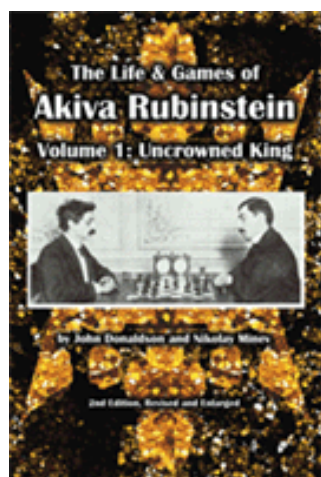




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



Lessons from Art Buchwald

Recently Lubosh Kavalek presented in his column in *The Washington Post* a game that started with the moves 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Bg5 e6. After these standard moves of the Rauzer Sicilian, White played the rather unusual 7.Bb5.

Kavalek commented: Developing the bishops like Art Buchwald used to do against me. The late humorist would later exchange them for my knights, exclaiming: “No more forks!”

As always the humorist had a sensible point, but nevertheless his method seems extremely primitive. Didn’t Buchwald know that the bishop-pair is considered a valuable asset and could he not count that an optimally placed bishop covers thirteen squares and a knight only eight?

Of course things are not so simple as I just presented them. Kavalek indicated that even the great Alekhine had used the ‘primitive’ move 7.Bb5 in a blindfold simul in Paris in 1925. Later he did it again in a serious game, Alekhine - Foltys, Margate 1937.

In these games, after a later a7-a6 by Black, Alekhine withdrew his bishop to e2, losing a tempo. His idea seems to have been that the move 7...Bd7 which he had forced this way, might have negative value for Black. Interesting. In several Scheveningen set-ups this is indeed the case, as proven by two Karpov-Kasparov games in which Black played Bc8-d7-c8. In Alekhine’s games with 7.Bb5, Black’s 7...Bd7 is almost certainly a useful move, but it speaks for Alekhine’s inventiveness that he considered the idea that this natural developing move might in fact be a loss of a tempo.

I found that several strong players had experimented with the Buchwald move 7.Bb5, among them Bobby Fischer in a simul in Solingen in 1970. Contrary to the Buchwald method he left one of Black’s knights on the board, which turned out badly, for later he fell victim to a nasty knight fork and had to resign.

An opening in which the Buchwald method plays an important role is the Chigorin Defense, 1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nc6. In several important variations Black plays his bishops to b4 and g4, intending to exchange them for the knights. Chigorin’s opening never became very popular, but even at the highest level there have always been devotees. One of them is Alexander Morozevich, who together with Vladimir Barsky wrote a fine book, *The Chigorin Defence According to Morozevich*, published by New in Chess this year.

It is not often that a top players shares his private opening analyses with the general public. Morozevich writes that he could do it because he doesn’t intend to use this defense in the near future. He hasn’t lost his faith, but he is a man who always likes to explore new territories.

Glancing through the book I was confronted with my prejudices. Looking at a diagram I thought: “Isn’t it ugly? Can Black really play this way?” But Morozevich shows with concrete variations that it can be done. He doesn’t like vague generalizations and writes:

“One can argue for a long time about various abstract matters, but we have a board, and we have pieces: if you think that this or that move is bad, then show me why.”

Though Morozevich has practiced the Chigorin Defense in serious tournaments, many of the examples he gives are blitz games, some of them against top class players such as Karpov, Kramnik and a certain Raffael, who according to Morozevich may be Kasparov. Blitz games count for less than serious tournament games, but when two top players blitz an opening variation that they have really studied, we can learn something from them.

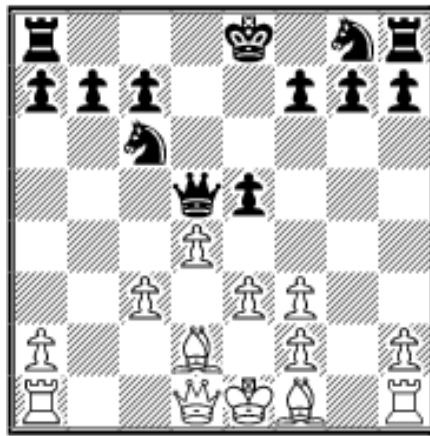
If it is true that Raffael was Kasparov, their blitz games in 2006 on the playchess.com server amounted to a collision of principles, for already long ago Kasparov had voiced his distrust of the Chigorin Defense.

Kasparov – Smyslov

Candidates Final

Vilnius (11), 1984 [D07]

1.d2-d4 d7-d5 2.Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3.c2-c4 Bc8-g4 4.c4xd5 Bg4xf3 5.g2xf3 Qd8xd5 6.e2-e3 e7-e5 7.Nb1-c3 Bf8-b4 8.Bc1-d2 Bb4xc3 9.b2xc3



The opening according to Art Buchwald. Black has exchanged his bishops and he has given White a potentially very strong pawn center. On the other hand, White's kingside is slightly weakened and Black has free piece play. Morozevich and Barsky quote from Kasparov's notes to this game: "Tigran Petrosian once joked: 'If your opponent wants to play the Dutch Defence you shouldn't prevent him!' There is a mass of openings for which this joke is justified, and the Chigorin Defence is one of them."

9...Qd5-d6

Morozevich has come to the conclusion that 9...Nf6 is the best move.

10.Ra1-b1 b7-b6 11.f3-f4 e5xf4 12.e3-e4 Ng8-e7 13.Qd1-f3 0-0

And here he finds the immediate 13...Qa3, with the threat 14...Nxd4, much stronger.

14.Bd2xf4 Qd6 a3 15.Bf1 e2 f7 f5 16.0-0 f5xe4

Even now, after 16...Ng6 White's advantage would be small, as Kasparov indicated in his notes.

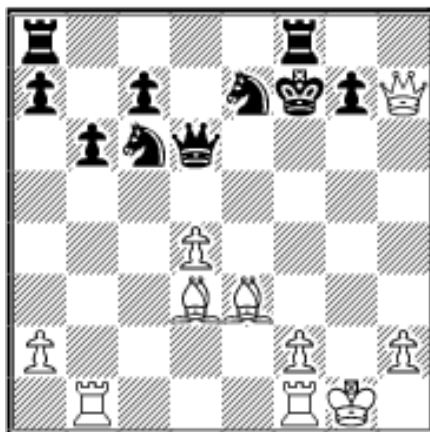
17.Qf3xe4 Qa3xc3 18.Bf4-e3

Now White has a tremendous attack.

18...Qc3-a3 19.Be2-d3 Qa3-d6

This cannot be the solution, but as Kasparov already showed, other moves couldn't save Black either.

20.Qe4xh7+ Kg8-f7



Here many moves would lead to a win for White. The one chosen by Kasparov is not the simplest, but in accordance with his style. Another piece is brought into the attack.

21.Rb1-b5 Nc6xd4 22.Qh7-e4

But this is wrong. After 22.Bxd4 Qxd4 23.Rg5, White would have a winning attack, as 23...Rh8 fails to 24.Bc4+.

22...Ra8-d8

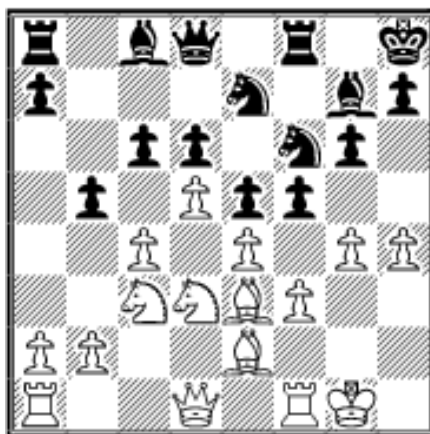
Kasparov had been seduced by the attractive variation 22...Nxb5? 23.Bc4+ Kf6 24.Qh4+ Ke5 25.f4+ Ke4 26.f5+ Kxe3 27.Qf2+ Ke4 28.Re1 mate. After Smyslov's sensible and strong actual move, Kasparov felt forced to take the draw.

23.Be3xd4 Qd6xd4 24.Rb5-f5+ Ne7xf5 25.Qe4xf5+ Kf7-g8 26.Qf5-h7+ Kg8-f7 ½-½

At first sight this game is not a recommendation for the Chigorin Defense, as White quickly gained a decisive advantage which seemed to flow naturally from the general characteristics of the position – two bishops and a strong pawn center. On the other hand Morozevich shows us several ways to improve on Black's play.

For many players it will be attractive and useful to study an opening outside the mainstream of theory, guided by a top-class practitioner. But as for me, I fear that I would never get the feel of it. It's not only the bishop-pair, which I have always cherished. In many variations Black exchanges both his d-pawn and his e-pawn, leaving him without center pawns. Morozevich writes that he prefers open piece play in the center rather than blocked pawn chains. For me it is the opposite. When it comes to the center I have a *horror vacui* and I wouldn't know what to do with my free pieces.

Here is a diagram (not from an actual game, but this may come) that appeals to me.



A position worthy of Hans Kmoch's famous book *Pawn Power in Chess*. If you like this diagram, I think it will be hard to like the Chigorin Defense.



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