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Accelerated Dragons and Theory Hounds

by Glenn Budzinski

Accelerated Dragons by John Donaldson and Jeremy Silman, 1998 Everyman Chess, Reprinted 2004, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 320pp., \$26.95

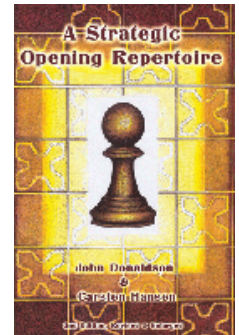
For those of you who are regular readers of [ChessCafe.com](#) book reviews, this particular book may seem like *déjà vu*. There’s a good reason for feeling like you’ve been here before, too; we did, in fact, recently [review](#) a book by Silman that featured the Accelerated Dragon variation. The title and subject of both works are not identical, however. In *Winning with the Sicilian Defence, A Complete Repertoire Against 1 e4*, Revised 2nd Edition (1998), Silman examined many possible Black replies to White systems of play in the Sicilian Defense after 1 e4 c5. In that work, the principal Black response advocated after the common move order 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cd4 4 Nd4 was 4...g6, the Accelerated Dragon. On the other hand, Donaldson and Silman’s *Accelerated Dragons*, the subject of the present review, focuses entirely on the Accelerated Dragon, 4...g6, as well as derivatives such as 2...g6. As noted by Silman in the Foreword to *Accelerated Dragons*, “This book is not a ‘winning repertoire for Black’ tome. It is an honest appraisal of an opening system.”



That it is a comprehensive examination of an opening system is indisputable. Again quoting Silman, “No book has ever given so much material on this line ... the variations are ... covered with such thoroughness that the sheer mass of information may actually become rather daunting!”

Material is segregated into sixteen chapters, plus an Introduction intended for the “average tournament player,” which covers general plans and ideas in the opening; a Foreword, a Table of Contents and an Index of

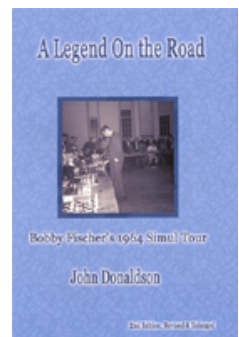
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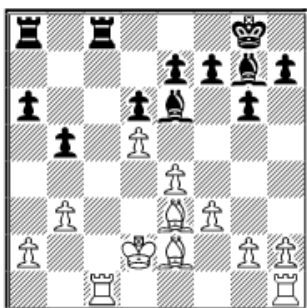
[A Legend on the Road](#)
 by John Donaldson

Variations.

Each of the chapters focuses on a separate variation or sub-variation. Chapter 1 covers Black responses to **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cd4 4 Nd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7** when White plays **Be2**; replies to the White moves **f3** and **Bc4**, known as the “Weekend Variation” can be found in Chapter 2; Chapter 3 covers the main line of the Uogele, **6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4 0-0**, while Chapter 4 and 5 look at **7...Qa5** and **7...Na5**; **5 Bc4** is the subject of Chapter 6; and **5 Nxc6** is Chapter 7; Nearly one-half of the book is contained under Chapters 8 through 13, the Maróczy Bind, **5 c4**, with the Gurgendize System, **5...Nf6**, occupying more than fifty pages; the Semi-Accelerated Dragon, **4...Nf6 5 Nc3 g6** is examined under Chapter 14; the Hyper-Accelerated (**2...g6**) under Chapter 15 and the Chameleon, **6 Nde2** and **g3**, is covered in Chapter 16.

Since the Maróczy Bind occupies a good chunk of the book, and “is without a doubt, White’s best answer” to the Accelerated Dragon, according to Silman in *Winning with the Sicilian Defence* (D & S call it “one of White’s very best set-ups,” p. 137), much of this review will be devoted to examining the D & S analysis and recommendations against **5 c4**. *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*, Volume B 1997 edition (*ECO*), covers the Accelerated in variations B34-B39, and the Maróczy Bind specifically in B36-B39.

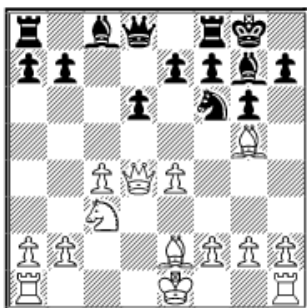
Looking first at the Gurgendize System of the Maróczy, a position in the Sämisch Variation of the King’s Indian Defense is reached by transposition after the moves **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4 Nf6 6 Nc3 d6 7 f3 Bg7 8 Be3 0-0 9 Qd2 Nxd4 10 Bxd4 Be6 11 Be2 Qa5 12 Rc1 Rfc8 13 b3 a6 14 Be3 b5 15 Nd5 Qxd2+ 16 Kxd2 Nxd5 17 cxd5**.



The D & S commentary and analysis are virtually identical to that contained in Silman’s book. (The reader may wish to take a look at our [review](#) of *Winning with the Sicilian Defence*.) One of the only differences between the two books coverage of this particular line appears to be the addition by D & S of two alternatives to **14 Be3**. For the record, **14 a4** led to equality in Stefansson-Tiviakov, 1991 Mamaia Jr. World

Championship and **14 Qb2** was advantageous to White in Lautier-Topalov, 1994 Cap d’Argde Rapids, although Black missed an opportunity to turn the tide on his eighth move. The main line for both D & S and Silman, **14 Be3**, is based upon the game Ernst-Petursson, 1994 Reykjavik, a twenty-move draw.

Given its prominence in the book, the D & S coverage of the Gurgendize is worthy of additional scrutiny. Stepping back to White’s seventh move, there are two alternatives to review, **7 f3** of Ernst-Petursson as given above and **7 Be2**. Looking at the latter move, while D & S offer similar coverage to that found in the Silman book, it is not identical. For instance, Silman immediately jumps to the two White options after **7 Be2 Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Bg7 9 Bg5 0-0**.



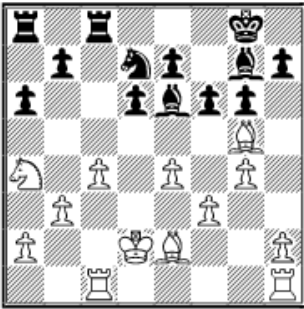
D & S consider three additional choices for Black on his ninth move: **9...Be6**, **9...h6** and **9...Qa5**. Thus, after **5 c4 Nf6 6 Nc3 d6 7 Be2 Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Bg7 9 Bg5 0-0**, the two options for White are **10 Qd2** and **10 Qe3**. All three sources, D & S, Silman and *ECO*, are in agreement here.

Examining **10 Qd2** leads to yet another



fork in the road. There are now at least three ways for Black to go: **10...Be6**, **10...a6** or **10...Bd7**. According to *ECO*, **10...Be6** leads to a small White plus after **11 Rc1 Qa5 12 f3 Rfc8 13 b3 a6 14 Na4 Qd2 15 Kd2 Nd7 16 g4 Kf8 17 h4 Rc6**, as in Wang Zili-Alterman, 1995 Beijing, or Averbakh-L. Popov, 1976 Polanica Zdroj.

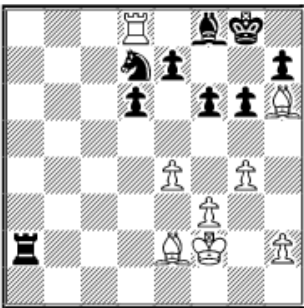
D & S and Silman mirror *ECO* through **16 g4** but continue with **16...f6**.



This is not an insignificant difference, since **16...f6** was previously considered to be unsatisfactory for Black because of **17 Be3 f5 18 ef5 gf5 19 h3 Rf8 20 f4 d5 21 cd5**, which was better for White in Beliavsky - Tiviakov, 1993 Groningen. This line is given by *ECO* and is, presumably, the reason for its recommendation of **16...Kf8**. It is also cited in a note by D & S.

But, according to D & S and Silman, after **16...f6 17 Be3 f5 18 ef5 gf5 19 h3 Rf8 20 f4**, Black now replies with the improvement **20...Rad8!**, rather than **20...d5**, transposing to the theoretically important game Am. Rodriguez-Antunes, 1994 Matanzas, which produced an equal position after **21 Nc3 d5 22 gf5 Bf5 23 cd5 Nf6 24 Bb6 Rd7 25 Ke3 Rc8**.

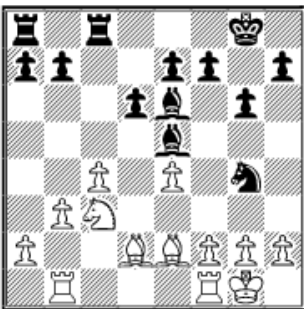
Another choice for Black after **10 Qd2** is **10...a6**. (There is no coverage offered by *ECO* for this move in the sequence **9 Bg5 0-0 10 Qd2**, although **10...a6** is addressed in a similar line after **9 Be3**.) Once more, D & S and Silman reach an identical assessment: **10...a6** has been busted after the lengthy **11 f3 Be6 12 Rc1 Rc8 13 b3 b5 14 cb5 ab5 15 Nb5 Rc1 + 16 Qc1 Qa5+ 17 Qd2 Ra8 18 a3 Bb3 19 Qa5 Ra5 20 0-0 Ba4 21 Rb1 Bb5 22 Rb5 Ra3 23 Rb8+ Bf8 24 Bh6 Nd7 25 Rd8 Ra1+ 26 Kf2 Ra2 27 g4 f6**



And now, rather than **28 Ke3**, which led to a draw in Mokry-Kallai, 1985 Trnava, White has David Strauss' improvement **28 e5!! fe5 29 g5** and Black is doomed "since **29...Ra7** falls victim to **30 Bc4 +**" (p. 156). Forgive our cynicism for wondering about the practical opportunities for mere mortals (other than in correspondence play) of having a chance to use a theoretical innovation that occurs on the twenty-eighth move of

the game. The move **28 e5** is an example of just how deep theory can go in the Accelerated Dragon.

Turning to **10 Qe3** instead of **10 Qd2**, after **10...Be6 11 0-0 Qb6**, *ECO*, D & S, and Silman provide the following choices: **12 b3 Qe3 13 Be3 Nd7 14 Rac1 Rfc8 15 Nd5 Kf8 16 f4 a5 17 f5 Bd5** (*ECO*) and **12 Rab1 Qe3 13 Be3 Rfc8 14 b3 Ng4 15 Bd2 Be5**



16 Nd5 Kf8 17 h3 Nf6 (D & S and Silman). Both lines are okay for Black. The *ECO* source game is Dolmatov-Tiviakov, 1993 Rostov-on-Don, also cited by D & S and Silman in notes. D & S and Silman's analysis is, again, nearly identical and appears to be based primarily upon recommendations of Christiansen.

Curiously, however, while *ECO* includes D & S and Silman's **12 Rab1** (referencing Christiansen-Dzindzichashvili, U.S. ch 1990 as the source through **14 b3**), it continues with **14...Ng4 15**

Bd2 Bc3 16 Bc3 b5 with an unclear position, stopping short of **17 f4**, which leads to a White advantage according to Christiansen, and provided in D & S and Silman. Thus, given the accuracy of Christiansen's assessment, it would appear that D & S and Silman's **15...Be5** is the way to go rather than *ECO*'s **15...Bc3**, allowing Black to maintain the balance.

Of course, all of this assumes that White will opt to enter the complexities of the Maróczy Bind with **5 c4**. Another popular main line, however, is **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cd4 4 Nd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4**, which D & S consider "the meat of the Accelerated Dragon" (p. 37). Black's reply **7...Qa5** leads to *ECO* B35 and Chapter 4 of D & S.



After **8 0-0 0-0 9 Bb3 d6 10 h3 Bd7 11 f4**, *ECO* offers three possibilities, each of which gives White a minimal advantage: **11...Rac8 12 Nf3 Rcd8 13 Qe1 Bc8 14 Rd1 e6 15 Qh4 Qh5**; **11...Nd4 12 Bd4 Bc6 13 Nd5 Bd5 14 ed5 Nd7 15 Bg7 Kg7 16 Qd4 Kg8 17 Rac1 Rae8 18 Kh2**, Vasiukov-Ciocaltea, 1967 Bucharest; and **11...Qh5 12 Nf3 b5 13 a3 a5 14 Qd3 a4 Bd5 e6 16 Bc6 Bc6 17 Bd4**, as suggested by Piket.

D & S, on the other hand, give no less than six potential Black eleventh move responses, including *ECO*'s **11...Rac8**, **Nd4** and **Qh5**. Silman, in his own book, discusses only **11...Nd4**; the identical comment that "This is Black's soundest continuation" can be found in both D & S (p. 96) and Silman. *ECO*'s **11...Nd4** is followed through **13 Nd5**, when D & S and Silman deviate with **13...Rae8**, which looks to be an improvement for Black since they assess the position as equal after **14 Qd3 Nd5 15 ed5 Bb5 16 c4 Bd4+ 17 Qd4 Bd7 18 Kh2 Qc5 19 Qd2 e6**.

A curiosity is the D & S recommendation of **13 Qd3** ("This is the strongest test of Black's set-up." p. 99), rather than **13 Nd5** in the **11...Nd4** sub-variation. Thus, after **11...Nd4 12 Bd4 Bc6 13 Nd5**, they continue by following the game Martin Gonzalez-Bellon, 1974 Olot, through **13...Rad8 14 Rad1 Nd7 15 Bg7 Kg7 16 Kh1 Nc5 17 Qd4+ e5 18 fe5 Nb3 19 ab3 de5 20 Qe2 e5 21 b4 Qb4 22 Rd8 Rd8 23 ef5 g5** and conclude that "Black's powerful bishop gives him the advantage" (p. 102). Since there are no improvements cited for White, with the possible exception of **16 Qd4+**, why is **13 Qd3** "stronger" than **13 Nd5**, a move that gives White no worse than equality, regardless of the source?

The D & S analysis of **11...Qh5** is very thorough, considerably more comprehensive than *ECO*'s mere footnote. The upshot is that Black should be able to at least hold his own, whether White follows *ECO*'s **12 Nf3** or the D & S **12 Qd3** (see below). While D & S agree that White is for choice in Piket's *ECO* line (although it's unclear whether Piket's analysis consists of *ECO*'s **17 Bd4** or D & S' **17 Nd4**, since both the bishop and knight can go to the d4-square), *ECO* omits Dzindzichashvili's **14...b4**, which may turn the tide in favor of Black.

As mentioned above, after **11...Qh5**, there is the move **12 Qd3** offered by D & S, which leads to an interesting sacrifice of the queen after **12...a5 13 a4 Nb4 14 Qd2 Rac8 15 f5 Rc3 16 bc3 Ne4 17 Qe1 Na6 18 Ne2 Nac5 19 Nf4 Qf5 20 Ne6 Qf1+ 21 Qf1 fe6**, when "Black's active pieces give him plenty of compensation for the sacrificed queen" (p. 96).



Among White's other troubles in this position is the difficulty in finding a good square for his own queen.

There is little doubt that *Accelerated Dragons* represents about as current, accurate and complete of a source on



this opening as one could ever expect to find. In fact, this is probably the most comprehensive work ever written on the Accelerated Dragon. Perhaps there are a

few more suggestions given for the player of the black pieces, but one would be hard-pressed to not consider the book to present a balanced view.

Concerning the obvious overlap of material between *Accelerated Dragons* and Silman's *Winning with the Sicilian Defence*, we take no position on the ramifications (if any) of identical material by the same author appearing in two separate books by two different publishers. As long as you understand that both books have different goals and are aware of the overlap, we have done our job.

We would very much want to recommend this book without qualification. Certainly, *Accelerated Dragons* will become an integral part of our own opening library. But, at the same time, we would be remiss in our duties if we did not emphasize that this is a book that is chock-full of theory. In fact, including the Introduction, which discusses a few general plans, more than 300 of the book's 320 pages are crammed with theory. So, unless you're a theory hound (or a theory hound "wannabe"), as good as this book is, it might not be your cup of tea.

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