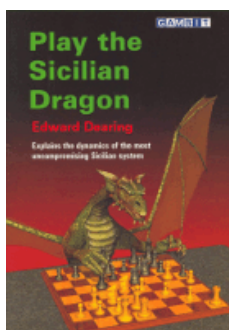




COLUMNISTS

The Openings Explained

Abby Marshall



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The Openings Explained

The Sicilian Dragon, Levenfish Attack [B71]

I will alternate between examining openings for White and openings for Black, so the topic for this column is the Levenfish Attack against the Sicilian Dragon.

Theory

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.f4



The Levenfish. To those who know that I love the King's Gambit, it may seem that I must push the f-pawn no matter what opening I play. The Levenfish avoids the craziness of the mainline Yugoslav while still being strong, especially against an unsuspecting opponent. The f-pawn lunge opens the f-file for the rook after White castles and prepares a quick e4-e5.

6...Bg7

This is most natural. It also can lead Black to some nasty traps. 6...Nc6 Black's safest. 7.Nxc6 (7.Nf3 This is what I always play, because it keeps all the pieces on the board and becomes just a normal game of chess. White will play Bd3, 0-0, Qe1-Qh4 and win. 7.Nxc6 is also possible.) 7...bxc6 8.e5 dxe5 (8...Nd7 9.Qf3 Bb7 10.Be3 dxe5 11.Bc4 White is much better. Compare the development and activity of the White and Black pieces.) 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 10.fxe5 Ng4 11.Bf4 Bg7 12.0-0-0+ Kc7 13.e6+ Be5 14.Bxe5+ Nxe5 15.exf7 Nxf7 16.Be2+/-.

7.e5!

It is important to not waste time. The variation becomes a bit sharp and tactical, so being familiar with the different lines will pay off.

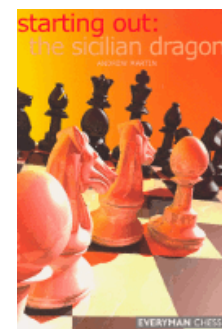
7...dxe5

7...Ng4 8.Bb5+ Kf8 (8...Bd7

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9.Qxg4 I've won more than one game this way.) 9.h3 Nh6 10.Be3 Nc6 11. exd6 Nxd4 12.Bxd4 Qxd6 13.Bxg7+ Kxg7 14.Qxd6 exd6 15.0-0-0+/- Black has weak pawns and is underdeveloped.; 7...Bg4 8.Bb5+ Nbd7 9.Qd3 Ng8 10. exd6 Qb6 11.Be3 Qxd6 12.h3 Be6 13.Nxe6 Qxe6 14.0-0-0+/- White has gorgeous development and threats against the misplaced black pieces.; 7... Nh5!? This move has some hidden resources for Black and I believe that it is the best shot. 8.Bb5+ (8.g4? Nxf4 9.Bxf4 dxe5 Black regains the piece and picks up a pawn or two.) 8...Bd7 9.Qe2! This key variation will be examined in the illustrative games. Again, development and misplaced black pieces give White an edge.

8.fxe5 Nfd7

8...Ng4 9.Bb5+ Nc6 The only move. (9...Kf8 10.Ne6+) 10.Nxc6 Qxd1+ 11. Nxd1 a6 12.Ba4 Bd7 So, Black will get back the piece. This technique is worth remembering (a6 and Bd7). 13.h3 Nh6 14.Nxe7 Bxa4 15.Nd5+/- White is up a pawn.

9.e6



9...Ne5

9...fxe6? 10.Nxe6 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 Qa5 12.Bf4! Qxc3+ 13.Kf2 Kf7 14.Qd5 Qf6 15.Nc7+- Kg7 16.Qg5 White has safeguarded the position and will win the rook on a8.

10.Bb5+ Nec6

10...Nbc6 11.exf7+ Kxf7 12.0-0+/-.

11.exf7+ Kf8

The following moves are pretty much forced if Black wants to regain the pawn.

12.Nxc6 Qxd1+ 13.Nxd1 Nxc6 14.Bc4 Nd4 15.Ne3 Be6 16.Bxe6 Nxe6 17.0-0 Bf6 18.Nd5 Kxf7 19.Be3+/-



Black has an isolated pawn on e7. White has a queenside pawn majority, which is often an advantage because the pawns can be pushed without endangering the king (not the case with a kingside majority) and the opposing king is far away from the eventual passer that will be created. White also has a great centralized knight. These factors give White a clear advantage.

Lessons Learned

1. The importance of a quick e4-e5
2. Understand the activity of White's pieces and the tactical tricks
3. Remember the 12.Bf4! idea after 9...fxe6. It will surprise your opponents.

Games

In the following game, I do not advocate the line that White tries with 9.e6. However, the game provides a good conceptual framework for understanding the position. As well, I do not just want to study openings; it is important to study chess, which is why I included this instructive game.

Schmidt Schaeffer (2314) - Lindemann (2322)

17th Open Brooklyn (9), 30.12.20000

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.f4 Bg7 7.e5 Nh5 8.Bb5+ Bd7



9.e6

I believe that 9.Qe2 is a better try, but the text shows the resources in both the white and black positions.

9...fxe6

9...Bxb5 10.exf7+ Kxf7 11.Ndxb5+/- White has fewer pawn islands and the light squares are loose.

10.Nxe6 Bxc3+

This bishop will be exchanged anyway, so Black saddles White with isolated double pawns on the c-file, creating a target.

11.bxc3 Qc8



11...Qa5 12.Bd2! Bxb5 13.c4 Qa4 14.cxb5+/-.

12.Bxd7+?!

This looks most natural, but allows a strong reply. 12.Qd3 keeps the position equal.

12...Nxd7



12...Kxd7!

13.Ng5 Qxc3+ 14.Bd2 Qc4 This is unclear, but I would prefer Black. Black is up a pawn and White cannot castle.

13.0-0 Nc5 14.Ng5

White does not want to trade pieces, as he will be worse in an endgame because of his weaker pawns.

14...Nf6 15.Be3 h6

Black kicks White's knight and gains more control over the e4-square.

16.Bd4 0-0

16...hgx5 17.fxg5 The knight is pinned to the rook on h8. This would open the position, not a good idea when the king is still in the center.

17.Nf3 Nd5

17...Nfe4 This seems more natural. White has weak light squares.

18.g3 Kh7 19.Nh4



This is also rather unclear, but I prefer White because of the attacking chances and the strong bishop.

19...Rf7??

Black fails to anticipate White's threat and in fact makes the threat even stronger in this position. An unfortunate end. 19...Qe6 20.Qf3 Qf7 21.Rae1 unclear. White has pressure, while Black is going to target the weak white queenside.

20.f5 g5 21.Qh5 1-0

Black resigned. Owv.

The next game is a good example of the line that I advocate with 9.Qe2.

Krnan,T (2306) - Brkic,A (2428)
WYb16 Halkidiki GRE (3), 25.10.2003

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.f4 Bg7 7.e5 Nh5 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.Qe2!



This is the strongest.

9...Bxb5

9...0-0? 10.g4! This is now a threat because the white queen covers e5, so Black's trick of Nxf4, dxe5 does not work. 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 e6 12.gxh5 Qh4 + 13.Qf2+-; 9...a6 10.Bc4 Nc6 11.Nxc6 Bxc6 12.0-0 I would prefer White here. Now g4 is a threat.

10.Ndxb5!?

10.Qxb5+ Qd7 11.Qxd7+ Kxd7 12.Nf3 is what I play.



Black has to face the threat of g4 and White is more coordinated than Black. The game move is also interesting.

10...dxe5 11.fxe5 a6 12.Na3 Qd4

12...e6?! 13.0-0 Qd4+ 14.Be3 Qxe5 15.Nc4 Qc7 16.Nb6 White wins. 16... Ra7 17.Nbd5 exd5 18.Bxa7+.

13.g4 Nf4

13...Bxe5!? 14.gxh5 Qh4+ 15.Kf1 Bxc3 16.bxc3 Nc6 This is a bit wild. Black only has a pawn for the piece, but this time it is White who suffers from poor pieces and a weak pawn structure.

14.Bxf4 Qxf4 15.Nd5 Qxe5 16.Qxe5 Bxe5 17.Nc4 Nc6



The bishop cannot move to a safe place that also protects the c7-square. Black will lose the exchange.

18.Nxe5 Nxe5 19.Nc7+ Kd7 20.Nxa8 Rxa8 21.0-0-0+ Ke6

Black has a pawn for the exchange and a passed pawn on e7. I don't think this is enough compensation, which makes it a risk-free endgame for White with winning chances.

22.Rd4

22.Rhe1 However, White managed to lose this same endgame. 22...f5 23.gxf5 + (23.Re2 White will win the knight, which would be the end of the game: 23...Kf6 24.g5+ Ke6 25.Rde1) 23...gxf5 24.Rd3 Kf6 25.Rh3 f4 26.Rxh7 Nf7 27.Re4 e5 28.Rxf7+? Not necessary. 28...Kxf7 29.Rxe5 Kf6 30.Re4 Kf5 31. Re7 b5 32.Kd2 Rh8 33.Rf7+ Ke4 34.Re7+ Kf5 35.Re2 f3 36.Rf2 Ke4 37.b3? Rd8+ 38.Ke1 Ke3 39.Rf1 b4 40.h4 Rd5 0-1, Lederman,L-Mittelman,G Beersheba 1997.

22...Rc8 23.Rhd1 a5

23...f5 24.gxf5+ gxf5 25.Rh4 White nets another pawn. 25...Rh8 26.Rh6+ Ng6 27.Rg1.

24.h3 f5 25.gxf5+ gxf5 26.Rh4



26...Rc4?

Black needed to keep his rook to support the kingside passers. This makes White's task easier. When you are down in material, trading is bad. For example, if you have nine pieces of chocolate and your friend has ten, it's no big deal because you both have lots of chocolate. But when you have one piece and your friend has two, then you might feel upset.

27.Rxc4 Nxc4 28.Rd4

Especially with pawns on both sides of the board, White's rook will dominate. The knight is a short-moving piece and can't cover both sides.

28...b5 29.a4 Ke5 30.Rd7 Ke6 31.Rc7 Kd6 32.Rc8 Nb6 33.Rd8+ Kc7 34.Rf8 1-0

Further Reading

- [Play the Sicilian Dragon](#) by Edward Dearing - "This is an awesome book that is a must-buy for anybody playing these lines with either Black or White." Carsten Hansen, Checkpoint, [April 2005](#)
- Chess Publishing.com is a good resource on openings.

Practioners

- Grigory Levenfish, a strong grandmaster from the past and the inventor of the opening.

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