

A dragon to the death

A RECENT lecture I gave at the Pencarrow Chess Club in Wainuiomata covered the Sicilian Dragon, one of the most violent of all the chess openings.

At first it was considered unclear. Then Bobby Fischer became the leading exponent of the lethal White Yugoslav attack (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 0-0 8.Qd2 Nc6 9.Bc4 Bd7 10.h4!?) from which follows a simple but highly effective mating procedure, with White playing the moves 0-0-0, Bh6 and h5 prising open the h-file for his major pieces.

Devotees of the Blackside were forced to speed up Queenside counterplay and dramatic exchange sacrifices on c3 were soon commonplace. Present day opinion again regards the Yugoslav attack against the Dragon as unclear, but of the most active grandmasters only England's Tony Miles plays the opening with any frequency.

World champion Anatoly Karpov has a wide opening repertoire and often produces interesting ideas. Recently he sidestepped the main lines and rehabilitated an old variation with some novel Karpovian ideas.

Las Palmas 1977

SICILIAN DEFENCE (Dragon variation)

| A. Karpov (USSR) | A. Martin (Spain) |
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| 1. e4 | c5 |
| 2. Nf3 | d6 |
| 3. d4 | cxd4 |
| 4. Nxd4 | Nf6 |
| 5. Nc3 | g6 |
| 6. Be2 | |

Karpov follows an old line in which White castles kingside early on and follows up the attack with a later f4.

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| 6. . . . | Bg7 |
| 7. 0-0 | 0-0 |
| 8. Bg5! | |

The first Karpov deviation. From here the bishop exerts indirect pressure on the Black e-pawn. Another advantage this move has over the normal, 8.Be3 is that at an opportune moment White may suddenly lash out with a Bxf6, followed by Nd5 which attacks the capturing bishop on f6 plus the e-pawn if Black moves his bishop from the knight's line of fire.

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| 8. . . . | Nc6 |
| *9. Nb3 | Be6 |
| 10. Kh1 | |

Finesse number two. If 10.f4 immediately Black can begin his Q-side counterplay rolling with 10 . . . b5, intending

11.Bxb5 Qb6 ch 12.Kh1 Nxe4! if White captures. Karpov's tenth move transfers his king to a less vulnerable square.

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| 10. . . . | a6 |
| 11. f4 | b5 |
| 12. Bf3 | Rc8 |

Martin would dearly like to play 12 . . . Bc4 but this fails to 13.e5, and similarly 12 . . . Nd7 (preventing 13.Nd5) meets the same 13.e5.

13. Nd5!

With this move Karpov seizes the advantage. Black dare not ever exchange this knight with . . . Bxd5 because then his backward e-pawn sitting on e7 would become vulnerable. In the meantime White threatens to double his pawns by a dual exchange on f6.

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| 13. . . . | Nd7 |
| 14. c3 | Nb6 |
| 15. Qe2 | Nc4 |
| 16. Rad1 | Qd7 |
| 17. Rfe1 | Qa7 |

Karpov was threatening to bring his other knight into the fray by 18.Nd4.

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| 18. Bh4 | Rfe8 |
| 19. Nc1! | Qb8 |
| 20. Nd3 | a5 |
| 21. Nf2 | Bd7 |

Through a remarkable knight manoeuvre, Karpov has activated his most poorly placed piece — now he offers an exchange in search of a direct kingside assault.

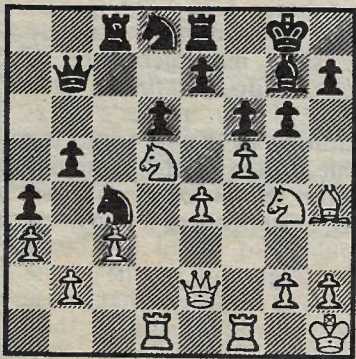
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| 22. Bg4! | Bxg4 |
| 23. Nxg4 | a4 |
| 24. a3 | Qb7 |
| 25. Rf1 | Nd8 |

Another defensive try was 25 . . . Rf8.

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| 26. f5! | f6 |
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Martin must prevent 27.f6 by White. Now Karpov uses his aggressively posted pieces and advantage in space to bring the Black king from his shelter.

MARTIN



KARPOV

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| 27. Bxf6! | exf6 |
| 28. Ngxf6 ch | Bxf6 |
| 29. Nxf6 ch | Kf8 |
| 30. fxg6 | hxg6 |
| 31. Qg4 | |

With no really useful discovered check at hand Karpov simply brings more pieces into the fray.

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| 31. . . . | Nf7 |
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If 31 . . . Ne5 then 32.Nd7 dbl.ch. Kg7 33.Nxe5 Rxe5 34.Rxd6 and against three major pieces Black's king is helpless.

32. Qxg6 Nce5
33. Nh7 ch Resigns

On 33 . . . Ke7 Karpov had planned a lovely Queen sacrifice ending in mate after 34.Ng5! Nxg6 35.Rxf7 ch Kd8 36.Rxd6 ch when Black is forced to interpose his Queen, but to no avail as 37.R (either) xd7 is checkmate.

MURRAY CHANDLER