



Dr. Strangelove's Move

It should have remained a joke and nothing more. Five years ago I had an article here, titled *Joe, Jake and Garry*, about the line 1. e4 e5 2. Qh5. This had been played twice against Kasparov, first by the actor Woody Harrelson, who with some grandmasterly help managed to draw, and later by tennis star Boris Becker, who had to fight Kasparov on his own and lost.

These two games did little to bestow respectability on the move 2. Qh5, but that changed when Nigel Short wrote, that a few years earlier Vladimir Kramnik had prepared the move to use in a blitz game against Kasparov.

Had he really played it, this would have been welcomed by thrill-loving amateurs, but I think Kramnik was right to refrain from doing so. He would have gained some time on the clock, because Kasparov would certainly spend a few seconds expressing his disgust, but it would have been a joke in bad taste.

Kramnik had told Short that in what he considered to be the main line, 1. e4 e5 2. Qh5 Nc6 3. Bc4 g6 4. Qf3 Qe7 5. Ne2, White was not worse. Not a very strong endorsement, but good enough to persuade some people to use 2. Qh5 occasionally in blitz games. I did it myself too, sacrificing an opening advantage for the sake of shock and insult. Never more than once against the same opponent though.

This year saw the first serious game with 2. Qh5 between strong grandmasters, Nakamura-Sasikiran from the Sigeman tournament in Malmö and Copenhagen. Kramnik's judgment that White was not worse was vindicated, but Hikaru Nakamura lost because he tried to avoid a draw at all cost.

He must have become a hero to the multitude that likes to avoid all opening theory without paying the price of getting a bad position. Nakamura showed that it could be done, but once should have been enough. The main fault of 2. Qh5 after 1. e4 e5 is that it almost invariably leads to dull positions.

In Yearbook 76 of *New in Chess* Genna Sosonko wrote that Nakamura had played more than a hundred games on the Internet Chess Club with 1. e4 e5 2. Qh5. Even worse, he had done the same against the Sicilian: 1. e4 c5 2. Qh5, not only on ICC, but also in the World Open, Philadelphia 2005, against Mark DeJmek, whom he beat easily.

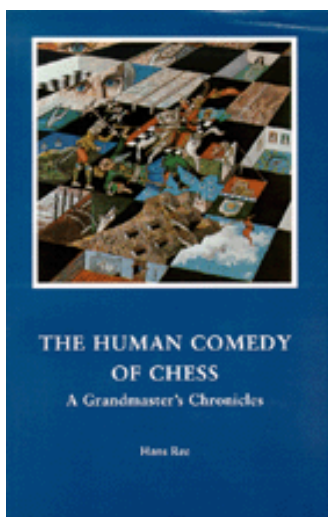
In a blitz game or in a serious game against a vastly inferior opponent you can play

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The Human Comedy of Chess



by Hans Ree

everything, but I wouldn't have expected to see 2. Qh5 against the Sicilian in an important tournament game against a formidable player. Still, this occurred last month in the finals of the Young Masters tournament in Lausanne. Nakamura had lost his first game against the Ukrainian Andrei Volokitin and had to win the second one.

Nakamura – Volokitin

Young Masters

Lausanne 2005

1. e2-e4 c7-c5 2. Qd1-h5 Contrary to the line with 1...e5, White is really a bit worse here, I think. **1...Ng8-f6 3. Qh5-h4** What would I have done here? Surely retract my second move partially by 3. Qe2, but of course this was not Nakamura's intention. **3...Nb8-c6 4. Bf1-e2** A move played several times by Dina Bazhenova, the Under-8 Girls champion of Russia. Presumably the idea is that with the queen out of the way, White will be able to activate the bishop by Be2-d1-b3, as actually happens in the game. **4...e7-e5 5. d2-d3 Bf8-e7 6. Qh4-g3 d7-d5** Black is already clearly better. **7. Nb1-d2 0-0 8. c2-c3 b7-b5 9. Ng1-h3** The awkward position of his queen prevents him from playing the normal move 9. Nf3 **9...d5-d4 10. c3-c4 Nf6-e8 11. c4xb5 Be7-h4 12. Qg3-f3 Nc6-b4 13. Be2-d1 f7-f5 14. a2-a3 Ne8-d6**



Such a position doesn't demand great courage to sacrifice a piece. **15. a3xb4 f5xe4 16. Qf3-h5 Bc8xh3 17. g2-g3 Qd8-f6 18. Bd1-b3+** *New in Chess Magazine* 2005/7 quotes Volokitin, who considers 18. f3 Bg2 19. Rg1 the best defense after which "Black has to play accurately to maintain his advantage." **18...Kg8-h8 19. f2-f3 e4xf3 20. Ke1-f2 Bh4-g5 21. Nd2xf3 g7-g6 22. Bc1xg5 Qf6-f5 23. Qh5xh3 Qf5xf3+ White resigned.**

Horrible. It reminds me of one of the games that Max Euwe invented to dissuade Dutch children from playing 2. Qh5.

In the daily e-mail magazine *Chess Today* the editor Alex Baburin strongly admonished Nakamura, who once in an interview said that he had little time for players like Smyslov: "Perhaps if he studied Smyslov a bit, he won't be coming up with moves like 2. Qh5 - after all the seventh World Champion called his game collection *In Search of Harmony*. 2. Qh5 clearly belongs to a different book..."

Sosonko had written in a similar vein: "When the teething troubles of the talented American champion are over, he will stop playing moves like 2. Qh5 and put his teeth in other moves and systems. Plenty of room left!"

This was written before the Lausanne tournament and if it had been Sosonko's aim to discourage Nakamura from playing 2. Qh5, his article actually had the opposite effect, for there Nakamura had found Dina Bazhenova's 4. Be2, which he tried out against Volokitin.

“Never trust anyone over 30” was a famous slogan for the mindless of the 1960's. Putting one's faith in the Under-8 is certainly carrying it to an extreme.

Playing over the Nakamura-Volokitin game, I imagined myself playing 2. Qh5, forced by an involuntary spasm of the right arm, and than sensibly retracting it on the next move with 3. Qe2. Somehow this imaginary sequence Qd1-h5-e2 reminded me of Stanley Kubrick's wonderful movie *Dr. Strangelove or: How I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb*.

Peter Sellers plays Dr. Strangelove, a former Nazi scientist who has put his expertise in blowing up the world at the service of the American government. When he is excited, his right arms tends to rise involuntarily in a Nazi salute, after which he grabs it with the other arm and struggles to bring it back into a more civilised position. The next time I watch that movie I will imagine Peter Sellers as a chessplayer whose arm jumps out to bring the queen all the way to h5 and who corrects himself with great effort a moment later.

To end in a more positive vein: in 1968 I spent some days together with Bobby Fischer in the kibbutz of one of the participants of the tournament in Netanya that had just ended. We played some blitz games in which Fischer appeared very fond of moves like Qd1-h5. Well, not really at move 2, but at the first opportunity when it was more or less reasonable. He won all these games, which he might also have done had he moved his queen even further, off the board.

For those interested readers interested in seeing more of Nakamura's 2. Qh5, here is a [link](#) to five of his games (in PGN format) from earlier this year.



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