

Beat the Anti-Sicilians

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Robert Ris

Thinkers Publishing



Key to Symbols

!	a good move	±	White stands slightly better
?	a weak move	∓	Black stands slightly better
!!	an excellent move	±	White has a serious advantage
??	a blunder	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!?	an interesting move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
?!	a dubious move	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
□	only move	→	with an attack
N	novelty	↑	with initiative
☉	lead in development	↔	with counterplay
⊙	zugzwang	Δ	with the idea of
=	equality	▷	better is
∞	unclear position	≤	worse is
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material	+	check
		#	mate

Bibliography

New in Chess Yearbooks

ChessBase Magazine

Mega Database 2021

Corr. Database 2020

Lifetime Repertoires: Sicilian Najdorf – Anish Giri, Chessable

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Preface

Dear reader,

When I decided to write *The Modernized Sveshnikov* (June 2020) I knew that I was basically committing myself to covering the Anti-Sicilians in a separate book as well. After all, what's a book on the Sveshnikov alone worth when your opponents decide to avoid the Open Sicilian? Especially since the Sveshnikov is nowadays considered to be one of the most reliable options for Black in the Sicilian, White players have been investigating new territories within the Anti-Sicilians. The book you are holding in your hands, *Beat the Anti-Sicilians*, aims to provide a complete Black repertoire against all the critical sidelines after 1.e4 c5. The biggest part of the book covers the Rossolimo and Alapin, but also the popular lines at club player's level like the Grand Prix Attack and the Morra Gambit, and other alternatives on White's 2nd move are also worked out in detail.

What I didn't realize, however, is that it would take me much more time than I had expected. Having worked out your analysis doesn't mean that these are ready for publication. Besides my regular work as a trainer/coach, most of my time in the last year has been spent busily editing my original analysis and checking it again with the computer, following the latest games and adding these to my files, and rechecking again etc. This repetitive procedure slowed down the entire process and explains why this work is published later than I originally had in mind.

Speaking for myself, as a Sicilian player I mainly like to face the Open Sicilian and I was often disappointed when my opponent decided to deviate from the sharp main lines. Well, at least that was how I experienced it for a long period of time and I'm sure many other players have often felt the same. But those who had invested time studying the Anti-Sicilians didn't mind facing these sidelines, or were even glad to see their opponents being afraid of their favorite variation within the Open Sicilians. That's actually the spirit we should look for, and hence I'm recommending you do the same: invest your time and you'll get rewarded!

I have aimed to find a good balance of verbal explanations without ignoring the hardcore variations you have to know. In case you find some of the analyses a bit

too long, don't be discouraged! They have been included mainly to illustrate the thematic ideas and show in which direction the game develops once the theoretical paths have been left. That's why I have actually decided to cover 37 games in their entirety, rather than cutting off my analysis with an evaluation. I believe that model games help you to better understand an opening, but certainly also the ensuing middle- and endgames.

Just as in the *The Modernized Sveshnikov*, also in this book I have made frequently use of correspondence and engine games. With a lack of over the board (elite) tournaments, most elite players made their switch to the world of online chess as well. These games with a shorter time control are often full of mistakes, but the opening stage is still relevant. Hence, I have decided to include these online games whenever I thought them to be a useful addition to our repertoire.

With the completion of this work and *The Modernized Sveshnikov*, I think I have succeeded in offering the reader a complete, ambitious, and sound Black repertoire against 1.e4. I am incredibly satisfied with the result of this work, as I think the mix of new ideas, beautiful variations, model games, extensive analyses and explanation of key concepts will inspire many chess fans. I would like to wish you all an enjoyable read and hope that you will be able to apply some of my recommendations in your own games. You no longer have to fear any Anti-Sicilian!

Robert Ris

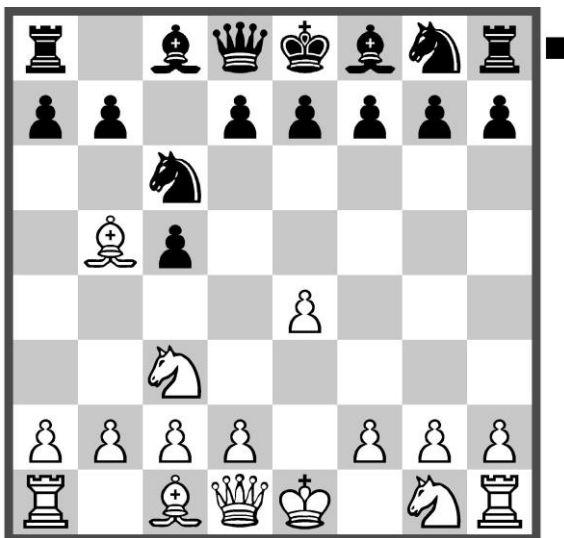
Amstelveen, The Netherlands
September 2021

www.robertris.com



2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bb5

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bb5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 10 – 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bb5

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nd4

a) 4.Bc4 189

b) 4.Nf3 194

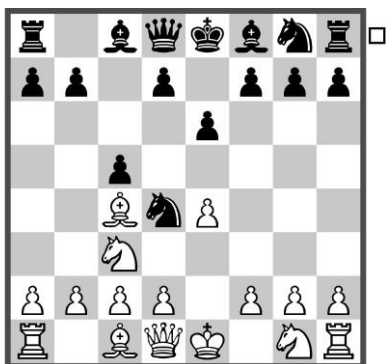
a) 4.Bc4

- I Promyshlyanskiy, Vitaliy (2211)
 J Motylev, Alexander (2703)
 🌐 EU Championship rapid 2019

Instead, White has a more serious alternative: 6. 0-0 a6

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nd4 4. Bc4

4. a4 has been seen here as well, but likely leads to positions covered in the game, or else after 5.Nf3 when White decides to play a2-a4 later anyway, and hence I recommend 4... e6.

4... e6

Position after: 4... e6

5. Nge2

5. Nf3 Nf6 Now, we can mention that 6. e5?! d5! 7. Nxd4 [7. exd6 Bxd6 is nice for Black too.] 7... cxd4 8. Bb5+ Nd7 9. Ne2 Qg5 favored Black in Sedlak – Ermenkov, Subotica 2002.



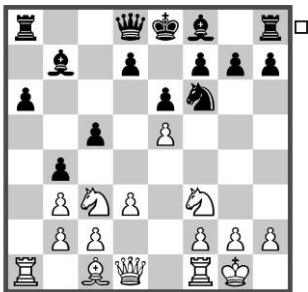
Position after: 6... a6

A) 7. Bb3 Qc7!? 8. d3 Ng4 9. g3 Nxf3+ 10. Qxf3 was seen in three games and, rather than the automatic ...Ne5, it's more precise to start with 10... h5!? not allowing White to launch the f-pawn with tempo.

B) 7. a4 is imprecise in view of 7... d5! 8. exd5 exd5 9. Ba2 Bg4! 10. Qe1+ Be7 11. Nxd4 cxd4 12. Ne2 d3! 13. cxd3 0-0 and White's extra d-pawn is an impediment. A good example: 14. d4 Bb4 15. Qd1? and now in McShane – Shirov, Germany 2012, the most convincing way to proceed is 15... Re8 16. f3 Bd7 17. d3 Qb6 followed by doubling rooks on the e-file.

C) 7. d3 b5 [7... d5? is a well-known mistake, in view of 8. exd5

exd5 9. Nxd5! Nxd5 10. Nxd4 cxd4
 11. Qh5 Be6 12. Re1 and White re-
 gains the piece, because after 12...
 Be7 13. Rxe6 Nf6? 14. Rxf6! things
 only get worse.] 8. Bb3 Nxb3! [With
 the knight on f3, I would no longer
 recommend 8... Nc6?! in view of 9.
 e5!] 9. axb3 Bb7 The big difference
 from 5.Nge2 becomes clear now, as
 White is unable to launch his f-
 pawn. 10. e5 b4



Position after: 10... b4

C1) 11. exf6 bxc3 12. fxg7 Bxg7
 13. bxc3 Bxc3 14. Ra4 Rg8 15.
 Bf4?! [15. g3 as played in the cor-
 respondence game Andeer –
 Martello, ICCF 2009, gets the ma-
 chines' approval, but after
 15...Qc7! I would rather be
 Black.] 15... Qf6 16. Bg3 Bxf3 17.
 gxf3 h5 and Black is clearly better
 in Iuldachev – Aronian, Mallorca
 2004.

C2) 11. Na4 Nd5

(see analysis diagram next column)



Position after: 11... Nd5

C2.1) 12. Bg5?! Qc7 13. Re1 h6
 14. Bh4 g5 15. Bg3 and now the
 energetic 15... h5! 16. h4 gxh4
 17. Bxh4 Rg8 offered Black ex-
 cellent prospects in Gabrielian
 – Lamard, chess.com 2020.

C2.2) 12. c4 bxc3 13. bxc3 Be7
 14. Ba3 Qc7 15. d4 cxd4 16.
 Qxd4 Rc8 17. c4 Nb4 18. Bxb4
 Bxb4 with near equality in
 Sanchez – Silva Filho, ICCF
 2017.

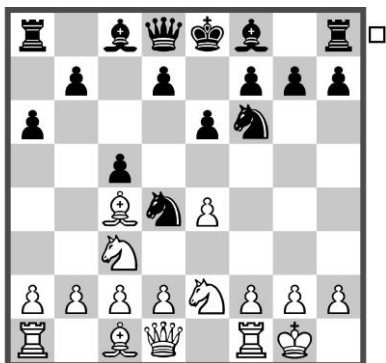
C2.3) 12. Ng5 f5 13. exf6 Qxf6
 was absolutely OK for Black in
 Polster – Philippe, Germany
 2005.

C2.4) 12. d4 cxd4 13. Qxd4 Be7
 14. c4 bxc3 15. bxc3 0-0 16. Bd2
 and now in Biti – Cvitan, Sibenik
 2011, Black could have ob-
 tained a nice position with 16...
 f6!?.

5... Nf6 6. 0-0

6. Nxd4?! cxd4 7. e5 d5 8. Bb5+ [8. exf6? dxc4!] 8... Nd7 transposes to 5. Nf3 Nf6 6. e5?!

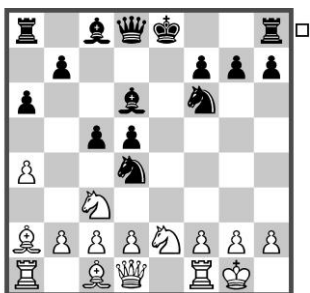
6... a6



Position after: 6... a6

7. d3

A) 7. a4 d5 8. exd5 exd5 9. Ba2 [9. Nxd5? fails this time to 9... Nxd5 10. Nxd4 cxd4 11. Qh5 Be6 12. Re1 Nf4! Black has won many games in this way.] 9... Bd6!?



Position after: 9... Bd6!?

A1) 10. Nxd4?!



Position after: 10. Nxd4?!

10... cxd4 11. Re1+ Be6

A1.1) 12. Ne2? Ng4 13. g3 [13. h3 Bh2+ 14. Kf1 Nxf2! 15. Kxf2 Qf6+ and Black wins] 13... Qf6 14. Nf4 and now in Keosidi – Maletin, Russia 2007, decisive would have been 14... h5! 15. Qf3 0-0-0.

A1.2) 12. Nxd5 Nxd5 13. Bxd5 Bxh2+ 14. Kxh2 Qxd5 and Black was slightly better in Mogranzini – Forato, Arvier 2010.

A2) 10. d3 Ne6!? [10... 0-0 11. Nxd4 cxd4 12. Ne2 Bg4 13. h3±] 11. Ng3 h5! 12. Nf5 Bc7

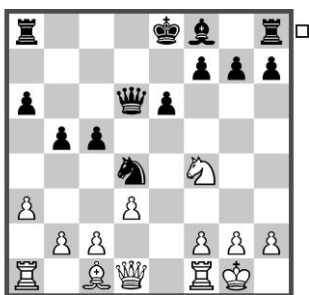


Position after: 12... Bc7

A2.1) 13. Re1 Kf8!⇐ [13... 0-0? runs into 14. Nxd5! Nxd5 15. Bxd5 Qxd5? 16. Ne7+.]

A2.2) 13. g3 g6 14. Nh4 0-0 15. f4 Nd4 16. f5 Nxf5 17. Bg5 Qd6 18. Nxf5 Bxf5 19. Rxf5 [19. Bxf6 Qxf6 20. Nxd5 Qd4+ 21. Kg2 Bd8 is also no problem for Black.] 19... gxf5 20. Bxf6 [20. Qf3 Rae8 21. Qxf5 Nh7 22. Bf4 Qb6 23. Bxc7 Qxc7 24. Qxh5 Re5 25. Nxd5 Qd6 26. Qg4+ Kh8 and I'd rather be Black, as in Savin – Schueppel, ICCF 2015.] 20... Qxf6 21. Nxd5 Qd4+ 22. Kh1 Bd8 23. Qxh5 Qg4 and Black was fine in Schuster – Janzen, ICCF 2016.

B) 7. a3 b5 [7... d5 is possible too, with similar play as in the variation with 7.a4.] 8. Ba2 Bb7 9. d3 d5 10. exd5 Nxd5 11. Nxd5 Bxd5 12. Bxd5 Qxd5 13. Nf4 Qd6



Position after: 13... Qd6

B1) 14. Nh5 Qe5!? 15. Ng3 [15. Re1? allows 15... Nf3+!] 15... Be7 16. c3 Nc6 17. Be3 Qd5 18. Qe2 0-0 and Black was slightly better in Copar – Standke, ICCF 2011.

B2) 14. Re1 Be7 15. Nh5 0-0 16. Bf4 Qd8 It may seem as if White has achieved something by pushing the queen back to its initial square, but that's not too much of an issue. The knight on d4 is very annoying and probably White should chase it away as well, with c2-c3, but then the d-pawn will become a target. In the game White decides to not do anything much, but that's not satisfying either: 17. a4 b4 18. Rc1 Rc8 19. b3 Re8 20. Qg4 g6 21. Ng3 f5! 22. Qd1 Bf6 23. Be5 Bxe5 24. Rxe5 Qf6 25. Re1 e5 and Black obtained a very clear advantage in Vohl – Riedener, ICCF 2012.

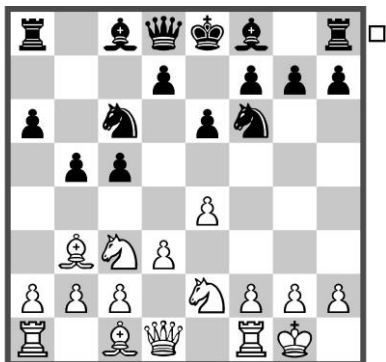
C) 7. e5?! d5 8. exf6 dxc4 9. fxg7 Bxg7 slightly favors Black.

7... b5

7... d5?! 8. exd5 exd5? again allows the well-known trick 9. Nxd5! Nxd5 10. Nxd4 cxd4 11. Qh5 Be6 12. Re1 and White will win his piece back, retaining an extra pawn and a nice and powerful attack.

8. Bb3 Nc6!?

(see diagram next page)



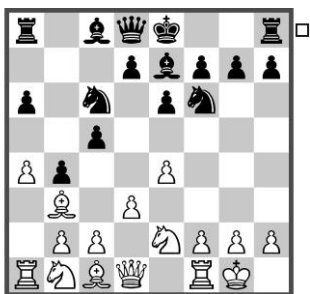
Position after: 8... Nc6!?

Initially I was going to recommend the main continuation 8... Nxb3 9. axb3 Bb7 but then after 10. f4 d5 11. e5 d4 there are quite a number of lines leading to a forced draw.

9. Bg5

Instead, 9. Ng3?! h5 10. Bg5 h4 11. Nh5 h3! didn't offer White anything but problems in Thiel – Xu, Germany 2017.

Another option for White is to play: 9. a4?! b4! 10. Nb1 Be7



Position after: 10... Be7

D1) 11. f4 was seen in Mamedov – Vidit, Kolkata 2009, and now Black

has various promising continuations, but I found the following dynamic option worth sharing: 11... Na5 12. Nd2 [12. Ba2 c4!] 12... Qb6 13. Kh1 d5 14. Ba2 [14. exd5 exd5 looks dreadful.] 14... dxe4 15. Nxe4 c4 16. Nxf6+ gxf6 and Black develops a powerful initiative against the king via the g-file and a8-h1 diagonal.

D2) 11. Ng3 h5! 12. h3 h4 13. Ne2 d5 14. exd5 Nxd5 gives Black a very nice position. In the game Tissir – Jones, chess.com 2020, White now played 15. Nf4?! when Black should refrain from exchanging the knights and instead go for 15... Nf6! when I fail to see a constructive way for White to complete his development, e.g. 16. Nd2 g5! 17. Ne2 Bb7 followed by ...Qc7, ...0-0-0 etc. ensures Black a powerful kingside attack.

E) It seems to me that a neutral move such as 9. Re1 is relatively White's best option, though after 9... Be7 10. Ng3 d6 [10... h5?! can't be recommended this time, because of 11. a4!? b4 12. Nd5!] 11. Nce2 Na5 12. Nf4 0-0 13. c3 Nxb3 14. axb3 Bb7 15. Be3 a5 Black was doing more than fine in De Oliveira – Daubenfeld, ICCF 2015.

9... Be7 10. Ng3

10. f4 h6 [10... d6?! 11. f5!] 11. Bxf6 Bxf6 12. e5 Be7 13. a4 was played in Jones – Wells, Sunningdale 2007, and now Wells' play can be improved upon

here with 13... b4! 14. Ne4 Qb6 15. Kh1 Bb7 with fantastic play for Black.

10... h6 11. Bxf6 Bxf6 12. Nh5

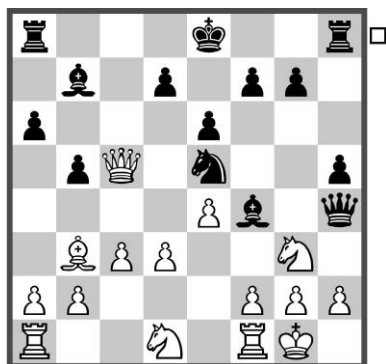
12. f4 was seen in Vocaturo – Cmilyte, Wijk aan Zee 2012, where Black decided to castle kingside too quickly. A better option is 12... Bb7 and now after 13. e5 Be7 14. Nce4 Qb6 Black is about to castle queenside with a strategically miserable position for White.

12... Bd4! 13. Qe2 Qh4 14. Nd1 Be5 15. Ng3

15. g3 is met by 15... Nd4! and White's position is falling apart.

15... h5 16. c3 Bb7 17. Qe3 Bf4 18. Qxc5 Ne5

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 18... Ne5

19. f3

In the case of 19. Qd4 Black gives his attack renewed impetus by 19... Rh6! with simply too many threats.

19... Nxd3 20. Qd4 Ne5 21. Qf2 Rh6! 22. Bc2 Rg6 23. Ne3 Rxc3 24. Qe1

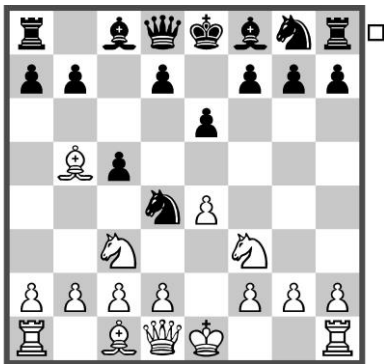
After 24. hxg3 Bxc3 White is forced to give up his queen.

24... Rxc3+ 25. Nxc3 Qxc3+ 26. Kf2 Bg3+ 27. Ke3 Nc4+ 0-1

b) 4.Nf3

I Arribas Lopez, Angel (2434)
 J Gelfand, Boris (2676)
 Blitz chess.com 2020

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nd4 4. Nf3 e6



Position after: 4... e6

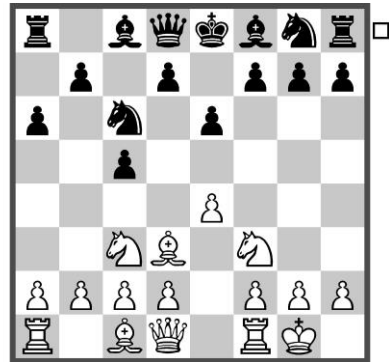
5. 0-0

5. Nxd4? cxd4 6. Ne2 Qg5! and Black wins a pawn, as 7. Nxd4? Qc5! 8. c3 e5 9. b4 Qb6 makes things even worse by dropping a piece.

5... a6 6. Bd3

The most common move, because after 6. Be2 Ne7 7. Nxd4 cxd4 White can't retreat his knight, while after 8. Nb1 Nc6 Black obtains a good position.

6... Nc6!?



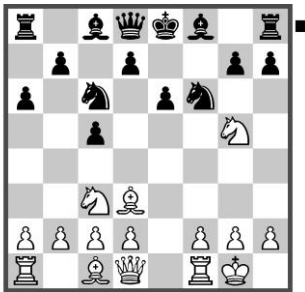
Position after: 6...Nc6!?

The most ambitious move. Black moves the same piece for the third time, but hopes to profit from White's clumsy bishop on d3. After 6... Ne7 7. Nxd4 cxd4 8. Ne2 Nc6 9. c3 I slightly prefer White's prospects.

7. b3

A) 7. a3 b5 8. Re1 [8. Be2 Qb6!?! preventing d2-d4] was seen in Guseinov – Saric, chess.com 2019, and now the rook has taken the e1-square from the knight, it makes sense to once again consider 8... g5!?

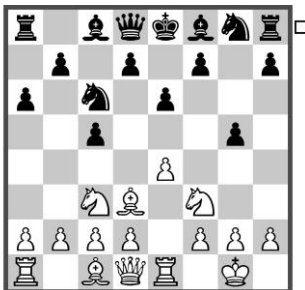
B) 7. e5 vacates the e4-square for one of the minor pieces. The simplest way to equalize is to push the d-pawn, but the alternative 7... f5!?! leads to fascinating play. 8. exf6 [8. a4? g5! 9. h3 h5 gave Black a crushing attack in Samani – Yoo, chess.com 2021. A new idea is 8. Re1!?! Nge7 9. Bf1 Ng6 10. d4 cxd4 11. Nxd4 Ncxe5 12. Nxf5 exf5 13. f4 d6 and Black withstands White's attacking prospects.] 8... Nxf6 9. Ng5



Position after: 9. Ng5

9... d5 [9... Be7? 10. Bxh7!] 10. Re1 [10. Bxh7? fails to 10... Nxh7 11. Qh5+ Kd7 12. Nf7 Qe8 and Black wins.] 10... Be7!? [10... Bd6? was seen in Nestorovic – Perunovic, Smederevska Palanka 2016, but then 11. Nxe6! Bxe6 12. Rxe6+ Kf7 13. Rxf6+! favors White.] 11. Nxe6 Bxe6 12. Rxe6 0-0 offers Black excellent compensation for the pawn.

C) 7. Re1 with the idea of playing e4-e5 can be well met by 7... g5! as Black threatens to trap the knight.



Position after: 7... g5!

C1) 8. h3? only leads to problems for White, which was reflected well in the following game: 8... h5! 9. Bf1 g4 10. Nh2 Bd6 11. g3 h4! 12. Nxg4 hxg3 13. f3 Nf6 14. Bg2 Nxg4 15. fxg4 Qf6

16. Rf1 Qd4+ 17. Kh1 Rh4 18. Ne2 Qh8!



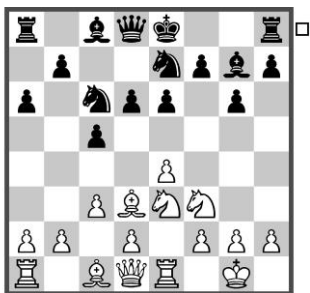
Position after: 18... Qh8!

19. Ng1 Ne5 and Black had achieved a totally dominating position in the engine game Exchess 7.31b – The Baron 3.36, TCEC 2014.

C2) 8. g3 was seen in Kogan – Livner, Rogaska Slatina 2011. White's idea is to consolidate his kingside with Bf1-g2. My suggestion here is to proceed with 8... g4!? 9. Nh4 Be7 10. e5 [10. Qxg4 Ne5 11. Qh3 Nxd3 12. cxd3 Bxh4 13. Qxh4 Qxh4 14. gxh4 Ne7 and I'd rather be Black here, while 10. Ng2? h5 clearly favors Black.] 10... Bxh4 11. Qxg4 f5 12. Qg7 Bf6 13. exf6 Qxf6 14. Qxf6 Nxf6 and Black is in great shape.

D) 7. Nd5!? g6 [7... exd5? 8. exd5 Nce7 9. d6! and White regains the piece. However, 7... Bd6!? is a new idea worth investigating too.] 8. Re1 Bg7 9. c3 d6 [Simply bad is 9... Nge7? 10. Nxe7 Qxe7 11. Bc2 e5 12. d4! which was seen in Jones – Navara, Tornado 2020.]

10. Ne3 [10. Bc2? exd5 11. exd5+ Nce7 and White can't regain the piece with d5-d6.] 10... Nge7



Position after: 10... Nge7

11. Bc2 [11. Bf1 d5 12. exd5 exd5 13. d4 cxd4 14. cxd4 0-0 was fine for Black in Maze – Demuth, Brest 2019 (Note of the Editor: great game!) 11... e5 12. a3 0-0 13. b4 b5 14. Rb1 h6 15. Bb2 f5 16. bxc5 dxc5 with a complicated midgame in Zvjaginsev – Bukavshin, Kaliningrad 2015.

F) 7. Be2 has been tried in many games. The idea is that White is ready to transpose to the Open Sicilian by playing d2-d4 on the next move. Hence, 7... Nd4! is the way to go for Black, which has the drawback that the game may be drawn before move 10!

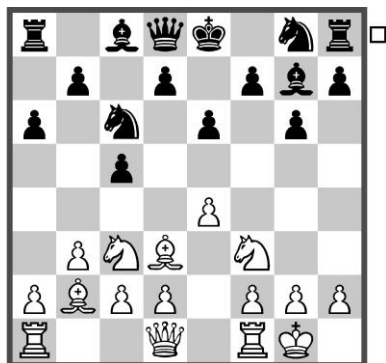
7... g6!?

This move has recently become popular. In earlier games Gelfand tried Black's main option, 7... d6.

8. Bb2

8. e5 Bg7 9. Re1 was seen in Cuenca Jimenez – Ninov, Granada 2015, and now Black's best option is to challenge the pawn on e5 with 9... f6!? 10. Ne4 [10. exf6?! Nxf6 11. Bb2 0-0 looks great for Black, as 12. Ne4? drops a pawn after 12... Nxe4 13. Bxg7 Nxf2! 14. Kxf2 Kxg7] 10... fxe5 11. Nd6+ Ke7 and with a massive block of central pawns, the black king is absolutely safe, e.g. 12. Nxc8+ [12. Ng5 Nh6! 13. Nge4 Nf5 and Black untangles] 12... Rxc8 13. Bb2 Qc7 and White's compensation is insufficient.

8...Bg7



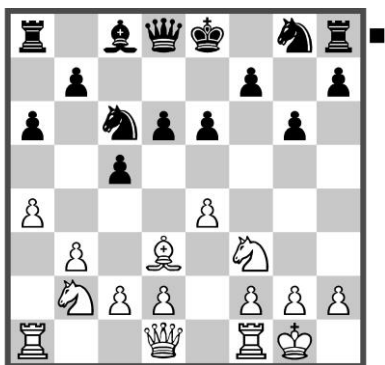
Position after: 8... Bg7

9. Na4

9. Re1 d6 [9... Nge7?! as played in D'Costa – Babanin, Tallinn 2019, invites White to play 10. e5!] 10. e5 [10. Bf1 Nge7 11. Na4 e5! 12. Nc3 0-0 with an excellent position for Black in Sadhwani – Gelfand, chess.com 2020.] was tried in Demchenko – Czerw, Teplice 2019, and now after 10... Nxe5 11. Nxe5

dx5! [11... Bxe5?! 12. Rxe5! dx5 13. Ne4 gives White nice compensation] 12. Ne4 Qc7 13. f4 Kf8 14. fxe5 Bxe5 15. Bxe5 Qxe5 16. Qf3 Kg7 Black is in time to consolidate his kingside.

9...Bxb2 10. Nxb2 d6 11. a4



Position after: 11. a4

11... Nge7

11... Nf6 12. Nc4 e5 13. Ne3 Be6 14. Re1 0-0 is also fine for Black in Sadhwani – Le, Lichess.org 2020.

12. c3 0-0 13. Bc2 e5 14. Nc4

14. d4? is met by 14...cxd4 15. cxd4 Bg4!.

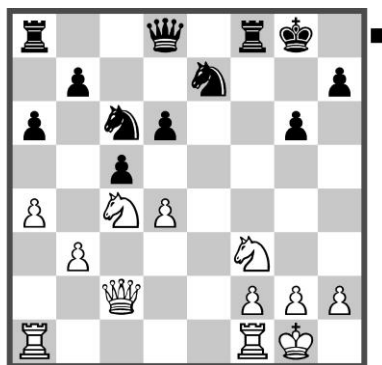
14... f5 15. exf5 Bxf5

All recaptures are perfectly fine for Black, but the most energetic continuation is 15... e4! 16. Nh4 [16. Bxe4 d5 17. fxxg6 hxg6 and Black wins a piece.] 16... d5 which enables Black to seize the initiative in the centre.

16. d4?

Underestimating Black's 18th move. White had to try 16. Bxf5 Nxf5 17. Qe2 with a slightly inferior position.

16... exd4 17. cxd4 Bxc2 18. Qxc2



Position after: 18. Qxc2

18... Rxf3! 19. gxf3 Nxd4 20. Qe4?

Another huge mistake, which abruptly ends the game. More stubborn is 20. Qd3 but then also after 20... Qd7 Black obtains a powerful initiative, e.g. 21. Rae1 Rf8 22. Nd2 Nd5 23. Qc4 Rf5 and so on.

20...d5

0-1