



SKITTLES ROOM



by Nikolay Minev

The Legacy of John Cochrane

by Nikolay Minev

He is not forgotten. John Cochrane (1798-1878), Scottish Master, did not achieve note as player who had big practical successes. Spending most of his life in India (1824-69), his clashes against top players occurred during 1841-42, while on vacation in London. Cochrane played on equal terms against George Walker (1803-1879), William Davies Evans (1790-1872), and others. He even managed to win a match (6-4) against the Frenchman Pierre Charles Fournier de Saint-Amant (1800-1872), though in a series of games against Howard Staunton (1810-1874) he was defeated convincingly. All his preserved games show a player totally committed to tactics, a player who liked to attack and sacrifice, sometimes beyond reasonable risk. Two of the games which Cochrane managed to “steal” from Staunton will introduce us to his style.

John Cochrane-Howard Staunton

London 1842

Queen's Pawn Counter Gambit C40

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nxe5 Qe7?! 4.d4 f6 5.Nc3!?

This interesting gambit is omitted in *ECO*.

5...fxe5 6.Nxd5 Qf7 7.Bc4 Be6 8.O-O c6 9.f4 cxd5 10.fxe5 Qd7 11.exd5 Bxd5



12.e6! Qc6?!

Critical for White's conception is 12...Qxe6 13.Re1 Bxc4, leaving Black with a rook and three minor pieces for the queen. However, after 14.Qh5+ Kd8 (14...Kd7 15.Rxe6 Bxe6 16.d5, or 14...g6 15.Rxe6+ Bxe6 16.Qe5) 15.Rxe6 Bxe6 16.Bg5+, followed by 17.Re1 (16...Kd7 17.d5), White's initiative continues with good practical chances.

13.Qh5+ g6 14.Qxd5 Ne7?

Loses by force. After 14...Qxd5 15.Bxd5 Nc6 16.c3, White stands better, with two strong bishops and three pawns for a piece, but the fight is still ahead.

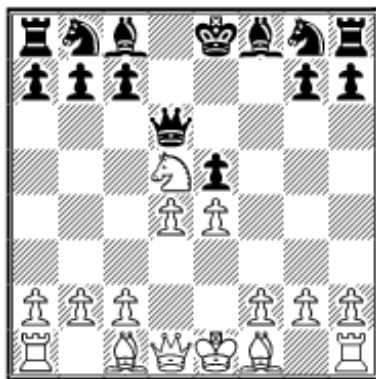
15.Qe5! Qxc4 16.Qxh8 Nf5 17.Bh6 Qb4 18.Qxf8+ Qxf8 19.Bxf8 Kxf8 20.g4 1-0

John Cochrane-Howard Staunton

London 1842

Queen's Pawn Counter Gambit C40

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nxe5 Qe7?! 4.d4 f6 5.Nc3!?! fxe5 6.Nxd5 Qd6



Hardly an improvement on 6...Qf7.

7.dxe5 Qxe5 8.Bd3 Bd6 9.f4 Qe6 10.f5 Qe5 11.Bf4 Qxb2
12.Bxd6 cxd6 13.Nc7+ Kd8 14.Nxa8 b6 15.O-O Bb7 16.Bc4
Qe5 17.Bd5 Kc8 18.a4 Nc6 19.Rb1 Bxa8 20.a5 Kc7 21.Rb5
Nd4 22.axb6+ axb6 23.Qd3! Nxb5 24.Qc4+ Kb8 25.Qxb5
Qd4+ 26.Kh1 Bxd5 27.Qe8+ Kc7 28.exd5 Nf6

Forced. If 28...Qxd5, then 29.Ra1 Qb7 30.Ra3 and White wins.

29.Qxh8 Ng4 30.h3 Nf2+ 31.Rxf2 Qxf2 32.Qxg7+ 1-0

When I asked some of my chess friends what they know about Cochrane, I received the following answers:

- *A gambit in Petroff Defense-knight captures the f-pawn!*
- *A player who liked to sacrifice the knight at f7.*
- *He introduced the quickest sacrifice of the knight at f7!*
- *I hate the gambit which he introduced!*

As a tactical idea, the sacrifice of a knight (or a bishop) at f7, especially before castling, is associated with the so-called sacrifice of pursuit, as defined by Spielmann: *The sacrifice of pursuit is aimed at bringing out the opponent's king to expose him to attack with the board full of pieces.* This kind of sacrifice is well demonstrated in the following two games. Note that immediately after the sacrifice the king is put under very strong threats.

Michael Yeo-A.Erdal Smith

London 1979

Modern Defense B06

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 d6 4.f4 a6 5.Nf3 b5 6.Bd3 Bb7 7.O-O Nd7 8.e5 b4?

Driving White's knight to a better position. Theory suggests 8...c5 or even 8...e6, with White having a slight edge.

9.Ne4 d5 10.Neg5 e6



11.f5! gxf5

If 11...exf5 12.e6.

12.Nxf7! Kxf7 13.Ng5+ Ke7 14.Nxe6! Kxe6 15.Bxf5+ Ke7
16.Bg5+ Ndf6 17.Qe1 Kf7 (see next diagram)



18.Be6+!!

The point of the whole combination; Black is lost in all variations, for example, 18...Kxe6 19.exf6+ or 18...Kf8 19.Bxg8. He prefers to lose the king.

18...Kg6 19.Qg3 Ne4 20.Bf7 1-0

Borislav Ivkov-Stefano Tatai

Venice 1966
English A30

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 e6 4.Bg2 d5 5.O-O dxc4?! 6.Na3 Nbd7 7.Nxc4 b5?

The same mistake as in the previous game; White's knight is forced into an attacking position.

8.Nce5 Bb7



9.Nxf7! Kxf7 10.Ng5+

A pure sacrifice of pursuit; Black's king must go to an open space in advance of his army to avoid loss of material.

10...Kg6 11.Qc2+! Kxg5 12.d4+ Kh5 13.Bxb7 g5

There is no time for 13...Rb8, because of 14.Bf3+ Ng4 15.h3.

14.h4 Qb8 15.Bg2 h6 16.Qd3 Be7 17.Bxa8 Qxa8 18.f3 g4 19.fxg4+ Kxg4

Forced. If 19...Nxg4, then 20.Rf5+! Bg5 (or 20...Kg6 21.Rg5+!) 21.Bxg5 exf5 22.Qxf5 with an inevitable mate.

20.Qg6+ Kh3



An odd position; Black also threatens mate.

21.Rf2 Ng4

The only defense against 22.Rh2 mate.

22.Qxe6 Rf8 23.Bf4 Rxf4 24.gxf4 1-0

For if 24...Bxh4, 25.Rf3+ Bg3 26.Qxd7 etc.

There have been hundreds of players with a pronounced tactical style and thousands of knight sacrifices at f7 before and after Cochrane. Most are totally forgotten. Why is he not forgotten? The answer can be found in the three games below.

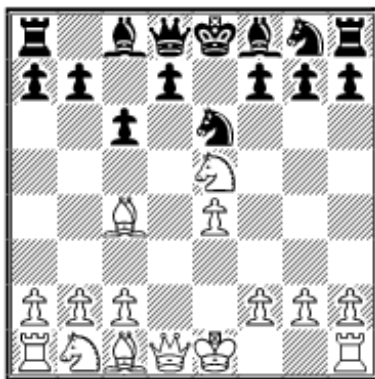
John Cochrane-Howard Staunton

London 1842

Scotch C44

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 Nxd4 4.Nxe5!?

The knight is within striking range of the f7-pawn! Recent theory considers this weaker than 4.Nxd4 exd4 5.Qxd4 d6 6.Nc3 Nf6 (According to *ECO*, 6...Ne7 7.Bc4 leads to a slight edge for White. Deserving of attention is 7.Bf4!?, and if 7...Nc6, 8.Bb5 as in the Ruy Lopez, Steinitz Defense, or 7...Ng6 8.Bg3, followed by O-O-O.) 7.Bg5 Be7 8.O-O-O with an advantage for White.

4...Ne6 5.Bc4 c6?!

Of course, this move (the main line at that time!) must be condemned, because it does not contribute to Black's development. After the natural 5...Nf6 Lisitsin remarks in *Sovremenny Debiut: The sacrifice proposed by Cochrane: 6.Nxf7 Kxf7 7.Bxe6+ Kxe6 8.e5 Ng8 is attractive, but incorrect (ECO stops here), for example, 9.Nc3 d5 10.Qg4+ Kf7 11.Qf3+ Ke8 12.Nxd5 Bg4 etc.* It is important to note that this assessment, still dominant, was made in the 1930's, when the theoretical trend was to be skeptical of any sacrifice which did not give immediate and favorable results. As we shall see, Cochrane's experiments were well ahead of his time.

His idea, clearly demonstrated in this game and especially in the following discussion of the Petroff Defense, is one of long term compensation based on the black king's inability to castle. This means that in the final position of Lisitsin's analysis, White, by playing 13.Qb3 or 13.Qe4, has just the situation that Cochrane was looking for. Spend five minutes with this position and you will be convinced that Black faces a difficult defensive task at the least.

6.Nxf7!? Kxf7 7.Bxe6+ Kxe6 8.O-O Kf7

No, White's tactical idea is not the usual sacrifice of pursuit! Black's king is not immediately exposed to a strong attack. By sacrificing the knight, White has created an unbalanced position in the hope that Black's problems with his king in the center will give White time for quicker development and probably for organization of an attack, or for recovery of the sacrificed material.

9.Be3 Ne7?!

Not the best, but I don't have a sure recipe for Black's defense, nor did Staunton 150 years ago! The alternatives deserving attention are: 9...Nf6, 9...d5 and 9...d6.

10.f4 d5 11.f5! Kg8? 12.c4 b5

Looks strange, but what else? Black's position already is very difficult.

13.cxd5 cxd5 14.Nc3 Bb7 15.e5 b4



16.f6!

Threatening 17.f7 mate. The game is practically over.

16...gxf6 17.exf6 Ng6 18.f7+ Kg7 19.Qd4+ 1-0

Here are two other examples in the same variation in which Cochrane is successful with the sacrifice Nxf7.

John Cochrane-George Walker

London 1841
Scotch C44

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 Nxd4 4.Nxe5 Ne6 5.Bc4 c6 6.O-O Nf6 7.Nxf7

One year later Cochrane tried to improve the whole variation, creating better conditions for the knight sacrifice; see the next game.

7...Kxf7 8.Bxe6+ Kxe6 9.e5 Nd5?

Clearly better is 9...Ng8, as suggested Lisitsin.

10.c4 Nb6 11.Kh1 h5?

Perhaps the decisive mistake; instead 11...Bc5 12.f4 d5 is, let's say, still unclear.

12.f4 g6



13.f5+! Kxe5

If 13...gxf5 then 14.Qf3. In case of 13...Kf7 White could continue 14.e6+ Kg8 (14...Ke8 15.f6) 15.f6 d5 16.Qe2 Rh7 17.Bg5.

14.Bf4+ 1-0

John Cochrane-Howard Staunton

London 1842
Scotch C44

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 Nxd4 4.Nxe5 Ne6 5.Bc4 c6 6.O-O Nf6 7.Nc3

Instead of 7.Nxf7 as in the above game. We don't, and will not know the reason for Cochrane's refusal to carry out his pet tactical subject – possibly to avoid his opponent's home preparation, or simply because he thinks that White's position is already so advantageous that he does not need to sacrifice immediately.

7...Bb4

Unsatisfactory is 7...Be7 8.f4, or 7...Bc5 8.Kh1 O-O 9.f4, threatening 10.f5. Black could provoke the thematic sacrifice by 7...d6, and if 8.Nxf7 Kxf7 9.f4 Ke8 etc.

8.f4 Qa5**9.Nxf7**

Interesting complications emerge after 9.Bd2 O-O 10.a3 (10.Qe2!?), but Cochrane makes use of the last chance for his typical sacrifice.

9...Kxf7 10.f5 Qc5+ 11.Kh1 Qxc4 12.fxe6+ Qxe6 13.Qh5+ g6?

The decisive mistake. The correct 13...Kg8 14.Qh4 Be7 brings White's sacrifice in question. But not 14...Bxc3 15.bxc3 Qxe4 16.Bf4, followed by 17.Rae1, and White holds a strong

initiative.

14.Qh4 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Rf8? 16.Bh6! 1-0

We don't know the remainder of the game, but it is obvious that after the retreat of the rook, e.g., 16...Re8 17.Bg5, Black loses the knight and is in a hopeless position.

As we saw, Cochrane's daring experiments of 150 years ago with the knight sacrifice at f7 are united in one and the same tactical idea: a thematic true sacrifice in the early stage of the game, the highest level of Spielmann's sacrifice of pursuit, when it is almost impossible to evaluate the balance between the sacrificed material and the compensation for it. These theoretical questions regarding an evaluation of the compensation and the borderlines of the attendant risk are more and more at the center of attention in modern chess practice. A test field for this general and important theoretical problem in the last two decades is a sacrifice in the Petroff Defense, which also is a legacy from Cochrane and is named for him.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nxf7

Cochrane is known to have played eight games with this sacrifice against Moheschunder Bonnerjee during a match in Calcutta in 1848. Here White has a knight less, and the compensation is rather hypothetical: a mobile armada of pawns against a king that cannot castle, and disturbances in the opponent's development. It is not possible to predict the outcome of the subsequent fight; it depends of the strategic and tactical abilities of the players, their fantasy and courage. In the following examples it is White who prevails. The only reason for that is that tactics prevail over less-than-accurate defense. However, practice shows almost equal success for both sides.

Alvis Vitolins-Ilya Alexandrov

Riga 1990
Petroff C42

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nxf7 Kxf7 5.d4 c6 6.Bd3 Be7 7.O-O Na6?! 8.Nc3 Be6 9.f4

Qc7?! 10.e5 Qb6

Hoping for 11.exf6 Qxd4+ 12.Kh1 Bxf6 with equality.

11.Kh1 Bg4 12.Qe1 Nd5 13.Qg3 Bc8 14.Nxd5 cxd5 15.c3 Qd8 16.f5



A dream position for the whole idea.

16...Nc7 17.Bf4 Ne8 18.Qf3! dxe5 19.Qh5+ Kg8 20.dxe5

Threatening the decisive 21.e6.

20...g6 21.fxc6 hxc6 22.Qxc6+ Ng7 23.Bh6 1-0

Alexey Savko-IM Viesturs Meijers

Latvia (ch) 1994

Petroff C42

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nxf7 Kxf7 5.d4 c5

A dynamic approach to the defense – Black counterattacks immediately.

6.dxc5 Qe8 7.Nc3 d5?!

Not 7...Nxe4?? 8.Qd5+ and 9.Qxe4, but 7...dxc5 deserves serious attention.

8.Bg5 Nbd7 9.Bb5 Qe6

This novelty does not solve all of Black's problems. 9...Bxc5? loses, e.g., 10.Bxf6 gxf6 11.Qxd5+ Qe6 12.Qh5+ Kg7 13.Bxd7 Bxf2+ 14.Kxf2 Bxd7 15.Rhd1 Rhd8 16.Qd5 Qb6+ 17.Qd4 Qc7 18.Nd5! Qxc2+ 19.Rd2 Qc6 20.Rc1! Qd6 21.Rc7 Rac8 22.Rxb7 Rf8 23.g3 Qc6 24.Rxa7 1-0, Vitolins-Viksna, Riga 1985.

10.O-O Bxc5

Or 10...dxe4 11.Qe2 and White retains a significant initiative.

11.exd5 Qf5 12.Qd2 Ne5 13.Rae1 a6 14.Be2 Rd8?!

Instead, 14...Re8 followed eventually by ...Bd7 looks preferable.

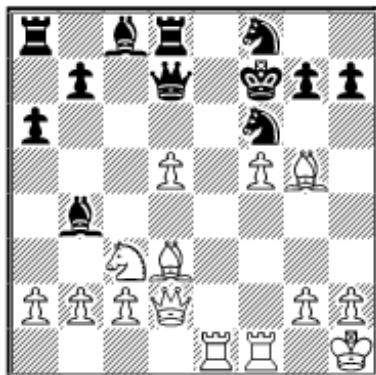
15.Kh1 Bb4 16.f4! Ng6

Or 16...Rxd5 17.fxe5 Rxd2 18.Bc4+ and White should win.

17.Bd3! Qd7

17...Qxd5? is impossible because of 18.Bxf6 gxf6 19.Bxc6+ hxc6 20.Qxd5+.

18.f5 Nf8



19.d6!

The “Kamikaze Pawn” opens the door to Black’s king.

19...Kg8

Only move. If 19...b5 20.Re7+, or 19...Qxd6 20.Bc4+.

20.Bc4+ Kh8 21.Bxf6 gxf6 22.Qd5 Qg7 23.Re7 Qg4 24.Qf7 Be6?

A blunder, but also after 24...Bxc3 25.bxc3 Qg5 26.Re8 Rxe8 27.Qxe8 Qg7 28.d7! White wins easily.

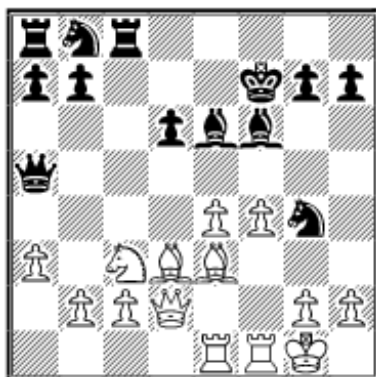
25.Qxf6+ 1-0

Alexey Savko-Aron Reshko

Riga 1989

Petroff C42

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nxf7 Kxf7 5.d4 c5 6.dxc5 Qa5+ 7.Nc3 Qxc5 8.Be3 Qb4 9.Qd2 Be6 10.Bd3 Be7 11.a3 Qa5 12.f4 Rc8 13.O-O Ng4 14.Rae1 Bf6?!



15.e5! dxe5 16.fxe5 Qxe5 17.Bf4 Qc5+ 18.Kh1 Nd7 19.Ne4 Qd5 20.c4 Qc6 21.Nd6+ Ke7 22.Rxe6+ Kxe6 23.Bf5+ Ke7 24.Nxc8+ Rxc8 25.Bxg4 Rd8 26.Rd1 Ke8 27.Qe2+ Kf8 28.Bd6+ Kg8 29.Be7 1-0

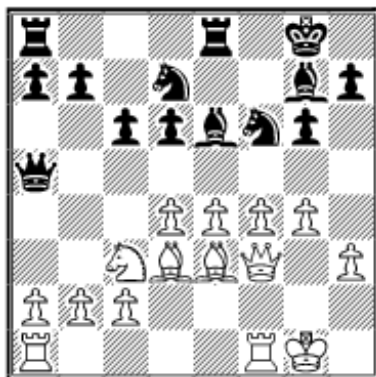
Vasily Skotorenko-Per Bille Somod

Corr. 1987/88

Petroff C42

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nxf7 Kxf7 5.d4 g6 6.Bd3 Bg7 7.O-O Re8 8.Nc3 Kg8 9.h3 Be6 10.f4 Nbd7 11.Qf3 c6

12.Be3 Qa5 13.g4 (see next diagram)



13...Nb6 14.f5 Bc4 15.g5 Nfd7 16.f6 Rf8 17.Qg4 Bxd3 18.cxd3 Nxf6 19.Qe6+ Rf7 20.gxf6 Bf8 21.e5 Nd7 22.Ne4 1-0

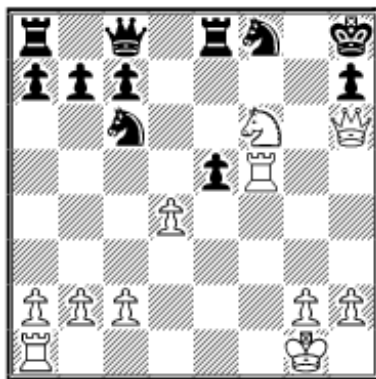
Marc Santo Roman-Jean-Pierre Moulain

Paris 1989

Petroff C42

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nxf7 Kxf7 5.d4 g6 6.Nc3 Bg7 7.Bc4+ Be6 8.Bxe6+ Kxe6 9.O-O Re8 10.f4 Kf7 11.e5 Nfd7 12.f5 gxf5 13.Qh5+ Kg8 14.Bg5 Qc8 15.Nd5 dxe5 16.Rxf5

Nc6 17.Bh6 Bxh6 18.Qxh6 Nf8 19.Nf6+ Kh8 (see next diagram)



20.Rg5 1-0

The general theoretical question of the nature of the relationship between material and compensation, hinted at a long time ago by Cochrane, is a trend in modern chess, but we have only scraped the surface and the exact answer, if it exists at all, is still far away.

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