

Anish Giri

The Dragon Sicilian

A Take-No-Prisoners Repertoire Versus 1.e4

This book is also available as a Move Trainer and
video course at Chessable.com

New In Chess 2022

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Introduction

1.e4 c5

The ambitious Sicilian Defense! Black is fighting for the center but from the side, without going for a symmetrical pawn structure.

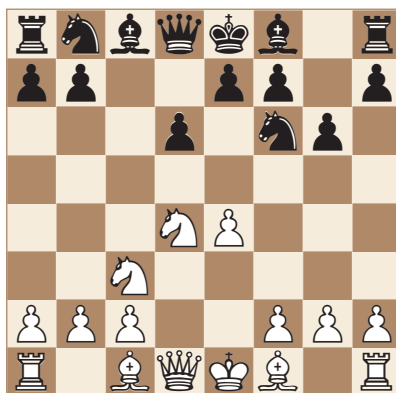
2.♘f3 d6 3.d4

The Open Sicilian. The first five moves of the Sicilian Dragon are the same as in the Najdorf on which I also created a Chessable course.

3...cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3

Up until this point, it is not clear what type of Sicilian Black is going to play. There is the Classical Sicilian with 5...♗c6 and the Najdorf with 5...a6, but this book deals with the most romantic and aggressive of all Sicilians: the Dragon.

5...g6



The move that defines the Dragon Sicilian. This opening is named after the pawn structure h7/g6/f7/e7/d6 that has the shape of a Dragon, at least, that's what I was brainwashed to believe when I was a kid. Incidentally, the name also reflects the spirit of the variation. The Dragon is notoriously ambitious, risky and reckless. However, when going over the lines during one of my many training sessions for the Candidates Tournament 2020/2021, I discovered that its reputation for being dubious is rather undeserved. The Dragon has always been a popular and very successful opening for amateurs and club players, but I believe that, in light of the groundbreaking discoveries I will present in this book, it can be

played all the way up to the very highest level. Now that I have some experience writing about the French and the Najdorf, I believe I can strike a very fine balance between presenting cutting-edge, top-level chess theory and offering clear and practical guidance to players of all levels.

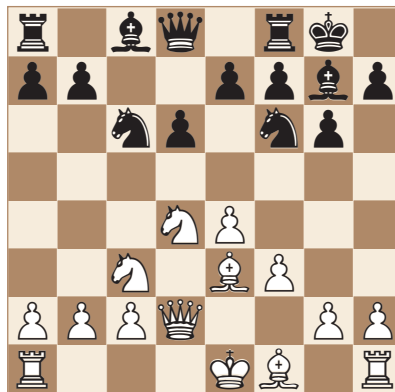
6. ♗e3

By far the most played and also the most dangerous set-up, called the Yugoslav Attack. It makes up the main body of this work, but of course, all the sidelines on move 6 are thoroughly covered, too.

6... ♗g7

The idea of the Dragon is to develop the bishop to the long diagonal, while also keeping the central pawn structure e7/d6 intact. Interestingly, this often means that, besides going for an attack on the queenside, Black is also often happy to enter an endgame, as his pawn structure is excellent and there is not much White can offer in return for our pressure along the semi-open c-file. White, on the other hand, will try to trade off the pride of our position, the g7-bishop, with ♖d2 and ♗h6 or ♗d4 in some cases, and use the g6-pawn as a target for an attack on the kingside with h2-h4-h5.

7.f3 0-0 8. ♖d2 ♘c6



And now we have landed in the main *tabiya* of the Dragon Yugoslav Attack. Here, White has to choose between the old main line with 9. ♗c4 and the more modern approach with 9. O-O-O allowing 9...d5, which, as it turns out, doesn't immediately solve all the opening problems.

After 9. ♗c4, 9... ♗xd4 is my main recommendation. It will be thoroughly examined in this book.

9.0-0-0 is the modern main line and a very critical continuation. The established theory is that Black has to defend a slightly worse position here, making the whole Dragon a lot less attractive than what it used to be. Recently, however, while looking through older and more dynamic variations, I discovered a hidden way, played in only a handful of games, which seems to give a new twist to the traditional approach of dealing with this critical system.

With the help of the most powerful modern chess engines, I was able to prove that the old masters weren't betrayed by their intuition when they decided to go for the natural 12...e5 in this variation, although truth be told, we will already deviate from the old theory on the next move.

These are the general ideas that triggered me to create a Chessable course on the Dragon, and now this book. Of course there is a lot more to be found on the coming pages. I hope you will find my discoveries in this super-romantic opening variation useful and instructive, and I wish you lots of fun playing the Dragon!

*Anish Giri,
The Hague,
August 2022*

CHAPTER 2

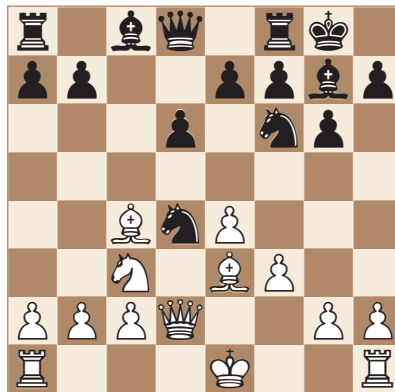
Yugoslav Attack with 9. ♖c4 ♞xd4

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞f6 5.♝c3 g6 6.♞e3 ♞g7 7.f3 0-0
8.♞d2 ♞c6 9.♞c4

In this chapter, I would like to present you with my main recommendation: a relatively rare and yet very straightforward system.

9... ♞xd4

In fact, it is also possible to start with 9... ♞a5!? and only after 10.0-0-0 take with 10... ♞xd4 followed by 11... ♞e6, which will eventually transpose to one of our lines. White will have the very same choice of going for ♞xe6 or for ♞b3.



10. ♞xd4

Instead, 10. ♞xd4 would be a big mistake due to 10... ♞g4 11. ♞d2 ♞xe3 12. ♞xe3 ♞d7, and with the bishop pair and the semi-open c-file, Black has all the fun.

10... ♞e6

This is a rather old line that has been around forever, but was not thought to give Black adequate play. Now, with the help of modern computers, I have managed to fully rehabilitate it and the old conclusions have been completely undermined. Besides being the top choice of the best engines against the system with 9. ♞c4, this approach is also very logical and very direct. We want to develop our pieces to the most active squares right away and start our play on the queenside as soon as possible. White has a choice here. He can either keep the tension with 11. ♞b3, or go for the bishop trade with 11. ♞xe6.

A) 11. ♗xe6

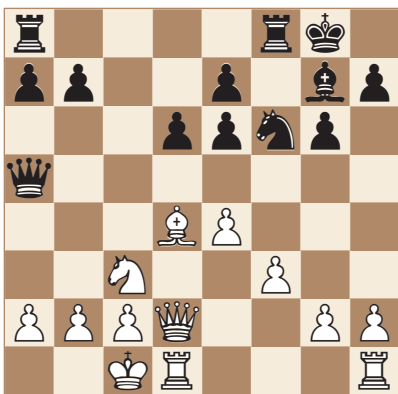
The bishop trade does double Black’s pawns, but it strongly reinforces our central control, as the important d5-square will now be guarded by our e6-pawn.

11...fxe6 12.0-0-0

White has to castle long if he wants to get anything in this particular line, but also in the Dragon in general. Our only fundamental issue is a potentially vulnerable king. If White were to castle short we would just get the queen out with 12...♙a5, trade the d4-bishop after ...♞d7 or ...♞h5 and enjoy the pressure along the c-file. The c3-knight would be particularly aimless with the pawn on e6 guarding the d5-square.

12.h4 here or on the next move will transpose to the same position after for example 12...♙a5 13.0-0-0 ♜ac8 14.♗b1 15.h4.

12... ♙a5



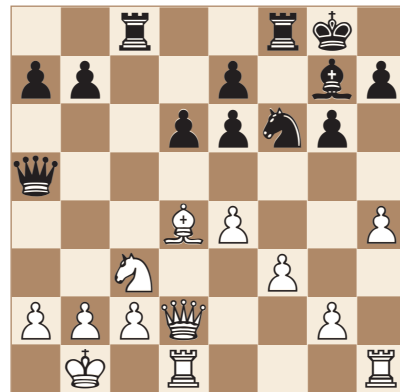
A1) 13. ♗b1

The most often played move. Again, if White starts with 13.h4, it will likely transpose after 13...♜ac8 14.♗b1.

13... ♜ac8

It is possible to offer the trade of bishops right away with 13...♞d7, but I like to bring our rook to the semi-open c-file first before deciding where to jump with the knight. The knight can potentially also go to h5.

14.h4



There is no real threat yet, but this move could be useful in the long run, as now h4-h5 is always in the air.

14... ♞h5

14...♞d7!? may even be my preference: 15. ♗xg7 ♗xg7. The knight is heading to e5, and the advance 16.h5 can be met with 16...g5. Black can play 17...h6 next and with the closed h-file, White has no play on the kingside, while Black enjoys the c-file.

15. ♗xg7 ♗xg7

Black has a comfortable position. White's kingside play is blocked, as 16.g4?! is well met with both 16...♟f4 as well as 16...♟g3!?. We control all the key squares in the center and next we can think of doubling on the c-file or advancing our queenside pawns eventually.

16.e5

This a clever attempt to bring us off balance, but it doesn't lead to anything special for White.

16... ♖xe5 17. ♜he1 ♖f4

Offering a trade of queens. The endgame after

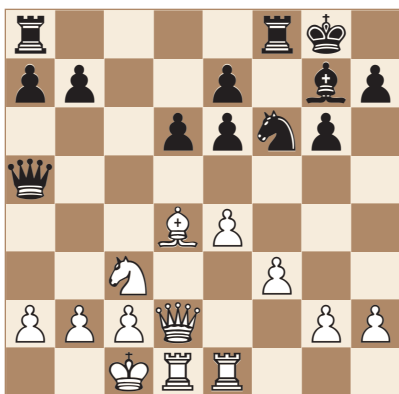
18. ♜xe6

(instead, 18. ♖f2 can be met with 18... ♖b4!, threatening to take the c3-knight, not giving White time to breathe)

18... ♖xd2 19. ♜xd2 ♟f7

was equal in an old email game Achilles-Gutierrez, 2008.

A2) 13. ♜he1!?



This is the strongest move according to the engines,

forgetting about the kingside play with h2-h4-h5 and focusing instead on the center. White is now threatening e4-e5.

13... ♟d7

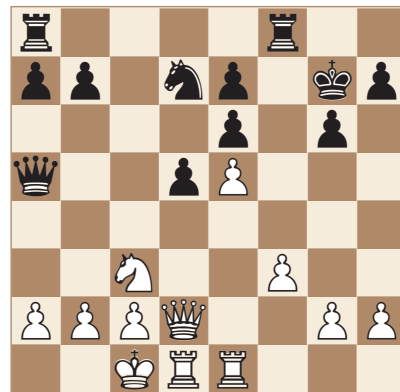
Given that White is not intending h2-h4-h5 in the near future, it makes more sense to keep the knight closer to the center and go for this move as opposed to ...♟h5.

14. ♟xg7 ♜xg7 15.e5!

This is White's idea. White is changing the pawn structure in the center.

15...d5

Keeping the center closed. 15...♟xe5 would be met by 16.f4! when White would regain the e6-pawn and the d5-square for his knight.



A21) 16. ♟b1 ♜ac8 17.h4

Now that our knight is far away from the h5-square, White goes for the h2-h4-h5 push after all. 17.♟e2 ♖xd2 18. ♜xd2 ♟f7 (we cannot take on e5 with 18...♟xe5 due to 19.♟d4 and White

grabs the pawn on e6 with a fork) 19. ♗d4 ♗b8!. A thematic regrouping, like the one we see in the similar endgame after the 16.a3 move. Black is fine here, challenging White's strong d4-knight and potentially starting counterplay against the e5-pawn. A correspondence game that reached this position (Efendiyev-Lecroq, 2017) was eventually drawn.

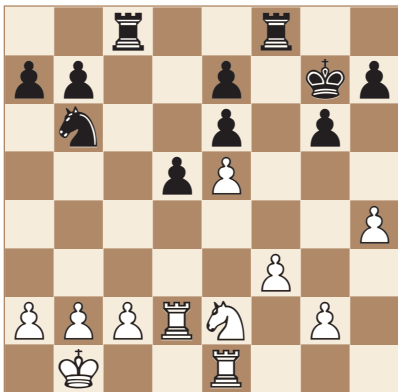
17... ♗b6!?

In the correspondence game Molina-Mulder, 2017, Black got counterplay with 17... ♖f5!? 18.f4 ♖c4. Black increases the pressure and intends ... ♗c5 next. White decided to go for an endgame after all: 19. ♗e2 ♙xd2 20. ♖xd2 ♖f8 21. ♗d4 ♗c5 and a draw was agreed.

18. ♗e2

If White ignores the threat, he will soon be in trouble, for example after 18.h5 ♗c4 19. ♙c1 ♗xb2 and Black is crushing it.

18... ♙xd2 19. ♖xd2



We will see these endgames a lot. Usually, we want to bring our knight to c6 to challenge White's strong knight on d4, but here, with the knight already on b6, we have a different route:

19... ♗c4!

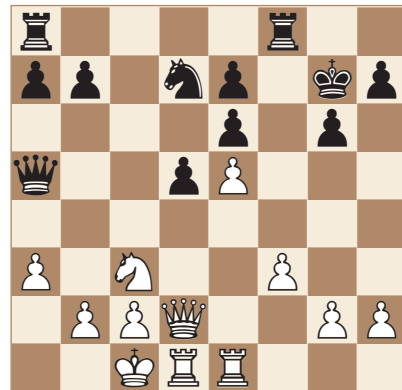
And, depending on where the white rook will go, Black will either take on e5 or go to e3.

20. ♖d3

20. ♖dd1 ♗e3; 20. ♖d4 ♗e3.

20... ♗xe5

A22) 16.a3



This seems like a slightly more accurate way of preparing ♗e2. In the arising endgame, the king is possibly better placed on c1 than on b1, as it is closer to the center. Although, frankly, it is all very subtle and the differences are minuscule.

16... ♖ac8

This move never needs commentary in the Sicilian. The rook belongs on this file!

17. ♗e2

Just like in the line with 16.♔b1, if White chooses to postpone trading the queens with 17.h4, we will still force this with 17...♗b6! intending ...♖c4.

17...♗xd2+



18.♞xd2

The endgame is fine for Black. It is very important that, even if White gets a bind with the pawn chain e5/f4/g3/h4, it is not the end of the world now that we no longer have the bishop on g7. White's knight on d4 will be challenged with the thematic ...♗d7-b8-c6!, our king will likely reroute itself to d7 so as to stay close to e6-pawn while letting the f8-rook keep watch over the f-file. And after that, we will keep the ideas of ...h7-h6/...g6-g5 on the kingside and the ...b7-b5/...a7-a5-pawn advance on the queenside in mind.

18.♔xd2 occurred in the correspondence game Verenzuela-Lanz Calavia, 2016: 18...♞c4 (Black makes use of

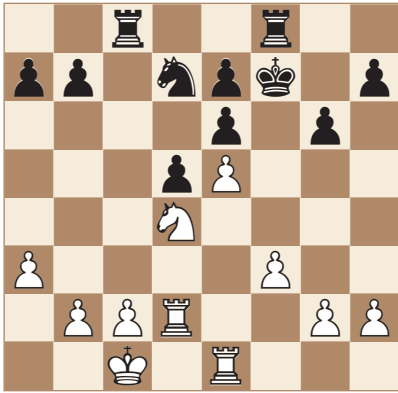
the fact that White can't block the fourth rank with ♗d4 just yet, and swings his rook over to h4) 19.♔c1 ♞h4 20.h3 g5 (not allowing f3-f4 and leaving the e5-pawn isolated) 21.♗d4 ♔f7 22.b3 ♗b8 (introducing the thematic ...♗c6 idea) 23.♞e3 ♞c8 24.♔b2 a5, possibly intending ...♞c5 and ...♗c6. Black seems comfortable in this endgame and a draw was agreed.

18...♔f7

Black lost one correspondence game here after 18...a5!?. The idea is to grab some space on the queenside: 19.♗d4 ♔f7 20.♞e3 (if 20.f4 there is always the ...♗d7-c5-e4 idea, which is the point of Black keeping the d7-knight flexible) 20...a4 21.♔b1 (again, 21.f4 is met with 21...♗c5!) and now 21...g5⇒. 21...♗b8 is also okay here. It is similar to our main line, but the text move is also a strong conceptual idea, not letting White get his kingside pawns all nicely connected with f3-f4 and g2-g3. Next, we want ...♗b8 and ...♗c6. In the correspondence game, however, Black played 21...♗b6, where it is doing nothing after 22.b3!. After quite a few more mistakes, Black eventually lost the game (Moser-Guerreiro, 2017).

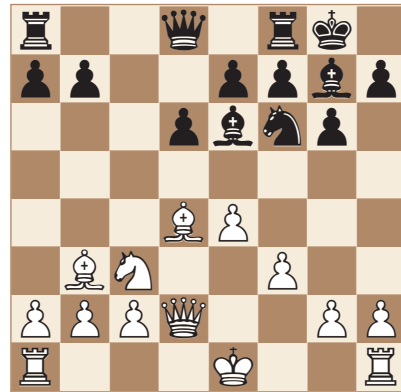
19.♗d4

If White starts with 19.f4, we may go for the active 19...♗c5 followed by ...♗e4.



as we aren't going to get all that much play there, for example, if White meets ...b7-b5/...a7-a5 with pawns on a3 and b3. However, the same applies to White: while he can prevent our counterplay on both wings, he has no resources left to start any real play of his own. Both sides appear to be at a standstill here.

B) 11. ♖b3



19... ♗b8

The most conceptual approach is to start with this regrouping and challenge the d4-knight immediately. Alternatively, I also like 19...g5!?, trying to avoid the kingside bind altogether. Although, as I already mentioned, without the dead bishop on g7 the kingside bind in itself is not so damaging for us.

20.f4 ♗c6 21. ♗f3!

White is also on top of things. He avoids the trade of knights.

21... ♖e8

Continuing with our plan. Black can also start with ...h7-h6 first, it all comes down to the same thing.

22.g3 h6 23.h4 ♖d7

The king is well placed here. White has managed to secure his kingside, so now we can grab some space on the queenside.

24. ♖e3 b5

Frankly, our queenside offensive is more of a preventive measure,

Apart from this being the most popular move, it also feels right. White parks the bishop on b3 and asks Black what he has achieved by playing ...♖e6.

11... ♗a5

The standard way of developing the initiative in the Dragon. The queen heads to a5 from where it controls some key squares, like b5 and d5, but also puts pressure on the c3-knight and, at times, the a2-pawn.

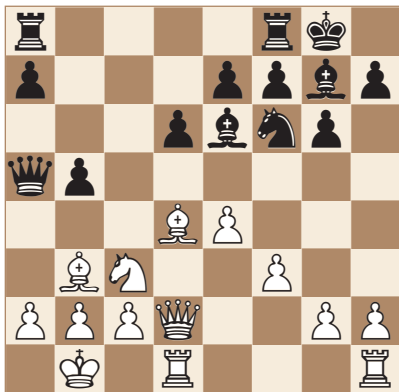
12.0-0 b5!

This is the new twist, although it has been played in a couple

of hundreds of games already. About a decade ago, Hikaru Nakamura tried to make this line of the Dragon work against me with 12...♖fc8. After the game, he told me he couldn't refute it but, as some time passed, the engines got stronger and humans started looking at this position more closely. It turned out that after 12...♖fc8 13.♗b1 b5 White has the very challenging and rare move 14.a3! (which is now instantly pointed out by the computers), stopping ...b5-b4.

Instead, it is the immediate ...b7-b5-b4 that gives Black the counterplay he needs.

13. ♗b1



This is an important move whenever there is an x-ray between the queens on d2 and a5. Now Black has to watch out for the intermezzo ♘d5 ♙xd2 ♘xe7+ . This is a very important motif in the Dragon, although it doesn't necessarily always work

for White, by the way! Do stay alert to tricks!

13...b4!

Continuing with the direct approach.

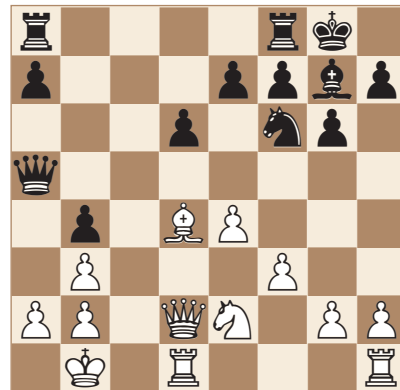
B1) 14. ♘e2

The knight is quite passive and no longer controls the important squares d5 and a4.

14... ♙xb3!

Now that the knight is far away from d5, it is a good moment to trade the bishops.

15.cxb3



15...e5!?

The standard idea of ...♙b5 intending ...a7-a5-a4 was fine too, but here Black can make use of the fact that the knight on e2 is misplaced and go for a quick breakthrough in the center.

16. ♙f2 ♖fd8

Followed by ...d6-d5, which is unstoppable at this point.

17. ♙h4

Trying to stop ...d6-d5, but that is no longer possible.

17...d5!

A temporary pawn sacrifice, once again making use of the fact that the e2-knight is too far away from the crucial d5-square.

18. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 19.exd5 ♜d7

And Black wins back the pawn with a better pawn structure.

20. ♜g3 ♜ad8 21. ♜e4 ♖g7 22.d6

White can only postpone the inevitable.

22...f5!

Undermining the knight and picking up the d6-pawn next.

23. ♜g5

The d6-pawn is doomed and now the easiest is probably to pin the knight with

23...♖h6!?

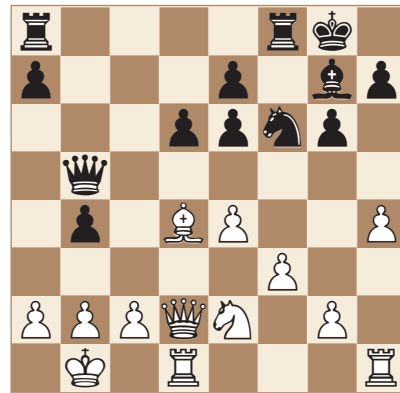
and follow up with ...♞c5 and ...♜xd6, equalizing the material and ending up with a pawn majority in the center.

14...fxe6 15. ♜e2 ♞b5

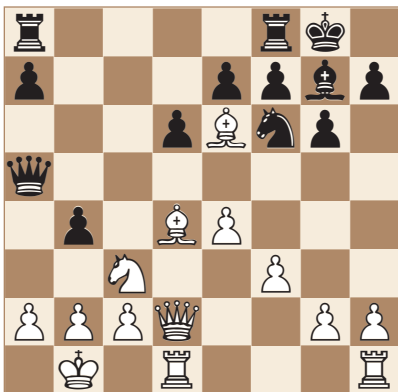
Typically, whenever the b-pawn gets pushed to b4, the queen slides over to b5, allowing the a-pawn to be pushed forward, too.

16.h4

16. ♞d3 ♞xd3 17. ♜xd3 ♜d7. With a good pawn structure and, as always, with the semi-open c-file there is not much to worry about for us in this endgame.



B2) 14. ♖xe6



This feels like a concession and it certainly is more logical to take on e6 right away on move 11.

16...a5

There were five correspondence games played in which Black pushed 16...e5 first (Black scored four draws and one win, by the way), but I don't see any reason for Black to commit to that just yet.

17.g4

White is methodically trying to get his play on the kingside. It makes sense.

17.h5 gxh5! (slowing down White's kingside play just a little bit so as to get enough time to start our own queenside play

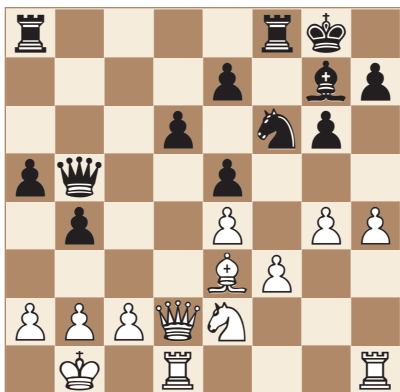
with ...a5-a4/...b4-b3) 18.♘g3 a4 (going for the counterattack) 19.♙xf6 ♙xf6 (White is slowly breaking through, but our king is safe enough and ...b4-b3 is coming) 20.♘h5 (after 20.♖xh5 ♗c4 the king on g8 is rather open, but is in fact pretty safe, and ...b4-b3 is coming) 20...♙h8!, preserving the bishop, intending ...♗e5, and if White brings the knight back with 21.♘f4, we strike with 21...b3!

17...e5!

Now the play on the queenside with ...a5-a4/...b4-b3 is not as efficient as White's kingside play with h4-h5, so instead we strike in the center.

18.♙e3

This allows 18...d5!, but 18.♙g1 is way too awkward, as 18...♖ad8!, intending 19...d5 next, gives Black good play.



18...d5!

The central push works well here.

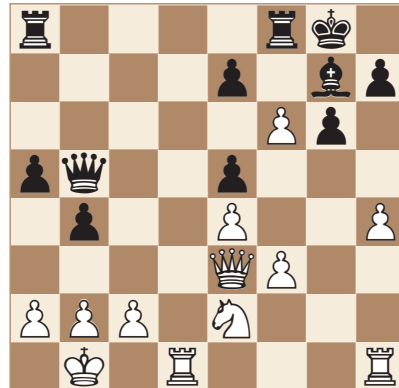
19.g5

If White were to simply take on d5, we would easily regain the pawn by moving any of the two rooks to d8.

19...d4!

Tempo play.

20.gxf6 dxe3 21.♗xe3



21...♖xf6!

It is important not to think about undoubling our pawns and instead focus on counterplay on the f-file. The bishop can eventually find a bright future on the h6-c1 diagonal.

22.h5

White should start some play before we get to push ...h7-h5! and lock the kingside.

22...♖af8

Hitting the f3-pawn.

23.hxg6

And now I like the thematic solution

23...♖xf3! 24.gxh7+ ♔h8.

Note how beautifully the h7-pawn protects our king. Quite typical!

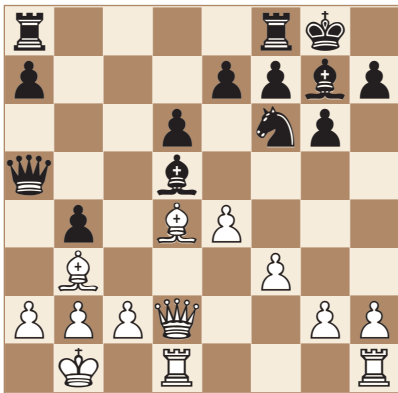
25.♗d2 ♗c4

And White is facing some issues with the protection of his e4-pawn, and ...♖f2 as well as ...a5-a4 are coming next. What's most important is that our king is safe thanks to the enemy pawn on h7.

B3) 14. ♗d5

The most principled and most common reply.

14... ♗xd5



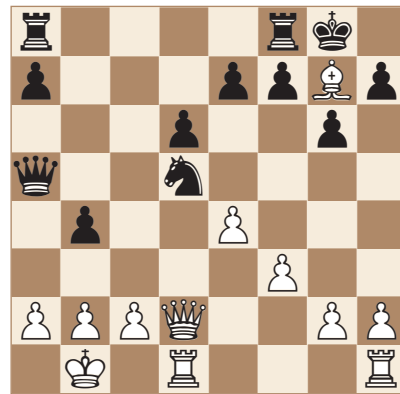
B31) 15. ♗xd5

This appears to be strong at first, but there are some tactics!

15... ♗xd5 16. ♗xg7

If 16. exd5 ♖xd5, we are happy here, having traded the central d5-pawn for our b-pawn. After the text move, if Black were to just recapture on g7 with 16... ♗xg7, White would go 17. exd5 and then start quick play on the kingside with h2-h4-h5, which clearly appears to be faster than our ...a7-a5-a4/... b4-b3 counterplay. However, there is a very important

trick now that many of your opponents will surely not see coming.



16... ♗c3+!!

A very strong intermezzo. Black is taking over the initiative here, as the tactics work out for us.

17. ♗xc3

This is the best attempt, trying to salvage a draw in an ugly rook endgame.

If 17. bxc3, White hopes to at least win the b-pawn after 17... ♗xg7 18. cxb4, but there is one more surprise: 17... ♖fb8! (actually 17... ♖ab8! is just as good) 18. cxb4 ♖xb4+! and it turns out that, in the end, we will win back the piece with dividend: 19. ♖xb4 ♖xb4+ 20. ♗b2 ♖ab8. Black has to see this far (or study my book)! Once we win back the piece, we obviously have a better pawn structure. If we consider the rule of pawn islands, White has three, while we have two. The less the better.

17... bxc3 18. ♖xc3

C) 3.g3

Leading to some sort of a King's Indian Attack.

3...♘f6 4.d3 g6

Quite often, I like to recommend the fianchetto in these closed positions.

5.♙g2 ♖g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♞e1 ♘c6

Natural development can never be wrong.

8.c3 e5

Especially with the white bishop on g2, this push is clearly the way to go, as it is hard to advance on the queenside otherwise. Now there are a few plans, like preparing ...d6-d5 or a queenside expansion. I think preparing ...f7-f5 is somewhat unrealistic here, although long term it could also be a plan.

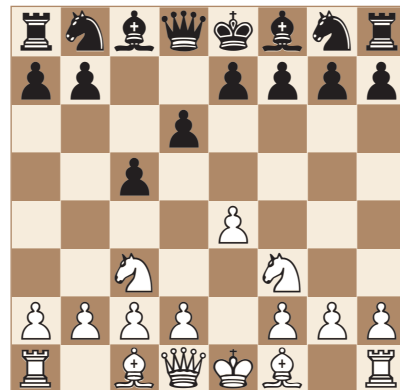
9.a4

Not a threatening plan, trying to just finish development and gain some space on the queenside. 9.a3 b5! (I like this reaction to the plan with a2-a3/b2-b4) 10.h3 (I lost a game to Bassem Amin at the Nations Cup Online

rapid 2020, but the position is very good for Black at this point; in case of 10.b4 a5! the trades on the queenside are in Black's favor) 10...a5! (in the game, I wasted a tempo on 10...♞b8) 11.a4 (this move troubled me, but allowing a weakening of the c4-square is not an issue at all) 11...b4 12.♘bd2 (heading towards c4 is logical) 12...h6 13.♘c4 ♙e6. The knight is pretty on c4, but it alone can do no damage with the queenside being completely closed. Black is the one with a long-term idea of pushing ...f7-f5, while White is running out of useful moves.

9...h6 10.♘a3 ♞e8

Preparing to eventually push ...d6-d5. White is playing the reversed King's Indian, but not a particularly fun one. Black can actually also decide not to push for ...d6-d5 and play on the queenside with an eventual ...b7-b5 instead.

D) 3.♘c3

3...e5!?

For the Dragon course I chose to punish White for his move order. Also, if we try to play along with 3...♘f6, we can't go for the Dragon set-ups after 4.♙c4!, as then 4...g6 fails to 5.e5!, while something clever like 4...♘c6 5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4 g6 also fails to 7. ♘xc6! bxc6 8.e5!.

4.♙c4 ♙e7!

We need to start with this move to avoid the childish trick 4...♘f6?! 5.♘g5!.

5.d3



5...♘f6

If Black played 5...♘c6 here instead, we would enter a big *tabiya* from the 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 e5 Sicilian, but here we are better off, as we remain flexible. Now the critical plan of d2-d3/♘f3-d2-f1 is less effective.

6.0-0

Without the maneuver with ♘f3-d2-f1, these positions are known to be quite harmless for Black.

If 6.♘d2?! 6...♙g4! is the standard response, forcing the weakening of White's kingside first before we prepare pushing ...d6-d5: 7.f3 ♙e6 (now we drop back to control the d5-square) 8.♘f1 d5!. This is the point of delaying ...♘c6. White is simply not in time to get the knight to e3 and prevent the ...d6-d5 break.

6...0-0



There is no need to sweat over the weak d5-square, Black will just play around it. If you want to get more confidence in these kind of positions, I would recommend studying the games of Magnus Carlsen in the structure with 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 e5. I will give a couple of sample lines.

D1) 7.♙g5

White can always trade the dark-squared bishop for the knight, trying to gain further control over d5.

7...♘c6 8.♙xf6 ♙xf6 9.♘d5

We play around the d5-square, we don't have to bother trying to regain control over it.

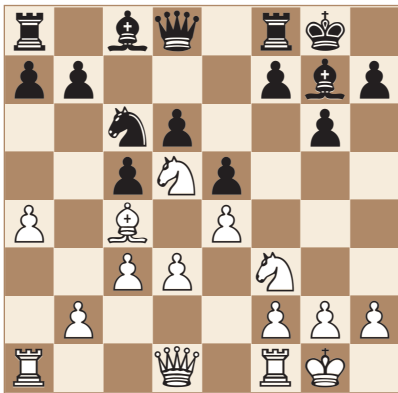
9...g6

A typical way of regrouping the pieces here.

10.c3 ♖g7

Black has a few plans, but the most aggressive one is the one with ...f7-f5, expanding on the kingside.

11.a4



Now we can go for ...♗h8 and ...f7-f5, but we can also use the opportunity to activate our dark-squared bishop.

11...♗h6!?

The plans with ...♗h8 and ...f7-f5 are still on the agenda, but now our dark-squared bishop gets a room with a sea view. Another plan, by the way, could be ...♗e6 and ...♞e7, trading off the pieces that can control d5, especially as White's other knight is too far away from it.

D2) 7.h3

The most often played move here.

7...♗e6!?

It's clever to postpone ...♞c6 for now.

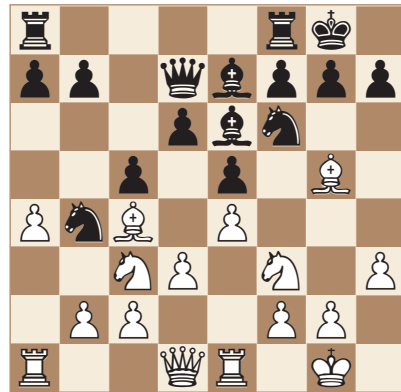
8.a4

Preparing for ...a7-a6/...b7-b5 in advance.

8...♞c6 9.♞e1 ♚d7

Intending 10...♗d8 next.

10.♗g5 ♞b4!?



Due to the pawn on a4, the knight does a good job in helping to control the d5-square.

11.♞d2

White is trying to reroute his knight to e3. Not a great idea.

11...h6 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♞f1 ♗g5

Stopping the idea of ♞e3.

14.♞e3 ♗xe3

Parting with the bishop is the easiest way to make sure White doesn't get to dominate the d5-square.

15.♞xe3 f5

White has the tough choice to either abandon control over the square d5, or let us have our pawns roll down the board.

E) 3.♙c4



This move has become relatively popular at the high level too, especially in the quicker time controls. I also see it pop up now and then across other levels, so it is good to know how to handle this. White intends to place the bishop on b3 and then slowly fight for the center and perhaps push c2-c3/d2-d4 if possible.

3...g6

Playing the Dragon, we have to be clever, so as not to get move-ordered here. After the natural 3...♘f6 we have to deal with 4.♘c3! when 4...g6 fails to 5.e5!, and 4...♘c6 5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4 g6 also fails to 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.e5!.

E1) 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4

There isn't much point in taking with the queen here: 5.♙xd4 ♘f6. The queen is a target to ...♘c6.

5...♘f6 6.♘c3 ♙g7

Transposing to the Dragon line with 6.♙c4.

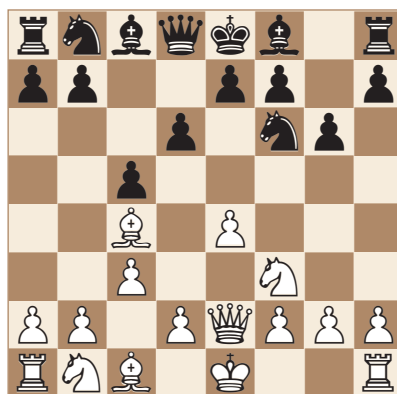
E2) 4.c3 ♘f6!

We don't let White have the pawn center with d2-d4 this easily.

5.♙e2

Ambitious, intending 6.d4, but White doesn't get his wish granted here so easily.

5.e5 dxe5 6.♘xe5 e6 is not an issue here, with the white pawn being on c3: 7.d4 cxd4 8.0-0 ♙g7 9.cxd4 0-0 10.♘c3. Now the easiest is to just develop with 10...♘c6 11.♘xc6 bxc6. The weakness of the c6-pawn is compensated by the weakness of the d4-pawn and the position is fine. We will enjoy our outpost for the knight on d5 and we should also keep an eye on the possibilities of ...e6-e5!? and ...c6-c5!?, using the power of our bishop on the long diagonal.



5...♘c6!

Now White has to waste one more move on h2-h3.

6.h3

6.d4 is a mistake: 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♙g4! and there is an issue with

the d4-pawn that White can't solve.

6...♙g7 7.d4 cxd4 8.cxd4 d5!

Not letting White have his beautiful pawn center for more than half a move.

9.exd5 ♖xd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.♘c3 ♙e6

With firm control over the light squares, as 12.♘g5 can be met by 12...♘xc3! 13.bxc3 ♙xc4, when the bishop easily escapes the threat of ♘xe6. Black is doing well thanks to our better pawn structure.

E3) 4.♘c3 ♙g7 5.0-0 ♖f6 6.d3 0-0 7.h3 ♘c6



For us Dragon players this is really not a concern. We have got our bishop on g7 and White's position lacks any punch. We can prepare for ...e7-e6/...d6-d5 in the center or ...a7-a6/...b7-b5 on the queenside.

E31) 8.♙g5

This has been played a lot, but ...h7-h6 usually is a handy

inclusion for Black anyway, as it stops the idea with ♖d2/♙h6.

8...h6 9.♙e3 ♖a5

The bishop on c4 suddenly has to be traded.

E32) 8.a3

This has also been played a lot, with the idea to drop the bishop back to a2.

8...e6 9.♙a2 b6

Of course, ...a7-a6/...b7-b5 is excellent too, but this set-up is also very sensible.

10.♙e3 h6!?

Not at all a necessary precaution, but rather a clever one.

11.♖d2 ♙h7

And White struggles to find a plan, now that the idea with ♙h6 is taken out and the f3-knight is in the way of the pawn on f2. We may want to push ...d6-d5 at some point.

E33) 8.♙e3

Finishing the development. White's set-up is very amateurish and not very potent, but he hasn't done much wrong either.

8...a6

We can include 8...a6 and 9.a4, but we can also choose not to. It's a matter of taste.

9.a4 b6

Also possible is 9...e6!?, which is even more ambitious, taking away the idea of 10.♘d5.

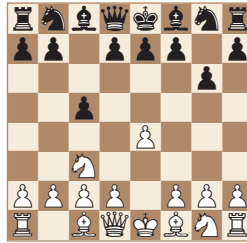
10.♖d2

Index of variations (numbers refer to pages)

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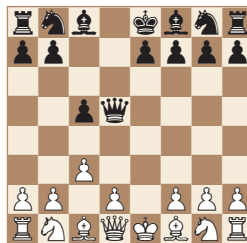
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2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♖xd5

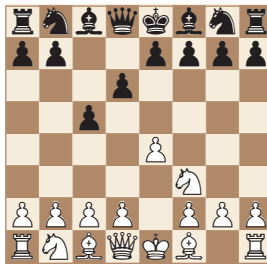


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3.♙b5+ ♙d7



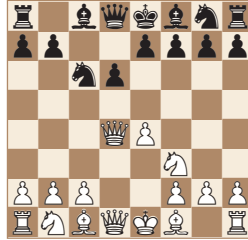
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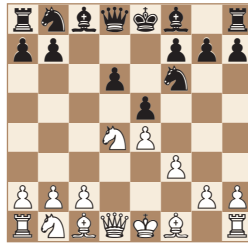


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4.♘d4 ♘f6

5.f3 e5



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5.♘c3 g6



The Dragon Sicilian

6. ♖e2 ♗g7



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6.f4 ♘c6



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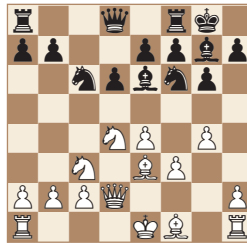
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8. ♖d2 ♜c6



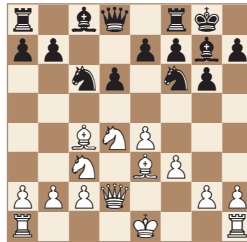
9.g4 ♗e6



The early 9.g4

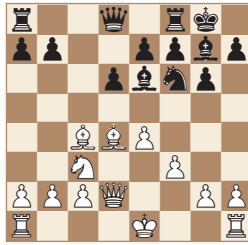
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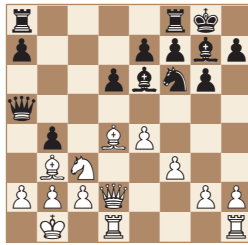


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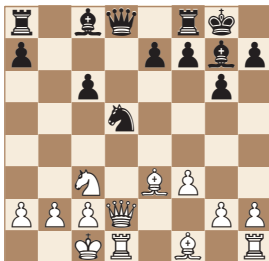
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Dragon main line

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