



COLUMNISTS

Over the Horizons

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CHESSTHEATRE

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Back to the Ice Age: Myers' Defense

In 2006, I discussed defenses involving an early g7-g5: Myers' Defense 1 c4 g5 and a related set-up against Réti's Opening, 1 Nf3 h6 followed by g5. The coarse advance of Black's g-pawn still belongs to the stepchildren of theory, in spite of the valuable games and analyses by the American theoretician **Hugh Myers** (1930-2008). The ironic expression "Ice Age Openings," used in my two earlier columns [\[1\]](#) and [\[2\]](#), reflects the negative attitude of the majority. Lately **Maurits Wind** has studied the concept in two detailed articles (fifteen resp. ten pages long) in *Kaissiber* ([\[3\]](#), [\[4\]](#)) and found that both systems are playable. Instead of the original lines, however, in Wind's opinion deferred versions are often more flexible and lead to better results. One of these lines, 1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 d6 3 Nf3 g5!?, was introduced by him in 1978.



*Hugh Myers (right) playing against Curt Brasker
Source: Chess Review 1954*

The next game allows me to return to the Myers Defence. It is not free of errors, but who can avoid mistakes in an unfamiliar position. Concerning the recent flood of repertoire books advocating the Catalan Opening, or other "closed" openings, often involving an early Nf3, unorthodox systems like Myers' g7-g5 deserve a revival.

Nicolas Rousset (France) writes: "Your ChessCafe article 'The Impoliteness of Ice Age Openings' in [January 2006](#), about the Myers' Defense, made a great impression on me. After a lot of experimental blitz games on the Internet, I finally tried the thing in a serious game over-the-board. It was played between two modestly rated players, but I think it may interest you – probably you are not spammed every day with Myers' Defense related e-mails!"

Jonathan Etrog (2189) – Nicolas Rousset (2132)

Puteaux (French Cup), (3) January 2010

Myers' Defense [A10]

Comments: *Nicolas Rousset*

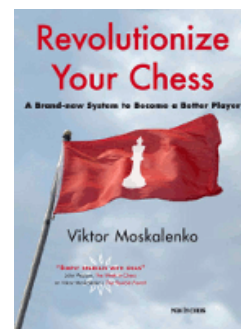
1 c4 g5

My opponent was confronted with this move for the first time. He remembered having read something about it, and that "there was a trap after 2 d4." He decided for a quiet approach.

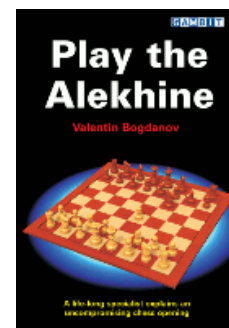
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An interesting strategy: now Black, who in the present case has no more experience than White in the Myers' Defense, needs to find a harmonious development of his pieces. (SB: Myers believed that an early g7-g5 is justified, if White has played *one* of these three moves: c4, Nf3, or g3. Wind prefers g7-g5 in "improved" situations, where White combines at least *two* of the three moves, as illustrated by Hodgson's System: 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 h6 3 d4 g5. While Wind's article [\[3\]](#) looks at lines including c4 and Nf3, after the text move Black also cannot be worse. Critical was 2 d4 h6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 c5 with sharp complications, see [\[3\]](#).)

2...Bg7 3 Bg2 c5 4 Nc3

Here I recognized the threat Ne4, forking my pawns on c5 and g5!

4...h6

Kari Heinola, the hero of your article, decided to sacrifice a pawn, or maybe he did not notice the threat: 4...Nc6 (Mazock – Heinola, 25th Paul Keres memorial 2000) 5 Ne4!.



(SB: It's wise to avoid the fork. The motif reminds me of Larsen – Raizman, Munich 1958: 1 f4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 b4, when Black didn't dare to play 3...Nd5 either. In [Kaissiber 26](#) (2007) Bent Larsen admitted that he has lost his former belief in the correctness of the combination 3...Nd5 4 Bb2 f6 5 f5, because of 5...Nxb4. While Larsen's case is not entirely clear, 5 e3 Nxb4 6 a3 N4c6 7 d4 d5 8 c4 with some pressure, the fork 5 Ne4 in the diagram wins a pawn for no real compensation.)

5 a3

Apparently new. 5 e4 led to a draw in Gaspariants – S. Marder, Copenhagen 2004 (Politiken Cup).

5...Nc6 6 Rb1



6...Qa5?

Not exactly preventing the b4-push, but the queen will prove to be well-placed, making the development of the bishop c1 difficult. (SB: The text move is a mistake and loses time, since b4 cannot be prevented. There are solid alternatives: 6...d6 [6...a5] 7 d3 [or 7 b4 Bxc3 8 dxc3 Bf5] 7...Qd7 intending b6 and Bb7; for example, 8 Qa4?! a6 9 Bd2 Rb8 10 h4 b5 11 cxb5 axb5 12 Nxb5 Nd4 =.)

7 Nf3 d6 8 h3

(SB: No mistake, but the advance of the b-pawn was possible and advantageous: 8 Nd5 Bf5 [8...e6 9 b4 Qd8 10 Nc3] 9 b4 +/-, and the queen has to retreat to d8. The attempt 9...cxb4? 10 axb4 Qa2 11 Rb3 Bc2 fails to 12 Rb2! Bxd1 13 Rxa2 Bb3 14 Ra3 Bxc4 15 Nc7+ +-.)

8...f5



With the intention of 9...Nf6.

(SB: To create the pawn duo f5 & g5 looks natural. In his column in *The Independent* on Sunday, September 18, 1994, Michael Basman commented the first moves of Franklin – Basman, Sutton Open 1994, like a logical step-by-step execution of the first player: 1 c4?. "An immediate blunder." [...] 1...g5!. "The complete refutation." [...] 2 Nc3 h6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 c5 5 e3 Nc6 6 Nge2 d6 7 d3 f5!. "White's unambitious set-up lets me take the initiative." 8 a3 Nf6 9 Qc2 0-0 10 Rb1 e5 11 b4 f4!, etc. – Nevertheless, in the present game White would still have fine chances by means of 9 0-0 Nf6 10 b4! or the immediate 9 b4 cxb4 10 axb4 Nxb4 11 0-0, when b7 is only one of many weak spots in Black's camp. The main difference to Basman's game is the dubious move 6...Qa5?!.)

9 e4? Nf6

(SB: 9...Bxc3 10 dxc3 Nf6 came into consideration, to control the center.)

10 exf5

Or 10 Qc2 fxe4 11 Nxe4 0-0 =+.

10...Bxf5 11 d3



I had the feeling that Black was better, but how to continue? There were several candidate moves, but I didn't have a clear plan. For his weak 9th move my opponent had spent a lot of time, and now it wasn't easy to concentrate on the game again. Moreover, a furious tactical phase began on the board next to us, which added to my difficulties. But suddenly I saw a "not very positional move":

11...d5!

Simply threatens ...d4 and ...dxc4.

12 Qb3

12 cxd5 Nxd5 13 Nd2 Nxc3 14 bxc3 Ne5 and Black is better. (SB: The *zwischenzug* 14 Qh5+ Kf8 15 bxc3 Ne5 16 0-0 Bxd3 is still sufficient for a draw; e.g., 17 f4 (17 Rxb7; 17 Ne4) 17...Bxf1 18 fxe5 Bxg2 19 e6 Kg8 20 Qf7+ Kh7 21 Qf5+ with perpetual check. There is an aggressive alternative: 13...0-0-0!? 14 Bxd5 (14 Nxd5) Rxd5 15 Nxd5 Bxd3.



White has many ways to go wrong: 16 Ra1? Nd4 17 Ne3 Be2 +/- or 16 Ne3 Nd4 17 b4 Qb5 with unpleasant threats. The correct reply 16 b4 cxb4 17 Qb3 Bxb1 18 Nxb1 bxa3+ 19 Bd2 leads to an unclear situation with chances for both sides.)

12...0-0-0! 13 cxd5 Nxd5

White suffers from his weak point d3.

14 0-0 Qb6

The opening and early middlegame took a lot of time, now a mutual *zeitnot* begins. I overlooked 14...Bxd3 15 Nxd5 c4 +/-.

15 Qxb6 Nxb6 16 Ne1 c4 17 g4



17...Bxd3?

(SB: Gives the strong bishop for a weak knight. 17...Bh7! 18 Be3 cxd3 would have been much stronger, Black should win.)

18 Nxd3 cxd3 19 Rd1 Nc4 20 Bd5 Bxc3?

Better is 20...N4e5 +/-.

21 Bxc4 d2 (or 21...Bd4) 22 bxc3 dxc1Q 23 Rbxc1 Ne5 24 Bd5



24...Rh8

24...Ng6! was more precise, with the better ending. After the text move White holds:

25 c4 Ng6 26 Re1 Kc7 27 Rc3 Rf6 28 Rce3 Rdf8 29 Re6 b6 30 R1e2 Kd7 31 Bc6+ Kc7 32 Bd5 Kd7 33 Kf1 Rxe6 34 Bxe6+ Kd6 35 Bf5 Nf4 36 Rd2+ Kc5 37 Rd7 e6 38 Be4 Nxh3 39 f3 Kxc4 40 Rxa7 Rd8 41 Rc7+ 1/2-1/2

Corrections

1. Sicilian Defense 2 Nf3 h6!?

The [November 2009](#) column "Pachman's Verdict" covered **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 h6**, and here mainly the line 3 c3, which I had regarded as critical since 1990. About the line 3 Nc3 d6! 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Nf6 my column only said: "transposes to a little-played, but interesting system."



Missing was the information that there already existed a thread on www.chesspub.com, where this idea is discussed, called "The Transporter Sicilian" by TalJechin from Malmö. Here you will also find additional material. In the diagrammed position the continuation 6 Bc4 e5 7 Nf5! may be good for White. My latest attempt in the said thread: 6...a6! (instead of 6...e5). Then on 7 f3 Black can play 7...Qc7, which wins a tempo on the Bc4 (an advantage of postponing Nc6), followed by e6. Best may be 7 Be3, when Black has a choice:

(a) 7...e5

(a1) 8 Nde2 Ng4 transposes to analysis by Mark Nieuweboer.

(a2) 8 Nf5 g6 9 Ng3 Be6 += is playable for Black, because Ng3 is less useful than a Ne3.

(b) 7...Ng4 8 Qf3!? Ne5 9 Qe2 Nxc4 10 Qxc4 e6 11 0-0 b5 12 Qb3 Nd7 unclear.

(c) 7...Qc7 8 Bb3 e6 with interesting play.

2. Mokele Mbembe

The [December 2009](#) column "Just a Game" had my whining about the loss of a Mokele. **1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Ne4 3 d3 Nc5 4 d4 Ne6 5 f4 g6 6 d5 Ng7 7 Nf3 d6 8 c4**. So far Baramidze – Bückner, Kiel 2009. Now I should have preferred 8...Bg4! 9 Be2 e6 10 Nc3 Nd7 11 Ng5 Bxe2 12 Qxe2 dxe5 13 fxe5 Be7 14 Nf3 0-0 15 Bf4 Re8 16 0-0 f6 17 Qd2 fxe5 18 Nxe5 Nf6 19 Rae1 exd5 20 Nxd5 Nxd5 21 cxd5 Nf5 22 g4 Nd6 23 Bh6 Bf8 24 Bg5 Be7 25 Bxe7 Rxe7 26 Qd3 a6 27 a4 Re8 28 Nxg6



Instead of 28...Qd7 29 Rf8+! +-, **Jason** from the **USA** recommends "28...Qg5! 29 Rxe8 Rxe8 30 Nf4 Qxg4+ and now black is okay." Many thanks! Indeed, after 31 Kh1 Qf5 32 Qxf5 Nxf5 33 Ne6 Ne3 34 Nxc7 Rc8 35 Re1 Rxc7 the rook ending looks drawish. In the meantime I had found another solution: 27...Nf7 also seems to hold. Now we can start to search for a win for Black.

Sources

[1] St. Bückner: "The Impoliteness of Ice Age Openings," ChessCafe [January 2006](#)

[2] St. Bückner: "Finding Your Own Approach in the Second Ice Age," ChessCafe [November 2006](#)

[3] M. Wind: "Mit g5 gegen Englisch: Myers' Idee und ihre Folgen," in: [Kaissiber 34](#) (2009)

[4] M. Wind: "Kampf der Systeme: Myers gegen Réti," in: [Kaissiber 35](#) (2009)

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