



C O L U M N I S T S

*Let's Take A
Look...*

Nigel Davies



by Bruce Alberston

We invite you to submit games to be considered by Nigel in this column. For all games submitted, please provide the following information: (1) Names of both players; (2) Ratings of both players; (3) When and where the game was played; (4) The time control used in the game; and (5) Any other information you think would be helpful for us to know. Please submit the games (in PGN or CBV format if possible) to: nigeldavies@chesscafe.com. Who knows, perhaps you will see the game in an upcoming column, as Nigel says to you, "Let's take a look..."

Dinner and Chess

After my traditional grandmaster draw with Bogdan Lalic at the last UK 4 Nations Chess League, we retired to the analysis room. Bogdan then showed me what he had in mind for the Veresov Opening and it turned out that he had swelled Everyman's coffers by buying my books on both the Veresov and Trompovsky before the game. I have to say that it was lucky I chose the English, my decision to play this way being dictated by the thought that at least it avoided sharp theory. But when you don't play boldly you don't get many chances...

It was a far cry from the chess I played in my youth when I was free from the worry of my professional chess duties. My excuse is nothing but a serious bout of cowardice. But if I'm kind to myself I might cite the nature of today's game as a contributory factor.

Unfortunately the atmosphere in today's tournaments is one of extreme seriousness, with instant forfeit being the penalty for ringing mobile phones and arbiters likely to tell you to be quiet if, heaven forbid, you happen to speak to a friend. It's even illegal these days to write down your move before playing it as this constitutes the "taking of notes." Why should someone want to commit such a heinous crime; the huge riches at stake as prize money?

Things used to be very different even 20 years ago. Go back further and the game is hardly recognizable from what it was. One of my favorite books is Harold Bird's *Chess History and Reminiscences* in which one gets a feel of what professional chess was like 100 years ago. Here's an excerpt from the section on *Dinner and Chess*:

At Pursell's, people used to eat chops, smoke cigars or pipes, play Chess and talk Cricket all at the same time, which seems to contradict the assumption that it is impossible to do two things at once. Some say they

cannot play Chess before dinner, others not after dinner. Too much dinner is considered a fair excuse for losing at Chess, but no dinner at all is not a valid plea.

According to the Rev. A. B. Skipworth, who should be an authority on the subject, professional Chess players are not supposed to dine at all, but our great friend, the genial Mars, dissents from this view. Staunton, Boden, Steinitz, Mars and Skipworth himself are essentially diners, and Bird has been accused of a tendency that way.

When was the last time that someone mentioned dinner and chess in the same sentence? Not in the last couple of decades to the best of my knowledge. Like it or not we have become “sportsmen” with every aspect of our little game being geared towards competition and ratings. If your rating slips it can seriously damage your credibility, and credibility dictates your level of income. What was it like in Bird’s day? Things were much simpler. Here another excerpt from the section on stakes:

Returning to stakes, I have met here and therewith an amateur who has had scruples and preferred not even, playing for the shilling.

Buckle, Lord Lyttleton, and many eminent in Chess, were strongly in favour of the customary small stake, and I have seen dignitaries of the Church, and spotless amateurs, pocket their shillings with as much gusto as the poor and much abused professional. It is a kind of voucher to mark the score.

Professor Ruskin and others who have referred to this question, saw no objection to the time-honoured stake, and it has been the rule at the greatest clubs, for, by fixing a custom, it was hoped to keep the stakes within prescribed limit. It must be admitted that the difference between one shilling and £25, £50 or £100 on a game is far too large.

Since the growth of the foreign demands for stakes, not thought of in the days of Philidor, Labourdonnais, McDonnell, Staunton and Morphy, squaring between players, has been asserted, viz.— in 1878, 1885, and 1887, besides which it has always seemed to me that as the stakes go up the play goes down, and it certainly would be difficult to name a match in which so few interesting games took place as that between Steinitz and Zukertort for £400 a side, played in the United States at New York, St. Louis and New Orleans in 1886.

A sedate and rather severe looking stranger challenged Bird to a game of Chess once, just when Bird had finished a long sitting with a strong player, and was in rather a lively mood. "A stake, I suppose," said Bird. "No, I don't like stakes," said the stranger." Then suppose we say a chop, or even a basin of soup, fried sole, or box of cigars." The stranger looked awful for a moment but dismayed by the good temper of his vis a vis, suddenly relaxed and conformed to the usual rule, and as the love

tales conclude was happy ever afterwards.

It is best to understand that the stake on each game is a shilling, not to say simply we play for a shilling. Once, after an eight hours sitting, a countryman after losing twenty games blandly handed Mr. F. one shilling for the sitting, and could not be induced to part with more.

Besides the seriousness of chess there's a second problem in that "theory" has grown to such an extent that it's difficult for anyone to find the time to play at a high level whilst having the normal things in life like a job and family. Strong players live in fear that they might not have studied the latest wrinkle. And it's difficult to find a sound opening which hasn't been mapped out by theory.

Is there any way we might roll back the clock?

Certainly there should be less regulation and that would reduce the tension in tournaments. But what about changing the game itself? Bronstein has said that we need to play fast whilst Fischer has suggested shuffling the start position. With the 960 possible start positions of "Fischer Random" there's little immediate danger of it being analyzed to death. Is there anything we can do meanwhile?

Perhaps Alexander Morozevich has demonstrated an interesting way forward by scouring ancient texts for forgotten variations and then unleashing them against super-GM opposition. It's not at all easy for his opponents to deal with these lines over the board and the results can be highly entertaining. Yet here, too, there's a serious cost in that it takes time to repair ancient variations. At least it's creative and interesting work...

Is this a worthwhile approach for club players? Sure! If Morozevich can use the Albin Counter Gambit against players like Ivan Sokolov, then it's certainly playable at club level. And at faster time limits all sorts of things are possible.

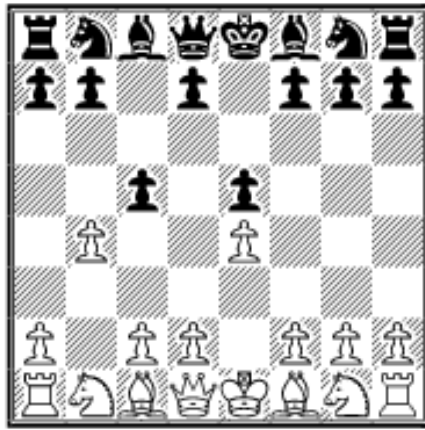
In response to my recommendation of the Wing Gambit I was sent some games with this opening by a player calling himself "Bigtrucksam." One of these was won in just *five* moves against quite respectable opposition. It just shows that it's not to be sneezed at...

Bigtrucksam (1902) - Ipe (1852)

Sicilian Wing Gambit B20

Internet Blitz 2005

1 e4 c5 2 b4!? e5



Trying to focus on development rather than material; in Bigtrucksam - IBA, Internet Blitz 2005, Black declined the pawn with 2...b6 instead, the game reeling on with 3 bxc5 bxc5 4 Nf3 Bb7 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Rb1 Rb8 7 Bc4 e6 8 d3 Nf6 9 Bf4 d6 10 0-0 Be7 11 e5 dxe5 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 Bxe5 0-0? (Panic. He had to play 13...Bd6 when 14 Bb5+ forces Black to give up castling rights but leaves him on the board at least) 14 Bxb8 Qxb8 15 Ba6 Bxa6 16 Rxb8 Rxb8 17 Qf3 and White won.

Of course the critical reply is 2...cxb4 when "theory," such as it is, says 3 a3 (though note that 3 Bb2 and 3 Bc4 lead to "sporting chess" according to Gerald Abrahams) 3...d5 4 exd5 Qxd5 5 Nf3 e5. Frank Marshall analyzed this line in the *Special Analysis of Openings* chapter in his book of collected games. After 6 axb4 Bxb4 Marshall proposed 7 Na3 (7 c3 Bc5 8 Na3 Nf6 9 Nb5 0-0 is good for Black as 10 Nc7 is answered by 10...Bxf2+ 11 Kxf2 Qc5+ winning back the knight on c7. Marshall also mentioned 7 Ba3 but after 7...Bxa3 8 Rxa3 Nc6 9 Nc3 Qd6 10 Nb5 Qe7 11 Qa1 Nf6 12 Bc4 0-0 13 0-0 Bg4 it was hardly inspiring for White in Podgorny - Pachman, 1953) 7...e4 (7...Nf6 8 Nb5 0-0 9 Nc7 Qc5 10 Nxa8 e4 11 Ng1 Re8 has 'the terrible threat' of 12...e3 according to Gligoric and Sokolov, but Shredder is unimpressed after 12 c3) 8 Nb5 Kd8 (8...Qd8 must surely be better) 9 Nfd4 Nc6 10 c4 Qd7 11 Bb2 Nf6 12 Qa4 Bc5 13 Nb3 b6 14 Nxc5 bxc5 15 Be2,



with the comment that *White threatens to castle with good prospects*. Perhaps I should add that as a teenager I showed this book to a strong local amateur who advised me that castling often comes much more easily...

3 Nf3

Bigtrucksam played this restrained move in two of the games he sent me. But the King's Gambitesque 3 f4!? is more in the spirit of general mayhem, for example 3...d6

(3...exf4 4 Nf3 d5 5 exd5 Qxd5 6 Nc3 Qh5 7 bxc5 Bxc5 8 d4 Bb4 9 Bd2 Bxc3 10 Bxc3 Ne7 11 Be2 0-0 12 0-0 Nbc6 13 Rb1 was about equal at this stage in Capablanca (of all people) - Viana, Rio de Janeiro 1928. 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Bc4 Nc6 6 0-0 Nd4 7 Nxd4!? Bxd1 8 Bb5+ Ke7 9 Nf5+ Ke6 10 Nc3 cxb4?! (This can't be good, but even after the sensible 10...Bg4 White can, for example, play 11 Ne3 Nh6 12 f5+ Kf6 13 Ncd5+ Kg5 14 Nxg4 Nxg4 15 Rf3 with a strong bind and various threats for the queen.) 11 Nd5 Nf6?? 12 Nxg7+ Bxg7 13 f5 mate, which was Bird (no surprise here) - NN, London 1895.

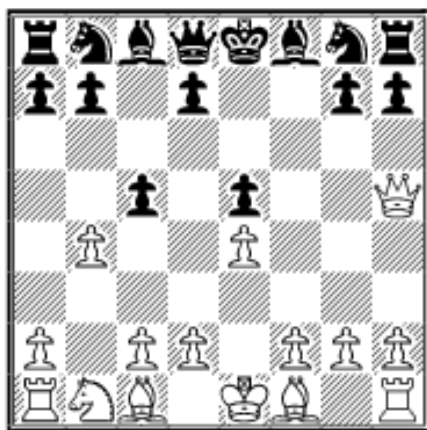
3...f6

In the game Bigtrucksam - Milorad, Black decided to take the pawn after all with 3...cxb4 and after 4 Nxe5 (4 Bc4!?) 4...Nc6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 Bb2 Nf6 7 e5 Nd5 8 Bc4 Nb6 9 Bb3 Be7 10 0-0 0-0 had a reasonable position. Of course there are plenty of ways for Black to get a playable game, but nothing gives him the safety offered by well trodden paths.

4 Nxe5 fxe5?

This loses on the spot. Black had to try 4...Qe7 5 Nf3 Qxe4+, though admittedly this is very nice for White after 6 Be2 cxb4 7 0-0 because of the *huge* lead in development.

5 Qh5+ 1-0



Had Black seen everything or was it that he just didn't relish continuing a game with his king wandering around? He is in fact quite lost here, for example 5 Qh5+ Ke7 (5...g6 6 Qxe5+ Qe7 7 Qxh8 leaves White the exchange up for nothing) 6 Qxe5+ Kf7 7 Bc4+ d5 8 Bxd5+ Kg6 9 Qg3+ Qg5 (9...Kh6 10 d3+ g5 11 h4 is about as devastating an attack as one could hope for whilst 9...Kh5 10 Bf7+ g6 11 Qe5+ wins the rook on h8) 10 Bf7+ Kf6 11 Bb2+ winning Black's queen. It seems fitting that the final move of this variation is from a square vacated by White's b-pawn.

Recommended Reading

Chess History and Reminiscences by Harold Bird

The Veresov by Nigel Davies (Everyman, 2004)

The Trompovsky by Nigel Davies (Everyman, 2005)

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