



COLUMNISTS

The Openings Explained

Abby Marshall

[\[Find us on Facebook.\]](#)



CHESSTHEATRE
Play through and download
the games from
ChessCafe.com in the
[DGT Game Viewer](#).

Free Shipping!

**On all Orders
More than \$75!**



UPS GROUND Only.

The Openings Explained

Sicilian Kan Variation [B43]

My subject for this column is the Sicilian Kan Variation, which is also known as the Paulsen Variation. Many top players have employed it over the years and it is popular at club levels because of its flexibility. With the help of Jesus de la Villa's book [Dismantling the Sicilian](#) and Richard Palliser's notes on Chess Publishing, I give a solid, aggressive choice for white players to combat this system.

1.e4 c5

The idea of the Sicilian is to stake a claim in the center while avoiding the symmetry of 1...e5 systems.

2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6



[FEN "rnbqkbnr/1p1p1ppp/p3p3/8/3NP3/8/PPP2PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 5"]

This is the Kan Variation. Black hasn't yet developed a piece, but the position is flexible. The pawn advances ...a6 and ...e6 are common Sicilian moves that Black wants to make anyway. Black may play ...b5 and ...Bb7, or ...d5 at some point, and has a nice plan of development. The dark-squared bishop has a wide variety of squares available and Black is safe from attack since the e6-pawn is well defended by the f- and d-pawns.

5.Nc3

White develops simply. Now playing c4 is no longer an option, but White is eschewing positional considerations for quick piece play and an aggressive setup.

5.Bd3 is a move that I played for a while. The possibility of putting a pawn on c4 to pressure the center is still open and the bishop defends the e-pawn, which may come under attack after ...b5 and ...Bb7. However, I began to dislike this move because Black has so many possible responses.

5...Qc7

This is the main line, though Black has a wide variety of options, which makes the Kan attractive to black players.

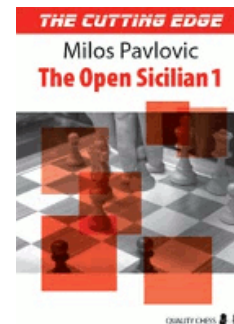
5...b5 is the most direct way to counter White's development scheme.

Purchases from our
[chess shop](#) help keep
ChessCafe.com freely
accessible:



[Sicilian Kan Variation](#)

by Valeri Lilov



[The Cutting Edge 1:](#)

[The Open Sicilian 1](#)

by Milos Pavlovic



[Sicilian Kan](#)

by Andrew Martin



[FEN "mbqkbnr/3p1ppp/p3p3/1p6/3NP3/2N5/PPP2PPP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq b6 0 6"]

The c3-knight may lose its place in the center and the defense of the e-pawn, and Black's c8-bishop is free to move. 6.Bd3 White continues developing. Notice that the bishop will usually come to d3 in the Kan. It looks weird because it is behind its own pawn, but the idea is to protect the e-pawn after the ...b4 and ...Bb7 setup. 6...Qb6 Again Black responds to White's development in the most direct way. The queen is useful here and a bishop on c5 may place pressure on the a7-f2 diagonal.

a) 6...Bb7 This logically follows up Black's idea. 7.0-0 Nc6 Black doesn't want to play ...b4 at this stage since the pawn would be a weakness and open up the c4-square for White's bishop. (7...Qc7 transposes to the main move 5...Qc7.) 8.Nxc6 White exchanges knights to avoid losing a tempo and to gain more control over the e5-square. 8...Bxc6 (8...dxc6 This recapture blocks Black's light-squared bishop, and if the pawn advances to c5, then the dark-squared bishop is blocked. And if it advances to c4 later, then the Black queenside pawns become vulnerable. 9.e5! White gains space and starts looking at the d6-square. 9...Qc7 10.Bf4 Black is getting cramped and the d3-bishop is sitting pretty as well.) 9.Re1 White sets up a common theme in the Sicilian: putting a white knight on d5 with a rook on e1 to disrupt the black position. 9...Qb8



[FEN "rq2kbnr/3p1ppp/p1b1p3/1p6/4P3/2NB4/PPP2PPP/R1BQR1K1 w kq - 0 10"]

Black wants to put pressure on the e5-square if White makes the push. (9...Qc7 10.Nd5 Now the idea comes with tempo. The effect of this knight will be seen in the main variation.; 9...Nf6 10.e5 Nd5 11.Ne4 The Black knight looks active, but it's blocking the light-squared bishop. The black bishop is also unsure of where to go and White's pieces are pointing toward an attack.) 10.a4 White first starts tickling Black's queenside pawns. This is the drawback of playing ...b5 very early. 10...b4 11.Nd5 The main purpose is simple: White wants an active knight, and the center of the board is an ideal spot. Black would be unhappy trading bishop for knight since the position would become open, favoring the side with the bishop-pair. 11...Nf6 With this move Black directly attacks the intruding knight. (11...Bd6 Black develops, makes a threat on h2, and prevents Bf4. 12.Qg4 White takes advantage of what Black left behind. 12...Bxh2+ 13.Kh1 Kf8 Black got the pawn with tempo; however, White has a scary initiative. 14.Nf4 Forces Black to allow White the bishop-pair. 14...Bxf4 15.Bxf4 e5 Black gives White no extra time. 16.Bg5 White is down a pawn. Black has a king in the center and little activity. It's complicated though; White easily has the edge in over-the-board play.) 12.Bf4 (12.Nxf6+ This isn't bad, but it diffuses White's plan of playing e5 and

Black has some play along the g-file and with bishops at c6 and d6 targeting the white king.) 12...Bd6 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 14.Nb6 White keeps the initiative and gains a nice outpost. 14...Rb8 15.a5 Qf4 16.Qf3+/- The game looked pretty tactical. Now it seems like White wants to calm things down. White has the positional edge because of the b6-knight and Black's tender dark squares, and doubled pawns on f2 and f3 are no big deal since they actually help protect e4 and render the c6-bishop useless.

b) 6...d6 7.a4 Almost always play a4 if Black has played ...b5 and ...d6. Black's dark-squared bishop is cut off from defending the pawn once it advances to b4. 7...b4 8.Na2 Nf6 9.0-0 (9.Nxb4 d5) 9...Bb7 10.Re1 a5 Black can defend the b-pawn, but now the black queenside is opened up. 11.c3



[FEN "rn1qkb1r/1b3ppp/3ppn2/p7/Pp1NP3/2PB4/NP3PPP/R1BQR1K1 b kq - 0 11"]

White has the queenside light squares and open files.

c) 6...Bc5 7.Nb3 Almost always play Nb3 after Bc5 to poke the bishop. If it goes to a7, then the kingside dark squares are a little weak. If it goes to e7, then the queenside squares have lost some support. 7...Be7 8.Qg4 Now White can get some play against the undeveloped kingside, so 6...Bc5 may have been premature. 8...g6 9.0-0 d6 10.e5! We've seen the e5-push is good to get in; here it works tactically. If 10...dxe5?, then 11.Qe4 Ra7 12.Qxe5

7.Nf3! It is uncommon to retreat the knight back to f3 in the Sicilian. Usually the knight will not return until f4 is played. However, in this case White wants to gain control over e5 with pieces, since Black is behind in development. This is another juncture where Black has a bit of choice in how to continue.

7...Qc7 The queen retreats to check up on e5 and to prevent White's threat of 8.a4, a5, and Na4.

a) 7...Nc6 8.0-0 Qb8 Black wants control over e5. (8...d6 is in the first illustrative game.) 9.e5 White can still play it, however. 9...Nge7 Black declines the sacrifice and will try to take advantage of the space that the e-pawn left behind. (9...Nxe5 10.Nxe5 Qxe5 11.Qf3 Qb8 12.Bf4 White is down a pawn so needs to act quickly. Keep the initiative! 12...Bb7 13.Be4 Bxe4 14.Nxe4 Qd8 15.a4 I like this move since it throws Black off a little. White has been making threats and now whips out a pawn move from edge of the board to loosen things up. Maybe the a1-rook will join the action. 15...b4 16.Be5 This is another nice move that keeps Black tied up. Black's bishop can't move nor can the knight go to f6. 16...h6 17.c4 Again, nice! White prepares to cramp Black even further and at the same time opens things up for the white rooks. The pawn deficit doesn't mean much.) 10.Re1 Bb7 11.Be4 White relocates the bishop to a more advantageous location. Black can't really gain control of d5. 11...Qc7 12.h4 White wants to gain space and impede the development of the Black kingside pawns, since it is likely Black will castle queenside. 12...h6 13.h5 0-0-0 14.Bd3 f6 (14...f5 15.Bxb5 axb5 16.Nxb5+-) 15.exf6 gxf6 16.a4+/-



[FEN "2kr1b1r/1bqpn3/p1n1pp1p/1p5P/P7/2NB1N2/1PP2PP1/R1BQR1K1 b - a3 0 16"]

It is not an easy position, since Black has the open g-file and all the center pawns. However, Black's development is poor and the position of the black king is not so great. White should focus on attacking and neutralizing Black's counterplay.

b) 7...Bb7 doesn't work out too well: 8.a4 b4 9.a5 Qc7 10.Na4 Qxa5? 11.Be3 Qc7 12.Nb6 Ra7 13.Nxd7.

c) 7...d6 8.a4 We have seen this idea before. 8...b4 9.a5 Qc7 10.Na4 Nd7 11.Be3; 8.0-0 Bb7 (8...Nc6 9.Re1 d6 10.Bf4 Ne5 Black commonly plays ...Ne5 since doubling the e-pawns is fine for Black; the pawns control important central squares. 11.a4 White didn't play this right after 9...d6, but it still gets played. 11...b4 12.Na2 Rb8 13.c3 White opens up files to take advantage of Black's underdevelopment and weak queenside. 13...bxc3 14.Nxc3 Rxb2 15.Rc1 Although the Kan doesn't have a reputation for the tactical violence of the Dragon or the Najdorf, White still seems to be making sacrifices and relying on initiative. Every White piece is developed and White has easy compensation.; 8...d6 9.a4 Here we go again. 9...b4 10.Na2 Nc6 11.Bd2 Qb7 12.Qe1 Rb8 13.c3 All the pieces attack or defend the b-pawn, and then White opens files. 13...bxc3 14.Bxc3 White takes back with a piece in order to have a queenside majority and highlight the weakness of the a6-pawn. 14...Nf6 15.b4 e5 16.b5+/-) 9.Re1 The same idea of getting e5 in reoccurs. 9...Bc5 This is more active than 9...Be7. (9...Be7 Black chooses to keep the bishop close to home and remain solid. 10.e5 f5 Black immediately gets some space, blunts the d3-bishop and gets control over e4. 11.Bf4 Nh6 12.a4 (12.Bxh6 gxxh6 This looks tempting, but now Black has the bishop-pair and the open g-file, which more than makes up for the ugly h-pawns.) 12...b4 13.Nb1 Now that the b-pawn is well-defended, White doesn't drop back to a2. 13...Nf7 14.h4 h6 15.h5 +/- White's gained some space and plans to relocate the knight to influence the e5-d6 complex.) 10.Qd2



[FEN "rn2k1nr/1bqp1ppp/p3p3/1pb5/4P3/2NB1N2/PPPP1PPP/R1B1R1K1 b kq - 0 10"]

The idea of going to g5 is sort of hard to combat. 10...Be7 This isn't a huge concession since 10.Qd2 did block the c1-bishop, so both sides are losing tempo.

a) 10...Nf6 11.Qg5 Bf8 (11...0-0 12.e5 This is not pretty.) 12.Bf4 White has all the play.

b) 10...Ne7 11.b4! The other idea of 10.Qd2. 11...Bxb4 12.Nxb5 axb5 13.

Qxb4 White has the bishop-pair and the b-pawn will fall shortly.; 11.b3 Nf6 12.Bb2 d6 (12...0-0 This looks dangerous because all of White's pieces want to go that way. Here's a variation that shows the dangers. 13.e5 Nd5 14.Nxd5 Bxd5 15.Ng5 h6?! 16.Nh7 Re8 17.Nf6+! gxf6 18.Qxh6+- f5 19.Bxf5! exf5 20.e6 f6 21.Qg6+ Kf8 22.Qf7#) 13.a4 b4 (13...bxa4 Exchanging on a4 is generally bad because it opens the file for the rook and the a6-pawn looks really weak. 14.Rxa4 Nbd7 15.Rc4 Qb8 16.Ba3 0-0 17.e5 Nd5 18.exd6 Bxd6 19.Bxd6 Qxd6 20.Rh4 That's a lot of attackers.) 14.Na2 Nc6 15.Nd4 (15.Nxb4? Nxb4 16.Qxb4 d5) 15...Nxd4 16.Bxd4 a5 17.Rac1 0-0 18.c3 bxc3 19.Nxc3



[FEN "r4rk1/1bq1bPPP/3ppn2/p7/P2BP3/1PNB4/3Q1PPP/2R1R1K1 b - - 0 19"]

As with the other times that Black has tried ...b4, ...a5, etc, White takes control with c3.

5...d6 6.Be3 Nf6 transposes to the Scheveningen Sicilian, which more commonly arises after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.Be3 a6.

5...Nc6 transposes to the Taimanov Sicilian: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 a6.

5...Ne7 This move, and 5...Bc5 and 5...Bb4 are basically side-lines. 6.Be3 Nec6 7.Nb3 d6 8.f4 b5 9.Bd3 Be7 10.0-0 Nb4 11.Be2 White employs a basic development scheme that gives an edge.

5...Bc5 6.Be3 d6 7.Qd2 Nf6 8.0-0-0 Nbd7 9.Nb3 This is probably not what Black envisions.

5...Bb4 6.Bd2 Nc6 7.Nxc6 bxc6 8.Bd3 d5 9.0-0 Nice and easy development.

6.Bd3

We have finally reached the main line, which branches out into 6...Nc6 or 6...Nf6. The bishop goes to d3 as usual, and Black has choices.

6...Nf6

6...g6 is not recommended since it creates dark-square holes. The pawn advances ...e6 and ...g6 are usually not played together. 7.f4 Bg7 8.Nf3 This setup is similar to the Levenfish Variation, which I discussed in my [November 2009](#) column. 8...d6 9.0-0 Nd7 10.Kh1 Ngf6 11.a4 Stop Black from gaining space with ...b5. 11...b6 12.Qe1 Bb7 13.Bd2 Black's setup is wrong because there are dark-square holes, a weak d6-pawn, and the fianchettoed g7-bishop isn't so scary since White is castled kingside.

6...b5 This advance is probably better on the fifth move. 7.0-0 Bb7 (7...Nf6 8.Qe2 d6 9.Bd2 Be7 10.a4 b4 11.Na2 a5 12.c3, etc.) 8.Qe2



[FEN "rn2kbnr/1bqp1ppp/p3p3/1p6/3NP3/2NB4/PPP1QPPP/R1B2RK1 b kq - 0 8"]

(8.a3 I look at this in the second illustrative game.) 8...Nf6 Black doesn't have much of an answer to e5. (8...Nc6 9.Nxc6 Bxc6 10.a4 b4 11.Nd5 The motif of Nd5 pops up again. Of course remember that a major piece has to be on the e-file for this to work, otherwise White just loses the knight to ...exd5. 11...Qb7 12.Bf4 Black really doesn't want to give White the two bishops. If Black doesn't do this, then White can continue opening lines with c3.; 8...Bc5 9.Nb3 Be7 10.e5 b4 This forces the knight to a bit of an awkward spot. 11.Nd1 Nc6 12.Bf4 g5 13.Bg3 h5 14.h3 h4 15.Bh2 g4 Black has begun a violent counterattack that may not so good. 16.Qxg4 Nxe5 17.Re1+/- Black's pawns on h4 and especially b4 are weak, and the king is still in the center.) 9.e5 Nd5 10.Nxd5 Bxd5 11.a4 b4 12.c4 This opens lines, since Black can't really let White gain this much space. 12...bxc3 13.bxc3 Qxc3 14.Bb2 White has sacked a pawn yet again in this variation. 14...Qa5 15.Rfc1 Nc6 16.Nb5 White uses tactical means to take advantage of the d5-bishop. 16...Qb6 17.Nc3 Bb3 18.Ne4 Be7 19.Bc3 Now things are good for White. The b3-bishop is out of play and the White pieces are beautifully placed. 19...0-0? 20.Nf6+ gxf6 21.Qg4+ Kh8 22.exf6 Rg8 23.Qh4+-.

6...Bd6 Black wants to stop White from castling and from playing f4 or e5. 7.Qd2 White threatens to get in f4 and also eyes g5. 7...Nc6 8.Nxc6 dxc6 9.Qg5 f6



[FEN "r1b1k1nr/1pq3pp/p1pbpp2/6Q1/4P3/2NB4/PPP2PPP/R1B1K2R w KQkq - 0 10"]

10.Qh5+ Qf7 11.Qe2 e5 The flavor of the opening is different than what we are used to. Black is the one who has gotten in ...e5. 12.0-0 Ne7 13.Rd1 Bc5 14.Na4 Ba7 15.Be3 White is a little better because of Black's holey dark squares on the queenside. White also has control over the d-file.

6...Nc6 7.Nxc6 White doesn't want to lose a tempo responding to the threatened knight, and White gains control over e5. 7...dxc6 This is the most natural recapture for Black. ...b5 is still a possibility, the queen is on a nice square, and the d-file can be used for both players. (7...bxc6 This is good for preparing a central push to d5, but the queen is on the wrong square for this. 8.0-0 Nf6 9.Qe2 d5 10.b3 White uses an alternative route to gain control over e5. White doesn't want to exchange on d5, and instead keeps the tension and a pawn in the center. If Black trades on e4, the c6 pawn becomes very weak. 10...Be7 11.Bb2 0-0 12.Na4 Bb7 13.e5 Nd7 14.c4+/- White has gained space in the center and on the queenside.; 7...Qxc6 This is a bit goofy. What is the queen doing? 8.0-0 b5 9.e5 The pawn can go to e5 without any support. 9...Bb7 10.Be4 Qc7 11.Qf3 White wants to ensure control over the e4 square.

11...Rb8 12.Bxb7 Qxb7 13.Ne4 The d-file and d-pawn are weak and will fall into White's hands.) 8.0-0 Nf6 (8...b5 Thematic but Black needs to develop some pieces. 9.e5!? It seems that if you want to play this as White, it would be good to practice positions in which you give up material for time. White is once again sacking a pawn for an initiative, with the justification that the extra development and time are enough. 9...Qxe5 10.Re1 Qc7 11.Ne4



[FEN "r1b1kbnr/2q2ppp/p1p1p3/1p6/4N3/3B4/PPP2PPP/R1BQR1K1 b kq - 0 11"]

Now it's a bit awkward for Black to develop the knight or the dark-squared bishop. 11...Bb7 (11...Be7 12.Qg4) 12.Qf3 Ne7 13.Bf4 e5 14.Bg3 Ng6 15.Ng5 There's a lot of pressure on e5 and Black's king in the center looks very vulnerable.) 9.f4 e5 Black can't let White get in e5 and steamroller through with f5. 10.Kh1 (Not 10.fxe5 Bc5+ 11.Kh1 Ng4 12.Qf3 0-0 Now it's Black who as an easy initiative.) 10...Bc5 (10...Bd6 11.f5 h5 The position is now of a closed nature. Black has covered all of the center squares so White will try to exploit the slight space advantage on the kingside. 12.Be3 b5 13.a4 b4 White tickles Black's queenside. 14.Nb1 Qe7 15.Nd2+/-) 11.Qe1 White wants to keep the position open if possible in order to attack the Black king. 11...Ng4 (11...b5 12.fxe5 The scenerio here is different than when we previously saw this move. White's queen is well placed on e1, covering the f2 square and the e-file. 12...Ng4 13.Bf4 Be6 14.h3 Nxe5 15.Nd5 This is a good trick to remember. 15...cxd5 16.exd5 Nxd3 17.cxd3 Qe7 18.dxe6 0-0 (18...Qxe6 19.Qc3; 18...fxe6 19.Bg5! Qxg5 20.Qxe6+ Kd8 21.Rf5 White wins.) 19.exf7+ White is up a clear pawn.) 12.Qg3 h5 Black wants to gain kingside space. 13.f5 Now the Black pieces are a bit in disarray. The h-pawn is frozen, the knight can't move. 13...Qe7 (13...Bd7 14.Bg5 White makes Black cut off the f6 square for the knight in order to castle queenside. 14...f6 15.Bh4 0-0-0 16.h3 Rh7 Black safegaurds the g7-pawn and relies on the h-file pin to regain the piece if White captures on g4. 17.Rab1!+/-; 13...b5 14.Be2) 14.Be2 Bd7 Black can't save the pawn. 15.Bxg4 hxg4 16.Qxg4 0-0-0 17.Qg3 Rh5 18.Be3 Rdh8 19.h3 White is well defended and up a pawn.

7.f4

This is aggressive. White delays castling to fight for the e5-square.

7...d6

This position can also arise via the Sicilian Scheveningen move order. Black has to be precise with development since White has a very aggressive setup.

7...b5 This is a bit ill-timed since White has a lot of development at this point. 8.Qe2 (8.a3 I look at this in the second illustrative game.) 8...Bb7 (8...b4 9.Na4 Nc6 10.Nb3 Be7 11.Be3 Rb8 12.c4 Black's early pawn pushes have left holes on the queenside that White's lead in development can quickly exploit. If Black trades pawns, then the c-file is for White. Otherwise, White will march ahead to c5 and have a grip on the dark squares.) 9.Bd2 b4 (9...Bc5 10.Nb3 Be7 11.e5 Nd5 12.Ne4 White gained more time and space attacking Black's pieces.; 9...d6 10.a4 b4 11.Na2 e5 Black has to play actively or else simply be down a pawn. 12.Nb3 Nc6 13.Nxb4 Nxb4 14.Bxb4 exf4 15.Bd2 Here 9...d6 was not a very good move.; 9...Nc6 10.Nf3 White has already played f4 so the knight retreat isn't a big deal. 10...Nb4 11.0-0 Nxd3 12.cxd3) 10.Na4 d5 11.e5 Ne4 12.Be3 Of course White preserves the bishop-pair. 12...Nd7 13.0-0 Ndc5 (13...Bc6 14.Nxc6 Qxc6 15.Bxe4 dxe4 16.b3 Be7 17.Rac1)

14.Nxc5 Bxc5 15.Nb3 Bxe3+ 16.Qxe3 0-0 17.a3 bxa3 18.Rxa3 After all the exchanges, White has the better pawns. 18...Rab8



[FEN "1r3rk1/1bq2ppp/p3p3/3pP3/4nP2/RN1BQ3/1PP3PP/5RK1 w - - 0 19"]

(18...f6 Attacking the pawn chain at its head is a good idea, but White can begin a forcing sequence. 19.Bxe4 dxe4 20.Nc5 Bd5 21.c4! Rac8 (21...Bxc4 22.Rc1 Bd5 23.Nxe6) 22.cxd5 Qxc5 23.Qxc5 Rxc5 24.dxe6 fxe5 25.f5 The protected e-pawn is too strong. White wins.) 19.Nd4 White makes the knight more active and moves toward the potentially vulnerable black kingside. (19. Bxa6 Bxa6 20.Rxa6 Qxc2) 19...Qb6 20.Rb3 Qc5 21.Ra1 g6 22.h4 h5 23.Ra4 Qe7 24.Bxe4 dxe4 25.Rab4 White ties down the black pieces. Black can't take on h4. 25...Qc7 26.f5! exf5 27.Nxf5 Qxe5 Black is in a bad position and tries one last thing. (27...gxf5 28.Qg5+ Kh8 29.Qh6+ Kg8 30.Rg3#) 28.Rxb7 Rxb7 29.Nh6+ Kh7 30.Rxb7 White is up a piece.

7...Bb4 8.0-0 Bc5 (8...Bxc3 9.bxc3 Qxc3 10.Nb3 0-0 11.e5 Nd5 12.Bd2 Black's dreadful development is going to get slammed by White's attack.) 9. Nce2 Nc6 10.c3 d6 11.Kh1 White basically gained time.

7...Bc5 8.Nb3 Ba7 9.e5 Nd5 10.Nxd5 exd5 11.Qg4 White has an easy attack.

7...Nc6 8.Nxc6 White isn't going to waste time. 8...Qxc6 9.Qe2 Bb4 10.Bd2 d6 11.0-0-0 Qc7 12.Kb1 Ba5 13.Rhe1 Bd7 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 Bxc3 16.Bxc3 Nd5 17.Bd2 Black played some weird opening moves and White came out on top with the bishop-pair and a target: the black king.

8.Qf3

White intends to castle queenside.

8...b5

8...Nbd7 9.g4 Nc5 10.g5 Nfd7 11.Bd2 Involve all your pieces in the attack. Black has allowed White to press ahead. 11...b5 12.b4!? This is a radical way to stop Black's queenside play. 12...Nxd3+ (12...Na4 13.Nxa4 bxa4 14.0-0 Black's pawns are terrible and Black has no play.) 13.cxd3 Bb7 14.0-0 g6 15. Rac1 Qd8 16.f5 exf5 17.Qf2+/- Oh my, everything is about to become open and Black's position is a mess.

8...Be7 9.g4 Nc6 (9...b5 10.g5 Nfd7 11.Be3 Black has played conservatively and White has a big space advantage.) 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.g5 Nd7 12.Be3 Rb8 13.0-0-0 Qb7 14.b3 Qb4 15.Bd2 Black does not really have queenside play against White's king.; 8...Nc6 9.Nxc6 bxc6 10.0-0 Bb7 11.Qg3+/-.

9.g4 Bb7

9...b4 10.Nce2 d5 11.e5 Nfd7 12.Be3 Bb7 13.Qg3 Nc5 14.0-0-0 Nbd7 15. Kb1 0-0-0 16.Rc1



[FEN "2kr1b1r/1bqn1ppp/p3p3/2npP3/1p1N1PP1/3BB1Q1/PPP1N2P/1KR4R b - - 0 16"]

White has a space advantage and a clear plan, or at least an idea.

9...Nc6 10.Nxc6 Qxc6 11.g5 Nd7 12.Be3 Bb7 13.a3 Nc5 14.f5 0-0-0 15.0-0-0 White has all the space.

10.g5 Nfd7 11.h4 Nc6 12.Be3 Nc5 13.0-0-0 Nb4

13...Nxd4 14.Bxd4 b4 15.Ne2 Rc8 16.Kb1 d5 17.e5 is complicated.

14.Kb1 Nbx d3 15.cxd3 b4 16.Nce2



[FEN "r3kb1r/1bq2ppp/p2pp3/2n3P1/1p1NPP1P/3PBQ2/PP2N3/1K1R3R b kq - 0 16"]

If Black plays the main line, it will be difficult for White to prove an advantage. White has good play here and good practical chances for the win.

The first game shows the ideas after the typical ...d6 advance and the thematic sacrifice of a pawn. It is also instructive in terms of tactics and planning.

Gormally, Daniel (2509) – Ciuksyte, Dagne (2426)

Liverpool Open, 08.09.2007

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 b5 6.Bd3 Qb6 7.Nf3 Nc6 8.0-0 d6 9.a4

Here is the idea that we saw in the theory section.

9...b4

Basically forced.

10.a5!

A thematic pawn sacrifice to gain time. Black's knight also becomes misplaced.

10...Nxa5

Otherwise the b6-square fall into White's control.

11.Be3 Qc7 12.Na4 Rb8

White justifies the sacrifice by reasoning that the gain in time and queenside squares outweighs the pawn.

13.Nb6

Palliser suggests that 13.c3!? is better. This opens even more lines. 13...b3 (13...bxc3 14.Rc1! Ne7 15.Rxc3 Nec6 16.Qc2 White has lots of pressure and the a5-knight is way out of play.) 14.Nb6 White exchanges this knight for the one on a5 to pressure the now weak a6-pawn. 14...Rxb6 15.Rxa5 Rb8 16.Qa1



[FEN "1rb1kbnr/2q2ppp/p2pp3/R7/4P3/1pPBBN2/1P3PPP/Q4RK1 b k - 0 16"]

16...Nf6 17.Bxa6! Bd7 (17...Nxe4? 18.Bb5+ Ke7 19.Qa4! d5 20.Bc6 Black can't untangle.) 18.Bd3 Be7 19.Ra7 Rb7 20.Ra8+ Rb8 21.Qa7 Qxa7 22.Rxa7 This occurred in Dzhumaev-Fominyh, Tashkent 2007. White has regained the pawn and has control of the seventh rank. The pawn on b3 will likely fall shortly.

13...Rxb6 14.Rxa5 Rb8 15.Qa1

White will easily win the a-pawn and restore material equality. However, White is more active and Black's b-pawn is a target.

15...Nf6 16.Bxa6 Bd7

16...Bxa6 17.Rxa6 Nxe4 18.Ra7 Rb7 19.Ra8+ Ke7 20.Qa4 Black has kept the pawn, but the kingside development is all wrong.

17.Bd3 Be7 18.Ra7 Rb7 19.Ra8+ Rb8 20.Qa7

White figures that he will have an advantage in the endgame with the weak black pawn and the open file.

20...Qxa7 21.Rxa7



[FEN "1r2k2r/R2bbppp/3ppn2/8/1p2P3/3BBN2/1PP2PPP/5RK1 b k - 0 21"]

21...e5!

Black shows good presence of mind to put up strong defense. The two

weaknesses of the seventh rank and the weak b-pawn give White a clear advantage.

21...0-0?! 22.e5 dxe5 23.Nxe5 This position further adds to White's edge.

22.Bg5

This fights for the d5-square.

Palliser gives the following plan as perhaps being stronger. 22.Rfa1 0-0 23. Nd2!? This keeps pieces on the board, but since White has better coordination it could be better.

22...Be6 23.Rfa1 h6 24.Bxf6 Bxf6 25.R1a6!

White cannot allow Black to play ...d5 at a favorable moment, since then the position would be rather open and favor the bishop-pair. However, by forcing it now, White is in a better position to counter it since Black is missing the h8-rook.

25...d5 26.Ra5 dxe4

26...Rd8 27.Kf1 Sooner or later Black will have to take on e4.

27.Bxe4 0-0 28.b3

White does not have to rush.

28...Rfd8 29.h3 Rd1+ 30.Kh2 g6 31.R5a6!?



[FEN "1r4k1/R4p2/R3bbpp/4p3/1p2B3/1P3N1P/2P2PPK/3r4 b - - 0 31"]

Nice! White maintains the tension. 31.Nxe5 Bd8! 32.Ra1 Rxa1 33.Rxa1 Bc7 34.f4 g5 The bishop-pair give Black chances to defend. This shows the weakness of White's plan to control d5.

31...Bd8!

Black plays well and tries for counterplay now that White has abandoned the pawn-grabbing strategy.

32.Nxe5 Bb6 33.Re7 Bxf2??

Black cracks under time pressure. 33...Bc5! leads to an unclear game. 34. Nxc6!? (34.Rex6 fxe6 35.Bxc6 Rd6 defends) 34...Bxe7 35.Nxe7+ Kg7 36. Nc6 Rb5 37.Bd3 Rb7 38.f4 White is doing pretty well here, too, but at least Black has more chances.

34.Rax6!

This tactical blow leads to the win.

34...fxe6 35.Bxc6 Bg3+

What else to do? 35...Kf8 36.Rf7+ Ke8 37.Rxf2+ Kd8 38.Nc6+; 35...Rbd8 36.

Bh7+ Kf8 37.Ng6#.

36.Kxg3 Kf8 37.Rf7+ Kg8 38.Bh7+ 1-0

The next game is very interesting and shows the typical ideas, even though it does not follow our theory exactly.

Bologan, Victor (2665) – Caruana, Fabiano (2620)
European Championship, Plovdiv (10), 01.05.2008

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.f4!? b5 8.a3

I recommend 8.Qe2, but I chose this game to illustrate what to do in certain positions, even if they do not arise from our exact move order. The text move is not bad, and it leads to positions I like to examine.

8...d6

Now playing 9.a4 would just be a wasted tempo.

8...Bb7 would be more typical. White could play 9.Qe2 now and attack more conservatively.

9.g4!?

Palliser says, "Typically Bologan. As those who have studied his excellent [best games collection](#) will be aware, the Moldovan GM specializes in sharp Sicilian struggles with opposite-side castling. I don't think that White has an objective advantage here, but I suspect that Bologan was already feeling the more comfortable." We have seen this move in other lines of the Kan, so it is important to understand the position.

9...h6

Black delays development and tries to hold White up.

10.Qe2 Nbd7 11.Bd2

We have seen a similar position in the theory section. Now we will discover what happens when Black attempts to stop White's extension plans.

11...g6?

White's pawn storm has been halted, but Black has weaknesses on the dark squares.

11...Be7 Black should develop. 12.0-0-0 Nc5 13.Kb1 Bb7 14.h4 d5!? 15.e5 Nfe4 This is complicated with chances for both sides.

12.0-0-0 Bg7

Black has his desired set-up, but White is well-placed to open the position.

13.g5!

White justifies the ensuing sacrifices with the fact that Black has weaknesses and a king in the center.

13...hxg5 14.e5!



[FEN "r1b1k2r/2qn1pb1/p2ppnp1/1p2P1p1/3N1P2/P1NB4/1PPBQ2P/2KR3R b kq - 0 14"]

White wants to open everything up.

14...dxe5 15.Bxg6?

The machine proves that this is not best. 15.Nxe6! fxe6 16.Bxg6+ Kd8 17. fxe6 White has only a pawn for the piece, but also open files and available squares. Plus, a direct threat that forces Black to spend more time. 17...Nd5 18. Rhf1 White has a great deal of pressure and mobile kingside pawns. 18...Rf8 (18...Nf4 Black wants to close off the position. 19.Bxf4 exf4 20.Qxe6 Qe5 21. Qc6 Rb8 22.Rfe1 Qxg5 fails to 23.h4! Qxh4 24.Nd5; 18...Bb7 19.Rf7 Bf8 20. Qg4) 19.Bf7 N7b6 20.Qh5! 21.Qg6 is coming. Black would not find it easy to deal with this position over-the-board.

15...exd4 16.Qxe6+ Kd8 17.Qxf7

This is aesthetically pleasing for White.

17...Nf8

Palliser says that the critical test is 17...Nc5! 18.fxe6 Qxf7 19.Bxf7 Ng4 20. Nd5 This looks quite scary, so Black needs to react strongly. 20...Nf2! 21.Ba5 + Kd7 22.Nb6+ Ke7 23.Bd5 Rb8 24.Rde1+ Kd6 25.Rhf1 Rf8 White saved all of his pieces for the time being, though he is still down one. Black may be a little better since he is now active.

18.fxe6

White can't afford to use a tempo to avoid the trade of queens.

18...Qxf7 19.Bxf7 dxc3 20.Bxc3+ Ke7



[FEN "r1b2n1r/4kBb1/p4n2/1p4P1/8/P1B5/1PP4P/2KR3R w - - 0 21"]

21.Bb3!?

White keeps the play mischievous. 22.Rhe1 is a big threat and Black doesn't have time to move the knight.

21.gxf6+ Bxf6 22.Bd5 is the obvious continuation. 22...Bxc3! (22...Rb8?! 23. Bb4+ Kd7 24.Rhe1 Black keeps the piece, but maybe not his own king.) 23.

Bxa8 Be5 White has won some material back. Now he has a rook and two pawns for a bishop and a knight, which is usually good for the side with the rook, especially in the endgame.

21...Be6

21...Ne6!? This is the other move that blocks the nasty b3-bishop from the powerful diagonal. 22.gxf6+ Bxf6 23.Bb4+ Kf7 24.Rd6! Rd8 25.Rc6 White has a lot of play for the piece. Palliser gives a possible variation: 25...a5!? 26. Bxa5 Rxa5 27.Re1 Kg6 28.Bxe6 Ra6 29.Rxc8 Rxe6 30.Rxe6 Rxc8 This should be a pretty easy draw.

22.Rhe1?!

White falters. 22.Rhf1! N6d7 (22...Ne8?? 23.Bb4+; while 22...Ne4 23.Bxg7 Rg8 24.Bf6+ Nxf6 25.gxf6+ Kf7 26.Bxe6+ Nxe6 27.Rd7+ Kg6 28.f7 should be OK for White; 22...Nh5 23.Bb4+ Ke8 24.Rde1) 23.Bxg7 One piece down. 23...Rh5 24.Bxe6 Nxe6 25.g6! Nxg7 26.Rf7+ Ke6! 27.Rdxd7 This is pretty good for White.

22...Ne8!?

Black works to keep the advantage. 22...Re8 23.gxf6+ Bxf6 24.Bxf6+ Kxf6 25.Rd6; for example, 25...a5 26.Bxe6 Nxe6 27.Ra6 a4 28.c4! bxc4 29.Rxa4 With too much simplification, the extra piece becomes less significant.

23.Bb4+ Kf7 24.Bxe6+ Nxe6 25.Rd7+ Kg6 26.Rxe6+ Kf5 27.Re2!

White holds on to the h-pawn and threatens the king with checks, but White is running out of pieces.

27...Rc8

27...Kxg5!? 28.Rg2+ Kf5 29.Rf2+ Kg4 30.Rg2+=.

28.Kb1



[FEN "2r1n2r/3R2b1/p7/1p3kP1/1B6/P7/1PP1R2P/1K6 b - - 0 28"]

This is an odd move to me. White is down a piece, so the onus is on him to prove something, but he seems to be playing it cool and waiting for Black to make a mistake.

28...Rc7?

This loses the knight.

Taking the pawn may have been the best solution. 28...Kxg5! when 29.Ra7 (or 29.Rxe8 Rhxe8 30.Rxg7+ Kh5 31.Rg2 This looks equal.) 29...Kf4 30. Rxa6 White gets another pawn and it's complicated.

29.Rd8 Kxg5 30.Rdxe8 Rxe8 31.Rxe8 Rf7 32.Re6 Rf1+ 33.Ka2 Rf2 34. Kb3 1-0

If the position was complicated when White was minus a piece, then now it

seems that White has an extra piece. White will win by picking off the queenside pawns.

Lessons Learned

- Black's setup ensures that for the time being, White can't carry out blitz attacks on the e6-square, since the d-pawn has remained on d7. Also, the b8-knight has delayed development so that a quick ...b5 and ...Bb7 places immediate pressure on White's center.
- On ...d6, play a4, because the queenside pawns are now vulnerable, since the f8-bishop is blocked off. On ...Bc5, play Nb3 to put the question to the bishop.
- Sacrificing the pawn for the initiative is a common motif, as is the knight jump to d5.

Practitioners

- Louis Paulsen. Although the variation bears his name, this variation was introduced by Anderssen decades earlier.
- Savielly Tartakower. He was a Polish grandmaster who was known for his opening contributions and wit.
- Mark Taimanov. He is a Russian grandmaster and also an accomplished concert pianist. Chess and music do go together!
- Mikhail Tal. He is one of my favorite players. The Latvian grandmaster was known for his tactics and wildly complicated positions.
- Lev Polugaevsky. This Soviet grandmaster was a frequent world championship contender and an important theoretician.
- Lajos Portisch. He is a Hungarian grandmaster known for his positional play.

Further Reading

- [*Dismantling the Sicilian*](#) by Jesus de la Villa. I believe I recommended this book before, and with good reason.
- [*Play the Sicilian Kan*](#) by Johann Hellsten

© 2010 ChessCafe.com. All Rights Reserved.

Comment on this month's column via our [Contact Page](#)! Pertinent responses will be posted below daily.

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE
CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[ChessCafe Archives\]](#)
[\[ChessCafe Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#)
[\[Contact ChessCafe.com\]](#)

© 2010 BrainGamz, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
"ChessCafe.com®" is a registered trademark of BrainGamz, Inc.