



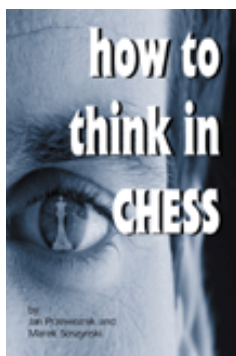
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COLUMNISTS

Opening Lanes

Gary Lane



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Opening Lanes is based in large part on readers' questions. Do you have a question about a particular opening line? Baffled by a branch of the Benoni or Budapest? Submit your questions (with you full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Gary will reply in his next *Chess Cafe* column...

Yes, I have a question for Gary!

Scream

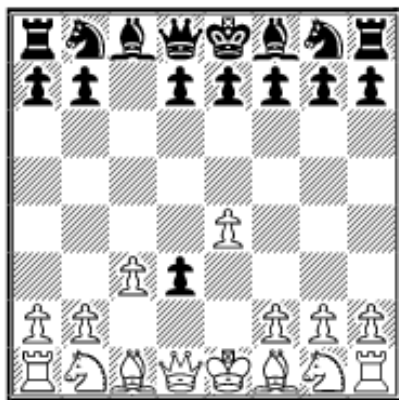
There are some people who lock their doors at night with heavy bars across them, sleep inside a panic room and have a large, howling dog as a guard. However, according to **Alan Genegaling Orduñez**, from **Mexico** there is one thing that no amount of prevention can keep you safe from. His chilling note is such that on no account should anybody approach a chessboard without knowing what dangers inhabit the black and white squares.

He writes: "What the heck can I do against the Smith-Morra Gambit against my beloved Sicilian? It seems that no matter what I play – I get beat. Once I heard someone telling a friend that if he wanted to beat me he should play the Morra gambit. I have some material on it but it has not worked out well for me. So if you can help me, please do so my friend."

I cannot ignore such a plea from the heart so let's get straight down to business:

Valentin Diadychko-Alexander Kovchan Ukranian Team
Championship 2004

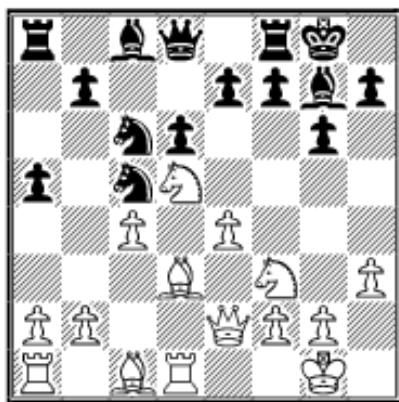
1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 d3



Black declines the sacrifice in an effort to prevent White from enjoying the usual rampant attack. The advantage for Black is that he can just carry on developing, aiming to steer the struggle into the middlegame. The critical line has to be 3...dxc3 when after 4 Nxc3 White manages to conjure up some attacking chances for the pawn. It can become complicated and Black can easily go astray. Therefore, 3...d3 is a

reasonable choice. **4 Bxd3 4 Nf3** is playable because, of course. White can take his time to take a pawn: 4...Qc7 5 Bxd3 Nf6 6 0-0 d6 7 Na3 a6 8 Bf4 Nbd7 9 Qa4 (9 Re1 intending e4-e5 is worth considering) 9...e5 with roughly equal chances, F.Karimi-K.Podzielny, Solingen 2004.

4...g6 The main reply is 4...Nc6 and White has a variety of moves: 5 c4 White makes room for the queen's knight to occupy the c3-square while the pawn on c4 will be useful to stop Black's freeing move ...d7-d5; A) 5 Nf3 e6 6 Qe2 (the queen moves to the e-file, which is a common idea in the Morra, to free the d1-square for the king's rook) 6...d6 7 0-0 Nf6 8 c4 Be7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Rd1 Qc7 (or 10...a6? allows 11 e5! dxe5 12 Bxh7+ Nxh7 13 Rxd8 wins) 11 h3 a6 12 Be3 b6 with equal chances, J.Ruigrok-T.Knight, Les Dicqs 2002. B) 5 f4 d6 6 Nf3 g6 7 0-0 Bg7 8 Kh1 Nf6 (black's set-up is similar to a Dragon and works fine in this position) 9 Be3 Qa5 10 Nbd2 Ng4 11 Bg1 Bd7 12 Qe2 Qc7 with an edge for White, W.Luyckx-P.Bezsilko, Mechelen 2002. C) 5 c4 d6 6 Nf3 g6 7 Nc3 Bg7 8 Be3 Nf6 9 Rc1 0-0 10 0-0 Bg4 11 h3 Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Qa5 13 Qe2 Nd7 and the chances are level. Alternatively, 4...Na6!? is an unusual idea that is designed to bring the queen's knight to the c5-square 5 Be3 e6 6 Nf3 Nf6 7 b4!? White takes steps to deprive the black queen's knight of the c5-square and consequently making it look rather useless on a6. 7...Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 Nc7 10 Qc2 d6 11 c4 Bd7 12 Nc3 with a space advantage, P.Mayerhofer-H.Teske, Aschach 2002.; 4...d5? allows 5 Bb5+ winning a pawn. **5 c4 Bg7 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 0-0 d6 8 h3 Nf6 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Qe2** I think 10 Be3 is a better idea. **10...Nd7 11 Rd1 Nc5 12 Nd5 a5**



Black is higher rated at 2498 so is content just to improve his position instead of trying to engineer instant counterplay. In this case, the a-pawn is advanced to stop the future possibility of b2-b4 and of course allow ...Ncb4. **13 Rb1 Nb4 14 Bc2 Bd7** The time is not yet right to play 14...Nxa2 when 15 Be3 is fine for White. For example: 15...Nb4? (or 15...b6 16 Ra1 e6 17 Rxa2 exd5 18 exd5 with equal chances.) 16 Nxb4

axb4 17 Bxc5 wins due to the pin on the d-file. **15 Bg5 Re8 16 Be3 Rc8 17 Bd4 Bxd4 18 Nxd4 Nxa2 19 f4?! 19 e5** causes Black more problems because it allows White to open lines for his pieces: 19...dxe5 20 Qxe5 Nb4 21 Nxb4 axb4 22 Rd2 with some play for the pawn. **19...Bc6 20**

e5? Bxd5 21 cxd5 dxe5 22 Qxe5 If 22 fxe5 then 22...Nb4 brings the knight back into the action and makes the d5-pawn rather vulnerable. **22...Nb4 23 Bb3** The only way to hang on to the d-pawn, but it is not good enough to alter the situation because Black is on top. **23...Nxb3 24 Nxb3 a4 25 Qe4** Or 25 Nc1 Rc5 and the d-pawn will fall. **25...Qb6+ 26 Nd4 Rcd8** Probably 26...e6 is also good 27 dxe6? Rxe6 28 Qf3 Rd8 29 Qf2 Red6 winning. **27 Kh1 Rxd5** Kovchan is now a clear two pawns up and victory is in sight. **28 Nf3 Red8 29 Rxd5 Nxd5 30 Rd1 e6 31 f5** A desperate measure, but understandable because White has to do something to try and salvage the game. **31...exf5 32 Qc4 Nf6 33 Rxd8+ Qxd8 34 Qb5 Qd5 35 Qxd5 Nxd5 36 Kg1 f6 37 Nd4 Kf7 38 Kf2 Ke7 39 h4 h5 0-1**

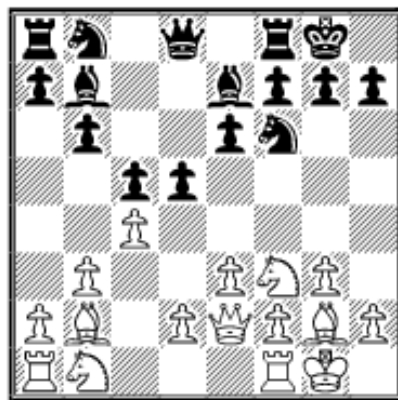
So now there is no need to be afraid.

Enrique O. Lorenzo from the **USA** is a keen player and writes: “I am just a chess novice and I find your column geared towards veteran players. I am shooting for 1400 right now and find myself limiting my openings to the Reti and English for White and the Pirc-Robatch for Black. Otherwise, I will just get confused with all the openings out there. Is this enough? Please discuss these openings.”

I think your choice of openings sounds very reasonable. All have the benefit of allowing you to develop your pieces and castle without fearing a tactical knock out. This would not be the case in razor sharp openings such as the King’s Gambit or the Dragon in the Sicilian. I suspect in time you might change your openings, but there is no rush. A good way to find out what else to play is to look at annotated games collections by the star players such Alekhine and Anand. You might also find an old copy of Michael Adams’s book *Chess in the Fast Lane*, which is particularly good at explaining things with words rather than just using endless analysis. I hope this game on the Reti encourages you to go out and win:

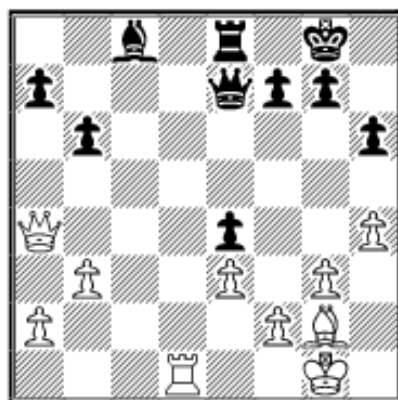
Ocsar Panno-Zambrana Copa Santiago 2004

1 Nf3 Richard Réti (1889–1929) developed his system at a time when the opening seemed revolutionary. He realised that you did not have to strive for a big pawn centre all the time and that careful development could restrain the opponent from advancing in the centre. The general idea, depending how Black replies, is to employ a fianchetto and threatens to advance his cluster of centre pawns if Black indulges in reckless behaviour with his pieces. **1...Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 b6** The expected response from anyone who plays the Queen's Indian Defence because Black is hoping for a transposition if White plays d2-d4. **4 Bg2 Bb7 5 0-0 Be7 6 b3** The advantage for White of a double-fianchetto is that it helps to speed up development with minium fear of falling for a trick. At the highest level, the bishop being on the b2-square will simply help to hinder Black from occupying d4 or e5 with his pawns. **6...0-0 7 Bb2 d5 8 e3** This has to be played at some point because Black will continue with ...c7-c5 when ...d5-d4 is a real possibility to sever the influence of white's dark-squared bishop. **8...c5 9 Qe2**



This is a standard idea to allow the rooks to be co-ordinated, which means that the king's rook can come to the d-file in order to support a pawn advance. If you can reach this sort of position as a 1400 player you would be doing well. **9...Nc6 10 Rd1 Qc7** Or **10...dxc4 11 bxc4 Qc7 12 Nc3 a6 13 Rab1 Rab8 14 Ba1!?** (an odd looking move but it is designed to help prevent the advance ...b6-b5) **14...Rfd8 15 d3** with equal chances,

L.Thiede-R.Vaganian, Koelln 2003. **11 Nc3 Rad8** Or **11...Rac8 12 cxd5 exd5 13 d4** (White can now put pressure on the d5-pawn thanks to the rook on d1 and can also give Black hanging pawns by a timely **d4xc5** providing another target) **13...Nb4 14 Nb5 Qb8 15 dxc5 Rxc5 16 Nfd4 g6 17 a3 Na6 18 b4 Rcc8 19 Rac1** gives White excellent chances to his well placed pieces, P.Velikov-D.Baron, Elancourt 2004. **12 Rac1 Qb8 13 cxd5 exd5 14 d4 Rfe8 15 dxc5 Bxc5** If **15...bxc5** then **16 Na4** puts decent pressure on the c5-pawn giving White the edge. **16 Na4 Be7 17 Nd4 Nxd4 18 Bxd4** Panno's advantage is partly based on the weak d5-pawn which is a long-term target. As usual in the Reti, when things go properly, the pair of bishops are very influential. **18...Ne4 19 Nc3 Bf6 20 Qb2 h6 21 Nxe4 21 Ne2!?** needs to be considered in order to maintain the tension. **21...Bxd4 22 Rxd4 dxe4** After the series of exchanges Black has managed to relieve the pressure by getting rid of the isolated d-pawn so now the position is level. **23 Rcd1 Qc7 24 h4 Rxd4 25 Qxd4 Qe7 25...a6** is a good idea if only to deal with the threat that occurs in the game because a future **Qa4** can be rebuffed with ...b6-b5. **26 Qa4!** The threats of **Qxa7** and **Rd7** causes Zambrana some problems. **26...Bc8?**



Black is in trouble: A) **26...Ba8 27 Rd7 Qe6 28 Rxa7** is better for White; B) **26...Qe6 27 Qxa7 Bd5** is probably the best bet when White will have to slowly advance on the queenside. **27 Qxe4 Qxe4 28 Bxe4 Rxe4 29 Rd8+ Kh7 30 Rxc8** The end of the combination sees White emerge a pawn ahead, which should be winning with correct play. **30...Re7 31 Kf1 h5 32 Ke2 Kg6 33 a4 f6 34 f3 Rd7 35 Rc4 Kf7 36 Rd4**

Rc7 37 Kd2 Ke6 38 e4 g6 39 Rc4 Rd7+ 40 Ke2 Ke7 41 Rc6 White dominates the board because his rook is active and Black always has to avoid piece captures due to the pawn deficit. **41...Rb7 42 e5 1-0**

Last month I suggested that **Bob Taylor** from **England** should send in some analysis on his pet line the Ponziani. It is one of the oldest openings around, having been played for over 500 years. However, Bob has managed to impose his own style on one of the main lines:

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 d5 4 Bb5 dxe4 5 Nxe5 Qg5 6 Qa4 Qxg2 (Black

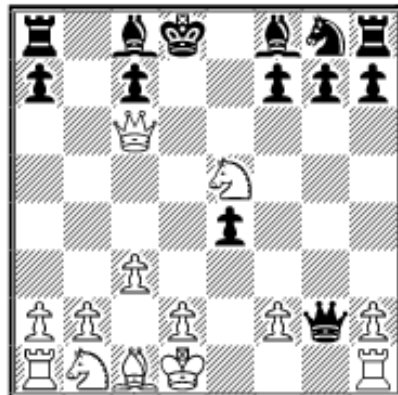
can revert to 6...Qxe5 but current theory says that is 'only' equal or unclear) 7 Bxc6+ bxc6 8 Qxc6+ Kd8 9 Kd1 (9 Rf1 the move loses, but I won't give all the ins and outs here; crucial is 9...Bh3 10 Qxa8+ Ke7 11 Kd1 Qxf1+ 12 Kc2 Bf5) 9...Qxh1+ not forced, but hard to resist? 10 Kc2 Nh6 (I won a game in 1997 where black played differently; the line I am here sticking with is what Hebden played in 1998 - after much thought.) 11 Qxa8 Bd6 12 Nc6+ Kd7 13 Nd4 (here, I tried 13 Nxa7 in the Hebden game and was crushed. There is also recent analysis that shows that 13 c4 is weak (from IM Wolfram Schoen) 13...Re8 (13...Ng4 14 Na3 Nxf2 (14...Bxh2 15 Nc4 f6 16 Qd5+ Ke8 17 b3 Nxf2 18 Bb2 Qg2 19 Nc6 Bd7 20 Nxa7 Qg6 21 Ne3 c6 22 Nxc6 Qf7 23 Qc5 Rg8 24 Nb4 g6 25 Rf1) 15 Qd5; 14...Bxa3 15 Qd5+ Ke7 16 Qg5+ Ke8 17 Nc6) 14 Na3 and Black has plenty of choices. I believe the position is balanced e.g. 14...Qf1 15 Qc6+ Kd8 16 Qb5 Qd3+ 17 Qxd3 exd3+ 18 Kxd3 Ng4 19 f3. The saving idea on move 13 Nd4, came from Mark Hebden, the idea of playing 9 Kd1 is my own, from quite a few years ago, but it is extraordinary what lengths black players will go to, in order to sidestep this entire line!

Robert Zelcic-Franc Rodman Ljubljana 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 The starting point of the Ponziani Opening. One has to give respect to White who at the time was rated 2503. **3...d5 4 Bb5 dxe4 5 Nxe5 Qg5 6 Qa4**



The queen pins the knight which is known as one of the main lines. Also possible: 6 d4 Qxg2 7 Rf1 Bh3 8 Nd2 (8 Qb3! looks like a killer move) 8...e3?! (8...Nge7 is the safe choice) 9 fxe3 Bd6 10 Ndf3 Bxe5 11 Rg1 when Black can give up, A.Verhagen-C.Braun, Huy 1991. **6...Qxg2** Or 6...Qxe5 7 Bxc6+ bxc6? (7...Kd8!? is a possibility) 8 Qxc6+ Kd8 9 Qxa8 Nf6 10 Na3 Bc5 11 b4 led to victory in J.Baron Rodriguez-M.Pavlovic, Terrassa 1995. **7 Bxc6+ bxc6 8 Qxc6+ Kd8** In the game G.Montavon-S.Haack, Hamburg 1997, Black to play the right move and after 8...Ke7? was duly crushed: 9 Qxc7+ Kf6 10 Qxf7+! Kxe5 11 d4+ exd3 12 Bf4+ 1-0. **9 Rf1** Bob Taylor's idea is 9 Kd1:



And he provides the following analysis to support his claim 9...Qxh1+ 10 Kc2 Nh6 11 Qxa8 Bd6 12 Nc6+ Kd7 13 Nd4 Re8 (13...Ng4 14 Na3 Nxf2 (14...Bxh2 15 Nc4 f6 16 Qd5+ Ke8 17 b3 Nxf2 18 Bb2 Qg2 19 Nc6 Bd7 20 Nxa7 Qg6 21 Ne3 c6 22 Nxc6 Qf7 23 Qc5 Rg8 24 Nb4 g6 25 Rf1 and White is better) 15 Qd5 is fine) 14 Na3 Qf1 15 Qc6+ Kd8 16 Qb5 Qd3+ 17 Qxd3 exd3+ 18 Kxd3 Ng4 19 f3 However, I think

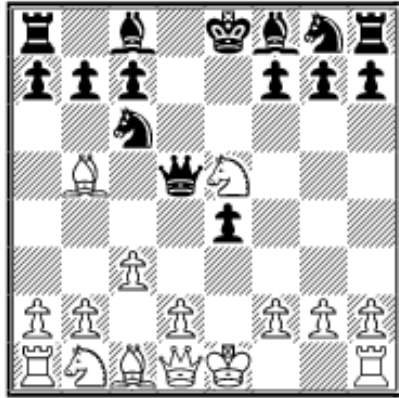
that after 19...Ne5+ Black has the superior chances. Still, there are plenty of interesting positions for people to ponder and to try out in games. **9...Bh3 10 Qxa8+ Ke7 11 Kd1 Qxf1+ 12 Kc2 Bf5!** This seems to be the key move which is keeping a black cloud over the line. The black king might look silly but it is relatively safe and both players will have trouble developing smoothly. Instead 12...f6? is a serious mistake allowing 13 b3! with the menacing threat Ba3+ causing lots of trouble. For instance: 13...Nh6 14 Ba3+ Ke6 15 Qe8+ Kf5 16 Bxf8 fxe5 (16...Rxf8 17 Qxf8 Kxe5 18 Qc5+ Kf4 19 Qxc7+ Kf5 20 Qc5+ Kg6 21 Kb2 Qd3 22 Qxa7 Ng4 23 a4 e3 24 fxe3 Nf2 25 Qd4 led to an easy victory in M.Kottke-D.Willenberg, Germany Team Championship 2001) 17 Qd7+ Kf4 18 Qxg7 Ng4 19 Qxh8 Nxf2 (Black should really start counting the pieces) 20 Qf6+ Kg4 21 Qg7+ Kf4 22 Qf7+ Bf5 23 Bh6+ Kg4 24 h3+ Nxh3 25 Qc4 Qxc4 26 bxc4 e3+ 27 Kd1 1-0 J.Pcola-J.Kratochvil, Marianske Lazne 2003. **13 Qd5 Kf6** It takes strong nerves to handle this position but Black has to remember that the white knight and queen should not be enough to force mate. **14 Nd7+ Bxd7 15 Qxd7 Bd6 16 Qa4** The root of White's problems is clear because to make any tactical threats he needs to be supported by other pieces. At the moment White's queenside pieces are watching the action from afar, making Black the firm favourite to win. **16...Qd3+ 17 Kb3 Ne7 18 Qd4+ Qxd4 19 cxd4 Bxh2** White has exchanged queens to stem the onslaught, but will now have to cope with a poor ending. Zelic is a strong player, yet he can only do as well as his position demands and here a pawn down with the h-pawn about to march forward is not what he wants. **20 Nc3 Kf5 21 Kc4 h5 22 d3 exd3 23 Kxd3 Rd8** Probably 23...h4 is simple and good. **24 Be3 Bf4 25 Rh1 g6 26 Ke2 Nd5 27 Kf3 Bg5 28 Bxg5 Kxg5 29 Ne4+ Kh6 30 Rc1** White is fighting back and has done well to temporarily push Black back. However, he is still much worse. **30...f5 31 Nc5 g5 32 Ne6 g4+ 33 Kg3 Rd6 34 Nxc7 Kg5** The pawn count might now be equal but it is too late. Black's pawns are well placed and will soon dash towards promotion. **35 Nb5 h4+ 36 Kh2 Rd7 37 Rc5 Kf4 38 Kg1 Ke4 39 Rc6 Kf3 40 Nd6 Ne7 41 Rc3+ Kf4 42 Nb5 Nd5 43 Ra3 g3 44 Kg2 h3+ 45 Kg1** If 45...Rh7+ 46 Kg2 Rh2+ 47 Kf1 Rxf2+ 48 Kg1 Kg4 wins **45...gxf2+ 46 Kxf2 Rh7 47 Rf3+ Kg4 48 Rg3+ Kh4 49 Nd6 Ne7 50 Rg1 h2 51 Rh1 Kh3 52 Nc4** Or 52 Rc1 Rh4 53 Rh1 Rxd4 winning. **52...Nd5 53 Ne5 Rg7 54 Nd3 Rg2+ 55 Kf3 Rg3+ 56 Ke2 Rxd3** Or 56...Kg2 57 Rd1 Re3+ 58 Kd2 Rh3 followed by promoting the pawn. **57 Kxd3 Kg2 58 Ke2 f4 59 Ke1 Nb4 60 Rxh2+ Kxh2 61 Kf2 Kh3 62 Kf3 Nd5 63 b4 Kh4 64 b5 Kg5 65 a4 Nc3 66 d5 Nxd5 0-1**

I noticed that Bob has played English grandmaster Mark Hebden since he wrote that analysis. However, the master is such a canny player he made sure to play something a bit different to avoid any prepared analysis:

Robert Taylor-Mark Hebden Coventry 2004

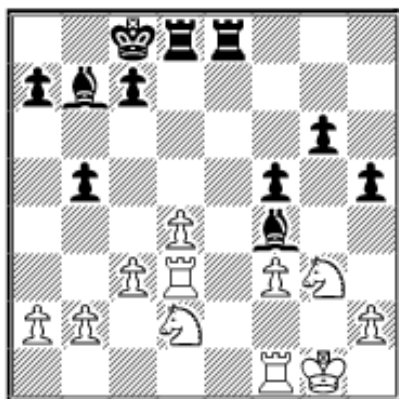
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 d5 4 Bb5 dxe4 Also possible: 4...f6!? to defend the e5-pawn is logical but it does deprive the f6-square for the king's knight: 5 Qa4 Nge7 6 d3 Be6 7 0-0 a6 8 Bxc6+ Nxc6 9 Be3 Bd6 10 Nbd2 0-0 with a slight edge for Black, K.Bhatia-H.Lang, British Team

Championship 1999; 4...a6 5 Bxc6+ bxc6 6 Qa4 Bd6 7 d4 (7 Qxc6+ Bd7 8 Qxd5 Nf6 9 Qc4 Bb5! is better for Black due to the lead in development and the fact that the white king is stuck in the centre) 7...dxe4 8 Qxc6+ Bd7 9 Qxe4 Nf6 10 Qe2 e4 11 Ne5 0-0 12 Bg5 Bf5 13 Nd2 c5 14 0-0 with a slight advantage, M.Kantorik-M.Castiglione, Slovak Team Championship 2000. **5 Nxe5 Qd5**



This move comes in and out of fashion but has the merit of avoiding main line theory. **6 Bxc6+?!** It is understandable against an established grandmaster that White wants to test a complicated line, but the critical line has to be 6 Qa4 when Black can be lured into quicksand: 6...Bd7?! Black defends the knight but 7 Nxd7 Kxd7 (If 7...Qxd7 then 8 Qxe4+ is simply better for White who is a pawn up) 8 d4 Bd6 9 Bc4 Qh5?

(9...Qa5 is the only way to keep the game competitive although 10 Qb3 maintains White's advantage) 10 d5 the knight is pinned and Lastin will enjoy a big advantage. Black just continues to make it look better in the tournament bulletin, A.Lastin-D.Belotelov, Moscow 1994. B) 6...Nge7 is also reliable to protect the queen's knight. Another main line starts with 6...Qxe5. For example Hickl-A.Jussupov, Altenkirchen 1999, continued: 7 Bxc6+ bxc6 8 Qxc6+ Kd8 9 Qxa8 Nf6 10 Na3 Qg5 11 g3 Qh5 (11...Bxa3 12 bxa3 Qd5 13 Qxd5+ Nxd5 14 Rb1+- Re8 15 f3 exf3+ 16 Kf2 is better for White) 12 Nc4 Bc5 13 d4 exd3 14 0-0 Re8 15 h4 (15 b4!? looks logical but 15...Bxf2+! changes the assessment upon 16 Rxf2 Re1+ 17 Rf1 Rxf1+ 18 Kxf1 Qe2+ 19 Kg1 Qe1+ 20 Kg2 Qe2+ 21 Kg1 Qe1+ with a draw by perpetual check; I prefer 15 Bf4! when the obvious 15...Ng4 is met by 16 h4 when White is better) 15...Bxf2+ 16 Rxf2 (16 Kxf2 Qc5+ 17 Ne3 Ng4+ 18 Kg2 Rxe3 19 Bxe3 Nxe3+ 20 Kh2 Nxf1+ 21 Rxf1 c6 22 Qb8 when White is better) 16...Re1+ 17 Rf1 Rxf1+ 18 Kxf1 Qd1+ 19 Kg2 Qe2+ 20 Kg1 Qe1+ 21 Kg2 Qe2+ 1/2-1/2. **6...bxc6 7 d4** Or 7 Ng4? Ba6 8 f3 (8 d4!? exd3 the idea is that now White will be able to castle kingside 9 Ne3 Qe6 10 Nd2 Nf6 11 0-0 Bd6 when Black is on top due to the extra pawn and strong pair of bishops) 8...Bd6 9 b3 Bd3 10 Bb2 0-0-0 11 c4 Qg5 12 Nc3 f5 13 Ne3 Qg3+! 0-1 G.Puskas-M.Pinter, Budapest 1999. **7...Bd6** 7...Ba6 to stop White from castling kingside is worth considering: 8 Qa4 Bb5 9 Qa5 f6 10 a4 fxe5 11 axb5 exd4 12 bxc6 Qxa5 13 Rxa5 offered equal chances in Z.Csapo-E.Liu, Budapest 2001. **8 Qa4?! 8 c4** is probably best, with equal chances. **8...Ne7 9 Be3 Qb5!** A clever idea offering to enter an ending where his c-pawns will no longer be doubled. **10 Qxb5** 10 Qc2 allows 10...f6 when the white knight on e5 is embarrassed 11 c4 Bb4+ 12 Nd2 Qb7 winning. **10...cxb5 11 f3** 11 Nd2 walks into 11...f6 and White can start the car. **11...f6 12 Ng4 exf3 13 gxf3 Bb7** Hebden begins to use the advantage of the two bishops by exerting some pressure on the f-pawn **14 Nd2 h5 15 Nf2 Nf5 16 0-0 0-0-0** If 16...Nxe3 then 17 Rfe1 Bf4 18 Nf1 will regain the piece. **17 Rae1 Rhe8 18 Nfe4 Nxe3! 19 Rxe3 Bf4** Black has to be careful how to proceed because 19...f5 allows 20 Nxd6+ cxd6 21 Rfe1 with equal chances. **20 Rd3 f5 21 Ng3 g6**



It seems crazy but White has already run out of constructive moves yet the material level is equal. **22 Kf2** One way to explain White's problem is to see what happens if he waits with 22 a3 which allows the combination 22...h4 23 Nh1 Re3 24 Rxe3 Bxe3+ 25 Kg2 Bxd2 winning easily. **22...c5 23 Ne2 Rxe2+ 0-1**

Perhaps other people have tried out the Ponziani, if so, send in the

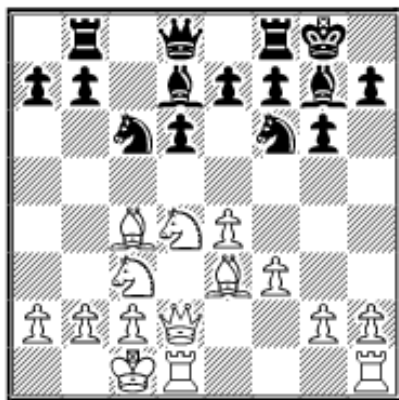
games!

"I'm **Jobannie Tabada** from the **Philippines**. A friend asked me why the Sicilian Dragon isn't played in top-level competitions anymore. I'm passing the buck to you, if you don't mind. Is there any one treatment that has grounded the once fashionable defense?"

I think the Dragon is still played at the highest level but nowadays the players of the white pieces often play Anti-Sicilian lines. For example 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 is sometimes answered by 3 Bb5+ to avoid the complicated Dragon. However, I did find a recent game when a 2600 player plays the Dragon and wins:

Erwin L'Ami-Segei Tiviakov Netherlands Championship, Leeuwarden 2004

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 0-0-0 These are all standard moves, well known to slayers of the Dragon. Also possible: 9 g4 Be6 10 0-0-0 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 Qa5 12 Kb1 Rfc8 (Black has to be careful which rook to move 12...Rac8?! allows 13 Nd5! Qd8 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Nxf6+ exf6 16 h4 with an attack) 13 Nd5 Qxd2 14 Nxf6+!? (14 Rxd2 is also possible) 14...Bxf6 15 Rxd2 Bxd4 16 Rxd4 Rc5 17 h4 with roughly equal chances, I.Bozanic-M.Cebalo, Rabac 2004. **9...Bd7 10 Bc4** White employs the celebrated Yugoslav Attack. **10...Rb8!?**



If you look in the old Dragon books it will be a struggle to find a reference to this odd looking move. It really came to prominence a few years ago and is now known as "The Chinese Variation." Instead 10...Ne5 has been played many times and leads to positions that have been extensively analysed but is still full of surprises: 11 Bb3 Rc8 12 Kb1 Re8 13 h4 h5 14 Bg5 Rc5 15 Nde2 a5 16 f4 Neg4 17 e5 dxe5 18 fxe5 Nxe5 19 Nf4 Qc8

led to a wonderfully complicated position and eventually Black emerged victorious in E.Berg-R.Winsnes, Goteborg 2004. **11 Bb3** Or 11 Nd5 b5 a logical choice considering that the queen's rook is there to support the

advance of the b-pawn 12 Nxf6+ Bxf6 13 Nxc6 Bxc6 14 Bd5 Qc7 15 Bxc6 Qxc6 16 Bd4 White is keen to exchange the pieces in order to lessen Black's attacking possibilities 16...Bxd4 17 Qxd4 Rfc8 18 Rd2 b4 19 Kb1 Rb5 20 Rc1 a5 21 Rd3 Rc5 22 Qf2 a4 with the initiative, P.Ascic-M.Cebalo, Pula 2004; 11 h4 Na5 12 Bb3 b5 the Englishman duly advances the b-pawn to justify the queen's rook move earlier 13 h5 Nc4 14 Bxc4 bxc4 15 hxg6 fxg6 16 Bh6 Qa5 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Qh6+ Kf7 19 Nde2 Qb4 20 Qf4 Ke8 21 Qe3 Qxb2+ 22 Kd2 Qb6 when it Black has the safer king, M.Sciortino-G.Jones, Montecatini Terme 2003. **11...Na5 12 Bh6 Bxh6 13 Qxh6 b5 14 h4 e5 15 Nde2 b4 16 Nd5 Nxb3+ 17 cxb3** If White is looking for an improvement then 17 axb3 might be considered. J.Slaby-L.Cernousek, Marianske Lazne 2004: 17...Nxd5 18 Rxd5 Be6 19 h5 Qc7 (19...Bxd5 would make White laugh out loud because 20 hxg6 is a killer move) 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 Rd3 (If 21 Rd2 then 21...Bxb3 makes White suffer) 21...Rfc8 22 Qd2 An admission that White is in trouble because the queen returns from its aggressive post to endure defensive duties 22...Rb6 23 c4 Ra6 (23...bxc3! 24 Rxc3 Rc6 is better for Black) 24 Kb1 Qa5 25 Rxd6 Qa2+ 26 Kc2 Bxc4? (26...Rxc4+ is not quite possible 27 bxc4 b3+ 28 Kd1 Qb1+ 29 Nc1 Rxd6 30 Qxd6 Qc2+ 31 Ke1 Qxc1+ 32 Kf2 Qxh1 33 Qxe6+ Kf8 34 Qxe5) 27 Rd8+ Kg7 28 Qd7+ Kf6 29 bxc4 Rxc4+ 30 Kd2 the king runs but it cannot be caught 30...Qxb2+ 31 Ke3 Rc3+ 32 Nxc3 Qxc3+ 33 Kf2 Ra2+ 34 Kg3 1-0 **17...Nxd5 18 Rxd5** 18 exd5 allows 18...Bf5 when the white king is embarrassed. For instance: 19 g4 Rc8+ 20 Kd2 Rc2+ 21 Ke1 Bc8 and White is in trouble. **18...Be6 19 Rd2 Rb6** Tiviakov brings the rook into the attack by preparing to shift it to the a-file **20 Kb1** White makes room for the knight to defend the a2-pawn. **20...Ra6 21 Nc1 Qe7 22 Nd3 Rb8** Perhaps 22...f5 should be considered **23 Rc1 Rab6** 23...f5!? is interesting **24 g3** A neat idea to facilitate a future f4-f4. 24 Rdc2 is also simple and good offering roughly equal chances. **24...f6 25 Qe3 Kg7?! 25...a5 26 h5** with the initiative. For example: 26...g5 27 f4 a4 and a double-edged game is the result. **26 h5! gxh5** If Black wastes a move with 26...R6b7 then White can attack with the line 27 hxg6 hxg6 28 Rh1 g5 29 Rdh2. **27 Rh2 Bf7 28 g4 Kh8 29 gxh5 Rg8 30 f4 Rb5 31 f5 d5 32 h6** 32 Rhc2 is worth a try to infiltrate on the queenside **32...dxe4 33 Nc5 Rb6 34 Rg1 Rc8**



35 Rhg2?? This has to be the result of time-trouble! **35...Qxc5 0-1**

Gary wants your questions on openings!! Send it along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence. [Yes, I have a question for Gary!](#)



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