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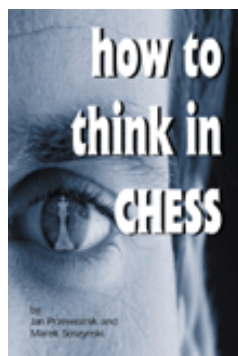
Opening Lanes is based in large part on readers' questions. Do you have a question about a particular opening line? Baffled by a branch of the Benoni or Budapest? Submit your questions (with you full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Gary will reply in his next *Chess Cafe* column...

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COLUMNISTS

Opening Lanes

Gary Lane



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Gold Medals

The chess Olympiad ended in victory for Ukraine who duly picked up their gold medals. However, if certain openings had to be awarded their own prizes then the firmly established Queen's Gambit would probably win Gold; the Benoni might take Silver, while the Philidor would be lucky to be awarded Bronze. Where does that leave 2 b3 against the Sicilian? **Nat Clark** from **England** dubs it the Short Sicilian and I reckon it might be sufficient for a tin medal because it comes about fourth in my rankings.

Nigel Short-Devaki Prasad Commonwealth Championship, Mumbai 2004

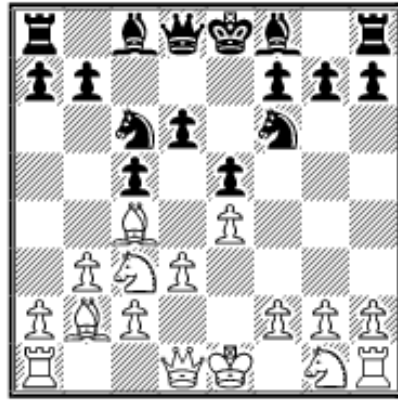
1 e4 c5 2 b3



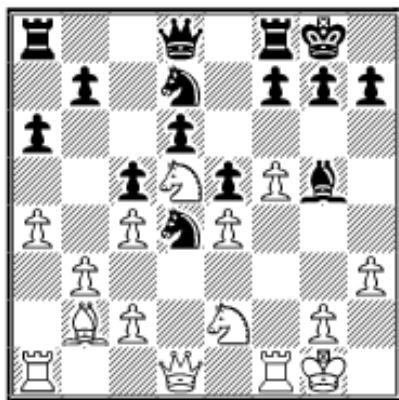
Nigel Short has added respectability to this sideline of the Sicilian in recent years. The former world title challenger is still highly rated at 2687 and uses it as a way to avoid preparation. At international level it is easy for an opponent to have all of Short's games on a computer, but by playing different lines against the Sicilian it will prove to be difficult to accurately predict the opening line.

2...Nc6 3 Bb2 e5 This is arguably the toughest defence because it blocks the a1-h8 diagonal. White will now have to concentrate on a plan such as f2-f4 to try and maximize his dark-squared bishop. It will also soon become evident that with no pawn to cover the d5-square White will endeavor to occupy it with a piece. **4 Bc4 Nf6** Or 4...d6 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 Nf3 (this is a tame response because it makes more sense to try and open lines by preparing f2-f4) 6...Bg4 7 h3 Bh5 8 g4 Bg6 9 d3 Be7 10 Nh4 Nd4 with a level position, M.Tassopoulos-A.Panagiotopolous, Agios Kyrkos 2004. **5 d3** Also

possible is 5 Nc3 Be7 6 d3 0-0 7 Nge2 (this is the same plan as Short employs in the main game and is surely the right way to handle the opening) 7...a6 8 a4 Rb8 9 0-0 Nh5 10 Nd5 b5? 11 axb5 axb5 12 Bxb5! (a nice little tactic which gives White the much better game) 12...Rxb5 13 Nec3 (the point is revealed because now the rook on b5 and the knight on h5 are attacked so White regains his piece) 13...Rb8 14 Qxh5 d6 15 f4 gave White a clear advantage in Y.Balashov-I.Korobov, Elista 2001. **5...d6 6 Nc3**



5...Be7 And now: **a)** 6...Be6 7 Nge2 Be7 (if 7...Bxc4 then 8 dxc4 is to White's advantage because he can easily plant a knight on d5 or campaign against the backward d6-pawn. Although Black might well install a knight on d4 the difference is that it can be ousted with c2-c3) 8 0-0 0-0 9 f4 exf4 10 Nxf4 Bxc4 11 bxc4 (11 dxc4 is also good although White is wary of not supporting his e-pawn) 11...Nd7 12 Ncd5 Nde5 13 Nh5 with an edge because White can transfer his queen to the kingside to aid the attack, F.Bellini-N.Ronchetti, Reggio Emilia 2003. **b)** 6...Nd4 7 a4 Be7 8 Nge2 (once again White prepares to instigate kingside action with the pawn break f2-f4) 8...0-0 9 0-0 Bg4 10 f3 Be6 (10...Bh5 is also possible but then it neglects the control of the d5-square which White is keen to occupy) 11 f4 exf4 12 Nxf4 Bg4 13 Qd2 Nh5 14 Nxh5 Bxh5 15 Nd5 Bg5 16 Qf2 gave White superior attacking chances thanks to his well placed pieces, A.Krayz-E.Karasik, Ramat Aviv 2004. **7 Nge2** White develops the knight on e2 to allow the possibility of breaking out on the kingside with f2-f4. **7...0-0 8 0-0 a6 9 a4** Short takes time to contain Black's activity on the queenside by curtailing ...b7-b5. **9...Nd4** Alternatively, 9...Nb4 has the merit of trying to exploit the advance of the a-pawn by installing a knight on a relatively safe square and intending ...Be6 hoping for ...d6-d5. **10 h3** This is another safe move, which is designed to maintain the tension. If 10 f4 then 10...Bg4 offers equality because Black can exchange pieces on e2. **10...Be6 11 f4 Nd7!?** Prasad prepares for the advance of the f-pawn by preparing to ease his congestion with ...Bg5. I think 11...Qc7! is a high-class waiting move because 12 f5 allows the surprising 12...d5! when 13 fxe6 (13 Nxd5 Bxd5 14 Bxd5 Nxd5 15 exd5 Qd7 16 Nxd4 cxd4 17 Qf3 Rac8 18 Rf2 Rfd8 is slightly better for Black) 13...dxc4 14 exf7+ Rxf7 15 bxc4 offers roughly equal chances. **12 f5 Bxc4 13 dxc4 Bg5 14 Nd5**



Short's star piece in the game is the dominating central knight **14...Nf6**. Instead **14...Nxe2+ 15 Qxe2 Nf6** has the merit of depriving Short of the powerful influence of the knight on d5 but **16 Rad1 Nxd5 17 Rxd5** just gives White an excellent game because he has long term pressure against the weak, backward d-pawn. **15 Nec3 Kh8 16 Nxf6 Qxf6 17 Nd5**. Once again the theme of a strong knight is an indication of Short's

positional strength because it is dictating the game. **17...Qh6 18 Kh2 g6?! 19 c3 Nc6 20 f6!** The black bishop is effectively locked out of the game while the queen is also reduced to a limited role of avoiding being captured! **20...Qh5**



21 Rf3! It is tempting to exchange queens but Short is wise enough to know that the timing is not quite right. The key to winning such positions is to condemn the black bishop and queen to a life as spectators on the kingside, and then concentrate on the queenside. **21...Rae8 22 g3 Re6 23 Kg2 Rc8 24 a5** Now White will turn his attention to the queenside as a classic way to exploit the marooned black queen.

24...Nb8 25 Qd3 Nd7 26 Raf1 This simply defends the f-pawn before he will seek to infiltrate Black's position. **26...Bh6 27 b4 Bg5 28 Ba3 Bh6 29 R3f2 Bg5 30 bxc5 Nxc5 31 Bxc5 dxc5** If **31...Rxc5** then **32 Qb1** targets the b7-pawn and Black's position collapses. The key is the powerful knight on d5, which dominates play. **32 h4 Bh6 33 Qe2** Finally, Short decides it is time to exchange queens to make sure that there are no tricks available. **33...Qxe2 34 Rxe2 g5 35 Kh3 gxh4 36 Kxh4 Rg8 37 Rf5 Rd8 38 Rb2 Rd7 39 Rf1 Re8 40 Rfb1 Rb8 41 Rb6 1-0** The threat is **Rxa6** and Black sensibly gave up.

Of course, it is a risky business to play uncommon lines but at international level that is the modern way to keep everyone from guessing your opening choice. I had such an experience at the chess Olympiad where on board 2 for Australia I had to face Nigel Short who was representing England with the grandmaster playing an odd opening line of the French Defence. The game started **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2** and now he played **3...h6**. I hope someone asks to see the rest of the opening because I will have a chance to reveal my victory to a larger audience!

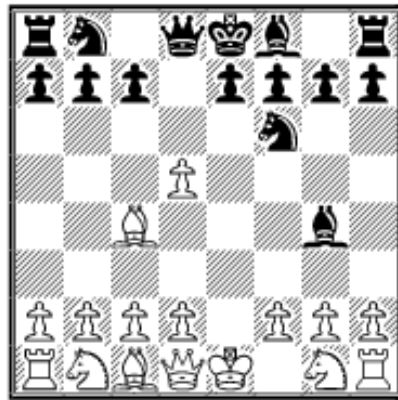
Dave Van der Kiso from the **Netherlands** writes "I've been playing the Icelandic Gambit with Black **1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 c4 e6** for two years. This opening fits my style, because I like to play very aggressively and give my opponent no chance to get in the game. I really like this opening, but as in every opening there are a few lines I dislike. The most

frustrating line is 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 Bb5+. There is no problem when I can win back my pawn, but what is my compensation when White hardly defends his extra pawn?"

Well, every game as Black cannot be a potential brilliancy so sometimes you just have to be ready for a workman like performance. If you are always presented with an equal position straight from the opening then you should be pleased because top players spend all their time trying to achieve such a status. I think with White you can dictate matters more easily but as Black you sometimes have to be patient.

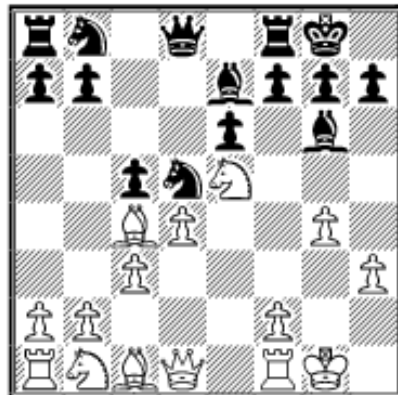
Ricardo Medina-Fa Eid Olympiad Bled 2002

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 Bb5+ Bd7 I have seen a few players trying to keep the game sharp by testing the pawn sacrifice 3...c6 but after 4 dxc6 Nxc6 5 Nf3 White is already better because Black has very little compensation for the pawn. **4 Bc4 Bg4**



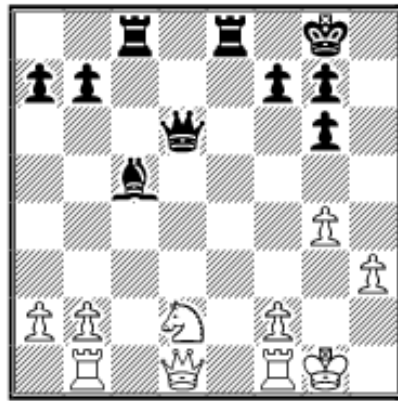
5 Nf3 This is the quiet response where White declares he is just happy to develop his pieces. I think Black should be happy to have achieved equality. After all some Sicilian Dragon players have to play 24 moves to achieve the same success. The critical test is 5 f3 which compromises the pawn structure but ensures he can hang on to the extra pawn for a while longer: 5...Bf5 6 Nc3 Nbd7 7 d3 with roughly equal

chances. **5...Nxd5 6 0-0 e6 7 d4 Be7 8 c3 0-0** Black whisks his king to safety. Other tries: **a)** 8...Nd7 9 Re1 0-0 10 Nbd2 N7f6 11 Ne4 Nxe4 12 Rxe4 Nf6 13 Re1 c5 (a standard idea to challenge the centre and make it difficult for White to make progress) 14 Be3 Rc8 with a level position, V.Hansen-R.Vagle, Oslo 1998. **b)** 8...c6 9 Re1 0-0 10 Nbd2 Nd7 11 Nf1 Re8 12 Ne3 Bh5 13 Be2 Bg6 gave Black a solid position, L.Kempen-T.Stanning, Box Hill 2001. **9 h3** Also possible is 9 Nbd2 c5 (this idea is central to Black's plan to cause White problem by undermining the center) 10 dxc5 Bxc5 11 Ne4 Bb6 12 Bxd5 exd5 13 Ng3 Nc6 14 Qd3 Bxf3 15 Qxf3 with equal chances, M.Oliveira-P.Oliveira, Lisbon 2001. **9...Bh5!? 10 g4 Bg6 11 Ne5 c5!?**



This is a key idea in this variation for Black to create some pressure in the centre and also give him more room to develop his pieces such as ...Nb8-Nc6. **12 Nxg6 hxg6 13 Bxd5?! The Honduras International player starts to go astray. The bishop should be preserved because there is no advantage to be gained from exchanging pieces. 13...exd5** I prefer 13...Qxd5 to activate the queen where it is not easily harassed

because, with a pawn on c3, there is no space for the queen's knight to be developed on that square. **14 Be3 cxd4 15 Bxd4** White might argue that he has some chances because he can target the isolated d5-pawn. However, the problem is that with a pawn on g4 his kingside is too exposed. **15...Nc6 16 Be3 Rc8 17 Nd2 d4!?** Eid takes the opportunity to get rid of the isolated d-pawn, which means that White will run out of potential targets. **18 cxd4 Nxd4 19 Rb1 Nc2 20 Qf3** If **20 Rc1** then **20...Nxe3 21 fxe3 Bg5** highlights the power of the bishop compared to the passive knight. **20...Nxe3 21 Qxe3 Bc5** Black can now gain time attacking the white queen. **22 Qe2 Re8 23 Qd1 Qd6**



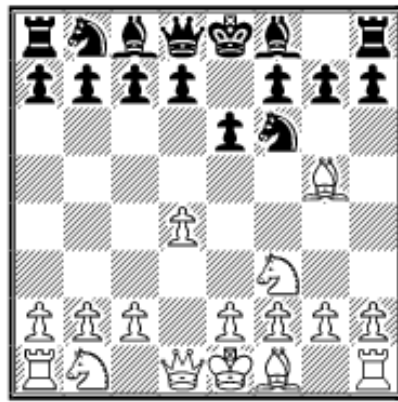
Black is ready to play ...Qg3+ with an instant win guaranteed. **24 Kg2 Qd5+ 25 Nf3 Qxa2** Well, you can't argue with winning a pawn. Basically, Black's opening has been a success because he quickly achieved equality and then slowly but surely made steady progress. **26 Qd7 Qb3 27 Rfd1 Qb6 28 Ne5 Qe6** It is understandable that Black wants to exchange queens when he is up on material but **28...Qf6** has the merit of

turning defence into attack. **29 Qxe6 Rxe6 30 Nf3 Re2 31 Rbc1?** I can only assume this is the result of a time-trouble crisis. Instead **31 Rd2** prevents any immediate disaster. **31...Rxf2+ 32 Kg3 Rxb2 33 Rxc5 Rxc5 34 Rd8+ Kh7 35 Ng5+ Rxg5 0-1**

G. Verardi from **Italy** has received some friendly advice but wants a second opinion. He is rated 1600 and plays the Torre but his friend rated 2000 says it is bad. He asks, "What do you think about this system and is it necessary to adopt another kind of opening that is good to attack with."

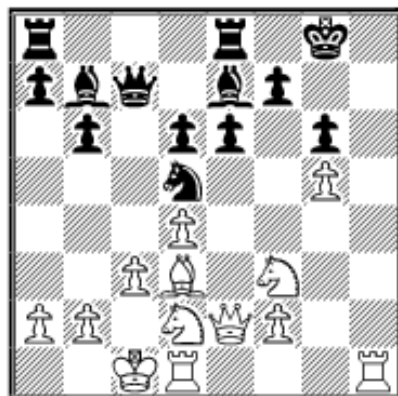
I often hear such complaints and when I look at the games of players rated around 1600 they often don't really understand the opening. Of course, this is normal because if you did know it really well then you would be very strong! It is a good idea to look at a few annotated Torre games to try and further your understanding. Perhaps your friend is right about the need to change your opening but it is best just to go through numerous games and choose an opening which appeals to you. Anyway for now let's see the Torre in action:

Sean Nagle-Tamas Fodor, Budapest 2004
1 Nf3 Nf6 2 d4 e6 3 Bg5



The Torre is a much respected opening which over the years has attracted plenty of top names. **3...c5 4 e3 Be7 5 Nbd2 b6 6 Bd3 Bb7 7 c3** The white pawn structure is similar to the main line Colle except the dark-squared bishop is more actively placed on g5. For instance: 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 e3 c5 4 Bd3 Be7 5 Nd2 b6 6 c3 Bb7. **7...cxd4!?** This releases the tension in the centre and makes things easier for White. This is

because now the half-open e-file can be occupied by either the queen or rook. Other moves have been tested and judging from the following encounters particularly in Australia: **a) 7...d6 8 0-0 Nbd7 9 Qe2** (9 e4 looks like a reasonable alternative) **9...0-0 10 Rfe1 Nd5 11 Bxe7 Qxe7 12 a4 cxd4 13 Nxd4** (taking back with the knight looks odd but 13 exd4 allows 13...Nf4 14 Qe3 Nxd3 15 Qxd3 with an equal position) **13...Ne5 14 Ba6 Rab8 15 Bxb7 Qxb7 16 Red1 Rfd8 ½-½ M.Ginat-A.Allen, Melbourne 1999. b) 7...0-0 8 0-0 Nc6 9 dxc5!?** **bxc5 10 e4 d5** (10...d6 is also possible to deter White from advancing the e-pawn which would allow the light-squared bishop to attack the black kingside) **11 Re1 d4! 12 Nc4 Rb8 13 Qe2 Nh5 14 Bd2 dxc3 15 bxc3 Qc7 16 e5** gave White good attacking chances in T.Chisholm-M.Weeks, Suncoast 1999. **8 exd4 0-0** Or **8...d6 9 0-0 Nbd7 10 a4 a6 11 Re1 0-0 12 b4** (12 Qe2 to coordinate the rooks can also be considered) **12...a5 13 Qb3 axb4 14 cxb4 Bd5 15 Qb2 h6 16 Be3 Qb8 17 Rec1 Qb7** gave Black a slight edge in D.Franciskovic-B.Franciskovic, Rijeka 2001. **9 Qe2** The queen invariably comes to e2 in these lines because it allows for the rooks to be coordinated after castling. **9...d6 10 h4!** I am not sure if this is the perfect move but you have to admire his attacking spirit. **10...Nbd7 11 0-0-0 Re8** Fodor makes room for his queen's knight on f8 but this a clear defensive measure. I prefer **11...Rc8** in a bid to think about counter-attacking. **12 Bxf6 Nxf6 13 g4 Qc7?! I** think it is time to challenge White on the validity of the attacking system with **13...Nxc4** when White has some pressure upon **14 Rhg1** but it is debatable if it justifies the pawn. **14 g5 Nd5 15 h5 g6?! Black** should at least try **15...Nf4** to exchange off the aggressively posted bishop **16 Qe3 Nxd3+ 17 Qxd3** when White still has an initiative. **16 hxg6 hxg6**



17 Bxg6! The American smashes the defences and it is time for Black to go home. **17...fxg6 18 Qxe6+ 1-0**

I hope you continue to play the Torre with success.

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