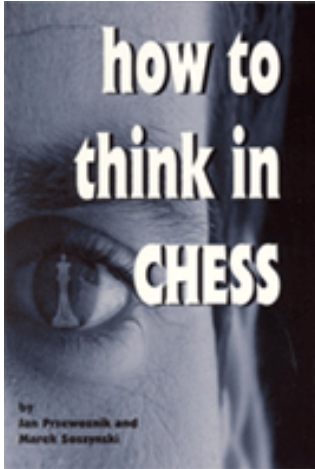




## C O L U M N I S T S

## Let's Take A Look...

Nigel Davies



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](mailto: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..."

## Don't Try This at Home

There comes a time in many chess masters lives when they no longer view the game as their career. What usually happens is that they then give up, as quite a few titled players in the UK have done. When did Raymond Keene, Bill Hartston, John Nunn Matthew Sadler, James Howell, Darshan Kumaran or even the legendary Julian Hodgson last pick up a pawn in anger? And there are other GMs who haven't been playing much either.

Having abandoned all illusions about being even a semi-professional player, I've had thoughts about giving up myself. It's painful not to play as well as one once did and difficult to find the time to maintain one's strength. So pride intervenes and says that "enough is enough." But is it really?

One book I really enjoyed was Sidney Bernstein's *Combat: My 50 Years at the Chessboard* in which the author describes two very different phases to his career. After being a serious player in his youth he stopped playing for ten years and then came back with the idea of playing for fun. This, after all, is why we took the game up in the first place. Isn't it?

Inspired by Bernstein's approach I thought a lot about this and made a decision. I'm going to keep playing till I drop, but the time has come to put the fun side first. And with this in mind here's one of my recent games:

*Davies – Hague*  
Bolton Open, 2007

1 d4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 Bg5 d6 4 Qd2 Nd7 5 e4 a6 6 h4 h5 7 0–0–0 b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 dxe5 Bxe5 10 Nf3 Bd6 11 Bd3 Ngf6 12 Rhe1 Bb7 13 Nd4 c5



14 Ne6 Qa5 15 Kb1 c4 16 Bf5 b4 17 Ne4 Bxe4  
18 Bxe4 Nxe4 19 Rxe4 fxe6 20 Bxe7 Qf5 21  
Qxd6 Qxe4 22 Qxd7+ Kf7 23 f3 Qe2 24 Bxb4+  
Kg8 25 Re1 Qxg2 26 Qxe6+ Kh7 27 Qf7+ Kh6  
28 Qf4+ 1–0

Well, that was exciting though anyone with [Deep Fritz](#) at hand will argue that 14...Qb6 was probably good for Black. Not to mention the



quicker win via 23 Bd8+. But does it really matter that my play was “iffy”? I enjoyed the game.

Needless to say, I haven’t fully managed the transition to the romantic school. In the last round there was money at stake so I returned to a closed, careful, grandmasterly chess, got totally outplayed by a player rated 400 points lower than myself and finally swindled a draw from a hopeless position. I figure that *Caissa* was sending me a message.

Generally speaking though, it’s better to play a tight, careful game if you want your results to improve, but many people don’t understand this. If I play adventurous chess, I’m fully aware that my results are likely to get worse and that gangly, spotty teenagers will laugh at me. But I’m willing to make the trade off.

Most chess teachers don’t seem to manage to communicate the message to hopeful improvers that they aren’t going to get better by trying to be a kind of latter day Mikhail Tal. Perhaps some of them don’t even try. Many teachers are themselves confused by the fun versus blood issue and may believe they’re a mini Tal or Shirov whose time is yet to come. Now this is not to say that mini Tals don’t exist and that they shouldn’t play “attacking chess.” It’s just that in my experience they are few and far between, the ones with Tal delusions being far more numerous. The problem then is that they’ll be playing the wrong kind of chess. The key for players to improve their results is to find what they can be good at rather than be geared up to throw their pieces around as standard.

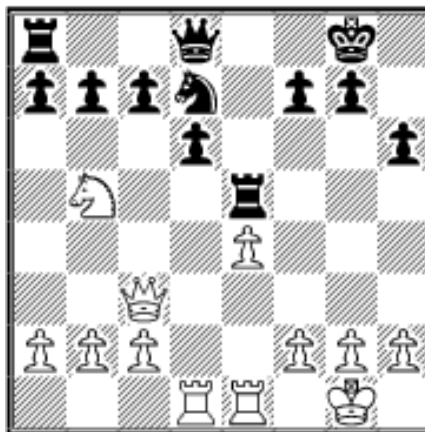
The fun versus blood confusion isn’t helped by much of the literature on the game, which tends to present spectacular chess as a good model for the young beginner. Newspaper columns in particular inspire the flinging of oneself against brick walls. With unsurprising consequences.

Getting more specific let’s consider, for example, the role of major pieces in a chess game. Now really they should tend to operate from rather modest positions until the board clears a little and they have a clear way to enter. Yet the bold use of rooks is often praised to the hilt, thus inspiring imitators. Take for example the following game:

***Tarrasch – Lasker***

4<sup>th</sup> Match Game, 1908

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 0-0 d6 5 d4 Bd7 6 Nc3 Be7 7 Re1 exd4 8 Nxd4 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 Bxb5 10 Nxb5 0-0 11 Bg5 h6 12 Bh4 Re8 13 Rad1 Nd7 14 Bxe7 Rxe7 15 Qc3



16 Nd4 Rc5 17 Qb3 Nb6 18 f4 Qf6 19 Qf3 Re8 20 c3 a5 21 b3 a4 22 b4 Rc4 23 g3 Rd8 24 Re3 c5 25 Nb5 cxb4 26 Rxd6 Rxd6 27 e5 Rxf4 28 gxf4 Qg6+ 29 Kh1 Qb1+ 30 Kg2 Rd2+ 31 Re2 Qxa2 32 Rxd2 Qxd2+ 33 Kg3 a3 34 e6 Qe1+ 35 Kg4 Qxe6+ 36 f5 Qc4+ 37 Nd4 a2 38 Qd1 Nd5 39 Qa4 Nxc3 40 Qe8+ Kh7 41 Kh5 a1Q 0-1

This was really a spectacular use of Black’s rook, going from e7 to e5 and c5. But objectively speaking this was a very dodgy plan, the main aim of which was probably to provoke and unsettle the pompous Tarrasch. I can think of a couple of other examples too, such as a game

between Stein and Tarve plus one Kasparov's games versus Karpov.

But where does this leave those less talented than Lasker, Stein and Kasparov if they then try this at home? Quite possibly a rook down.

In this month's game we see some inappropriate rook play by White. But he gets away with it, because of being a better practical player; the exotic positions of his rooks drawing Black into time trouble. OK, it worked in practice, but this shouldn't be encouraged. So 5/10 for White and 3/10 for Black.

**Nigel Hepworth – Peter Shaw**  
Calderdale Chess League, 2007  
Sicilian [B50]

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 c3**

I've found that open Sicilians (with 3 d4) are the exception rather than the rule at club level, which makes the study of such lines something of a time-waster. Expect the Morra, 2 c3, 2 f4, 3 Bb5 lines or the Closed (2 Nc3 and 3 g3).

**3...Nf6 4 e5**

This was actually introduced by the great Alexander Alekhine. 4 Be2 has proved to be the most popular move here, when 4...Nxe4?? loses a piece because of 5 Qa4+.

**4 dxe5 5 Nxe5 Nbd7**



The stem game for this line, Alekhine - Tsvetkov, Buenos Aires 1939, featured a poor response by Black in 5...Nc6?! after which 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bc4 Bf5 8 d3 e6 9 Qf3 Qd7 10 h3 Be7 11 Nd2 Rd8 12 0-0 Bxd3 13 Bxd3 Qxd3 14 Qxc6+ Qd7 15 Qa6 0-0 16 Nc4, gave White much the better game because of Black's pawn weaknesses and the nice c4-square for White's knight.

**6 Nf3**

Alternatively, White might consider 6 Nc4, though after 6...e6 7 d4 cxd4 8 cxd4 b6 9 Be2 Bb7 10 0-0 Be7 11 Nc3 0-0 12 Bf4 Ne4 13 Rc1 Ndf6, there wasn't much play to compensate for the isolated pawn's weakness in Kozlov - Karjakin, Alushta 2002.

**6...e6 7 d4 Be7**

The immediate 7...cxd4 is also possible, when White should probably reply with 8 cxd4 if he wants something (rather than the insipid 8 Nxd4).

**8 Be3**

Getting ready to recapture on d4 with a piece, but I think this is the wrong thing to do. Despite White's loss of time, positions with an isolated d-pawn are not at all bad, mainly

because of the passive position of Black's knight on d7. Thus 8 Bd3 seems correct, meeting 8...cxd4 with 9 cxd4.

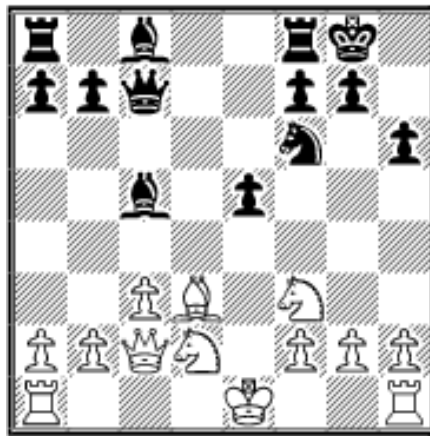
**8...0-0 9 Nbd2 cxd4 10 Bxd4 Qc7**

I actually prefer Black now, because of his extra centre pawn and the fact that it can advance. The bishop on d4 will soon be driven away.

**11 Bd3 e5 12 Be3 Nc5 13 Bxc5**

The immediate surrender of the two bishops is probably the least of White's evils, moving the bishop on d3 also leads to trouble. For example, 13 Bc2 b6 14 0-0 Ba6 15 Re1 Rad8 and 13 Be2 Bf5 would see a Black rook coming to d8 next, with tremendous central control and pressure.

**13...Bxc5 14 Qc2 h6?!**



This looks like a natural way to reduce the pressure against h7, but strategically it has serious negative implications. Besides the loss of tempo the problem is that Black will now find it much harder to safely play ...f7-f5, because of the weakening of g6. And this in turn means that White gets some control over the centre.

I quite like the move 14...Re8, intending 15 Ne4 Nxe4 16 Bxe4 g6. Black would then be well poised to play ...f7-f5, possibly preceded by bringing his bishop to g7.

**15 0-0 Re8 16 Ne4 Nxe4 17 Bxe4 Be6 18 Rfe1**

I'm not sure what the rook is doing on this square, White should really be aiming for control of d5. With this in mind, 18 Rfd1 looks better, "threatening" to exchange light square bishops with 19 Bd5. If White gets rooks off as well, his queen and knight combo versus queen and bishop might give him some hope of playing for the full point.

**18...Bd6**

It's really way too late for plans based on ...g6; for example, 18...g6 19 Rad1 Rad8? is refuted by 20 Rxd8 Rxd8 21 Bxg6 etc..

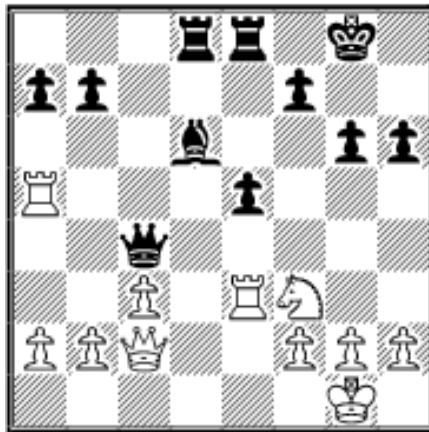
**19 Re3?!**

The start of some over-zealous rook play by White. This "works" only because he sees more than his opponent. 19 Rad1 was the correct move here, getting ready for 20 Bd5.

**19...g6**

Black could exploit the negative side of White's last move with 19...Bc5, when 20 Rd3 (20 Ree1 is probably best) 20...f5 21 Bd5 e4 22 Bxe6+ Rxe6 23 Qb3 Qb6 24 Nd4 Qxb3 25 axb3 Rd6 26 Rdd1 Rad8 puts White under serious pressure.

**20 Rd1 Rad8 21 Bd5 Bxd5 22 Rxd5 Qc4 23 Ra5?!**



Once again being too adventurous with the rooks. 23 Qd1 is much better; for example, 23...Bc7 24 Rxe5 Qxa2 25 Rxe8+ Rxe8 26 Rd2 leaves very little in it.

**23...Bc7?!**

Not the best; Black should just play 23...Bc5, when 24 Ra4 Qd5 25 Re1 f5 leaves him in control. It's difficult to see how that rook on a4 is going to get back into the game.

**24 Rxa7 Bb6 25 Re4?**

This should lose, but Black doesn't spot it. The correct move is 25 Ra4, when 25...Qd5 26 Re2 f5 is still "game on." But Black is a pawn down compared with the 23...Bc5 line.

**25...Qd5?**

Missing his chance. 25...Bxf2+ 26 Kxf2 (26 Qxf2 Qxe4) 26...Qc5+ 27 Kf1 Qxa7 is winning.

**26 Raa4 f5 27 Re2 e4 28 Ne1**

Ambitious but risky. White should play 28 Nd4, when 28...Bxd4 29 Rxd4 (29 cxd4 b5 30 Ra6 Re6 31 Rxe6 Qxe6 will also win the pawn back) 29...Qxa2 gets back the pawn with an equal position. After the text, I think Black is better again.

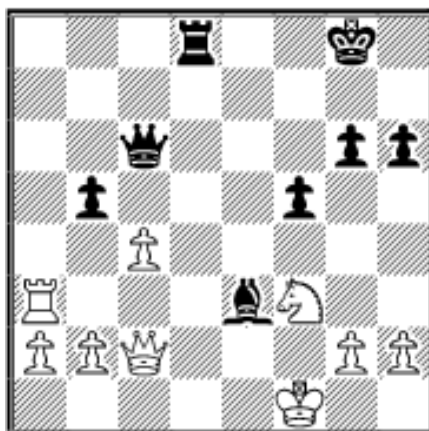
**28...e3 29 fxe3 Rxe3 30 Rxe3 Bxe3+ 31 Kf1 Qb5+ 32 c4 Qc6**

32...Qb6 may be better, when after 33 Nf3 Bc5, the rook on a4 is still out of play.

**33 Nf3 b5**

With time trouble rearing its ugly head, Black solves the problem of White's rook for him. Instead of this, Black has a number of good moves; for example, the relaxed 33...Kh7 would intend 34...Qe4. I think there's more than enough for the pawn here.

**34 Ra3**



34 Rb4! looks even stronger, but the text is rewarded with a blunder.

**34...bxc4??**

Forgetting about the bishop on e3. Almost anything is better.

**35 Rxe3 f4 36 Rc3 g5**



Without a hanging flag we all resign these positions.

**37 Rxc4 Qa6 38 b3 g4 39 Nh4 Rd6 40 Qe2 Re6 41 Qxg4+ Kh7 42 Nf5 Qa7 43 Qxf4 Qxa2 44 Rc7+ Kg8 45 Qg4+ 1-0**

### Recommended Reading

*Combat: My 50 Years at the Chessboard* by Sidney Bernstein (Atlantis Press Ltd., 1977)

*Chess for Fun and Chess for Blood* by Edward Lasker (Dover, 1962)

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