

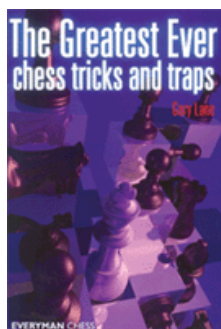


## COLUMNISTS

### Opening Lanes

Gary Lane

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## The Other Guys

A key to success can be to get your opening on the board as soon as possible to stop your opponent playing their favourite variation. After three moves in the Sicilian it is possible to get your own way, but you still need to know what to do next. That is when you need to know what the other chess masters are playing.

**Andrew Green** from **Scotland** recalls, "I prepared as white for the popular line 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5 Nbd7. I was surprised when my opponent changed his usual move to 3...Bd7 and I was unable to prove any advantage in the opening. Can you suggest anything?"

This line in the Sicilian is growing in popularity because it offers White the perfect opportunity to avoid variations such as the Sicilian Dragon or the Najdorf, which saves a lot of time analysing the fabulously complicated lines associated with those openings. The only snag for White is that so much attention has been lavished on 3 Bb5+ at a high level and Black tends to equalise fairly easily. Still, there is always room for improvement and in the following game the new British Champion wins the title in a clinical fashion:

**Michael Adams - Simon Williams**  
British Championship 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ Bd7 4 Bxd7+ Qxd7 5 c4!?**



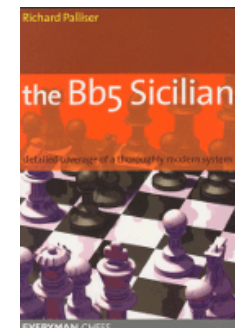
[FEN "rn2kbnr/pp1qpppp/3p4/2p5/2P1P3/5N2/PP1P1PPP/RNBQK2R b KQkq c3 0 5"]

White takes steps to stamp out the prospect of a quick ...d6-d5 by Black and this appears to be a good test of Black's set-up. **5...Nf6** Also possible is a) 5...g6 6 d4 and now a1) 6...cxd4 7 Nxd4 Bg7 8 Nc3 Nc6 9 Nde2 (9 Be3 is also possible) 9...Nf6 10 f3 0-0 11 0-0 Rfc8 (or 11...e6 12 Bg5 h6 13 Be3 Rad8 14 Qc1 {14 Qd2 looks obvious, but 14...d5! is a good reply} 14...Kh7 {now 14...d5 is no longer impressive because of 15 Rd1 pinning the pawn} 15 Rd1 Rfe8 16 Kh1 Qc7 17 Qd2 led to equal chances in Ni Hua-I.Nepomniachtchi, Sochi 2009) 12 b3 Nd8 13 Be3 Ne6 14 Qd2 Nc5 15 Rab1 Qe8 16 Rfd1 as usual a lot of manoeuvring is required to extract an advantage, D.Rodin-E. Morozov, Voronezh 2007. a2) 6...Bg7 7 d5 Nf6 8 Nc3 0-0 9 0-0 (this now resembles a 1 d4 opening because of the pawn structure, which is what hardly what you are aiming for when playing the Sicilian as black) 9...Na6 10 h3 e5 11 a3 Nh5 12 Rb1, intending b2-b4, with a slight advantage, G.Meier-M. Noack, Dresden 2010. b) 5...Nc6 6 Nc3 Ne5 7 d4 (7 d3 is the safe and steady response) 7...Nxf3+ 8 gxf3 and now a) 8...cxd4 9 Qxd4 e6 10 Be3 Ne7 11 f4 Nc6 12 Qd2 Be7 13 Rg1!? (I also like 13 0-0-0) 13...g6 14 0-0-0 Rd8 15 Kb1!? Qc7 16 Nb5 Qc8 (or 16...Qb8 17 Nxa7!? Nxa7 18 Qd4 with advantage to White) 17 Qc3 and White was better in Zhang Zhong-Zhao Jun Yongchuan 2003. b) 8...0-0-0 9 Be3 e6 10 Qb3 looks encouraging for White. c) 8...Nf6

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9 dxc5 dxc5 10 Bf4 Nh5 (instead 10...0-0 is met by 11 Nb5, threatening checkmate in one move when 11...Qxd1+ 12 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 13 Kxd1 with equal chances) 11 Be3 e6 12 Qb3 Be7 13 Rd1 Qc6 14 Qb5 gave White the initiative, Ni Hua-Ji Dan Xinghua 2010. **6 Nc3 g6 7 d4 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bg7 9 f3** The idea is not only to support the e4-pawn, but also facilitate Bc1-e3 without fearing Black trying to exchange the bishop with ...Nf6-g4. If White is looking for something different, I would recommend h2-h3 where there is more scope to find improvements, because everybody concentrates on systems associated with f2-f3. **9...0-0 10 Be3!?**



[FEN "rn3rk1/pp1qppbp/3p1np1/8/2PNP3/2N1BP2/PP4PP/R2QK2R b KQ - 0 10"]

An important statement of intent that White is looking for a victory. The reason being is that 10 0-0 is almost regarded as a silent draw offer because so many games head for a peaceful conclusion. For example, 10...Rc8 11 b3 d5! (this is the key move that promises Black equality and the reason why Adams avoided castling kingside on move ten) 12 exd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 e6 14 Bh6 exd5 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 16 cxd5 White is happy to head towards the draw by encouraging further exchanges (16 Nb5 or 16 Rc1 are other ways to try to get something from the position) 16...Qxd5 17 Ne2 Qe5 18 Qd4 (or 18 f4 Qe3+ 19 Kh1 Nc6 20 Rf3 Qe8 21 Qd2 J.Pribyl-P.Velicka, Pardubice 2010) 18...Nc6 19 Qxe5+ Nxe5 20 Rac1 ½-½, R.Ekstroem-J.Gallagher, Lenzerheide 2010. **10...Rc8** Black follows the usual strategy of targeting the c4-pawn with thoughts of organising ...d6-d5 in the right circumstances. In the heavyweight encounter B.Macieja-B.Damljanovic, Vrsac 2006, Black delayed attacking the c-pawn by playing 10...a6. That game went 11 Rc1 Rc8 12 b3 Qd8 13 Qd2 Nc6 14 Nde2 (14 0-0 is worth considering, although 14...Qa5 is about level) 14...Rab8 15 0-0 Qa5 16 Rfd1 b5 17 Nd5 Qxd2 18 Rxd2 Nxd5 19 cxd5 Nb4 20 Rxc8+ Rxc8 21 Kf2 led to an equal ending, but White eventually won. **11 b3 e6** The grandmaster from Qatar, Al Modiahki, is an expert on this variation and his games are well worth a look because he manoeuvres well in such positions to eventually extract an advantage: a) 11...a6 12 a4 Nc6 13 0-0 Qc7 14 Nde2 (this theme of moving the knight out the way is a ploy to maintain the tension) 14...Qa5 15 Qd2 Rd8 16 Rab1 with a level position, M.Al Modiahki-H.Ziska, Dresden 2008. b) 11...Nc6 12 Rc1 a6 13 Nxc6 Rxc6 14 a4 e6 15 0-0 Qd8 when White is able to keep on manoeuvring to extract a slight advantage, M.Al Modiahki-A.Obodchuk, Dresden 2008. c) If Black tries to copy the drawing line with 11...d5?, then the difference of Be3 compared to castling is revealed upon 12 exd5 Nxd5? 13 Nxd5 e6 14 Nc3 and, of course, the knight on d4 is protected leaving White with a winning advantage. **12 Rc1 d5?!** The Englishman is keen to replicate similar lines associated with 10 0-0 and ploughs ahead with his plan of challenging the centre. **13 e5** Or 13 exd5?! exd5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 cxd5 Na6 with equal opportunities and arguably Black has a slight initiative. **13...Ne8 14 cxd5 exd5 15 f4** All that has happened after Black's brief burst of activity is that he has been saddled with an isolated d-pawn. Perhaps just as importantly Black has a passive position with little sign of counterplay, which would not be to his liking because Williams is renowned for his attacking style. **15...Nc6 16 0-0 Nc7 17 Nxc6 bxc6 18 Ne4!**



[FEN "r1r3k1/p1nq1pbp/2p3p1/3pP3/4NP2/1P2B3/P5PP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 0 18"]

A nice way to centralise the knight by relying on the pin along the d-file. Now the knight is well placed to hop on to the important squares c5, d6 or even f6 depending how Black responds. Instead, 18 Na4 exploits the backward c-pawn by aiming for the c5-square, but Black is better placed to cope with that upon 18...Ne6 when 19 Nc5 Nxc5 20 Bxc5 a5 is a little better for White. **18...Ne8** Or 18...Ne6, which is less impressive upon 19 f5! gxf5 20 Rxf5 with a terrific position. **19 Nc5** The d6- and f6-squares are now covered by the black knight, so White can occupy the c5-square with impunity. **19...Qe7 20 Nd3 Qe6 21 Qf3** White is manoeuvring around to keep probing and force Black to make concessions. **21...a5 22 Nc5** The white knight is rather influential and keeps a grip on the position by making sure that Black remains passive. **22...Qe7 23 Bf2 Rab8 24 Qh3 f5** Williams blocks the influence of the queen on the h3-c8 diagonal, but it does mean that White is presented with a passed e-pawn. After a casual move such as 24...Kh8?, White can seize his chance with 25 Nd7 when 25...Rb7 26 Nf6 wins, because of the twin threats against the rook on c8 and checkmate on h7. **25 Qc3** The white queen has done its job on the kingside by managing to have a passed pawn and is now ready to wreck havoc on the queenside. The first job is to target the a-pawn and stretch the defending forces. **25...Ra8?!** The obvious move, but it is flawed because of a neat combination. After 25...Qd8, then 26 Rc2 and White can gradually improve his position with a timely Ne6 and Bd4, leaving Black with a very poor position. **26 Na4** The immediate threat is the fork Nb6, but Black's pieces lack coordination and it is difficult to stop and keep the position intact. **26...Ra6** Instead, 26...Qd8 does not help because the knight is supported by the bishop on f2 so he needs to move a rook: 26...Rc7 27 Bb6 Rcc8 28 Bc5 followed by the knight fork on b6 is bad news for Black. **27 Qd3 1-0**



[FEN "2r1n1k1/4q1bp/r1p3p1/p2pPp2/N4P2/1P1Q4/P4BPP/2R2RK1 b - - 0 27"]

This is a good way to handle the variation and I have taken the liberty of analysing Mr. Green's game:

**Andrew Green - Ilya Golichenko**  
World Junior 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ Bd7 4 Bxd7+ Qxd7 5 0-0 Nc6 6 Qe2** The white queen gets out of the way to help connect the rooks and protect the e4-pawn. **6...Nf6 7 c3**



[FEN "r3kb1r/pp1qpppp/2np1n2/2p5/4P3/2P2N2/PP1PQPPP/RNB2RK1 b kq - 0 7"]

White patiently intends to create a pawn centre, which is considered a standard idea. I had a look in the databases and found the reader had some experience with this variation and in the game A.Green-C.Sreeves, Edinburgh 2009, White tried 7 Rd1, which has a decent reputation: 7...g6 8 c3 Qg4!? (an ambitious attempt to put pressure on the e4-pawn and upset White's usual steady progress; instead 8...Bg7 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 e5 Ne4 is similar to the main game, where once again 12 Nbd2 and 12 Ne1 are the main alternatives) 9 d3 c4 (9...Ne5 is interesting) 10 d4 Qxe4 11 Qxc4 Qd5 12 Qb3 Qxb3 13 axb3 (Black has finally managed to exchange queens, but White has a little edge because of the semi-open a-file) 13...Bg7 14 Nbd2 (I prefer 14 d5! to maintain the initiative) 14...Ne5 (14...Nb8 is met by 15 Be3 a6 16 c4 making room for the queen's knight to come to c3 with a slight edge) 15 Nxe5 dxe5 16 Be3 a6 17 c4, followed by Nc3, favours White) 14...0-0 15 b4 a6 16 Nc4 Nd5 17 Re1 Rfc8 18 Ne3 Nxe3 19 Bxe3 (the position is level, but if you want to win you just have to be patient and play such positions for a long time in the quest for a point) 19...d5 20 Bf4 e6 21 Nd2 ½-½. **7...e6** Another game by Green, but this time against S.Hilton, Edinburgh 2009 saw Black fianchetto with 7...g6 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 Bg7 (or 9...d5 10 e5 Ne4 11 Be3 Bg7 12 Ne1 h6 13 Nd3 Ng5 14 Nc5 Qc8 15 Nc3 0-0 16 f4 gave White a nice advantage in V.Nevednichy-A.Jankovic, Djakovo 2005) 10 Nc3 (10 d5 Nb4 11 Nc3 is also worth investigating if White needs an alternative) 10...0-0 11 Rd1 d5 12 Ne5 Qe6 13 Nxc6 Qxc6 14 f3 (14 e5 Ne4 {14...Nd7 can be met by 15 h4, intending h4-h5, to undermine the black kingside pawn barrier} 15 Nxe4 dxe4 16 d5 Qc7 17 d6 with the initiative) 14...Rad8 15 Bg5 dxe4 16 fxe4 h6 17 Bh4 (17 d5 is another idea, so that the bishop can retreat to e3 without worrying about the threat to the pawn on e4) 17...Rfe8 (17...Rd7 preparing ...Nf6-h5 is Black's best plan) 18 Rac1 Qd7 19 Qf3 g5 20 Bg3 Qg4 (Black is happy to exchange queens as a prelude to agreeing a draw, but White is ready to keep going) 21 Be5 Qxf3 22 gxf3 Rd7 23 Kf2 Red8 24 Ke3 Kh7 25 Rg1 h5 26 Ne2 Bh6 27 Rc5 Rg8 28 Ng3 g4+ 29 f4 h4 30 Nf5 g3? 31 Bxf6 exf6 32 hxg3 Bf8 (or 32...hxg3 33 Rxg3 Rxg3+ 34 Nxg3 gives White a winning ending thanks to the extra pawn and better pawn structure) 33 Rh1 1-0. **8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 d5** Black fights for control of the centre otherwise White would steadily develop his queenside with an edge. **10 e5 Ne4 11 Be3 Be7**



[FEN "r3k2r/pp1qbppp/2n1p3/3pP3/3Pn3/4BN2/PP2QPPP/RN3RK1 w kq - 0 12"]

**12 Nbd2** Mr. Green commented that he knew this was slightly unusual, but wanted to avoid his opponent's opening knowledge. This may well be true, but the stellar cast of players who have employed 12 Ne1 suggest that a serious improvement can be found by retreating the knight and paying special

attention to the following games. For instance, a) 12...f5 13 f3 Ng5 14 Nd3 0-0 15 Nc3 Nf7 16 Nf4 (perhaps 16 Rac1 with the idea of doubling rooks on the c-file is worth considering) 16...Bg5 17 Rad1 Bxf4 18 Bxf4 Rfc8 19 h4 Na5 20 g4 gave White the initiative in A.Kovalev-K.Shiven, Alushta 2009. b) 12...f6 13 f3 Ng5 14 Nd2 this is the current favourite of the elite players (14 Nd3 is also fine, when 14...fxe5 15 dxe5 Nf7 16 Bf2 0-0 17 Nd2 is level) 14...0-0 15 Nd3 Rac8 (maybe 15...fxe5 16 dxe5 Nf7 17 f4 Nh6 18 Nf3 {18 Nc5 is interesting} 18...Qe8 19 Rac1 Rc8 20 a3 Qg6 21 b4 Ng4 22 Bc5 Bxc5+ 23 Rxc5 Nh6 ½-½, J.Smeets-M.Vachier Lagrave, German Team Championship 2009) 16 Rac1 Nf7 (or 16...b6 17 Bf2 Nf7 18 a3 f5 19 h4 with a level position, E.Alekseev-V.Gashimov, Elista 2008) 17 f4 f5 18 a3 b6 19 h3 with equal opportunities, N.Short-U.Andersson, London 1982. **12...f6?!** The ploy of playing something different works, because Black makes the usual reply that is normally reserved for 12 Ne1. The alternatives 12...0-0 or 12...Rc8 is about equal. **13 exf6 gxf6 14 Nxe4** The first time I saw this position this seemed the obvious move, but it does not quite convince under closer scrutiny. Also possible is a) 14 Rac1 might be an option in view of 14...0-0 15 Bh6 Nxd2 16 Qxd2 with the initiative, because the black king looks vulnerable. b) 14 Bf4 Nxd2 (instead 14...f5 15 Ne5 Nxe5 16 Bxe5 0-0 17 f3 favours White) 15 Bxd2 highlights the problem of a quick ...f7-f6 in this variation because the e6-pawn is weak. For instance, 15...0-0 16 Rfe1 Kf7 17 Nh4, intending Bh6 and Qh5+, with dangerous play. **14...dxe4 15 Nd2 Qd5!** The queen does an excellent job of protecting the pawn and stopping White from safely checking on h5. **16 Qg4 f5 17 Qh5+ Kd7**



[FEN "r6r/pp1kb2p/2n1p3/3q1p1Q/3Pp3/4B3/PP1N1PPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 18"]

It is surprising after a casual glance that Black allows his king to end up on d7, but he can actually get away with this. The problem for White is that he needs reinforcements to pursue the black king and it is not easy to organise that in double quick time. **18 Kh1?!** A waiting move, but it does nothing to improve the position. 18 Nb1, aiming for the c3-square to oust the black queen makes sense, 18...Bb4 probably not the best, but the sort of move the majority of players will try in such circumstances: 19 Nc3 Bxc3 (after 19...Qa5, the star move is 20 d5! and Black is busted) 20 bxc3 Raf8 to cover the f7-square before the white queen has time to do some damage 21 c4 Qxc4 22 Bh6 Re8 23 Rab1 b6 24 d5! leads to excellent play; 18 f3 exf3 (18...Nb4 is a clever reply and achieves equality) 19 Nxf3 Rag8 offers equal opportunities. I reckon 18...f4! is correct, but a tough move to find at the board, but the most accurate reply. For instance, 19 Qxd5+ exd5 20 Bxf4 Nxd4 (20...Rh8 21 Be3 Nb4 22 Nc3 Rf5 when Black has decent compensation for the pawn, but it demands accurate defensive play) 21 Nc3 threatening the d5-pawn and Be5. **18...Rag8 19 f3 exf3 20 Qxf3 Nb4!**



[FEN "6rr/pp1kb2p/4p3/q1p2/1n1P4/4BQ2/PP1N2PP/R4R1K w - - 0 21"]

Golichenko can think about a knight fork with ...Nc2, but more importantly is ready to take back on d5 if the queens are exchanged. The classic way to play against an isolated pawn is to blockade it and then gradually undermine it. **21 Rac1?! A slight inaccuracy that makes it hard for White to seek equality.** I suspect 21 Rad1 to avoid the knight fork on c2 is an improvement, when 21... Rc8, as in the game, can be met by 22 Qh5 with equal chances. For instance, 22...f4 23 Qxd5+ Nxd5 24 Bxf4 and the difference compared to the main game is that there is no rook on c1 allowing White to take back on f4. **21... Rc8** Instead, 21...Nxa2 lets White get back in the game with 22 Ra1, when 22...Nb4 23 Rxa7 wins the pawn back with a slight edge. **22 Bf4** 22 Qh5 allows the crafty 22...f4!, when 23 Qxd5+ Nxd5 24 Bf2 Rhg8 is a little better for Black. **22...Rxc1 23 Rxc1 Rc8** Black is happy to exchange rooks so that his king on d7 becomes active in the ending rather than a possible hindrance in the middlegame. **24 Rxc8 Kxc8 25 a3 Qxf3 26 Nxf3 Nd3** Black is clearly on top, but White can still fight for a chance to draw. **27 Bg5 Bd6 27...Kd7!** looks to be a tough reply, when 28 b4 Bxg5 29 Nxg5 h6 30 Nf3 Kc6 looks grim for White. **28 b4 Kd7 29 Kg1 Kc6 30 Kf1 Kb5**



[FEN "8/pp5p/3bp3/1k3pB1/1P1P4/P2n1N2/6PP/5K2 w - - 0 31"]

**31 Bf6?** The position seems to be poor and White goes astray. However, an interesting resource is presented by 31 g3! in view of 31...Ka4, as in the game, which is well met by 32 Ke2 Nb2 33 Bc1, followed by Ng5, which I think gives decent chances of survival. **31...Ka4 32 Ng5 Bxh2?!** Also very promising is 32...Kxa3!, when 33 Nxe6 Kxb4 looks rather intimidating because of the pair of passed pawns on the queenside. **33 Nxe6 Kxa3 34 Nc5?** I would be curious to know what Black had prepared for the superior 34 Be7! which is designed to slow down the progress of the black queenside pawns. Of course, 34...Nxb4 is met by 34...Ka4, but the passed d-pawn presents Black with a fresh set of problems. For instance, 35 d5 Kb5 36 Nd4+ Kc4 37 Nf3 Bf4 38 d6 Nxb4 39 d7 Nc6 40 d8Q Nxd8 41 Bxd8 and Black might still be favourite, but he would have to found accurate moves to get here in the first place and at least it will be a serious test of his technique) 35 d5 with a draw likely. **34...Nxc5 35 bxc5 Kb4** The position is dead lost because the outside passed a-pawn is hard to hold back. **36 Kf2 Bf4 37 Kf3 Bh6 38 g4 fxg4+ 39 Kxg4 Kc4 40 Kf3 Kd5 0-1**

**Mark Bryan** from **Cyprus** reveals he has been teaching his sister the Latvian. He reports, "I have been analysing 3 exf5 in the Latvian, but can find nothing for Black, not even an equal line. I have used chess engines, but they always say White is winning. What am I missing?"

I quite like the Latvian (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 f5) having played it in my youth during numerous five-minute games. It is one of those openings to which players can become devoted and in the past it was a favourite of correspondence players who wanted to entice their opponents into uncharted territory. In recent decades English grandmaster Tony Kosten wrote a thoughtful book on the opening, which inspired others to take up the opening. I did see Kosten play it in the first round of international open tournaments as a surprise weapon with considerable success. However, the modern chess software is fantastic and murky, exciting lines in the Latvian are usually now considered good for White. It is a shame that Black is struggling to impress, but that is certainly the reality at the moment.

It would be nice to think that some lines can be revived. In the meantime, here is a reminder as to why Black loves to play such a wacky opening:

**Alexandre Wallyn - Jonny Hector**  
Belfort 1988

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 f5**



[FEN "rnbqkbnr/pppp2pp/8/4pp2/4P3/5N2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq f6 0 3"]

The starting point of the Latvian. It is liable to provoke fear in those who are not prepared for the opening, but for others it might be a pleasant surprise. **3 exf5** This is the move that is annoying Mr. Bryan and it is the most obvious move in the position. Black is trying to play a sort of King's Gambit in reverse, so the gambit pawn is taken. 3 Nxe5 and 3 Bc4 are the main alternatives. **3...e4 4 Ne5** White is already creating serious problems by threatening Qh5+. Also possible is 4 Nd4 Qf6 (if 4...Nf6 to stop Qh5+, then 5 g4 looks like a sharp response) 5 Nb3 a timid retreat resulting in an equal position, but 5 Nb5! is more to the point when 5...Na6 6 N1c3 Qxf5 7 d3 favours White) 5...d5 6 Bb5+ c6 7 Be2 Bxf5 the position is roughly level, but Black soon builds up a strong initiative 8 0-0 Bd6 9 d4 Nd7 10 c3 h5 11 Bxh5 +? g6 12 Bg4 Bxh2+ 13 Kh1 Qh4 14 g3 Bxg3+ 15 Bh3 Qxh3+ 16 Kg1 Qh2 checkmate, A.Matein-D.Georgiev, Sofia 2010. Instead, 4 Qe2 is discussed in the next main game. **4...Nf6** The knight covers the h5-square to stop the queen delivering a decisive check. 4...Qf6 is not so good upon 5 Qh5+! (5 d4 has been tested in a number of games, but the queen check is what Black should fear) 5...g6 6 fxg6 hxg6 7 Qxg6+ Qxg6 8 Nxg6 Rh7 9 Nxf8 Kxf8 10 d3 it is time for Black to count the pawns and weep, D.Sinclair-T.Holmen, Dos Hermanas 2003. **5 Be2** White signals his intention to check on h5, which certainly seems pretty impressive. 5 d4!? is very popular, but it is not the critical line and allows Black to catch up on development. For instance, 5...d6 6 Nc4 Bxf5 7 Ne3 Bg6 and now a) 8 c4 (White wants to exert extra control over the d5-square) 8...Be7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Be2 c5 Black strikes in the centre and has no worries 11 Ned5 Nc6 led to equal chances in J.Klovans-T.Gietl, Regensburg 1997. b) 8 h4 d5 9 c4 Nc6 10 Nc3 dxc4 11 d5 Ne5 12 Nxc4 Nxc4?! (the best way to contain White is to play 12...Nd3+, when 13 Bxd3 exd3 14 0-0 Be7 intending to castle kingside offers equal opportunities) 13 Bxc4 a6 14 Be3 Bd6 15 h5 led to a slight edge in C.Crouch-S.Kindermann, London 1978. **5...d5?** A calculated gamble by Hector. At the time of the game he was an international master rated 2400, so he probably guessed that his unrated opponent would wilt at some stage. Still, it takes courage to play in this manner, but he is renowned for playing odd looking openings. Also possible is 5...Qe7? 6 Bh5+ g6 7 fxg6 Qxe5 8 g7+ Nxh5 9 gxh8Q Qxh8 10

Qxh5+ and Black can go home, L.Schneider-E.Fassl, Bexbach 1996. Probably best is 5...Be7 to make room for the king 6 Bh5+ Kf8 7 Nf7 (7 Nc3 also looks promising) 7...Qe8 8 Nxh8 Qxh5 (this is not so clear, because Black is hoping to take the trapped knight in the corner giving him two pieces for the rook) 9 Qxh5 Nxh5 10 g4 Nf6 11 g5 Nd5 12 g6 Kg8 13 Nf7 d6 (the position is about equal, which is the sort of situation Black wants because by now I reckon that White would have conceded a lot of time on the clock) 14 gxh7+ Kxh7 15 Rg1! Bxf5 with complicated play, but Black has sufficient compensation. **6 Bh5+ Ke7 7 b3** White wants to keep chasing the king, so he prepares Bc1-a3+. Or 7 d4 Bxf5 8 Bg5 g6 9 Bg4! Bxg4 10 Nxg4 Bg7 11 f3 with excellent play for White, because the king on e7 is misplaced. It is worth remembering that the obvious 7 Nf7 is met by 7...Qe8, but after 8 d3 Nxh5 9 Nxh8 Bxf5 10 0-0, I suspect White can engineer good chances against the exposed king before Black has time to capture the rook on h8. **7...Na6 8 d4** White is spoilt for choice, since his position looks so impressive because of the hapless king on e7. I also like 8 Bb2 with the idea that 8...Bxf5 can be met by the forcing line 9 Nf7 Qe8 10 Nxh8 Nxh5 (10...Qxh5?? is terrible in view of 11 Bxf6+ gxf6 12 Qxh5) 11 g4 and White will gain material. **8...Bxf5 9 Ba3** + It is tempting to chase the king, but the check does not cause maximum damage, A more measured approach with 9 Nc3 is worth considering. **9...c5 10 dxc5 Qa5+!** Finally, Hector is able to conjure up some counterattack chances and make his opponent think. **11 b4?!** Wallyn is getting carried away with the excitement of having lured a king to e7. The pawn sacrifice is not needed and merely encourages Black. 11 c3 is a decent response, when 11...Nxc5 is met by 12 0-0, but not 12 b4?! which is strongly rebuffed by 12...Qc7 threatening the knight on e5. **11...Nxb4 12 c6?** White reveals his idea to pin the queen's knight, but it fails to impress. A better idea is to admit that advancing the b-pawn is wrong and try 12 0-0. **12...Ke6!** It looks silly to start moving the king up the board, but the situation dictates such dramatic measures. **13 cxb7 Rb8 14 Bf7+?** The advantage has already slipped away, so giving away a knight is not sensible. Maybe 14 c3 is worth a try, but after 14...Nxh5 White is struggling, because 15 Qxh5 allows 15...Nc2+ winning easily. **14...Kxe5**



[FEN "1r3b1r/pP3Bpp/5n2/q2pkb2/1n2p3/B7/P1P2PPP/RN1QK2R w KQ - 0 15"]

This is a completely mad looking position, but Black is winning. It should come as no surprise if you take a close look at the position, because White's wretched development means he cannot exploit the exposed black king. **15 0-0 Rxb7 16 c3 Rxf7 17 Qd4+** At last White is able to get his queen involved with the attack, but you don't have to calculate variations to realise it needs reinforcements and the other pieces are poorly placed. **17...Ke6 18 cxb4 Qb6** Black is a piece up and an international master, so the result is not in doubt. **19 Qd2 Rd7 0-1**

It is clear from such an entertaining game why many players with the black pieces have given the Latvian a whirl. However, the more I look at it with the latest chess software, the more problems Black seems to have. In the next game, White easily gets an advantage from the opening and soon converts it into a win.

**Aleksandar Kovacevic - Rudi Regancin**

Ljubljana 2005

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 f5 3 exf5 e4**



[FEN "rnbqkbnr/pppp2pp/8/5P2/4p3/5N2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQKB1R w KQkq - 0 4"]

This is considered the main weapon for players with the black pieces, but nowadays it looks innocuous to me. After 3...d6, White needs to work quickly to stop Black from playing ...Bxf5 and consolidating his position by castling kingside, where he will be able to use the rook in an aggressive fashion along the semi-open f-file d4! is the best way to strike at Black's pawn structure to induce a weakness 4...e4 5 Ng5 Bxf5 there is a debate on how to proceed: a) 6 g4 Bc8 7 Nxe4 d5 8 Ng3 Qh4!? 9 Qe2+! Ne7 10 f3 (10 h3 looks like a much better way to protect the g-pawn, because in the game the knight is suddenly pinned) 10...Nbc6 11 Be3 gave White the advantage in M.Gluzman-M. Chapman, Canberra 1999. b) 6 Nc3 Nf6 7 f3 transposes to the previous note. c) 6 f3 Nf6 (or 6...exf3 7 Qxf3 Qc8 8 Bd3 intending to castle kingside with a winning position) 7 Nc3 d5 (the problem with 7...exf3? is that 8 Qxf3 hits the bishop on f5 and pawn on b7 pushing Black further on to the defensive 8...Qc8 9 Bc4 with a big advantage) 8 fxe4 Nxe4 (or 8...dxe4 9 Bc4 threatening Bf7+ or just Nf7) 9 Nxe4 Qe7 (of course 9...Bxe4 10 Nxe4 dxe4 11 Qh5+ wins) 10 Bb5+ Bd7 (10...c6 is met by 11 0-0! and Black is seriously in trouble) 11 Bxd7+ Nxd7 12 0-0 dxe4 13 Nxe4 when White is on top, D. Hristodorescu-E.Pessi, Bucharest 1993. **4 Qe2** The grandmaster pins the pawn, so Black needs to respond positively. **4...Qe7** Instead, 4...d5 is met by 5 d3 when 5...Bxf5 6 Nd4 Qd7 or 6...Bg6 7 dxe4 dxe4 8 Qb5+ Nd7 9 Ne6 Qc8 10 Bf4 Bd6 11 Nc3 wins) 7 Nc3 favours White; a sample line runs 7...Nf6?! 8 dxe4 dxe4 9 Qb5 Qxb5 10 Ncxb5 with a big advantage. **5 Nd4 Nf6** In the game M.Bajovic-F.Caroff, Metz 1988, Black chased the king's knight, but with no success: 5...c5 6 Nb5 d5 (6...Na6 runs into 7 N1c3! when 7...Nf6 8 d3 exd3 9 Nd6+ Kd8 10 Qxe7+ Kxe7 11 Bf4 is great for White) 7 d3 a6 (7...Bxf5 wins a pawn back, but after 8 Bf4 the threats of Nc7+ and Nd6+ are tough to meet adequately) 8 N5c3 exd3 (or 8...Nf6 9 dxe4 dxe4 10 Bg5 Bxf5 11 Nd5 is very strong) 9 cxd3 Nf6 10 Bg5 Nbd7 11 Nd2 (of course 11 Nxd5? is wrong in view of 11...Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Nxd5) 11...d4 12 Nce4 Kf7 13 Bf4 h6 14 0-0-0 Qd8 15 Nd6+! Bxd6 16 Qe6+ Kf8 17 Bxd6+ 1-0. **6 d3 c5?** Regancin wants to shoo the knight away so he can prepare to take on f5. The idea is flawed for tactical reasons. The option to put pressure on the knight and f5-pawn makes sense, but 6...Qe5 is easily dealt a blow with the simple 7 c3 and White remains on top. Probably 6...Nc6 is the best chance. **7 Nb5!**



[FEN "rnb1kb1r/pp1pq1pp/5n2/1Np2P2/4p3/3P4/PPP1QPPP/RNB1KB1R b KQkq - 0 7"]

The knight is well placed to cause mayhem because the squares on c7 and d6 are very inviting. **7...d5** Instead, 7...Na6 can be met by 8 Bf4 with excellent prospects, but also 8 N1c3 is great with a view to follow the sample line 8...exd3 9 Nd6+ Kd8 10 Qxe7+ Kxe7 11 Bf4 when the black king looks silly. 8

Bf4 White reinforces the threats by adding support for the knight to occupy either the c7- or d6-squares depending how Black responds. **8...Na6 9 Nd6+ Kd8**



[FEN "r1bk1b1r/pp2q1pp/n2N1n2/2pp1P2/4pB2/3P4/PPPP1QPPPP/RN2KB1R w KQ - 0 10"]

The opening has obviously gone wrong, when he has to give the right to castling with no obvious compensation. **10 dxe4 Nxe4** Black would have to be very brave or foolish to try 10...dxe4, because 11 Nc3, intending to castle queenside, looks like a brilliancy played a 100 years ago, given that Black's defence has been so poor. Much of the blame can be attributed to the choice of opening, because it is easy for Black to go astray and then be crushed. **11 Nxe4 Qxe4 12 Qxe4 dxe4 13 Nc3 Bxf5**



[FEN "r2k1b1r/pp4pp/n7/2p2b2/4pB2/2N5/PPP2PPP/R3KB1R w KQ - 0 14"]

After the series of exchanges, Black has finally won his pawn back, but crucially White still enjoys a strong initiative. **14 0-0-0+ Ke8** Black can try 14...Kc8, but 15 Bc4, followed by Rhe1, is very strong. **15 Nxe4!** A simple, but nice trick to go a pawn up and carry on attacking the beleaguered king on e8. **15...Bxe4 16 Re1 Nb4 17 Rxe4+ Kf7** Or 17...Kd8 18 Bb5 (threatening Re8 checkmate) 18...Be7 19 Rd1+ Kc8 20 Rxe7 and the game is over as a contest. **18 Bc4+ Kf6 19 g4** White is spoilt for good moves, but for the record the quickest win starts with 19 Re6+, when 19...Kf5 20 Rhe1! is extremely strong because taking the bishop results in a mating net upon 20...Kxf4 21 R6e5!, and the prospect of R1e4 checkmate should prompt resignation. **19...b5 20 Bxb5** White is two pawns, closing in on the black king and dominates the board. Victory is in sight. **20...h5 21 a3 hxg4 22 axb4 Rh3 23 Rhe1 Rf3 24 Be5+ Kg5 25 Rg1 Rxf2 26 Rfxg4+ Kf5 27 Rg5+ 1-0**

**Bob Piatt** from the USA came up with an interesting question: "I have a question about finishing off my opening repertoire. I, like Paul Manham of a few weeks ago, love the Sicilian Dragon (particularly the Accelerated Dragon). After a few years of moderate success with it, I found an article suggesting if you like the Dragon to try the English. I have settled on a variation of the English that (almost always goes) 1 c4 2 g3 3 Bg2 4 Nc3. I like both very much. My problem is finding my black reply to 1 d4. I have tried numerous things (QG, KI, Benoni, etc) and can't seem to find an opening that I like as much as the others. Is it just my problem or is there a "match" for me? Any ideas would be very greatly appreciated."

There is no direct link from the Dragon to replying against 1 d4, but I have to say that my first thoughts focussed on the Benko or Benoni because both

openings give Black active play. I then had a thought and decided to ask some top Dragon players which opening they recommend against 1 d4. I was coaching at the World under 20 Championship in Poland and passed on Mr Piatt's question to some of the juniors competing in the event. First up was **Clement Sreeves** from **Scotland** who declared that the Dutch Defence 1 d4 f5 is a good reply, because it promises tactical play and is particularly popular against club players who usually have problems against its direct style. I certainly agree with that, but could not help wondering why Clement actually plays the Semi-Slav? I also had a word with **Yang-Fan Zhou** representing **England** who felt you should play the King's Indian Defence, because it is very sharp and has opportunities to sacrifice material.

I hope that helps and if any other reader has the solution to what a Dragon player should play against 1 d4, then please let me know.

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**Opening Lanes** is based 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 your full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Gary will reply in his next **ChessCafe.com** column.

*[Yes, I have a question for Gary!](#)*

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