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Preface

Anti-Sicilian systems continue to be a source of comfort for White players who want to avoid the ever-growing theory of the main lines, and conversely a pain in the neck for those playing Black whose only real wish is to reach the Najdorf, Dragon, Scheveningen or Sveshnikov (or whatever their favourite Sicilian variation is) in every single game they play.

I hope that this book will provide some attractive options to both players: bold possibilities for Black against some of White's more popular Anti-Sicilians, and also weapons for White to try, aiming to shock and confuse opponents.

I would like to thank my co-authors Richard Palliser and Peter Wells for all their hard work on this project; not only for their own articles, but also for their enthusiasm to discuss and analyse other possibilities. As usual a number of ideas eventually had to be discarded, often reluctantly so. One typical reason for disqualification was if a 'weapon' seemed to provide more danger to oneself than the opponent!

Richard Palliser wrote Chapters 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9; Peter Wells contributed Chapters 2 and 4; and finally I was responsible for Chapters 1, 5, 10, 11 and 12.

John Emms
Hildenborough, Kent
March 2009

Series Introduction

The original concept behind *Dangerous Weapons* was to take a major chess opening and to approach it in a completely different way: to concentrate on variations that are ambitious, sharp, innovative, disruptive, tricky, enjoyable to analyse; ones not already weighed down by mountains of theory, and ones unfairly ignored or discredited. To me this seemed like an author's paradise, which I'm sure contributed somewhat towards the inspiration behind this series!

The main motivation behind studying major openings in such a way is to be able to present the reader (not forgetting the author!) with a considerable number of fresh, hard-hitting opening weapons for both White and Black; in some cases to create repertoires and in others to enhance and rejuvenate existing ones.

What is a Dangerous Weapon?

For the purpose of choosing opening variations for this series, usually a *Dangerous Weapon* fits into one or more of these overlapping categories:

1) Moves that create complex, original positions full of razor-sharp tactics and rich positional ideas where creative, attacking play is rewarded; moves which are new, rare or very fresh, leaving plenty of scope for research.

It should be pointed out that even though mainline theory produces a vast number of wonderfully complicated positions, these opening variations lose out heavily in the 'danger' stakes. No matter how sharp and difficult the position, the opening phase is nowhere near as hazardous for your opponent if he is able to fall back on that comfort blanket known as theory. I've played plenty of incredibly sharp lines without any real fear simply because of reasonable book knowledge and some solid home preparation. Thus in *Dangerous Weapons* the emphasis has mainly been on non-theoretical lines, where your opponent is left to his own devices at a very early stage.

2) Moves that are highly ambitious; ones which aim for total domination.

Perfect for those not satisfied with a quiet theoretical edge as White and eager to search for a big advantage or even a direct refutation, albeit at some risk; or for those as Black who prefer to strive for the initiative at any cost, preferring this over a manageable disadvantage or sterile equality.

3) Moves that have been previously ignored, discarded or discredited by theory, perhaps unfairly so or maybe for the wrong reasons.

Discredited lines can be especially dangerous – the psychological element cannot be ignored. Facing an opening like this, I find myself asking the question, ‘Why is he playing this variation if it is meant to be bad?’ Often there is a very good reason (a logical improvement, perhaps, which overturns a previous assessment), and in any case how are you supposed to remember a hypothetical 15-move refutation when you only browsed it in a book once, and that was a few years ago?

4) Moves that are visually shocking; moves which seem to contradict the laws of the game.

Disregarding the question of objective merit for the moment, there’s no doubt that a crazy-looking move has at the very least some psychological value. Unleashed on an opponent, it can produce a range of emotions: uncontrolled laughter, perhaps followed by over-confidence; anger (at being insulted by such a move) followed by over-aggression; or perhaps discomfort, followed by timidity. Of course you may instead encounter understanding followed by objectivity – you have to pick and choose your opponents.

Dangerous for Whom?

It would be difficult, probably impossible, to guarantee that every single variation in this book is 100% sound. You have to understand that in some cases ‘dangerous’ can mean ‘dangerous for both sides’. What I do expect, however, is that your opponent’s ride throughout the opening should be far bumpier than yours!

Guiding You Through

Throughout the book there are various icons together with explanatory notes to emphasize significant points. They should be fairly self-explanatory, but here’s a brief summary:

Dangerous Weapons: Anti-Sicilians



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This signifies a game, variation, sub-variation or position where the Dangerous Weapon has obviously produced the desired effect.



BEWARE! Pointing out immediate danger for the player using the Dangerous Weapon.



ROLL THE DICE! Signifying a variation or sub-variation which is perhaps more suited for games with short time-limits or for players who enjoy taking risks.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This indicates a transposition to a different opening variation. Using different move orders to reach a desirable position or to trick your opponent into something with which he is unfamiliar is becoming a weapon of increasing value.

As the title suggests, *Dangerous Weapons* may not be for the faint-hearted! More than anything, it is aimed at players of all levels who like to be entertained, those who are happy to try out fun-to-play openings at their local chess club, on the Internet, in tournaments, wherever they choose to play.

Good luck studying and playing your *Dangerous Weapons*!

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Chapter Eight

Forcing Black to Defend

Richard Palliser

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5!? (Diagram 1)

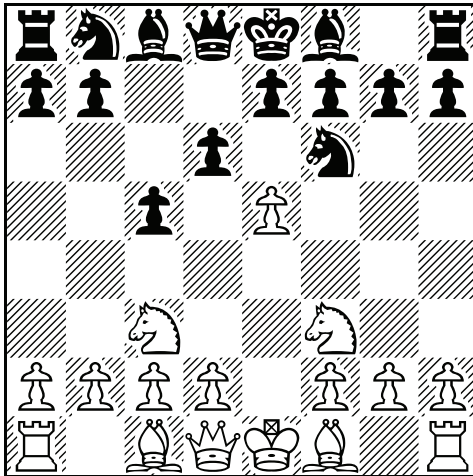


Diagram 1 (B)

Surprising a 2...d6 player isn't at all easy if one wants to avoid the Open Sicilian, but perhaps this weapon might just do the trick. Various works on the anti-

Sicilians have rather neglected 4 e5 and, as we will see, it has certainly caught a number of fairly experienced Sicilian players by surprise.

Advancing with e4-e5 is positionally quite well motivated; White simply wants to give his king's knight an active role on e5. Black has various methods to try and equalize, but none are especially dynamic and so the Najdorf or Dragon player who revels in unbalanced positions may not feel too at home here. Moreover, White risks little with this 'plus-equals' approach, although it would be a mistake to assume that White can never aspire to more than a small edge.

□ J.Rudd ■ M.Rose

British League 2004

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5!? dxe5 5 Nxe5 (Diagram 2)

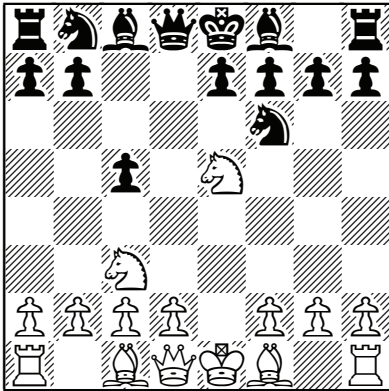


Diagram 2 (B)

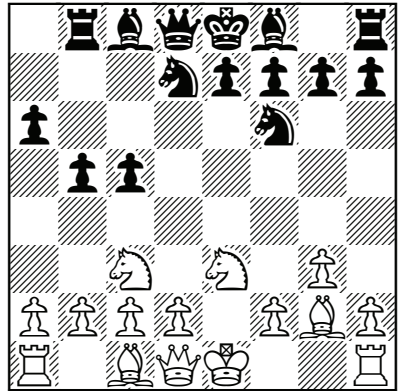


Diagram 3 (B)

5...a6

Preventing a possible check on b5 while preparing ...b5 has been fractionally Black's most popular choice in practice, although both 5...Nbd7 and 5...e6 are important alternatives, as we'll see in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

6 g3!?



ROLL THE DICE! White's main choice has been the solid 6 a4, as even played by Anand in a couple of rapid games, but the text is somewhat trickier. White not only dissuades 6...b5, but prepares a rather deep trap.

6...Qc7

Black develops with tempo and prepares ...Nc6 in a position in which he assumes White cannot exchange knights due to the open long diagonal. Those aware of what follows may well, though, prefer something else:

a) 6...Nbd7!? was recently advocated by Kiril Georgiev in *The Sharpest Sicilian* and is a fairly decent choice: 7 Nc4 (Rudd has tried 7 d4 here too, but ...Nbd7 is more of a useful move than ...Qc7; here Black might just exchange on d4 and e5, and 7...e6 8 Nxd7 Qxd7!? 9 Be3 Qc6 10 Rg1 Qb6 was another decent method in O.Nikolenko-A.Khalifman, St Petersburg 2004) 7...b5 8 Bg2 Rb8 9 Ne3 (**Diagram 3**) 9...e6 (Black's invariable choice, but Georgiev's suggestion of 9...g6!? deserves a test; White might counter with 10 d4 cxd4 11 Qxd4 Bg7 12 a4, but Black should be okay in a manoeuvring struggle after 12...0-0 13 axb5 axb5 14 0-0 b4) 10 d3 (10 0-0 Be7 11 b3!? 0-0 12 Bb2 Qc7 13 Qe2 is another method of deploying White's pieces, P.Roques-W.Denayer, correspondence 2007) 10...Be7 11 a4 (White must break with either this or d4 if he wishes to create a bit of pressure) 11...0-0 12 0-0 Bb7 13 Bxb7 Rxb7 14 Qf3 Qb6 15 Qg2 (prophylaxis; the position remains roughly level, but there is certainly plenty of play left and scope to outmanoeuvre the opponent) 15...Rc8 16 Bd2 Ne5 17 axb5 axb5 saw another regular 4 e5 exponent in action in H.Vedder-T.Burg, Dutch League 2007, and now both 18 Ra5!? and the vigorous 18 f4!? Nc6 19 f5 are decent alternatives to the game's simpler 18 Ra2.

b) 6...Qd4 was an ambitious try to drive back the active knight in B.Bondarev-I.Strojevsky, Belorechensk 2005, and 7 Qe2! Nbd7 8 Nf3 Qd6 9 Bg2 e6 10 0-0 Be7 11 d3 0-0 12 Bf4 would have given White a pleasant pull due to his freer development.

c) 6...e6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 d3 Nbd7 10 Qe2 (White might do slightly better to hinder the development of Black's queenside with 10 Bf4!? when 10...Nxe5 11 Bxe5 Nd7 12 Bf4 e5 13 Be3 echoes the play after 10 Qe2) 10...Nxe5 11 Qxe5 Qd4 (the solid 11...Bd6!? 12 Qe2 Rb8 looks like a better try; it's hard to believe that 13 Bg5 h6 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Ne4 Qe7 16 Nxd6 Qxd6 leads anywhere for White and so he might prefer 13 b3!?) 12 Qe2 Rb8 13 Be3 Qd8 14 Rad1! (**Diagram 4**) 14...e5?! (preventing White from opening the position for his more active pieces with d4, but allowing that would have been the lesser evil) 15 Bg5! left Black struggling to satisfactorily defend his e-pawn in J.Rudd-V.Arjun, Coulsdon 2007, as 15...Nd7 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 17 d4 cxd4 18 Rxd4 b5 19 Rfd1 would have left White with the initiative and control of the position.

7 d4! (Diagram 5)

Black's last two moves haven't especially helped his development, and so White is entirely correct to blow open the position.

7...cxd4?!

Now White's lead in development promises him at least a pull. Thus Black should prefer 7...e6! 8 Bf4 (8 Bg2 cxd4 9 Qxd4 Bc5! equalizes, H.Vedder-J.Aagaard, Vejen

1993, but 8 Nc4!? deserves attention, preparing to meet 8...cxd4 9 Qxd4 Bc5 with 10 Qf4 Qc6 11 Rg1 0-0 12 Be3; that may suffice for a small pull, but is far from forced and the somewhat more radical 8...b5 9 Bg2 bxc4!? was preferred in D.Andreikin-M.Rodshtein, European Championship, Plovdiv 2008, after which 10 Bxa8 Qa7 11 Bg2 cxd4 12 Ne4 Be7 might not have given Black quite enough for the exchange had White settled for the simple 13 0-0 followed by Qe2 and an undermining b2-b3) 8...Bd6 9 Bg2 Nbd7 (best; 9...0-0 10 0-0 Rd8?! 11 dxc5! Qxc5 12 Qe2 Be7 13 Rad1 Nbd7 14 Nc4! left Black struggling to complete his development in J.Rudd-A.Hunt, British Championship, Scarborough 2001) 10 Nxd7 Bxd7 (**Diagram 6**), which gives him decent chances to equalize. Now 11 Bg5 cxd4 12 Qxd4 Be5 13 Qb4? a5! sidelined White's queen and saw Black seize a strong initiative in J.Rudd-D.Gormally, British Championship, Liverpool 2008, and I haven't found anything better than 11 Bxd6!? Qxd6 12 dxc5 Qxc5 13 0-0 Rd8 14 Qe2, which just looks pretty level after 14...Bc6 15 Bxc6+ Qxc6 16 Rad1 0-0.

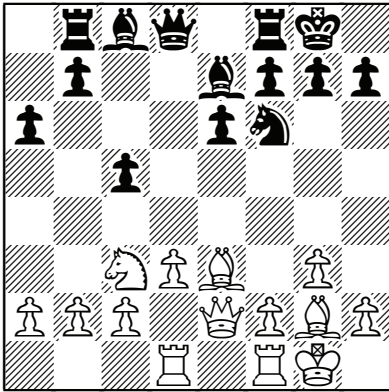


Diagram 4 (B)

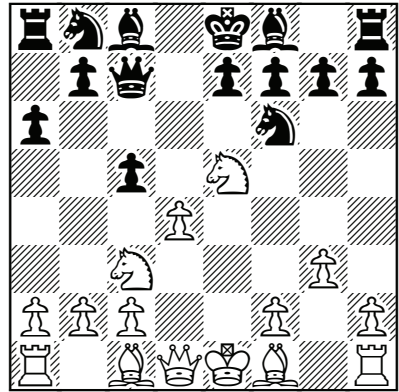


Diagram 5 (B)

8 Qxd4 Nc6

This was the point of 6...Qc7. Otherwise 8...Nbd7 9 Bf4 generates early pressure and after 9...Qc5 10 Qxc5 Nxc5 11 Bg2 Ne6 12 Be3 g6?! 13 0-0-0 Bg7 White would have obtained a crushing bind had he found 14 Na4! Rb8 15 Nb6 0-0 16 f4 in R.Vedder-S.Van Blitterswijk, Amsterdam 2001.

9 Nxc6 Qxc6 10 Bg5! (Diagram 7)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Ahead in development and with the d-file open, White is fully justified in sacrificing a whole rook to further his initiative.

10...Qxh1?!

Critical, but now Black must face a monstrous initiative. That said, he is already in some trouble and needs to find a good move (of which there is only one!) at this point:

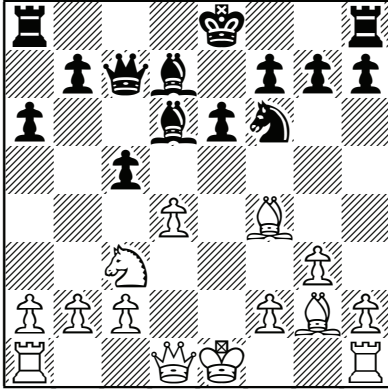


Diagram 6 (W)

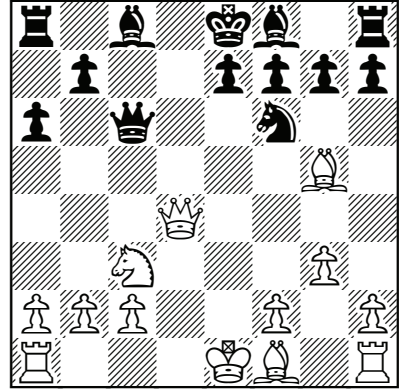


Diagram 7 (B)

a) 10...h6! 11 0-0-0!? (more tricky than 11 Bxf6 exf6 12 0-0-0 Be6 13 Rg1 Bc5 14 Bg2 Bxd4 15 Bxc6+ bxc6 16 Rxd4, although this sufficed for an endgame edge in H.Vedder-So.Polgar, Amsterdam 1995) 11...Bg4? (missing a very dangerous sacrifice; Black must prefer 11...Be6! when I haven't found anything better than 12 Bxf6 exf6 13 Bd3 Bc5 14 Be4 Bxd4 15 Bxc6+ bxc6 16 Rxd4, reaching a virtually identical ending to Vedder-Polgar in which White has a pleasant pull, but Black reasonable chances to hold with accurate defence) 12 Bg2! Qxg2 13 Bxf6 (**Diagram 8**) 13...Qc6 (Black's king finds itself defenceless after 13...exf6? 14 Qxg4, and 13...gx6? 14 Nd5! would also be fatal) 14 Qxg4 gx6 15 Nd5 left Black under huge pressure in O.Nikolenko-D.Svetushkin, Moscow 2007.

b) 10...Bg4?! 11 Bxf6 Bf3 12 Bxg7 Rg8!? (better than 12...Rd8 13 Qe5 Rd6? 14 Bh3 f6 15 Bxf6 Rxf6 16 0-0, which cost Black a second pawn in H.Vedder-M.Bosboom, Wijk aan Zee 1997) 13 Bxf8 Bxh1 14 Bxe7! Qe6+ (14...Kxe7 15 0-0-0 Kf8 16 f4 Bf3 17 Qb4+ Kg7 18 Rd6 gives White a strong initiative, two pawns and more than enough for the exchange) 15 Be2 (15 Kd2!? might well be more precise; 15...Qxe7? loses to 16 Bd3 and 15...Kxe7 16 Qh4+ Kf8 17 Bd3 gives White his usual strong pressure for the exchange) 15...Qxe7 16 0-0-0 was seen in B.Geismann-P.Lichmann, European Club Cup, Kallithea 2008. Now Black should have taken his chances in an endgame with 16...Rd8 17 Qa7 Rxd1+ 18 Nxd1 Rg6!, since the game's 16...Bc6?! should have been met by 17 Bc4 Rd8 18 Nd5! Bxd5 19 Bxd5 Kf8 20 f4 with strong centralization.

c) 10...Bf5?! 11 0-0-0 h6? 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 Bg2! Qc8 (13...Qxg2? 14 Nd5 leaves Black defenceless due to the crushing check on c7) 14 Rd2 Rb8 15 Nd5 didn't see Black last much longer in H.Vedder-B.Van Opheusden, Dutch League 2005.

11 0-0-0 (Diagram 9) 11...Bd7

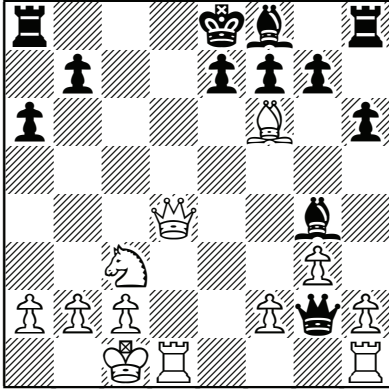


Diagram 8 (B)

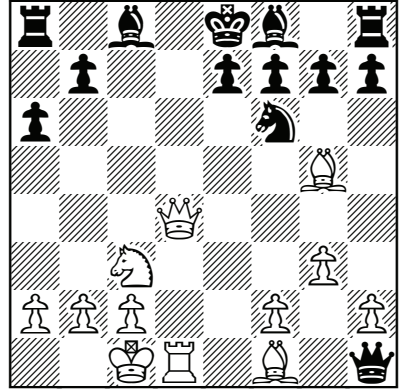


Diagram 9 (B)

The only source I could find which gave decent coverage to 4 e5 was one on 1 Nc3 (!), namely Harald Keilhack's excellent *Knight on the Left: 1.Nc3*, which pointed out that 11...Nd7? fails to help Black in view of the crushing 12 Nd5 f6 13 Bh3!.

12 Bxf6 0-0-0?

This loses by force, as does 12...Rd8? 13 Nd5. Meanwhile Rudd had previously faced 12...Bc6 in J.Rudd-J.Dworakowska, Hastings 2003/04, and after 13 Bxg7! (even stronger than 13 Bh3!? Qxd1+ 14 Qxd1 gxf6, which gives Black two rooks for the queen, although he will do well to unravel without shedding a few pawns after 15 Nd5 Bh6+ 16 f4) 13...Bxg7? (13...Rg8 was essential, although after 14 Be5 White has some initiative for the exchange, as shown by the line 14...Qf3 15 Be2 Bh6+ 16 Kb1 Qf5 17 Nd5 when Black faces a grim choice between 17...Bxd5 18 Qxd5 Qc8 19 Bh5 and 17...f6 18 Nc7+ Kf7 19 Nxa8 Rxa8 20 Bc7, with a large advantage for White in both cases) 14 Qxg7 Rf8 (**Diagram 10**) his normally very-alert tactical eye surprisingly missed 15 Bxa6! Qf3 (or 15...Qxd1+ 16 Nxd1 Rxa6 17 a3 when White's active queen and extra pawns are much stronger than Black's rooks) 16 Nb5 Rc8 17 Qe5 (Keilhack) with a decisive attack.

Finally, we should note the recurring theme of 12...Qc6 13 Bg2!, after which 13...Qe6 (13...Qc8? loses to 14 Bxg7 Bxg7 15 Qxg7 Rf8 16 Nd5 Qc5 17 Qe5 and there's no good defence to both checks; perhaps Black might thus try 13...Qd6!? as one Vedder once faced, but after 14 Qxd6 exd6 15 Bxb7 Rb8 16 Re1+ Be7 17 Rxe7+

Dangerous Weapons: Anti-Sicilians

Kd8 18 Bxa6 gxf6 19 Rxf7 White had far too much for the exchange in the ensuing ending) 14 Nd5 Rc8 15 Bxg7 Bxg7 16 Qxg7 Rf8 17 Qd4 once again gives White too great an initiative for the exchange.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! These lines show just how dangerous White's rook sacrifice is. Indeed, it's not hard to appreciate why both Vedder brothers and Jack Rudd (all decent 2300-strength players) have been so attracted to 4 e5!

13 Be5

Preventing the black king from moving and preparing a decisive attack on the dark squares.

13...f6 14 Nd5! (Diagram 11) 14...fxe5 15 Qxe5 Qxd5

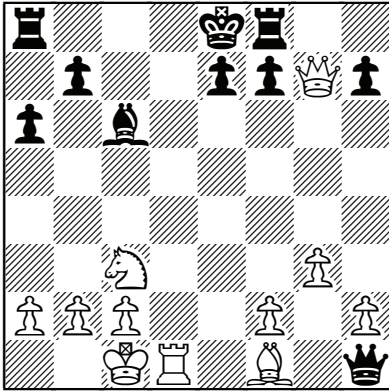


Diagram 10 (W)

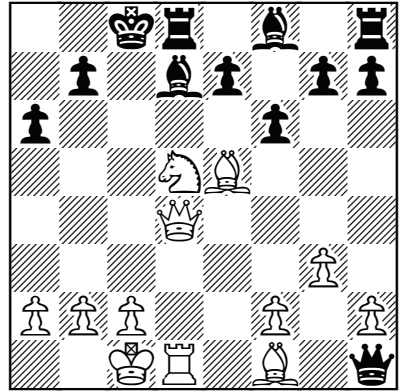


Diagram 11 (B)

Forced, but Black might as well have resigned; the second wave of the attack will finish him off before he can get his kingside pieces into play.

16 Rxd5 e6 17 Rd3 Be7 18 Rc3+ Bc6 19 Rxc6+!

The easiest way to win, as Rudd picks up yet more material.

19...bxc6 20 Qxe6+ Kc7 21 Qxe7+ Rd7 22 Qe5+ Kb6 23 b4 Ra8 24 a4 g6 25 Bg2 Rad8 26 Qc5+ 1-0