 48
 ♜b3 g5 49 ♖b5 1-0

This was an instructive game that showed how bad Black's position can become if he does not play the ...b6 gambit early. A 2500+ rated player got into a poor position with no chance of escape.

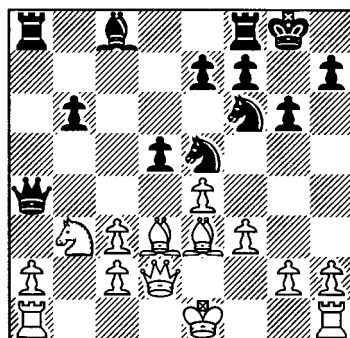
In the next game the same player doesn't make the same mistake.

exchange for pressure down the a- and c-files.

10 cxb6 axb6 11 ♜e2 d5

The ...d5 advance is very frequently played in the Sniper Sacrifice.

12 ♜d4 ♜e5 13 ♜b3 ♜a4



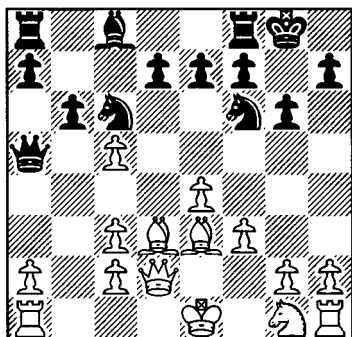
Game 19

Y.Masserey-U.Adianto
 Lausanne 2001

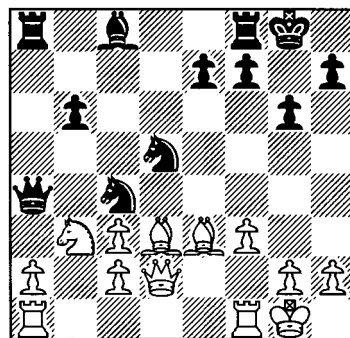
1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♖g7 3 ♜c3 c5 4 dxc5
 ♖xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♜c6!? 6 ♖e3 ♜a5 7 ♜d2
 ♜f6 8 f3 0-0 9 ♖d3 b6

The Dilution Principle from 9...b6 is triggered. Black now has a small advantage: his knights are well placed, as is the queen, all pressuring the centre. White's weaknesses on the queenside will also become irritations for him.

14 exd5 ♜xd5 15 0-0 ♜c4



Again the Dilution Principle position commences. Black offers a pawn in



Although White is strong on the dark squares because of the Sniper Sacrifice, this also means that, relatively

The Sniper

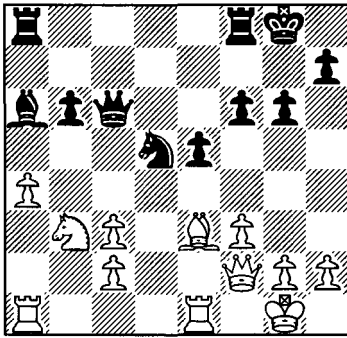
speaking, Black will be stronger on the light squares.

16 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 17 ♔d4 f6

My favourite move appears again. This pawn blunts the white bishop and prepares central expansion with initiative.

18 ♜f2 ♖a6 19 ♜fe1 ♜c6 20 a4 e5 21 ♔e3

I prefer Black's pressure on the light squares to White's on the dark squares.

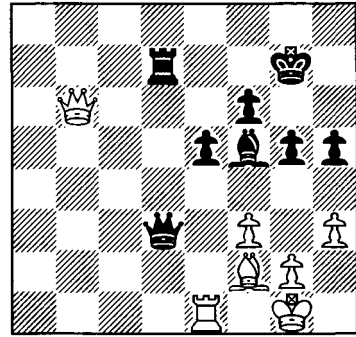


21...♜fc8 22 a5 bxa5 23 ♜xa5 ♖xc3 24 ♖c5 ♔c4 25 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 26 ♜d2 ♖d5 27 ♔f2 ♔e8 28 ♖e4 ♖g7 29 ♖c3 ♖f4 30 ♖e4 ♔d5 31 ♔g3 ♔xe4 32 ♔xf4 ♔f5 33 ♔e3 ♜c7 34 c3 ♜d8 35 ♜b2 ♜d3 36 ♔b6 ♜c6 37 ♔f2 ♜xc3

The Benko-style attack is completed and the queenside pawns are won. The question now is, can Black win this opposite-colour bishop early endgame? Whatever the outcome, the opening has been a complete success for the Sniper Sacrifice.

38 ♜b6 ♜d7 39 ♜a7 ♜c7 40 ♜a3 h5 41 ♜e3 ♜a4 42 ♜b6 ♜d7 43 ♜b8 ♜c2 44 ♜e8 ♜c7 45 ♔e3 ♜c3 46 ♔f2 ♜c6 47

h3 ♔e6 48 ♔e3 ♔f7 49 ♜b8 ♜c3 50 ♔f2 g5 51 ♜b6 ♔g6 52 ♜e3 ♜b2 53 ♜b6 ♜c2 54 ♔e3 ♜d3 55 ♔f2 ♔f5



After some careful approach work Black is on the verge of playing ...g4 which will contribute to a major weakening of the white king.

56 ♜e3 ♜c2 57 ♜c5 ♜b2 58 ♜c1 ♜b3 59 ♜e3 ♜a4 60 ♜c5 g4

The pawn advance arrives and the final attack begins.

61 hxg4 hxg4 62 ♔g3 gxf3 63 gxf3

The effect of 60...g4 becomes apparent: the white king is exposed.

63...♖h7 64 ♖f2 ♜a2+ 65 ♜e2 ♜f7 66 f4 ♜d5 67 ♜c1 ♔g4 68 ♜d2 ♜a7+ 69 ♖g2 ♜e3 70 ♜c7+ ♖h6 71 ♜xd5 ♔f3+ 72 ♖h3 ♜e2

The light squares are fatally weakened and the rook capture is just a distraction.

73 ♜d7 ♔g2+ 74 ♖h2 ♔xd5+ 75 ♖h3 ♔g2+ 76 ♖h2 0-1

A great example to justify the Sniper Sacrifice. This game showed once again the value of ...b6 and the Benko-style pressure against White's

queenside weaknesses. Black's pressure on the light squares was considerably faster than White's pressure on the dark squares.

The next game will see the Pterodactyl take flight! It will show that Ray Keene was a visionary in his unveiling of this incredible idea, and with a few refinements he could have had a dinosaur far superior to even Tyrannosaurus Rex! Keep an eye out for my tweak 12...0-0!!, making Keene's idea completely valid.

Game 20

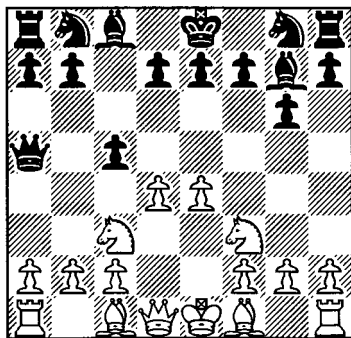
E.Mortensen-R.Keene

Gausdal 1983

1 e4 c5

The Sicilian Sniper move order is played.

2 ♖f3 g6 3 d4 ♗g7 4 ♖c3 ♜a5



A fascinating Sicilian Dragon materializes, as Black has chosen not to capture on d4 thus keeping the central

tension. This line was coined 'The Pterodactyl' by Raymond Keene and Lawrence Day – that is ...g6, ...♗g7, ...c5 and ...♜a5 against the White Sicilian setup. For clarity, and to show that it can be encountered if you are a Sniper practitioner, I will refer to 4...♜a5 as a Sniper Pterodactyl. I think these two guys were way ahead of their time playing this variation.

5 d5

White has two other reasonable tries with 5 ♗e3 or 5 ♗e2:

a) 5 ♗e3 ♖f6 6 ♜d2 cxd4 7 ♖xd4 ♖c6 8 ♖b3 ♜c7 9 ♗e2 d6 10 h4 ♗e6!?! leaves Black with a promising middle-game (10...h5!?! is also playable).

b) 5 ♗e2 is a passive approach that gives Black an easy ride, but 5...♖c6 should be avoided as after 6 d5 ♖d4 7 0-0 ♖xf3+ 8 ♗xf3 ♗e5 9 ♗g5 d6 10 ♜d2 ♖f6 11 ♗f4 ♗xf4 12 ♜xf4 0-0 13 e5 Black will struggle to equalize in the centre. Instead, after the stronger 5...♖f6 White has a choice:

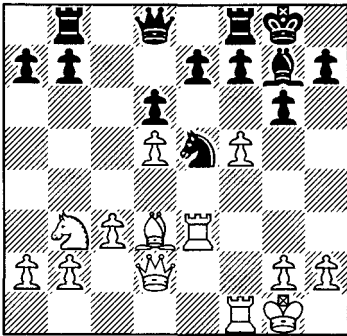
b1) 6 e5 ♖d5 7 ♗d2 cxd4 8 ♖b5 ♜b6 9 0-0 0-0 when Black has the better position with good pressure on the e5-pawn.

b2) 6 0-0 cxd4 7 ♖xd4 ♖c6 8 ♗e3 0-0 9 f4 d6 10 ♖b3 (although this knight move gains a tempo, the net effect is that it is removed from the centre and, more so, from any attack on the black king) 10...♜c7 11 ♜d2 ♗g4 12 ♗d3 ♗e6 13 ♖ae1 ♖ad8 14 f5 ♗d7 15 ♖b5 ♜b8 16 h3 a6 17 ♖c3 b5 with plenty of queenside counterplay and

The Sniper

access to e5 for the black knight which should ensure adequate defensive resources against any kingside assault by White.

Black can also consider 13...♘g4!? (instead of 13...♞ad8), as hunting White's dark-squared bishop is certainly useful: 14 ♘d5 ♚d8 (it is generally a good idea to delay capturing the knight on d5 for a few moves, or simply to play around it for the entire game) 15 c3 ♘xe3 16 ♞xe3 ♞b8 (it is very difficult for White to break through as the g7-bishop becomes a stout defender) 17 f5 ♙xd5 18 exd5 ♘e5.



Black has a simple defence on the dark squares and can also look forward to some initiative with a later ...♚b6+.

5...♙xc3+

Yet another effective Sniper Sacrifice.

6 bxc3 ♘f6!

A gain of a tempo that fully justifies 5...♙xc3+. This is much better than 6...♚xc3+ which allows tremendous activity for White.

7 ♘d2

7 ♙d3 is seen in the next game, and 7 e5 is covered in Game 22.

7...♚xc3

A brave acceptance of the sacrificed pawn. Black's position is dangerous but if the minefield is carefully navigated he will come out with a small advantage. This capture was not recommended one move earlier, but the development of the g8-knight makes it far more attractive for Black.

8 ♞b1 ♘e4

Central pawns in general should be captured and this position is no exception.

9 ♞b3

9 ♙d3 ♘xd2 10 ♙xd2 ♚e5+ is okay for Black.

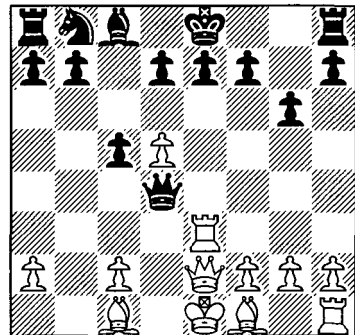
9...♚d4

Black's moves must be precise here otherwise White will gain a quick victory.

10 ♘xe4 ♚xe4+ 11 ♞e3 ♚d4

Black is okay after this move.

12 ♚e2

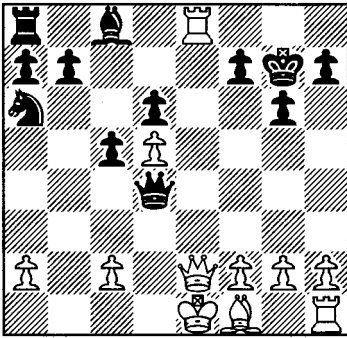


12...e6?!

I cannot recommend this move, and

perhaps the resulting position discouraged players from repeating this Jurassically-named variation.

Well, the Sniper can resurrect this killer bird with 12...0-0!! . Black gives back the e-pawn but enables a rapid catch-up in development and counter-play against the overly developed white rook: 13 ♖xe7 ♘a6 14 ♙h6 d6! (Black has to offer material otherwise he can quickly end up lost) 15 ♙xf8 ♗xf8 16 ♖e8+ ♗g7.



Initially this looks very dangerous for Black, but when we look a little deeper it becomes clear that Black is doing very well on account of a future ...♘c7. For example, 17 ♖e7?! ♖c3+ 18 ♗d1 ♙g4+ 19 f3 ♖xe8 followed by...♙xf3+ is a nice full point for the Sniper; or 17 ♖c4 ♖f6 18 ♖e3 ♘b4 19 a3 b5 20 ♖c3 ♖xc3+ 21 ♖xc3 ♘xd5 22 ♖d3 ♙b7 and again Black is winning. **13 c4 ♖a1?!**

Black is better advised to castle here instead of this provocative gesture: 13...0-0! 14 ♙b2 ♖f4 15 ♙e5?! (15 ♖f3 ♖c7 16 ♖e3 d6 17 ♖h6 is a bit of an

unclear mess) 15...♖g5 16 h4 ♖d8 17 h5 d6 18 ♙c3 (18 hxg6 fxg6 19 ♖hx7!?! is interesting) 18...e5 (Black's 'Bermuda Triangle' central pawn setup locks out the dangerous bishop) 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 f4 ♘d7 21 g3 ♖b6! 22 ♙g2 ♘f6 23 0-0 ♘g4 24 ♖ef3 e4 25 ♖xe4 ♙f5 26 ♖e7 ♖f7 27 ♖e2 ♖c7 28 ♖e1 ♗f8!. Black defended successfully and still has an extra pawn in reserve.

14 ♖c2 ♘a6 15 a3 d6 16 ♙d3 ♙d7

Black is clearly worse here, and I must refer the reader back to 12...0-0!! to keep the Pterodactyl alive.

17 0-0 ♖g7 18 ♙b2 e5 19 f4 f6 20 fxe5 fxe5 21 ♖ef3 0-0-0 22 ♖f7

White's penetration via f7 yields a big advantage.

22...♖h6 23 ♖f2 ♙f5 24 ♙xf5+ gxf5 25 ♖xf5+ ♗b8

White is now clearly winning due to four main reasons: f-file domination, ♙c1 threats, the d6 weakness and the poor position of the a6-knight.

26 ♙c1 ♖h4 27 ♙g5 ♖d4+ 28 ♗h1 ♖c8 29 ♖d7 ♘c7 30 ♙e7 ♗a8 31 ♙xd6 ♖hd8 32 ♖f5 ♘a6 33 ♙xe5 ♖xc4 34 d6 ♘b8 35 ♖b1 ♖d5 36 ♖c7 ♖g8 37 ♖f3 ♖xf3 38 gxf3 ♖xc7 39 dxc7 ♘c6 40 ♖d1 b5 41 ♖d5 ♗b7 42 ♙d6 ♗b6 43 ♖xc5 a5 44 f4 ♘a7 45 ♖h5 1-0

Although the game itself was a mauling for Black, Keene's opening idea was sound. The Sniper can resurrect the Pterodactyl with the incredible new discovery 12...0-0!!, returning the e-pawn and maintaining a small advantage. The Sniper Pterodactyl lives!

The Sniper

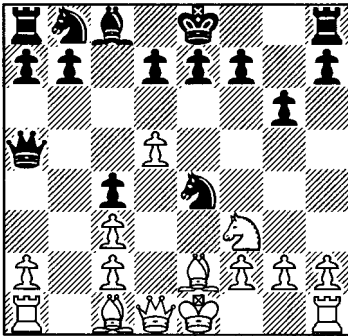
This next game also arises from the Pterodactyl. The Sniper Sacrifice allows Black to win the e4-pawn with a ...c4 tactic and acquire excellent compensation after an exchange sacrifice.

Game 21 V. Atlas-F. Velikhanli Swiss League 1999

1 e4 c5 2 d3 f3 g6 3 d4 g7 4 c3 a5 5 d5 xc3+ 6 bxc3 f6 7 d3 c4

This cute pawn move fully justifies Black's previous play, as a white centre pawn will be captured.

8 e2 e4

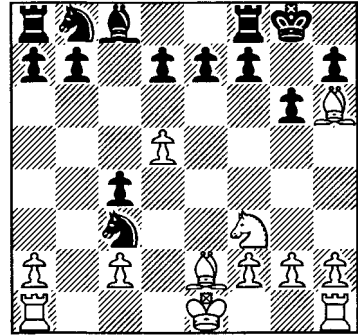


9 d4

This common tactical device of a double attack by White nearly always fails on account of Black's counter-tactics against the weakened c3-pawn.

9...0-0 10 h6 xc3+ 11 xc3 xc3

Black offers the exchange but gains ample compensation in the form of extra central pawns and an active knight – Black's position is preferable.



12 xf8 xf8 13 xc4 b5 14 d2 e4+ 15 e3 f2 16 xf2 bxc4

A draw was agreed on move 73, but I have omitted the remaining moves because it is only the opening that is especially instructive.

The next game will demonstrate an excellent win by one of the pioneers of this system, Lawrence Day, who developed a reputation for playing sound, creative openings and must take credit for resurrecting the Pterodactyl.

Game 22 S. Thavandiran-L. Day Todd Southam Memorial, Toronto 2004

1 e4 c5 2 d3 f3 g6 3 d4 g7 4 c3 a5 5 d5 xc3+ 6 bxc3 f6! 7 e5?

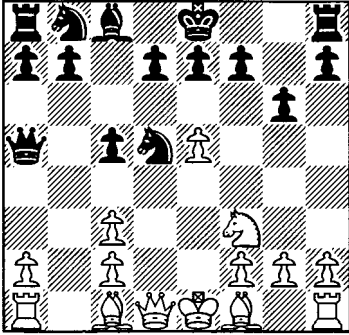
This shows how some White players might forget that their c-pawn may well be captured effectively.

7...dxd5

White may have missed this tactic.

Black simply goes a central pawn up and should go on to win.

tacking bishops is removed.



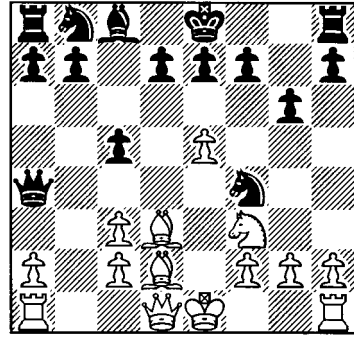
8 ♗d2 ♗a4

Black exploits the weakened a4-square. Thanks to the Sniper Sacrifice, the queen can sit safely and menacingly in the white camp with direct pressure on the weak queenside pawns, which in turn prevents the white pieces from activating successfully.

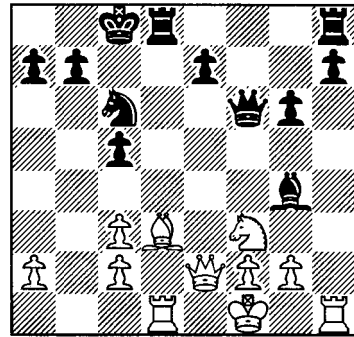
8...♗a3! is a serious alternative, as she also sits here with immunity. For example, 9 c4 ♖c3 (forcing a queen trade, after which White's poor pawn structure remains but Black's weak dark squares are more difficult to take advantage of) 10 ♗c1 ♗xc1+ 11 ♗xc1 ♖a4 12 ♖b1 f6 (my favourite move again appears, and here it confirms Black's small advantage) 13 exf6 exf6 14 ♗d3 ♗f7 15 0-0 ♖e8 and White has no compensation for the pawn deficit.

9 ♗d3 ♖f4

The surprising occupation of f4 ensures the sting is taken out of any White attack, as one of the sharp at-



10 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 11 ♗e2 ♖c6 12 h4 d5 13 exd6 ♗xd6 14 h5 ♗g4 15 hxg6 fxg6 16 ♖d1 ♗f6 17 ♖f1 0-0



Again, the Sniper policy of deferring ...0-0 cancels out the 'zero development' of White's h1-rook.

18 ♖b1 ♖d7 19 ♗e4 ♖d8

19...♖e5! makes Black's life a lot easier.

20 ♗c4 ♖c7?!

20...b6 was better. It is often difficult psychologically to weaken the light squares in this manner with the white bishop slicing them up, but White has no way to progress effectively.

21 ♖xb7+! ♜xb7 22 ♜xg4+ ♜f5 23 ♜xf5+ gxf5 24 ♜xb7 ♖xb7 25 ♖e2 ♖f7 26 ♜h5 e6 27 ♖e3 h6 28 g4? fxg4 29 ♖e5 ♖xe5 30 ♜xe5 h5 31 ♖f4 ♜f8+ 32 ♖g5 ♜xf2 33 ♖xh5 g3 34 ♜g5 ♜f5 0-1

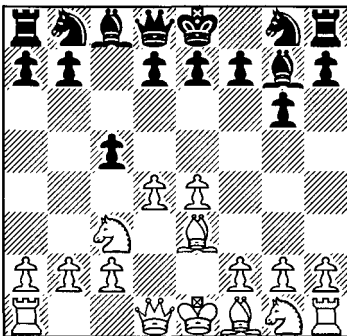
Black gained a clear advantage because of the obvious error 7 e5?. Giving Sniper practitioners a central pawn numerical advantage is generally very unwise, and this is no different in the Pterodactyl variation.

Other Fourth Moves for White

Game 23
D.Graham-C.Storey
Northumberland League 2009

This game will show how delaying central pawn advances can easily acquire points for 'Snypermodernists'.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♖g7 3 ♖c3 c5 4 ♖e3



This has been a very popular way of meeting my Sniper, although I could never really figure out why.

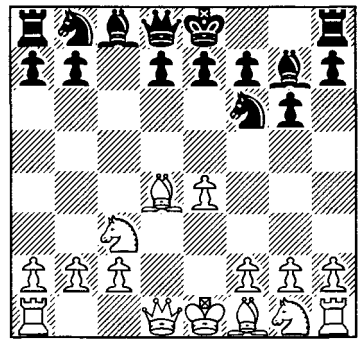
Another option is 4 d5 d6 which

reaches the Schmid Benoni. Here 5 ♖f3 ♖f6 transposes to Sokolov-Topalov (see Game 32), while the aggressive 5 f4 transposes to the f4 Schmid Benoni (see Chapter 4).

4...cxd4

If the complications below are not to the reader's liking, 4...♜a5 is a perfectly good alternative (see the next game).

5 ♖xd4 ♖f6



The bishop's central position must be exploited to gain a useful tempo. If the knight can come to c6 and force a retreat of the bishop, not only will Black have equalized, but in fact he will have wrested the initiative from White.

5...♖xd4!? is an additional weapon in the Sniper arsenal. For example, 6 ♜xd4 ♖f6 7 ♖d5 0-0 8 ♖xf6+ exf6 9 0-0-0 ♖c6 10 ♜d6 ♜e8 11 ♖d3 ♜a5 12 ♖b1 ♜e6 13 ♜d5 ♜b6 14 ♖h3 ♖e7 15 ♜b3 with a messy but level position.

6 e5

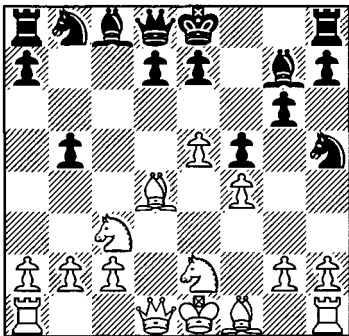
This advance violates the opening principle of not moving a pawn twice. However, here there is some justifica-

tion as the knight makes a second move and is posted to the flank, where not only is its central value reduced, but it is also short of squares. Fortunately, Black has an ace up his sleeve to solve all problems associated with the knight's difficulties on the rim.

6...♗h5 7 ♖d2

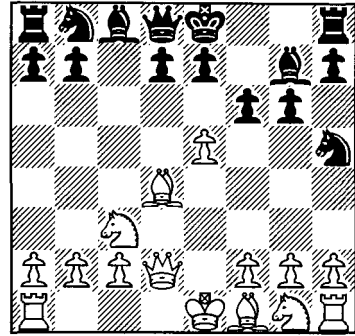
White simply threatens to win the knight and the game with 8 g4. Therefore Black has only one defence (see below).

Another key line is 7 ♖ge2! f5! (the only move; 7...f6?! 8 ♖g3! ♖xg3 9 exf6 and White stands better, or 7...♗h6?! 8 g4 ♖f4 9 ♗e3 ♖xe2 10 ♖xe2 ♗g7 11 f4 ♖c6 12 0-0-0 d6 and White's space advantage gives Black a difficult game) 8 f4 b5!



After spending a lot of time analysing this variation, I've concluded that 8...b5 is the only try to keep Black alive. Following 9 ♖xb5 ♖c6 10 ♖d3 ♖xd4 11 ♖bxd4 ♖a5+ 12 c3 ♗b8 13 b4 ♖d5 Black has some compensation for the pawn in a complicated middlegame.

7...f6!



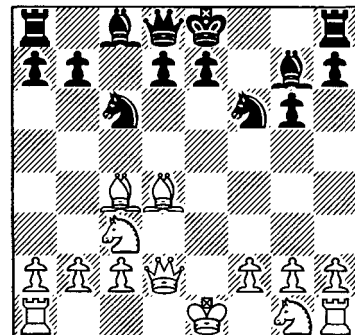
My favourite move appears again.

This time ...f6 is the only move to keep Black on the board, and of course it also offers excellent central counterplay.

8 exf6 ♖xf6 9 ♗c4

This looks like a dangerous problem for Black but simple and careful pawn advances, using the extra pawns in the centre, will easily neutralize White's temporary activity. I love the fact that Black can choose when to advance his central pawns in the Sniper. This is 'Snypermodern' theory!

9...♖c6



The move that Black was staking his opening play on. If the dark-squared

The Sniper

bishop now retreats, not only does it lesson its value, but the extra tempo will allow Black to use his central pawn majority effectively in the near future. Therefore White does not have the luxury of preserving this piece, but its trade will have the net effect of giving the Sniper bishop a free role.

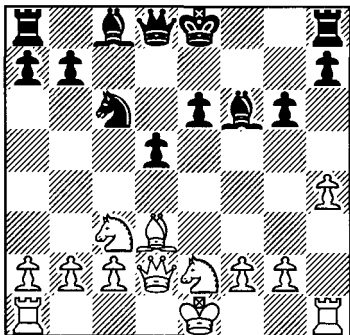
10 ♖xf6

Better was 10 ♘f3, catching up on development, with equal chances.

10...♗xf6

The opening dust has settled and not only does Black have the two bishops, he also has the two central pawns. If Black is not itaken out in the next few moves, the Sniper bishop will easily decide matters in the late middlegame, but I can see no way for White to press home any advantage.

11 ♘ge2 e6 12 h4 d5 13 ♗d3



Black now controls the centre. Next the kingside defence and c8-bishop problems must be solved.

13...♝b6 14 h5 g5

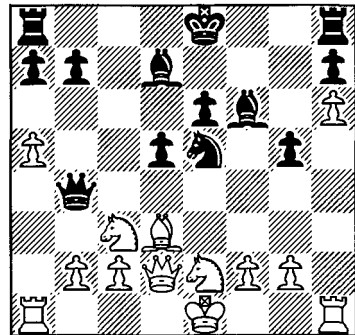
Black of course does not want to open lines against his kingside. Again

the policy of delaying ...0-0 gives extra benefits, and as we can see there is no need for Black to be concerned about the king in the centre just yet.

15 h6 ♗d7 16 a4

White is forced into flank action. Black now just consolidates his centre and improves his position with each move.

16...♗e5 17 a5 ♝b4



Dean Graham is a multiple county champion from Northumberland, rated around 2200. I remember being somewhat surprised at the amount of energy he was investing in his wing pawn advances. The centre should almost always be given priority before such luxuries are permitted.

18 a6 b6 19 0-0-0

White prepares his rooks to join the action but Black's central superiority will easily nullify any White attacks on the horizon.

19...♞c8 20 ♖b1

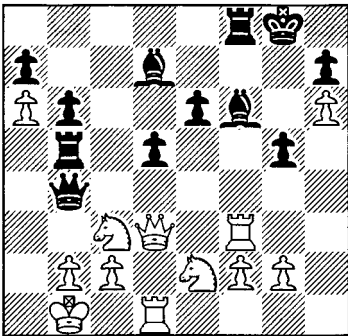
The humble ...f6 move should be given full military decoration for allowing the Black forces to reach this posi-

tion. Black now begins active operations while simultaneously ensuring there are always adequate defences to his king.

20...♘xd3 21 ♚xd3 0-0

At last Black castles, because almost all attacking options have now passed on the kingside and the black king is completely safe. In fact, the black king is quite happy to take some fire if the rest of his forces can increase active operations against weak areas in the White camp – specifically the a-file and of course the centre.

22 ♖h3 ♜c5 23 ♜f3 ♝b5



The cheeky mating threat on b2 takes advantage of a tactical concept I teach my students called ‘the illusion of defence’ – in short, a square that looks defended but in fact is not defended. This particular type of tactic is quite a blind spot in the tactical awareness of under-2200 players. I would advise that students pay particular attention to this type of attack, as finding it can often decide the mid-game battle.

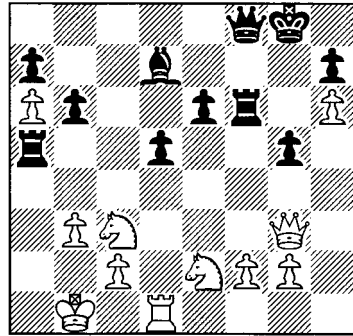
24 b3

White’s dark squares are fatally weakened and the Sniper bishop surveys White’s entire domain. The slightest movement will result in any target being taken out!

24...♗a5 25 ♜xf6

Desperation – there is no compensation for this sacrifice except that it is stopping mate.

25...♜xf6 26 ♚g3 ♚f8



Black postpones the immediate attack and simply consolidates with the extra material. He eyes up the capture of the one hope in White’s position, namely the pawn on h6.

27 ♚c7 ♜f7 28 ♚xa7

Now Black again changes tack and plays for mate, rather than taking out the h6 threat.

28...♚a3 29 ♘a4 ♙xa4

With a discovered attack on the queen.

30 ♚xb6 ♙e8

Always protect your king to prevent counterplay, whether it is on ranks, files or diagonals.

31 c4 ♖xa6 32 ♖b8 ♜e7

Complete consolidation, and now the bishop prepares an invasion on the h7-b1 diagonal.

33 ♖e5 ♙g6+ 0-1

This game saw White seize the centre early, but Black found the modest but extremely potent 7...f6!, saving the h5-knight and allowing an initiative against the bishop on d4. Black's extra central pawns negated any attack and their eventual advance created problems for White that could not be solved.

The final game of this chapter features a bizarre Dragon without dark-squared bishops that favours Black:

Game 24
M.Mrva-Z.Azmaiparashvili
European Club Cup,
Neum 2000

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 ♘c3 c5 4 ♙e3 ♖a5 5 ♖d2

Here 5 ♘f3 instead transposes to the note to White's fifth move in Game 20.

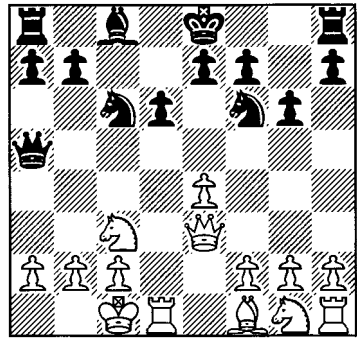
5...cxd4 6 ♙xd4 ♙xd4!? 7 ♖xd4 ♘f6

A Dragon without the dark-squared bishops may in many instances favour White. Here, however, the central initiative-gaining ...♘c6 will equip Black with an extra move to cope with any White opening attacks.

8 0-0-0

Alternatively 8 b4!? ♖d8 9 ♘f3 ♘c6 10 ♖d2 b6 11 b5 ♘a5 12 e5 ♘h5 with a comical position for Black's knights. White has a small advantage but Black can make a complex meal of it with ...♙b7 and ...♞c8.

8...♘c6 9 ♖e3 d6



The lack of dark-squared bishops has decreased White's initiative and the position is completely level. However, Black has yet to commit his king to any area, and this could still prove useful and offer Black some winning prospects.

10 ♙c4 ♙d7

Better was 10...♘g4! seizing the dark squares which are favourably accentuated by the omission of both dark-squared bishops. After 11 ♖e2 ♖c5 12 ♞d2 ♘d4 13 ♖d3 ♘e6 14 ♖d5 ♖c7 15 ♙b5+ ♗f8 16 f3 ♘f6 17 ♖b3 a6 18 ♙d3 ♖a5 Black is faster in the race to attack the kings.

11 h3 ♞c8

Gaining a useful tempo in the quest for some initiative.

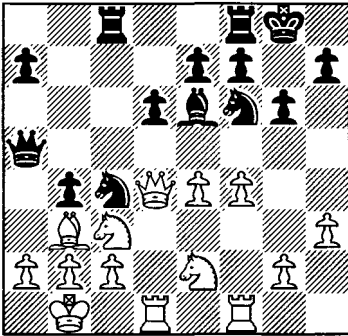
12 ♙b3 ♙e6!

This quashes any attack that White may have been dreaming about and gives Black better prospects with his current lead in central pressure.

13 ♖b1 ♘e5 14 ♘ge2 ♘c4 15 ♚d4 0-0 16 f4 b5

With opposite-side castling there's a race to open up a file for the rooks. Black's position looks preferable.

17 ♜hf1 b4



These 'central modifiers', just like passed pawns, should be continually placed under surveillance. Now whenever the knight goes Black acquires the advantage.

18 f5

White does not give up the fight for the centre by retreating his knight. Instead his response is an invitation to deep calculation but it's all in Black's favour.

18...bxc3 19 fxe6 ♘xb2 20 ♜xf6

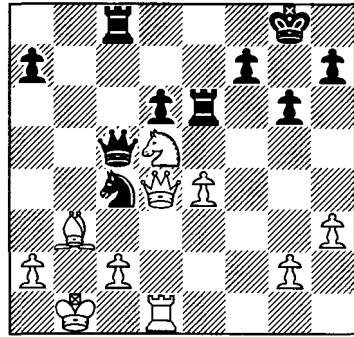
White was perhaps pinning his hopes on this, but the Sniper position is

still strong – even without the Sniper bishop.

20...exf6 21 ♚xf6 ♘c4

Shutting off the bishop's attack and securing a winning position.

22 e7 ♜fe8 23 ♘xc3 ♜xe7 24 ♘d5 ♜e6 25 ♚d4 ♚c5



Offering simplification is always a great way to increase an advantage, as in order to avoid trades the opponent often has to give away good central squares that he had under control.

26 ♚d3 ♘g7

Always remember the king can take care of weak squares too. Here it brings support to f6 and prevents any accidents on e7.

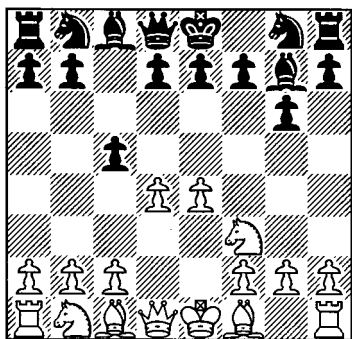
27 ♜f1 ♜xe4 0-1

Losing a central pawn can sometimes make a Master resign – just like in this case. In this game we saw the 4...♚a5 approach and a Dragon mid-game without the dark-squared bishops which simply favoured Black.

Chapter Two

Main Line 2: Kingside Knight – 3 ♘f3 c5!

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 ♘f3 c5

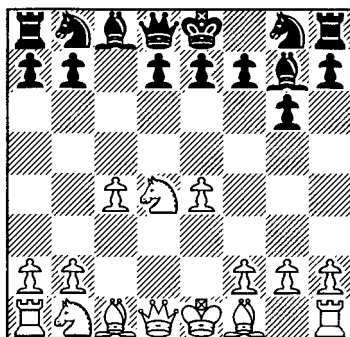


Game 25

V.Meribanov-V.Onoprienko
Voronezh 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♙g7
5 c4

SMOT: If this needs explanation please go back and read the introduction.



The 4 c4 Maroczy with ...♙b6!

The following two games will demonstrate a creative way for Black to play against the Maroczy setup, taking White away from his traditional easy path and presenting a number of early problems with ...♙b6.

The Maroczy Bind played via a Sniper move order is slightly more favourable for Black than Maroczy Binds with ...♘f6 inserted, as the Sniper bishop offers additional options which may cause some problems for White. This is particularly useful against White players who have one pre-programmed variation of the Maroczy Bind, as these Sniper Maroczy positions are independent and relatively uncharted, primarily because the knight remains on g8 for an extended period of time.

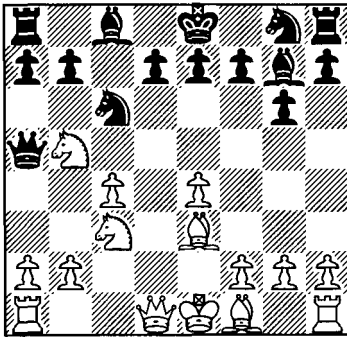
5...♘c6 6 ♙e3 ♘b6

This is my personal Sniper recommendation against the Maroczy setup.

7 ♘b5

7 ♘b3 ♘c7 transposes to the next game.

7...♗a5+ 8 ♘1c3



8...♘f6

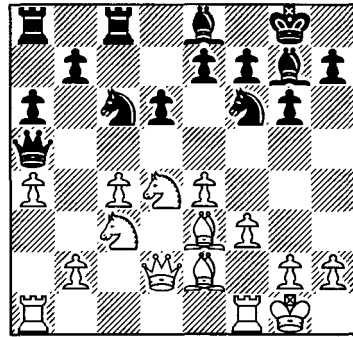
There is a natural human reflex to remove the knight from 'our territory' but there is no need as there is no real threat. Black can simply go about his own business rather than play the

overly cautious ...a6 immediately.

9 f3 0-0 10 ♙e2 d6 11 0-0 ♙d7 12 ♗d2 ♗fc8 13 a4 a6 14 ♘d4

Black has a tiny advantage due to the long-term potential against the d4-square. He should look to play the position slowly and bring the queen to b4 or f8.

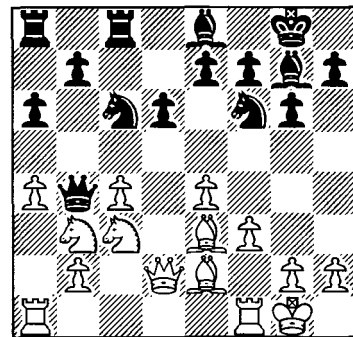
14...♙e8



This is a commitment to moving the queen to b4.

15 ♘b3 ♗b4

The cheeky queen invasion is perfectly safe and gains the initiative against the loose b3-knight.



16 ♗c2 ♘a5

The Sniper

Black is quite happy to trade knights and keep the queen on a5, where at a moment's notice she can communicate with any part of the board.

16...♘e5!? is another possibility.

17 ♘d2 e6

Accepting a weak pawn on d6 but ensuring the c3-knight can't activate on d5. 17...♙xc4!? is an interesting alternative.

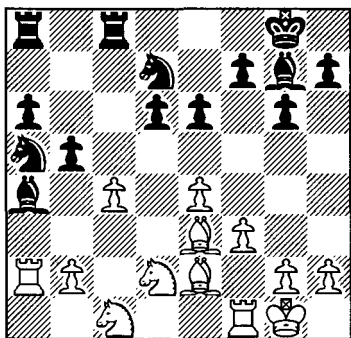
18 ♘a2 ♚xa4

This brave pawn grab will give Black good winning chances.

19 ♚xa4 ♙xa4 20 ♘c1?! b5!

This gives Black a nice edge. 20 ♘c3 would have been stronger.

21 ♙a3 ♘d7 22 ♙a2



White is keen to win a piece with b3 but Black has a good answer.

22...♘c6 23 b3 ♘b4

The rook is trapped.

24 bxa4 ♘xa2 25 ♘xa2 bxa4

The passed a-pawns become very problematic for White.

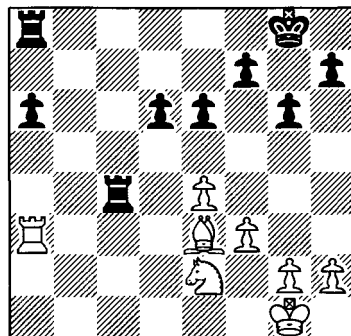
26 ♙c1 ♘c5 27 ♘c3 a3 28 ♘db1

The white pieces have to neglect their central duties in order to restrain

the a-pawns. Black should be able to find a way to exploit this.

28...♘b3 29 ♙c2 ♘d4 30 ♙a2 ♘xe2+ 31 ♘xe2 ♙b2 32 ♘xa3 ♙xa3 33 ♙xa3 ♙xc4

Black's opening has been a success. His position is preferable here – there is no risk of losing and he has many winning chances.



34 ♙f2 a5 35 ♙d4 f5 36 ♙e3 ♙f7 37 ♘d3 ♙c6 38 ♙a4 e5 39 ♙e3 ♙b8 40 ♙d2 ♙b3+ 41 ♘c3 ♙c5 42 ♙a2 ♙e6 43 ♙c2 ♙b4 44 ♙e3 ♙c6 45 ♘d3 ♙b3 46 ♙d2 ♙c5 47 ♙c2 ♙b4 48 ♙e3 ♙c6 49 ♘d3 ♙b3 50 ♙d2 ♙a6 51 ♙c2 ♙b7 52 ♘d5 a4 53 ♙b4 ♘d7 54 ♙b2 ♙c6 55 ♙a3 fxe4 56 fxe4 ♙f7 57 ♙d2 ♘d7 58 ♘e3 ♙e6 ½ -½

6...♚b6 forced White into finding a new path in a Maroczy situation. By sending the d4-knight away from its best location, a number of difficulties were presented to White. This allowed Black an opportunity to pressure White's queenside and eventually capture the a-pawn.

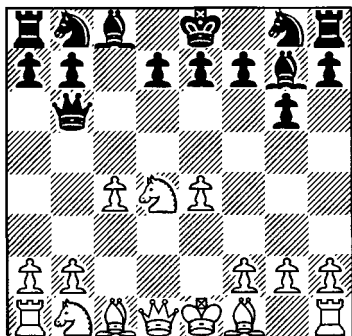
This next game sees a super-accelerated 5...♖b6, played even before the queen's knight develops. This may be even better than the last variation! I've presented both in this book so that your variations will be camouflaged, not just in various move order transpositions in Sicilians, Pircs, Moderns and Benonis, but also in move nuances that look similar to recommended variations. In modern day chess it's wise to have a few different variations to hand, just to make an opponent's preparation a bit more difficult.

Game 26
F.Grunberg-Z.Stanojoski
 Kavala 2002

1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 g6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♙g7

SMOT: Of course the position after 5 e4 could arise from the Pure Sniper move order of 1...g6, 2...♙g7 and 3...c5.

5 e4 ♖b6



Not only is 5...♖b6 a good move aiming for dark-square control, it also

helps take White out of his comfort zone.

6 ♘b3

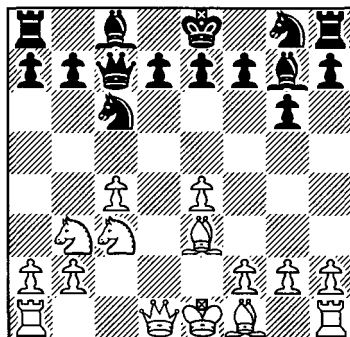
This way of playing against the Maroczy must be good for Black considering the white knight has moved three times only to have the disadvantage of preventing the b-pawn from supporting the c4-pawn.

After 6 ♘b5!? a6 7 ♙e3 ♖a5+ 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 ♘d2 d6 10 ♙e2 0-0 11 ♘b3 ♖d8 12 0-0 ♘bd7 13 f4 Black has a hedgehog position with some extra help from White's misplaced knight on b3.

6...♘c6 7 ♙e3

Attempting to keep the pawn structure intact with 7 ♙e2 ♖c7 8 0-0 b6 reaches a solid balanced middlegame, mainly because it is hard for White to launch any strong offensive due to the passively located b3-knight.

7...♖c7 8 ♘c3



8...♙xc3+!

This is yet another Sniper Sacrifice that Black is happy to play. In return, Black can look forward to pressure

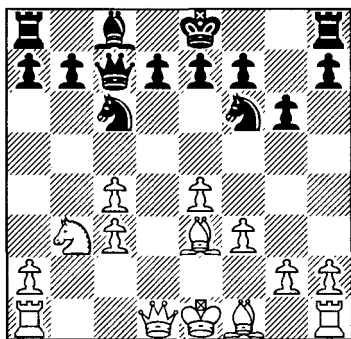
The Sniper

against the c4-pawn with rooks, knights and bishop.

9 bxc3 ♖f6

More central pressure forces defensive moves and prevents White from assuming an initiative.

10 f3



10...d6

An important awareness for Sniper practitioners against this pawn structure should be to play ...b6 and ...d6 in that exact order.

11 c5!

This counter-activity by White is the reason I prefer 10...b6!. I would rather have central pawns in reserve, in harmony with the Storey Pawn Scale, rather than the wing b-pawn. By playing 10...b6! first, this simply allows Black to play ...bxc5 in answer to c5, followed by ...d6, ...♖f6 and c-file pressure from the rooks.

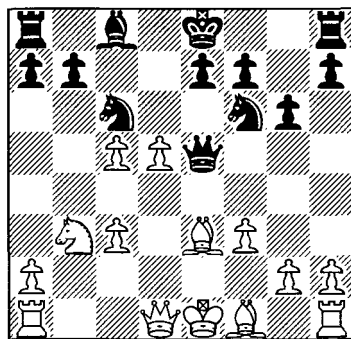
I have no hesitation in recommending 10...b6!. In fact, I would push the boat out and say that Black would be clearly better after that move. This game shows that 10...d6 is not as good,

even though Black still gets a reasonable position.

11...d5!?

Black is not happy to trade a central pawn for a wing pawn and finds another way of striking at White's centre.

12 exd5 ♗e5



Black's opening with 5...♗b6 and 8...♙xc3+ has been a success, although I think Black could have got an even better position than this with 10...b6.

13 ♙f2 ♖xd5 14 ♙d4 ♖xc3

Although Black emerges a pawn up in the resulting endgame, White is extremely well placed to neutralize the deficit.

15 ♙xe5 ♖xd1+ 16 ♖xd1 ♖xe5 17 ♖a5 0-0 18 ♙b5 b6

18...a6 was a little better.

19 ♖he1! bxa5 20 ♖xe5 ♖b8

White's activity and passed c-pawn will more than compensate for the pawn.

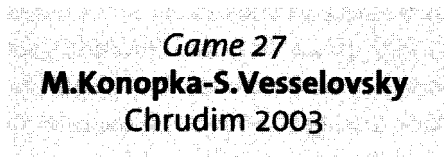
21 c6 a6 22 ♙c4 ♖b2+ 23 ♖e2 ♖b6 24 ♖c2 ♙g7 25 c7 ♖d6 26 ♖xd6 exd6 27 ♖d2 ♙f6 28 ♖xd6+ ♙e7 29 ♖d5 a4 30 ♙e3 f6 31 ♙d4 ♙b7 32 ♖c5 ♙d6 33

11...d5 12...xd5 34 c8♖ ♜xc8 35 ♜xc8 ♞xa2
 36 ♞a8 ♞b3 37 ♞xa6+ ♞e7 38 ♞a7+
 ♞e6 39 ♞xh7 a3 40 ♞a7 a2 41 ♞a3 ♞f5
 42 ♞c3 ♞f7 43 ♞b2 g5 44 ♞a5+ ♞f4 45
 ♞a4+ ♞e5 46 g3 ♞f5 47 ♞a5+ ♞g6 48
 ♞a4 ♞h5 49 h4 ♞d5 50 hxg5 fxg5 51
 ♞a3 ♞g6 52 ♞d3 ♞e6 53 ♞d4 ♞f5 54
 ♞a4 ♞d5 55 f4 gxf4 56 ♞xf4+ ♞g5 57
 ♞a4 ♞e6 58 ♞c3 ♞f7 59 ♞d2 ♞b3 60
 ♞a3 ♞g4 61 ♞e2 ♞f7 62 ♞f2 ♞b3 63
 ♞a5 ♞f7 64 ♞a4+ ♞g5 65 g4 ♞b3 66
 ♞a3 ♞xg4 1/2-1/2

11...d5 was a nice idea but the simple 10...b6! gives Black a steady small advantage, so why risk the complications? Use the Storey Pawn Scale!

White grabs the c5-pawn with 4 dxc5

The following few games will focus on the most aggressive attempt at refuting the Sniper – an early ♘f3 and capturing on c5. I will show that Black gets counterplay and that White's aggression is not dangerous.



1 d4 g6 2 ♘f3 ♞g7 3 e4 c5

There have not been too many Pure Sniper move orders of 1...g6, 2...♞g7 and 3...c5. I hope the reader has spent a moment at each Sniper Mover Order Transposition (SMOT), comparing the Pure Sniper move order with the one

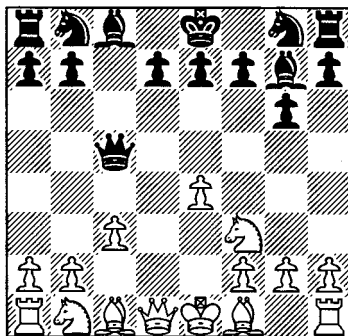
chosen in the actual game.

4 dxc5 ♞a5+ 5 c3

5 ♘c3 enables Black to transpose to a favourable Sniper Sacrifice line with 5...♞xc3+!

5 ♘d2 ♞xc5 6 ♘c3 ♘f6 7 ♞e2 d6 8 ♞e3 ♞a5 leaves Black ready for a good middlegame where he can eventually use his central pawn advantage.

5...♞xc5



Black's early queen development means the white knight can no longer come to c3. The cost for Black is that his queen can be harassed by the c1-bishop.

6 ♘a3

6 ♞d3 is covered in Game 29, and 6 ♞e3 in Game 30.

6...♘f6

Sniper players should always insert ...♘f6 first in this position; otherwise they will find themselves in a lost position:

a) 6...d6?! is an error which simply allows White a central pawn exchange which in turn enables some strong pressure; for example, 7 ♞e3 ♞a5 8

The Sniper

♖b3 ♗f6 9 ♜b5+ ♗bd7 10 e5! dxe5 11 ♗g5!. The Sniper practitioner should avoid this stereotypical d-pawn advance and keep it in reserve for later.

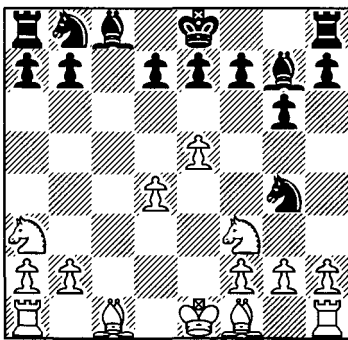
b) 6...b6? is also bad. Although it may look attractive, White gains a huge initiative after 7 ♜e3 ♜c6 8 ♜c4 ♜b7 9 ♜b3 e6 10 ♗b5 ♜f8 11 0-0-0 followed by doubling on the d-file.

7 ♜e3

7 ♗b5 is covered in the next game. Alternatively:

a) 7 ♜d3 is a weaker choice that makes the Sniper's life even easier than the text. After 7...0-0 8 ♜e3 ♜a5 9 0-0 ♗c6 10 ♜e2 d6 11 h3 h6 12 ♗c2 ♜h5 (12...♜d7 gives a safe, level middle-game but Black can easily try for more) 13 c4 g5 14 ♗d2 g4 Black's position is preferable in the complications.

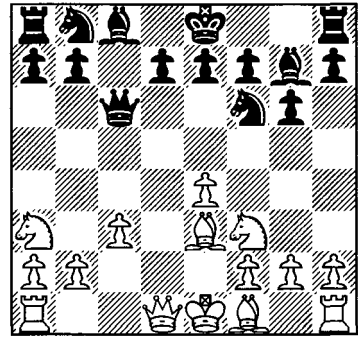
b) 7 e5 ♗g4 8 ♜d4 (I.Rajlich-A.Jakab, Budapest 2006) 8...♜xd4 9 cxd4 reaches a key position for the assessment of the 4 dxc5 Sniper.



It seems like an equal ending to me, but there are still plenty of pieces and opportunities for both sides to try and

win. One possible line is 9...b6 10 ♜d2 ♜b7 11 ♗b5 ♗a6 12 h3 ♗h6 13 ♜c1 ♗f5 14 ♜e2 f6, which is playable for Black.

7...♜c6!?



Attacking e4 and not encouraging ♗b5 as much as 7...♜c7 would.

8 ♗b5

This is the critical test, as the pressure against a7 and c7 must be successfully addressed. Alternatives include:

a) 8 e5 ♗g4 9 ♜d4 0-0 10 h3 ♗h6 and now:

a1) 11 g4 is double-edged: 11...d6 12 exd6 ♜xd4 13 cxd4 exd6 14 ♜e2 f5 15 g5 ♗f7 16 h4 f4!?, and if White sacrifices a pawn with 17 h5 ♗xg5 then Black also gets a lot of chances in the arising complications.

a2) 11 ♜d3 ♗f5 12 0-0 d5 with approximate equality, or 12 ♜xf5 gxf5 13 0-0 b6 with a double-edged middle game – Black can look forward to counterplay with his bishop on b7.

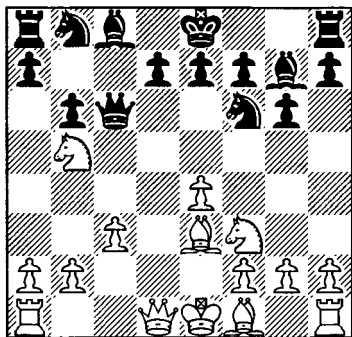
b) 8 ♜d3 0-0 9 0-0 and now:

b1) Avoid 9...♗xe4?! 10 ♗d4 ♜xd4

11 ♗xd4. Only give up the Sniper bishop if you get some very clear compensation. Here Black wins a pawn but White has no other weaknesses and therefore I cannot recommend this position to Sniper practitioners.

b2) 9...d6 10 ♖b5 b6 11 a4 (or 11 e5 dxe5 12 ♗xe5 ♜b7 13 ♜f3 ♜xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♖bd7 15 ♜fe1 ♗b7 16 ♗d4 a6 17 ♖a3 ♜fe8 with a balanced position) 11...a6 12 ♖bd4 ♜b7 13 a5 b5 with an equal position in which a Sniper practitioner could expect to outplay White.

8...b6!



It's so important to play this humble pawn move here, creating a safe haven for the queen.

9 ♖fd4

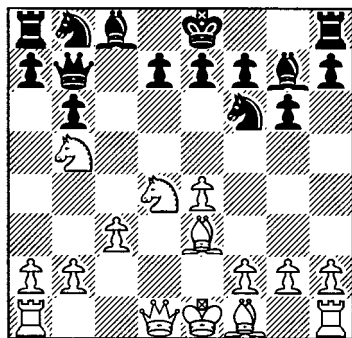
Also possible is 9 e5 ♖g4 and now:

a) 10 ♗d4 leads to a complex middlegame: 10...0-0 11 h3 ♖h6 12 ♗e2 ♖f5 13 0-0 ♗b7 (the Sniper's brother is clearly a good piece and Black will enjoy plenty of counterplay because of it) 14 ♜e1 a6 15 ♖a3 d6 and Black has a good position.

b) After 10 ♖fd4 the resulting ex-

changes are in Black's favour: 10...♗xe3 11 ♖xc6 ♖xd1 12 ♖c7+ ♗f8 13 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 14 ♜xd1 ♗xe5 15 ♖xa8 ♗b7 16 ♖xb6 axb6 and Black has the better endgame chances.

9...♜b7



This 'Sniper queen' position ensures Black has decent prospects in a dynamic middlegame.

10 f3

When f2-f3 is played, Black should always be looking to carry out ...d5 in one move, as he does in this game.

10 e5 ♖d5 reaches a double-edged position. For example:

a) 11 ♖f5 gxf5 12 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 13 ♖c7+ ♗d8 14 ♖xd5 ♗xe5 hardly offers White enough play for the pawn.

b) 11 ♗g5!? a6 12 ♗xe7! axb5 13 ♗d6 ♖f4 14 f3 ♖c6! 15 ♖xb5 ♖xe5 (15...♖e6!?) 16 ♖c7+ ♗d8 17 ♖xa8 (after 17 ♗f2 ♜a5 18 b4 ♜d5 19 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 20 ♜xd5 ♖xd5, the knights in the centre and the weakness on c3 mean Black should go on to win) 17...♜xa8 and the centralized knights give Black a promising middlegame.

10...a6 11 ♖a3 0-0 12 ♙c4

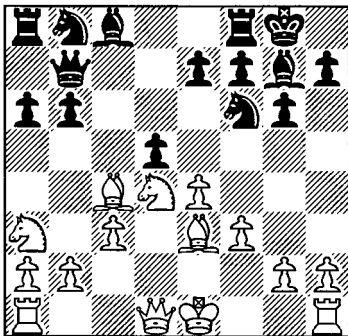
After 12 ♙e2 Black has a choice of options:

a) 12...d6 13 0-0 ♖bd7 with a nice solid middlegame in store and the possibility of a useful minority attack for Black on the queenside.

b) On 12...e5!? 13 ♖b3 d5 Black may claim a small edge, as the white knights have activated then deactivated over to the backwaters of the queenside.

c) Black should avoid 12...d5?!. Although this would normally be a good idea, here White may close the centre with 13 e5 and gain some initiative by attacking the f6-knight, which would pass the advantage to White.

12...d5



13 exd5 ½-½

The players agreed a draw at this moment, but after 13 exd5 b5! 14 ♙b3 ♚d8 Black enjoys a small advantage, with his central activity offering good winning chances in a complicated middlegame for the Sniper practitioner. This short game showed us how

Black can effectively deal with the 4 dxc5 line. He found a nice home on b7 for his queen and achieved a good position. The sub-variations proved that Black will also get a good position if White attempts to gambit for the initiative.

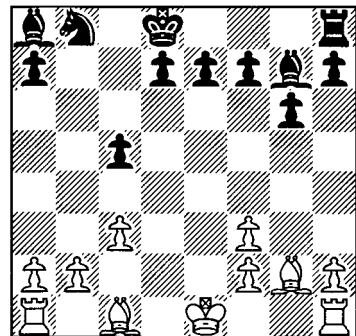
Game 28
M.AI Modiahki-B.Macieja
Turin Olympiad 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 g6 3 d4 ♙g7

SMOT.

4 dxc5 ♜a5+ ♜xc5 6 ♖a3 ♖f6 6 ♙d3 ♖f6 7 ♖b5 0-0

7...b6 occurred in A.Alavkin-M.Kanep, Moscow 2004, which continued 8 e5 ♖g4 (threatening mate in one) 9 ♜d4 ♖xe5 10 ♜xc5 ♖xf3+ 11 gxf3 bxc5 12 ♖c7+ ♚d8 13 ♖xa8 ♙b7 14 ♙g2 ♙xa8.

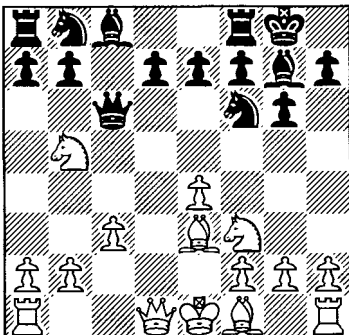


The dust has settled and we can take stock: two pawns for the exchange, two extra central pawns and better development – this is practically

a win for Black! The game continued 15 0-0 d6 16 $\text{e}3$ $\text{d}7$ 17 f4 $\text{xg}2$ 18 $\text{xg}2$ $\text{c}7$ 19 $\text{ac}1$ $\text{b}8$ 20 $\text{c}2$ $\text{c}6$ 21 $\text{d}1$ a5 (Black has all the pressure) 22 b3 a4 23 $\text{b}1$ c4 24 $\text{cb}2$ a3 25 $\text{c}2$ $\text{c}5$ 26 $\text{xc}5$ $\text{xc}5$ 27 $\text{f}3$ d5 28 $\text{e}2$ $\text{b}6$ 29 $\text{cc}1$ $\text{cxb}3$ 30 $\text{xb}3$ $\text{xb}3$ (Black is more than happy to take rooks off as dangerous passed pawns can be created simply) 31 $\text{axb}3$ d4 32 $\text{c}d3$ $\text{dxc}3$ 33 $\text{c}c2$ $\text{d}4$ 34 $\text{d}1$ e6 (Black carefully prepares the advance of his pawns) 35 f3 h5 36 h3 f6 37 $\text{e}1$ e5 38 $\text{fxe}5$ $\text{fxe}5$ (the bishop is secured and the king is ready to support the passed pawns) 39 h4 $\text{cb}4$ 40 $\text{f}1$ a2 41 $\text{a}1$ $\text{a}3$ 42 $\text{d}1$ $\text{b}6$ 43 $\text{e}1$ $\text{d}8$ 44 $\text{e}4$ (careful – mate in one is threatened!) 44...a1N+ (a nice under-promotion to finish) 45 $\text{xc}3$ $\text{cxb}3$ 46 $\text{e}3$ $\text{b}6$ 0-1.

After 7... $\text{d}g4$?! 8 $\text{d}fd4$ a6 9 $\text{c}xg4$ $\text{axb}5$ 10 $\text{cxb}5$ d6 11 $\text{h}4$ $\text{e}6$ 12 $\text{e}3$ $\text{c}6$ 13 f3 $\text{d}7$ 14 $\text{d}4$ $\text{xd}4$ 15 $\text{xd}4$ even my favourite move 15...f6 does not give Black an acceptable position, thus 7... $\text{d}g4$ is to be avoided.

8 $\text{e}3$ $\text{c}6$

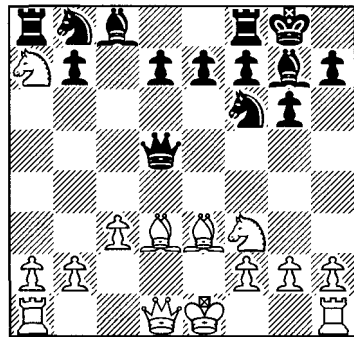


9 $\text{d}3$

Alternatively:

a) 9 $\text{d}fd4$?! $\text{cxe}4$ 10 $\text{c}7$ leads to a material plus for White, but Black can grab the centre. I do not believe Black has quite enough for the exchange in the resulting position, in which case he should go back to 7...b6, although there is certainly a complicated struggle ahead. For example, 10...b6 11 $\text{e}2$ $\text{b}7$ 12 $\text{xa}8$ $\text{xa}8$ 13 0-0 $\text{b}7$ 14 $\text{f}3$ d5 15 a4 (L.Bruzon Bautista-V.Malakhov, Yerevan 2000) 15...e5 16 $\text{b}5$ $\text{c}6$ 17 $\text{e}1$ a6 18 $\text{a}3$ $\text{bd}7$.

b) 9 $\text{cxa}7$?! $\text{cxe}4$ 10 $\text{d}3$ $\text{d}5$.



It seems a little strange, but the queen is quite safe on this central square because there is no knight to come to c3 to attack it, and this ensures an equal game for Black after 11 0-0 $\text{c}6$ 12 $\text{xc}8$ $\text{fxc}8$ 13 a3 $\text{d}g4$.

9...b6 10 0-0

If 10 e5!? then 10... $\text{d}g4$ 11 $\text{f}4$ a6! 12 $\text{bd}4$ $\text{c}5$ 13 0-0 $\text{xe}5$ 14 $\text{e}4$ $\text{a}7$ 15 $\text{xe}5$ $\text{xe}5$ 16 b4 $\text{d}6$ 17 $\text{xe}5$ $\text{xe}5$ 18 $\text{e}1$ $\text{c}7$ and Black has a safe extra pawn.

The Sniper

10...♙b7

Black can look forward to a good safe middlegame involving a queen-side minority attack.

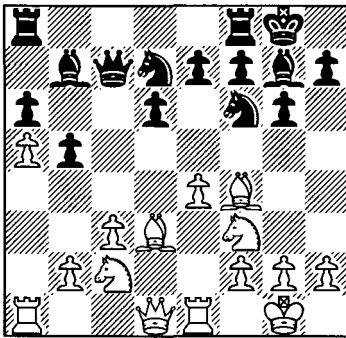
11 ♖e1

After 11 e5? ♜g4 12 ♙f4 ♜xe5 the extra central pawn guarantees an advantage.

11...d6 12 a4 a6 13 ♜bd4 ♝c7 14 a5 b5

14...bxa5 is another good alternative.

15 ♜c2 ♜bd7 16 ♙f4



A 'Double Sniper' arrangement is a common target for Sniper practitioners. I suggest trainees take a moment to familiarize themselves with all of the black pieces. Okay, maybe the b5-pawn is sometimes on b6, but this piece deployment should be given extra scrutiny. I strongly recommend this structure – and the study time in understanding it. Please pay particular attention to the possibilities for each piece over say 4-5 moves.

16...e5!

This move which is often a favourite of Magnus Carlsen's when he plays the

Sicilian Dragon. Here it ensures Black keeps a small edge as the weakness of the d5-square is offset by the central advantages gained and the initiative against the bishop.

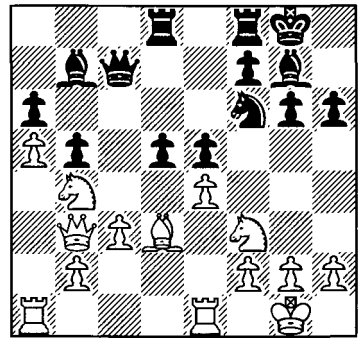
17 ♙g5 h6 18 ♙xf6

Otherwise ...♜c5 wins the central pawn after 18 ♙h4 g5 19 ♙g3 ♜c5.

18...♜xf6 19 ♜b4 ♞ad8

If Black achieves ...d5 he will be pressing for the full point.

20 ♝b3 d5!



When Black gets this in without material loss, more often than not his entire position springs to life – this case is no exception.

21 exd5 ♜xd5 22 ♙e4 ♜xb4 23 cxb4

After 23 ♝xb4 ♙d5! 24 ♙xd5 ♞xd5 25 ♞ad1 ♞xd1 26 ♞xd1 ♞d8 27 ♞e1 f5 Black has good winning chances.

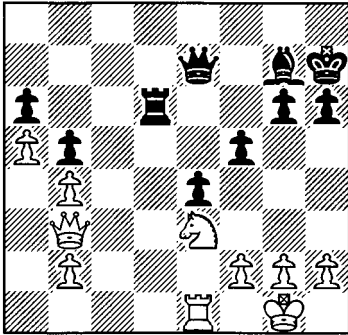
23...♙xe4 24 ♞xe4 ♜h7

Black is cueing up ...f5 with a much better centre and play against the f3-knight with ...e4. This will chase the knight away from safe central defensive duties.

25 ♞ee1 f5!

Black has a trivial win from here.

26 ♖ac1 ♜d6 27 ♖cd1 ♜e7 28 ♘d4 ♖d6
29 ♘c2 ♖fd8 30 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 31 ♘e3 e4



Black has full command of the centre and great targets on the queenside should an ending materialize.

32 ♜c2 ♖d8 33 h4 ♜xh4 34 ♜c6 f4 35
♜xe4 ♖d4 0-1

In my early days with the Sniper, this White setup was the most problematic for me to deal with. My faith was restored by Macieja's play in this variation, which confirms my assessment that the Sniper is a fantastic opening system that can continually fight for the full point. This game saw Black consolidate against White's early activity, add pressure in the centre and then win the centre, and with it the full point followed.

The next game will also feature the favourite piece/pawn development for expert Sniper practitioners and will show how Black can easily acquire a small advantage with the structure. It will also demonstrate how badly top

players can play in the latter stages of a blitz game!

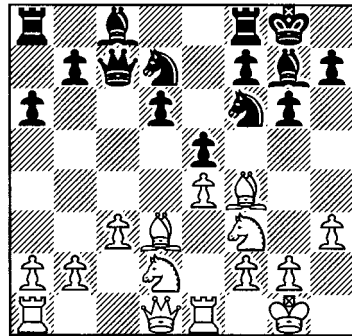
Game 29

D.Popovic-A.Wojtkiewicz
Internet (blitz) 2005

1 d4 g6 2 ♘f3 ♗g7 3 e4 c5 4 dxc5 ♜a5+
5 c3 ♜xc5 6 ♗d3 ♘f6 7 0-0 d6 8 h3 0-0
9 ♗e3 ♜c7 10 ♖e1 ♘bd7 11 ♘bd2 a6

The highly favoured Sniper Army piece and pawn deployment has once again arisen. This setup should ensure that Black has some promising middle-game plans.

12 ♗f4 e5



Black is happy to accept a backward d-pawn if it ensures long-term extra support in the centre, especially with a gain of a tempo on the f4-bishop.

13 ♗e3 b6

This Sniper deployment is solid but always poised for a full-on counterattack at a moment's notice. Black will wait for some more weaknesses to appear in the White camp before begin-

ning active operations.

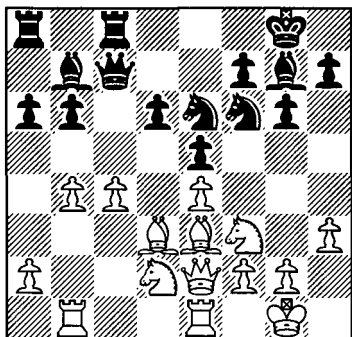
14 c4 ♖b7 15 b4

Giving squares to get squares as Bobby Fischer would say. This approach is always a doubled-edged sword.

15...♗fc8 16 ♖e2

Black has a small advantage, although there is still clearly an enormous amount of play left in the position. If I was to try and identify why Black has an edge here, I would point to the weakness at c4 coupled with the difficulty of the white f-pawn to contribute to the centre. As a result Black has slightly the better of it in the centre, although according to *Rybka* the advantage is only tiny.

16...♟f8 17 ♖ab1 ♟e6

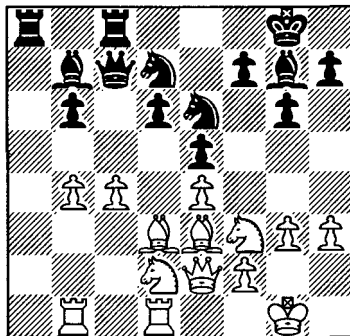


It is fair to say the d6-pawn is weak. It's also fair to say the pawn cannot be attacked for some considerable time with traditional doubling or tripling on the d-file. So it would also be fair to say it's not weak. Confused? Me too!

18 g3 ♟d7 19 ♖ed1 a5!

To help the a8-rook enter the game using 'zero development'!

20 a3 axb4 21 axb4



21...♟d4

Even better was the surprising 21...♟b8! 22 ♟b3 ♟c6 23 ♟d2 ♖a3 24 ♟c3 ♟ed4 25 ♟bxd4 exd4 26 ♟b2 ♖a2 27 ♖a1 ♖xa1 28 ♟xa1 ♟xb4 29 ♟xd4 ♟xd3 30 ♖xd3 ♖xc4 with a great position for Black as both bishops are firing.

22 ♟xd4 exd4

Black's activity and initiative in the centre ensures he gets the better of the middlegame.

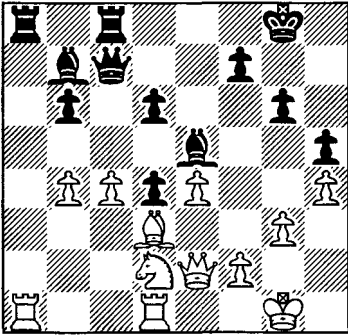
23 ♟f4 ♟e5

A superb square for the knight, made available by allowing White to weaken the central pawn structure.

It comes down to this: Is the centralization of the knights worth the weakened structure? Wojtkiewicz thinks so and this is also backed up by *Rybka* and my Dilution Principle analysis. So the tip is: don't be afraid to accept pawn weaknesses if it means you can centralize your knights. It is the pressure and occupation of the centre with the black knights which is a major feature in expert Sniper practitioners'

play. Always be vigilant to this and remember: a centralized knight is better than an active bishop in the Sniper – that is Snipermodern theory!

24 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 25 ♚a1 h5 26 h4



26...♚e7

26...♙c6 with the idea of bringing the bishop to g4 is a better idea. After 27 ♖g2 ♙d7 Black keeps an edge.

27 ♖g2 ♙g7 28 ♘f3 ♚e8 29 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 30 ♙b1 ♚a3?

An error – Black misses his chance to add further pressure to the weakened dark squares. After 30...♚a4! 31 ♚e1 ♚e6 Black is pressing for more advantage.

The rest of the game shows how much the quality of moves can deteriorate in a blitz finish, even with extremely strong players.

31 ♘xd4 ♚a1 32 ♘f3 f5 33 ♖g1 fxe4 34 ♘g5 ♙h6 35 ♚e1 ♙xg5 36 hxg5 e3 37 ♙xg6 ♚xg5 38 ♜xa1 exf2+ 39 ♚xf2 ♚xg6 40 ♚f1 h4 41 ♙h2 ♚e8 42 gxh4 ♖h7 43 ♚g3 ♚e2+ 44 ♚f2 ♚e4 45 ♚f4 ♚h1+ 46 ♖g3 ♚g1+ 47 ♙h3 ♚h1+ 48 ♖g4 ♚g1+ 49 ♖f5 ♚g6 mate (0-1)

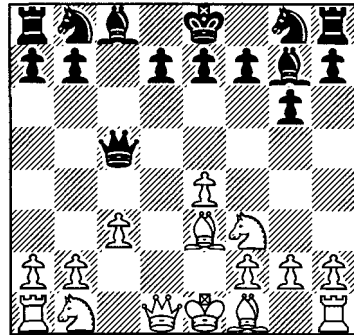
The next game sees White quickly bring his bishop to d4 to try and dominate in the centre, but Black shows with 9...f6 that he can nibble away at the centre and finally control it.

Game 30
A. Abreu-J. Gonzalez Garcia
Capablanca Memorial,
Havana 2003

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 d4 ♙g7 4 dxc5 ♚a5+

Also interesting is 4...♘f6!?, which makes a future ...♚a5 a lot more potent. One line runs 5 e5 ♘g4 6 ♚d4 d6 7 cxd6 ♘c6 8 ♙b5 0-0 9 ♙xc6 bxc6 10 ♙g5 f6 (my favourite little move again) giving Black a good game.

5 c3 ♚xc5 6 ♙e3



6...♚c7

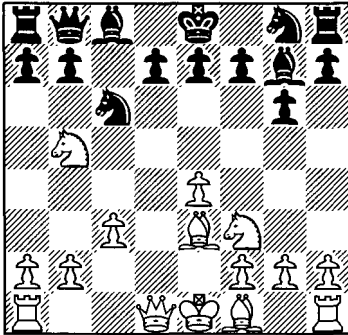
Of course not 6...♚c6 as this would simply attract the knight to d4 with tempo. Black must also avoid 6...♚a5?! 7 ♙c4 ♘f6? (7...♘h6 8 h3 f6) 8 e5 ♘g4 9 ♙xf7+ ♖xf7 10 ♘g5+.
7 ♙d4

The Sniper

The alternative is 7 ♖a3 and now:

a) 7... ♗xc3+?! is an instance of when not to play the Sniper Sacrifice. White gets too active after 8 bxc3 ♜xc3+ 9 ♘d2 ♜xa3 10 ♙c1 ♘c6 11 ♘c4 ♜b4+ 12 ♗d2 ♜c5 13 ♗c3 f6 14 ♘e3 ♜b6 15 ♘d5 ♜d8 and White is better.

b) 7... ♘c6 8 ♘b5 ♜b8.



The queen is tucked into an area that is passive, but if ...a6 and ...b5 appear then it will have a good active role from its current location. 9 ♜d2 ♘f6! (this is good as it encourages White to bring the bishop to the passive d3-square; instead 9...d6 10 0-0-0 ♘f6 11 ♗d3 0-0 12 h3 a6 13 ♘bd4 ♗d7 14 ♗h6 b5 was level in E.Paehtz-T.Kosintseva, Athens 2001) 10 ♗d3 d5 (Black's activity ensures equality) 11 ♗f4 (this may look menacing but there is a simple response...) 11...e5 and it is Black who has the better share of the centre. After 12 exd5 ♘xd5 13 ♗g5 0-0 14 0-0 a6 15 ♘a3 ♗e6 16 ♗c4 ♘c7 17 ♜e2 b5 the b8-queen is now active, and Black has plenty of counterplay with a queenside minority attack and play against the

dimly placed a3-knight.

7... ♘f6 8 e5 ♘h5 9 ♜d2

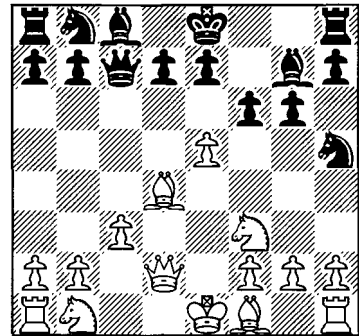
Threatening to win the knight, but there is a standard treatment seen in earlier games that offers excellent counterplay to Black.

After 9 ♘a3 ♘c6 there are two main options:

a) 10 ♜e2 ♘xd4 11 cxd4 0-0 12 ♜d2 d6 13 ♙c1 ♜d8 14 exd6 exd6 15 ♗e2 ♜f6 with a balanced position.

b) 10 ♘b5 ♜b8 11 ♜e2 ♘f4 12 ♜e3 ♘e6 13 ♗d3 a6 14 ♘a3 b5 15 0-0 ♗b7 16 ♘c2 0-0 17 ♗e4 ♘cxd4 18 cxd4 ♗h6 19 ♜xh6 ♗xe4 20 ♘ce1 d5 21 ♘g5 ♘xg5 22 ♜xg5 ♜b6 with a completely equal middlegame.

9...f6!!



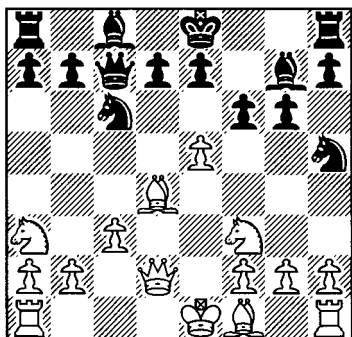
The two exclamations are to demonstrate the impact and initiative that can be created by this humble little move. By now all Snipers trainees should understand the importance and necessity for inserting this move at every appropriate opportunity.

10 ♘a3

Or 10 exf6 ♘xf6 11 ♗d3 ♘c6 12

♙e3 d5 13 ♙h6 0-0 14 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 (protecting h6 with the king often prevents a nasty invasion on the kingside) 15 0-0 e5 (also good is 15...♗g4! 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 hxg4 ♘e5 when the knight is looking to help checkmate on h2) 16 ♙e2 ♙e6 17 ♘a3 ♙g8 18 ♘c2 ♗ad8 19 h3 ♘h5 and Black's strong centre ensures the better middlegame chances.

10...♘c6



11 exf6

11 ♘b5 ♗b8 12 exf6 ♘xf6 13 ♙c4 (if 13 ♙e3 a6 14 ♘bd4 0-0 15 0-0-0 d5 16 ♖b1 ♘e4 Black's position is preferable) 13...a6 14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 16 ♘xd4 b5 17 ♙b3 ♗e5+ 18 ♘e2 (on 18 ♗e2 ♙b7, the two bishops are better than White's minor piece pair, so it's a small advantage for Black) 18...♙b7. 19 0-0 ♗g5 20 ♗xg5 ♙xg5 reaches a level endgame.

11...♘xf6

Black now has two dormant centre pawns, but White has none. The battle revolves around whether Black can effectively bring these pawns into the centre.

12 ♙c4

12 ♘b5 ♗b8 13 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 14 ♗d1 a6 15 ♘a3 0-0 16 ♙e2 b5 17 h4!? (17 0-0 ♘e5 with equality) offers White some attacking possibilities, but Black has adequate defensive resources after 17...b4, with level chances in a doubled-edged position on account of the weakness of both kings.

12 ♙e3 d5 13 ♙h6 ♙xh6 14 ♗xh6 ♘e5 15 ♙b5+ ♙d7 16 ♙xd7+ ♘fxd7 17 ♗e3 ♘xf3+ 18 ♗xf3 ♗e5+ 19 ♗e2 ♗xe2+ 20 ♖xe2 0-0-0 reaches a level-looking ending, although Black does have better chances to dominate the centre.

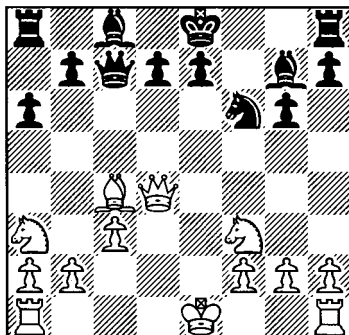
12...♘xd4

This exchange ensures a good game for Black as there is no longer a marker of the Sniper bishop.

13 ♗xd4

After 13 ♘xd4 d5 14 ♙b5+ ♖f7 Black is better, with a strong centre and the bishop pair.

13...a6



Black possesses the two bishops and the central pawns. If he gets these ac-

The Sniper

tive the win should be near – so White must do everything to prevent their activity.

14 0-0-0

If 14 0-0 then 14...b5 15 ♖d5 ♜b8 16 ♜fe1 e6 followed by castling short, with an edge for Black.

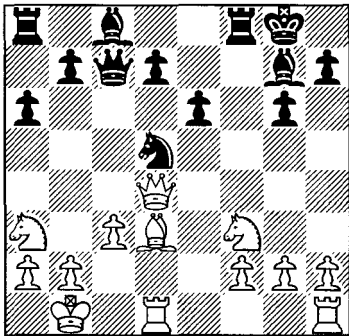
14...e6

The extra central pawns created through the ...f6 break begin to make their presence felt.

15 ♖b1 0-0

Black will soon finish development and look forward to ...b5-b4 and a timely ...d5 with a nice small advantage.

16 ♖d3 ♗d5



Action in the centre commences. Black's position is preferable here mainly due to the advantage of having two central pawns in exchange for wing pawns, which brings us back to the Storey Pawn Scale.

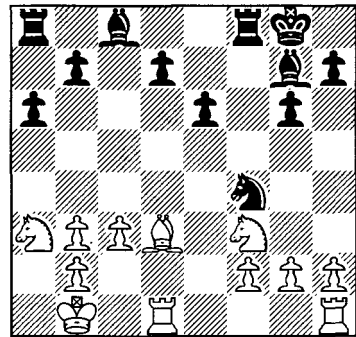
17 ♜c4 ♜b6 18 ♜b3 ♜xb3?!

A desire to enter a favourable endgame. However, Black could simply take the pawn with 18...♜xf2!? in an

attempt to be better in the middle-game, and this was certainly worth a try.

19 axb3 ♗f4

Black's activity ensures he has the advantage despite having three pawn islands compared to White's two – it is the central advantage that takes priority.



20 ♖f1 b5 21 ♗c2 ♖b7

21...♞a7! would have kept a clear edge. After 22 ♗g5 ♜c7 23 g3 ♖b7 24 f3 ♗d5, the advantage of having the two bishops is sufficient to claim a clear advantage overall.

22 ♜xd7 ♖xf3 23 gxf3 ♜fd8 24 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 25 ♜c1 ♖h6 26 ♗e3 ♗d5

Black could play on for a win (after 26...♗f7 27 ♜c2 he is still pushing) but it seems a draw was sufficient.

27 ♖h3 ♗f4 ½-½

White gave up the centre early on by giving Black two dormant central pawns. This meant that their later advance would offer Black a central advantage, which did happen, although White successfully grovelled for a draw.

White plays 4 c3

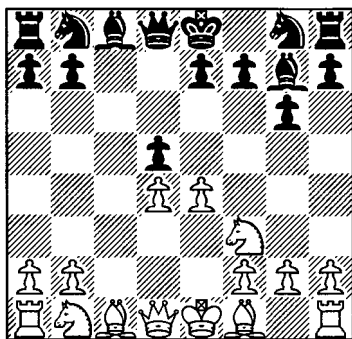
The next game sees White's efforts to support the centre by neglecting piece development and playing the pawn to c3. Black immediately strikes in the centre with ...d5 and then piles pressure on the weak d4-pawn.

Game 31 T.Gharamian-V.Gashimov Cappelle la Grande 2008

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c3 ♙g7 4 d4

SMOT: The Pure Sniper move order would be 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 ♘f3 c5 4 c3.

4...cxd4 5 cxd4 d5



This central thrust immediately gives Black full equality.

6 e5

6 exd5 ♘f6 7 ♙b5+ ♘bd7 8 d6 is a popular way of playing and is best met by Malakhov's approach of 8...0-0 when Black acquires excellent play down the e-file regardless of whether White grabs an extra pawn or not. For exam-

ple, 9 dxe7 ♖xe7+ 10 ♖e2 ♜e8 11 ♖xe7 ♜e7+ 12 ♙e3 ♘d5 13 ♘d2 ♘7f6 14 ♘c3 ♘xc3 15 ♙xc3 ♙g4 and Black is the one who is pressing.

6...♘h6 7 h3

White is concerned about the c8-bishop trading itself for the f3-knight, which has an important defensive role in protecting the weak and attackable d4-pawn. Even so, excessive prophylaxis with h2-h3 ensures that Black can easily equalize.

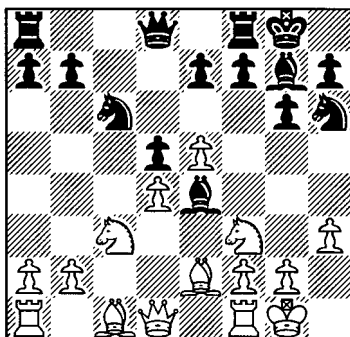
7...0-0

Also good, and more in tune with the Sniper ethos, is 7...♘c6!?. There is of course no need to rush with ...0-0.

8 ♙e2 ♘c6

Black's light-square access for the knights will allow him to build up great pressure on the d4-pawn.

9 0-0 ♙f5 10 ♘c3 ♙e4!



A surprising best move: the bishop offers itself to cause advantageous chaos in the centre.

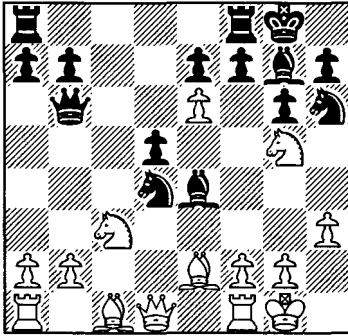
11 ♘g5 ♖b6

Just as he would do in an Advance French Defence pawn structure, Black

The Sniper

will try and throw everything he can at the d4-pawn/square.

12 e6 ♖xd4



Black's success in the centre gives him a middlegame advantage.

13 ♖gxe4 dxe4 14 ♖xh6 ♖xh6

The Sniper bishop loves to have no opposing bishop.

15 exf7+ ♖xf7 16 ♖c4 e6

The two central pawns are weak but they still have useful roles in attacking central squares.

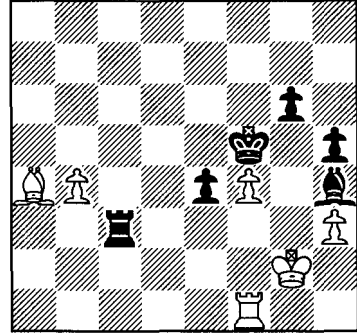
17 ♖e2 ♖g7 18 ♖xd4 ♖xd4

The dust settles and Black is left with the centre, good attacking prospects against f2 and b2, and a later pawn thrust with ...e3.

19 ♖e2 ♖c6 20 ♖ad1 ♖d8 21 b3 ♖g7 22 ♖g4 ♖f5 23 a4 a6 24 ♖h1 e5 25 f4 h5 26 ♖h4 ♖f6 27 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 28 g3 exf4 29 gxf4 ♖c5 30 ♖d2 b5 31 axb5 axb5 32 ♖e2 ♖f5 33 ♖g2

33 ♖fd1 may look dangerous but the centralized king decides matters: 33...♖xf4 34 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 35 ♖xd4 ♖e3! will make the endgame simple for Black.

33...♖f6 34 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 35 b4 ♖c7 36 ♖xb5 ♖h4 37 ♖a4 ♖c3



Black's three advantages combine to ensure the victory: more active king, more active rook and superior pawn structure. In general, two advantages are required to ensure the win but three clear advantages make the process trivial – although as always care is required.

38 ♖b1 ♖g3+ 39 ♖h2 ♖a3 40 ♖d7+ ♖xf4 41 b5 ♖a2+ 42 ♖h1 e3 43 ♖e6 ♖d2 44 ♖c4 e2 45 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 46 b6 ♖e8 47 b7 ♖b8 48 ♖b4+ ♖g3 49 ♖b3+ ♖f2 50 ♖b2+ ♖e3 51 ♖g2 g5 0-1

This game saw Black's pieces attack the d4-pawn viciously in the opening, and this resulted in an excellent middlegame for the 2665-rated Grandmaster Gashimov.

White plays 4 d5

It's nice to see Topalov play and win with this Sniper variation as Black, thus giving it quite a high stamp of approval which in turn means it doesn't need my recommendation!

Game 32

I.Sokolov-V.Topalov

Hoogeveen 2006

1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♗g7 3 ♖f3 c5 4 d5 ♖f6

Also playable is 4...d6!? 5 h3 a6 6 a4 ♖f6 7 ♗c3 with a space advantage for White but plenty of middlegame play in store to neutralize that.

5 ♗c3 d6 6 ♗b5+

After the solid 6 ♗e2 0-0 7 0-0 Black can play 7...♗e8!!.. I've given this move two exclamation marks: one because it's a very good move and another because it was the first plan that I learnt from a Grandmaster (albeit in a different position) when I was fortunate enough to see Grandmaster Mihai Suba analyse. As an impressionable teenager, I recall being absolutely amazed as he nonchalantly doubled his king's pawn (at this point, graded 167 BCF, I believed doubled pawns were worth only half a pawn each!) only a few moves later to see him plant his knight on d6 with apparent immunity and with excellent surveillance of all the key central squares – truly Dynamic Strategy! This experience of watching a brilliant dynamic strategist at work remained deeply lodged in my psyche, and I unwittingly sought out positions of complex dynamism within my playing style – with mixed results but always great joy.

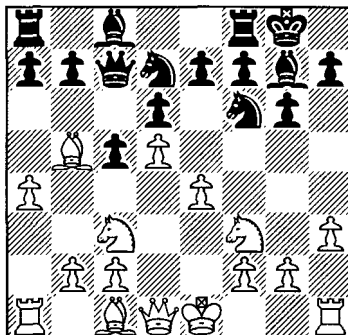
An example of how to continue as Black can be seen from Grandmaster

Minasian's play, in a 1994 game played against Rotstein, in Paris: 8 ♗f4 ♖d7 9 ♖d2 ♗b8 10 ♗h6 ♗c7 11 a4 a6 12 a5 ♖f6 13 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 14 h3 b5 15 axb6 ♗xb6 16 b3 e6 when White is quite comfortable. However, if I could refer the reader back to 9...♗b8 and replace this move with the Suba/Storey idea of 9...♗e5, then Black can look forward to a fairly safe queenside expansion and good counterplay. If White tries to mess the pawns up, then 10 ♗xe5 dxe5 (gaining a useful tempo) 11 ♗e3 b6 12 a4 ♖d6 and we have the Suba/Storey knight and a messy position with level chances.

6...♖fd7

The most complex move.

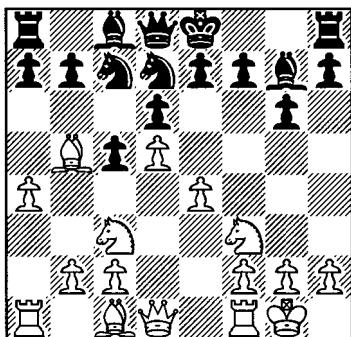
Blocking with the other knight is my other recommendation: 6...♖bd7! 7 a4 0-0 8 h3 ♖c7!.



The protection of e5 from ...♖c7 gives Black a nice middlegame, as it is quite difficult for White to easily organize his thematic e5 thrust without leaving some weaknesses

If the knight comes to c7, not only does it get some initiative against the b5-bishop but it also supports a quick ...a6/...b5 with excellent counterplay.

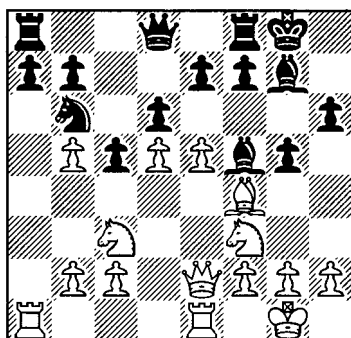
8 0-0 ♖c7



9 ♖e1

Leaving the bishop to be captured, but Topalov finds a good solution to White's active play.

9 ♖e2 was a quick draw in I.Khenkin-B.Savchenko, Havana 2009.
9...♗xb5 10 axb5 0-0 11 ♖f4 ♗b6 12 e5 ♖f5 13 h3 h6 14 ♖e2 g5!

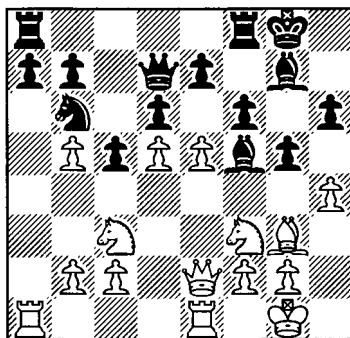


An excellent move that denotes Topalov's intention to utilize his bishop pair. Many players would frown at

weakening their own kingside, but Black's dominating light-squared bishop has all of the weak squares covered.

15 ♖g3 ♖d7 16 h4 f6

Even Topalov has a liking for my favourite little move!



17 e6 ♖e8 18 ♗h2 ♖g6

The position is dynamically balanced, but Topalov goes on to win.

19 f4 ♖h5 20 ♖d3 gxf4 21 ♖xf4 ♖g6 22 ♗f1 f5 23 ♗h2 ♖g4 24 ♖g3 ♖xg3+ 25 ♗xg3 ♖e8 26 ♗ge2 ♗h7 27 ♖g3 ♗c4

Black seizes the initiative. As the white pieces go backwards, Black's advantage grows greater.

28 b3 ♗e3 29 ♖ac1 ♖g8 30 ♗d1 ♗xd5 31 c4 ♗b4 32 ♗e3 a6 33 bxa6 ♖xa6 34 ♗xf5 ♖f6 35 ♗f4 ♖a2 36 ♗d5 ♗xd5 37 cxd5 ♖h5 38 ♖f1 ♖d2 39 ♗e3 ♖d4 40 ♗c4 ♖d3 41 ♖f4 ♖xb3 42 ♗d2 ♖b2 43 ♖b1 ♖g6 44 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 45 ♖f3 ♖f8 46 ♗c4 ♖e4 47 ♖xd6 ♖xf3 0-1

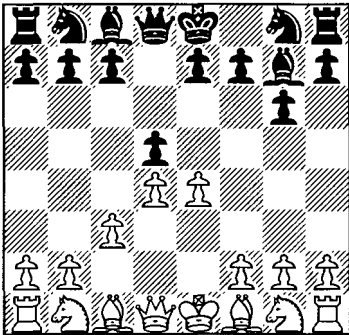
Here we saw Black deal effectively with White's ♖b5+ and later play a weakening kingside move: ...g5! Black was able to cover all his light squares and the bishop pair triumphed.

Chapter Three

White Plays 3 c3 – The Deferred Sniper

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 c3 d5 (with ...c5 to come)

times – time will tell if I achieved my objective!



Game 33
S.Tiviakov-C.Storey
European Union Ch'ship,
Liverpool 2008

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 c3 d5

Not quite a Sniper – yet!

4 ♞d2

Tiviakov plays a Tarrasch-style line against the Sniper, but I had prepared an ambitious idea.

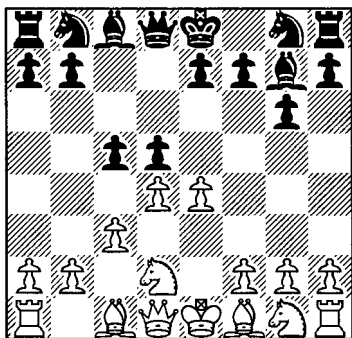
4...c5!

Behold – the Deferred Sniper. The knight is not exactly well placed on d2 and this pawn sacrifice is highly instructive. Does Black have enough for the sacrificed pawn? Yes, but it is very

The Storey Gambit

Let's start this chapter by taking a closer look at my game against Tiviakov. Facing him was a great honour for me, and I wanted to make an impact on opening theory against one of the best opening theoreticians of recent

long-term compensation.



5 dxc5 ♟f6! 6 exd5

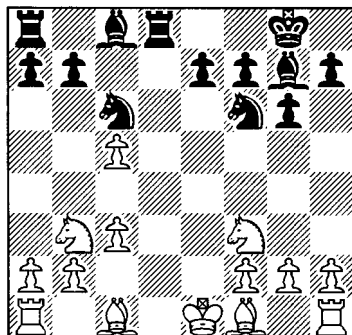
Alternatively, 6 ♟b5+ ♟d7 7 ♟xd7+ ♟bxd7 8 exd5 ♟xc5 and Black stands well.

6...♟xd5 7 ♟b3

For 7 ♟gf3, see the next game.

7...♟xd1+ 8 ♟xd1 0-0 9 ♟f3 ♟d8+ 10 ♟e1 ♟c6

Black's lead in development together with White's inability to castle or to move a knight to c5 (the extra pawn occupies that square) ensures that Black has a small advantage. This highly original position demands further tests.



11 ♟e2 e5

Black's advantage may not be obvious, even to a Grandmaster, but he is better in the centre and can create further weaknesses in the White camp.

12 ♟e3 ♟e6 13 ♟g5 ♟d5 14 f3 h6 15 ♟h3

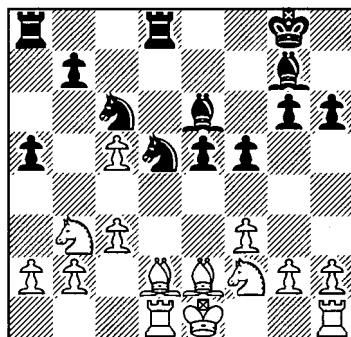
Further central costs for White, as the knight is forced to the rim.

15...♟e6 16 ♟d1 ♟d5 17 ♟d2 f5

Black has the centre and better piece positioning, and added up this is worth more than the pawn.

18 ♟f2 a5!

Another piece will be pushed away from the centre.

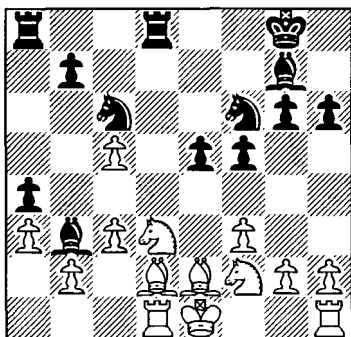


19 ♟c1 a4 20 a3 ♟f6

Black is still better but there is a strange pressure that comes over a player when he faces opponents much higher-rated than himself. I am not blaming this pressure for one of the moves I soon play, but just noting my general inability to swim with the grandmaster dolphins who can calculate considerably better than me.

21 ♟cd3 ♟b3!

The white rook is forced back to an inactive square. I think I just needed a bit more belief here, but instead I got carried away and played what even a beginner would call an error! In fact any beginner could see the best move here – simply double on the d-file. That's the strange pressure I mentioned earlier that a higher-rated player can inflict on an opponent.



22 ♖a1 ♖a5?

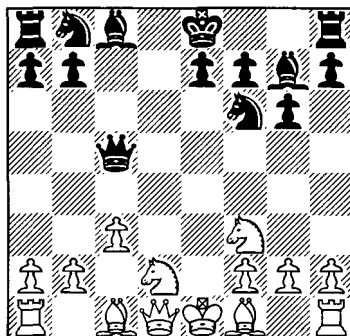
The remaining moves of the game are too painful for me to add – I just got outplayed.

Of course it's easy to win in analysis, but had I played the 'beginner's' 22...♖d7!, the simple and logical move, I could have gained a clear advantage as I previously showed in the introduction: 23 g4 ♖ad8 24 gxf5 gxf5 25 ♙c1 ♗f7 26 ♖g1 ♙f8 27 ♗f1 ♙c4 28 ♖b4 ♙xe2+ 29 ♗xe2 ♖a5 30 ♖bd3 ♖e8 31 ♖d1 ♖c4, etc.

In the next game White deviates from Tiviakov's play and Black quickly acquires a small advantage.

Game 34
J.Heissler-L.Thiede
German League 2002

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 c3 d5 4 ♖d2 c5 5 dxc5 ♖f6 6 exd5 ♗xd5 7 ♖gf3
Instead of Tiviakov's 7 ♖b3.
7...♗xc5



Black regains the pawn and enjoys a temporary development advantage.

8 ♖b3

The knight has moved twice but hardly occupies a great square. Black does not have to worry too much about a quick opening attack.

8...♗c7 9 ♙b5+ ♖bd7?!

After this move White is fully equal again.

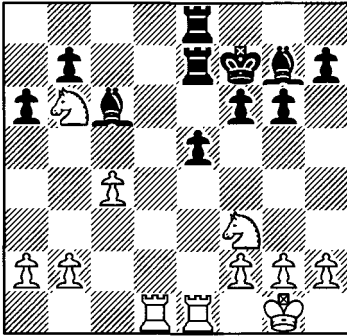
9...♖c6! is better than the text as it leaves the bishop a little loose and there is no way White is going to gain from a c6 capture: 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖e1 ♙g4 12 h3 ♖ad8 with better prospects for Black.

10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖e1 e5 12 ♙g5 ♖e8 13 ♖bd2 a6 14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 ♙xd7 ♙xd7

16 ♖e4 ♗g7 17 ♖d6 ♖d8

Not the most inspiring of moves. After 17...♖ac8! Black has great winning chances in the ending.

18 ♖ad1 ♗c6 19 ♖c5 ♖e7 20 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 21 ♖d6 ♗f8 22 ♖c4 f6 23 ♖b6 ♖ae8 24 c4 ♗f7



Even in this ending Black has the better winning prospects on account of ...f5 at an opportune moment.

25 b4 ♖c7?!

Black is doing his best not to win this one. 25...f5! would have been the clearer way to keep the advantage.

26 c5 ♗f8 27 ♖d2

Now the two knights start to increase their grip over important central squares, including the rook access square at d7.

27...♖d8 28 ♖dc4 ♖xd1 29 ♖xd1 ♗e7

White has secured the d-file and placed the knights on solid squares. Black was probably now wishing he had played 25...f5! to gain some activity.

30 a4 ♗e6 31 f3

31 ♖a5! pressures the bishop and

helps to keep the advantage.

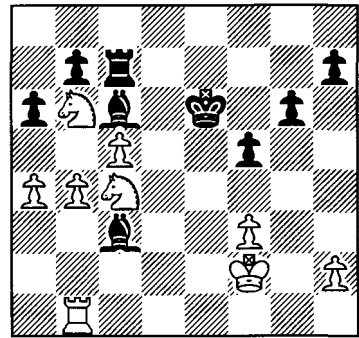
31...f5

Black begins to get some counterplay. 31...♗xa4! 32 ♖xa4 b5 is a somewhat surprising tactic, difficult for a human to see but simple for a computer engine.

32 ♖e1 e4 33 ♗f2 ♗f6

Now the bishops are active and suddenly Black has the winning chances.

34 ♖d1 ♗c3 35 ♖b1 exf3 36 gxf3



36...♗d4+

36...g5! mobilizing the majority gives Black an advantage.

37 ♗g2 ♗f6 38 ♖a5 ♖e7?

The lure of gaining activity allows White to seize some of his own. 38...♗g5! still fights for the win.

39 ♖xc6?!

After 39 ♖d1 ♖e2+ 40 ♗f1 ♖f2+ 41 ♗e1 suddenly a black piece will be lost.

39...bxc6 40 ♖d1

After a complicated 'Not Quite Endgame' and a plethora of errors therein, White emerges with a small advantage and soon goes on to increase it:

40...♙c3 41 b5 axb5 42 axb5 ♖e6 43
 bxc6 ♜xc6 44 ♜d5+ ♙g5 45 ♜xc3 ♜xc5
 46 ♜d5 ♜c4 47 ♙g3 ♙h6 48 ♜f4 ♜c6 49
 h4 ♜a6 50 ♜d7 ♜a8 51 ♜h3 ♜h8 52
 ♜g5 ♙h5 53 ♜xh7 f4+ 54 ♙h3 1-0

This game saw Black acquire the two bishops, although White's centralized pieces were equal to them. Black had some good opportunities to fight for the advantage – specifically 9...♜c6 can be recommended.

The Main Line:

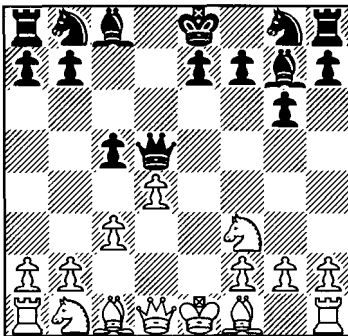
White Plays 4 exd5

The following two games will show a good way of playing against the c3-Sicilian, which could feature in the Sniper if White plays in this manner.

Game 35

D.Gjuran-I.Khmelniker
Pardubice 2008

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 ♜xd5 4 d4 g6 5
 ♜f3 ♙g7



SMOT: But this time it is a Deferred

Sniper! The Sniper could reach this position with 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 c3 d5 4 exd5 ♜xd5 5 ♜f3 c5.

6 ♜a3

The best way to meet 6 ♙e2 is with 6...cxd4. For example, 7 cxd4 ♜f6 8 ♜c3 ♜d6 (the best square for the queen) 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜b3 ♜c6 11 ♜d1 ♜b4 (Black is well placed to have slightly the better of the ending) 12 d5 ♜xb3 13 axb3 ♜b4 14 ♙f4 ♜e8 15 ♙e3 ♜a6 16 ♜d4 ♜ac7 17 ♜db5 ♜xb5 18 ♜xb5 a6 19 ♜c3 ½-½, Zhang Pengxiang-Ni Hua, Budapest 2000. When we consider that Pengxiang was rated nearly 200 points higher than his opponent, this has to be viewed as a very successful opening for Black.

6...cxd4 7 ♜b5

7 ♙c4 is the other main try for White:

a) After some analysis I've concluded that I cannot recommend the popular 7...♜e4+?!, because of 8 ♙e3 ♜h6 9 cxd4 0-0 10 ♜b5 ♜c6 11 ♜c7 ♜f5 12 ♜xa8 ♜fxd4 13 ♜c1 ♙g4 14 ♜c7 ♙xf3 leading to complications which are favourable for White.

b) Instead Black should play 7...♜d8!, which is the best square for the queen. After 8 ♜b3 e6 9 ♙f4 ♜f6 10 ♜b5 0-0 11 ♜bxd4 (when White moves backwards from b5 with this knight, it is a sign that his early opening aggression has not worked) 11...♜c6 12 ♜xc6 bxc6 13 0-0 ♜d5 14 ♙g3 ♜b6 Black is by no means worse.

7...♜a6 8 ♜bxd4

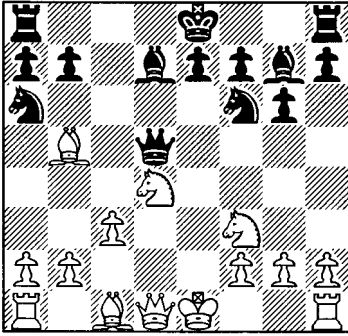
The Sniper

A simple development count is in Black's favour and shows that he has done something right in the opening, even though White gets good centralized knights.

8...♖f6 9 ♘b5+

In the next game we will consider 9 ♘xa6.

9...♙d7

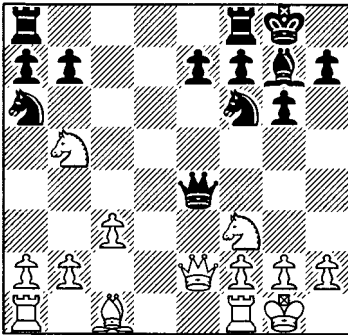


Black has a slight lead in development, ensuring an equal game.

10 ♖e2 0-0 11 0-0 ♙xb5

11...♗c5!? is also a good try.

12 ♗xb5 ♖e4



Black has no weaknesses and enjoys a level position.

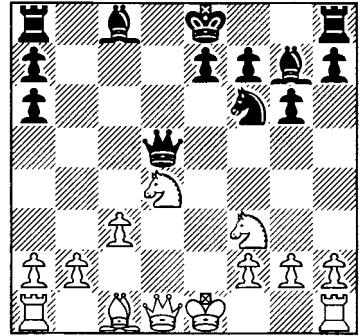
13 ♙e1 ♗xe2 14 ♙xe2 e6 15 ♙e3 b6 16 ♙d4 ♗fc8 17 ♗e5 ♗e8 18 f4 ♗ac7 19 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 20 c4 ♗e8 21 b3 ♗d8 22 ♗d1 f6 23 ♗f3 ♗f7 24 ♗de1 ½-½

The next c3-Sicilian Sniper game sees the Sniper's brother take charge of the long a8-h1 diagonal.

Game 36

A.Karpatchev-A.Galliamova
St Petersburg 1998

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 ♗xd5 4 d4 g6 5 ♗f3 ♙g7 6 ♗a3 cxd4 7 ♗b5 ♗a6 8 ♗bxd4 ♗f6 9 ♙xa6 bxa6



White attempts to justify his development lag by damaging Black's pawn structure, but now Black's light-squared bishop has no challenger and Black can look forward to play on the long a8-h1 diagonal.

10 0-0 0-0 11 ♙e1 ♙e8 12 ♗b3 e5

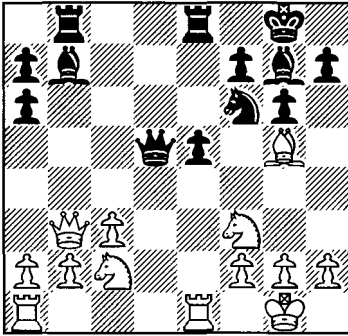
12...♗d6!? is better than 12...e5 as it prepares the initiative-gaining move ...♗b8 with great activity in the middle-

game.

13 ♖c2 ♗b7

This bishop takes over the role of the dominant piece and will generate threats for a long time along its diagonal.

14 ♗g5 ♞ab8



Black's activity already ensures the better middlegame prospects.

15 ♜xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♞ad1 h6 17 ♗c1 g5 18 c4 ♖f4

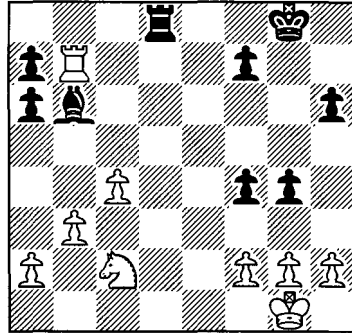
The two-bishop advantage is only an advantage when they are controlling many key squares. Here both are doing so, especially the Sniper's brother.

19 ♗xf4 exf4 20 b3 g4

Always look to gain advantages in the centre, be it occupying, controlling, or reducing the opponent's control of it.

Black gains an edge here by forcing the knight to occupy a good central square. This prevents the d1-rook from utilizing its control of an open file and thus negates its ability to arrive on the seventh rank.

21 ♘fd4 ♞xe1+ 22 ♞xe1 ♞d8 23 ♞e7 ♗xd4 24 ♞xb7 ♗b6



Black has a won game as the threat of mate on the back row cannot easily be dealt with. For example, 25 h3 ♞d1+ 26 ♗h2 g3+ 27 fxg3 ♗g1+ 28 ♗h1 ♗f2+ 29 ♗h2 fxg3 is checkmate!

25 ♞e7 ♞d2 26 ♘e1 g3

White has no defence but plays on for a few more moves.

27 hxg3 fxg3 28 ♘f3 gxf2+ 29 ♗f1 ♞d1+ 30 ♘e1 fxe1 ♜+ 31 ♞xe1 ♞xe1+ 32 ♗xe1 a5 33 ♗d2 ♗g7 34 ♗d3 ♗f6 35 ♗e4 ♗e6 36 g4 ♗c5 0-1

This game showed that the presence of two active bishops can force other positional advantages. In particular, Black's domination of the d-file and penetration of the seventh rank came about due to White's desire to capture the useful bishop on b7 which was performing an excellent active role for Black.

In conclusion, these two games gave Black no real problems, and ...g6 is a good way of playing against the c3-Sicilian via a Deferred Sniper.

Less Popular Moves

The following game will show how difficult it is for a Master to play well when forced to think for himself in a new situation. A basic principle is broken which allows Black to assume the initiative as early as move five.

Game 37
M.Jevtic-M.Simic
Belgrade 1989

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 c3 d5 4 ♗d3?!

4 e5 transposes to other lines after 4...c5:

a) 5 ♖f3 cxd4 6 cxd4 transposes to Gharamian-Gashimov (Game 31)

b) 5 f4 transposes to positions considered in the next chapter.

4...dxe4!

Black quickly finds a way to gain a free development move and with it seize a tiny advantage.

5 ♗xe4 ♖f6

5...♖f6 drives the bishop back and gains a free move. In terms of development advantage, this simply gives Black White, and White Black!

6 ♗d3

Black has an extra piece developed and also has the move – a complete success for the Sniper.

6...0-0

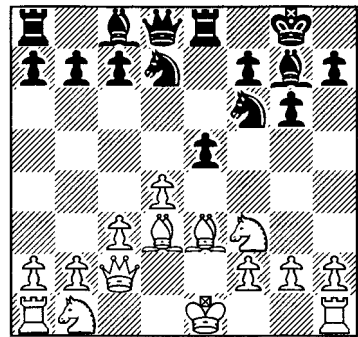
All Sniper players know that ...0-0 is always a last resort and other moves that affect the centre should be played first if possible. The interesting alterna-

tive 6...c5!? was more in the spirit of the Sniper, and if 7 dxc5 0-0 8 ♗c2 ♜xd1+ 9 ♗xd1 ♖bd7 10 b4? Black has 10...♖d5.

7 ♗e3 ♖bd7

Black gains a clear plus by grabbing the centre with 7...e5!, with chances of an e-file attack and ...♖g4 gaining the two-bishop advantage.

8 ♖f3 ♗e8 9 ♜c2 e5



Black is already close to winning and 4 ♗d3 must be assigned to the scrapheap.

10 ♖bd2 exd4 11 cxd4 ♖d5

The pressure on the e3-bishop ensures more advantage for Black.

12 ♗e4 ♖xe3 13 fxe3 ♖f6 14 0-0 ♖xe4

15 ♖xe4 ♗f5 16 ♖fd2 ♜e7 17 ♖f4 ♗h6

18 ♖af1 ♗xf4 19 ♖xf4 ♗xe4 20 ♖xe4 f5

21 ♜c4+ ♗h8 22 g3 b5 23 ♜c3 fxe4 24

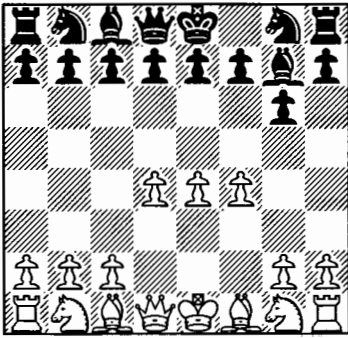
d5+ ♜g7 25 ♜c6 ♖f8 26 ♖xe4 ♜f6 0-1

This game once again showed the power of two active bishops, who converted their pressure into material advantage. This transpired because White immediately handed Black the initiative with the error 4 ♗d3?!

Chapter Four

White Grabs the Centre with 3 f4

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 f4

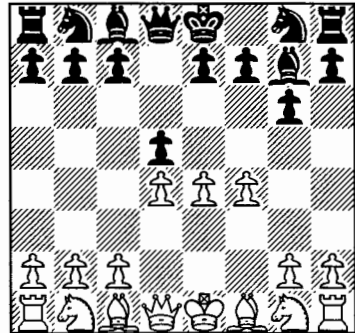


Schmid Benoni.

The ...d5 Neutralizer

Game 38
D.Svetushkin-V.Iordachescu
 Ciocaltea Memorial,
 Bucharest 2000

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 f4 d5!



In this chapter we see White play the 'Three Pawns Attack' (d4/e4/f4). This highly aggressive setup must be met with timely central thrusts. My recommendation against this move order is the Deferred Sniper with 3...d5! followed by 4...c5. This is a very good alternative to playing the Pure Sniper with 3...c5, which leads to the f4

The Sniper

The Pure Sniper move order of 3...c5 is put on hold in favour of the Deferred Sniper, and for a very good reason because Black soon emerges with an excellent position. 3...d5 can be played and is still okay for Black (see the next section), but 3...d5 is better at exploiting White's optimistic aggression.

4 e5

White has the central advantage but Black can solve the problem of his worst minor piece, which is of course how to develop the c8-bishop.

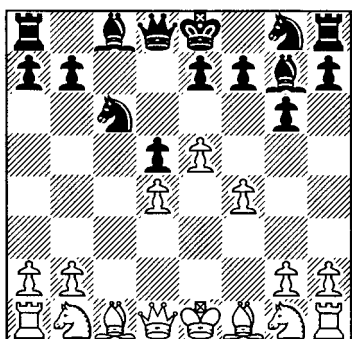
4...c5

In a bid to make the position unclear, 4...h6! is worth a try, although the text is fine.

5 c3

Alternatively, 5 dxc5 c6 6 c3 e6 7 f3 h6 8 d3 0-0 9 0-0 b6 (this gambit is again useful for Black) 10 cxb6 ♖xb6+ 11 g1 with pressure on the queenside for both black rooks and plenty of play for the pawn.

5...cxd4 6 cxd4 c6



Black will now gain counterplay by throwing everything he has at the d4-

pawn. The immediate 6...h6! is also a good move.

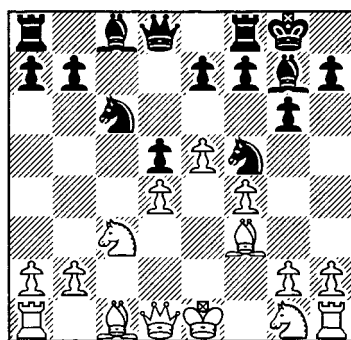
7 c3 h6

Black already has a small advantage. The newly developed knight will enjoy a superb role at f5 where it will survey the entire White army and especially the weakness at d4.

8 e2 0-0 9 f3

9 f3 is covered in the next game.

9...f5



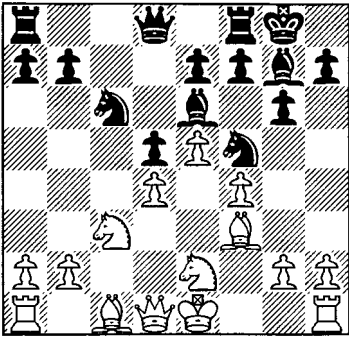
I particularly like this idea of offering to trade d-pawns, and it also helps centralize the black knights.

10 g2

If 10 e6 d5 ♖b6 Black is ready to take on d4 with a lead in development, and ...f8d8 will help Black considerably.

10...e6

This surprising move ensures a good advantage for Black. The key weakness is defended and the Sniper's brother remains active on the light squares. Had the pawn on d5 been defended with ...e6, locking in the bishop, Black would have lost whatever advantage he had.



11 g3

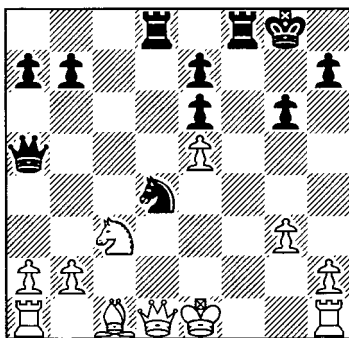
Of course 11 g4 is met by 11...h4.

11...b6

Black really should have gone on to win this position and White can consider himself very lucky to have drawn after being outplayed in the opening.

12 d4

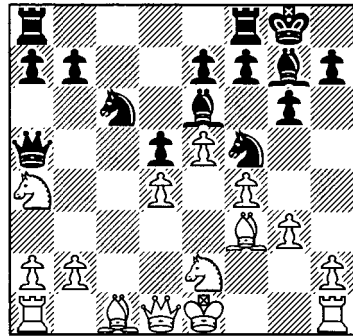
Winning a central pawn with 12 d5?! may look attractive. However, Black crashes through on d4, with his rook applying long-range support. For example, 12...ad8 13 ex6 fxe6 14 a4 a5+ 15 ac3 cxd4 16 dxd4 ex5!! 17 fe5 dx4.



The white king is looking very bare

and the discovered attack is looking lethal.

12...a5+



13 f2 b5

13...ac8 is also extremely good for Black.

14 c5

It is Black's willingness to trade his e6-bishop for a knight that will secure him a good advantage.

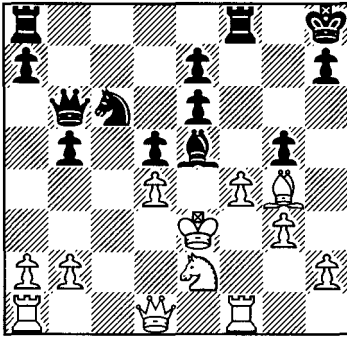
14...b6 15 ex6 fxe6

The most important factor in chess is who has the safer king – immediately or potentially. Here we see that Black gains in his attack on the weaker white king as a result of allowing his e6-bishop to be traded. The pawn increases its value as it is now a central pawn, and also the centre is blocked which somewhat neutralizes White's potential two-bishop advantage. In fact, Black has the 'not two-bishop' advantage! I hope I have enlightened readers as to why the 2569-rated Grandmaster was so keen to allow White to capture his e6-bishop.

16 e3 g5

The Sniper

16...♖xe3! is the best move: 17 ♖xe3 g5 18 ♖g4 ♖h8 highlights the weaker position of the white king and ensures Black's advantage. Note that 19 ♖xe6 is met by a discovered attack from the queen on b6, while 19 ♖f1 is answered by 19...♖xe5!!.



20 fxе5 ♖xe5 21 ♖f3 g4 22 ♖g2 ♖c4+ 23 ♖d3 ♖xb2+ is a nasty fork that fully justifies the incredible ...♖xe5 sacrifice.

17 ♖d2 gxf4 18 gxf4 ♖h6 19 ♖hg1+ ♖h8 20 ♖g4 ♖ad8?!

20...♖ac8! keeps Black's winning chances alive.

21 ♖d1 a5 22 ♖g3 ♖xe5 23 dxe5 d4 24 ♖xf5 exf5 25 ♖gg1 dxe3+ 26 ♖xe3 ♖e6 27 b3 a4 28 ♖e2 axb3 29 axb3 ♖c6 30 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 31 ♖c1 ♖a8 32 ♖xb5 ♖g8 33 ♖g1 ♖xg1 34 ♖xg1 ♖g8+ 35 ♖g3 ♖xf4 36 ♖xg8+ 1/2-1/2

This game saw the Deferred Sniper easily cope with White's early pawn aggression. It also highlighted the dangers of weakening the squares that the pawns neglect after being moved into the centre in such an aggressive man-

ner. Sniper players prefer to place their pawns aggressively in the centre only when there is something tangible to be gained. They avoid being overly speculative as they know this can leave fatally weak squares behind.

The next game sees a transposition to the previous one at move five. White deviates with 9 ♖f3, Black answers with a quick ...♖g4 and then again throws everything he can at d4. This is a simple and highly effective plan that all Sniper players should look to implement against White's central pawn structure.

Game 39 N.Laursen-T.Hillarp Persson Politiken Cup, Helsingor 2008

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♖g7 3 f4 c5

A Pure Sniper, but not recommended in this instance as the Deferred Sniper is better. In other words, play ...d5 before ...c5.

4 c3?!

I believe White has some chances for a small advantage by playing 4 d5 against the Pure Sniper move order in this variation, reaching a f4 Schmid Benoni (see the next section). Credit must go to IM Byron Jacobs, who scored some good results with d5 against me on the ICC and forced me to re-evaluate the variation.

4...d5

This transposes to the previous game which was a Deferred Sniper, but of course Laursen declined the opportunity to play the critical 4 d5!. I hope the reader appreciates the difficulties in compiling this work and presenting the material in an easy-to-absorb manner!

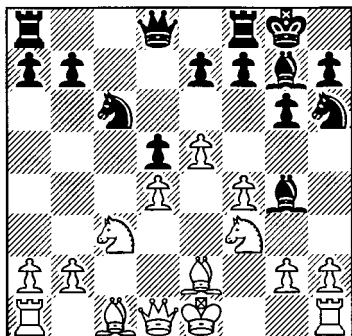
5 e5

An interesting pawn sacrifice is available to Black after 5 dxc5 ♖f6 6 exd5 0-0 7 ♗f3 ♜xd5 8 ♙c4 ♙e6 9 ♗a3 ♜c6, when his position is preferable despite being a pawn down.

5...cxd4 6 cxd4 ♜c6

Black has a simple plan of attacking the pawn base at d4. The black pieces are drawn to it like a bear to honey!

7 ♜c3 ♜h6 8 ♙e2 0-0 9 ♗f3 ♙g4



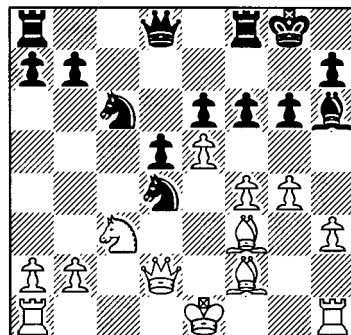
Black will enjoy a decent middle-game advantage, with some simple pressure against d4.

10 ♙e3 ♗f5 11 ♙f2 ♙h6 12 ♚d2 f6 13 h3 ♙xf3 14 ♙xf3 e6 15 g4

Tiger Hillarp Persson is well known for piece sacrifices for a few central

pawns. Here White forces him into it, and he takes little persuasion.

15...♗fxd4



The pressure against d4 yields a good material gain.

16 ♙xd4 fxe5

Simply blowing the White position apart.

17 ♙e3 d4 18 g5 ♙g7 19 ♙xc6 bxc6 20 0-0-0 dxe3 21 ♚xe3 ♚b6

One advantage of being ahead on material is that you can increase your advantage through offering simplification. In this instance Black simply gets free development and takes charge of an important diagonal.

22 ♚e2 exf4 23 ♚xe6+ ♙h8 24 ♜d2 ♚c5 25 ♜c2 ♜ae8 26 ♚d7 f3 27 ♚d2 ♜d8 28 ♗d1 ♚e5 0-1

This was an excellent attack against d4 after a quick ...♙g4, and a huge triumph for Black against the aggressive Three Pawns Attack. Should this line be classified as a Pure Sniper or a Deferred Sniper? Well, if it can be reached via a Pure Sniper then that should get priority, but the earlier game was definitely

a Deferred Sniper. The complexities of move orders – their mastery is difficult!

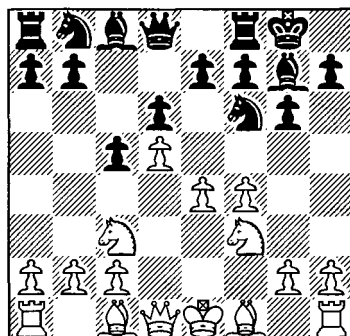
of Black's options are removed.

5 d5 ♖f6 6 ♗c3 0-0

The f4 Schmid Benoni

As mentioned previously, if Black plays 3...c5 White can reply with 4 d5 reaching an f4 Schmid Benoni. This is one of the most aggressive and dangerous setups against the Sniper. Here are two games to help us understand the difference between the Schmid Benoni with f4 and the Schmid Benoni without f4 (as we saw in Sokolov-Topalov, Game 32).

In the first game we will see a slow queenside expansion by Black with ...b6 and ...a6 to deal with White's a4. However, ...b5 is eventually achieved and when it arrives it comes with advantage.



7 ♗e2

The more aggressive 7 e5 is covered in the next game.

7...e6 8 0-0

White should avoid exchanging with 8 dxe6 ♗xe6 as Black is a touch better there.

8...exd5 9 exd5 ♗a6 10 ♗d2 ♗c7 11 ♗c4 a6

Game 40

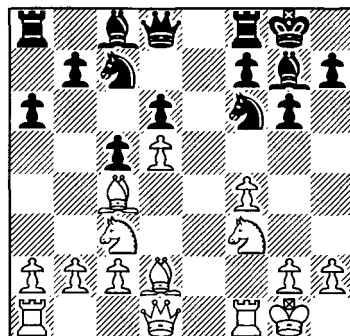
L.Varnam-A.Summerscale British Championship, Torquay 2009

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 f4 d6

Again I refer the reader to 3...d5! against this opening aggression. However, I should stress that the Sniper practitioner does need to be ready for the f4 Schmid Benoni, because of the move order 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♗c3 c5 4 d5 d6, and now 5 f4, etc.

4 ♗f3 c5

SMOT: A Deferred Sniper, although after committing to an early ...d6 some



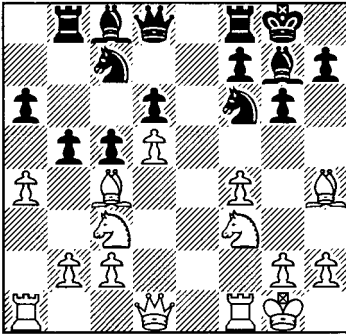
Black threatens ...b5 with a huge initiative gain on the queenside, control of some useful extra squares, and more importantly the central modifier threat of ...b4 would be made ready for

use at Black's discretion. White has only one reasonable move:

12 a4! b6!?

Aaron finds a nice slow way of playing. First of all he prevents the crippling a5 by White, and next he intends to put the black rook behind the pawn and then push it to b5.

13 ♖e1 ♜b8 14 ♖h4 b5

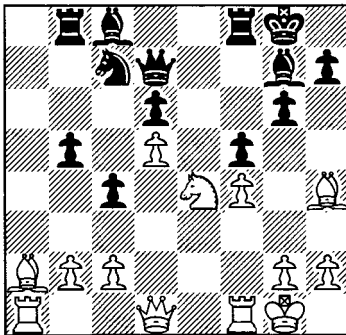


...b5 arrives, securing excellent queenside counterplay and additional spatial control.

15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖a2 ♜d7

Taking a4 away from the knight and helping to connect the rooks.

17 ♜g5 c4 18 ♜ge4 ♜xe4 19 ♜e4 f5



White's last chance of using the f6-square is taken away, and the white pieces are placed on 'non-dangerous active squares'. The English Grandmaster has shown an excellent way of playing the Sniper.

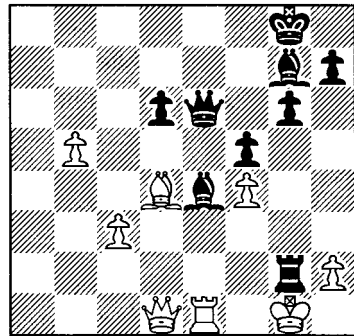
20 ♜g5 ♖b7 21 ♜e6

This is definitely not a position where White can fall asleep after achieving his knight to king six – he is simply lost.

21...♜xe6 22 dxe6 ♜xe6 23 ♜e1 ♖e4

With complete control of the centre and an extra pawn, the remainder of the game is trivial for a Grandmaster.

24 c3 ♜a8 25 ♖f2 ♜a4 26 b3 ♜a3 27 bxc4 ♜fa8 28 cxb5 ♜xa2 29 ♜xa2 ♜xa2 30 ♖d4 ♜xg2+ 0-1



With mate in 11! Here we saw Black counterplay with ...b6 and later ...b5, eventually leading to the win of the d5-pawn (albeit when it arrived at e6).

The next game sees Grandmaster Conquest deal effectively with an early central pawn thrust. He attacks the e5-pawn with everything he has and then

switches his attack to win the other central pawn. However, White's play can be improved upon (see the note to White's 11th move).

Game 41
P.Littlewood-S.Conquest
 British Championship,
 Douglas 2005

1 d4 c5 2 d5 g6 3 e4 ♗g7 4 f4!

An excellent positional approach – the large centre is good for White.

4...d6 5 ♖f3

An important point to remember after 5 ♖c3 is not to fall into a line that can place Black in a positional crush: 5...♗f6?? (a poisoned arrow to the heart of this variation for Black) 6 ♗b5+ ♗fd7 7 a4 when White is already on the verge of a 'winning slow bind' across the entire board.

Black needs a fantastic resource, and we must reverse back to 5...♗f6 to extract the arrow and heal the wound with yet another superb Sniper Sacrifice: 5...♗xc3+!! 6 bxc3 ♗f6! (quick central pressure combined with ...♗a5 causes some uncomfortable problems for White that are unique to the Sniper) 7 ♗d3 ♗a5! (this cheeky queen move causes disharmony in White's development) 8 ♗d2 c4 9 ♗xc4 ♗xe4 10 ♗d4 0-0 11 ♗e2 ♗f6 12 0-0 ♗a6 with a complex but level middlegame struggle that fully justifies the Sniper Sacrifice.

5...♗f6 6 ♗c3 0-0 7 e5

Conquest finds good counterplay against this early aggressive central thrust.

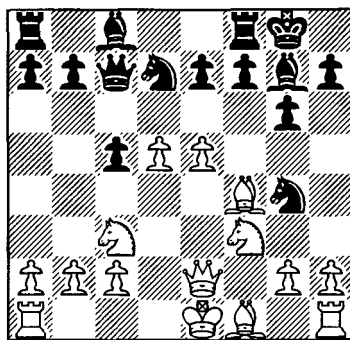
7...dxe5 8 fxe5 ♗g4

White's centre is formidable but can become a target. Black must attack it immediately or he risks getting completely suppressed.

9 ♗e2 ♗d7

9...f6!? is an interesting alternative, and may well be stronger.

10 ♗f4 ♗c7



Conquest has a habit of putting his queen here to attack the e5-square. It also pins the e5-pawn to the bishop.

11 ♗b5

The lure of the attack on the queen works, and Conquest now grabs the initiative.

Much better was 11 0-0-0! ♗gx5 12 ♗b1 a6 13 g3 f6 14 ♗h3 when White has great piece mobility and very realistic attacking potential which is well worth a pawn. This is the reason I cannot recommend this for Black, despite Conquest winning with it.

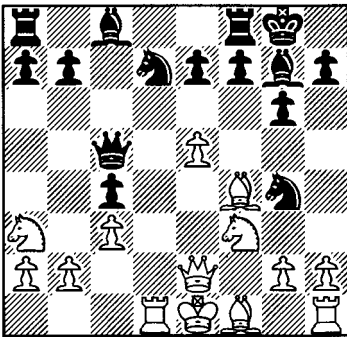
11... ♖a5+ 12 c3 c4

After 12...a6 13 ♘a3 b5 14 h3 ♖a4! 15 g3 ♘h6 16 ♙g2 ♘b6 17 ♖d2 ♘f5 18 g4 ♘xd5! 19 ♖xd5 ♖xf4 20 gxf5 ♖e3+ 21 ♙f1 ♙xf5 Black has a winning position as the rook and bishop will help to make ...♙d3+ a reality.

13 ♘a3

13 ♖xc4 a6! 14 ♘c7 b5 15 ♖c6 ♖a4 is a cheeky move that grabs the advantage. After 16 ♘d4 ♖b8 White's centre will soon be blown up by the Sniper bishop.

13... ♖xd5 14 ♖d1 ♖c5



Preventing ♖xc4 due to... ♖f2 mate!

15 ♘xc4 b5 16 ♘e3 ♘xe3

16... ♘gxe5!? is also a good move for Black.

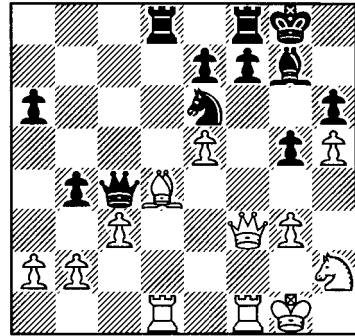
17 ♙xe3 ♖c7 18 ♙d4 ♘c5

An interesting alternative is 18... ♙b7!? 19 e6 ♙xd4 20 ♖xd4 ♘c5 21 exf7+ ♖xf7 22 ♖e5 ♖xe5+ 23 ♘xe5 ♖f5 24 ♘f3 a6 when Black's superior activity more than compensates for the extra pawn island.

19 ♖e3 ♘e6 20 ♙e2 ♙b7 21 0-0 a6 22 h4 ♖c6 23 ♘e1 ♖ad8 24 ♙f3 ♖c8 25 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 26 ♘f3 h6 27 ♘h2 ♖c8 28 h5 g5 29 g3?

29 ♘g4 keeps the game a contest.

29...b4 30 ♖f3 ♖c4



Black starts to attack the queenside weakness and the d4-square.

31 b3 ♖d5 32 ♖e2

Here Conquest played 32... ♖c6 and eventually won. However, after 32... ♖a5 Black already has a winning position as the c3-pawn will fall due its need to support d4.

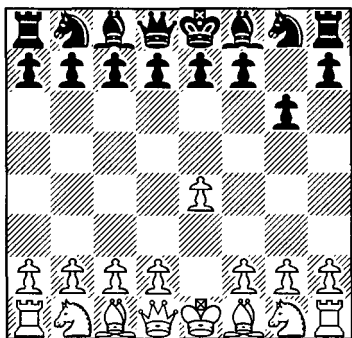
This game showed how to play against early central pawn aggression. Black allowed White to advance the central pawns but pressured them for the rest of the game, combining this with threats against White's weak queenside to create winning chances. White may be able to improve upon his aggressive play at some point, especially with 11 0-0-0!, while for Black 9...f6 could be an improvement.

Chapter Five

Other 1 e4

Lines for White

1 e4 g6



Game 42

J. Roos-S. Belkhodja

Paris 1994

1 e4 c5 2 ♖c3 ♜c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7

SMOT: This position can easily come from a Pure Sniper move order.

5 d3 d6 6 f4

The popular 6 ♙e3 is well met by 6...♜f6! 7 h3 ♜b6! with some irritating pressure for White to deal with, which ensures Black has a good middlegame.

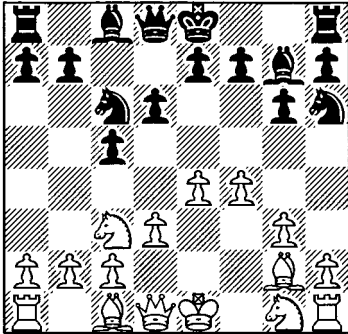
6...♜h6!

After searching the length and breadth of the planet for an excellent way to play against the Closed Sicilian via the Sniper, I have found it! I present it to you here. The Sniper practitioner will immediately notice that the diago-

Closed Sicilian versus Sniper

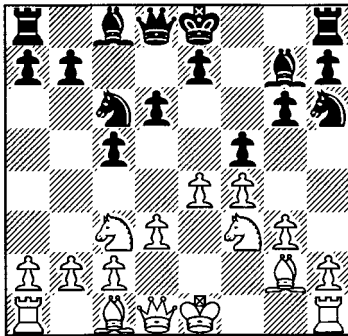
The first two games in this chapter will show a dynamic way for Black to deal with a Closed Sicilian setup using one of our favourite Sniper moves, ...♜h6, in conjunction with ...f5. This approach ensures that Black gets excellent counterplay.

nal stays open, f4-f5 is prevented and ...♙g4 is supported.



An alternative to 6...♘h6 is 6...a6!? reaching another rare position with the knight still on g8, but I will focus on the text and leave the other to your own investigations.

7 ♘f3 f5



Black immediately fights for the centre but wisely refrains from committing the e-pawn. 7...0-0!? was also a good try.

8 ♙d2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖b8

Preparing ...b5-b4 which will have the net result of removing a key defender from the centre.

9...♙b6!? is also playable, as is 9...♙d7!?

10 ♙e1 ♘h8 11 ♖b1 b5 12 a3 b4 13 axb4 cxb4 14 ♘d5 e6 15 ♘e3

15 ♘xb4? ♘xb4 16 ♙xb4 ♙b6+ wins a piece.

15...a5

A complex but level struggle lies ahead.

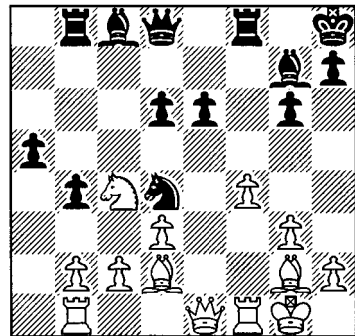
16 exf5 ♘xf5

Black gets an extra central pawn but will there be any chance to make use of it?

17 ♘c4 ♘cd4

17...♙c7!? is another good way of playing.

18 ♘xd4 ♘xd4



Black's central knight ensures a good game.

19 c3 ♘b3 20 ♙e3 ♙c7 21 ♙d1 a4

21...bxc3!? 22 bxc3 a4 also is good for Black.

22 cxb4 ♖xb4

Black's more active rook and extra central pawn offer the better prospects.

23 ♖e1 ♙b7 24 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 25 ♙f2 ♖e8

26 ♖g4 ♗d4 27 ♜bc1 ♜d7 28 ♜e4 ♗f5
29 ♗b6 ♜b5 30 ♗xa4 d5 0-1

The early ...f5 and ...♗h6 plan offers not only a good defence against White's own f5 threats, but also good central counterplay and actually sets White problems. This is a great way of meeting the Closed Sicilian.

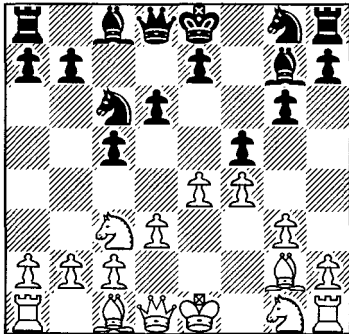
Game 43

M.Todorcevic-B.Vujacic
Belgrade 1980

1 e4 c5 2 ♗c3 ♗c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♖g2 ♖g7

SMOT: This should need no explanation by now, and if so you have mastered the move order part of the Sniper. If you are still confused, please read the end of the introduction again.

5 d3 d6 6 f4 f5



Black prefers to play ...f5 first before ...♗h6. Perhaps this is better than the last game – you decide! I think they are both good.

7 ♗f3 ♗h6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖h1

Neglecting central duties but put-

ting the king safe. It is nearly always better to defend by central control than by preparing a defence for the king. Therefore it is always better to strengthen the centre first if you really want to protect your king.

9...♗f7

Alternatively, 9...♖d7!? gives an interesting position.

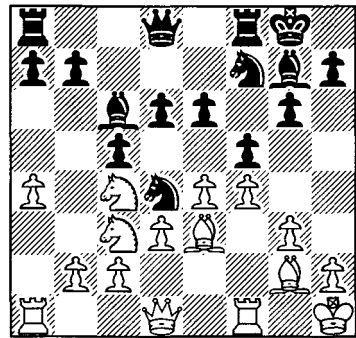
10 ♖e3 ♗d4

Or 10...♜a5!? 11 ♜d2 fxe4 12 dxe4 ♜b8 with a level middlegame.

11 ♗d2

Neglecting the centre in this manner is a triumph for Black's opening. Black's approach of defending his king by strengthening in the centre proves to be the better option.

11...♖d7 12 a4 ♖c6 13 ♗c4 e6



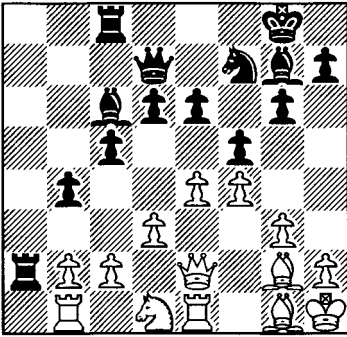
Black has slightly the better of the middlegame. A timely ...fxe4 and centralizing the rooks will enable good prospects for further advantage.

14 ♖g1 b6 15 ♜d2 ♜d7 16 ♗e3 a6

16...♜a8 prepares central thrusts and exchanges, and gives Black a small advantage.

17 ♖ab1 b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♗e2 ♗xe2
20 ♜xe2 ♖a2 21 ♗d1 ♖c8 22 ♖e1 b4

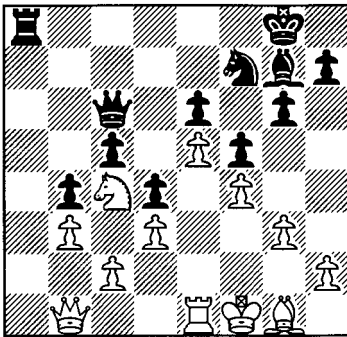
Black has all the queenside play, more space and more active pieces.



23 b3 ♗b7 24 ♗e3 d5 25 e5 ♗d8 26
♖a1 ♖ca8 27 ♖xa2 ♖xa2 28 ♜d1

Control of the only open file and a secure centre guarantee Black a plus.

28...d4 29 ♗c4 ♗f7 30 ♜b1 ♗xg2+ 31
♗xg2 ♜c6+ 32 ♗f1 ♖a8



33 ♜d1

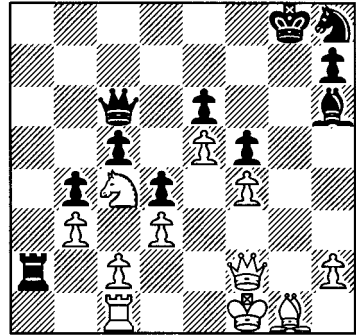
Black dominates the a-file and a8-h1 diagonal but something more is required to attain victory. Undermining the centre or weakening White's king position further would likely

achieve the objective.

33...♖a2 34 ♜e2 g5! 35 ♖c1 gxf4 36
gxf4 ♗h6

The extra pressure should now help to achieve victory.

37 ♜f2 ♗h8!



The point of the earlier ...g5 is revealed: Black now has a won game as the f4-pawn becomes an easy target.

38 ♜h4 ♜f3+ 39 ♗f2 ♜xf4

With the centre undermined, Black's task becomes trivial.

40 ♜d8+ ♗f8 41 ♖e1 ♖xc2 42 ♖e2 ♖c1+
43 ♖e1 ♗f7 44 ♜e8 ♖c2 45 ♖e2 ♖xe2
46 ♗xe2 ♜g4+ 47 ♗e1 f4 48 ♜c6 ♜h3
49 ♗e2 ♗g5 50 ♗d2 ♜xh2 51 ♗e4
♜h5+ 52 ♗d2 ♗xe4+ 53 dxe4 ♜h3 0-1

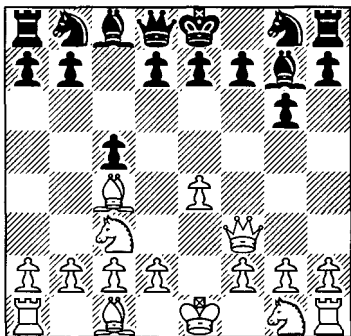
In this game we learnt that it is better to defend by playing in the centre rather than tucking the king away in the corner. In both games we saw a player defeating a higher-rated opponent with Black by deploying the ...f5! ...♗h6 defence, confirming it as an excellent way of meeting the Closed Sicilian. Sniper practitioners can expect many easy points.

Scholar's Mate-Style Attack

The next two games see an incredible idea for Black against a Scholar's Mate-style attack. White's setup is aggressive but Black has an unorthodox answer: 6...♙e7!! . Grandmaster Ivanov is so confident with this idea that he plays it again, against the same opponent, with the same result.

Game 44
S.Fink-A.Ivanov
 Atlantic Open,
 Washington DC 1998

1 e4 g6 2 ♘c3 ♙g7 3 ♙c4 c5 4 ♖f3



This is a cheeky setup that threatens Scholar's Mate, but also applies some positional pressure.

4...e6

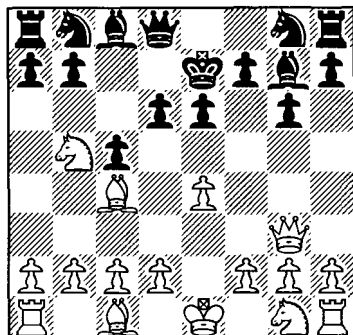
Black will be delighted if ...d5 arrives with a free attack on the c4-bishop.

5 ♘b5

White has two extra pieces in play and reasons that this may justify the second move of the knight, but Black

has an extremely novel solution waiting in the wings:

5...d6 6 ♖g3 ♙e7!!



I love this move, but how and why can it be a good move? Let me attempt to explain:

1. It protects the d-pawn.
2. It prepares ...♞e8 (after ...♘f6).
3. There is a Black initiative brewing with ...a6 and ...b5.
4. Black has good pawn cover on the central squares d5 and e5, thus White has medium to long-term difficulties bringing in his troops.
5. The c5-pawn clamps down on the d4-square, rendering the d2-pawn ineffective in contributing to the attack.

In truth, 6...♙e7!! is difficult to explain completely. Just sit back and admire the beauty of the Sniper!

7 d4

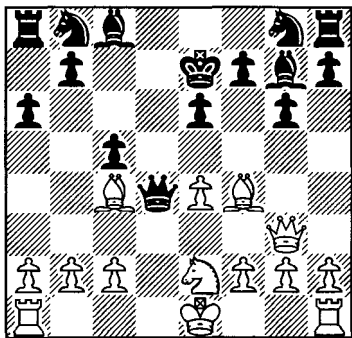
White tries to make use of his pieces in their current active locations, otherwise Black will send them all backwards with an initiative rebound.

7...a6 8 ♘xd6?!

Not happy with facing the inevita-

ble initiative rebound, White sacrifices the knight. Black reasons that the risky king move has enticed White into this losing position!

8...♖xd6 9 ♔f4 ♗xd4 10 ♖e2



10...♖xc4

Black accepted the extra piece and has adequate defensive resources. White has simply no compensation.

11 ♔xb8 ♖f6 12 ♖d1 ♔d7 13 ♗d6+ ♕e8 14 ♖c3 a5 15 ♗c7 ♔f8 16 ♖d3 ♔e7 17 0-0 ♕f8 18 ♖fd1 ♔c6 19 b3 ♗a6 20 ♗e5 ♔xb8 21 ♗xb8+ ♕g7

The dust has settled. Black not only has two bishops for a rook, but also some initiative against the white queen.

22 ♗e5 ♖e8 23 ♖f3 ♗a7 24 g4 ♗b8 25 ♗g5 ♖xe4 26 ♗e3 ♖f6 27 ♖h3 ♖xg4 28 ♗e2 h5 29 f3 ♖f6 30 ♖g3 ♔d6 31 ♖g2 ♔e5 32 ♖b1 ♖d5 33 ♗f1 ♖e3 0-1

This game saw a Grandmaster very successfully play 6...♕e7 against a Scholar's Mate-style attack, and also showed us the interesting criteria that justified such an outrageous opening move.

Game 45
S.Fink-A.Ivanov
World Open,
Philadelphia 2002

1 e4 g6 2 ♖c3 ♔g7 3 ♔c4 c5 4 ♗f3

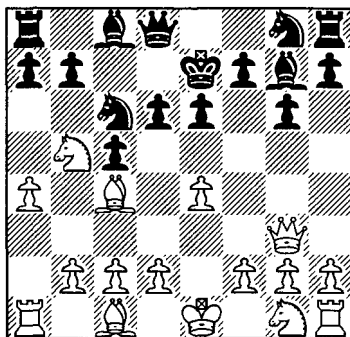
Stanley Fink could be forgiven for playing the same line again, against the same player, but 6...♕e7 once again stands firm!

4...e6 5 ♖b5 d6 6 ♗g3 ♕e7!! 7 a4

Better than his 1998 effort.

7...♖c6

Black defends by adding extra control to the centre.



8 ♖e2 a6 9 ♖bc3

No sacrifice of the knight this time by Mr Fink, but Black's grip on d4 prevents any heavy d-file artillery from getting at the d6-pawn.

9...♖b4

9...♖f6 is also good.

10 0-0 ♖xc2 11 ♖b1 ♖f6 12 d3

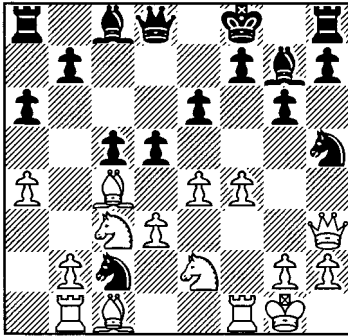
12 e5 comes to nought as well: 12...dxe5 13 ♗xe5 ♗d6 14 ♖d5+ ♖xd5 15 ♗xg7 ♔d7 16 d4 ♖ag8 and once

more 6...♔e7!! is justified.

12...♖h5 13 ♗h3 ♕f8 14 f4

This looks like the seed of a strong attack but there are no good tactics available and Black starts to get his grip on the centre.

14...d5!

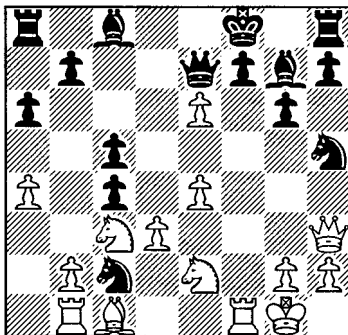


Once again the advantage passes to Black and White doesn't have enough for a pawn.

15 f5 dxc4

Black's 6...♔e7 has achieved quite a useful psychological effect; it is almost as though White is 'honour bound' to try a piece sacrifice.

16 fxe6 ♗e7



This ends the game as a contest, as Black will now play ...♗xe6 with defence and tempo.

17 dxc4 ♗xe6 18 ♗f3 ♖d4 19 ♖xd4 ♗xd4+ 20 ♔h1 ♕g7 21 g4 ♖f6 22 g5 ♖d7 23 b3 ♗he8 24 ♗f4 0-1

I have sympathy for Mr Fink but this is an outstanding mini chess tale. 6...♔e7!! once again proves its value and I am delighted to include it in this book.

Grand Prix Attack versus Sniper

The following games show an excellent way for Black to play against the Grand Prix Attack:

Game 46

J.Ristoja-E.Inarkiev
European Club Cup,
Izmir 2004

1 e4 c5 2 ♖c3 ♖c6 3 f4 g6 4 ♖f3 ♗g7

SMOT: A Deferred Sniper with ...♖c6, but of course this position could have arisen via a Pure Sniper.

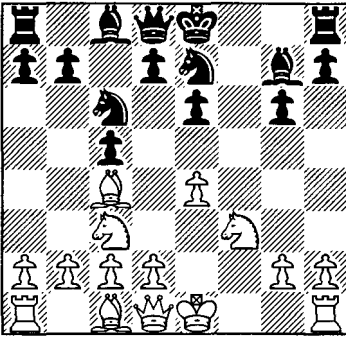
5 ♗c4

After 5 ♗b5 ♖d4 6 0-0 ♖xb5 7 ♖xb5 b6! 8 c4 ♗b7 Black has good middlegame prospects with the bishop pair advantage.

5...e6 6 f5!?

If Black is greedy and grabs this pawn it becomes an excellent move, but trust me Snipers-in-training, do not take it! Strengthen your centre instead, which will negate its value.

6...♖ge7 7 fxe6 fxe6!

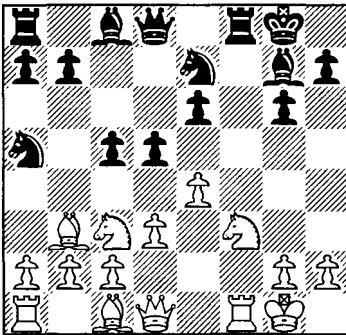


Black has acquired a tiny advantage due to better central placement and f-file usage. 7...dxe6!? is also okay for Black.

8 d3 0-0 9 0-0 d5

Central initiative gaining is a constant weapon in the Sniper's arsenal.

10 ♖b3 ♗a5!



An important moment as the knight prepares to neutralize any aggressive potential of the bishop.

11 ♖g5

Alternatively:

a) 11 ♖e1?! c4 12 ♖a4 (12 dxc4 dxc4 13 ♖a4 a6! is good for Black) 12...a6!

and Black is better.

b) 11 exd5 ♗xb3! is a good move as it removes the aggressive bishop from the battle.

11...d4

Shutting the centre is nearly always good if you gain some initiative with it.

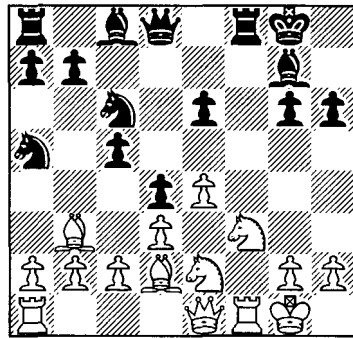
12 ♗e2 h6!

This secures g5 and prevents White's minor pieces from using the square for logistical operations.

13 ♖d2 ♗ec6

Rushing in with 13...♗xb3 14 axb3 e5 15 b4! offers White good counter-play against Black's centre.

14 ♖e1



14...♗xb3

At last the capture is played but only after White has committed his queen to an idea that does not improve his position, so this 'waiting to capture' policy proves to save a tempo.

15 axb3 e5

This is a balanced middlegame and well worth an hour's study, especially since the Grand Prix Attack is quite popular and this is a key position.

16 ♖h4

With 16 ♖g3 White could be forgiven for thinking he has some attack on the kingside, but Black can fight fire with fire: 16...♗d6 17 h4 ♔d7 18 ♕h1 ♜f7 19 h5 g5 (Black's kingside is stronger than White's) 20 ♘h2 ♞af8 21 ♕g1 ♖e6 and Black takes control of the light squares.

16 b4 cxb4 17 ♙xb4 ♘xb4 18 ♖xb4 ♕h7 is completely equal.

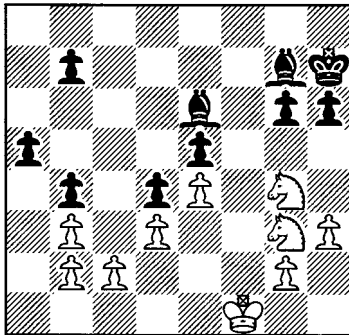
16...♗xh4

Black is more than happy to take on the endgame.

17 ♘xh4 ♙g4 18 ♘g3 ♕h7

Black is slightly better due to the knights being away from the centre.

19 h3 ♙e6 20 ♘f3 ♕g8 21 ♘h2 a5 22 ♘g4 ♕h7 23 ♜xf8 ♜xf8 24 ♞f1 ♜xf1+ 25 ♕xf1 ♘b4 26 ♙xb4 cxb4



Black is on the verge of a won game as the two bishops have easy and quick access to the edges of the board, whereas the white knights will struggle with this important requirement.

27 ♕e1 b5 28 ♘e2 ♕g8 29 ♘h2 h5 30 ♕d1 ♕f7 31 ♘f3 ♕f6 0-1

Black will penetrate on the kingside with his pieces and create a timely passed pawn on the a-file to win. This game saw Black simply exchange White's aggressive b3-bishop. Then White entered a poor endgame and Black's bishop pair helped the 2600+ Grandmaster easily convert to a full point. Overall, this is a good way of playing against the Grand Prix Attack.

This next game will demonstrate an additional option that Black has with the Sniper move order versus a Grand Prix Attack, specifically playing without ...♘c6. It will also show that White has difficulty in exploiting this omission.

Game 47
L.Karlsson-H.Olafsson
Ostersund 1992

1 f4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 e4 ♙g7

SMOT: This move order came from Bird's Opening. As Black is used to the structures it is easy for him to adapt to new situations. This shows one of the advantages of the Sniper, and most of the move order tricks are covered in this book. In other openings there are often tricky move orders that White can use at opportune moments to gain a great advantage in surprise. The beauty of the Sniper is that it is often Black who provides these surprises.

4 ♙c4 e6 5 ♘c3 ♘e7

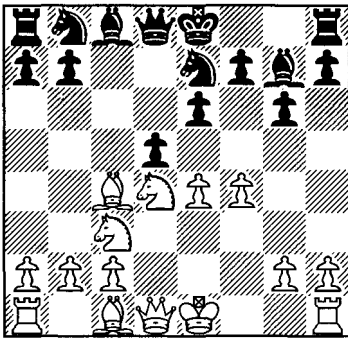
Black of course must strive to use

his d-pawn as quickly as possible, and 5...♗e7 prepares ...d5 with gain of development time.

6 d4

No better is 6 e5 d5 7 exd6 ♗f5. This is stronger than 7...♖xd6 as the black knight recaptures the pawn with a good position. For example, 8 d3 ♗xd6 9 ♖b3 0-0 when Black is solid and slightly better.

6...cxd4 7 ♗xd4 d5



The ...d5 thrust arrives and Black is happy even if White forces him to accept an Isolated Queen's Pawn.

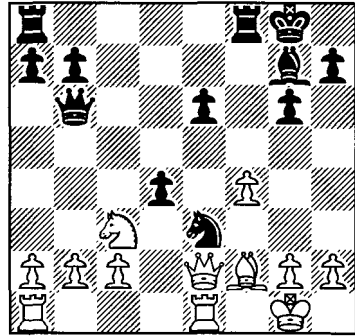
8 ♖b5+

Black's activity in an IQP position resulting after 8 exd5 exd5 ensures that he is fully compensated for his weakened d-pawn. Even so, this may be a wiser way of playing for White, as Black is simply better in the game continuation. One possible line is 9 ♖b3 ♗bc6 10 ♖e3 0-0 11 0-0 ♖b6 (Black is active with his pieces and would welcome the chance to play...d4) and now:

a) 12 ♗ce2 ♖g4 13 ♖d2 ♖xe2 14 ♗xe2 d4 15 ♖f2 ♗f5 when Black is still

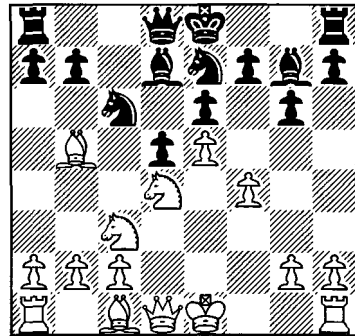
more active, has a greater share of the centre and thus a small advantage.

b) 12 ♗f5 d4 13 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 14 ♖f2 ♗f5 (the d-pawn cramps White's queen and f2-bishop) 15 ♖e1 ♖e6 16 ♖xe6 fxe6 17 ♖e2 ♗e3.



The advantages of the IQP become apparent. Black's play on the dark squares ensures a preferable position for him, even with the weak e-pawn.

8...♖d7 9 e5 ♗bc6



Black has an edge on account of the d4 pressure and trading potential against the b5-bishop.

10 ♖e2 ♗xd4 11 ♖xd4

The queen being on this square will

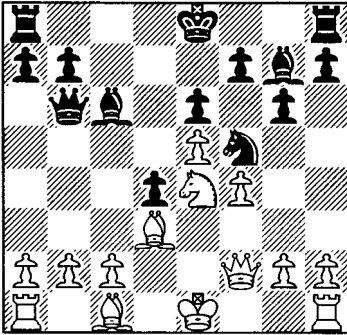
The Sniper

allow Black to gain some central initiative, which guarantees him the better of the middlegame.

11...♟f5 12 ♖f2 d4

12...♟c6 preparing the ...d4 advance for later would have offered more winning chances for Black, rather than just having the better of a draw.

13 ♟e4 ♟c6 14 ♟d3 ♖b6



This dynamic Sniper move irritates White at e3 and b2, and of course defends d4.

15 0-0 0-0 16 ♖e1 ♖ac8

16...♟e4 keeps the advantage, as a 'good knight' that could be improved is a fair trade for a 'good bishop'.

17 a4 a6 18 ♖a3 f6 19 ♟xf6+ ♟xf6 20 exf6 ♖xf6

Black's advantage has disappeared but he is still almost equal. The 'good knight' neutralizes the advantage of the two bishops.

21 a5 ♖b4 22 ♟d2 ♖d6 23 ♖b3 ♟e3 24 ♟xe3 dxe3 25 ♖xe3 ♖xf4 26 ♖c3 ♖g4 27 ♟f1 ♖f8 28 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 29 ♖xe6 ♖a4

The endgame is level.

30 ♖a3 ♖xa3 31 bxa3 ♖f5 32 ♖e7 ♖xa5 33 ♟c4+ ♟h8 34 ♖e3 ♟g7 35 ♖e7+ ♟f6 36 ♖xh7 ♟e5 37 ♖c7 ♖xa3 38 ♟d3 g5 39 ♖g7 ♟f4 40 ♖f7+ ♟e3 41 ♖e7+ ♟d4 42 ♟f2 ♖c3 43 g3 ♖c5 44 h4 gxh4 45 gxh4 a5 46 ♟g6 a4 47 ♖e3 ♖e5 48 c3+ ♟d5 49 ♟f7+ ♟d6 50 ♖xe5 ♟xe5 51 ♟e3 ♟d5 52 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 53 ♟d2 b5 54 ♟c2 ♟e4 55 ♟b2 ♟f5 56 ♟a3 ♟g4 57 c4 bxc4 58 ♟xa4 ♟xh4 59 ♟b4 ♟g4 1/2-1/2

An early f4 and ♟c4 is no test for the Sniper; expect easy points from any White suitors. This game also showed the Sniper is rich in move order transpositions, but Black can easily adapt to new situations as his structure has common traits and there are also many common ideas from other Sniper variations that we have already covered.

The final game in this Grand Prix Attack section will illustrate the danger in allowing a Sniper practitioner a tempo in the centre. White's 7 ♟e2 is an instructive type of error that all Snipers can capitalize on.

Game 48

**A.Herzog-A.Sznapik
Holzoster 1981**

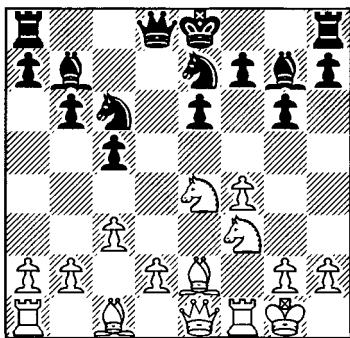
1 e4 g6 2 f4 ♟g7 3 ♟f3 c5 4 ♟c4 e6 5 ♟c3 ♟e7 6 0-0 d5 7 ♟e2

Simply conceding a tempo in this manner is a complete success for the Black opening.

7...dxe4

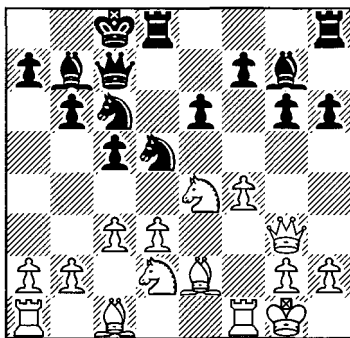
Black can improve with 7...♘bc6!, which is even better than the game continuation.

8 ♘xe4 ♘bc6 9 c3 b6 10 ♖e1 ♙b7



Double Sniper power! Black has good prospects and no development difficulties. In fact Black has the development advantage.

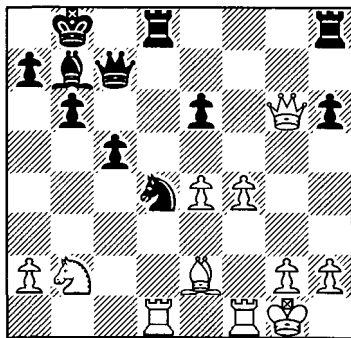
11 d3 h6 12 ♗h4 ♘d5 13 ♗g3 ♗c7 14 ♘fd2 0-0-0



Remember that Sniper practitioners never castle early. Delaying castling in this game has given Black the option to castle queenside in a position which is now highly favourable. Black is well

placed for the coming pawn assault races against the respective kings and can expect a full point from here.

15 ♘c4 f5 16 ♗xg6 fxe4 17 dxe4 ♘xc3 18 bxc3 ♙xc3 19 ♙b2 ♙xb2 20 ♘xb2 ♙b8 21 ♖ad1 ♘d4



Black's superior knight and g-file activity ensure a winning advantage.

22 ♙d3 ♖df8 23 ♗g4 ♖hg8 24 ♗h4 ♗h7 25 ♗e1 ♖g4 26 ♗e3 ♗g7 27 g3 h5 28 ♘c4 ♗c7 29 ♘e5 ♖g7 30 ♖d2 h4 31 g4 ♘c6 32 ♘xc6+ ♗xc6 33 h3 ♖d7 34 ♙c2 ♖xd2 35 ♗xd2 c4 36 ♗d4 b5 37 f5 ♗c7 38 e5 ♖d8 39 ♗e3 ♗c6 0-1

A perfect demonstration of how losing a tempo in the centre (with 7 ♙e2) passes the advantage to Black which was never passed back. Black built upon the advantage and converted it into a full point.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 ♙e3

The next two sections cover less popular choices for White on move three after 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7, namely 3 ♙e3 and 3 ♙c4.

Game 49

P.Bazant-L.Ftacnik

Czech League 2003

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♖e3 c5 4 c3

White tries a cautious c3 but this attempt at a solid setup allows Black easy equality.

4 ♖c3 transposes to 3 ♖c3 c5 4 ♖e3 and this was covered in Games 23-24.

4...cxd4 5 cxd4

For 5 ♖xd4, see the next game.

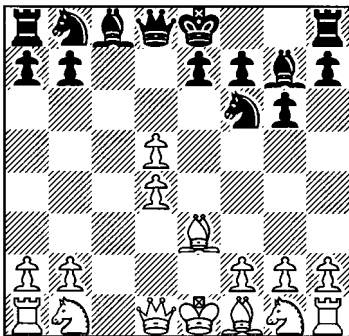
5...d5

Black quickly strikes with ...d5, giving him a good game. This is a common thrust that all Sniper trainees should be aware of.

6 exd5

Blocking the centre with 6 e5!? is fine for Black, with the g8-knight heading to f5 via h6.

6...♖f6



Of course not 6...♗xd5 as Black has a great game when the knight arrives at d5.

7 ♖b5+ ♖bd7

White hangs on to the doubled d-pawn but it is well known that this pawn structure offers Black good play.

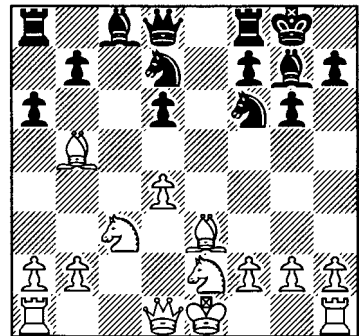
8 ♖c3 0-0

Black now threatens ...♖b6 followed by ...♖xd5 to reach a great setup against the IQP. White will have no compensation in terms of activity, advancing the pawn or a realistic king-side attack. He must find a radical solution or face the prospect of no counterplay in the middlegame.

9 d6

An interesting attempt to try and get back to equality, but White doesn't get quite enough activity and Black's superior development ensures a good Sniper position.

9...exd6 10 ♖ge2 a6

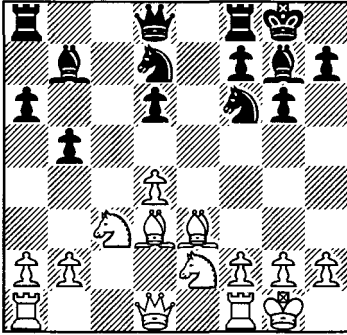


By returning the pawn, White has prevented Black from acquiring good play against White's IQP position. However, Black's lead in development combined with rapid queenside pawn expansion offers excellent middlegame prospects.

11 ♖d3 b5

Black seizes useful space on the queenside and prepares a central modifier with ...b4 chasing the knight.

12 0-0 ♖b7

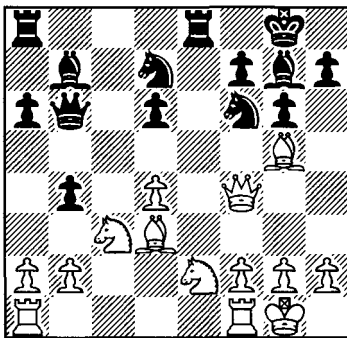


Black has a lovely position, with the Sniper bishop complemented by his brother on b7.

13 ♖g5 ♜e8 14 ♚d2 ♛b6

Black is now well coordinated and has more space than White – a clear success against White's opening effort with 4 c3 and 5 cxd4.

15 ♛f4 b4

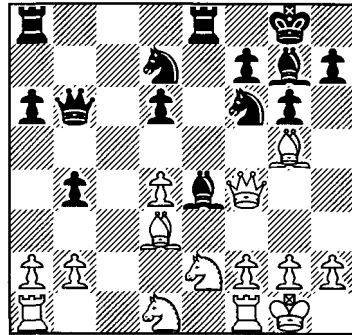


The central modifier arrives and, as so often happens, Black's position improves considerably when a white

piece is forced away from its central duty.

16 ♜d1 ♖e4

Although Black wins the game, 16...♜e4! in conjunction with ...♜f8-e6 is even more clinical. It is always good to try and exploit an opponent's weird piece positioning. Here White's queen on f4 together with ♖g5 is unusual, and this can be effectively met by the equally unusual knight retreat, only to reappear with such massive gain of initiative at e6: 17 ♜e3 ♜f8 and Black is ready to play ...♜e6.



17 ♛d2 ♖xd3 18 ♛xd3 ♛b5 19 ♛b5 axb5 20 ♜e3 ♜b6 21 ♜fe1 ♜e4 22 ♖f4 g5 23 ♖g3 h5 24 ♜f5 b3 25 ♖xd6 ♜xa2 26 ♜ab1 ♜d2 27 ♜eg3 ♜xe1+ 28 ♜xe1 ♜xb2 29 ♜xh5 ♜b1 30 ♜xb1 ♜xb1 31 ♜fxg7 b2 32 ♜f6+ ♜xg7 33 ♜e4 ♜c4 34 ♖b4 f5 0-1

Another central modifier was the catalyst for acquiring the opening advantage. Sniper practitioners love to attack the centre – eventually! White's efforts to play a solid 4 c3, 5 cxd4 and 6 exd5 came to nought, as the IQP posi-

The Sniper

tion that resulted was an ineffective one for White.

In this next game White tries a ♖e3 approach coupled with four moves of his e-pawn after only eight moves:

Game 50
K.Pohl-A.Ivanov
Pillsbury Memorial,
Natick 1997

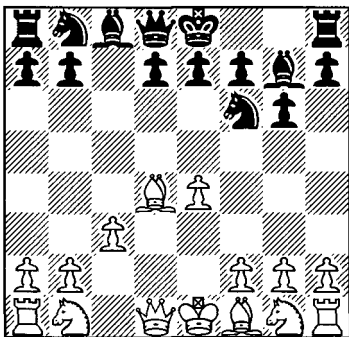
1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♗e3 c5

Grandmaster Ivanov was one of the early pioneers of the Pure Sniper move order, and his games are well worth a study.

4 c3 cxd4 5 ♗xd4

A desperate attempt to confuse a Sniper expert proves to be practically and theoretically erroneous.

5...♠f6!

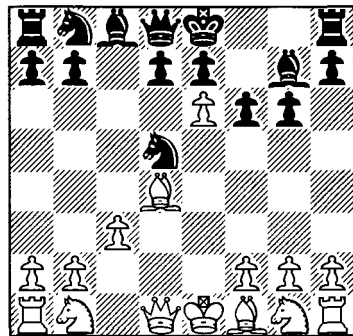


As is often the case, Black is happy to gain a tempo on the bishop with ...♠c6. White will rarely be happy with such a trade.

6 e5 ♠d5 7 e6

A bold attempt for complications but Black already has a lead in development and will get a small advantage.

7...f6

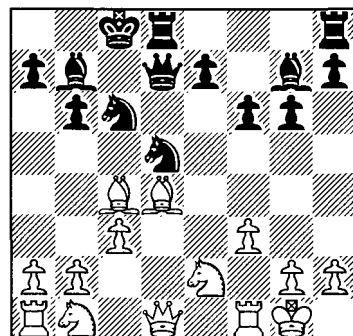


Here is ...f6 again! The Sniper bishop hides in the undergrowth for a while and will resurface later with doubled pressure in centre from itself and the pawn moving to f5.

8 exd7+ ♜xd7 9 ♗c4 ♠c6

The attack on the bishop arrives and Black has a definite small advantage.

10 ♠e2 b6 11 0-0 ♗b7 12 f3 0-0-0

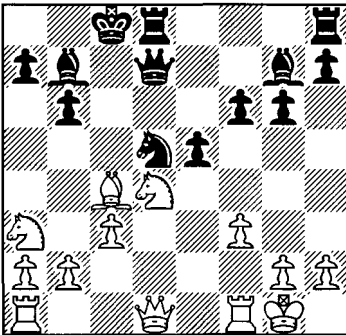


Remember the Sniper Code: 'Only castle when you have to or if you need

your rook in the centre'. Black clearly sees he has the advantage in an opposite-side castling position and that normally results in a full point, even more so than in positions where castling occurs on the same side.

13 ♖a3 ♗xd4 **14** ♗xd4 e5

Another central modifier again results in a big change in assessment, from a small advantage to a clear advantage. Black's two-bishop advantage is going to be well used and he also has an excellent square for his knight on f4, which can cause chaos in the attack against White's king position.



15 ♗dc2 ♗f4

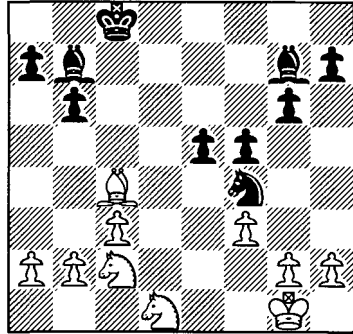
Black has secured the centre with the use of his extra central pawn and now commences attacking operations on the kingside. White tries to seek salvation in the endgame, but Black is doing very well and his central control is eventually converted to other advantages.

16 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 **17** ♜fd1 ♜hd8 **18** ♗e3 f5 **19** ♗ac2 ♜d2

The whole purpose of controlling

the centre is that it enables quick and direct access to useful areas of the board.

20 ♜xd2 ♜xd2 **21** ♜d1 ♜xd1+ **22** ♗xd1



The dust has settled, and Black has a number of advantages that should bring home the full point:

1. A stronger centre;
2. An advanced knight;
3. A central initiative that may allow Black's light-squared bishop to force access to the e4-square; and
4. The two bishops, which have realistic attacking prospects.

22...e4 23 fxe4 ♗xe4 **24** ♗e1 ♗f8 **25** b4 ♗g7

The Sniper bishop returns to his home after decisively weakening White's queenside pawns.

26 ♗g8 h6 **27** c4 0-1

The rest of the moves are unavailable on the database, but Black went on to win at move 40. This game saw an aggressive 7 e6 by White, but these pawn moves wasted time and allowed Black to gain the advantage in the centre by simply developing sensibly. Black

The Sniper

later activated the Sniper policy of delaying castling to ensure a winning middlegame.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♘g7 3 ♘c4

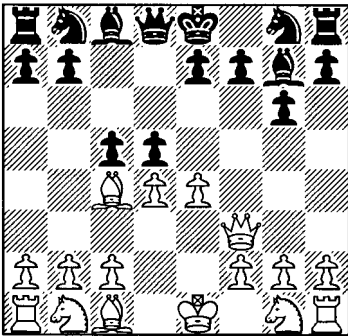
3 ♘c4 followed by 4 ♗f3 is another Scholar's Mate-style attack. This cave-man approach by White is dangerous if not countered exactly as recommended in this section.

Game 51 S.Petrenko-I.Gorbulov Geller Memorial, Odessa 2001

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♘g7 3 ♘c4 c5 4 ♗f3

A crude effort that almost refuted the Sniper, but after burning the midnight oil I found a dynamic solution:

4...d5!!



An incredible move that is completely justified as you will soon see.

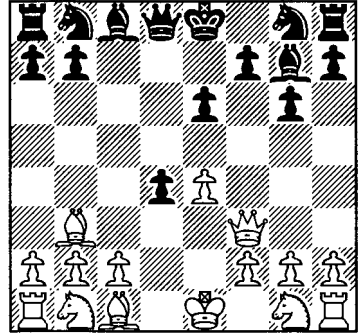
5 ♘xd5

The alternatively capture 5 exd5 is covered in Game 53.

5...e6

All is revealed – it is simply a pseudo-pawn sacrifice as the Sniper fire will soon bear down on d4.

6 ♘b3 cxd4



Black has more pawns in the centre. White is slightly ahead in development but can't take advantage of this, and therefore in my opinion Black will be better in the long term.

7 ♖e2 ♖c6

7...♖e7 is covered in the next game.

8 0-0 ♖ge7

8...♖f6!? is also worthy of playing.

9 ♖d2 0-0

Black has achieved his objective of better central control and may claim at least full equality thanks to 4...d5.

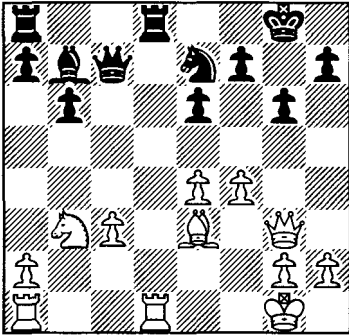
10 ♗g3 ♖a5

As we've seen before, this is a common theme in Sniper positions. Neutralizing the most aggressive minor piece normally takes any sting out of a White attack.

11 f4 ♗c7 12 c3 dxc3 13 ♖xc3 ♖xb3 14 ♖xb3 b5

A clever idea to gain space, but it

was better to grab central squares with 14...♖d8 15 ♔e3 b6 16 ♜fd1 and now 16...♙xc3! (another Sniper Sacrifice) 17 bxc3 ♙b7.



The trade on c3 is fully justified here:

1. White's pawn structure is damaged and the influential knight has been removed to allow the b7-bishop to arrive with tempo by attacking e4.

2. Black's bishop is far better than White's, and the advantageous position of Black's knight over White's is also a factor.

3. Even though the dark squares around Black's king are rather weak, White cannot easily exploit them.

15 ♙e3 b4 16 ♘b5 ♜c6 17 ♘xa7 ♜xe4

The battle for the centre is won and the full point should follow.

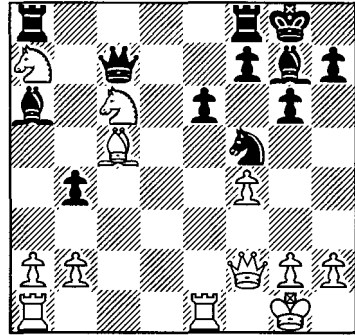
18 ♙c5 ♘f5?!

It seemed attractive to secure the knight and gain a tempo, but this was an error. It was better to play 18...♙a6 immediately, which would make Black's life easy and continue to keep a clear advantage.

19 ♜f2 ♙a6

Now ...♙a6 has lost a bit of its punch and White can equalize.

20 ♜fe1 ♜b7 21 ♘a5 ♜c7 22 ♘5c6



The error of 18...♘f5 is revealed: the white queen protects c5 and a7, otherwise Black would have ...♜xa7 with a winning position.

22...♜fe8 23 ♜ac1 ♙f6 24 ♙b6 ♜b7 25 ♜c2 h5?!

Better was 25...♙d3! 26 ♜d2 ♙c4 and Black has once again won the central battle. This instructive two-move manoeuvre is well worth appreciating as it leads to a clear advantage to Black, in contrast to the equal position offered by Black's move in the game.

26 ♜d1 h4 27 ♜cd2

It may superficially appear as though White has won the battle for the centre but Black has a clever way of fighting back:

27...♜xa7! 28 ♘xa7 ♙c4

Black gets an excellent diagonal for the bishop but White's position is still preferable – Sniper players must look back to 25...♙d3! or 18...♙a6!.

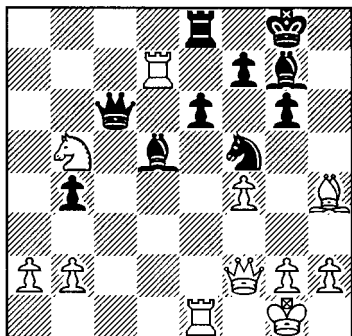
29 ♖d8 ♙g7 30 ♜d7

Black is also struggling after 30 ♜b6!.

30... ♜e4 31 ♜e1 ♜a8 32 ♙xh4 ♙d5 33 ♘b5?

A tactical error. These types of error are easy to make in time pressure, even for 2300-strength players.

33... ♜c6



Black regains material and is better in the centre. We all know what happens when the Sniper is better in the centre – the full point normally follows!

34 ♜xd5 exd5 35 ♘a7 ♜xe1+ 36 ♜xe1 ♜a4 37 ♙f2 d4 38 ♘c8 d3

While White has been saving his knight, Black's central pawn has become a major asset.

39 ♘e7+ ♘xe7 40 ♜xe7 ♜d1+ 41 ♜e1 ♜c2 42 ♜e8+ ♘h7 0-1

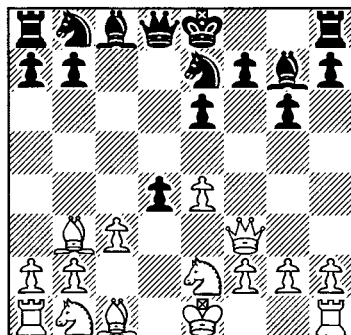
So the 4...d5 pseudo-gambit effectively deals with Scholar's Mate! Black followed up this great idea by exchanging the Scholar's Mate bishop and this resulted in stronger central control. White did have a decent position at one stage, but Black can improve with

25... ♙d3 rather than 25...h5, and also 18... ♙a6 rather than 18... ♘f5.

Game 52

D.Laszlo-C.Meleghegyi
Budapest 1973

1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♙g7 3 ♙c4 c5 4 ♜f3 d5!! 5 ♙xd5 e6 6 ♙b3 cxd4 7 ♘e2 ♘e7 8 c3!



This is a dangerous move that requires careful attention. However, with some precise play Black always has more than enough to counter White's middlegame activity.

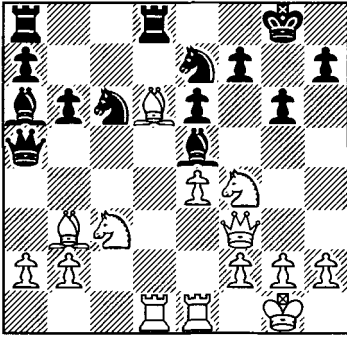
8...dxc3

Black reasons that he can successfully repulse the middlegame initiative White gains after this capture and effectively handle the bishop's invasion when it arrives at d6.

9 ♘bxc3 0-0 10 ♙f4 ♘bc6 11 ♜d1 ♜a5 12 ♙d6 b6 13 0-0 ♙a6

In conjunction with ...♜fd8 this is a precise way of combating White's excellent attempt to gain the initiative with 8 c3.

14 ♖fe1 ♜fd8 15 ♘f4 ♙e5!

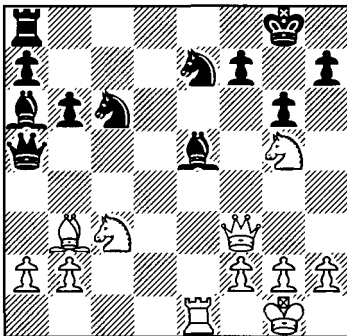


This surprising move allows Black to release the d8-rook's energy. Not eradicating the excellently placed d6-bishop would have resulted in a big build up of pressure most likely leading to a decisive sacrifice on e6.

16 ♗xe6?

White becomes a little optimistic in the attack.

16...♜xd6! 17 ♜xd6 ♙xd6 18 e5 ♙xe5 19 ♘g5



19...♙xh2+

The queen gains access to g5. Once again the Sniper bishop is only too willing to sacrifice itself for the greater

good!

20 ♙xh2 ♜xg5 21 ♜xf7+ ♙h8 22 ♘d5 ♜h6+

Moves that give the defence a tempo normally spell the end for any attack.

23 ♙g1 ♜f8 24 ♜e6 ♙c8 25 ♜d6 ♜d2 26 ♜xe7 ♜xf2+ 27 ♙h2 ♙a6??

27...♜f5! wins immediately. There is no attack for White and Black heads for ...♜h5+ mating.

28 ♜c7??

White should play 28 ♜e4!.

28...♜h4+ 0-1

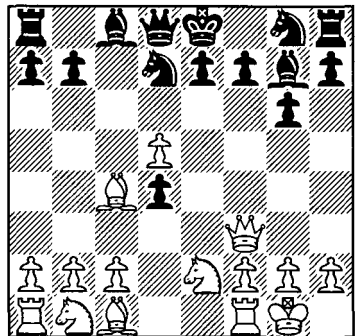
It's mate next move with 29...♜f1.

Game 53

P.Babrikowski-M.Hackel

German League 1996

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 ♙c4 c5 4 ♜f3 d5 5 exd5 cxd4 6 ♘e2 ♘d7 7 0-0



7...♘e5

This is possibly a little bit premature, although if played in conjunction with 8...♙f8 after the inevitable bishop

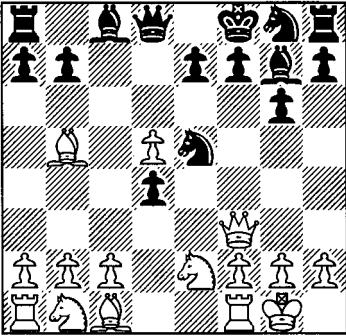
The Sniper

check it may have some value.

7...a6!? is a safer alternative.

8 ♖b5+ ♗d7?!

White now acquires a useful initiative. Sniper practitioners should instead go with my recommendation of 8...♗f8!.



Black gets a fine position after this bizarre king displacement, mainly due to his immediate initiative coupled with play that can be generated against White's b5-bishop. For example, 9 ♖b3 a6 10 f4 axb5 11 fxe5 ♗xe5 12 ♗f4 ♗xf4 13 ♖xf4 ♖b6 14 ♗h1 ♗f6 15 ♗a3 g5! (the rook must retreat away from its central position) 16 ♖ff1 ♗d7 17 ♖ad1 ♖a4. Now is the time to assess the value of the cheeky 8...♗f8!. Black has successfully managed to get his queenside rook influencing the key central square d4 and can claim some advantage.

9 ♖b3 ♖b6 10 ♗a3

The alternative 10 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 11 ♖d1 helps Black develop.

10...♗h6 11 ♗f4 ♖d8 12 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 13 ♖ad1 0-0

After this move White goes into the endgame with the advantage. Stronger is 13...♗xb5! 14 ♗xb5 d3! and Black is fine; for example, 15 cxd3 a6 16 ♗bc3 ♖xb3 17 axb3 ♗d7 18 ♖a1 ♗f6 19 ♖a5 0-0 20 b4 ♖d7 21 b5 ♖fd8 22 bxa6 bxa6 23 ♗d4 ♗xd5 24 ♗c6 ♗xc3 25 bxc3 ♖c8 26 ♖c5 ♗g7 27 d4 ♖b7 28 g3 ♖b6 29 ♗xe7 ♖xc5 30 dxc5 ♖e6 31 ♗d5 ♖c6 32 ♖a1 ♖xc5 33 c4 ♖xc4 34 ♖xa6 ♖d4 35 ♖a5 with a drawn ending.

14 ♗xd7 ♖xb3 15 axb3 ♖xd7 16 ♗xd4 ♖fd8 17 c4 ♗g7 18 ♗b5 a6 19 ♗bc3 ♖d6 20 f4 ♗d7 21 ♖e4 ♗f8 22 b4 ♗f6 23 ♖e3 ♖b6 24 b5 axb5 25 ♗xb5 ♖c8 26 b3 ♗xd5 27 ♖d3 ♗b4 28 ♖d7 ♗c6 29 ♖fd1 ♗f6 30 ♗g3 ♗a5 31 ♖1d3 ♗h4 32 ♗f2 ♗g7 33 ♗f3 ♖e6 34 ♗e4 f5 35 ♗ed6 ♖c6 36 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 37 ♖xb7 ♖e1 38 g3 ♗f6 39 ♗d4 ♖a6 40 ♖d2 ♖f1+ 41 ♗e2 ♖aa1 42 ♗f3 ♖fc1 43 ♗e5 ♖ab1 44 ♗d3 g5 45 ♖b5 ♖f1 46 fxg5 ♗xg5 47 ♖e2 ♗f6 48 c5 ♖bc1 49 ♗c4 ♖c3+ 50 ♗d2 ♖fc1 51 h4 ♖1c2+ 52 ♗e1 ♖c1+ 53 ♗d2 ♖1c2+ ½-½

In conclusion, Black has adequate resources against this Scholar's Mate attack but he must play 4...d5.

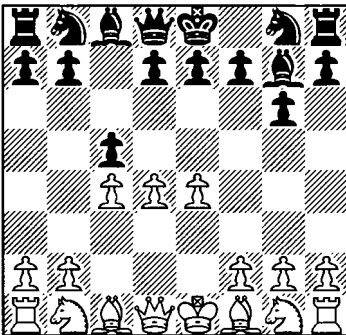
Chapter Six

White Plays d4 and c4

This chapter will cover queen's pawn openings (1 d4) in conjunction with c4, and usually e4 too.

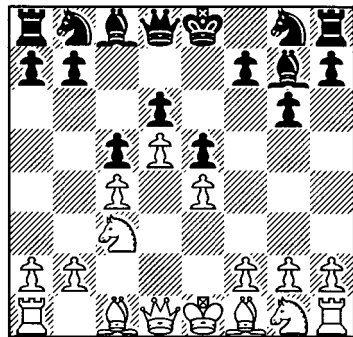
Bermuda Triangle versus the White Arrow

1 d4 g6 2 c4 ♗g7 3 e4 c5



The Pure Sniper against 1 d4.
4 d5

4 ♘f3 transposes to 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘f3 c5 4 c4 (see Chapter 2).
4...d6 5 ♘c3 e5



To help understand this position I have simply called it 'the Bermuda Triangle'. There are two triangular pawn structures in the centre of the board. White has more space but equally more weak squares that can no longer be defended by pawns.

Black's main ideas are:

1. Play for ...f5 and maybe ...f4 with a very favourable King's Indian.
2. Play for ...a6 and ...b5.
3. Leave the knight on g8 as long as safely possible and develop the b8-knight first, sometimes heading straight to the h5-square.

Black's position is extremely solid and traditional development is not so useful with the centre being so blocked.

White's plans are:

1. Keep a space advantage.
2. Prevent Black from effectively playing ...f5.
3. Play for b4 to open the queenside.

The following games will persuade the reader to add the Bermuda Triangle to their repertoire. If you like blocked positions with lots of manoeuvring then you will take little persuading. If blocked positions are really not to your taste then 'the Sniper Benko-style' may be more to your liking, which is discussed later in this chapter.

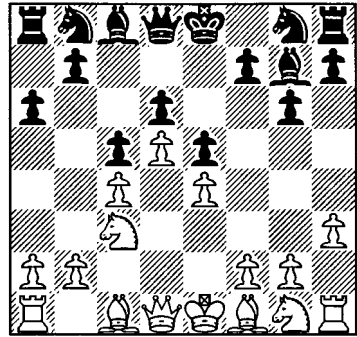
Game 54

N.Andersen-H.Frederiksen
Sensommer Open,
Denmark 1999

1 d4 g6 2 c4 ♗g7 3 ♖c3

This move order (instead of 3 e4 c5 4 d5) offers Black some additional options, specifically 4...♗xc3+ which is examined later in this chapter.

3...c5 4 d5 d6 5 e4 e5 6 h3 a6

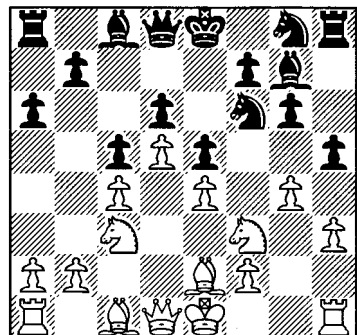


A useful move that can be played sooner or later. Rather than give specific variations in this blocked position, it is better to ask the reader to be aware of when he wants to play this move. It is essential that it is played at some point and according to my experience, the sooner the better.

7 ♘f3 ♘d7 8 ♗e2 ♘df6

The knight has consumed most of Black's quota of development. Now the purpose is to see whether this is acceptable in a blocked position – I believe it is.

9 g4 h5

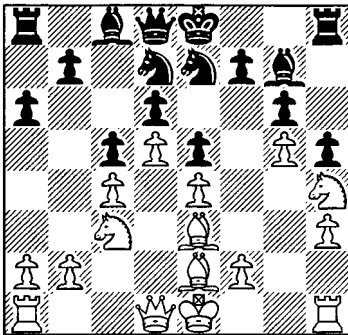


Inviting White to play g5, gaining more space but enabling Black to play a later ...f6. This would give Black the option of acquiring good play for his rooks on the f-file when he is in a position to do so.

10 g5 ♖d7

A major strategical undertaking is required by both sides.

11 ♙e3 ♖e7 **12 ♖h4**



12...♖b6?

This move provides Sniper trainees with a very instructive loss by Black. On b6 the knight simply hinders any real Black counterplay with ...b5. It also prevents Black from adding extra protection to the c5-pawn by means of ...b6.

Perhaps Black was too keen to 'develop' his c8-bishop, but a much better way to develop is to simply leave the bishop where it is and play ...b6 and ...♙a7 allowing the rook to enter the game successfully along the second rank. The rook can look forward to happily settling on f7 in the future, after which the double-rook pressure would offer good play. For example, 12...0-0 13

a3 b6 (13...f6 is premature and better for White after 14 gxf6; Black should be in a position to activate his a8-rook before playing this) 14 b4 (Black will be happy to recapture on c5 with his knight should White play bxc5) 14...♙a7 15 ♜b1 f6 (this could be delayed for even more moves if Black so chooses – for example, some waiting moves to see how White responds include ...♜c7, ♖h7 and ...♜b7) 16 gf6 ♖xf6 17 ♜g1 ♙xh3 18 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 19 ♜xg6 ♖g4 20 bxc5 ♖xe3 21 fxe3 bxc5 when Black can look for activity on the dark squares.

13 ♜b1 a5 **14 ♖b5**

I will provide no more commentary on this game as Black gets demolished – and this is all connected to the very weak move 12...♖b6.

14...♙a6 **15 a3** ♖d7 **16 ♙d2** a4 **17 ♙c3** 0-0 **18 ♙d2** f6 **19 ♜g1** ♙e8 **20 ♖c7** ♙f7 **21 ♖e6** f5 **22 ♙xh5** ♖b6 **23 ♖xf8** gxh5 **24 g6** ♙xf8 **25 ♙xh5** ♙f6 **26 ♙g5** ♖d7 **27 ♙xf6** ♖xf6 **28 ♙g5** fxe4 **29 ♖g2** ♖f5 **30 ♖e3** ♖d4 **31 ♜g3** b5 **32 ♖g4** ♙xg4 **33 hxg4** bxc4 **34 ♖f1** ♙a8 **35 ♙e3** ♜b8 **36 ♙d2** ♜f8 **37 ♙c3** e3 **38 ♙xe3** ♖xd5 **39 ♙e4** ♖f4 **40 ♙h1** ♜b8 **41 ♜c3** d5 **42 ♙h4** ♙e8 **43 ♙h1** e4 **44 ♜h3** ♖xg6 **45 g5** ♙e5 **46 ♜h6** ♜xg5 **47 ♖xg6** ♜xg6 **48 ♙h5** ♜d6 **49 ♙e8+** ♖h7 **50 ♙h5+** ♖g8 **51 ♙e8+** ♙f8 **52 ♖g2** ♖e6 **53 ♜g1** ♖g7 **54 ♖f1** ♙f6 **55 ♜g6** ♙f7 **56 ♙e6** ♙e7 **57 ♙xd5** e3 **58 f3** ♖f8 **59 ♙a6** ♖f5 **60 ♙a8+** ♖g7 **61 ♙e5+** ♖h7 **62 ♙h8+** ♖g6 **63 ♜g8+** ♖g7 **64 ♙h3** ♙f6 **65 ♜h8** ♙e7 **66 ♙g4+** ♖f7 **67 ♖e2** ♙d4 **68 ♙a8** ♖e8 **69 ♙h5+** ♖f8 **70 f4** ♙xb2 **71 ♙xc5** ♖f7 **72**

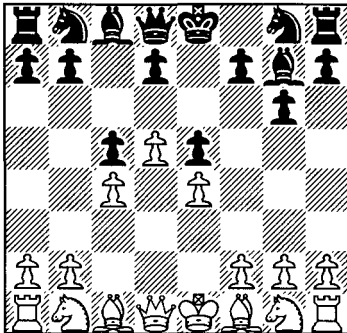
♖xc4+ ♘f6 73 ♚a6+ ♙g7 74 ♗b4 ♙f6
75 f5 ♚e5 76 ♗g4+ ♘f8 77 ♗g6 ♙e7 78
♚a8 ♙xa3 79 f6 1-0

Here we saw a good knight manoeuvre from b8 to f6, but this was followed up by the very bad 12...♘b6? which gave White excellent queenside play. Black was doing fine before 12...♘b6, and the variation with ...b6 and ...♚a7 showed how to obtain good counterplay.

The next game sees White try and blow up the Bermuda Triangle with the aggressive early 7 h4. The Bermuda Triangle shows its hidden counter-attacking power against these direct attempts as it leaves White's kingside much weaker than Black's.

Game 55
P.Cumbers-C.Storey
British Championship,
Torquay 2009

1 d4 g6 2 c4 ♙g7 3 e4 c5 4 d5 e5

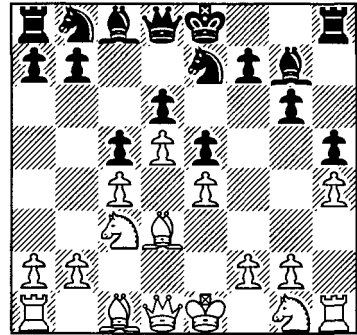


I prefer to enter the Bermuda Triangle with this move order, rather than playing ...d6 before ...e5.

5 ♘c3

After 5 dxe6 fxe6 Black's extra central pawn will be more than a match for any White attempt to attack the pawns: 6 ♘c3 ♘h6! (the Sniper bishop is more than happy to keep firing directly down the Sniper diagonal; if 6...♘c6 7 ♘b5 ♘d4 8 ♘d6+ ♘e7 9 ♙g5+ ♙f6 10 ♗d2! and White would stand a little better) 7 ♘f3 ♘f7 (this is one of the most underrated squares for a knight - it is well poised to enter the game, supports its own centre, protects the pawn when it goes to d6 and has great defensive value on the kingside) 8 ♙f4 d6 9 ♗d2 ♘c6 and the grip on d4 guarantees Black a good game.

5...d6 6 ♙d3 ♘e7 7 h4 h5



The general rule of thumb of 'try and play ...h5 before ...0-0' is the best method of dealing with White's h4 aggression.

8 ♘ge2 ♘d7 9 ♘b5

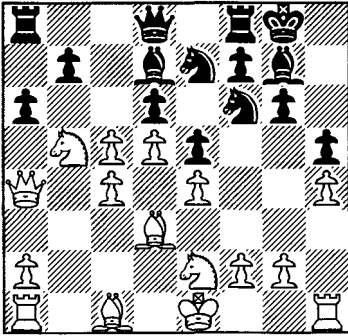
An interesting attempt to exploit

the weak d6-pawn but White cannot bring the rest of the troops in quickly enough to justify this attack.

9...♘f6 10 b4 a6 11 ♖a4?!

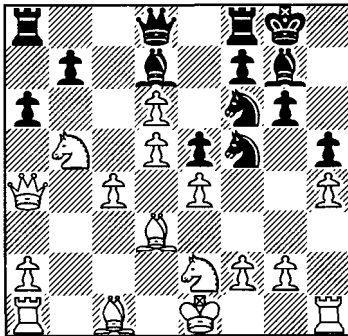
A major commitment but an error, as Black can find a great solution to this early queenside attack.

11...0-0 12 bxc5 ♙d7!



The in-between move is extremely common and Sniper trainees should always search for this type of tactic.

13 cxd6 ♘f5!!



Suddenly the threat of capturing on b5 with initiative ensures an advantage for Black.

14 ♖b3 axb5 15 c5

White grabs the centre but it is in no way worth a piece as Black has many trumps: more activity, safer king, a semi-open a-file and play against the weakened kingside – all because of the earlier 7 h4 aggression.

15...♖a5+

15...♘d4 was better than the move I played and guarantees an advantage. After 16 ♘xd4 exd4 17 f3 ♖a5+ 18 ♙d2 ♖a3 19 ♖c1 ♖fc8 Black is on the verge of winning the centre and with it the game.

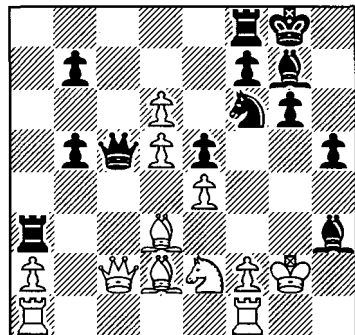
16 ♙d2 ♖a3 17 0-0

17 ♖c1 offered some hope.

17...♘xh4 18 ♙g5 ♘g2

A weak king can be well defended if its troops have good central control, but a *very* weak king cannot.

19 ♔xg2 ♖xc5 20 ♙d2 ♖a3 21 ♖c2 ♙h3+!



Black seizes the weakened light squares.

22 ♔g1

22 ♔xh3? ♖xc2 wins the queen.

22...♖xd6 23 ♖fe1 ♖c8

White has the centre but Black has

the white king within his scope.

24 ♖b1 ♜xd5 25 ♔h2 ♙d7 26 exd5 e4+
27 ♙f4 ♙e5 28 ♙xe5 ♜xe5+ 29 ♜g3 h4

The game is over but White struggles on in frustration.

30 ♖e3 hxg3+ 31 ♙g2 ♜xd3 32 ♜xd3
♜xa1 33 ♜xe4 ♙f5 34 d6 gxf2 35 d7
♜g1+ 36 ♙f3 f1♖+ 37 ♜xf1 ♜xf1+ 38
♙g3 ♜c3+ 39 ♔h4 ♜h3+ 40 ♙g5 ♜h5+
41 ♙f6 ♙xe4+ 42 ♙e7 ♜e5+ 0-1

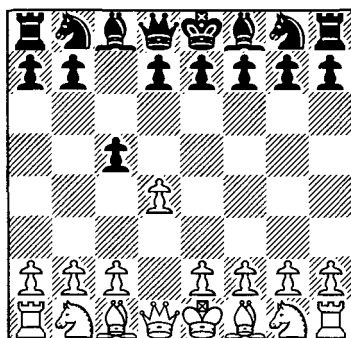
This game showed how robust the Bermuda Triangle is versus the White Arrow. Against early aggression by White, Black was more than capable of getting the better of things. White's 7 h4 and 11 ♖a4 were simply overly-aggressive and too risky.

Next we will see how a Grandmaster, famous for his excellent positional play and use of space advantage, defeats my Sniper. Recommended improvements within Black's arsenal will be suggested in the notes.

Game 56
G.Flear- C.Storey
British Championship,
Great Yarmouth 2007

1 d4 c5

At this point in my Sniper career I was unsure which move order was best against 1 d4. I am now of the opinion that the Pure Sniper move order is the best, although there is not much difference.



2 d5

Some Grandmasters have taken the c-pawn here against me in blitz games. I would suggest 2...e5 against 2 dxc5, but I would much prefer Sniper trainees to play a Pure Sniper move order and eliminate that possibility altogether.

2...g6 3 e4 ♙g7 4 c4 e5 5 ♜c3 d6 6 h3

Glenn loves to have a space advantage and this seems to be his own best way of acquiring it.

6...♜d7

Alternatively:

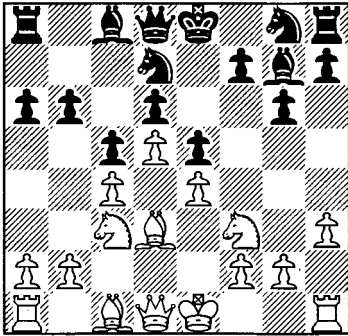
a) 6...f5 is playable if you're happy to have your king exposed in the early middlegame. After 7 exf5 gxf5 8 ♖h5+ ♜f8 9 ♜f3 ♜f6 10 ♜g5 the king is exposed but White's queen is also awkwardly placed and a complicated struggle lies ahead.

b) Traditional development with 6...♜f6 leads to a level position, e.g. 7 ♙d3 ♜bd7 8 ♜f3 0-0 9 0-0 ♜h5 10 ♜e2 h6 11 ♜b1 ♜e7 with lots of play available for both sides.

c) 6...♜a6?! intends ...♜c7 and ...b5,

but White can get his queenside attack with b4 in first: 7 a3 ♖d7 8 ♜b1 ♘c7 9 b4 cxb4 10 axb4 a5 11 c5 axb4 12 ♜xb4 dxc5 13 ♜xb7 with a good position for White.

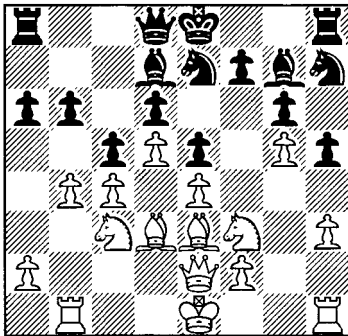
7 ♖d3 a6 8 ♘f3 b6



9 ♜e2 ♘df6 10 g4 ♖d7

10...♘e7 would also keep a level position.

11 ♖e3 h5 12 g5 ♘h7 13 ♜b1 ♘e7 14 b4

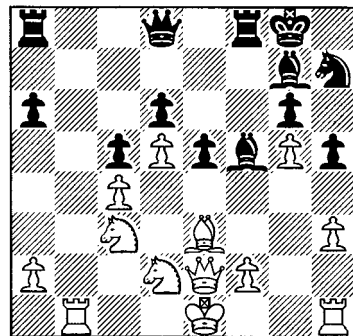


14...♘c8?!

This move was born of an over-exaggeration of my chances to get the knight to d6 (after bxc5 and ...dxc5). My loss here is a good lesson for any Sniper

trainee. In blocked positions always be realistic and always consider the realistic potential activity for each piece. This game taught me the value of never moving knights away from the centre unless there is an absolutely clear and good reason to do so, because the time and energy it takes to complete their return is very resource-intensive.

It would have been much better for me to play 14...0-0!. This is a big improvement over 14...♘c8 as it ensures the knight still has a role in the central fight by leaving it on its good centrally-influencing square. For example, 15 bxc5 bxc5 16 ♘d2 f5 17 exf5 ♘xf5 (this is a much better square than the passive c8, which was the source of Black's downfall in the game) 18 ♖xf5 ♖xf5.



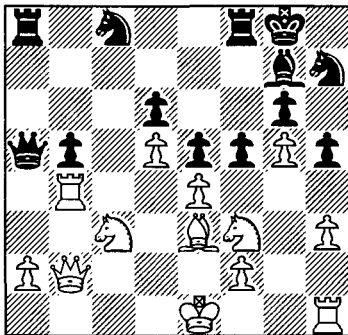
This bishop is good and Black also has the two-bishop advantage. In exchange for these advantages White may occupy e4 with one of the knights, but this makes the other defending knight superfluous. Overall the position is balanced, although Black has certainly made headway since move

one. After 19 $\text{d}e4$ $\text{w}e7$ 20 $\text{b}b3$ $\text{a}b8$ 21 $f3$ White's pawn structure is quite dysfunctional. Although Black cannot exploit it in the next few moves, there are likely to be opportunities later in the game, say in the late middlegame or early endgame.

15 $\text{c}c2$ 0-0 16 $\text{a}a4$ $\text{c}c4$ 17 $\text{d}d4$ $\text{c}c4$ 18 $\text{a}a4$ $\text{b}b5$?

This was a lack of grandmaster calculation power within my own ability and an expectancy of an optimistic tactical opportunity, but Black was already in an inferior position.

19 $\text{c}c5$ $\text{w}a5$ 20 $\text{w}b2$ $\text{a}x5$ 21 $\text{d}c3$ $f5$



Black is active but White's superior space in the centre is worth more than this activity, mainly because of the poor position of the c8-knight.

22 $\text{g}x6$ $\text{a}x6$ 23 $\text{d}d2$ $\text{d}a7$?

I am lost here. Please avoid ... $\text{d}c8$ is the moral of the Storey!

24 $a4$ $\text{b}x4$ 25 $\text{a}a4$ $\text{c}c7$ 26 $\text{w}a3$ $\text{f}f7$ 27 $\text{e}e2$ $\text{f}f8$ 28 $\text{g}g1$ $\text{g}g7$ 29 $h4$ $\text{w}d7$ 30 $\text{d}c4$ $\text{w}c7$ 31 $\text{c}d3$ $\text{d}f6$ 32 $\text{a}a1$ $\text{d}g4$ 33 $\text{a}a7$ $\text{a}a7$ 34 $\text{w}a7$ $\text{w}d8$ 35 $\text{w}b6$ $\text{w}xh4$ 36 $\text{d}x6$ $\text{c}x6$ 37 $\text{w}x6$ $\text{w}h3$ 38 $\text{a}a6$

$\text{d}x6$ + 39 $\text{c}c2$ $\text{w}g3$ 40 $\text{c}c6$ $h4$ 41 $\text{c}c7$ $\text{g}g4$ 42 $\text{a}x6$ + $\text{c}x6$ 43 $\text{w}e6$ + $\text{c}g7$ 44 $\text{w}e7$ + $\text{c}g8$ 45 $\text{c}c5$ $\text{w}f4$ 46 $d6$ $\text{d}f6$ 47 $\text{w}d8$ + $\text{c}h7$ 48 $d7$ $\text{d}x7$ 49 $\text{w}x7$ + $\text{c}h6$ 50 $\text{w}h3$ $\text{c}h5$ 51 $\text{c}d3$ $g5$ 52 $\text{d}e2$ $\text{w}f6$ 53 $\text{d}g3$ + $\text{c}h6$ 54 $\text{d}f5$ + $\text{c}g6$ 55 $\text{w}g4$ $\text{w}a6$ + 56 $\text{c}e3$ $\text{w}a1$ 57 $\text{d}xh4$ + $\text{c}h6$ 58 $\text{c}f8$ + $\text{c}h7$ 59 $\text{w}d7$ + 1-0

This game demonstrated the problems Black can face in the Bermuda Triangle if his knights do not find attacking, aggressive or central squares. The recommended improvements showed ways to get the knights into the game.

Game 57
R. Williams-C.Storey
South Wales
International 2008

This game will see Black send both knights to h5 before conducting a devastating middlegame attack using themes similar to those found in the King's Indian Defence. Black is able to play in King's Indian-style if White chooses a setup against the Sniper move order which is not favourable against the King's Indian.

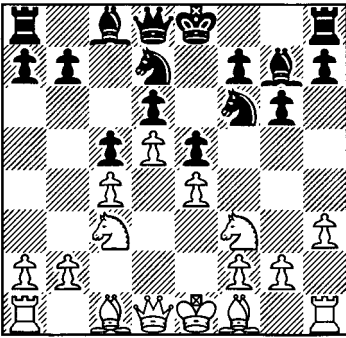
1 $d4$ $c5$ 2 $d5$ $g6$ 3 $c4$ $\text{c}g7$ 4 $e4$

SMOT: Again I used the Sicilian Sniper move order.

4... $e5$ 5 $\text{d}c3$ $d6$ $h3$

Playing $h2$ - $h3$ against the King's Indian is quite risky as it allows Black to aim for a kingside attack.

6...♖d7 7 ♗f3 ♗gf6



A big decision to play in King's Indian-style with ...♖h5 and a later ...f5. This approach is especially effective in this position because White has already created a major weakness on the kingside by playing h3. If White opts to castle kingside he will face a very powerful attack from Black.

If you fancy completely confusing your opponent, another good try is 7...♗e7 8 ♖b5 (or 8 ♖e2 0-0) 8...♗f6 9 ♗c3 ♖h5 which leaves Black with the better attacking prospects.

8 ♖d3

This gives a certain amount of immunity to the black knight when it sits on h5. With the bishop on e2, White can often exploit the knight's position on h5.

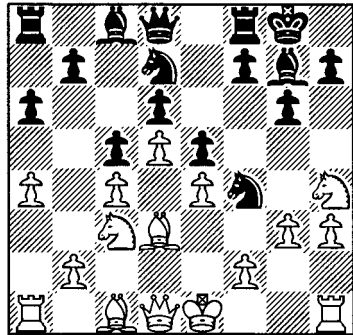
8...♗h5 9 g3 0-0 10 ♗h4 a6

This is a sensible approach, but it was more accurate to invade with the knight immediately by playing 10...♗f4.

11 a4 ♗f4

The knight quickly invades and

would gladly trade itself for White's light-squared bishop, which in turn would give added power to the c8-bishop.



12 ♗f3 ♗xd3+ 13 ♖xd3 ♗f6 14 ♖d2 ♖d7 15 h4

The light squares at h3, g4 and f3 have become very weak for White. With no bishop to defend them, a successful attack on these squares is likely.

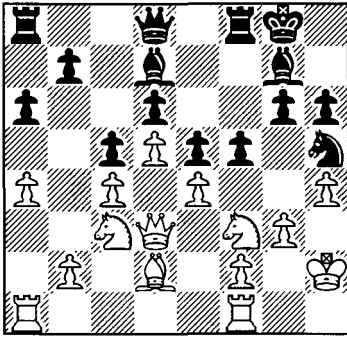
15...h6

15...b5 is also strong and is a good way of demonstrating another approach for Black: 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 18 0-0 (now that the king's position is fixed it is time for the bugle to sound – attack!) 18...bxc4 19 ♖xc4 ♖b8 20 ♖b1 ♖b4 21 ♖e2 ♖b7 22 ♖g5 ♖g4 (the light-square invasion begins) 23 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 24 ♖g2 leaves White wishing his pawn was on the h2- or h3-square.

16 0-0

With the king committed to the kingside, it is clearly time for all-out attack.

16...♗h5 17 ♖h2 f5



18 ♖g2 f4 19 ♜h1 ♚f6 20 ♜af1 ♙g4 21 ♜h2 f3+

Accentuating the weakness on the light squares.

22 ♖g1 ♙h3 23 ♜c1 ♜xg3 0-1

A smooth win helped by a number of minor errors. This game highlighted the weaknesses of developing the white bishop to d3 against the Bermuda Triangle pawn structure. A big advantage of the Sniper is that there are always possibilities to transpose to favourable-for-Black Kings Indian-type position if that's the way Black would like to steer the game. 15...b5 is also a nice idea and this thrust can be used in associated positions.

Game 58
S.Conquest-C.Storey
 British Championship,
 Great Yarmouth 2007

This game will once again emphasize the importance of keeping the black knights as centralized as possible.

It will also highlight the importance of not giving White an extra pawn in the centre.

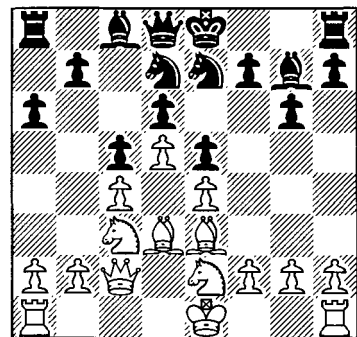
1 d4 c5 2 d5 g6 3 e4 ♙g7 4 c4

SMOT: Once again I play a Sicilian Sniper move order rather than a Pure Sniper. Back in 2007 I liked to chop and change between move orders to make it harder for my opponents to prepare for me. They had to spend considerably more time preparing if they were to do so properly. It also changed ECO classifications so that when opponents searched my openings it altered the statistics which could affect their approach!

4 c4 e5 5 ♜c3 d6 6 ♙d3

6 ♙d3 without h3 is not especially problematic for Black. As already noted, the bishop doesn't attack the h5-square, so a knight's occupation there becomes very attractive. With hindsight, aiming for ...♜h5 and a good King's Indian position would have been a better plan.

6...♜d7 7 ♜ge2 a6 8 ♙e3 ♜e7 9 ♚c2

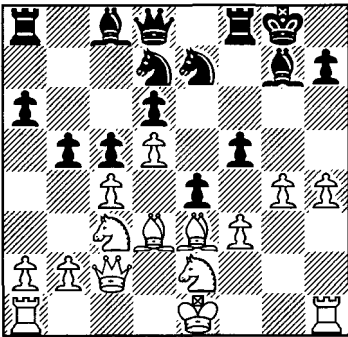


9...h5!

This move is symptomatic of my over-optimism during this period of my chess development.

9...0-0! intending ...f5-f4 is much better, with an extremely complex strategical middlegame in which Black's chances are equal. There is also scope to quickly play ...b5 if White does decide to castle queenside. If 10 h4?! Black hits the flank attack with the standard central treatment: 10...f5 and:

a) 11 exf5 gxf5 (the extra central pawns ensure Black has the better middlegame prospects) 12 f3 b5 13 g4 e4!.



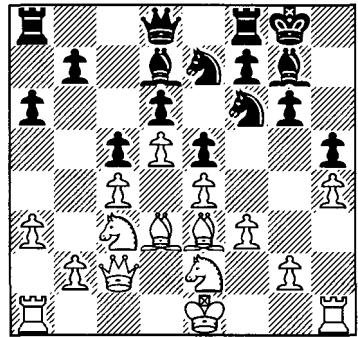
Black shifts the focus from the wings to the centre. It is this thrust that ensures Black is better, as the knight comes to the brilliant e5-square to survey all that's relevant: 14 fxe4 fxg4 15 ♖f4 ♗e5 16 0-0-0 ♜a5 (Black is faster in the race to attack the kings and the brilliance of the e5-knight is clear) 17 ♗e6 ♙xe6 18 dxe6 ♜f3 19 ♜he1 b4 20 ♜a4 ♜xa4 21 ♗xa4 ♜xe3 22 ♜xe3 ♙h6 23 ♙d2 ♜f8. Black has all the activity and can simply plan for liquidation

followed by a king munching exercise on White's pawns.

b) 11 h5 f4 12 ♙d2 g5 13 h6 ♙f6. Now Black is well placed to defend the kingside and can even look forward to breaking through on that wing in the late middlegame or early endgame. He also of course has the pawn sacrifice ...b5 waiting in the wings.

9...0-0 would have given me a much better chance of winning this game. At this point in time the Sniper was in its experimental stage and I hadn't learnt all of my lessons – I have now!

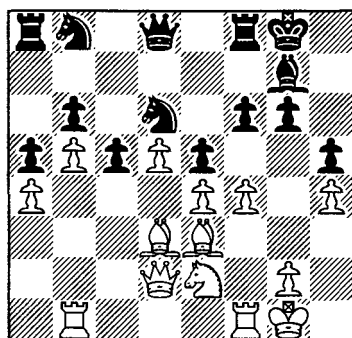
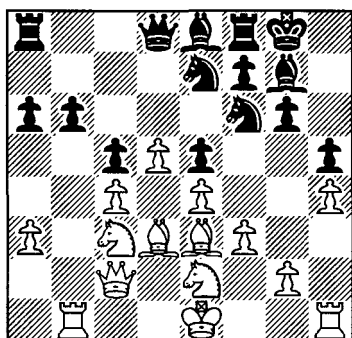
10 h4 ♗f6 11 f3 ♙d7 12 a3 0-0



13 b4

If White gets this in he is generally doing well, provided of course that Black has no obvious breakthrough on the kingside. However, Black does have some compensation in that the h4-pawn is not only a weakness in itself, it has also weakened the g3- and g4-squares which Black's pieces may one day hope to occupy.

13...b6 14 ♜b1 ♙e8 15 bxc5 dxc5



I was experimenting with this pawn structure at the time and planning to plant a knight on d6. The astute reader will notice that it contradicts my Storey Pawn Scale. This may be a reason why I lost this game and then decided to re-research the value of the pawns to come up with said pawn scale!

16 a4 a5 17 0-0 d7

Clearly White is happy on the queenside but his king is at risk from a potential attack on the kingside.

18 d5 c8 19 d2 b8

These knight manoeuvres, although not terrible, are still neglecting central responsibilities.

20 g5 f6

This move is often underestimated by White players and can sometimes offer Black great counterplay. Here it simply provides an attack on the bishop, with Black looking to play ...f5 under favourable circumstances.

21 e3 d6 22 f4 xb5 23 cxb5

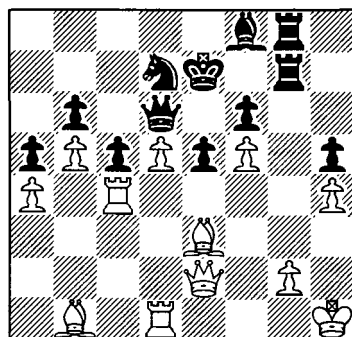
Mission accomplished! The knight is excellent, but Black's light squares are very weak.

23...d7 24 bc1 e7 25 b1 ae8 26 f5!

Exploiting the light squares and securing the advantage.

26...gxf5 27 exf5

27 Bxf5! was even better for White.
27...c7 28 g3 h8 29 e4 eg8 30 dxd6+ wxd6 31 c4 f8 32 e2 e7 33 d1 h7 34 h1 hg7



At the time I thought I had enough to draw or even win. However, in this period I was a bit too optimistic – in reality I was struggling to draw.

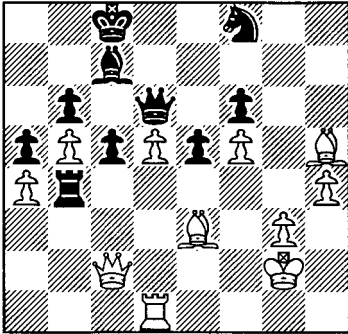
35 e4 g4 36 f3 xc4 37 xc4 h8

Black has had to go passive and White is clearly better.

38 ♖c1 ♔d8 39 ♙e4 ♚c8 40 g3 ♜g8 41
 ♚h2 ♜g4 42 ♖c4 ♙e7 43 ♔g2 ♜f8 44
 ♖c2 ♙d8 45 ♙f3 ♜b4

Again, I still thought I might get adequate counterplay now that I had an active rook, but Stuart had it all under control.

46 ♙xh5 ♙c7



Lining up a b8-h2 battery, and with time pressure looming I was still not certain of the assessment of this position. One thing I was sure of was this: had this been an opponent below strong Grandmaster strength I would have found a way to win – but the 2008 British Champion finds all the correct moves after a tiring session, showing his true class.

47 ♙e2 ♜d7 48 h5

This ties down my pieces.

48...♜f8 49 ♙c4 ♜h7 50 h6 ♚b8 51
 ♙d2 ♔a7 52 ♜e1 ♖f8 53 ♙xb4 axb4 54
 d6

Nice technique by Stuart:

1. The pawn push simplifies the position;
2. The c4-bishop increases its mobil-

ity and potential to attack the black king; and

3. The queen and rook have rapid access to the d-file and the d7 penetration point.

54...♙xd6 55 ♖d2 ♜g5

I can't allow the trade of queens at d7 so this is one last try to get active, but it's a trivial problem for a Grandmaster.

56 ♜h1 ♙c7 57 ♖d7 ♚b8 58 ♙d5 1-0

The bishop finally enters the battle and forces my resignation. This game saw a bold, creative effort by Black to set up a blocked position with ...♜d6 which backfired. Black should instead play 9...0-0! with a later ...f5, exploiting the fact he has not blocked his own f-pawn, when he is slightly better.

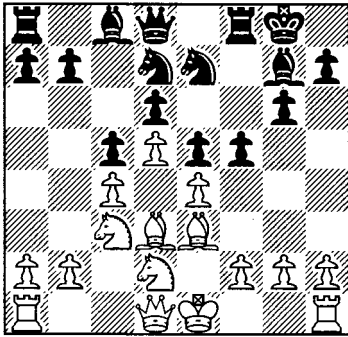
The next game will emphasize the value of learning the lessons from my previous game against Conquest, and will also show the implementation of those lessons.

Game 59

P.Bennett-C.Storey
 European Union Ch'ship,
 Liverpool 2008

1 d4 g6 2 c4 ♙g7 3 ♜c3 c5 4 d5 e5 5 e4
 d6 6 ♙d3 ♜d7 7 ♜f3 ♜e7 8 ♙e3 0-0 9
 ♜d2 f5

The lesson has been learnt from my earlier 'Conquest defeat': the knights monitor the centre well.



10 f3 ♘f6 11 ♚c2 ♘h5

The knight is better here than on less aggressive posts – again White’s ♙d3 ensures some immunity for this knight.

12 0-0-0

Now it becomes a race to open the files so that the rooks can contribute to the attacks on the enemy kings – first in normally wins.

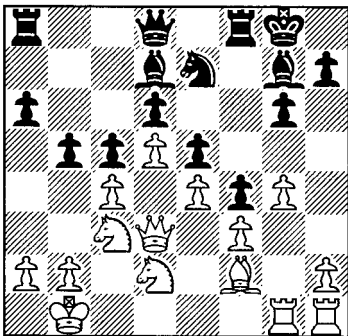
12...♘f4 13 ♖dg1 a6

Black is already slightly better.

14 g4 ♘xd3+ 15 ♚xd3 f4 16 ♙f2 b5

A thematic offering of the a6-pawn via a b5 trade.

17 ♖b1 ♙d7



Black is well placed for a direct assault on the white king, whereas White’s rook are trapped like a genie in a bottle and I had no intention of releasing Mr Bennett’s genie!

18 ♙h4 ♙f6 19 g5 ♙g7 20 ♙e1

White will now be aiming to play h4-h5 to open the h-file with some counterplay, but Black can prevent this with the ‘keep the genie in the bottle’ ...♙h3!

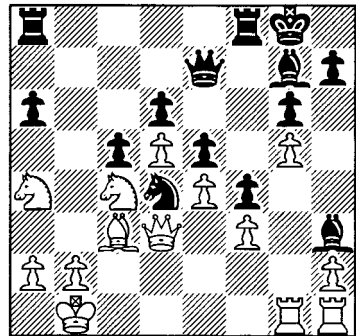
20...bxc4

First of all, let’s open the b-file with tempo.

21 ♘xc4 ♙h3! 22 ♘a4 ♘f5

The knight uses its immunity on f5 to head for its ideal square on d4.

23 ♙a5 ♚e7 24 ♙c3 ♘d4



The knight is too powerful so White exchanges it, but this potentially activates the Sniper bishop.

25 ♙xd4 exd4 26 b3 ♖ab8 27 ♘ab2 ♚d8 28 ♚d2 d3

The Sniper bishop ensures that all White’s pieces must tread with caution in their own territory otherwise it will support a rapid queen invasion.

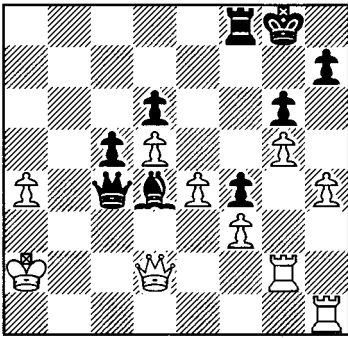
29 ♖xd3 a5 30 ♖xa5 ♙d7 31 ♖b2 ♙d4
32 ♖g2 ♗b6 33 ♖bc4 ♗a6

White puts up stiff resistance so Black needs to find a way to get a few pieces into the White camp for a raid on the king.

34 h4 ♖b5 35 a4?

The building pressure induces an error and now Black breaks through.

35...♖b4 36 ♙a2 ♙xa4! 37 bxa4 ♖xc4
38 ♖xc4 ♗xc4+



Black's pieces are in. The Sniper bishop dominates the white rooks and makes a mockery of the initial starting values.

39 ♙a3 ♖a8 0-1

All of Black's pieces are working well and White resigned.

This game saw the implementation of the lessons learnt from my Conquest defeat, specifically ...f5 and the knights remaining on central duty. It also showed how the value of the Sniper bishop can be increased from its initial three points, especially when it's involved in an opposite-side castling attack.

Game 60
E.Auckland-C.Storey
British Championship,
Liverpool 2008

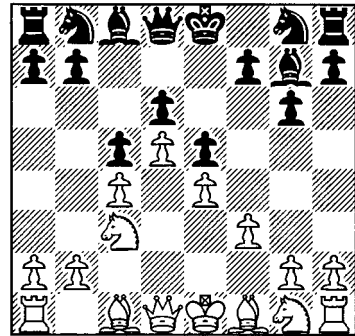
This game sees another aggressive opening attempt to blow the Bermuda Triangle out of the water, but Black quickly turns the tables and it is White who is mated after a king hunt.

1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♙g7 3 c4 c5

A Pure Sniper move order, and the recommended way of playing.

4 d5 e5 5 ♖c3 d6 6 f3

White plays in Sämisch Kings Indian style.



6...h5

Putting a direct stop to any White attempt to grab space with g4, and maybe Black may push the pawn to h4 and even h3 to trigger 'zero development' of the h8-rook. But this does weaken some key dark squares.

6...f5 grabbing the centre immediately is also worthy of consideration. After 7 ♙d3 ♖f6 8 exf5 gxf5 9 ♖ge2 0-0

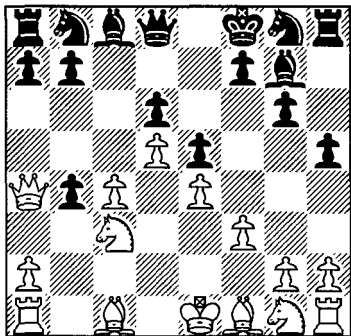
The Sniper

100-0 ♖a6 11 a3 Black is doing well.

7 b4

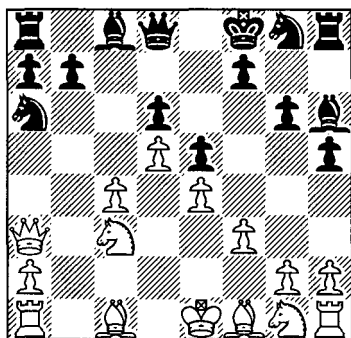
Extremely aggressive and risky. White reasons that his tactical play can directly refute Black's opening. In fact it does force Black to give up his castling rights but at quite a major cost for White.

7...cxb4 8 ♖a4+ ♔f8



Black can no longer castle but is very well placed to gain a central initiative by exploiting White's queen position on the queenside.

9 ♖xb4 ♖a6! 10 ♖a3 ♗h6!



The dark squares are even more inviting for the black knights if White's

dark-squared bishop is removed, even if it is at the cost of our own Sniper hero.

11 ♗ge2 ♗c5 12 ♗xh6+ ♗xh6 13 ♗c1 ♖g5

Black grabs more dark squares with the queen and prevents White's bishop development.

14 ♗b5 ♖h4+ 15 ♔e2 ♖d8

Now both kings have lost castling rights but Black is better placed to exploit this.

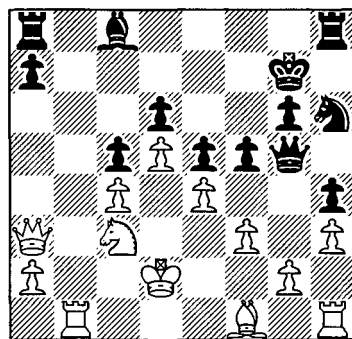
16 ♗d3 b6 17 ♗xc5 bxc5

Keeping the Bermuda Triangle pawn structure intact.

18 ♔d2 f5

Black has a desire to get his rooks to f2 and this move helps in that process.

19 h3 h4 20 ♖b1 ♔g7 21 ♗c3 ♖g5+



The queen returns to take the dark squares again.

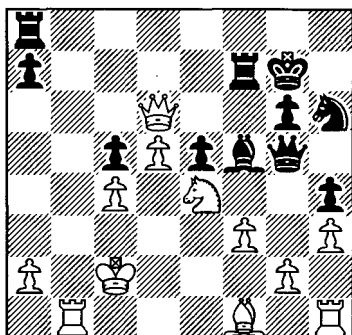
22 ♔c2 ♖f8

Looking forward to an imminent arrival at f2.

23 ♖a4 fxe4 24 ♗xe4 ♗f5 25 ♖d7+ ♖f7 26 ♖xd6

Winning the important d6 base

pawn but at the expense of having to face a direct attack on the king – rarely a good win of a pawn, even a central one.



26...♙xe4+

The king hunt begins. Can White escape?

27 fxe4 ♜f2+ 28 ♔b3 ♜e3+ 29 ♔a4 ♜xa2+ 30 ♔b5 ♝f7

Defending the king and bringing the knight into the attack – with tempo!

31 ♜c7 ♜a3 32 ♔c6 ♜a6+ 33 ♔d7 ♜d8+ 34 ♜xd8 ♜d6+ 35 ♔e8 ♜xd8 mate (0-1)

This game saw an ambitious attempt by White to win quickly on the queenside with an early b4 followed by a queenside invasion. Black proved this was unjustified with an incredible king hunt that forced the white king to the black king's starting square! This game also saw Black willingly lose the right to castle in exchange for active play and control of the dark squares, helped by the exchange of bishops.

Game 61

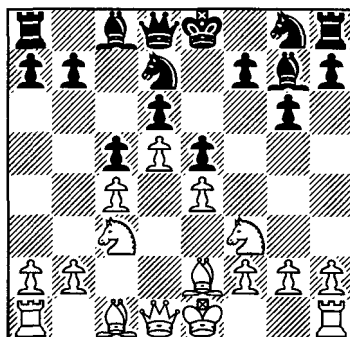
A.Lawson-C.Storey Sniper Training Match, Monkseaton 2009

Here we will see a White setup akin to a traditional Classical King's Indian, with ♘f3 and ♙e2. The ideal aim for Black is to take advantage of not having moved a piece in front of his f-pawn, so that ...f5 can be realized immediately. However, we will see that White's classical development is well placed to deal with such cheek, and that Black must also revert to more classical play with 10...0-0! or suffer a small disadvantage.

1 d4 g6 2 c4 ♙g7 3 e4 c5 4 d5 e5 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♘f3

I call this 'the Lawson System' because my training partner plays it, and as the pioneer of the Sniper I am allowed to, despite just being a wannabe Grandmaster!

6...♘d7 7 ♙e2



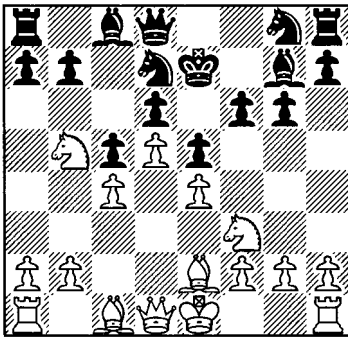
Dissuading a knight from coming to

h5 – compare this to the bishop going to d3 in the previous games.

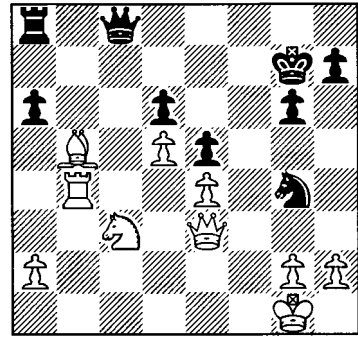
7...a6

White can exploit this move with ♖b1, when Black should play ...a5. Therefore ...a5 should be played in one move to generate counterplay.

For example, 7...♙f8 8 h4 h6 9 ♙e3, or even better 7...f6! (in Braveheart style: ‘come on to the spikes with your troops’) 8 ♗b5 ♙e7!!.



In Ivanov style, Black will look to get activity against this cheeky invasion to offset losing his right to castle: 9 0-0 a6 10 ♗c3 ♗h6 11 ♖b1 ♗f7 12 ♗e1 ♖f8! (the black king is safe in the centre) 13 ♙e3 ♙h6 (the plan for Black is to get a level ending) 14 ♙xh6 ♗xh6 15 ♗d3 ♙f7 16 f4 ♙g7 (Black has now artificially castled and is level) 17 fxе5 ♗xe5 18 ♗xe5 fxе5 19 ♖d2 ♙d7 20 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 21 b4 cxb4 22 ♖xb4 ♖c8 (the queen may re-enter at c5 with tempo against the white king) 23 ♖e3 b5 (Black is always looking to play this – even if it loses a pawn) 24 cxb5 ♙xb5 25 ♙xb5 ♗g4!!.



Great activity for Black begins. White must be careful to avoid a vicious king attack; for example 26 ♖g3 ♖c5+ is game over, but even after 26 ♖b6 ♖xc3 Black has a clear advantage.

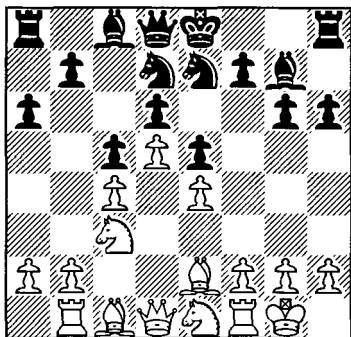
7...♗g6 can still be played and is a safe, respectable alternative. After 8 0-0 ♗h5 9 ♖e1 ♗f4 10 ♙f1 0-0 play is analogous to a mainline King’s Indian but I suspect Black has a slightly better version on account of the Bermuda Triangle pawn structure.

8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♖b1 h6?!

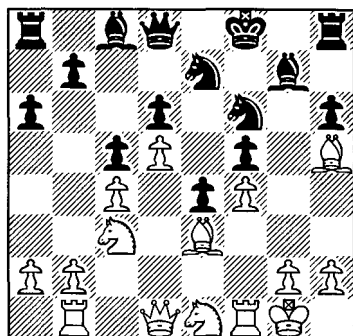
A waiting move which is an instructive error. Waiting moves are too risky if White can simply make headway in a certain area of the board, and here the b4 plan offers fast and good play for White, thus negating the prophylactic impact of 9...h6?!

9...a5 is a better move. It’s well worth accepting the weakening of the b5-square in return for slowing down White’s active play on the queenside. For example, 10 ♗b5 ♗f6 11 ♗d2 0-0 and Black is okay – he will soon turn his attention to the kingside.

10 ♖e1



here 15 cxb5 axb5 16 ♖xb5 ♖f6 17 ♙e2 ♖exd5 gives Black a good position.



10...f5?!

Martin Seeber's idea of 10...0-0! is better and the move I recommend to Sniper trainees. One possible continuation is 11 b4 cxb4 12 ♖xb4 f5 13 ♖d3 b6 (13...b5 is an error here as White simply plays 14 cxb5 axb5 15 f3 when the kingside pressure is way too slow and White wins the queenside) 14 f3 f4 15 ♙a3 ♖b8 16 ♖b2 ♗c7 17 ♗c2 h5 with chances for both sides in a complex position.

11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♙h5+ ♔f8

Black looks for a quick ...b5.

13 f4

The simple 13 b4 may refute Black's play. After 13...e4 14 ♖e2 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 I would not be too confident with the location of the black king – the position is a bit too open and can be opened further with f2-f3.

13...e4 14 ♙e3 ♖f6

Black's goal now is ...b5 and ...♖xd5. The immediate 14...b5!? can always be thrown in if Black would like to radically alter the shape of the game, and

15 ♖c2 b5

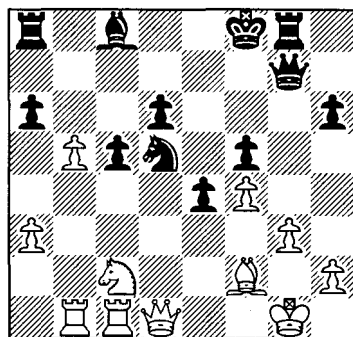
With fairly equal chances in a complex middle game.

16 ♙f2 ♗a5 17 a3 ♖xh5 18 ♗xh5 ♙xc3

Sniper Sacrifice!

19 bxc3 ♗xc3 20 ♖fc1 ♗g7 21 cxb5

♖xd5 22 ♗d1 ♖g8 23 g3



23...♖c3?

23...♗f7! would have kept an edge: 24 ♖e3 ♙e6 25 b6 ♔g7 26 ♗d2 ♖xe3 27 ♙xe3 ♖gd8 28 a4 ♔g8 29 ♗c2 ♙d5 with a pressing advantage.

24 ♗xd6+ ♔f7 25 ♙xc5?!

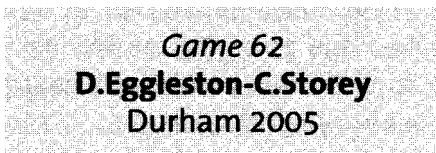
Much better was 25 ♗c7+! ♔g6 26

♖c6+ ♗h7 27 ♖xa8 ♘e2+ 28 ♗f1 ♘xc1 29 ♙xc1 ♖b2 30 ♙e3 which would have won for White. Therefore I must refer trainees back to 23...♗f7!, or even further to Seeber's 10...0-0!

After White missed his chance the game headed for a draw.

25...♘e2+ 26 ♗f1 ♘xg3+ 27 hxg3 ♖xg3 28 ♘e1 ♙e8 29 ♙f2 ♖h3+ 30 ♗e2 ♙e6 31 ♙c7+ ♗g8 32 ♖d4 ♖g4+ 33 ♗f1 ♙ad8 34 ♖e3 ♙d7 35 ♙c3 ♙ed8 36 ♖g3 axb5 37 ♖xg4+ fxg4 38 ♙xb5 ♙f8 39 ♙g3 ♗g7 40 ♘c2 ♙d1+ 41 ♗e2 ♙d3 42 ♙b7+ ♗g6 43 ♙xd3 exd3+ 44 ♗xd3 ♙f5+ 45 ♗d2 ♙d8+ 46 ♗c1 ♙d3 47 ♙b6+ ♗h5 48 ♙b5 ♗g6 49 ♙b6+ ♗h5 50 ♙f6 ♙xg3 51 ♙xf5+ ♗g6 52 ♙e5 ♙f3 53 ♙e6+ ♗h5 54 f5 ♙xf5 55 ♘e3 ♙a5 56 ♗b2 ♗g5 57 ♗b3 h5 58 ♗b4 ♙a8 59 a4 ♗f4 60 ♘d5+ ♗f5 61 ♙h6 ♗g5 62 ♙h7 ♙g8 63 a5 g3 64 ♘e3 ♗g6 65 ♙c7 h4 66 ♘g2 ♙h8 67 a6 ♗f6 68 a7 h3 69 ♙h7 ♙a8 70 ♙xh3 ♙xa7 71 ♙xg3 ½-½

White played ♘f3 and ♙e2 in Classical Kings Indian style, and it posed some serious problems for Black. However, Seeber's recommendation of 10...0-0! and earlier improvements on moves 7 and 9 ensure Black gets a good game, and overall this approach should be easy for Black to meet.

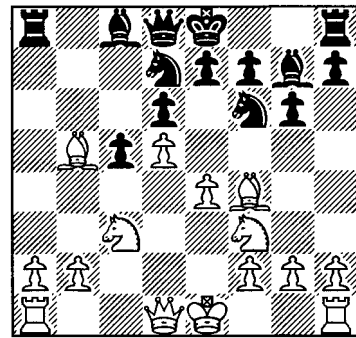


This game will see an attempt by

White to prevent the Bermuda Triangle pawn structure by way of 6 dxe6 en passant. It will also show that Black simply equalizes and may use the extra central pawn to useful effect later in the game.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 c4 c5 4 d5 d6

Playing in the Benko style is certainly worth considering. For example, 4...a6 5 ♘c3 b5 6 cxb5 d6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7 8 ♙f4 ♘gf6 9 ♙e2 axb5 10 ♙xb5



10...♘xe4! 11 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 12 ♘xe4 ♗f5 13 ♘xd6+ exd6 14 ♙xd6 ♖e4+ 15 ♗f1 ♗d7 16 ♙g3 ♙xb2 17 ♙b1 ♙xa2 18 h4 ♙e8, when Black's superior centre defends his king adequately and he can look forward to ...♙b7 with great play on the long diagonal. The Benko-style approach is further considered later on in the chapter.

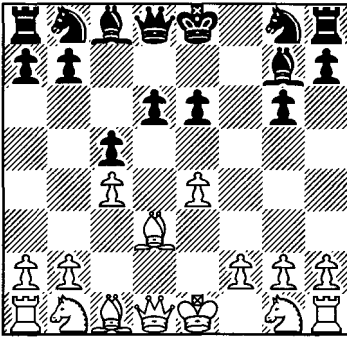
5 ♙d3

David Eggleston likes setups with ♙d3 in King's Indians, but in this game it simply offers Black easy equality.

5...e5

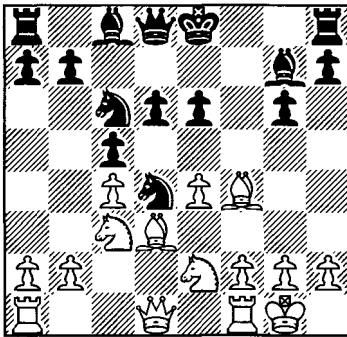
5...♘d7 is a playable alternative.

6 dxe6 fxe6



Black has already equalized. The extra central pawn will help in many defensive setups and will easily neutralize any initiative White may gain. Conceding a central pawn for a 'wing pawn' is a fundamental error unless some obvious compensation results from it.

7 ♖e2 ♘c6 8 ♘bc3 ♘d4 9 0-0 ♖e7 10 ♙f4 ♘ec6



Black secures d4 and is now even slightly better. This is a clear success for Black in the opening.

11 ♜d2 0-0 12 ♙g3 a6 13 ♜ad1 ♘e5 14 ♘f4 ♘xd3 15 ♜xd3 b5

Black's two bishops and attack tell

us that dxe6 in this variation is not to be recommended.

16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♜xf1+ 18 ♜xf1 ♘xe2+ 19 ♜xe2 ♜d4+ 20 ♜f2 bxc4 21 ♜f3

With a powerful double attack that is defused by a powerful 'double defence'.

21...♜a7 22 ♘e4 h6

22...♜c7 may also neutralize any White attack that may have been brewing.

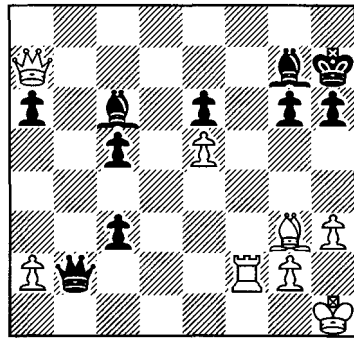
23 ♘d6 ♙d7 24 ♜f7+ ♘h7 25 ♘e8 ♙xe8 26 ♜xa7 ♜d1+ 27 ♜f1 ♜d4+ 28 ♘h1 ♙c6

28...♜xb2 was slightly better.

29 h3 ♜xb2 30 ♜f2

David could have been forgiven for expecting to win this position, but suddenly a surprising move rocks him in his seat:

30...c3!?



31 ♜xc5

If 31 ♜xb2 cxb2 32 ♜b6 ♙b5! and the pawn promotes safely.

31...♙e4

Again the queen sacrifice is offered!

32 ♖f4 c2 33 ♔h2 g5 34 ♚e3 ♙g6 35 ♚c1 ♚d4?!

Taking the a2-pawn would have made the win easier. In time pressure I allow David back into the game.

36 ♙g3 ♙xe5 37 ♜f1 ♙g7 38 ♜e1 ♙f5 39 ♜f1 ♚c4 40 ♜e1 ♚xa2 41 ♙e5 ♙xe5+ 42 ♜xe5 ♚c4 43 ♜e1 g4 44 hxg4 ♚xg4 45 ♚d2 ♙g6 46 ♜e3 ♚h4+

46...♚h5+ followed by 47...♚d1 wins for Black.

47 ♙g1 h5

And here the accurate 47...♚g5! still wins.

48 ♜c3 (½-½)

In the crazy time scramble that later occurred David managed to draw.

From an opening viewpoint this was a clear success for the Sniper, and Sniper practitioners can face this anti-Bermuda Triangle approach with complete confidence. The d4-square can be easily utilized by the knight coming to c6.

In the final game of this section Black doesn't play a Bermuda Triangle but instead opts to leave the pawn on e7 and simply prevents White from playing e5. I won't go into too much detail, but I just want to give readers a glimpse of an alternative plan to the Bermuda Triangle – in short, a Sniper with ...d6, ...♘e8 and ...♚c7. It's worth playing if you can do a little study on it, as White's pieces generally have to re-route themselves in an attempt to get the e5 thrust in.

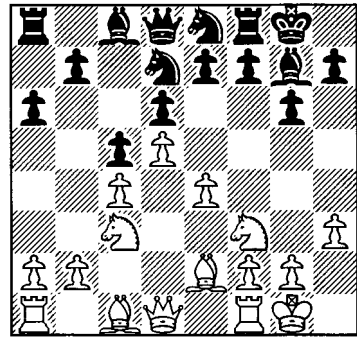
Game 63

L.Murzin-K.Makarov
Beliaev Memorial,
Moscow 2006

1 d4 g6 2 c4 d6 3 ♘f3 ♙g7 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 e4 0-0 6 ♙e2 c5 7 d5

SMOT.

7...a6 8 0-0 ♘bd7 9 h3 ♘e8



Black must fight against White's central thrust e5 – this is the main battleground.

10 ♙f4 ♚c7

This is an excellent move that prevents e5 and forces White's pieces to different squares to try and achieve the thematic advance.

11 ♚d2 ♘e5 12 ♘h2 f5 13 ♙h6 ♙xh6 14 ♚xh6 f4

Black locks the queen in and prevents f2-f4 dislodging his pride and joy.

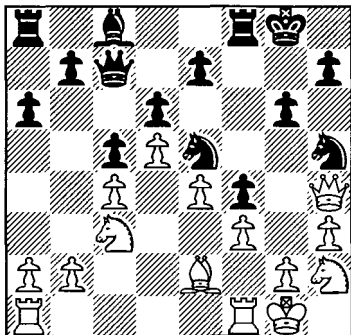
15 f3?!

15 ♘f3!? was necessary, to challenge the excellent knight on e5.

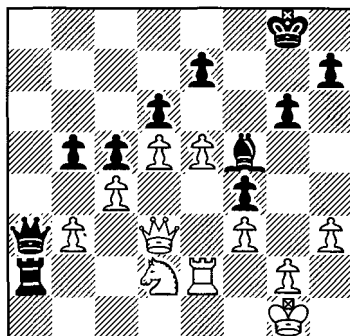
15...♘g7 16 ♚h4 ♘h5

The black knights have found su-

perb squares and White's attack has been repulsed – a clear sign that something has gone wrong for White.



squares that gain points for the Sniper. White could reasonably resign here.



17 ♖f2 ♕d7 18 ♜fd1 ♜ab8 19 a4 ♘g3
20 ♘f1 ♘xe2+ 21 ♚xe2 ♚b6

The start of an interesting plan of playing on the queenside to realize Black's advantage. I must point out that it would have been difficult for me to resist the alternative plan of ...h5, ...g5-g4, ...♖h8 and ...♜g8 with attack!

22 ♜db1 ♚b4 23 ♘d2 b5 24 axb5 axb5
25 ♘a2 ♚a5 26 ♘c1 ♚b6 27 b3 ♜a8 28
♜xa8 ♜xa8 29 ♘d3 ♘xd3 30 ♚xd3 ♜a2

White has removed the excellent black knight but at the cost of allowing a penetration on his second row.

31 ♜e1 ♚a5

The queenside invasion is complete and the end is near for White.

32 ♜e2 ♚a3

Increasing the pressure.

33 e5

This attempt to get active is easily rebuffed.

33...♚c1+ 34 ♘f1 ♕f5

It's always the win of the central

35 ♚xf5 gxf5 36 ♜xa2 bxc4 37 bxc4
♚xc4 38 ♜a8+ ♘f7 39 e6+ ♘f6 40 ♜f8+
♘e5 41 g3 ♚xd5 42 g4 ♘xe6 43 gxf5+
♘d7 44 ♜h8 ♚d4+ 0-1

This game saw an alternative Sniper recommendation to the Bermuda Triangle. A black knight went to e5 rather than the pawn and it seemed highly effective. However, White may have improved with 15 ♘f3.

The Broken Arrow: ...♕xc3!

This section focuses on another Sniper Sacrifice which can be played if White chooses a move order with an early ♘c3 instead of e4.

Game 64

I.Morovic Fernandez-G.Laco

Pula 2000

1 c4 g6 2 d4

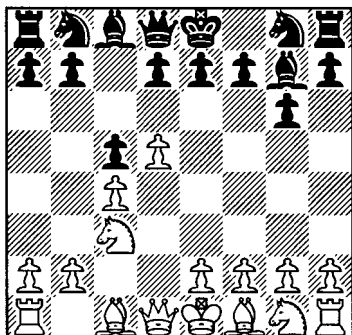
Of course this could have come from 1 d4.

The Sniper

2...♙g7 3 ♘c3 c5

A Pure Sniper versus an English/d-pawn hybrid.

4 d5



4...♙xc3+

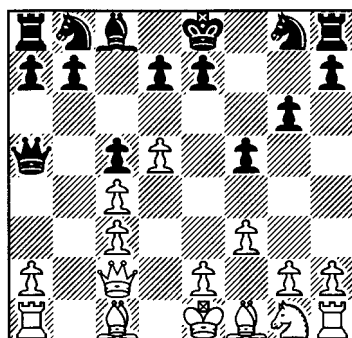
I love this move!

5 bxc3 ♖a5

Both ...♖a5 and ...f5 are played, but a key question is: which one should come first? I will let the reader decide, but here is some food for thought: 5...f5 6 g4 (6 h4 ♘f6 7 h5 ♘xh5 8 ♙xh5?! gxh5 9 e4 ♖b6 10 ♙xh5+ ♖g6 11 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 12 exf5 d6 13 ♖b1 b6 is good for Black) 6...♖a5 7 ♖c2 d6 8 ♖b1 ♘d7 9 ♖b5 ♖a6 when Black has a good position; for example, 10 gxf5 gxf5 11 ♙xf5 ♙xa2 12 e3 ♘e5 13 ♙h5+ ♙d8 14 ♙e2 ♖a4 15 h3 ♙f5 16 e4 ♖a1 17 ♙d1 ♙d7 18 ♖xb7 ♙xc3 with a great game for Black.

By playing ...♖a5 first Black prevents the dangerous g4 move, but it does allow White the option of sacrificing the c3-pawn and grabbing the centre with 6 e4 (see the next game).

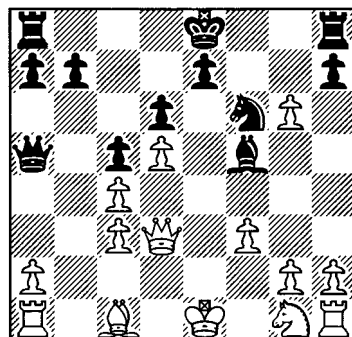
6 ♖c2 f5 7 f3



7...e5?!

This is not an effective way of playing for Black.

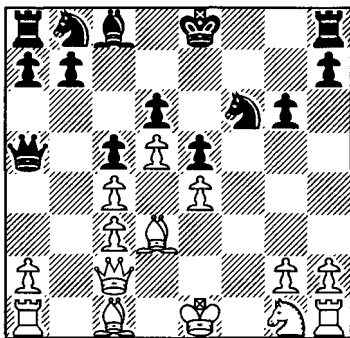
7...d6! is much better. This is a brilliant and deep idea involving a bishop to f5 sacrifice which justifies the exclamation mark: 8 e4 ♘f6 9 ♙d3 ♘bd7 10 exf5 ♘e5 (this is why an early ...e5 is not good – Black can get active central piece play with some advantage so it is not in his interest to completely block the centre up) 11 fxg6 ♘xd3+ 12 ♙xd3 ♙f5!.



The Sniper's martyrdom echoes into eternity as the c3-square remains a permanent weakness. After 13 ♙xf5

♖xc3+ 14 ♔f1 ♜xa1 15 ♜c2 hxg6 16 ♜xg6+ ♔d8 17 ♜c2 b5 Black is clearly better despite the early king adventure and should go on to win.

8 e4 fxe4 9 fxe4 ♘f6 10 ♙d3 d6



With the black queen stranded on the queenside, White can make more use of the open f-file and this leads to Black's downfall. 7...d6! is to be much more preferred for Sniper practitioners.

11 ♘f3 ♙g4 12 0-0 ♙xf3 13 ♜xf3 ♘bd7 14 ♙h6 ♘g4 15 ♙g5 h6 16 ♙d2 ♘gf6 17 ♜af1

White is just too active – Black has no counterplay.

17...♘g8 18 ♜f7 0-0-0 19 ♙e2

The win becomes trivial.

19...♜e8 20 ♙g4 ♘e7 21 ♜1f6 ♜c7 22 ♜a4 a6 23 ♜xg6 ♔d8 24 ♜xh6 ♘b6 25 ♜b3 ♜hg8 26 ♙e6 ♘bc8 27 h4 b5 28 ♜hh7 ♘b6 29 cxb5 c4 30 ♜a3 axb5 31 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 32 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 33 ♙xg8 ♜xh4 34 ♜xd6+ ♔e8 35 ♜e6+ 1-0

I love this variation! 7...d6!, given in the notes, puts 6 ♜c2 under a cloud, but 7...e5?! is to be avoided otherwise Black will be smashed down the f-file.

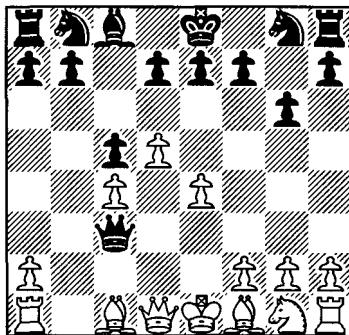
This next game will highlight the dangers of capturing White's c3-pawn early, as White's activity more than compensates. In fact, this provides a good argument for playing 5...f5 before ...♜a5.

Game 65
E.Ghaem Maghami-
O.Anilkumar
Teheran 2007

1 c4 g6 2 ♘c3 ♙g7 3 d4 c5 4 d5 ♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♜a5 6 e4

White grabs the centre at the expense of the c3-pawn. However, if Black captures it White may make good use of the a1-h8 diagonal.

6...♜xc3+



This cheeky pawn capture is somewhat brave as the bishop on c1 will look forward to a happy life. Although in this game a 2200-rated Black player draws against a 2550-rated Grandmaster, this simply doesn't sit comfortably with me and I can't recommend it.

The Sniper

Black should instead play 6...d6!? or 5...f5 before ...♖a5.

7 ♖d2 ♜g7

7...♜a3 tries to fight against White's queenside and hinder the bishop's occupation of the long diagonal. After 8 ♘e2 White has adequate compensation for the pawn, and 8...d6 9 ♘c3 ♜a5 10 ♖b5 ♜d8 11 ♜a4 ♘d7 reaches an unbalanced but level position. Black has no obvious weaknesses but White should be able to create one in the near future due to his good lead in development and advanced position of the knight on b5.

8 ♜c1

White seizes the dark squares. If defending passively with your extra pawn does not suit your style, then I refer you back to the note on 6...♜xc3+.

8...e5 9 f4

White has to get into the dark squares to justify the pawn deficit.

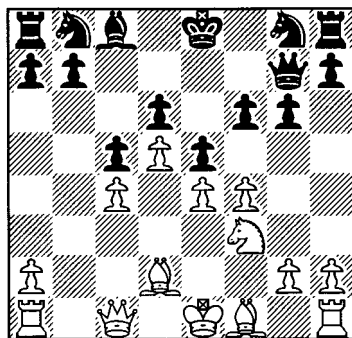
9 dxe6 is met by 9...fxe6! – always look to have a numerical central pawn advantage to use later. After 10 ♖c3 ♘f6 11 e5 ♘g8 the bishop is now blunted and Black can look forward to some nice central squares and central pressure for his knights.

9...f6

The little ...f6 move appears again, and it is the power contained in this little move that can offer Black defensive hope.

10 ♘f3 d6

Black has set up a dark-square defence.



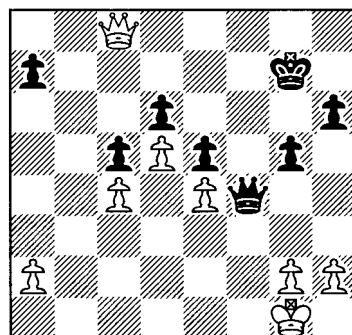
11 ♖d3 ♘d7 12 0-0 exf4 13 ♖xf4 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 fxe5 15 ♖e3 h6

Further dark-square defensive gestures from Black.

16 ♜b1 g5 17 ♜b2 ♘f6 18 ♜bf2 ♘g4 19 ♜f3 ♘xe3 20 ♜xe3

The position is completely level. White is in command of the f-file but Black can attack the f3-rook with his bishop, follow up with ...♗e7 and then challenge the f-file with the a8-rook.

20...♖g4 21 ♜f2 ♗e7 22 ♖e2 ♖xe2 23 ♜xe2 ♜af8 24 ♜g4 ♜g6 25 ♜xf8 ♜xf8 26 ♜xf8 ♗xf8 27 ♜c8+ ♗g7 28 ♜xb7+ ♜f7 29 ♜b8 ♜f4 30 ♜c7+ ♗g8 31 ♜c8+ ♗g7



With the two 'easiest to draw' pieces on the board, there can only be one result:

32 ♖d7+ ♘g8 33 ♜c8+ ♘g7 34 ♜c7+ ♘g8 35 ♜xd6 ♜c1+ 36 ♚f2 ♜d2+ 37 ♚f1 ♜d1+ 38 ♚f2 ♜d2+ 39 ♚f1 ♜d1+ ½-½

Black can grab the c3-pawn with the queen, but a long and dour defence will be required. The alternative is to play 6...d6 with a less defensive setup, or simply play 5...f5 before ...♜a5. The jury is out as to which approach is best. My gut feeling is that 5...f5 is better than 5...♜a5, but if you want to excel – learn them both!

In the next game White tries 6 ♜b3, but it is very passive and White simply gets no active play.

Game 66 E. Levin-S. Klimov St Petersburg 2008

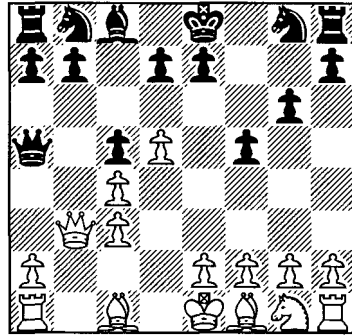
1 d4 g6 2 c4 ♘g7 3 ♘c3 c5 4 d5 ♘xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♜a5 6 ♜b3

This queen move looks less relevant than ...♜a5. It does have the virtue of protecting c3 and hitting b7. On the flipside, the rook will have less impact on the b-file and the queen will exert no influence on the kingside for quite a long time. A blocked centre with lots of manoeuvring is in store.

6...f5

This clampdown on the centre en-

sures that Black acquires plenty of counterplay and holds White's central pawn expansion by preventing e2-e4.

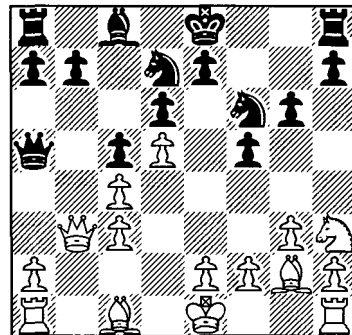


6...♘f6 is also possible. After 7 e4 ♘xe4 8 ♘d3 ♘f6 9 ♘f3 White has adequate compensation for the pawn but nothing more.

7 g3 ♘f6 8 ♘g2 d6 9 ♘h3

White has been forced to play less powerful central attacking moves – for instance, 7 g3 and 9 ♘h3 didn't directly attack the centre – and this should make life a little easier for Black.

9...♘bd7



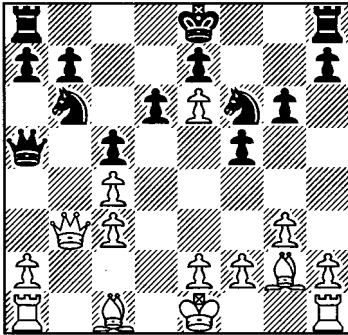
10 ♘f4

The knight arrives at an excellent

The Sniper

square. However, it is at the expense of allowing Black's knight to organize an attack on c4.

10...♖b6 11 ♘e6 ♗xe6 12 dxe6

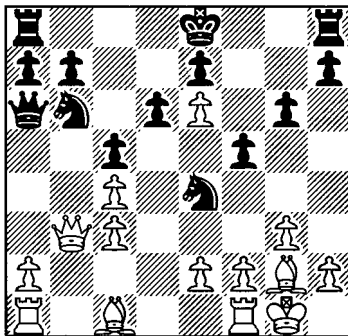


White's light-squared bishop looks powerful, and it is, but it's often only a match for a centralized knight.

12...♗e4

Delaying ...♗e4 and playing 12...0-0 instead is also possible.

13 0-0 ♖a6



The c4-square (and pawn) is won. Winning this pawn is far better than winning the c3-pawn, as that would of course allow the bishop on b2 brilliant action on the long diagonal.

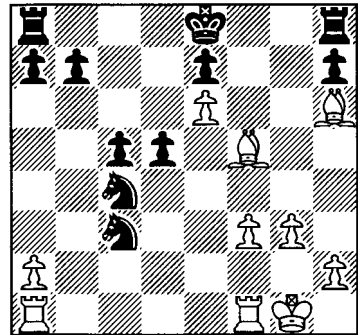
14 f3 ♘f6 15 e4 ♖xc4 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♗h3 ♘fd5

Black has the centre and with it the advantage – the two bishops are no match for the centralized knights.

18 ♗xf5 ♘xc3

Another pawn that was affecting the centre is removed and now White is near lost.

19 ♖xc4 ♘xc4 20 ♗h6 d5



Black claims the centre even more, making the conversion to victory considerably easier.

21 ♗d3 ♘b2 22 ♗c2 d4

As I always tell my students, who then look at me as if I'm a parrot: 'Centre, Centre, Centre... Centre.' It does tend to get the message across!

23 ♗g7 0-0-0 24 ♗xh8 ♖xh8

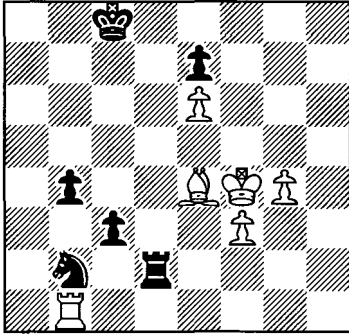
Black is even ready to sacrifice an exchange. Note the bishop that was exchanged could have had quite a bearing on the... centre!

25 ♖f2 d3 26 ♗b3 ♘e2+ 27 ♖xe2 dxe2 28 ♗f2 c4 29 ♗c2 ♖d8 30 ♗xe2 c3 31 ♗xh7 ♖d2+ 32 ♗e3 ♖xh2 33 ♗e4 b5

Black's active rook and 'hyper-

advanced' passed pawn should ensure the victory.

34 a3 ♖d2 35 ♜c1 ♜d1+ 36 ♔f4 a5 37 g4 b4 38 axb4 axb4 39 ♜b1 ♜b2



There is no way to stop the formidable pawns advancing successfully.

40 g5 b3 41 g6 ♜g2 42 ♜c1 ♜a4 43 ♔e3 b2 44 ♜h1 c2 45 ♜xc2 ♜xc2 46 ♔d3 ♜c1 0-1

Black's strategy of doubling White's c-pawns, strengthening in the centre with his knights, followed by attacking the c4-pawn made light work of a 2440-rated opponent. An extremely effective Sniper Sacrifice that let Black fight for the full point.

The Sniper: Benko Style

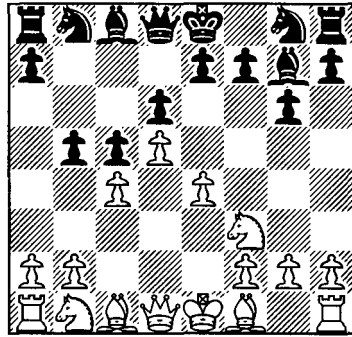
The 'Sniper Benko' can be played against early ♜f3 setups if Black is happy to suffer a pawn loss in return for long-term queenside pressure. There's an added bonus of avoiding many good variations that White may have chosen against a straightforward Benko Gambit, such as the f3 and e4 setup.

Game 67 E.Pigusov-M.Ivanov Mainz 2002

1 ♜f3 g6 2 d4 ♜g7 3 c4 c5

The Sniper Benko still starts with a Pure Sniper.

4 e4 d6 5 d5 b5



Black has engineered an unusual Benko Gambit that has somehow avoided a number of recommended setups for White against the mainline Benko. White's knight is already committed to f3 and Black's knight remains on g8. This gives Black better options and ensures a decent version of the Benko.

The Sniper Benko may also be played against other White setups, but an early ♜f3 clearly prevents setups of f3, f4 or ♜ge2, all of which are known to be quite challenging for Black.

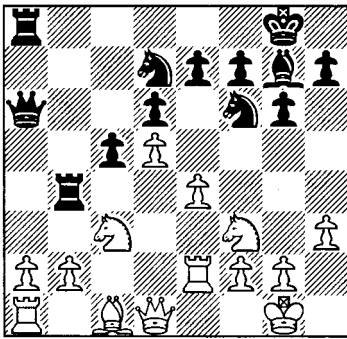
6 cxb5

Not capturing the pawn will only help Black gain free counterplay on the queenside.

The Sniper

6...a6 7 ♖c3 ♜f6 8 a4

White could capture on a6 but a 'Dilution Principle' position would follow where Black piles his pieces down the a- and b-files and possibly follows this with a timely ...c4. Okay, that's a little vague, but there's a standard pattern of highly effective play for Black in the Benko Gambit accepted which is easy to digest and then play. Here's one example: 8...0-0 9 ♙e2 ♙xa6 10 0-0 ♜bd7 11 h3 ♜a5 12 ♙e1 ♜fb8 13 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 14 ♙e2 ♜b4,



with good play for Black, A.Ipatov-O.Perez Mitjans, Barcelona 2009.

8...0-0 9 b6

Returning the pawn, but now Black can claim some advantage already.

9...♜xb6 10 a5 ♜d8 11 ♙e2 ♙g4 12 ♜d2 ♙xe2 13 ♜xe2 ♜bd7 14 0-0 ♜e8

Heading for b5 and awaking the Sniper bishop!

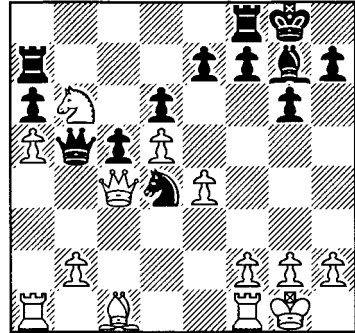
15 ♜c4 ♜c7 16 ♜a4 ♜b5 17 ♜cb6 ♙a7

White's knights look as though they have penetrated into Black's camp; the reality is they are semi-neglecting the centre.

18 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 19 ♜b6 ♜d4

Gaining a key tempo to give Black a clear advantage.

20 ♜c4 ♜b5!



As so often in Benko positions, Black is very well placed to enter the ending.

21 ♙a2 ♜b8 22 ♜d2 ♜xc4 23 ♜xc4 ♜b3 24 ♙e1 ♜ab7

Black is pressing and probing. White is simply too passive and has to wait like a fly stuck in a web – a great advert for the Sniper Benko.

25 ♙c3 ♜e2+ 26 ♙xe2 ♙xc3

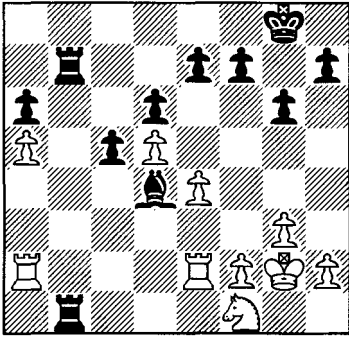
The back row threat forces the knight away from its central duties and ensures what should have been a full point for the Sniper Benko. Black really should have won this game, even playing a 2600+ opponent.

27 ♜e3 ♙c1+ 28 ♜f1 ♙b1

28...c4! followed by ...c3, again exploiting the back row weakness, is very strong.

29 g3 ♙xb2 30 ♙g2 ♙d4

When the Sniper bishop comes to the centre with immunity, no white piece can rest easy.



31 ♖ec2 ♜7b5 32 ♘d2 ♜d1 33 ♘c4
 ♜bb1 34 ♘d2 ♜g1+ 35 ♘h3 ♜bc1 36
 ♘f3 ♜xc2 37 ♜xc2 ♜d1 38 ♚g2 ♙g7 39
 ♘d2 h5 40 h4 ♘f8 41 f4 ♙d4 42 ♚f3
 ♜a1 43 ♘c4 ♜f1+ 44 ♚g2 ♜g1+ 45 ♚f3
 ♜f1+

45...♚e8 should still lead to victory.

46 ♙g2 ♜g1+ ½-½

This next game sees Morozevich transpose from a Sniper into a Sniper Benko, but only after exchanging the light-squared bishops.

Game 68

M.Karttunen-A.Morozevich

European Club Cup,
 Rethymnon 2003

1 d4 c5

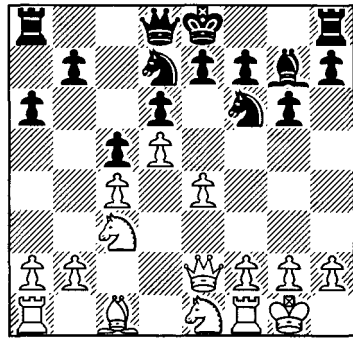
As I've mentioned before, although the 1...c5 move order is playable against 1 d4, I strongly recommend Sniper trainees to stay with the 1...g6 move order for a couple of years. Just like training in any subject, there will

be setbacks, but I guarantee you this: if you stay with the Sniper it will reap more points than other opening systems you might have played as Black. Practice – Patience – Perseverance – Progress – Points!

2 d5 g6 3 c4 ♙g7 4 e4

SMOT: Of course this could have come via a Pure Sniper.

4 e4 d6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♘f3 ♙g4 7 ♙e2 ♘d7
 8 0-0 ♘gf6 9 ♘e1 ♙xe2 10 ♜xe2



Black's strategy is now all about achieving ...b5 and monitoring White's potential e5 thrust.

10...0-0 11 f4 ♘e8 12 ♘f3 b5

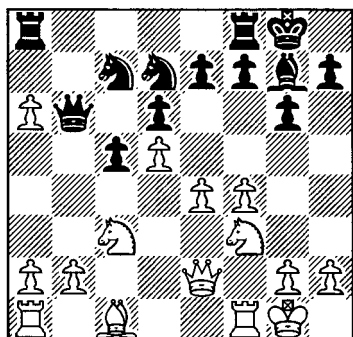
Always looking for ...b5, even at the cost of a pawn.

13 cxb5 ♜b6 14 bxa6 ♘c7

It's well worth taking a few minutes to fully examine this position. The meaty features are as follows:

1. Black will head his rooks down the a- and b- files to compensate for the pawn deficit.

2. The disappearance of the light-square bishops weakens the a6-square and a6-f1 diagonal.



15 e5

White's thematic break arrives but it also weakens the d5-pawn.

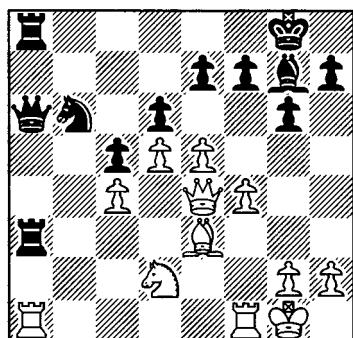
15... ♖xa6

Morozevich is more than happy to enter an endgame, even with a pawn deficit, as long as his pieces remain active.

16 ♕e4 ♜fb8 17 a3 ♞b5 18 ♙e3 ♞xc3 19 bxc3 ♜b3

Black invades on a weak light square.

20 c4 ♞b6 21 ♞d2 ♜xa3



Black wins back the pawn and is also well placed to attack White's remaining pawns from the advanced

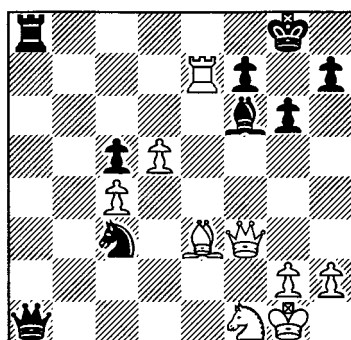
entry points he has engineered on the queenside.

22 ♜xa3 ♕xa3 23 ♜b1 ♞a4

Moving a knight away from the centre is rarely a good idea, but here it is coming straight back in with such devastating effect it is more than warranted.

24 ♜b7 ♞c3 25 ♕f3 ♕a1+ 26 ♞f1 dxe5 27 fxe5 ♙xe5 28 ♜xe7 ♙f6!

This is a lovely defensive move that gains a critical counter-attacking tempo.



29 d6?

An overly optimistic sacrifice. White might be just about surviving after 29 ♜c7 ♞d1! 30 ♙xc5 ♙d4+ 31 ♖h1 ♞f2+ 32 ♖g1!.

29... ♙xe7 30 dxe7 ♜e8 31 ♙xc5 ♕e1 32 g3 ♞e4 33 ♙a3 ♞d2 34 ♕f2 ♕xf2+ 35 ♖xf2 ♞xc4 36 ♙c5 ♞e5 0-1

Black wins with ...♞c6 and ...♞xe7.

A good Sniper Benko game by Morozevich, who invaded on the queenside and then launched an attack on the dark squares around the white king.

Chapter Seven

Miscellaneous Lines

Anti-Snipers

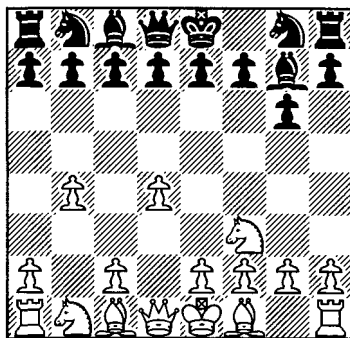
Game 69
K.Arkell-C.Storey
British Championship,
Torquay 2009

This game sees one of England's top Grandmasters play against the Sniper. His response: an 'Anti-Sniper' involving 3 b4. The resulting position might seem like a crazy mess to untrained Snipers, but a number of similar themes and patterns unfold that can act as navigation beacons for well-trained Snipers.

1 d4 g6 2 ♘f3 ♙g7 3 b4

Arkell was determined to prevent me from playing 3...c5. He achieved this but I still got it in two moves later – a

Deferred Sniper!



It was this game that convinced me the Sniper was something special. It is not just an opening but a chess system of structural development extending deep into the middlegame. Even Grandmasters can lose to it when facing considerably lower-rated opponents. Not only did I defeat a Grandmaster in this game with Black, he also

The Sniper

lost on time in a lost position – this again shows the power of the Sniper. With so many new positions and ideas it is not possible even for players as excellent as Keith to fully understand the complexities. Anyone who becomes familiarized with the resulting middle-games can gain time and reach better positions, which often translates to extra points over the course of a career – which in turn means higher ratings. That's my opinion, but this only kicks in if you can put some effort into the system and stick with it. That is true of mastering anything, I suppose.

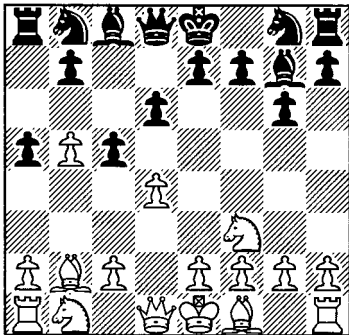
3...d6 4 ♖b2

A bizarre setup by White confuses us both – as the player with Black I think that means I have cancelled out White's initial opening advantage!

4...a5!

Snipers are always on the lookout for wing pawn exchanges in return for more centrally influencing pawns.

5 b5 c5

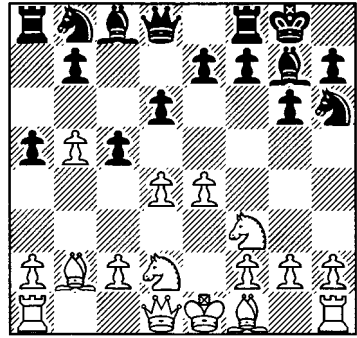


Phew – it's in! Behold another Deferred Sniper.

6 ♘bd2 ♘h6

I like the knight's development here as it can still attain a brilliant position on its next move, thus annulling the negative effect of 'knights on the rim are dim'.

7 e4 0-0



8 c3

Keith is world-class when it comes to understanding pawn structures and endgames. If he has a weakness from a GM viewpoint it may be his calculation in middlegames, so 'the messier the better' should offer some prospects – and there is nothing messier than an unclear new system. This is exactly the approach players who may not be as good as GMs should take, especially with Black. Otherwise time and again they will be ground down by a space or central advantage.

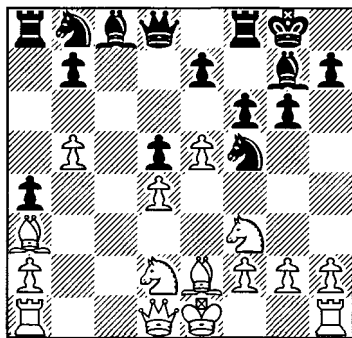
8...cxd4 9 cxd4 d5 10 e5 a4

Here the position is level but it is the calm before the storm – a storm that cannot be evaluated properly as it becomes absolutely chaotic.

11 ♙a3

A little optimistic, allowing the Sniper bishop to affect the centre by nibbling away with my favourite move in the Sniper:

11...f6 12 ♗e2 ♘f5!?



The knight surveys its domain and reasons that White will not play the risky g2-g4 to evict it. However, if g4 is played I believe White could equalize the position. Alternatively, after 12...fxe5 13 ♖xe5 ♘f5 14 0-0 Black has a nice small advantage.

13 ♖c1

13 g4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 fxe5 15 ♖c2 reaches an unclear mess that Keith probably didn't fancy defending.

13...g5 14 h3 ♘d7 15 ♗b2 ♖b6 16 ♖c2

This allows Black to make the position ultra-sharp. The question for Black is: how does he get the a8-rook to the kingside?

16...fxe5 17 dxe5 a3

Always be on the lookout for the initiative in the centre or on the enemy king.

18 ♗a1 ♖h6

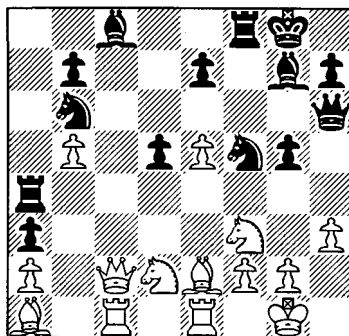
The queen makes her aggressive

kingside intentions clear.

19 0-0

How to get the a8-rook in?

19...♖b6! 20 ♖fe1 ♖a4!



With the added bonus of 'Centre, Centre, Centre ... Centre!'

21 ♘f1 g4 22 hxg4 ♖xg4

Objective achieved: the a8-rook has massively upgraded its value and function. White must be very careful otherwise a mating attack could be just around the corner. Keith wisely brings extra troops to defend his monarch.

23 ♘1h2 ♖g6 24 ♖d2

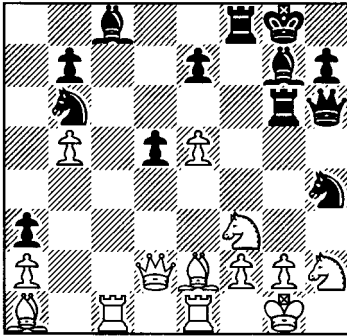
A nice attempt to neutralize the attack and then grind me down in the endgame. Level endgames against Arkell – who I would argue is even better than Capablanca in the endgame – will normally translate to a win for him.

24...♘h4!?

Although I was absolutely delighted with this move and the result of the game, I learned that it is difficult for top players sometimes to find simple three-move combinations in messy

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positions. Keith does have an opportunity to acquire a clear advantage later in the game but he can be forgiven as there are so many of these three-move combinations around – all requiring analysis and assessment.



25 ♖xh6 ♜xg2+

The position is a complete mess! This has nothing to do with the game but my favourite footballer is Messi – I can't play football like him but I can play chess like him!

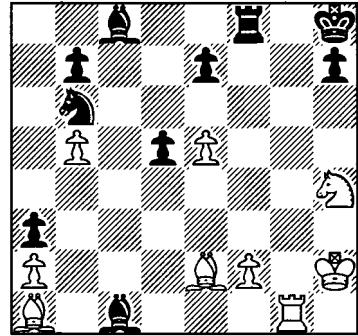
26 ♔h1 ♙xh6 27 ♘h4

27 ♜xc8!! is the move we both missed, and it even took a few seconds for my *Rybka* to find it. After 27...♜xc8 28 ♘h4 ♜xf2 29 ♘g4 ♜xe2 30 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 31 ♜xe2 ♜c1+ 32 ♔g2 ♜xa1 33 ♜f2+ ♔e8 34 ♘f5 Black's king will be under siege from White's attacking troops.

27...♜xc8 28 ♔xh2 ♙xc1 29 ♜g1+ ♔h8

After the game was published in *The Daily Telegraph*, a number of players asked me how much I had seen. Well, the truth is I had seen all the

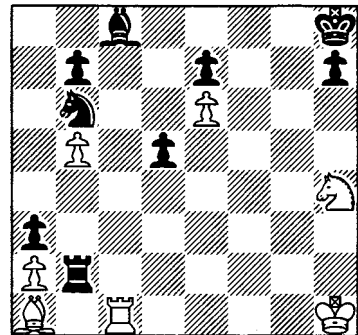
ideas after 24...♘h4 (except 27 ♜xc8!!) but was a little uncertain on some of the evaluations. I couldn't 'see' anything convincing for White and in hindsight this is correct except for 27 ♜xc8. Therefore, not the perfect Sniper game but very close.



30 ♜xc1 ♜xf2+ 31 ♔h1 ♜xe2 32 e6+

It was this move that Keith had pinned his hopes on, but I had seen an excellent response back at 24...♘h4!?. These ideas are easy to see when attacking but not so easy when defending and when many other ideas have to be calculated and assessed.

32...♜b2!!



White is now lost. The rook is immune from capture because the a3-pawn becomes a black queen: 33 ♖xb2+?! axb2 (this pawn simply becomes the winning trump) 34 ♖b1 ♗a4! 35 ♗f3 ♖xe6 36 ♗d4 ♖f7 37 ♗f5 ♖g6 and Black wins.

33 ♖e1 ♖g8 34 ♗f5

Black must be careful, as there is still some danger to the king.

34...♗f8 35 ♗d4 ♖xa2 36 ♖f1+ ♖e8 37 ♖g1

Threatening mate in one. After four hours of hard chess work, and in time pressure, it is possible to miss such things.

37...♗d8 38 ♖c3 ♗c4 0-1

Keith lost on time in a lost position. The Sniper had at last successfully arrived on the world stage with the taking of a 2500 GM scalp. This game demonstrated the value of playing middlegames that you have some familiarity with – at least more familiarity than your opponent. This is a key virtue of the Sniper system; it is not an opening in the traditional sense, as its structure works against any White setup.

This next game will show an effective way of dealing with the London System. It is the only time in the entire book where a Sniper system has not been recommended, as Black plays ...e5 instead of ...c5. Black's setup has been played with good success by Grandmaster Pia Cramling.

Game 70
S.Ledger-C.Storey
British Championship,
Liverpool 2008

1 d4 g6 2 ♗f3 ♖g7 3 ♖f4

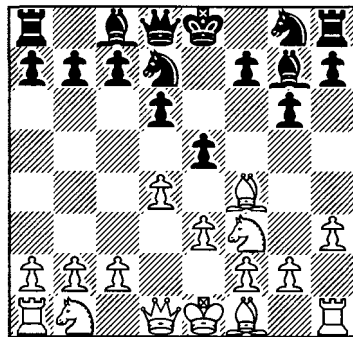
This setup for White appears to be calm and simple, offering a small advantage. Not so – the bishop can be hit by a pawn. Let's see how:

3...d6

Although ...c5 can be played, this approach endorsed by Cramling is so good that this is a rare instance where I recommend an alternative to the Sniper setup. Black's powerful aim is an all-out attack on the kingside!

The Pure Sniper way would be 3...c5 4 c3 ♖b6, with complete equality.

4 e3 ♗d7 5 h3 e5!



The entire point: this central initiative allows a scheme of development that ensures good attacking prospects for Black.

6 ♖h2 ♖e7 7 ♖e2

After 7 ♖c4 ♗gf6 8 ♖e2 c6 9 dxex5

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♖xe5 10 ♜xe5 dxe5 Black has slightly the better of a quiet position.

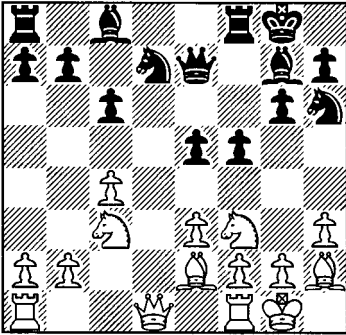
7...f5

Black can safely add the f-pawn to the centre as the e2-bishop is somewhat passive.

8 0-0 ♖h6 9 c4 0-0 10 ♜c3 c6 11 dxe5

Deviating from 11 ♜c1 ♜f7 12 b4 g5 13 ♜e1 ♜f6 14 b5 ♙d7 15 bxc6 bxc6 16 ♜b1 f4 17 ♜c2 ♙f5, when Black was already very strongly placed to attack on the kingside, S.Ledger-P.Cramling, British League 2006.

11...dxe5



Black has strong central control and the h2-bishop is out of the game.

12 ♜c1 g5 13 ♚h1 g4 14 ♜g1 ♜f6 15 ♜c2 ♜h5

Black is poised for the attack.

16 hxg4 fxg4 17 ♜e4 ♙f5 18 ♙d3

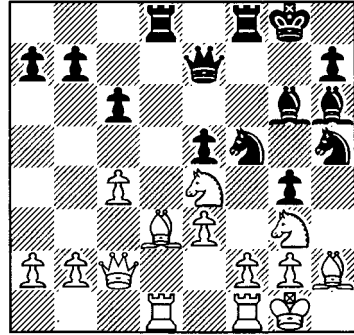
One final piece is required to do something useful – then attack!

18...♜ad8 19 ♜e2 ♙g6 20 ♜g1 ♜f5

The computer likes White here but the Dilution Principle is in effect. The satisfying thing about this game was that I was aware of this – there may be

hope yet for humanity against the silicon beasts!

21 ♜cd1 ♙h6 22 ♜2g3



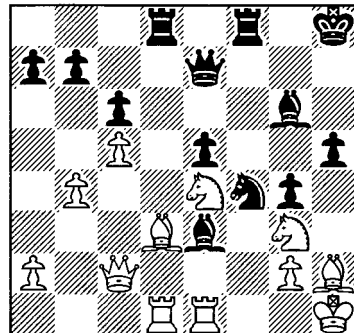
22...♜xe3!!

Two exclamation marks may be a bit generous really, as two central pawns, the initiative and a weaker enemy king is well worth one unit of material, and that's before forward calculations are applied.

23 fxex3 ♙xe3+ 24 ♚h1 ♜f4 25 c5 ♚h8 26 b4 h5

The pawn advance will plough through, driving away pieces and allowing the black pieces to attack.

27 ♜fe1



27...♙d4?!

Black wins easily by 27...h4! (a central modifier!) 28 ♖xe3 hxg3 29 ♙xg3 ♜xd3 30 ♖xd3 ♜f1+ 31 ♖h2 ♖xd3 32 ♜xd3 ♜h7+ 33 ♙.h4 ♜xh4+. If there is one thing I've learned since commencing the research and writing of this book, it's that central modifier moves can win games!

28 ♜e2 ♜xd3 29 ♜xd3 ♙f2 30 ♜xf2 ♙xd3 31 ♜xd3 e4 32 ♜e5 ♖h7 33 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 34 ♜g3 ♜d2

With the cat among the pigeons the position is won and should be trivial. However ... I proceeded to lose on time after thinking I had made the time control!

35 ♖xe4 h4 36 ♜e2 ♜f2 37 ♜f4 ♜f1+ 38 ♙g1 ♖xf4 39 ♜c4 1-0

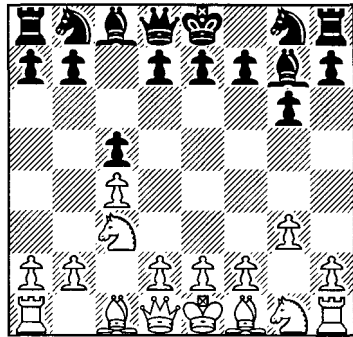
I lost on time in a trivially winning position. Comical now, but very painful at the time. Still, this was another superb victory for the Sniper recommendation, even though it was not actually a Sniper. Black built up an extremely effective kingside attack by using the early central thrust 5...e5 gaining a very useful tempo. If Black plays a Pure Sniper against the London System it just leads to equality.

**The English Opening:
A Simple Sniper Antidote**

This work would not be complete without a quick word on how to play against the English Opening. Of course after 1 c4 g6 White may transpose to many games discussed earlier in the

book, but if White plays in 'English style' Black needs a good, reliable answer and here I will offer a simple and clever idea. In short, it involves a Double Sniper: a quick ...b6 and ...♙b7, and a delayed development of the g8-knight. This straightforward method not only helps Black to just equalize, it also creates good chances to play for the full point.

1 c4 g6 2 ♜c3 ♙g7 3 g3 c5!



The Pure Sniper treatment.

4 ♙g2 ♜c6

Please note that the kingside knight remains on g8, and does so until the queenside Sniper position is completed.

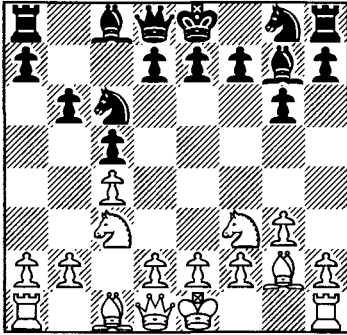
5 ♜f3

5 a3 b6 6 b4 ♙b7 is another promising version of the Double Sniper, with Black more than equalizing here. For example, 7 bxc5 bxc5 8 ♖b1 ♜c8 9 ♜e4 ♜d8 10 ♙f3 ♙c6 11 ♜h3 ♜e6 12 0-0 ♜f6 13 ♜eg5 ♙xf3 14 ♜xf3 0-0 15 d3 ♖b8 16 ♙f4 d6 with a pleasant position for Black in the game M.Gurevich-

The Sniper

V.Anand, Bastia (rapid) 2006.

5...b6!



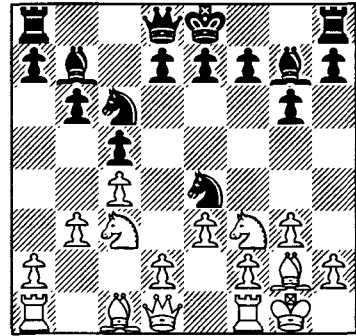
This early challenge on the light squares gives Black a fine game.

6 0-0 7 e3 8 f6 8 b3

After 8 $\text{N}e5$ $\text{Q}c7!$ Black is delighted and has no problems; for example, 9 $\text{N}xc6$ $\text{R}xc6$ 10 $d3$ 0-0 with equal chances.

8 $d4$ is White's best way to press for an advantage, but Black is equal after 8...0-0 9 $d5$ $\text{N}a5$ 10 $\text{Q}d3$ $d6$ 11 $\text{B}b1$ $e6$ 12 $\text{R}e1$ $exd5$ 13 $cxd5$.

8... $\text{N}e4$



White has completely lost any starting advantage he may have had. This variation will dissuade anyone from playing the English against you.

Conclusion

When you first venture into any new opening you will encounter problems, but with regard to the Sniper always remember this: Winners never quit and quitters never win!

If this attitude is applied then you will quickly begin to see vast improvements in your ability and points tally with Black, just as I did. If you have read this book properly you are now a fully trained Sniper and will have at your disposal the trickiest, most camouflaged, sound chess opening system for Black ever devised. I must take some credit for that as I have worked extremely hard on it!

Let us as fellow Snipers just recap on the key points of the Sniper:

1. We know the Pure Sniper move order of 1...g6, 2...g7 and 3...c5; and its cousin the Sicilian Sniper starting with 1...c5.
2. We have looked at Sniper Dragons with delayed castling and Kupreichik's ...b6!, and also examined Magnus Carlsen's Sicilian Dragons.
3. We have examined the Sniper Sacrifice involving ...xc3 and a ...b6 gambit which is particularly interesting. We also found ways to confuse White in a Maroczy Bind with an early ...b6!
4. The game Tiviakov-Storey and the resulting gambit provided good ammunition for the Sniper's theoretical credence against c3 setups.
5. When White aims for the f4 Schmid Benoni with 3 f4, the ...d5 neutralizer deals with that effectively.
6. When White shapes for an Anti-Sicilian with 2 c3 (like the Closed Sicilian or the Grand Prix Attack), Black was found to have some great lines that equalized and showed up White's unwillingness to correctly enter the central fight by way of an open Sicilian Dragon.
7. The Bermuda Triangle versus the White Arrow was a nice memory aid to understand the pawn structure. The resulting blocked positions generally favoured Black or equalized.

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8. A more dynamic way of fighting for the full point was the Broken Arrow – 4...♗xc3+! and then 5...♖a5 or 5...f5.

9. Another great virtue of the Sniper is that if Black wants to play the Sniper in Benko style, he avoids many of White's preferred anti-Benko setups and acquires a favourable version of the Benko.

10. Finally, we saw how successful Black can be when playing against Anti-Snipers, as the structural awareness gained from experience by regular use of the Sniper can help in complicated middlegame combat situations.

If you find that one of the chapters or key variations in this book comes under a cloud, or you would like to see some new Sniper games analysed by me, then by all means visit *The Sniper Monthly Update* link via my Personal Chess website www.CharlieChess.com. Alternatively, if you would like to contact me about a 'Sniper 20 Board Simul Challenge' and book signing, please do so by contacting me via storey@charliechess.com.

Thanks for reading and please send any feedback to the above e-mail address.

Congratulations! You are now a fully trained Sniper!

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the Sniper

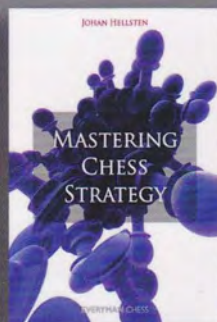
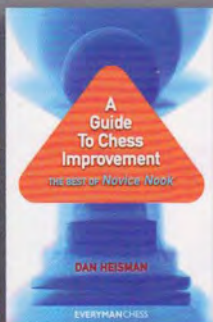
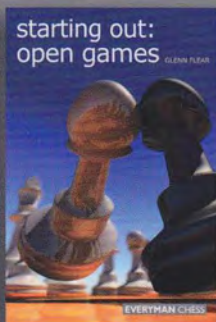
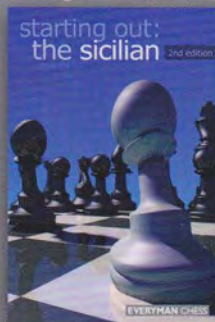
The Sniper is a dynamic and universal opening weapon for Black which can be used against all mainline openings. Black's system of development with ...g6 and ...Bg7 initially allows White to occupy the centre but, in true hypermodern style, Black strikes back immediately with ...c5. The Sniper can lead to original or barely-known positions in which Black can strive for the initiative. It's also rich in move-order possibilities, with potential transpositions into Sicilian, King's Indian or Benko-type positions.

FIDE Master Charlie Storey has spent years refining his favourite opening, successfully testing it out against players of all levels. In this book he reveals all his secrets, recommends his favourite lines for Black and provides you with everything you need to know about this fascinating opening.

- A repertoire for Black against 1 e4 and 1 d4
- Packed full of creative and original ideas
- Explains typical plans and tactics for both sides

Charlie Storey is a FIDE Master and the winner of many tournaments in the UK. He has been teaching chess for over 15 years and is the author of *The National Chess Syllabus*. In 2009 he coached the England junior team at the Under-16 Olympiad.

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