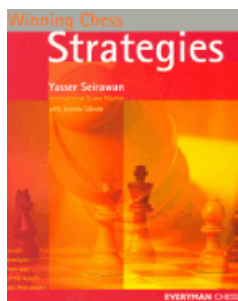




COLUMNISTS

Inside Chess

Yasser Seirawan



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Yasser Annotates

1987 United States Championship, Part Two

Yasser continues his coverage of the 1987 United States Championship, from the second issue of *Inside Chess* 1988/02.

Round Three

My typical slug-fest with Christiansen begins with me gaining a nice advantage early on and ends with me falling off the board, victim of some incredible tactical swindle. This time Larry lets me lead him gently to the slaughterhouse. As for Rohde-Kogan, White strangely frittered away a big edge; and Gurevich is still angry over his loss to Whitehead. Well he should be. A fascinating opening and middlegame position petered out to a stone-cold draw. Then, White, who had come to play, refused a draw and went on to win a hard struggle.

Kudrin and deFirmian contentedly disputed "their" variation of the Najdorf Sicilian. The game always appeared balanced and a draw was soon agreed. Good friends Wildman (Wilder) and Fed (Fedorowicz) drew within half an hour of play. Gulko survived a scare with the white pieces against Browne. White defended well, but Walter may not have made the most precise use of his advantage of the exchange.

I found the Benjamin-Dlugy feud the most interesting. Cordial and friendly off the board, they go for the throat at play time. A tremendous rivalry.

Benjamin, Joel (2575) - Dlugy, Maxim (2520)

USA-h Estes Park (3), 1987
Sicilian Defense [B66]

1.e4

I admire Joel's confidence in opening either e4 or d4. His ability to lead with both hands makes him a far more dangerous opponent. Still, he as yet is missing the depth of understanding necessary for a truly formidable two-punch combination. Perhaps specializing in one opening now, the other later, would make for an eventually powerful mix.

1...c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Bg5 e6 7.Qd2 a6 8.0-0-0 h6 9.Be3 Nxd4 10.Bxd4 b5 11.f4

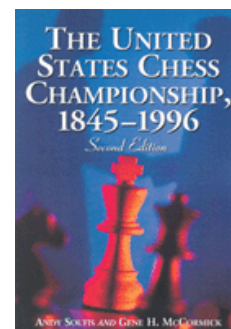
Recent innovations on this line see White tapping Black's extended queenside. Moves such as 11.Qe1 and 11.f3 have become increasingly popular.

11...Bb7 12.Bxf6 gxf6 13.f5

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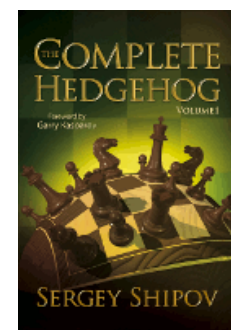
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Strategic plans are now defined. White wants to force Black to commit his e-pawn, after which his center weaknesses will mean eventual resignation. White intends to accomplish this by relocating his knight to either f4 or d4. The light-squared bishop will be effectively placed on c4, h3, or h5, with c4 being the ideal.

Black, too, has his strategic weapons. He looks to tie White to the defense of e4, so as to inhibit the knight's movement, and he can operate on the dark squares. That makes the square e5 a key post for either queen or bishop. Naturally, operations can also be carried out on the half-open c- and g-files. If White has to place his bishop passively on d3 then Black will have a freer hand in the middlegame. Finally, Black has a bright future in most endings due to his central pawn mass.

13...Qb6 14.fxe6

A question of style. I prefer keeping the tension: First of all, White denies Black any option of swinging his queen to g5 or his king rook to the queenside along the fifth rank. Secondly, Black now has a much more promising ending. Still, Joel has his reasons.

14...fxe6 15.Bd3

So here we are. White's bishop is now a temporary spectator to the strategic plans, and, worse, it blocks his attack against the pawn on d6. This allows Black the opportunity to activate his dark-squared bishop. Still, I'm not sure that activating the king bishop is Black's best decision. I prefer 15...0-0-0 followed by ... Qc5-e5.

15...h5 16.Kb1 Bh6 17.Qe1 Qc5

The possible 17...Qe3 looks tempting, until 18.Qf1 shows up with a double attack on f6 and b5.

18.Rf1 Qe5

Disastrous would be 18...Ke7, walking into the "Sicilian sacrifice"; i.e., 19. Nd5+.

19.Qf2 0-0!



It seems to me that Black has progressed further on his plans (outlined in my

note to move thirteen) than White has.

20.Ne2! Bg7! 21.Qf4?!

Joel loses his nerve. The ending suits Black. My preference would be to sacrifice the e-pawn by 21.c3 Bxe4 22.Nf4, which gives White some very dangerous threats against h5, g6, and e6. Black was sweating this continuation far more than the upcoming ending.

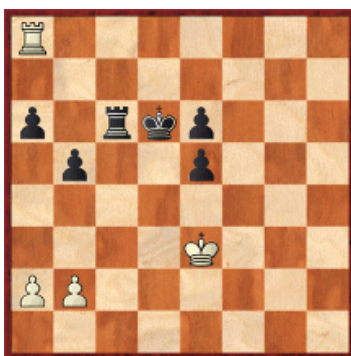
21...f5 22.Qxe5 dxe5 23.Ng3 h4 24.Nh5 fxe4!

Here the triplets give Black wonderful central domination. The game is nearing the stages of a technical win.

25.Be2 Bd5 26.Q3 Rxf1 27.Rxf1 hgx3 28.hxg3 e3 29.Nxg7 Kxg7

Now the game is a simple technical win.

30.Rel Rf8 31.Bd1 Bf3! 32.Kc1 Bxd1 33.Kxd1 Rf3 34.Ke2 Rxg3 35.Kd3 Kt6 36.Rf1+ Ke7 37.Rh1 Kd6 38.Rh8 Rg2 39.Kxe3 Rxc2 40.Ra8 Rc6?



After 40...Rxb2 41.Rxa6 Kd5. Black's king and rook escort the pawns undisturbed. Probably White would have to sacrifice his a-pawn for both of the e-pawns. This would clearly win for Black: he would have an extra b-pawn and White's king would be out of position. With 40...Rc6, Max wanted to keep as many pawns as possible on the board, and then activate his king.

41.Rd8+ Kc5 42.Ke4 Kb4 43.Rd2 Rc1??

Simple miscalculation. The win is still straightforward with 43...Rc5!, keeping the extra pawns for a few more moves. If White waits with 44.Rh2, Black pushes his a-pawn up the board and then activates his rook with ...Rc1.

44.Kxe5

Thank you.

44...Ra1 45.Rd4+

Before making a weakness the Black king must be driven back.

45...Ka5 46.a3 Re1+ 47.Kd6 Re2 48.Rb4 Kb6 49.Rb3 a5 50.Kd7

Max has forced White's king behind the passed e-pawn. The problem for Black is this: to win White's rook for the e-pawn, he will have to employ his king and thereby leave his queenside vulnerable to capture. Then the likelihood is that Black will, in turn, have to give up his rook, and the game will end up a draw.

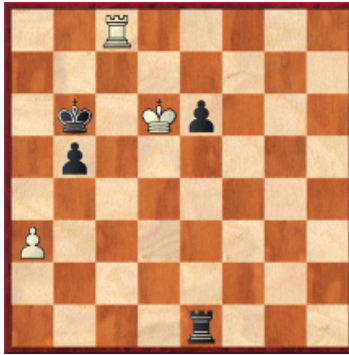
50...a4 51.Rb4 Kc5

Max now threatens ...Rc2 and ...Rc4.

52.b3 axb3 53.Rxb3 Re4 54.Rc3+ Kb6

The king circles back to try and attack the a-pawn.

55.Kd6 Re1 56.Rc8!



Joel must prevent the king from waltzing up to a4.

56...e5 57.Rb8+! Ka6 58.Kc5 Rc1+ 59.Kd5 Re1 60.Kc5 e4 61.Ra8+

White now has his choice of how to force the draw. Clearer to me is 61.Rb6 + Ka7 62.Rxb5 e3 63.Kd4 e2 64.Ke3.

61...Kb7 62.Re8 e3 63.Kxb5 e2 ½ -½

An excellent addition to the rivalry between these future greats. An exciting if uneven game.

Round Four

A very strange round. Such incredibly bad moves were being tossed around. The players still seemed to be settling in.

The friendly game of the round proved very unfriendly indeed. Fedorowicz-Benjamin - an obvious short draw conceived in the locker room - pushed beyond the anticipated half-hour limit. Even more surprising was that Benjamin had a very bad game. With a questioning glance, he sought solace from Fedorowicz, and found none. Fedorowicz wanted to play! Perhaps he only wanted to give Joel a lesson on the position? In any case, Fed's timing was all off, for neither player was there to score a full point. By the time Joel figured out that Fed was not going to make things easy for him, his position was rapidly going downhill. In fact, when the scoresheets were signed "draw," Joel was lost. The breach of etiquette on Fed's part really tempered the admiration these two players have of each other....

Surprisingly, Dlugy gave up a short draw with the white pieces to Rohde. Perhaps he was still smarting from his failure against Joel. Whatever the case, Rohde accepted the draw with pleasure. The Gurevich-Wilder game was a very thematic one. Both players were able to demonstrate the trumps of their respective openings. Their draw was well deserved. At the other end of the spectrum, Kogan and Kudrin both jealously guarded their pieces. After trading a pair of pawns, they began moving their pieces back and forth.

Christiansen continued his horrible form. After a mere 18 moves as White in a main-line Grünfeld against Gulko, Boris was completely winning with the black pieces. Usually players are still in theory at this point, with more to come! Strange.

This time, however, Larry woke up long enough to reach into his bag of tricks, and, with a little help from Gulko, finally got on the scoreboard. Against deFirmian I chose the Pirc. True to his aggressive nature, Nick chose his pet line in the Austrian Attack. By playing Bd3 before Nf3, he sidesteps the ...c5 counters. But I had come prepared! Over the board, unfortunately, I discovered my planned preparation would get busted. Whoops! I improvised and fell into a dangerous position. Being vulnerable to direct attack, I was surprised when Nick mishandled his chances. At the time, my draw offer was

gratefully accepted by both of us; with hindsight, it's likely Nick got a good deal.

The shock of the round was Whitehead's upset win over Walter Browne. Walter had been sitting on a tremendous advantage, and just when it seemed he was converting it - well, the win thrust Jay into clear first. Now that he was standing out among the crowd, it became clear he'd have to be treated more seriously.

Browne, Walter (2505) - Whitehead, Jay (2415)

USA-ch Estes Park (4), 1987

Queen's Indian [E12]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.a3 Bb7 5.Nc3 d5 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.Qc2 Nxc3

I take it for granted that Black's last move is the latest subtlety in this popular variation. It doesn't impress me. Perhaps I'm quoting "old think," but 7...Nd7 followed by a quick ...c5 is the accepted equalizing method.

8.Qxc3!? h6?!



If this move follows as a result of 7...Nxc3, then the whole line is bad. Black wants to play ...Nd7, but doesn't want to be bothered by 9.Bg5, which provokes 9...Nf6, giving White 10.e4! and a dangerous attack. Preferable is 9...Qc8 followed by ...c5 or ...Bd6.

9.Bf4 Bd6 10.Bg3 0-0 11.Rd1?!

White shouldn't delay development of his kingside. With 11.Rd1 he probably means to discourage freeing moves, such as ...c5 or ...e5. But Black lacks sufficient development for these advances. Therefore, correct was 11.e3, etc.

11...Nd7 12.e3 Nf6 13.Bd3 Ne4 14.Qc2 f5 15.0-0 Nxc3?

Black just gives up control of e4 with this move. Best is the simple 15...Qe7.

16.hxg3 Qf6



17.e4! fxe4 18.Bxe4 Bxe4 19.Qxe4 Qf5

Black seeks to neutralize the position through exchanges, but this doesn't solve his fundamental problem - the backward e-pawn.

20.Rde1

See the note to White's eleventh move.

20...Qxe4 21.Rxe4 Rfe8 22.Rfe1 Kf7 23.g4!

Now is a good time to talk about principles. Both players have defects in their pawn structures. Walter, however, is able to use his doubled g-pawns to good effect. Additionally, his last move puts a pawn on a light-colored square. One of the most fundamental principles is to put your pawns on the opposite-color square as your opponent's bishop. Walter now hopes to advance his kingside and force Black's king away from the protection of e6.

23...a5 24.g5 h5 25.Nh4

Good but not best. With 25.a4!, White blunts Black on the queenside and prevents him from fixing the white pawns on b2 and a3. One probable continuation would be 25...Rab8 26.R1e3 b5 27.axb5 Rxb5 28.b3, when White could continue his kingside initiative while securing the queenside.

25...a4!

This move guarantees Black a measure of counterplay. His bishop has a future job.

26.g6+ Kf6 27.d5??



Mistimed! Walter loses his advantage. He should have played 27.R1e3!, threatening to infiltrate with Rf3+ and Rf1. He probably anticipated only 27...e5, when 28.R1e3 is even stronger, since Jay has lost control of the square f5.

27...Ra5!!

This game turns on a dime. Walter should accept the fact that he just blew it and force a repetition. Instead, he persists in chasing a phantom win.

28.Rxe6+ Rxe6 29.Rxe6+ Kg5 30.g3??

It is likely the game would end in perpetual check after 30.Nf3+ Kf5 31.Nd4+ Kg5.

30...Rxd5

Black is suddenly much better. His pieces are optimally placed and White's b- and g-pawns are targets.

31.Kg2 Rd2 32.Re4 Rxb2 33.Rxa4 Ra2

See my note to Black's twenty-fifth move.

34.Rd4 Bc5 35.Rd5+ Kh6 36.Rf5 Bxa3 37.Kh3

A better try for White is 37.Rf7, although Black is probably winning.

37...Be7 38.Rf7 Bxh4 39.Kxh4 Rc2 40.Rf5 Rc5 41.g4 Rxf5 42.gxf5 b5 0-1

Round Five

A fighting round. Five of the seven games were decisive. Whitehead, our tournament leader, was knocked out of first by Wilder. Wilder repeated the variation Fedorowicz had earlier played against Whitehead, but Jay had done his homework. For a longtime he had a comfortable game. Then Jay lost the thread and Michael won a nice ending.

The Shirazi Indian again found Rohde, this time with Fedorowicz at the helm. Soon the game transposed into a g3 Pirc. Rohde was outgunned in a tactical skirmish and Fed soon pocketed the point.

How good I felt to reach plus territory! Against Kogan's Slav Defense, I "exchanged." In the rather sterile position that resulted, Boris played passively and was pushed off the board.

In an extremely sharp position, neither Kudrin nor Dlugy wanted to take any risks, so they agreed to a draw. Curiously, Sergey, playing the white pieces, wanted to play Be3, f3, Qd2, g4, h4, etc., against the Sicilian, a line championed by Nigel Short. But he played f3 first, preparing Be3, apparently to avoid facing an early ...Ng4. Sicilian players take note!

DeFirmian met Gulko's English Opening with one of his favorite defensive weapons - the Hedgehog. I thought Nick had comfortably equalized when it suddenly became obvious that he was playing to hold an ending. Fascinating. Where was Black's mistake? With accurate play he did hold the ending.

The game featured for annotation in this round is Christiansen-Browne. As a quick introduction, let me say that both players do credit to themselves in their fighting spirit. Over the years, they've had some real slug-fests.

Christiansen, Larry (2575) - Browne, Walter (2505)

USA-ch Estes Park (5), 1987

Queen's Pawn [A48]

1.Nf3 c5 2.e3 Nf6 3.d4 g6 4.dxc5

An excellent way to complicate the struggle. Eugene Torre won a very fine game against Miguel Quinteros in the 1985 Biel Interzonal using this idea.

4...Qa5+ 5.Nbd2 Bg7 6.a3 Qxc5 7.c4 Qc7! 8.Rb1 d6

This is not the way to realize equality. The simplest route seems to be 8...d5. In this case Black would then threaten ...Bf5 as well as discourage White from the b4 thrust.

9.Bd3 b6 10.b4 0-0 11.Bb2 Bb7 12.0-0 Nbd7 13.Qe2 Rac8?!



Not Black's most active plan. I like 13...a5! followed by opening the a-file. This would lead to exchanges that are in Black's favor as he's more cramped for space. A second strategic reason for 13...a5 is that Larry would have to be on guard against a possible pawn sacrifice. In positions resulting after ...axb4

and axb4, Walter could follow up with ...b6-b5.

14.Rbc1 Rfd8 15.Bb1 Qb8 16.Rfd1 a6 17.h3 Qa8 18.Ba2 Rc7 19.Nf1 Rdc8 20.N1h2

Thus far both players have been happily reshuffling their pieces (typical of such Hedgehog positions). Overall, though, White has been more successful. By relocating his bishop to a2, Larry has limited its exposure to attack. Further, the knight on h2 - which had played only a passive role on d2 - can become an irritant by moving to g4.

Unhappy with his new found passivity, Walter starts an aggressive reaction. From a spatially inferior position, such activity always carries the danger of activating the wrong side.

20...a5 21.Bb3 h5?

Walter decide s to prevent White's Ng4 possibilities once and for all. However, the cure is worse than the poison. Since Black's only problem is space, he should initiate a few exchanges. One method would be 21...Ne8, and if 22.Ng4, then 22...Bxb2 23.Qxb2 Nef6 and Black is OK.

22.Ng5! d5!?

Clearly Walter wasn't happy about having to play this move. Larry stands superior in the resulting position. But many threats, such as c4-c5, hang in the air against Black's position.

23.Nhf3! axb4 24.axb4 dxc4 25.Bxc4 Bd5 26.Bxd5 Nxd5 27.Rxc7 Rxc7 28.Bxg7 Kxg7 29.Qb2+ N5f6



Superficially, it appears that Black should be happy. Surely the recent wholesale exchanges have eliminated most of the dangers lurking in the position. But wait ... not so fast! First, compare the position of the two kings. Black's is far more vulnerable. Then compare the activity of the knights. Possible White sacrifices on f7 abound. These static factors further compound Black's problems by making White's majors slightly more aggressive than their counterparts.

30.e4! Qa4 31.Rd2 e6 32.Kh2 Qc6 33.Qd4 b5 34.Rd3!

With step-by-step precision, White continues to improve the position of his pieces. White's last move allows for the possibility of Ne5 followed by Rf3. Thus far, Walter has been a spectator to the proceedings.

34...Qb6 35.Qb2!?

Incredible. Larry seems to be a completely different player in this game. His play reminds one of Petrosian. Before directly attacking Walter's king, Larry first decides to reposition his rook from d3 to d6. An excellent idea, to be sure. But knowing Larry as I do, I would have wagered that he would play 35. Ne5!, or something else that prepares Nf7. The safest bet is that Walter was in his habitual time pressure. Larry was no doubt hoping that Black would self-destruct.

35...Qb8 36.g3 Ra7 37.Qd2 e5 38.Rd6 Qa8 39.Qd3 Qb7 40.Qb3 Nf8



Larry's play in these last few moves has been nothing short of amazing. He's managed to dominate the whole center, the kingside, and the nature of the struggle. I've found it very difficult not to adorn Larry's last six moves with exclams.

Now that White has built up a winning position, he decides the game by a combination leading to a forced win of material.

41.Nxe5 Nxe4 42.Rd7 Nxe5 43.Rxb7 Rxb7 44.Qd5 Rc7 45.h4 Nge6 46.Qxb5 Nd4 47.Qd5 Nfe6 48.Kg2 Rc2 49.Nf3 Nxf3 50.Qxf3 f5 51.Qb3 Rc6 52.b5 Rb6 53.Qe3 1-0

An outstanding game by Larry. What a relief to see him play so well today - that is, after our game!

Benjamin, Joel (2575) - Gurevich, Dmitry (2545)

USA-ch Estes Park (5), 1987

Modern Benoni [A61]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.Nc3 g6 7.Bg5

A few years ago this treatment for White used to be an important antidote to the Benoni. Now it's a rare guest on the tour.

7...h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Bg3 Nh5 10.Nd2 Nxe3 11.hxe3 Bg7 12.Nc4 0-0 13.e3



A key part of White's strategy is to leave out e4. Instead, White tries to take advantage of Black's kingside weaknesses with such moves as Bd3 and Qc2, controlling f5. If White does manage to get a stranglehold on this square, the game is over. For his part, Black will hope to gain enough play on the long diagonal h8-a1 to offset his weakened kingside. The position is very sharp and calls for a high degree of accuracy on the part of both players. The fact that this variation is played less often indicates that Black has managed to find a way to neutralize White's plan.

13...Qe7! 14.Be2

I'm not really a fan of this move. I prefer 14.Bd3 followed by either g3-g4 or Qc2. Perhaps Joel feared that on d3 his bishop might become harassed by an eventual ...Nb4.

14...Bd7!

It's critical that Black stir up trouble on the queenside as quickly as possible.

15.a4 Na6 16.Qd2 Nc7!

Preparing ...b7-b5. A strategic lemon would be ...Nb4. On b4 the knight would simply be a spectator and of no assistance to Black in his plans for queenside expansion.

17.e4?!

A strange and surprising move. More in keeping with White's plans would be 17.g4 or 0-0. The text just gives Black a target that he soon lops off.

17...b5! 18.axb5 Nxb5

In his handling of the Benoni in this game, Dimitri has kept to a consistent and powerful plan. White's center is under great pressure, and he has no reason to hope for a kingside attack. In short, Black stands well.

19.0-0 Nxc3 20.bxc3 Qxe4

A principal move. Black trades central pawns in order to open the position for his two bishops.

21.Nxd6 Qe5 22.Nb7

Forced, in order to avoid the loss of a pawn. The game now turns on whether the knight is or is not offside. Intuitively, I'd say the knight is badly placed. Why? Naturally, the unique movement of the knight gives it different "laws of mobility." knights excel when defended and/or centralized. Strangely enough, however, the worse squares for them are g2, g7, b2, and b7. Keep a mental note on how often a knight on one of these squares is exploited.

22...c4 23.Bxc4 Rfc8 24.Qa2 Rab8 25.Ba6 Rxc3

White's pieces have been forced to poor locations. My suspicion is that Joel felt that he still held the "advantage of White." So, instead of ensuring himself a safe drawing continuation, he plunges ahead.

26.Rae1 Qf6 27.d6 Bf8 28.Qa5



So far Dimitri has conducted his game in exemplary fashion. Now is the time to reap the rewards of his previous play. The most logical way is to prepare the capture of the dangerous d-pawn. Thus the straightforward 28...Rc6 seems best. Dimitri could then prepare to reap the harvest with moves such as ...Kg7 and ...Bc8. Or, if he doesn't mind White having the possibility of exchanging the offside knight, he can play an eventual ...Bxd6. Instead, Dimitri uncorks a tremendous blunder:

28...Qd4??

This move merely loses two tempi, allows White the opportunity to activate his knight and penetrate with his queen, and transforms the blockaded weakling on d6 into a powerhouse. Not too shabby.

29.Rd1 Qf6 30.Nc5 Qe5 31.Qc7 Bg4 32.Qxb8 Rxc3 33.fxc3 Qxc5+ 34.Kh2 1-0

Today fortune smiled on Joel and sent Dmitri into a bout of self-hatred.

Round Six

At the end of this round no less than eight players were tied for first! There were lots of jokes about a fourteen-player playoff. ... I don't suppose this would've amused the folks back at the USCF.

In Kogan-Gulko, Kogan was steadily outplayed and was forced to resign on move sixty. Kogan's worse fears are being confirmed. Last-minute replacements in a tournament the strength of the US Championship should not be accepted lightly!

Gurevich was completely lost against Rohde in a mere fifteen moves on the White side of the queen's Gambit Accepted. But after an extraordinary king hunt, White's king found a haven on a2 and Dmitri eventually won. For reasons of my own mental health, I couldn't bring myself to annotate this game. Let it suffice to say Rohde was not happy.

My game with Max was a short GM draw. The game deFirmian-Christiansen also appeared to be heading toward an early conclusion. My belief is that Nick had a serious advantage at one time, but that he misplayed it. An extremely complex strategic puzzle was offered by the Whitehead-Benjamin game. It appears as if both players altered their plans on many occasions. A satisfying draw.

Browne got a small but enduring plus against Wilder in a Bogo-Indian. Walter repeated Qa4+, as played by Wilder himself against Kogan. This time Michael was the victim, losing a long game on move 64. Both player's scoresheets were so horrible that the game can be re-created only to move forty-six.

Our annotated game for this round is another model game in the Hedgehog. It features an idea that appears to be making Black's life very difficult.

Fedorowicz, John (2520) - Kudrin, Sergey (2515)

USA-ch Estes Park (6), 1987

Symmetrical English [A30]

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 b6 4.Bg2 Bb7 5.0-0 g6 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4 Bg7 8.Nc3 d6 9.h3

I lost an incredible game against Kortchnoi on the Black side of this variation at the recent Zagreb Interzonal. In that game Victor tried a new idea featuring his bishops on e3 and h3. I eventually got a big advantage, but was unable to convert it. Instead, I went down in flames in a hard-fought tactical duel. This treatment of fianchettoing both bishops is not dangerous for Black. Though Ulf Andersson would probably say that Black's d5 square is weak, I believe Black has easy equality.

9...Nbd7 10.Bb2 0-0 11.Rac1 Rc8 12.Rfd1 a6 13.Qe3 Re8 14.h3 Rc7 15. Ne1

Strange chess. White weakens his kingside with moves like g3 and h3, then voluntarily trades light-squared bishops. One is always tempted to question moves one doesn't understand. I'll let you be the judge.

15...Qb8 16.Bxb7 Qxb7 17.Nd3

Fedorowicz plans to plant one of his knights on d5. He has his choice of routes - either through f4 or b4. Fed's preference is b4. In this way, Black's b-

pawn is blockaded.

17...b5

Whenever Black gets this break in a Hedgehog, it's adorned with exclams nine times out of ten. It seems strange to question this move after so many successes. With the blessing of hindsight, I might recommend the paradoxical weakening move 17...e6. The plan for Black would then be to maneuver the knights from d7 and f6 to e8 and f6! This is accomplished by...Rec8, Ne8, and Ndf6. "How weak is d6 after this?" you may ask. After 17...b5, White's task is straightforward: blockade and capture the b-pawn.

18.cxb5 axb5



19.Nb4! Rc5 20.Qf3!

Excellent. Fed offers a queen exchange after which the weakness of b5 becomes even more prominent. A sample variation might be: 20...Qxf3 21. exf3 Rec8 22.Na6 R5c6 23.Nxb5 winning.

20...Qa7 21.e4

Excellent consistency. Another foot soldier is called upon to support the control of d5.

21...Qb7 22.Qe2 Rec8 23.Ncd5 Rxc1 24.Bxc1! Nc5 25.Nxf6+ Bxf6 26.Nd5 Bg7 27.Bg5 Re8 28.b4 Ne6 29.Be3 Rc8 30.Bb6 Nf8 31.Bd4!

This move ensures that White's knight on d5 has a good future. It's awkward for Black to get in the boot ...e7-e6 since the weakness on f6 sings.

31...Bxd4 32.Rxd4 f6?



With the move 32...f6 Sergey opts for the wrong setup. In view of the game's result, Sergey might have to play 32.Kg7. The idea would then be to play...e6. The problem with this plan is that White might force ...e5; i.e., 33.Qb2 e5 3. Rd3. Black is then handicapped with a blockaded backward pawn. But then he will have the option of continuing with the aggressive plan of putting his knight on d4.

33.Rd3! Kf7 34.Ra3

Nicely played. Fedorowicz continues to find ways to tickle Black's weak b-pawn.

34...Ne6 35.Qe3

The game is suddenly won. Black cannot prevent White from penetrating into his position.

35...Ra8 36.Rxa8 Qxa8 37.Qb6 f5 38.Qxb5 fxe4 39.Qc4 Kf8 40.Qxe4 Qc8 41.Kg2 Kf7

Sergey is helpless in trying to prevent the white queenside pawns from advancing. Still, all of the forking possibilities that occur are quite pleasing:

42.a4 Qb7 43.a5 h6 44.a6 Qb8 45.b5 1-0

This game makes a very strange impression. Fed's victory seemed so one-sided: he constantly kept control of the position and forced inroads. It's as if Black's passivity was inherent in the pawn structure. Black had no clear goals other than ...b6-b5. And, once this push was played, White demonstrated his plans. Very interesting indeed.

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