



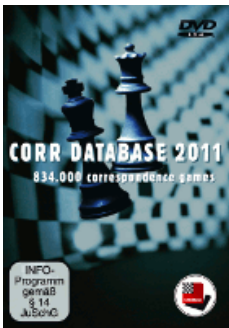
COLUMNISTS

CC
Chronicles

Bo Bredenhof



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Solid Openings For CC

Let's begin this month's column by answering some comments from last month:

Roger from **Canada** asked if "using chess software to help find the best move is now accepted in CC?" The answer depends on where you play. It is allowed in the ICCF, but other organizations or national tournaments may not allow it.

Stephen from the **USA** expressed kind words about the column. Thank you, it inspires me to continue my efforts to provide useful and interesting material.

Leon from the **USA** commented that I always assume a player follows "his chess software too much," without developing a plan. Every player is unique of course. There are many very good players out there. I know because I play them every day and it is difficult to win. Currently, I have fifty-seven games in eleven different tournaments. I am experienced enough to see when an opponent plays without a good plan (it is not always easy to find one) and when he relies too much on chess software.

Now to this month's topic: I have tried a variety of openings in CC during the last twelve years, and I have researched even more in analysis and databases. I would now like to share some of my experiences. I will assume that you play in tournaments where computer assistance is allowed because this makes opening selection much more critical. Though my comments are also useful in general. Please do not be offended if I have critical comments about your favorite opening. I am only expressing my opinion, while your experience with a certain opening may have been much more positive. My focus will be on solidity in the chess software environment at a moderate level of CC. There are several other aspects of opening choice in certain tournament situations and this will be dealt with another time.

Let's look at some very solid openings:

Ruy Lopez: This is a very solid opening for White. Black will often struggle for a draw, especially when White plays d5. In this case, Black has problems with piece mobility. Perhaps Black's best option is 3.Nf6: the Berlin Wall. Black can also try the Marshall Attack, but he will have problems in some Anti-Marshall variations. The Petroff is the most solid option for Black, but then he must be prepared for the Four Knights also.

Sicilian: The Closed variation is very solid for White, as is the Sveshnikov and Classical for Black.

Queen's Gambit: Several main lines in the QGD are very solid for White, and the QGA and Tartakower for Black.

Slav: The quiet 4.e3 is very solid for White, and the Chameleon or 4...a6 for Black.

Nimzo-Indian: Black has solid play in this opening, independent of White's choice of main line. Therefore, White usually avoids it with 3.Nf3. Then Black have several options: 3...d5 (the very solid QGD), 3...b6 (Queen's Indian), or 3...c5 (Benoni).

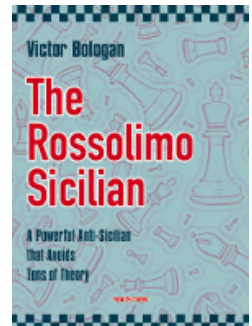
Semi-Slav: The Moscow variation with 6.Bxf6 is very solid for White.

Dutch: the Leningrad is very solid for Black, but White has several ways to avoid it.

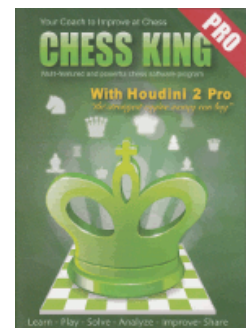
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If you list these openings among your favorites, then you will have a sound and resilient repertoire. If you pick your variations cleverly, there will be many draws, some wins, and only a few losses. As long as you think solid and simple with your openings, you will often get away with at least a draw.

While these openings may be positional in nature, there is plenty of opportunity for active play in these variations. The main point in this selection is to achieve robust positions with a minimum risk of losing. Next month, I will recommend a more tactically inspired opening selection.

Can you win tournaments with these openings? Of course! The opening is only one aspect of play. If you play 2...Nc6 in the Sicilian, you will occasionally encounter the 3.Bb5 System. Let's have a look at such a game between two equally strong players:

Richter, Wolfgang (2305) – Ilyasov, Anatoly (2307)
ICCF WS/M/259 2010/11
Sicilian Defense [B30]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 e6

More common is 3...g6. Other alternatives are 3...d6 and 3...Nf6. If you play the Classical Sicilian, perhaps you would prefer 3...d6 to get a similar position.

4.0-0 Nge7 5.c3 a6 6.Ba4 b5 7.Bc2 Bb7



[FEN "r2qkb1r/1b1pnprr/p1n1p3/1pp5/4P3/2P2N2/PPBP1PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 8"]

White has lured Black into advancing on the queenside in order to attack it at once. The problem with this scenario is that it takes time.

8.a4 Ng6 9.axb5 axb5 10.Rxa8 Bxa8 11.d4 cxd4 12.Nxd4 b4 13.Nb5

This is a strange and weak move. White should play 13.Be3 and get on with his development. To start a pawn hunt early in a game is often very risky. After 13.Nb5, Black is already equal.

13...Qb8 14.Qe2 Bc5 15.Rd1 0-0



[FEN "bq3rk1/3p1ppr/2n1p1n1/1Nb5/1p2P3/2P5/1PB1QPPP/1NBR2K1 w - - 0 16"]

Now comes the punishment.

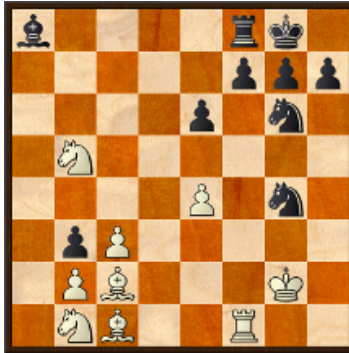
16.Rxd7 Bxf2+ 17.Kxf2

This is probably White's only move. After 17.Qxf2, the endgame seems lost. Black's queen, light-squared bishop, and the opening of the f-file would be too much for White.

17...Qxh2 18.Rd1 Nce5 19.Rf1 Qh4+ 20.g3

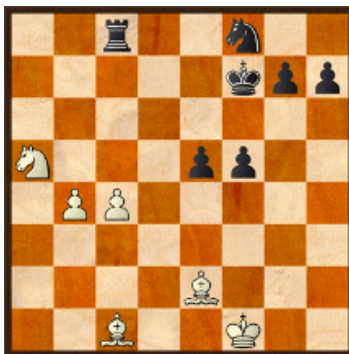
20.Kg1 only transposes.

20...Ng4+ 21.Kg1 Qxg3+ 22.Qg2 Qxg2+ 23.Kxg2 b3



[FEN "b4rk1/5ppp/4p1n1/1N6/4P1n1/1pP5/1PB3K1/1NB2R2 w - - 0 24"]

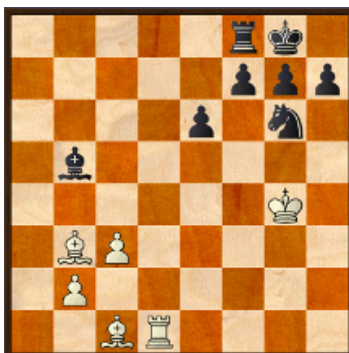
This is a critical position. White should now continue 24.Bd1 Bxe4+ 25.Kg1 (25.Kg3? loses a piece.) 25...Bxb1 26.Bxg4 Bd3 27.Nd4 Bxf1 28.Kxf1 e5 29.Nxb3 f5 30.Be2 Rc8 31.Na5 Kf7 32.c4 Nf8 33.b4:



[FEN "2r2n2/5kpp/8/N3pp2/1PP5/8/4B3/2B2K2 b - - 0 33"]

This interesting and difficult endgame position is about equal, with chances for both sides.

24.Bxb3? Bxe4+ 25.Kg3 Bxb1 26.Kxg4 Bd3 27.Rd1 Bxb5



[FEN "5rk1/5ppp/4p1n1/1b6/6K1/1BP5/1P6/2BR4 w - - 0 28"]

White is now behind two pawns and misses his good knight to support his passed pawns on the queenside. Black has a clear advantage, but it is still

interesting to see how he realizes it.

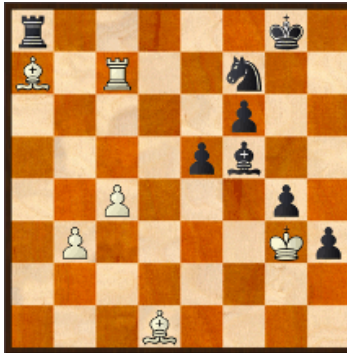
**28.Kg3 Rc8 29.c4 Be8 30.Ba2 Ra8 31.Bb3 Rb8 32.Bc2 f6 33.b3 Ne7 34.
Rd2 g5 35.Ba3 Nc6**



[FEN "1r2b1k1/7p/2n1pp2/6p1/2P5/
BP4K1/2BR4/8 w - - 0 36"]

Black has carefully blockaded White's passed pawns and begun advancing his own pawn on the kingside, without creating holes in the pawn chain. Black has a decisive advantage.

**36.Rd6 h5 (37.Rxe6 Nd4) 37.Bc5 h4 38.Kh3 Ne5 39.Bd4 Bg6 40.Bd1 Nf7
41.Rd7 e5 42.Ba7 Bf5+ 43.Kg2 Ra8 44.Rc7 h3+ 45.Kg3 g4 0-1**



[FEN "r5k1/B1R2n2/5p2/4pb2/2P3p1/
1P4Kp/8/3B4 w - - 0 46"]

Black played a very fine endgame.

From this game we can learn that pawn-hunting to the detriment of development is a bad idea, and not to give up too early. Even if you are in deep trouble, there can still be an escape (here 24.Bd1).

Until next time, good luck with your CC play!

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