



C O L U M N I S T S

Over the Horizons

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Vadim Zviagintsev
Photo: Dagobert Kohlmeier, Berlin

A Knight on the Edge: Part One

In some lines of the Closed Sicilian, Nb1-a3 has become a standard move; for instance, after 1 e4 c5 2 g3 or 2 d3, White often avoids Nc3 and prefers Na3-c2. When Lawrence Day published his *The Big Clamp – An Anti-Sicilian System* (1984), this idea gained some popularity. But we had to wait until 2005 to see the more radical **1 e4 c5 2 Na3** scoring points, even against top grandmasters. Here I'll mainly discuss the four games by Vadim Zviagintsev that have made **2 Na3** the Anti-Sicilian fashion of the day.

Not everyone has greeted the novelty with applause. Lubomir Kavalek wrote the biting comment in the *Washington Post* [\[10\]](#): “Zviagintsev’s bizarre knight move to the edge against the Sicilian (1.e4 c5 2.Na3?!) was an act of desperation against the well-known theoretician Alexander Khalifman. Somehow it worked out and Zviagintsev won.”

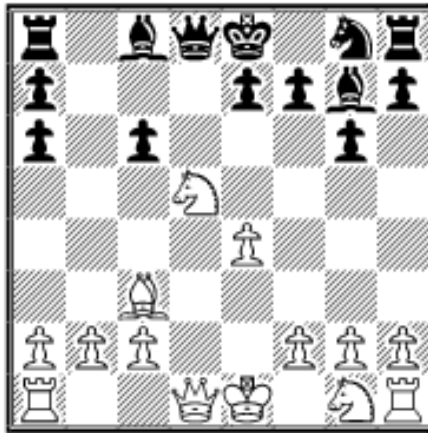
Quite the opposite could be true. During his preparation, Zviagintsev might have spotted a real weakness of his opponent. In his books, [\[4\]](#) and [\[5\]](#) Alexander Khalifman suggested his negative opinion about a

line involving an early Nb8-a6. Black's setup may be dubious, but Khalifman's "refutation" (Bxa6, d4-d5) doesn't look too convincing either:

1 e4 c6 2 d4 Na6 (De Bruycker Defense) 3 Nc3

(a) 3...Nc7 4 d5! Nf6 (4...d6 5 Nf3 e5, *S.B.*) 5 Nf3 d6 6 dxc6 bxc6 7 e5 Nfd5 8 Ne4 Bf5 9 Ng3 Bg6 10 Bd3 e6 11 0-0 Be7 12 exd6 Qxd6 13 Bxg6 hxg6 14 Qe2 Nf4 15 Qe5+/- Khalifman [4].

(b) 3...g6 4 Bxa6! bxa6 5 d5! Bg7 6 dxc6 Qa5 7 Bd2! (7 cxd7+, *S.B.*) dxc6 8 Nd5 Qd8 9 Bc3



9...e5 (9...Kf8 10 Bxg7+ Kxg7 11 Nc3 Qb6, *S.B.*) 10 Ne3 Qe7 11 Nc4 Be6 12 Qd6! Qxd6 13 Nxd6 Ke7 14 Nb7!+/-, Khalifman [4]. And [5] follows a similar strategy: **1 e4 Na6 2 Nc3 c6 3 Bxa6 bxa6 4 Nf3 g6 5 0-0 Bg7 6 d4 Nf6** (6...d6, *S.B.*) 7 e5 Nd5 8 Ne4 0-0 9 c4 Nb6 10 b3 d5 11 exd6 exd6 12 Ba3+/-, Khalifman [5]. In such a position, most players will probably follow Siegbert Tarrasch and avoid taking the knight

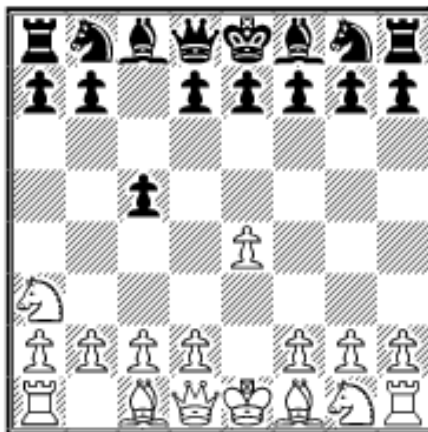
on a6, and give Black the two bishops and an open b-file. Doesn't this wild treatment of Na6 indicate that Khalifman is prejudiced against knights on the edge? If so, then Zviagintsev was well advised to try 2 Na3.

Vadim Zviagintsev (2659) – Alexander Khalifman (2653)

Moscow 2005, Russian Superfinal (2)

Sicilian Defense [B20]

1 e4 c5 2 Na3!



Lawrence Day [9]: "Freakers. I've played eleven different moves in this position, but never thought once of 2 Na3." Khalifman laughed, when his opponent played 2 Na3. But, as several commentators wrote after the game, the move isn't as silly as it looks. Against 2...e6, White can continue with 3 c3, and if 2...d5 3 exd5, the knight on a3 is clearly more useful than a weakening pawn move (2 f4 d5! or 2 g3 d5!). We will return to these alternatives. Black's next move is a

natural continuation, although it gets a “?!” from Sakaev.

2...Nc6 3 Bb5

A kind of Rossolimo Variation (2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5). With his knight still on g1, however, White keeps the additional idea of f2-f4, gaining valuable space on the kingside. This will be the appropriate reaction, when Black plays 3...g6 (next game).

Regular visitors of Tim Krabbé’s [website](#) will already know the Nemeth Gambit, a useful weapon, even against the strongest PC programs: 3 d4 cxd4 4 Bc4 Nf6 5 h3 Nxe4 6 Bxf7+ Kxf7 7 Qh5+ Ke6 8 Qg4+ Kd5 9 c4+ dxc3 10 Be3, with excellent chances for White. The concept was developed by Eduard Nemeth from Germany. It works – at least against those creatures that are suffering from the horizon effect. For more on the gambit see [\[3\]](#).

3...Qc7

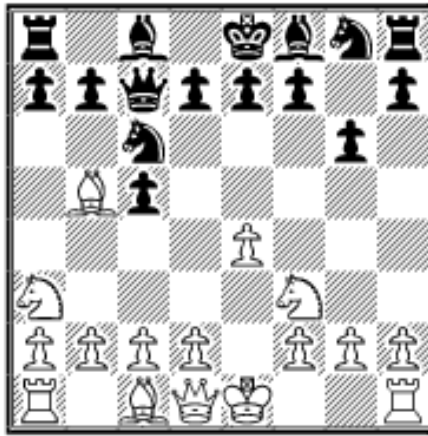
Prevents f2-f4 and allows recapturing with the queen after a later Bxc6.

Since Bb5 is already protected, 3...Nd4 is harmless: 4 Nf3 Nxb5 5 Nxb5 Nf6 6 e5 trans-poses to a complicated variation (normally arising after 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Nd4 5 e5 Nxb5 6 Nxb5) – 6...Nd5 7 Ng5! f6 8 Qf3. White has the better chances. White can also play 4 Ne2+ =, which is equally fine and avoids a theoretical dispute. Because the knight is on a3 (and not on c3), there even is a third choice: 4 Ba4 g6 5 c3 Nc6 6 Nf3 Bg7 7 d4 (1-0, 32), Svidler – Korotylev, Moscow 2006 (Superblitz tournament), although in this case 4...Qa5 5 c3 b5 seems more critical.

4 Nf3

4 d3 e6 5 f4 d5 6 Nf3 is a bit slow: 6...c4! 7 exd5 Bxa3 8 dxc6 Qa5+ 9 Qd2 Qxb5 10 bxa3 Ne7 =. The text move is more straightforward, heading for a quick d2-d4.

4...g6



Jeroen Bosch [13] suggests 4...a6 5 Bxc6 Qxc6 (“risky, but perhaps more in keeping with his third move”). After 6 0-0 d6 7 d4 Bg4 (not 7...cxd4 8 Nxd4 Qxe4? 9 Nc4+/-) 8 d5+/, White has a comfortable position. In Bissieres (2206) – Sighirdjian (2182), Asnieres sur Neine, May 2006 (French Team Championship), White preferred 6 d3 d6 7 h3 g6 8 0-0 Bg7 9 Re1 e5 10 Bg5 f6 11 Be3

Nh6 12 c3 0-0 13 d4 Nf7 14 dxc5 dxc5 (14...Be6?!) 15 Qd5 Qxd5 16 exd5 Rd8? (16...b6=) 17 Nc4 Bf8 18 Nb6 Rb8 19 Nd2 Bf5 20 c4 Nd6 21 a4 Nc8 22 Nxc8 Rbxc8 23 a5 Bd7 24 f4 Re8 25 fxe5 Rxe5 26 Bf4 Rxe1+ 27 Rxe1 Kf7 28 Re3 Rd8 (28...g5!? 29 Bg3 Re8) 29 Rb3 Bc8 30 Rb6 Rd7? (30...g5 31 Be3 Rd6) 31 Ne4+- g5? 1-0.

5 c3

“!” Sergej Shipov [11]. Nevertheless, Sakaev’s mention [12] of 5 0-0 Bg7 6 Re1 seems more precise; for example, 6...a6 7 Bf1+/. (7 Bxc6 dxc6 8 d3 also comes into consideration, hoping to exploit the weakness on c5).

5...a6 6 Bxc6 Qxc6 7 0-0! Bg7

Finally transposing to a theoretical situation: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 g6 4 0-0 Bg7 5 c3 Qb6 6 Na3 a6 7 Bxc6 Qxc6. In this move order, White has a strong alternative in 7 Ba4! (Black’s Qb6 is in the way of b7-b5). But, as we will see, in the game Khalifman still has to overcome some opening problems. Instead of the last move, taking the sacrificed e4-pawn would run into serious difficulties after 7...Qxe4 8 d4! (8 Re1 Qd5 9 d4, Sakaev [12]) 8...cxd4 9 Nc4, *Shakhmatny Nedelya*.

8 d4 d6?

Because of Shipov’s strong idea at move ten, 8...cxd4! 9 cxd4= deserves attention:

(a) 9...Qxe4 10 Nc4 (10 Re1 Qd5 11 Bg5 h6 12 Bh4 d6 13 Rc1 b5 14 Rc7 g5 15 Bg3 Bf6 16 Nb1! Kf8 17 Nc3 Qf5 18 d5 Qg6 19 Nd4 h5 20 Ne4 Kargin – Bogomolov, Novokuznetsk 2001 [11]) 10...Qc6 11 Nfe5!, *Shakhmatny Nedelya*. However, I fail to see an advantage for White after 11...Bxe5 12 Nxe5 Qd5.

(b) 9...d5 (or perhaps 9...b5) leads to balanced positions. In two games, Boudre – Apicella, Strasbourg 1992, and Van Riesen – Bokelbrink,

Pinneberg 1997, Black scored two points.

9 d5

9 Re1 b5 10 Bf4 Bg4 11 d5 Qc8 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 f6 14 Qe3 g5 15 Bg3 h5 16 b4 g4 17 h4 Nh6 18 Rac1 Nf7 19 c4 Bh6 20 Bf4 Bxf4 21 Qxf4 Ne5 22 Qe3 cxb4 23 cxb5 Qd7 24 Nc4 Nxc4 25 Rxc4 Qxb5 26 Rec1 Kf7 Heiduczek – Wild, Deutschland 1998 (0-1, 44).

9...Qc7



10 h3?

10 Bf4! is an improvement by Shipov [\[11\]](#) to prevent the development of Black's knight: 10...Nf6 11 e5 Nh5 12 exd6 exd6 13 Re1+ Kf8 14 Bg5!, and Black is in serious trouble. Other possibilities: 10...Bg4 11 Re1, Shipov [\[11\]](#); 10...b5 11 Re1 f6 12 c4 or 10...f5 11 exf5 Bxf5 12 Nh4 are also advantageous for White.

10...Nf6 11 Bf4 0-0 12 Re1 b5! 13 Qd2

Sakaev [\[12\]](#) analyzes the complicated 13 e5 dxe5 (or 13...Nh5 14 Bh2 Bh6, *S.B.*) 14 Nxe5 Qb7 (14...Qb6 15 Nc6 e6 16 Ne7+ Kh8 17 Nxc8 Raxc8 18 dxe6 fxe6 19 Be5+= [\[12\]](#)):

(a) 15 Nc6 e6 16 Bd6 Nxd5 17 Bxf8 Kxf8 18 Ne5 Qc7 with compensation, Sakaev [\[12\]](#).

(b) 15 c4! bxc4 16 Naxc4 Nxd5! 17 Na5 Qb4 18 Nac6 Qxf4 19 Qxd5 Be6 20 Nxe7+ Kh8 21 Qxc5. White has won a pawn, but Black's bishops are strong.

13...Bb7 14 Rad1 Rfe8 15 c4

15 Nc2 e6 16 e5 Nxd5 17 exd6 Qd7 18 Bg3 f6 unclear, Sakaev [\[12\]](#).

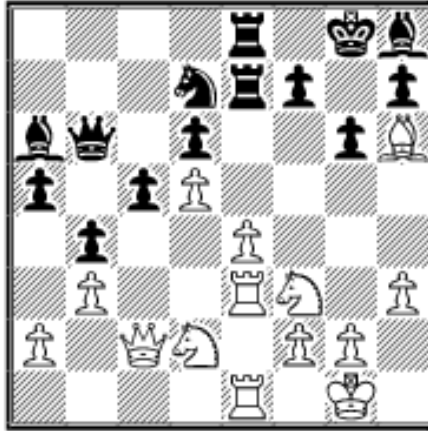
15...Qb6! 16 Bh6 Bh8! 17 b3 e6 18 Ng5

18 Rc1 exd5 19 exd5 Ne4 20 Qd3 f5 21 Re2 Qa5 22 Nb1 comes into consideration.

18...exd5 19 cxd5

19 exd5 bxc4 20 Nxc4 Qc7 21 Qf4 Rxe1+ 22 Rxe1 Rd8, Shipov [\[11\]](#),
23 Ne4 Nxd5 24 Qg3=.

**19...Re7! 20 Re3 Rae8 21 Rde1 a5 22 Nb1 b4 23 Qc2! Nd7 24 Nd2
Ba6! 25 Ngf3!**



25...Ne5?

Here Khalifman spoils his best chance in the whole game: 25...Bc3 followed by f6=+, Sakaev [\[12\]](#), and 25...Bd4 26 Nxd4 cxd4=+ was equally advantageous for Black.

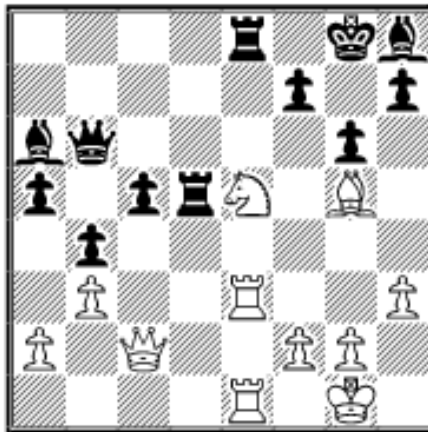
26 Bg5 Nxf3+

26...Rc7!=, Shipov [\[11\]](#).

27 Nxf3 Rd7?

The text move shows the strength of White's breakthrough e4-e5, as does Malcolm Pein's line 27...Rc7 28 e5 c4? 29 exd6! Rxe3 30 Rxe3 Qxd6 31 Re8+ Kg7 32 Qd2+- [\[6\]](#). The correct defense was 27...f6 28 Bf4 Bb5=.

28 e5! dxe5 29 Nxe5 Rxd5



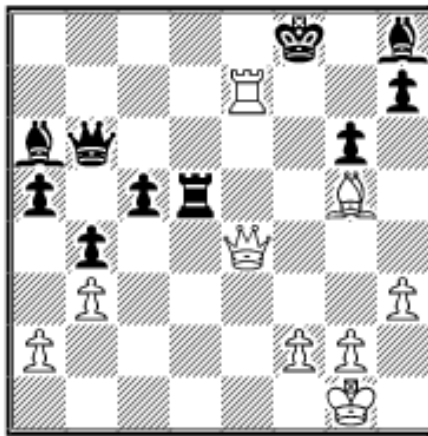
30 Nxf7!

The splendid justification of White's 28th move.

30...Rxe3 31 Rxe3?

At first sight, 31 Nh6+! Kf8 32 Bxe3 Bb7 seems okay for Black (33 Qe4 Rd4; 33 Qc4 Qd6), but White wins almost by force: 33 Qe2! Bc3 (33...Re5 34 Qc4) 34 Bxc5+ Qxc5 35 Qe8+ Kg7 36 Re7+ Kxh6 37 Qf8+ Bg7 38 Qxg7+ Kg5 39 Re3 Bc8 40 h4+ Kg4 41 Qxh7 Qd6 42 Rg3+ Kf4 43 Rxg6 Qc5 44 Rg3+- .

31...Kxf7 32 Re7+ Kf8 (32...Kg8) 33 Qe4



33...Rd1+?

Overlooking White's 37th move, perhaps in time trouble. Correct was 33...Qd6 34 Bh6+ Bg7 35 Bxg7+ Kg8 36 f4 Bb5 37 Bh6 Bc6, and White has only a repetition of moves (38 Rg7+ Kh8 39 Re7 Kg8).

34 Kh2 Qd6+ 35 f4 Bf6 36 Bh6+ Kg8 37 Qa8+! Black resigned (37...Qd8 38 Re8+)

Vadim Zviagintsev (2670) – Ruslan Ponomarev (2738)

Sochi, April 20th, 2006 (Russian Premier League)

Sicilian Defense [B20]

1 e4 c5 2 Na3! Nc6 3 Bb5 g6

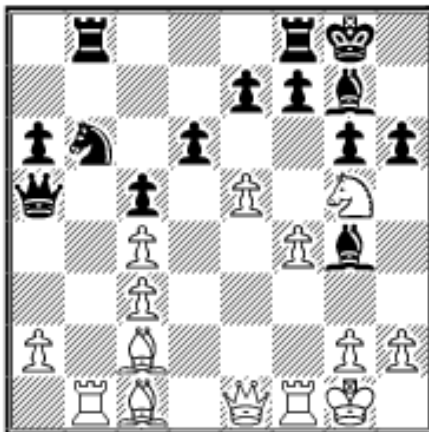
The game above demonstrated that 3...Qc7 4 Nf3 g6 5 c3 is slightly better for White. Here Black's queen remains on d8, White could now transpose to familiar lines of the Rossolimo Variation: 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5. But Zviagintsev follows his own plans, trying to profit from the fact that his knight is still on g1. His setup resembles a Grand Prix Attack, but with White's bishop on b5 instead of c4.

4 c3

In the earlier game Vadim Zviagintsev (2659) – A. Motylev (2632), Moscow 2005, Russian Superfinal (9), White chose the weaker 4 Bxc6 bxc6 5 d3 Bg7 6 f4 d5 7 e5 f6 8 Qe2 fxe5=+ 9 fxe5 Nh6 10 Nf3 Bg4 11 0-0 0-0 12 c3 Qc7 13 Nc2 Nf5 14 Bf4 Nd4 (even stronger: 14...Nh4! -/+) 15 Ncxd4 (15 cxd4) Rxf4 16 h3 cxd4 17 hxg4 dxc3 18 bxc3 Rxc3 19 Nd2 Rg3 20 Rae1 e6 21 Nb3 c5 (21...Bh6! 22 d4 Rxc3, when the counter 23 Qg4 Re8 24 Rf6 is strongly met by 24...Be3+ 25. Kh1 Qg7 resp. 25 Kf1 c5!-+) 22 Qf2 Rxd3 23 Nxc5 Rxc3 24 Nxe6 Qb6 25 Qxb6 axb6 26 Nxg7 Kxg7 27 Rf2 Re8 28 e6 Re7 29 Rd2 Rc5 30 a4 h5 31 Kh2 Kf6 32 Rf2+ Kg7 33 Rd2 Ra5 34 Rd4 Rc5? (34...g5! 35 Rb4 Kf6 36 Rf1+ Kg6) 35 Rd2 Kf6 ½-½.

4...Bg7 5 d3 Nf6 6 f4 0-0 7 Nf3 d6

In Savchenko (2568) – Belov (2599), Sochi 2006, Black varied with 7...Na5 8 0-0 a6 9 Ba4 b5 10 Bc2 d6 11 Qe1 Rb8 12 Qh4 b4 13 Nc4? (13 Nb1 Qc7 14. f5!+=) 13...bxc3 14 bxc3 Nxc4 15 dxc4 Qa5 16 Qe1 Nd7 (16...Be6 17 e5 Nd7 18 Bd3 -/+) 17 e5 (Bd2) Nb6 18 Rb1 Bg4 (18...Be6 19 Rb3 Bxc4 20 Ra3 -/+) 19 Ng5 (19 f5!) h6



20 Nxf7 Rxf7? (20...Kxf7 21 f5 Bxf5 22 g4 Bxe5 23 gxf5 g5-/+) 21 Bxg6 Qxa2 22 exd6 exd6 23 f5? (23 Qh4 Be2 24 Rb2 Qxc4 25 Re1+=) 23...Rf6?? (23...Qxc4 24 Bxf7+ Kxf7=+) 24 Rb2+- Qa5 (24...Qa4 25 Qe4) 25 h3 Rbf8? 26 hxg4 Nxc4 27 Rb7 Ne5 28 g5 hxg5 29 Bxg5 Nxg6 (29...Qa4 30 Bxf6+-) 30 Bxf6 Rxf6 31 fxg6 Rxg6 32 Qh4 Bh6 33 Rf8+!, Black resigned.

8 0-0 Bd7 9 Qe1 e6 10 Qh4



A familiar attacking scheme. White intends to proceed with his g-pawn. There is no immediate threat, but Black cautiously prefers to nip the attack in the bud.

10...Nh5 11 g4 Qxh4 12 Nxh4 Bf6

Or 12...Nf6 13 g5 Ne8 14 f5 gxf5 15 exf5 f6 16 g6+.

13 Nxg6 hxg6 14 gxh5 gxh5 15

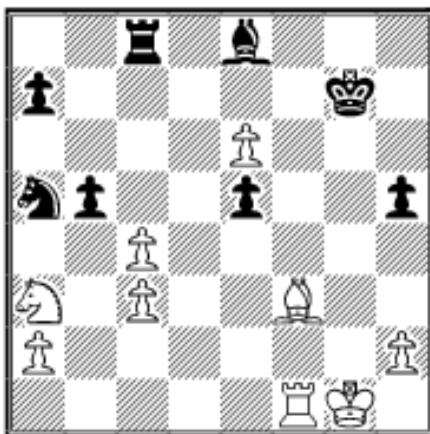
Ba4 d5?

15...Kh7 16 Be3 Rg8+ 17 Kh1 Be7= was necessary. After White's reply, the h5-pawn becomes a lasting problem.

16 Bd1!+= c4 17 e5 Be7 18 dxc4 d4 19 Nc2

19 Rf3 dxc3 20 Rxc3+= is also fine; for example, 20...h4 (20...f6?!) 21 Be3 f6 22 Rd3 Rad8 23 Bg4 Bc8 24 Rxd8 Rxd8 25 exf6 Bxf6 and White has an extra pawn.

19...dxc3 20 bxc3 Na5 (20...f6) 21 Ba3! Bxa3 22 Nxa3 Rac8 23 Be2 f6 24 Rad1 Be8 25 f5 fxe5 26 fxe6 Rxf1+ 27 Rxf1 Kg7 28 Bf3 b5



29 cxb5?

Vadim Zviagintsev overlooks a spectacular combination: 29 Nxb5!! Nxc4 30 Bb7 Rc5 (30...Rb8 31 Nc7! Rxb7 32 Nxe8+ Kg6 33 h4! or 31...Bg6 32 Ba6 Nd2 33 Rf2 Ne4 34 Rg2 Rb1+ 35 Bf1 Kf6 36 e7 Nd6 37 Nd5+ etc.) 31 a4 a6 32 Bxa6 Rc6 33 Rf3!. This strange position is probably won for White.

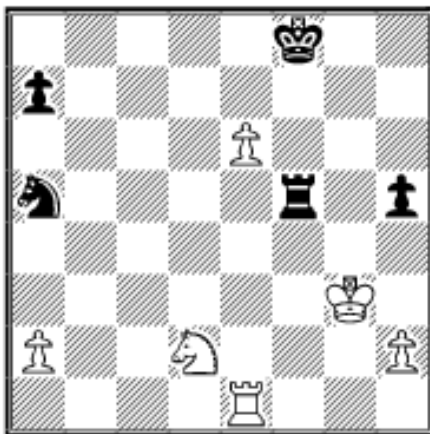
29...Rxc3 30 Nb1 Rc5 31 Be2

31 Be4!? is an interesting alternative, although Black may be able to hold: 31...Rxb5 32 Nc3 Rb6 33 e7 Rf6 34 Rb1 Rb6 35 Rd1 Re6 36 Rd8 Txe7 37 Nd5 Nb7 38 Rb8 Rd7 39 Rxe8 Nd6 40 Rxe5 Nxe4 41 Rxh5 Rb7 and the ending should be a draw.

31...e4 32 Kf2 e3+?

The following line was more or less forced and would have secured the draw: 32...Rc2 33 a4 Nc4 34 Rd1 h4 35 Rd4 e3+ 36 Kf1 Rc1+ 37 Kg2 (37 Rd1? Rxb1) Rc2 38 Nc3 Nb2 39 Rg4+ Kf6 40 Nd5+ Kxe6 41 Nf4+ Kd6=.

33 Kxe3 Re5+ 34 Kf3 Bxb5 35 Bxb5 Rxb5 36 Re1 Rf5+ 37 Kg3 Kf8 38 Nd2



38...Ke7

38...Rg5+? 39 Kf4 Rg2 40 Ne4 Ke7 41 Nd6 Nc6 42 Nf5+ Kf8 43 Rd1 with strong threats.

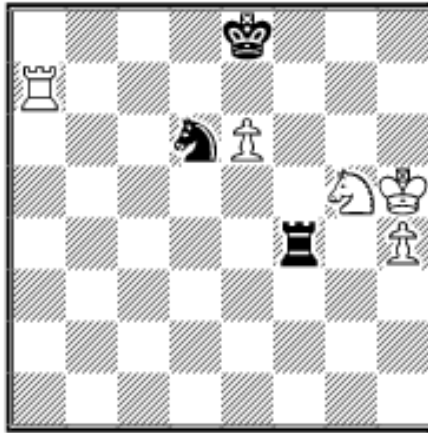
39 Nf3 Rd5 40 Kh4 Nc4 41 Ng5 Rd2 42 Rc1 Nd6 43 h3 Ne8 44 Kxh5 Rxa2 45 Kg6 Ra4 46 Rb1 Nd6 47 Rb8 Rf4

Another solution: 47...Rh4 48 Ra8 Nb5 49 Rc8 Nd4 50 Rc7+ Ke8 51 Rxa7 Nxe6!=.

48 Ra8 Rf6+ 49 Kh5 Nb5 50 h4 Rf4 51 Rh8 Nd6?

51...Nd4 was an easy draw: 52 Rh7+ Ke8 53 Rxa7 Nxe6.

52 Rh7+ Ke8 53 Rxa7



53...Nf5?

His last chance was 53...Rf6! 54 Kg4 Nf5 55 Ra3 (55 h5 Nd4 followed by 56...Nxe6=) 55...Nd4 56 Re3 Nf5, and it isn't clear whether White can win.

54 Nh7 Nd4 55 Kg6 Nxe6

55...Rg4+ 56 Kf6 Nxe6 57 h5! and wins, e. g. 57...Nc5 58 Ra8+ Kd7

59 h6 Rf4+ 60 Kg6 Ke7 61 Ra7+ Nd7 62 Kg5 Rf1 63 Rxd7+!+- .

56 Nf6+ Kd8 57 Ra8+ Kc7 58 Nd5+ Black resigned

Vadim Zviagintsev (2659) – Alexei Dreev (2694)

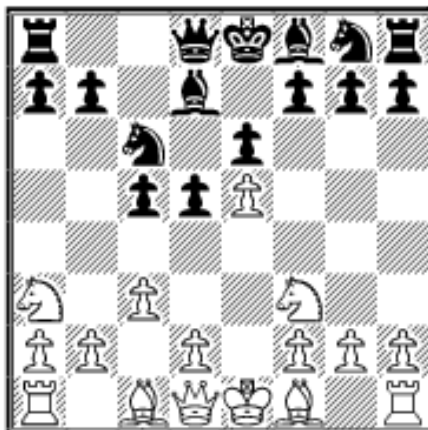
Moscow 2005, Russian Superfinal (7)

Sicilian Defense [B20]

1 e4 c5 2 Na3!

Some annotators liked the flexibility of the move 2 Na3. By the way, there is an even more flexible move: 2 a4, which was invented and played by the American theoretician Hugh E. Myers. His latest book, *Chess Explorer* (Davenport 2002) gives two games: Myers – Kooi, Decatur 1972 (1-0, 31) and Myers – Mehrdad Pedram, Coralville 1995 (1-0, 43). One of the points is 2...Nc6 3 Bb5, and White keeps the option of playing Ne2 instead of Nf3. And if 2...d5, you could even try Myers' sharp idea 3 d4, the Albin Counter Gambit with an extra move for White (a4).

2...e6 3 c3 d5 4 e5 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7



The game has transposed into a French structure, identical to one reached by Ljubojevic via a different move order: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c3 d5 4 e5 Nc6 5 Na3 Bd7. In the Advanced French, the maneuver Na3-c2 is not unusual, so it is clear that Dreev hasn't found a refutation of 2 Na3 either. On the other side, what does White have?

6 g3?!

White can delay d2-d4, and Zviagintsev uses this moment for an original development. But this is perhaps the wrong time for originality (see next note). Therefore, I'd recommend following Ljubojevic: 6 Nc2 f6 7 d4 fxe5 8 dxe5 Qc7 9 Bf4 Nge7 10 Ne3 Ng6 (10...h6) 11 Bg3 0-0-0 (Qb6) 12 Ng5 Qb6 (12...Ncxe5 13 Nf7) 13 Nf7 Qxb2 14 Qc1 Qxc1+ 15 Rxc1 c4 (Ljubojevic – Ribli, Belfort 1988) 16 Be2! Bc5 17 Bh5 b5 18 Nc2 a5 19 a3+/-.

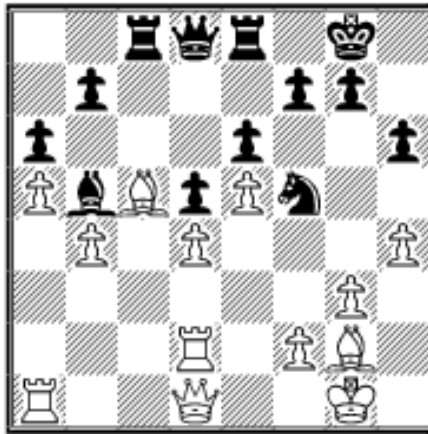
6...a6

Jeroen Bosch's 6...f6! [\[13\]](#) is the critical reply. I don't think that White can get an advantage, but he should be able to equalize: 7 Qe2 fxe5 8 Nxe5 Qb6! 9 Bg2 Nxe5 10 Qxe5 Nf6 11 0-0 c4 12 Nc2 Bc5 13 b3 cxb3 14 Rb1 0-0 15 Rxb3 Qa6 16 Nb4=.

7 Nc2 Rc8 8 Bg2 Qc7 9 Qe2 c4 10 0-0 Bc5 11 Nce1! Na5 (11...Nge7=) 12 d4 cxd3 13 Nxd3 Bb6 14 Nd4 Ne7 15 Bg5 Ng6 16 h4 h6 17 Bc1 Ne7 18 Rd1 Bxd4 19 cxd4 Nf5 20 Ne1 Bb5

20...Qc4 21 Qg4 Nc6 22 Bf1 (22 Nf3 Qe2 23 Re1 Qc2) 22...Qb4 23 Nf3 0-0, about =, *Shakhmatny Nedelya*.

21 Qg4 Nc6 22 Rd2 Qa5 23 Nc2 Nb4? (23...0-0!=+, *Shakhmatny Nedelya*) 24 Nxb4 Qxb4 25 Qd1 0-0 26 b3 Qa5 27 a4 Bd7 28 Ba3 Rfe8 29 Bc5 Qd8 30 a5 Bb5 31 b4



For the rest of the game, White obviously holds the advantage, but Black manages to hold the draw, mainly thanks to the opposite-colored bishops. It is difficult to find clear improvements. Perhaps 31 Rc2 Rc6 32 Qd2+= comes into consideration.

31...f6 32 Qe1 Qd7 33 Bh3 Qf7! 34 Ra3 h5 35 Rf3 Qg6 36 Qb1

Maybe 36 Bxf5 exf5 37 e6 was more dangerous. But in any case Black's blockade is very hard to break.

36...fxe5 37 Bxf5 exf5 38 Qxf5 Qxf5 39 Rxf5 exd4 40 Rxd4 g6 41 Rg5 Re6 42 g4 hxg4 43 Rdxg4 Kh7 44 h5 Be8 45 hxg6+ Rxc6 46 Rh5+ Kg8 47 Rxc6+ Bxc6 48 Rxd5 Be4 49 Re5 Bc6 50 f4 Re8 51 Rg5+ Kf7 52 Kf2 Re4 53 Rf5+ Kg6 54 Rg5+ Kf7 55 Rf5+ 1/2-1/2

When we heard about Zviagintsev's first success against Khalifman, we

all had our doubts whether he would dare to repeat 2 Na3 against another super-GM. But he did it again, and again ... His games inspire the creativity of many chess players, so it seems justified to name the variation after him. And after Sven-Åke Kronberg, who invented 2 Na3 in 1985 (cf. my next column). The Kronberg-Zviagintsev Variation has specific goals: in some lines the knight protects a bishop on b5, sometimes it goes to c4 or c2. Yet there is more – at the same time 2 Na3 is a “high-class waiting move.” The situations on the board look familiar – but no, suddenly appears this strange knight on a3. Only a little detail, but it changes everything. Chess is a young game.

Sources:

- [1] R. T. Durkin: *Nightmare-1. A New Chess Opening*, n. d., (USA 1960?)
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