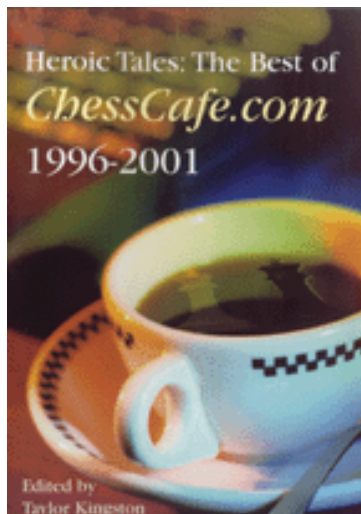


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Canning the Caro: The Milner-Barry Gambit Part 2

Before we dive into the analytical section of the article, I want to take the excellent suggestion of reader Leslie Leow and say a few words about Sir Stuart Philip Milner-Barry's achievements off the chess board.

Though he was not himself a mathematician, Milner-Barry possessed the sort of analytical mind required to attack extremely difficult problems. When World War II broke out, he joined the top-secret Bletchley Park team of cryptanalysts headed by Alan Turing. Since the 1970's when the existence of this group became common knowledge, historians have put together a compelling picture of the Bletchley Park analysts. Curiously, recruiters for the British cryptanalytic effort are known to have searched for people with some minimal knowledge of German, a bit of mathematics ... and demonstrated ability at chess, capacities they found in the likes of Milner-Barry (Boy champion of England in 1923 and a member of the British olympic teams in 1937, 1939, 1952 and 1956), Jack Good (runner up in the West of England Championship of 1958), and the three time British champion Hugh Alexander. The Government Code and Cipher School at Bletchley, or GC & CS, was informally known as the "Golf Club and Chess Society." In the event, the search for chess players was more than amply rewarded; it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that they did as much as any group to win the war against Hitler.

From 1937 to 1945, Milner-Barry served as Chess Correspondent for *The Times*. At the end of the war he entered the British Civil Service, rising to the post of Under Secretary at H M. Treasury and continued in that capacity until his retirement.

One of the most important parts of home analysis is looking at successes with a critical eye. The following game in "my" line of

the Milner-Barry Gambit looks like a resounding success.

Larsen - Andreassen Copenhagen (?), 1981

**1.d4 d5 2.e4 dxe4 3.Nc3 c6 4.f3!? e5 5.Be3! Bb4 6.fxe4 Nf6
7.Qd3 Qa5 8.Nf3**



8...0-0

8...Nxe4 9.Qxe4!? is a line for collectors of double Rook sacrifices. Black really has no choice: 9...Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 Qxc3+ 11.Kf2 Qxa1 and now White has various tempting alternatives but no clear win:

A. 12.Bc4 Qxh1 White has lost both Rooks and one

minor piece to the marauding Black Queen, but now his remaining units converge on the Black King.

A1. 13.Bxf7+!? appears good for a draw: 13...Kxf7 (13...Kf8?? 14.Qxe5 Kxf7 15.Ng5+ Kg6 16.Qd6+ Kh5 17.Ne6+-) and now we need to check out both Knight checks:

A1a. 14.Ng5+ Kf8 (14...Kf6 15.Qxe5+ Kg6 16.Qd6+ Kh5 17.Ne6 Bxe6 18.Qe5+ Kg6 19.Qxe6+ Kh5 20.Qf5+ Kh4 21.g3#) 15.Qxe5

A1a1. 15...Qb1 16.Qf4+ Ke8 17.Qe5+ Kd8 18.Nf7+ Kd7 19.Qf5+ Ke8 20.Nd6+ Kd8 21.Nf7+ Kc7 22.Bf4+ Kb6 23.Qc5+ Ka6 24.Qa3+ Kb6 (24...Kb5?? 25.Nd6+ Kb6 26.Nc4+ Kb5 27.Qc5+ Ka6 28.Qa5#) 25.Qc5+=

A1a2. 15...Qd1 16.Qf4+ Ke7 17.Qe5+ Kd8 18.Nf7+ Kd7 19.Qf5+ Kc7 20.Bf4+ Kb6 21.Qc5+ Ka6 22.Qa3+ Kb6 23.Qc5+= with a perpetual.

A1b. 14.Nxe5+ Where should the King go?

A1b1. 14...Kf6 Not here! 15.Qh4+ Ke6 16.Qg4+ Kd5 17.Qf3+ Kd6 (17...Ke6?? 18.Qf7+ Kd6 19.Nc4#) 18.Nc4+ Ke6 19.Qg4+ Kf7 20.Ne5+ Ke7 21.Bg5+ Kd6 22.Nc4+ Kd5 23.Ne3+ Kd6 24.Qf4+ Ke6 25.Qf5+ Kd6 26.Qe5+ Kd7 27.Qe7#

A1b2. 14...Kg8! This is the way to secure a draw. 15.Nxc6 Threatening mate, but this is easily parried. 15...h6 (or 15...Bd7 16.Nd8 h6 17.Qd5+ Kh7 18.Qe4+=) 16.Qe8+ Kh7 17.Qe4+=

A2. 13.Qxe5+ Be6! (13...Kd7? 14.Bf4! Rf8 15.Ng5+-; 13...Kd8 14.Bxf7 h6 15.Qxg7 Re8 16.Bxh6 Bg4 17.Qf6+ Kc8 18.Bxe8 Qd1 19.Qf8! Qxc2+ 20.Kg3 Kc7 21.Bf4+ Kb6 22.Qb4+ Ka6 23.Qa3+ Kb5 24.Bd2+-) 14.Qxg7 Rf8 15.Bxe6 fxe6 16.Bg5! Rxf3+! 17.gxf3! Qxh2+=

B. 12.Qxe5+ Be6 13.Qxg7 (13.Bc4 Qxh1 14.Bxe6 0-0 15.Bf5 Qd1 16.Bh6 gxh6 17.Qg3+ Kh8 18.Qe5+ Kg8= , but not 18...f6?? 19.Qe7+-) 13...Rf8 14.Ng5 Qxa2 15.Nxh7 Qxc2+ 16.Be2 Nd7 17.Nxf8 Nxf8 with a very unclear position.

9.Nxe5 Bxc3+ [9...Nxe4 transposes into the game.] **10.bxc3 Nxe4 11.Qxe4 Qxc3+ 12.Kf2 Qxa1** [12...f5 13.Qf4 Qxc2+ 14.Be2 +/-] **13.Bd3 f5 14.Bc4+ Kh8 15.Ng6+!** Why win the Queen when you can mate elegantly instead? **15...hgx6 16.Qh4# 1-0**

All very heartening, but what about a check on move 6? White appears to have no adequate response, e.g. 6...Qh4+! 7.Bf2 (7.Ke2!? teeters between 'brave' and 'silly.' 7...Bxc3 8.bxc3 Qxe4 9.Nf3 exd4 10.cxd4 Nf6 11.h3 Nd5 12.Qd2 Nxe3 13.Qxe3 Qxe3+ 14.Kxe3 0-0 -/+) 7...Qxe4+ 8.Be2 Qxg2 9.Bf3 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 Qg5 -/+ leaves White struggling (to put it charitably) to justify the two pawn investment. He has a substantial lead in development, but his pieces do not coordinate well (the Bishops, for example, are not pointing in the right direction!) and he will have difficulty castling comfortably.

Clearly an improvement is needed here. Kramnik wasn't available for a consultation, so I ran the position -- with some initial suggestions I thought promising -- through the Deep Position Analysis function of Deep Fritz 7. Overall, it looks like the best continuation is **6.Bc4!?**, with the following ideas:



A. 6...exd4 7.Bxd4 Nf6 8.fxe4 Nxe4 9.Qf3 Qxd4 10.Qxf7+ Kd8 11.Rd1 Qxd1+ 12.Kxd1 Rf8 (12...Nxc3+ is weaker: 13.bxc3 Bxc3 14.Ne2+/-) and now:

A1. 13.Qxf8+ Bxf8 14.Nxe4 is quite unclear

A2. 13.Qxg7!? may be strongest. 13...Nf2+ Forced:

Black must pick up the R/h1. 14.Kc1 Nxh1 White can rapidly create problems for the Black King and Rook, e.g. 15.Nf3 Bd7 16.Ng5 Nf2 17.Bf7! h6 (17...Ng4 18.Nxh7 Rxf7 19.Qxf7 Nxh2 20.Nf6+-) 18.Nh7 Rxf7 19.Qxf7 +/-

B. 6...Bxc3+ 7.bxc3 exd4 8.Bxd4 White's pawns aren't very pretty, but his Bishops look very menacing.

B1. 8...Nf6 9.fxe4 0-0 A Fritz idea now is 10.e5 Qe7 11.Nf3 c5 12.0-0 Ng4 13.Bf2 Nc6 14.Qd6 Ngxe5 15.Qxe7 Nxf3+ 16.gxf3 Nxe7 17.Bxc5 Re8 18.Rfe1 Be6 19.Bxe6 fxe6 20.Rxe6 Nd5 21.Rxe8+ Rxe8 22.c4 Nc3 23.Bxa7+-

B2. 8...exf3 9.Nxf3 Qe7+ (9...Ne7 10.Ng5 0-0 11.0-0 Nd5 12.Qh5 h6 13.Nxf7 Qe8 14.Nxh6+ gxh6 15.Qxh6+-) 10.Kf2! Black gets into surprisingly hot water after this. 10...Nf6 11.Re1

B2a. 11...Be6 12.Bxf6 gxf6 (12...Qxf6 13.Bxe6 fxe6 14.Qd6 Qf8 15.Rxe6+ Kf7 16.Qc7+! There is nothing Fritz likes better than cranking out a forced mate. 16...Kg8 (16...Kxe6 17.Re1+ Kf5 [17...Kd5 18.Qe5+ Kc4 19.Re4#] 18.Qe5+ Kg6 19.Qg5+ Kf7 20.Qf4+ Kg8 [20...Kg6 21.Qg4+ Kf7 22.Qe6#] 21.Qc4+ Qf7 22.Re8#] 17.Qxb7 Na6 18.Qxa6+-) 13.Nd4 0-0 14.Qh5+/-

B2b. 11...Ne4+ 12.Rxe4! Qxe4 13.Bxf7+ Ke7 Obviously the Bishop is immune because of a Knight fork at g5. 14.Bc5+ Kf6 15.Qd6+ Be6 16.Qe7+ Kf5 17.Qg5# 1-0 Szasz - Sutherland, 1971.

Let's return to the position after **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.f3 e5 5.Be3.**



If you let Deep Fritz 7 chew on this for about twelve ply, it favors the cheeky move 5...Qb6 -- a brazen attempt to nab the b-pawn. This is a good illustration of the difference between humans and computers: I cannot find a single human-vs-human game in my (several-million-game) database where Black has been this greedy. I think

White should rejoice at the compensation he gets if Black does send his Queen on that errand, but in Fritz's calculations the pawn is the more important consideration. (Maybe not *all* humans. There is a funny story about Karpov's seconds in one of the contests against Kasparov -- they had found a sacrifice that seemed extremely promising and showed it to Karpov anticipating that he would be very pleased. "Okay," he replied, "where's the mate?" And that was the end of that idea. But then again, isn't Karpov a Caro Kann player? There's a pattern here...)

Still, White must be prepared to give up the pawn under the most favorable circumstances possible, and two ideas seem worth investigating. First, he may try 6.a3!?, which combines a shallow but amusing trap (6...Qxb2?? 7.Na4 1-0) with the idea of castling Queenside, e.g., 6...Nf6 7.Qd2 and now 7...Qxb2? fails to 8.Ra2 Qb6 9.dxe5 winning a piece. Neither 7...exd4 8.Bxd4 c5 9.Bxf6 gxf6 10.0-0-0 nor 7...Qc7 8.dxe5 Qxe5 9.0-0-0 looks particularly appetizing for Black. Perhaps he has to try 6...Nh6, though this violates most classical intuitions about good opening play.

Second, White can just make a straight gambit of it with 6.Qd2. If Black allows Queenside castling he will simply be worse, so he more or less has to take the pawn and ride out the attack. The position does not admit of exhaustive analysis, but with a little coaxing down lines that seem intuitively appealing Deep Fritz 7 draws us into a totally murky position: 6...Qxb2 (6...exd4 7.Bxd4 c5 8.Nd5! Qd6 9.Bc3 +/-) 7.Rb1 Qa3 8.dxe5 Bb4 9.Rb3 Qa5 10.Bc4! This is the move one would like to play; the trick is to see that it is tactically justifiable. 10...b5 11.Rxb4! Qxb4 12.Nxb5!! Qxd2+ 13.Kxd2 cxb4 14.Bd5 The point: Black is losing back the material and the position is a mess.

By now someone has surely noticed that we have gone on for quite some time without giving any games by Sir Stuart Philip

Milner-Barry himself. To correct this oversight, here is a sprightly game won by our eponymous hero on the eve of the war in which he played such a vital, if secret, part:

Milner-Barry – Solomon Hampstead, 1939

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.f3 Nf6

A reasonable move, transposing into the O'Kelly Defense to the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit. This was advocated in Watson and Schiller's Big Book of Busts; it is a reasonable defense but by no means a bust to the BDG -- or the MBG, as case may be.

5.fxe4 e5 6.Nf3 Bb4?!

This looks like a slack move. Black should immediately hack off the pawn with 6...exd4, leaving White with the choice of whether to head for an endgame with an isolated pawn by 7.Qxd4 Qxd4 8.Nxd4 or a middlegame with 7.Nxd4 when 7...Bb4 generates some awkward pressure.

7.a3

This takes a tempo but solves the problem of how White is to hold onto his d4 pawn. The e-pawn is gambitted -- but as Sir Stuart was willing to do that on move 4, he cannot be too unhappy about it.

7...Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 Nxe4 9.Bc4!?



9...Nd6(?)

We can only speculate as to whether Sir Stuart would have reacted violently to 9...Nxc3, e.g. 10.Bxf7+!? Kxf7 11.Nxe5+ My personal favorite fantasy variation now runs 11...Kg8 12.Qh5 Be6 13.Bg5 Qc8 14.0-0 Nd7 15.Rf7! Nxe5 16.Rxg7+!! and Black is lost. Readers may

want to have some fun hunting around in the deviations from this line, as there are some surprising tactics hidden there.

10.Ba2 e4 11.Ng5 Bf5

Surely 11...h6 would have called down 12.Nxf7!? with ongoing complications after 12...Nxf7 13.0-0 Rf8 14.Qh5, etc.

12.0-0 Bg6 13.a4 Nd7 14.Ba3 Nf6 15.Rb1 h6 16.Nh3 b6 17.Qe1 Qd7 18.Nf4 Bh7 19.Nd3!

Making charming use of the pin to centralize his Knight.

19...0-0?

Plausible but fatal. Too many lines intersect now: the g-file, the diagonal from g3 to d6, and the diagonal from a3 to d6. Sir Stuart wraps things up with a finish so crisp it crackles.

20.Ne5 Qc7 21.Rxf6! gxf6 22.Qg3+ Kh8 23.Bxd6 1-0

Black cannot recapture without losing his Queen.

In view of the note to Black's sixth, it would be nice if we could find something more convincing for White. Watson and Schiller give 5.Bc4 Qa5, which they attribute to "Howell," but this is surely Holwell as given in Volker Hergert's monograph on the O'Kelly Defense. They think it is clearly favorable to Black, but like most lines in the Blackmar-Diemer complex this variation suffers from one-sided investigation, in this case investigation only for Black. White has various promising but uninvestigated ideas such as 6.Bd2(!) when 6...Qb4 7.Qe2 Qxb2 8.Rb1 seems clearly good for White, and 6...Qb6 7.fxe4 Qxd4 8.Qe2 looks like promising compensation for the pawn.

If the reader finds this unconvincing he may take comfort in the fact that 5.Nxe4 is also possible. In fact, this move is described on by a prolific chess author as the "McGrew Variation"(!) I assure you, dear reader, that this surprised me as much as anyone. But modesty forbids us to enter there.

Finally, here is a bit of caviar that reminds us of those innocent days when the computers were largely useful for showing what humans could get away with.

Larsen,B – Computer Denmark 1982

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.f3 exf3 5.Qxf3 Qxd4 6.h3 Nf6

I suppose at this point we should classify the game as a Ryder Gambit. Larsen obviously doesn't take his primitive silicon opponent seriously, and the game shows that he shouldn't.

**7.Be3 Qh4+ 8.g3 Qh5 9.g4 Qe5 10.0-0-0 e6 11.Bc4 Nd5
12.Bxd5 cxd5 13.Nxd5 exd5 14.Rxd5 Qe7 15.Bc5 Qe1+
16.Rd1 Qe6 17.Qc3 Qh6+ 18.Kb1 Bxc5 19.Qxc5**

Black hasn't broken any speed records developing, but White's material investment is so heavy that I still have qualms about his compensation.

19...Nc6 20.Nf3 Be6 21.Rhe1 Qf4 22.Ng5 Nd8 23.Rd6

Needlessly fancy: 23.Ne4 practically wins out of hand.

23...Qf6?

23...0-0! might have given Larsen some trouble. Now everything flows smoothly.

**24.Qb5+ Ke7 25.Rd7+ Kf8 26.Nxe6+ Nxe6 27.Rf1 a6 28.Qe2
Qh6 29.Rxf7+ Kg8 30.Rfe7 Nf8 31.Qc4+ Ne6 32.Rxe6 g6
33.Re8#**

Note: Over the past two months I have received several notes from readers regarding the analysis in various columns. Some of these notes are very thoughtful and contain points that deserve to be shared with our readers. At the end of next month's column I hope to reserve some space for considering the best of reader feedback, particularly on the Rousseau Gambit. Stay tuned!



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