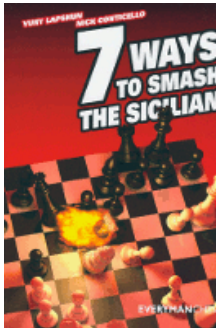




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Piece Sacrifices in the Open Sicilian

Steve Goldberg

7 Ways to Smash the Sicilian, by Yury Lapshun and Nick Conticello, 2009
Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 190pp. \$24.95

Not for the faint of heart, “this book is a collection of well-analysed games featuring thematic, active piece sacrifices by White in the Open Sicilian,” the authors write. The sacrifices examined are those in which White does not recoup the material right away, and they include Nd5, Nxe6, Bxe6, Nf5 N(x)b5, and B(x)b5, with a final chapter devoted to Bd5, Rxf6, and miscellaneous sacrifices.

The contents are divided as follows:

- The Knight Sacrifice on d5
- The Knight Sacrifice on e6
- The Bishop Sacrifice on e6
- The Knight Sacrifice on f5
- The Knight Sacrifice on b5
- The Bishop Sacrifice on b5
- Miscellaneous Sacrifices

Each chapter is organized in the same manner. A brief introduction is provided wherein the authors discuss the primary themes involved in the specific sacrifice. This is then followed by a series of complete and well-annotated games illustrating the issue at hand. There are 109 games in total.

Lapshun is said to have selected all the games and is chiefly responsible for the analysis in chapters one through six, while Conticello wrote all the chapter introductions, as well as being primarily responsible for chapter seven. The authors note that their analysis was aided by Fritz and Rybka, but that they have credited published sources as much as possible, and indeed they have taken advantage of published sources “as much as possible.” A helpful Index of Variations is provided, so that the reader can readily find relevant games in the text for any given variation.

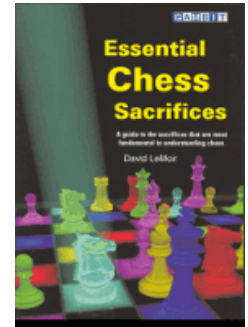
The instruction provided is quite specific. For example, in chapter six, in discussing the bishop sacrifice on b5, the authors write, “After playing Bxb5 axb5, White will normally recapture with his knight from d4, especially in the typical case of the black queen being posted on c7. White thus gains a second pawn and a tempo straightaway. In certain cases, when the pawn on d6 is insufficiently guarded, White will gain a third pawn with check, disturbing the enemy king and, if Black has castled long, achieving a decisive fork on the weakened point f7. Other times, White may follow up Ndx5 with the thrust e4-e5 which often ensures a trade of dark-squared bishops to enable a big check on d6.”

Lest the reader think that these piece sacrifices are only ventured by reckless club players, a look at the representative games shows otherwise. Names such as Karpov, Bronstein, Svidler, Fischer, Spassky, and many other luminaries appear on the white side of these sacrifices.

Let’s take a look at the commentary for Game 11, in which Tal offers both a bishop and a knight on d5:

Tal, Mihail (2625) - Mukhin, Mikhail A (2420)
URS-ch40 Baku (12), 04.12.1972

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1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4

Fischer's favourite weapon against the Najdorf.

6...e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.0-0 Bb7 9.Re1 Nbd7 10.Bg5 Nc5 11.Bd5!



Sacrificing a bishop and preparing the next trick after 11...b4.

11...b4

After 11...exd5 12.exd5+ Kd7 13.b4 Na4 14.Nxa4 bxa4 15.c4 Kc8 16.Qxa4 Qd7 17.Nc6 White's great activity gives him good winning chances.

12.Bxb7 Nxb7 13.Nd5



After this sacrifice Black is losing in all variations.

13...exd5

Entertaining is the line 13...a5 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.Nc6 Qc8 16.Nxf6 mate.

14.exd5+

Levy's 14.e5 dxe5 15.Rxe5+ Kd7 16.c4 also looks good for White.

14...Kd7 15.c3

15.Nc6 Qb6 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.Qh5 Nd8 18.Qf5+ Kc7 19.Nxd8 Rxd8 20.Qxf6 is another way to win material.

15...b3

Many years later after 15...Qa5 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.cxb4 Qxd5 18.Qa4+ Kc7 19.Rac1+ Nc5 20.bxc5 dxc5 21.Red1 Rg8 22.g3 Kb6 23.Nb3 Qh5 24.Rd7 Rc8 25.Qa5+ Kc6 26.Rcd1 Qe2 27.Nd4+! Black resigned in the game A. Areshchenko-S.Akbarinia, Kuala Lumpur 2002.

16.Qxb3 Nc5 17.Qc4 Qc8 18.Nc6 h6 19.Bxf6 gxf6 20.Re3

White follows the typical plan after sacrificing a knight on d5: place the remaining knight on c6, spoil Black's pawn structure on the kingside, double

rooks on the open file, and wait for the resignation.

20...Kc7 21.b4



Winning a piece.

21...Rg8 1-0

Of course, not all sacrifices will work this well, but under the proper circumstances, these thematic sacrifices are strong weapons in the hand of the white player who understands how to deal with the positions that follow.

7 Ways to Smash the Sicilian, written by international master Lapshun and U.S. national master Conticello, offers instruction that both white and black players should be familiar with before venturing into the Open Sicilian.

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