



COLUMNISTS

*Over the Horizons*

Stefan Bücker



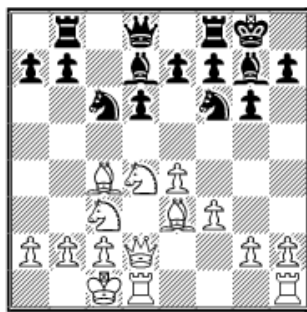
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The Chinese Dragon Refuted?

Against the Sicilian Dragon Variation, **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6**, the Yugoslav Attack **6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0** is clearly White's most popular weapon. Here the deep-analyzed 10...Rc8 followed by Ne5-c4 was played, almost automatically, in thousands of games. The alternative **10...Rb8!**? had been a much rarer guest on the boards. Only in 2002 the chess public took notice that the move might deserve more attention. Emil Anka [2]: "Belgian Fide Master Luc Henris, who was living in China with his Chinese wife, christened the variation 'Chinese Dragon' when he wrote a ground-breaking article about it for Yearbook 62. At that time there were few games available, so he had to create most of the analysis himself."



The obvious idea behind 10...Rb8 is to push the b-pawn and attack on the b-file, whether White dares to take the sacrificed pawn b5 or not. However, it would be too simplifying to say that 10...Rb8 plays on the b-file, while 10...Rc8 operates on the c-file. True, after 10...Rc8 Black's most concrete plans have to do with the c-file: Ne5-c4 and the eventual sacrifice Rxc3. But in many regular Yugoslav Attacks with 10...Rc8,

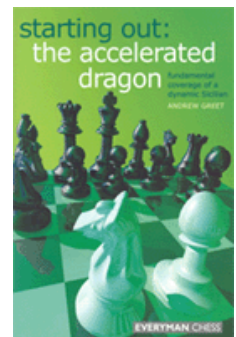
Black also uses the advance b7-b5 at an early stage. And if we study games with 10...Rb8, a few moves later very often Black's other rook appears on the square c8.

The philosophy behind **10...Rb8!** looks familiar to Dragon players, while at the same time they saw a chance to escape the crowded channels of theory. No wonder that the line soon became popular. In 2004, Hungarian GM Emil Anka claimed to have found a refutation of the Chinese Dragon [3], but his proposal to change the order of moves (10 h4! instead of 10 0-0-0) hasn't been adopted by many players. Nevertheless some adherents of the Chinese Dragon have returned to the traditional forms of the Dragon, perhaps under the impression that they have to know the standard treatment anyway, in case White plays 10 h4. It is difficult to say whether 10 h4 is really so strong. At the end of the article I'll look at this theoretical recommendation. Gary Lane is one of those who still believe in the line: "I think the Chinese Dragon will soon enjoy another spurt of popularity" (in his latest column [4]).

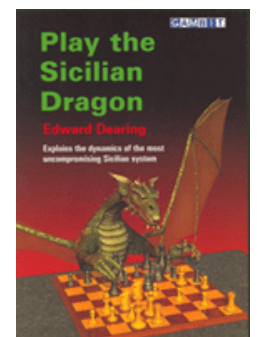
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Several weeks ago, **Volker Hergert** (Switzerland) had sent me several attractive games, his experiences with the Chinese Dragon. He was so kind to contribute an example from his practice for **ChessCafe.com**, which is both inspiring and theoretically important:

***Leroux – Hergert***

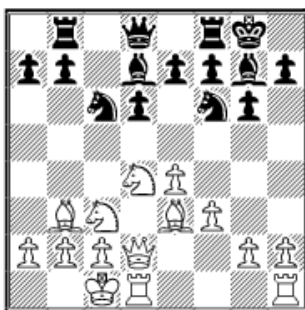
Paris 2008 [B78]

Comments by Volker Hergert

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8!?**

Golubev, one of the outstanding Dragon experts, even played 10...b5 with success, e.g., 10...b5 11 Bxb5 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 Bxb5 13 Nxb5 Rb8 14 c4?! (14 Nc3 +=) 14...Qc8 15 Qc3 Qc6 16 Kb1 a6 17 Na3 Rfc8 with fine compensation (0-1, 29) in Vovk – Golubev, Illichevsk 2006.

**11 Bb3**



A flexible alternative to the characteristic gambit 11 h4 b5!, which opens files for Black's attack: 12 Ndx b5 (12 Be2 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 Qa5 14 a3 e5?! 15 Be3 Be6 16 Nd5 Qxd2+ 17 Rxd2 Nxd5 18 exd5 += in Perez Candelario – Argandona Riveiro, San Sebastian 2006; 14...Rfc8! =) 12...Ne5

a) 13 Na3 Nxc4 14 Nxc4 Qc7 15 b3 (15 Na3? Rxb2! -/+; for example, 16 Kxb2 Nxe4! 17 Nab5 Bxb5 18 fxe4 Rb8 or 16 e5 Rfb8! 17 exf6 Bxf6 18 Bd4 Qa5) 15...Be6 16 Nd5 Nxd5 (or 16...Bxd5 17 exd5 Rb5 18 Bd4 Rxd5 19 Ne3 Bh6 =) 17 exd5 Qxc4 18 dxe6 fxe6 19 bxc4 Bb2, leading to perpetual check in Ninov – Argandona Riveiro, San Sebastian 2006.

b) 13 Be2 Qa5 14 Nd4 (White has to interrupt the long diagonal, since after 14 Na3 or 14 Nxa7 the blow 14...Rxb2 followed by sacrifices of the knights would be decisive), and now:

b1) Seeing how important it is for White to keep the long diagonal closed. Anka suggests 14...Be6!? to provoke 15 Nxe6?. Then the typical and powerful reply would be 15...Rxb2!



e.g., 16 Kxb2 Nxe4! -+. In the case that White declines to take the rook, the threat 16...Qa3 decides the issue; for example, 16 Nxf8? Qa3 17 Qe1 Nxe4! followed by mate. Other possibilities for White after 15...Rxb2! are:



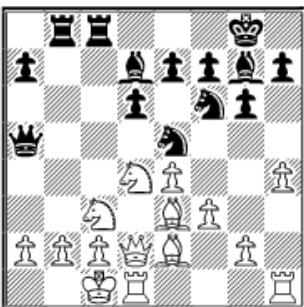
a) 16 Na4 Qxa4 17 Kxb2 Rb8+! (this is stronger than 17...Nxf3 Anka [2]) 18 Ka1 Nxf3 19 Bxf3 Nxe4+ 20 Qd4 Bxd4 + 21 Bxd4 Nf6 -+.

b) 16 a4 Nxe4 17 Nxe4 Nd3+ 18 Qxd3 (18 Bxd3 Rb1+ 19 Kxb1 Rb8+ followed by mate; 18 cxd3 Rc8+ 19 N6c5 Rxd2 20 Rxd2 Qxa4 -+) 18... Rfb8 19 Qb3 R8xb3 20 cxb3 Rxe2 21 Bd2 Rxd2 22 Rxd2 fxe6 23 Rc2 Qe5 24 Rd1 h6 -/+

c) 16 Qd4 opens an escape route for White's king: 16...Qa3 17 Qa4 Qxc3 18 Bd4 Bh6+ 19 Ng5 Rb4 20 Bxc3 Rxa4 21 Bxe5 dxe5 22 Kb2 Rb8+ 23 Ka1, about =. However, Black can improve his attack: 16...Rfb8 17 Nxg7 Qa3 (only now!) 18 Kd2 Rxc2+! 19 Ke1 Rb4 20 Nb1/Nb5 (20 Qxa7 Qxc3 + 21 Kf1 Rxe2 22 Kxe2 Rb2+ 23 Bd2 Nc4 -+) 20...Qxa2 21 Qxb4 Rxe2+ 22 Kf1 Rxe3 -+.

Another attempt against 14...Be6, the reply 15 f4 (hoping for the knight fork 16 Nc6) is similarly refuted by means of 15...Rxb2!. Nevertheless 14...Be6 seems less accurate (than 14...Rfc8), because of 15 Nb3 which consolidates and gains valuable time (15 a3 Bc4! is not so clear).

b2) 14...Rfc8. This position was already mentioned by Markovic, who believed that Black had acquired good compensation.



In this critical position, White has two main alternatives (Anka's third option 15 g4 [2] is unplayable because of 15...Bxg4! 16 fxg4 Nxe4 17 Nxe4 Qxa2 -+, St. Bucker):

a) 15 Nb3 allows 15...Rxb3! 16 cxb3 (he cannot afford to open the a-file: 16 axb3 Nxe4 17 fxe4 Nc4, intending 18...Qa1+ 19 Nb1 Qxb2 mate) 16...Qxa2 (in contrast to the line 14...Be6 discussed

above, the Rc8 now pins Nc3). A wild situation which has already appeared in practice: 17 Qc2 Qa5 18 Kd2 d5 19 Ra1 Qb4 20 exd5 Nxd5 21 Qe4 Qxb3 22 Nxd5 Qxb2+ 23 Ke1 Qxa1+ 24 Kf2 Qa3 25 Ra1 Qd6 26 f4 f5 27 Ra6 fxe4 28 Rxd6 exd6 29 Ne7+ Kf8 30 Nxc8 Bxc8 31 fxe5 Bxe5 32 Bxa7 d5 33 Ke3 Kg8 34 Bd4 Bd6 35 Bb2 h5 36 Kd4 Be6 37 Bc1 Kf7 38 Bg5 Bf8 39 Be3 Kf6 40 Bd1 Kf5 41 g3 Bd6 42 Bf2 Bb8 43 Kc3 Be5+ 0-1, Stanford (2178) – Anka (2422) McMinnville, 2004. Another continuation demonstrates the tactical pitfalls for White: 17 Bd4 Be6! 18 Bxe5 (hoping for 18...dxe5? 19 Qd8+ +-; it would have been slightly better to play 18 Bc4 Nxc4 19 Nxa2 Nxd2+ 20 Kxd2 Nxe4+ 21 fxe4 Bxd4 -/+) 18...Bxb3 19 Qd3 Bh6+ 20 f4 dxe5 21 Qd8+ Kg7 22 Qxc8 Bxf4+ 23 Rd2 Qa1+ 24 Nb1 Bxd2+ 25 Kxd2 Qxb2+ 26 Ke3 Qd4+ 27 Kf3 Nxe4 28 Rf1 Nd2+ 29 Nxd2 Qf4 mate.

b) 15 a3 Nc4 (Anka [1] prefers 15...Qb6, with sufficient compensation for the pawn. But the text move is fine, too) 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 Nd5 (Anka [1] recommends 17 g4 +=, overlooking 17...Bxg4! 18 fxg4 Nxg4 with at least equal chances for Black) 17...Qd8 18 Nxf6+ Bxf6 19 Kb1 (I had planned 19 h5 Ba4; so White prepares the defense Rc1) 19...Ba4 20 Rc1 (20 b3 would be a weakness after 20...Qc7) 20...d5! and Black was better in Landolt – Hergert, Pfäffikon 2008.

## 11...Na5

“Accurate. This time 11...Ne5 will not do: 12 f4! Neg4 13 h3 Nxe3 14 Qxe3 (M. Russell – Kafka, Goa 2002). White has more space and the threat of e4-e5, which Black has problems coping with. This was real hassle for Black until 11...Na5 was discovered to be playable: 14...Nh5 (14...e6 15 g4 Bc6 16 g5 Nh5 17 Ndb5 +/-) 15 Rhf1 Nxf4 16 Rxf4 e5 17

Rxf7 +/- . Also inadequate is 11...b5 12 Nxc6 Bxc6 13 Bxa7 Ra8 14 Bd4” (Silman, 2004).

## 12 h4

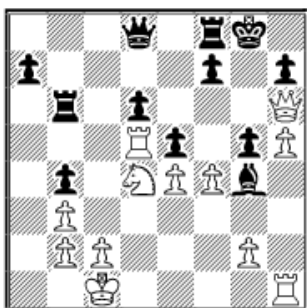
Four years ago, the aggressive 12 Bh6 suffered a serious blow in a correspondence game: 12...Bxh6 13 Qxh6 b5

a) 14 g4 b4 15 Nd5 Nxb3+ (15...e6 16 Nxf6+ Qxf6) 16 Nxb3 Nxd5 17 exd5 e5 18 dxe6 Bxe6 “and Black has at least as much queenside play as White on the other flank” was an analysis by Silman (2004). In Sinov – Cabrera Rrujillo, Pamplona 2007, there followed 19 Nc5 Qc7 (19...b3!?) 20 Na6 Qc4?! (20...Qa5! 21 Nxb8 Rxb8 with fine compensation for the exchange) 21 Nxb8 Rc8 22 Qd2 Qxa2 23 Qxb4 Bb3 24 Kd2 Rxc2+ 25 Ke3 Qxb2 26 Qxd6? (26 Qb5 +/-) 26...Re2+ 27 Kf4 Bxd1 (=, 39). In Kritz (2609) – Jianu (2531) Plovdiv 2008, the alternative treatment 17...Ba4 also lead to a draw, although White retained a small advantage after 18 Nd4 Qa5 19 h4 Rfc8 20 Kb1 Qxd5 21 b3 Bd7 22 h5 Qe5 23 Rhe1 Qg7 24 Qxg7+ Kxg7 25 Rxe7.

b) 14 h4 e5 15 Nde2 b4 16 Nd5 Nxb3+ 17 axb3 Nxd5 18 Rxd5

b1) 18...Be6 is the older continuation, which had a short comeback last year, but without success: 19 Rd3 Rb6 20 f4 Bg4 21 h5 Qc7 22 Rg3 Rc8 23 c4 bxc3 24 Rxc3 and White won in Bologan – Savchenko, 2007.

b2) 18...Rb6!. An improvement found in 2004, in a correspondence game Carvalho da Nilva – Qa Costa Junior. White’s best attempt is 19 h5 g5 20 f4! (after 20 Rxd6? f6 White’s queen is imprisoned and only Black retains winning chances) 20...Bg4 21 Nd4!

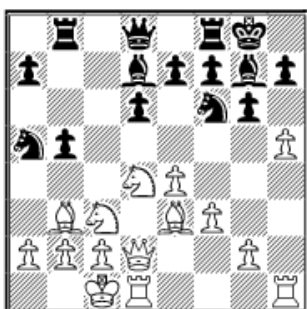


21...gxf4 22 g3 Kh8 23 gxf4 exd4 24 Rg5 Rg8 25 Rxg8+ Kxg8 26 Rg1 Qh4 27 f5 Rc6 28 f6 Rxc2+!! 29 Kxc2 Qf2+ 30 Kd3 Qe2+ 31 Kxd4 Qxb2+ 32 Kc4 Qc3+ 33 Kb5 Qc5+ 34 Ka4 Qc6+ 35 Kxb4 a5+ 36 Kxa5 Qc5+ 37 Ka4 Qa7+ 38 Kb5 Qc5+ 1/2-1/2, Burnoiu – Jianu, Bucharest 2006.

The flexible 12 Kb1 is another, less popular option: 12...b5 13 h4 Nc4 14

Bxc4 bxc4 15 Ka1 h5 16 Rb1 Re8 17 Bh6 Bh8 18 g4 hxg4 19 h5 Qa5 (correct was 19...Nxb5 20 fxg4 Nf6 -/+) 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 Rh4 gxf3 22 Nxf3 Nxe4 23 Nxe4 c3 24 Nxc3 Rxb2 25 Kxb2 Bxc3+ 26 Qxc3 Rb8+ 27 Qb3+ Rxb3+ 28 axb3 e5 29 Rd1 Bc6 30 Ng5 d5 31 Rf1 1-0, Efimenko – Charbonneau, Montreal 2005.

## 12...b5 13 h5



13 Kb1 Nc4! 14 Bxc4 bxc4 15 Ka1! Re8 (Anka [2] suggests 15...h5!?) 16 g4 Qa5 17 h5 Rb6 18 Nde2 Ra6 19 h6 Bh8 20 g5 Nh5 21 Bd4 e5 22 Be3 Rb8 23 Qe1 Nf4 24 Bc1 Be6 25 a3 1/2-1/2, Stellwagen – Reinderman, Hilversum 2008 (Dutch Championship).

### 13...Nc4 14 Bxc4

14 Qf2 (Fritz) doesn’t seem too dangerous after 14...Nxe3 15 Qxe3 b4 16 Nd5 e6 17 Nxf6+ Qxf6.

## 14...bxc4 15 Bh6

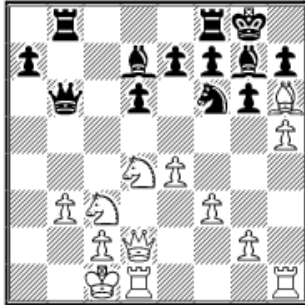
15 hxg6 fxg6 16 Kb1 Qa5 17 Ka1 Rf7, Mas – Jones, New Delhi 2007,

isn't promising.

### 15...Qb6 16 b3 cxb3

16...Bxh6 can transpose to the game after 17 Qxh6 cxb3 18 axb3. Less precise seems 16...Qa5 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 hxg6 Qa3+ 19 Kb1 fxg6 20 Qh6 + Kg8 21 Nd5 Rf7 22 Nxf6+ exf6, Guo – Oliver, Australian Open 2007, because of 23 Qc1! +=.

### 17 axb3



17 cxb3 is also met by 17...Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Rfc8.

### 17...Bxh6

17...Qa5 18 Bxg7 Qa1+ 19 Nb1 Kxg7 20 hxg6 fxg6, Listes – Deur, Split 2005; 21 Qg5 unclear.

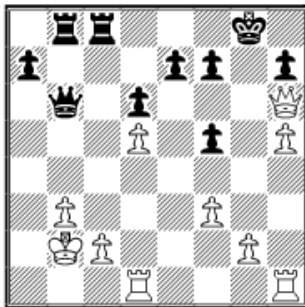
### 18 Qxh6 Rfc8

To insert 18...Qa5 19 Kb2 didn't convince me, since after 19...Rfc8 White has the first-class defense 20 Rd3 (for example, 20...Rb4 21 Nd5 Nxd5 22 exd5 Bf5 23 Nxf5 gxf5 24 Qg5+ Kf8 25 Rc1 +- in Prasenjit – Shiven, New Delhi 2008). After the precise text move, 19 Rd3 fails to 19...Rxc3 20 Rxc3 Qxd4.

### 19 Nd5

Because the h-file has not been opened yet, Black is able to defend himself.

### 19...Nxd5 20 exd5 Bf5! 21 Nxf5 gxf5 22 Kb2



White is well advised to remove the pin in the c-file. If 22 Qg5+ Kh8 (22...Kf8 23 Rhe1 hands over the initiative to the first player) 23 Qxe7 (23 h6? fails to 23...Rxc2+! 24 Kxc2 Qxb3+ 25 Kd2 Rg8 26 Qxe7 Rxc2+ 27 Ke1 Qc3+ 28 Kf1 Qxf3 + 29 Ke1 Qf2 mate) 23...Qxb3 24 Qf6+ Kg8 25 Qg5+ Kf8 26 Qd8+ Rxd8 27 cxb3 Rxb3, and Black has a slight advantage.

### 22...Rxc2+!?

22...Qc5 23 Qd2 leads to equal play and offers no real chance to play for a win.

### 23 Kxc2 Qxb3+ 24 Kd2 Qb2+ 25 Ke3

25 Ke1? loses because of 25...Qxg2 +-

### 25...Rb3+ 26 Rd3

Of course not 26 Kf4? Qe5+ 27 Kg5 Rb4 followed by mate.

### 26...Qe5+ 27 Kf2!

In my calculations I had only foreseen 27 Kd2 Rb2+ 28 Kc1, when 29...Ra2! forces mate; for example, 30 Rb3 Qa1+ 31 Rb1 Qc3+ etc.

### 27...Rxd3

27...Rb2+ 28 Rd2 Qd4+ 29 Ke2 Qc4+ 30 Kf2 Qd4+ draws immediately, of course, but I still wanted to win.

## 28 Rb1

The point of White's last move.

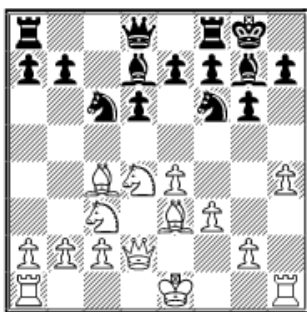
## 28...Rxf3+!

28...Qd4+ 29 Ke2 Qe5+ 30 Kxd3 Qxd5+ also leads to a draw, or 30 Kf2 Qd4+ with perpetual check. However, after 30 Kf1 Black would still have to find the rescue 30...Rb3!, which after 31 Rxb3 Qa1+ 32 Kf2 Qa2+ 33 Kg3 Qxb3 34 Qg5+ Kf8 35 Qh6+ Kg8 (35...Ke8 36 Qxh7 Qxd5 37 Qg8+ Kd7 38 h6 Qe5+ 39 Kh3 f4 40 Kg4 =) 36 Qg5+ Kf8 37 Qh6+ secures the half point.

**29 gxf3 Qh2+ 30 Ke3 Qe5+ 31 Kd2 Qd4+ 32 Ke2 Qc4+ 33 Ke1 Qh4+ 34 Kd1 Qa4+ 1/2-1/2**

## Does Anka's 10 h4 refute the Chinese Dragon?

In the New in Chess Yearbook 72 [3], Emil Anka gave the following move-order as the "solution," which is meant to prevent the Rb8 idea of the Chinese Dragon: **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 h4!**

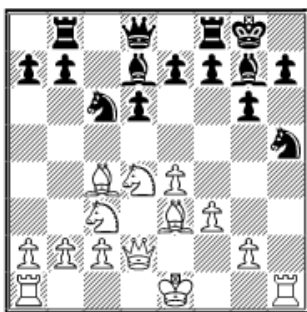


White delays castling and immediately starts his attack. Anka: "10 h4! is a logical and healthy move in a position with opposite castling. It has no disadvantages, only advantages." But – does it really prevent the next move, as Anka believes?

## 10...Rb8?!

This is a bit risky, perhaps Black should in fact better return to a standard set-up. However, it isn't entirely clear that Emil Anka was right in Yearbook 72.

## 11 h5 Nxh5



There is nothing better. Anka's main line 11...b5 12 Bb3 Nxh5 13 g4 Nf6 14 0-0-0 +/- is hopeless for Black. In this line, b7-b5 is practically losing a tempo.

## 12 g4 Nxd4!

Improving upon 12...Nf6, the move considered in Anka's analysis [2].

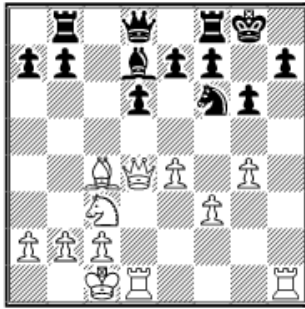
## 13 Bxd4 Bxd4 14 Qxd4

14 gxh5 isn't better: 14...Bg7 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 0-0-0 Qa5 17 Rdg1 e6, etc.

## 14...Nf6

Black's play, starting from 11...Nxh5, looks anti-positional at first, but after "winning" the pawn at h5, the massive exchange on d4 at least has reached one important goal: to deflect White's queen from the square h6. White's remaining bishop here is stronger than usual, because it can no longer be neutralized by means of Nc6-e5-c4. Black's natural antidote should be Be6 (hopefully).

## 15 0-0-0



A critical position. White develops as fast as possible and isn't interested in winning back a pawn (15 Qxa7 b6!). If 15 Qe3 Be6 16 0-0-0, Black can't play 16...Bxc4? 17 e5!, but after 16...Qb6 he has a sound position.

### 15...Rc8!

15...b5? 16 Bb3 Qb6 17 Qd2 Be6 18 Qh6 Rfc8 19 Bxe6 fxe6 is unplayable because of the tactical 20 e5! Rxc3 (20...dxe5 21 Ne4) 21 bxc3 dxe5 22 g5 Nh5 23 Rxb5 Qe3+ 24 Kb1 gxf5 25 Qxe6+ Kf8 26 g6 hxg6 27 Qxg6 Qb6 28 Qxh5 Qf6 29 Rg1 Rb6 30 Rg5 +-.

### 16 Nd5

- a) 16 e5?? dxe5 17 Qe3 Rxc4 18 Qh6 Rxc3! —.
- b) 16 Bb3 Qa5 17 Qe3 Be6 18 Nd5 Bxd5 19 exd5 Qc5, about =.
- c) 16 Rh2 Rc5 17 Rdh1 e5 18 Qd3 Be6 =.
- d) 16 g5 Nh5 17 e5 e6 18 Rxb5 gxf5 19 Ne4 Rxc4 20 Qxc4 d5, about =.
- e) 16 Bd5 Qb6! (not 16...b5?? 17 e5! dxe5 18 Qe3 with a winning attack) 17 Qxb6 axb6 18 Bxb7 Rc7 19 Bd5 Kg7 =.

### 16...e5 17 Qf2!? Be6 18 Qh4

Or 18 Nxf6+ Qxf6 19 Bxe6 fxe6 20 Rxd6 Qf4+ with sufficient counterplay: 21 Kb1 Qxg4 22 Qh2 Qh5 23 Qxh5 gxf5 24 Rxb5 Rxf3 25 c3 Rc6 26 Rxc6 bxc6 27 Rxe5 Kf7 28 a4 Kg6 29 Rxe6+ Rf6 and Black should be able to draw.

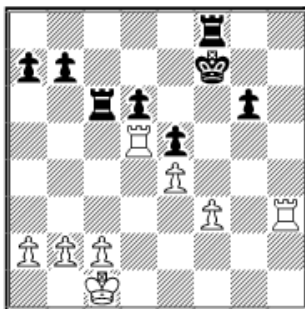
### 18...Bxd5 19 Bxd5 h5!

19...b5? 20 Qh6 +/-.

### 20 gxf5

Or 20 Bxb7 Rb8 21 Bd5 Kg7 22 Bb3 Rh8 +/.

### 20...Nxd5 21 Rxd5 Qxh4 22 Rxb4 Rc6 23 hxf6 fxg6 24 Rh3 Kf7 +=



White only has a slight advantage in the ending.

#### Sources

- [1] L. Henris: "The Chinese Dragon Variation," *New in Chess Yearbook* 62 (2002)
- [2] E. Anka: "The Chinese Dragon Revisited," *New in Chess Yearbook* 71 (2004)
- [3] E. Anka: "The Chinese Dragon Refuted!," *New in Chess Yearbook* 72 (2004)
- [4] G. Lane: "Enter the Dragon," latest column for [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com)



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