

THE HYPER ACCELERATED DRAGON

by

Raja Panjwani



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Managing Editor
Romain Edouard

Proofreading
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Graphic Artist
Philippe Tonnard

Cover design
Iwan Kerkhof

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY TO SYMBOLS	5
INTRODUCTION	7
CHAPTER 1. CLASSICAL VARIATION [♘e2]	15
CHAPTER 2. 7.♘c4: ANTI-YUGOSLAV VARIATION	31
CHAPTER 3. 7.♘c4: MY SYSTEM	59
CHAPTER 4. MAROCZY BIND: BREYER VARIATION	93
CHAPTER 5. MAROCZY BIND: MAIN LINE	135
CHAPTER 6. 4.♙xd4 VARIATION	179
CHAPTER 7. ANTI-SICILIANS: ALAPIN AND MORRA	191

KEY TO SYMBOLS

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

INTRODUCTION

*It simply isn't an adventure worth telling
if there aren't any dragons.*

J.R.R. Tolkien

My Favorite Sicilian

I was introduced to the Accelerated Dragon when I was ten years old, more than seventeen years ago. It was arguably my first 'serious' defense against 1.e4: prior to then I would develop my pieces in a manner my father and I called 'P-Play' (the 'P' deriving from our family name) but which I later discovered is widely known as the Hippopotamus Defence. He and I were of similar strength at the time, and we studied the opening together from the then recently published, and now classic, *Accelerated Dragons* by IMs Donaldson and Silman.

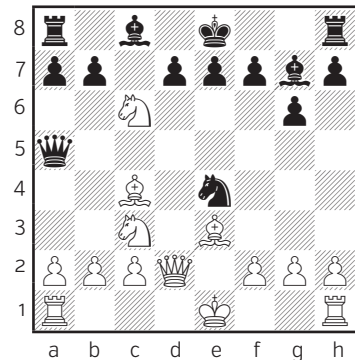
What drew me to the opening initially was the abundance of cheapos I could set up for my opponents in the early stages of the game, which even experts and masters seemed unprepared for. The following was always one of my favorites:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
♙g7 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4
♚a5 8.♚d2?

8.0-0

8...♘xe4! 9.♘xc6

9.♘xe4 ♚xd2+ 10.♙xd2 ♘xd4♠



9...♚xc3!! 10.♚xc3

10.bxc3 ♘xd2 11.♙xd2 bxc6♠

10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 bxc6♠

Beyond simple tricks like this one, I found that the positional themes of the opening were fairly easy to digest; for example, dark square control, central breakthrough (especially ...d7-d5), queenside expansion, as well as the typical favorable and unfavorable end-

games which tend to arise. As I have matured as a player, my perspective on this opening has correspondingly transformed, but my respect and appreciation for its strength has only been enhanced. This book is an attempt to convey my current understanding and approach with black.

I have always felt that the Accelerated Dragon does not get its due respect among the Sicilians. Even its prodigal brother, the un-accelerated Dragon, had its time in the spotlight when it was used by Kasparov to twice defeat (and twice draw) Anand in their 1995 PCA World Championship match. Why then, has the Accelerated Dragon — the theoretically no worse off, and much safer of the two (I like to think of it as the only Sicilian where Black needn't worry about getting mated in 25 moves) — historically been only an occasional guest in top events, and, unlike every other respectable Sicilian, never occupied the central battlefield of a World Championship match? Part of the discrepancy is a vestige of the old (pre-1970s) dogma that in the Sicilian, to avoid suffocation, Black must prevent White from obtaining a 'clamp' pawn center (pawns on e4 and c4). Indeed, the Maroczy Bind (5.c4) has always been the bane of the Accelerated Dragon's existence. However, while this attitude towards the Sicilian may have

been justifiable half a century ago, Black has since demonstrated counterattacking prospects against the e4/c4 clamp in a variety of structures, as in the Hedgehog, Kalashnikov, Kan, Taimanov, and certainly no less in the Accelerated Dragon.

I suspect that computers have deterred many potential devotees away from the Accelerated Dragon. Computer evaluations in the main lines tend to fluctuate between +0.25 and +0.5, which plausibly leads to the rationale that playing the Accelerated Dragon instead of the Berlin or Marshall — where evaluations are closer to +0.15 — is like playing with a small handicap straight out of the opening. Things, however, are not so simple. Computers evaluate each position by objective features, without regard for subjective factors which are very often more important in tournament chess. Machines systematically ignore the value of, for example, being able to follow one of a small number of thematic plans, irrespective of what the opponent does, saving on clock time as well as risk of mishandling the position. This sort of human element is unaccounted for by the engine, resulting in an inflated estimation of White's chances. In this regard, there are similarities between the Accelerated Dragon and the King's Indian Defense — another opening notoriously bastardized by the engine. King's Indian devotees are used to seeing +0.5 computer evaluations, but they are not discouraged

1 The only time it was played in a World Championship Match was Spassky-Petrosian 1969, Game 3.

because they recognize that there is a narrow margin of error for White, and to err is human. The same can be said for the Accelerated Dragon.

Fortunately, the tide of fashion is turning, and contemporary Accelerated Dragon experts like (super) Grandmasters Tiviakov, Mamedov, Iturrizaga, and Malakhov have demonstrated that this opening can be a reliable counter to 1.e4 even against top opposition. Recently, in fact, World Champion Magnus Carlsen upheld the Black side of a Maroczy to put a halt to Caruana's 7-0 run in the 2014 Sinquefeld Cup. I predict a bright future for this opening, for many reasons, but most of all because 1) The resulting positions are difficult for computers to properly assess- many '+=' evaluations are more accurately '=' but more importantly 'easier to play for Black', a factor which should not be underestimated especially considering the increasingly short time controls, and 2) There is plenty of unexplored terrain, which cannot be easily navigated by the positional dictums we are brought up with, because the Accelerated Dragon is a genuinely nonstandard opening. This means that there is a competitive advantage to those who work out its unusual nuances, unlike in, say, the Najdorf or Sveshnikov where it often feels like the strategic ideas are all well known, and only concrete novelties are yet to be discovered (if it is unclear what I mean by this, I hope it isn't by the end of the book!).

The Accelerated Dragon State of Mind

A friend of mine (a strong IM) recently commented to me that if he could be certain that his opponents wouldn't play the Maroczy bind, he would always play the Accelerated Dragon instead of his usual (unaccelerated, but I sometimes teasingly prefer 'un-playable') Dragon, because White can't play the critical Yugoslav Attack against the Accelerated Dragon (despite this being lesson #1 of the Accelerated Dragon, a surprising number of masters have not gotten the memo). "However", he continued, "in the Maroczy, Black is just playing for a draw, you can never win!" A loyal defender of my beloved pet opening, I insisted he had it all wrong, and that I welcome the Maroczy in must-win games with Black. "That's really weird dude, you're probably the only one" was his retort, but I think when it comes to the Accelerated Dragon, there's a requisite state of mind needed in order to properly handle it — some players have had a conversion experience after catching a glimpse of its incredible power, while others haven't. Plausibly as a result of this, from my experience there is a peculiar camaraderie among Accelerated Dragon practitioners. Whereas Najdorf 'bros' espouse a Darwinian angst that their novelty on move 25 in the Poisoned Pawn variation will be discovered, used, and rendered useless by their

colleagues, I have found that Accelerated Dragon players enjoy discussing their ideas with each other. A personal anecdote of mine is fairly typical: in the final round of the 2013 US Masters tournament I was in a must-win ‘money game’ with Black against Cuban GM Abreu, and I noticed GM Rauf Mamedov (a leading expert on the Black side of the Accelerated Dragon) was taking an interest in the Maroczy Bind on my board. I won the game in a tense struggle, and afterwards when I was collecting my prize, Rauf kindly congratulated me on the win and took an interest in the 15...e6 line I played (see chapter 5), which he said he hadn’t studied before. I told him I was not too happy with the more popular 15...Qb6, but he asserted that from his analysis Black has no problems there — “it’s equal” he said. His confident proclamation was just the nudge I needed to look closer into some of the lines I thought were undesirable for Black, and on closer inspection I realized (unsurprisingly) he was right!

While this elusive ‘state of mind’ is somewhat ineffable, and better grasped from experience than anything else (if I am successful then the contents of this book will convey precisely this), I think it is helpful to think of the Maroczy as a close cousin of the Hedgehog. I understand the ‘philosophy’ of the Hedgehog in terms of how Mihai Suba describes it in his excellent *Dynamic Chess Strategy*. It is worth quoting him at length.

“White’s position looks ideal. That’s the naked truth about it, but the ‘ideal’ has by definition one drawback — it cannot be improved. ...In the early 1970s, the successes of Karpov and Andersson showed that [Hedgehog] positions are not only playable but offer as many winning chances as any other opening. This was in glaring conflict with classical strategy. White enjoys more space, better development [and] his position has no weaknesses. How is it possible that Black not only resists in these positions but sometimes wins? The only plausible answer lies in the hidden dynamics of the positions. After the opening, White’s position has all the qualities of a successful picture, but lacks concrete possibilities for improvement. Within our terminology, it is rigid (not elastic). Black’s position, in contrast, ‘looks’ bad but has greater scope for improvement.” (p. 26)

This description applies equally well to the Maroczy. In fact, you might say that the Accelerated Dragon (specifically the Black side of the Maroczy) ‘state of mind’ is, to borrow Suba’s phrase, an appreciation for the “hidden dynamic factors” in each position which compensate for the static deficiencies (again, the best way to ‘sense’ these is by studying the opening — the variations in this book are meant to illustrate these factors). Moreover, as a long time Hedgehog player myself, I must say that in my opinion, Black has much more freedom in the Maroczy than in the Hedgehog; for instance, in the Hedgehog, it is usual-

ly unfavorable for Black to exchange queens, whereas in the Maroczy (and the Accelerated Dragon more broadly), White often takes pains to avoid exchanging queens so as to not lose the initiative, and that is a liability which contributes to the “rigidity” (another apt term of Suba’s) of White’s position. Terms like ‘elastic’ and ‘counterattacking potential’ will be interspersed throughout this book — they are much more informative than reductive evaluations like ‘=’.

An Inclusive Opening

One of the remarkable things about the Accelerated Dragon is its appeal to players with vastly different styles. Compare Bent Larsen, the epitome of dynamic, offbeat, risky chess, with Sergei Tiviakov, who claimed in an interview recently that his style has been shaped most by Petrosian (who was a great Accelerated Dragon devotee himself), Smyslov, and Karpov — both these players have championed the Accelerated Dragon as their main weapon against 1.e4 and yet their styles are in many ways polar opposites of each other! How can this be? I think the answer to this question is subtle and instructive. I think that when playing the Accelerated Dragon it ‘feels’ like you are playing White, not Black (albeit in a hypermodern manner). What I mean is, in chess, White tends to be the one to control the tempo of the game — usu-

ally it is White who chooses whether to enter into an opposite side castling situation, or to exchange pieces early on and maneuver around in a simplified middlegame, or invoke the center as the locus of battle, ensuring king safety above all.² Furthermore, Black usually needs to play accurately to not end up slightly worse, or at least give the initiative to White. The situation is, to the well prepared Accelerated Dragon player, precisely the reverse: in the Maroczy, for example, there are half a dozen different ways for Black to develop, and players of diverse styles can choose the one which suits them best (or vary their choice depending on practical considerations). Black controls the tempo and determines the character of the struggle, which is why it is so effective in must-win games. Furthermore, unlike in many 1...e5 openings, or in most other Sicilians like the Kan, Sveshnikov, or even the Najdorf, White’s choices are rather limited if he does not want to end up slightly worse out of the opening. In practice, White meets the Accelerated Dragon with either the Maroczy Bind or the 7. ♘c4 variation; this is simply not so in the Najdorf where every single reasonable move is a viable candidate from the

² This is why most White openings — the Open Sicilian for example — are suitable for both positional and tactical players, because the fact that White controls the character of the struggle means that White can steer the position in the desired direction.

starting position of the Najdorf (6.h3, 6.♖g1, 6.g3, 6.f3, 6.♗e3, 6.f4, 6.♗e2, 6.♗c4, 6.♗g5, 6.a4, and that is not even to mention variations therein), and the margin for White error is far greater (for example 6.♗e2 e5 7.♗f3!? is a serious challenge to the Najdorf but 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.♗f3?! is just dubious against the Accelerated Dragon).

The above may sound a little hyperbolic, and I would like to make it clear from the outset that I am not claiming that 'Black is better' in the Accelerated Dragon; to do so would be dishonest. My claim is a serious one: the character of the Accelerated Dragon is that of a White opening. In fact, the Accelerated Dragon reversed *is* a White opening, called the English, and is fashioned by most of the top players in the world, including Carlsen, Kramnik, Aronian, Anand, Giri, and others: the exact piece arrangement occurs with colors reversed (and a tempo up) after 1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♗f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.♗c3, as well as 1.c4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.g3 ♗c6 6.♗g2 ♗c7 7.o-o e5 (reversed Maroczy). I have enjoyed playing this 'reversed Accelerated Dragon' with White as well.

In addition to being inclusive in the above sense, that it can suit players of diverse styles, and also that it can be a coherent complement to a 1.c4 repertoire with White, there are many interesting ways that the opening 'fits' with defenses against 1.d4/1.c4/1.♗f3, and can often directly transpose from them.

King's Indian:

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6

i) 5.♗f3 o-o 6.♗e2 c5 7.o-o cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♗c6

ii) 5.f3 o-o 6.♗e3 c5 7.♗ge2 cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♗c6

Benoni/Benko Gambit:

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 c5 3.♗f3 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 g6 6.e4

1.d4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 g6 3.c4 c5 4.♗c3 (4.d5 either 4...b5 or 4...e6) cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♗c6 6.e4

Symmetrical English:

1.c4 c5 2.♗f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗g7 5.e4 ♗c6

1.♗f3 c5 2.c4 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗g7 5.e4 ♗c6

Of course, there is no obligation on Accelerated Dragon players to deploy these defences in order to allow for transpositional possibilities — Tiviakov has been a lifelong Nimzo-Indian/Queen's Indian devotee as a counter-example — but I have found it useful to play these systems in tandem myself.

One more point on the topic of move orders: since the Accelerated Dragon (especially the Maroczy) can come about from so many different move orders, I have taken some liberties

with the games in this book to convert the initial moves to the 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 ‘Hyper-Accelerated Dragon’ move order we will be focusing on. I have done this, following a not uncommon practice, purely for didactic purposes — I don’t want readers happy with their 1.d4 defenses to be confused by transpositions from openings they don’t play.

About This Book

This book presents a repertoire for Black after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 — the Hyper-Accelerated Dragon. I am relatively lax about distinguishing between ‘Accelerated Dragon’ (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6) and ‘Hyper-Accelerated Dragon’, and I use the two interchangeably unless to emphasize move order nuances, for example, “the Hyper-Accelerated Dragon avoids the Rossolimo”. However, this is not merely ‘a’ Hyper-Accelerated Dragon repertoire, it is *my* repertoire, and I present the material as such, from a first person perspective, making brazen use of my own games and offering personal anecdotes and opinions. This stylistic choice risks my coming across as presumptuous and at times even boastful, but my hope is rather that the conversational mode of presentation makes readers feel as though I am their tour guide through what might otherwise feel like an insurmountable labyrinth of variations. Further on the point of stylistic choices, I am regret-

tably not sufficiently skilled in writing without gender-specific pronouns, so please regard all generic references to ‘he’ as ‘s/he’ (or alternative) and so on.

I provide as much information as I think is necessary for readers to play this opening with Black; however, this is absolutely not meant to be an anthology on the opening. I make no claim to cover every conceivable variation White can play. Any attempt at such, couched under the heading of a ‘complete repertoire’ would not only be misleading, but in this day and age obsolete. This is not to say that opening books are altogether obsolete; on the contrary, as inundated with information as we all are nowadays, it can be enormously helpful to have an author divulge opening secrets from their years of experience which would not easily be gathered from a database search.

What is obsolete is the attempt to thoroughly and comprehensively ‘prove equality’ with Black, and more importantly for our purposes it is antagonistic to the spirit of the Accelerated Dragon, which is that of an opening refusing to be evaluated on static grounds alone. As Jonathan Rowson instructs in his *Seven Deadly Chess Sins*, “You need to assess not only the position as it stands but the position as it has changed and how it is likely to continue to change”. (p.75) So, I am not a big fan of evaluations like ‘=’ or ‘+=’ or ‘+’ (though I capitulate to these at times) because ‘=’ makes me think

of a draw and ‘+=’ makes me feel like I ought to be satisfied with a draw as Black, when in reality Black can very much be optimistic about his position despite such evaluations, and that is why I prefer evaluations like “counterplay” or “mutual chances”.

If you encounter a variation not covered in this book, for example 1.e4 c5 2.♘a3, my general prescription is this: find a database (no excuses, they are free online), and search the position with an Accelerated Dragon player (I gave you a list above) as Black to see how they have chosen to play the position. Ideally you’ll find a model game that you can recall whenever you face the system; after all, when it comes to rare systems like 2.♘a3 it is foolish to memorize concrete variations since you’ll never remember them anyway, but the key ideas of a model game you can. Even in the main lines of the Accelerated Dragon, don’t try to memorize the moves given in this book as if they are the ultimate truth. They aren’t. Your learning will be enhanced if you actively seek out novelties of your own, and try to understand how the various positional ideas for both sides fit together.

To make this book as valuable to the Petrosian-style (risk-averse) Accelerated Dragon player as to the Larsen-type (risk-craving), I have recommended two systems against each of the 7.♙c4 and Maroczy Bind variations. I hope

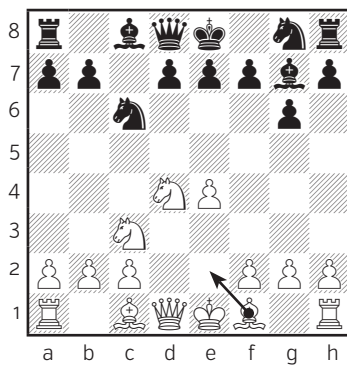
at least one of these suits you. For those among you who will embark on the risky course (‘My System’ against 7.♙c4 and the Breyer Variation of the Maroczy), may I caution you to do so with a realistic attitude towards the cost of risk-taking in chess. It is in the (mathematical) nature of risk-taking that it increases the variability of outcomes — both good and bad. The mature risk taker is mindful of this, cognizant that their risk-taking is compatible with their aims and justifications. This was the attitude of Bent Larsen. If you would like to play the Accelerated Dragon ambitiously, with a tolerance for risk, keep in mind the following description of Larsen, given by Reshevsky: “He is a firm believer in the value of surprise. Consequently, he often resorts to dubious variations in various openings. He also likes to complicate positions even though it may involve considerable risk. He has a great deal of confidence in his game and fears no one. His unique style has proven extremely effective against relatively weak opponents but has not been too successful against top-notchers.” Alas, this is the risk-taker’s predicament, but far from discouraging it, I am thankful for the risk-takers among you who resist the ‘genetic’ drift of our chess community towards timidity and results-oriented pragmatism.

I sincerely hope you find this to be an enjoyable and enriching experience.

CHAPTER 1

CLASSICAL VARIATION [♘e2]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘g7 5.♗c3 ♗c6



Contents

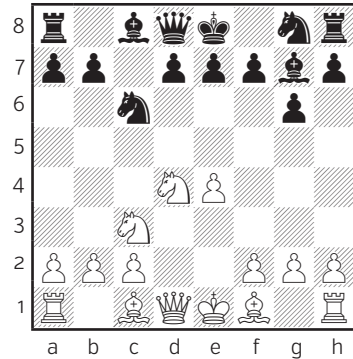
1. 6.♗b3, 6.♗de2	16
2. 6.♘e3 ♗f6 7.sidelines & 7.♘e2 d5!?	19
3. 6.♘e3 ♗f6 7.♘e2 o-o 8.sidelines	22
4. 6.♘e3 ♗f6 7.♘e2 o-o 8.o-o	27

1

We begin with the variation which epitomizes the Accelerated Dragon philosophy. In most defenses to 1.e4, White has the option of playing a 'Classical' variation by developing the light squared bishop to e2. This is particularly the case in Sicilians like the Najdorf, Schevningen and Taimanov, but also in other defenses like the Pirc/Modern and Alekhine. In all these systems, the Classical Variation offers White serious chances to obtain an opening advantage, and the immortal games of past champions like Geller and Karpov provide textbook illustrations of successful 'Classical' 1.e4 play. In contrast, the ♗e2 (Classical) variation against the ordinary, un-Accelerated Dragon is rather harmless for Black, the Yugoslav Attack being its critical test. As Accelerated Dragon players, we are in an even more favorable situation than ordinary Dragon players when it comes to the Classical variation, because we can choose to transpose to harmless variations of the Classical Dragon by opting for ...d7-d6 at opportune moments, and in some lines we can strike with ...d7-d5 directly, saving a full tempo compared with analogous lines in the Dragon. Despite the fact that this system offers White no advantage, it is still seen in about 15% of Accelerated Dragons (the other 85% are nearly evenly distributed between the Maroczy and

♗c4 variations), the bulk of which occur at the club level.

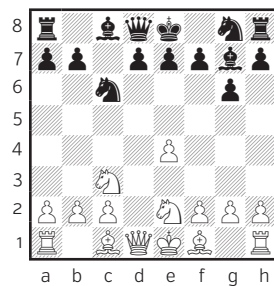
1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
♗g7 5.♗c3 ♘c6



6.♘b3

This move tends to be played later on anyway in the ♗e2 system, in order to hinder Black from playing ...d7-d5 (note that the Maroczy and ♗c4 variation both target the d5-square), so some players prefer to play 6. ♘b3 directly without committing the Bishop to e3.

6.♘de2

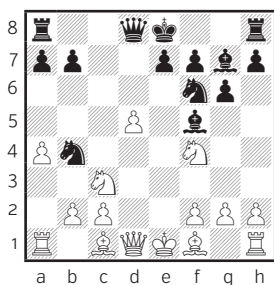


This is not part of the ♗e2 system so I just mention it in passing. Some

people who like to fianchetto their light bishop in other Sicilians play this 'Chameleon' line; such variations are apt against tamer Sicilians like the Najdorf, not the unforgiving Accelerated Dragon.

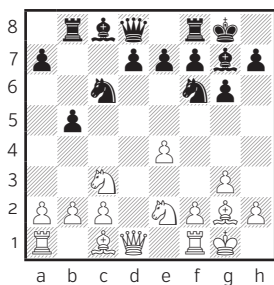
6...♟f6 7.g3

(7.a4 d5!N 8.exd5 (8.♟xd5? ♟xe4⚡)
8...♟b4 9.♟f4 (9.♟g3 0-0 10.♟c4
♟c7 11.♟b3 ♟d8↵) 9...♟f5



10.♟b5+ ♟f8 11.♟d3 ♟xd3+ 12.cxd3
g5 13.♟fe2 ♟xd5 14.♟xg5 ♟xc3
15.bxc3 ♟xd3 16.0-0 ♟c4=)

7...b5! 8.♟g2 ♟b8 9.0-0 0-0



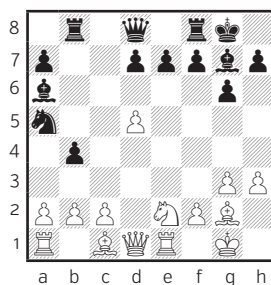
10.h3

a) 10.♟d5 d6 11.♟g5 (11.h3 ♟d7
12.c3 e6 13.♟b4 ♟xb4 14.cxb4 ♟b6⚡

Polgar,Z (2550)-Georgiev,V (2615)
Matinhos 1994) 11...♟d7 12.c3 ♟e8
13.♟d4 ♟xd4 14.cxd4 ♟b6 15.♟b4
♟b7 16.♟c1 ♟d7 17.b3 a5 18.♟c2 b4=
1-o (57) Kuzmin,G (2540)-Macieja,B
(2460) St Petersburg 1996;

b) 10.♟f4 d6 11.♟d2 b4 12.♟d5 ♟g4
13.♟ab1 ♟ge5 14.b3 e6 15.♟e3 ♟a5⚡;

10...b4 11.♟d5 ♟a6 12.♟e1 ♟xd5
13.exd5 ♟a5



14.♟f4

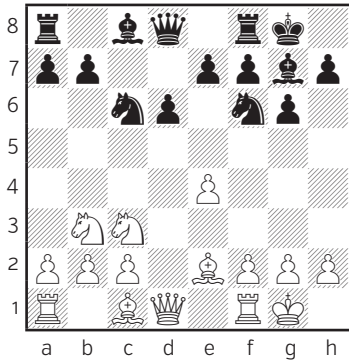
(14.♟d4 ♟c4 15.♟b1 e5! 16.dxe6
fxe6⚡)

14...♟c8 15.d6 e6 16.a3 b3! 17.cxb3 ♟b6
18.b4 ♟c4⚡ Perovic-Nikolic, Pula
1991.

6...♟f6 7.♟e2 0-0 8.0-0

There are ways of playing this in the
spirit of the Accelerated Dragon but
I think Black's best and simplest path
is to proceed in Dragon style with
...d7-d6 and ...♟c8-e6, aiming to play
...d6-d5.

8...d6



has been compromised but the far more salient factor is Black's superiority in the center.)

11...♖d8= White cannot prevent ...d6-d5, which as a rule (at least) equalizes for Black.;

9. ♖e1 ♘e6 10. ♘f1 d5 11. ♖c5

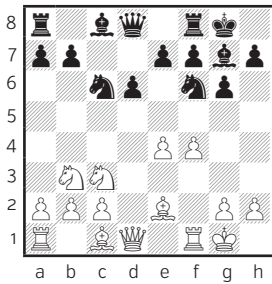
(11.exd5 ♖xd5 12.♗e4 b6=)

9. ♘g5

This is likely to be White's idea if they play 6.♗b3 directly.

11...dxe4 12.♗xe6 ♔xd1 13.♖xd1 fxe6 14. ♘c4 ♖f7 Black's tripled pawns are not to be scoffed at; they restrict White's pieces by controlling important central squares.

9.f4?!



9... ♘e6 10. ♗h1

White signals his intention to continue with f2-f4. Since White's bishop is on g5, it is no longer realistic for Black to aim for ...d6-d5, so he refocuses attention toward the queenside.

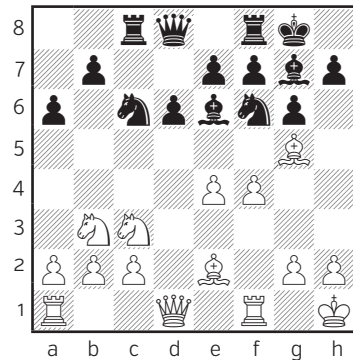
10.f4?! b5!↖

9...b5!↖;

9. ♖h1 ♘e6 10.f4 ♔c8! Preventing f4-f5.

(10...d5?! 11.f5 ♘c8 12.exd5 ♗b4 13.fxg6 hxg6 14. ♘f3 ♘f5 15.♗d4±)

10... ♔c8 11.f4 a6



11. ♘e3

(11.f5? gxf5 12.exf5 ♘xf5 One might think White has some compensation because Black's king position

Black can take his time on the queen-side because if White continues with f4-f5 then Black will happily take possession of the e5 square with his knight.

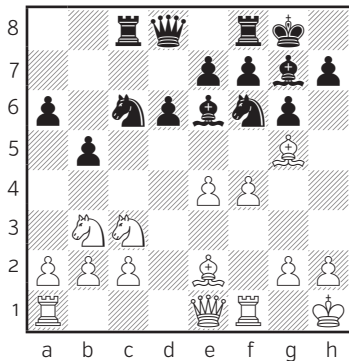
12. ♖e1

12.f5 ♟d7! 13. ♖c1 ♟e5 14. ♖f4 b5↗;

12. ♟f3 ♟d7!?! Just one idea of many.
13. ♜b1 ♟xc3 14. bxc3 ♖c7↗;

12.a4 ♟a5 13. ♟xa5 ♖xa5 14. ♟d3 ♜fe8
15. ♖e2 ♖b4 16.a5 ♟g4 17. ♖d2 ♟d7
Black threatens ...d6-d5 thanks to the pin on the c3-knight. 18. ♖e2?! ♖xb2
19. ♟xf6 ♟xf6 20. ♟d5 ♟b5 21. ♟xb5
♖xb5 22. ♖xb5 axb5 23. ♜ab1 ♜c5↗
0-1 (42) Anand,V (2715)-Topalov,
V (2640) Linares 1994.

12...b5



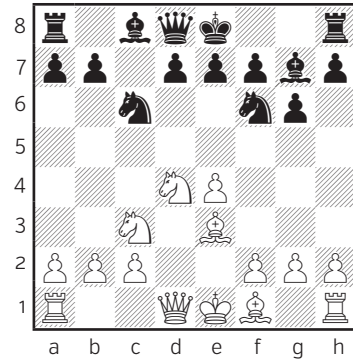
13.f5 ♟d7 14. ♖h4 ♟e5 15. ♟d4 ♜c5!↗

Black intends ...♖d8-a8 with prospects for the thematic ...♜xc3 Sicilian exchange sacrifice.

15...♟c4?! 16. ♟d5 ♟xd5 17. exd5↑

2

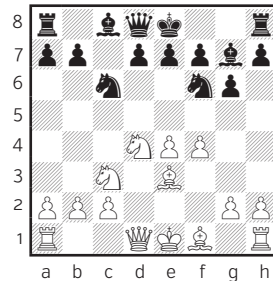
1.e4 c5 2. ♟f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♟xd4
♟g7 5. ♟c3 ♟c6 6. ♟e3 ♟f6



7. ♟e2

7. ♟xc6 bxc6 8.e5 ♟g8! (8... ♟d5 I never liked this pawn sacrifice but several grandmasters have played it. 9. ♟xd5 cxd5 10. ♖xd5 ♜b8∞) 9.f4 ♟h6 10. ♖d2 0-0 11.0-0-0 d6!:=;

7.f4

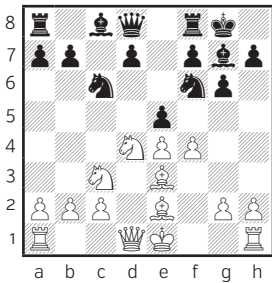


7...0-0 8. ♟e2 Black can of course continue with 8...d6 here and transpose to the ordinary Dragon but I suggest we only do so after White

has displaced his knight from the active d4-square.

(8.e5 White can't afford such extensions before castling and completing development. 8...♖e8 9.♙f3 (9.♘xc6?! bxc6 10.h4?! d6 11.h5 ♙a5 12.hxg6 hxg6±; 9.♙d2 d6↔) 9...d6 10.o-o-o (10.♘xc6?! bxc6 11.♙xc6 ♙d7±) 10...♙d7↔)

8...e5!



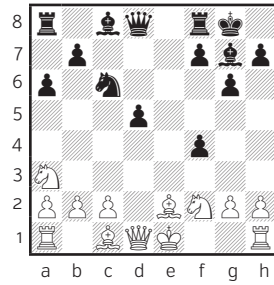
9.♘db5 Black has safe paths to equality here like 9...♖e8, but the following opportunity, while messy and slightly risky, is far too appealing to pass up.

(9.fxe5 ♗xe5 10.o-o d6 11.♙g5 h6 12.♙h4 g5 13.♙g3 ♙b6 14.♖h1 ♗eg4 15.♙d3 ♗h5↔; 9.♘xc6 dxc6 10.fxe5 ♗g4!↔)

9...♗xe4!!N 10.♘xe4 d5 11.♗f2

(11.♗ed6 a6 12.♘xc8 ♖xc8 13.♗a7 ♗xa7 14.♙a7 b6±)

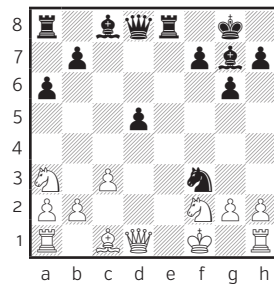
11...a6 12.♗a3 exf4 13.♙c1



Black's compensation is of a long-term nature. For the sacrificed piece he currently has two pawns, control over the center, and most of White's pieces are awkwardly placed. Black can 'just play' the position, even the computer gives its approval ("o.o") to several moves (13...♖e8, 13...♙h4, 13...♗d4). The following is just one possible continuation. 13...f3!? 14.♙xf3

(14.gxf3?! ♙h4 15.o-o ♙d4 16.c3 ♙a7 17.♗c2 ♙h3 18.♙e3 ♙xe3 19.♗xe3 ♙g5+ 20.♖h1 ♙xf1 21.♗xf1 ♖fe8=)

14...♖e8+ 15.♖f1 ♗d4 16.c3 ♗xf3



17.gxf3

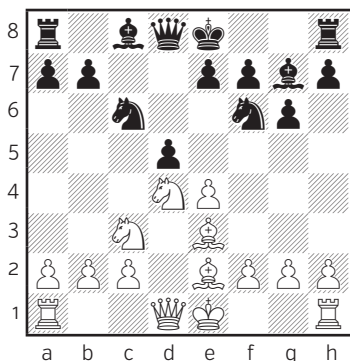
(17.♙xf3 d4! 18.♙d2 ♙e6 19.♖e1 ♙b6±)

17...d4! 18.♙f4

(18.cxd4?! ♠f5 19.d5 ♜c8 20.h4 b5
21.♞b1 b4!?)

18...dxc3 19.♞xd8 ♜xd8 20.bxc3 ♠xc3
21.♜d1 ♠e6 22.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 23.♞b1
♠d4 24.a3 ♜c8 25.♞g2 ♜c2 26.♞d2
♜a2=

7...d5!?



Black is not supposed to be able to play this; the general rule is that, except in extraordinary circumstances, Black must castle before playing this. Obedience to that rule is likely why this move has never been played by a 2400+ player (at least according to the database). Computers are helpful for showing us the exceptions to our rule of thumb heuristics. Nevertheless, Black is not better off here than he is in the main line (7...o-o), it is just another path to easy equality.

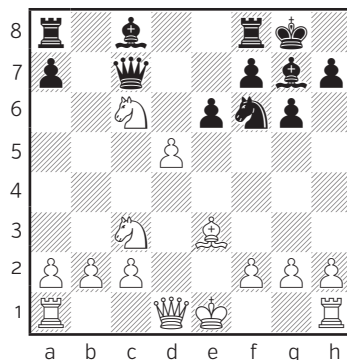
8. ♠b5

8.exd5 ♞xd5 9.♞xc6 bxc6 10.♞xd5
♞xd5 11.o-o o-o= We have transposed to the 7...o-o 8.o-o d5 line.

8...o-o 9. ♠xc6

9.♞xc6 bxc6 10. ♠xc6 ♜b8=

9...bxc6 10.♞xc6 ♞c7 11.exd5 e6!



12.o-o

12.♞b5 ♞b7 13.♞d6 ♞c7 14.♞b5
♞b7=;

12.♞d2 exd5 13.♞d4 ♞e4 14.♞xe4
dxe4=

12...exd5 13.♞d4

13.♞b4 ♞g4 14.g3 ♞xe3 15.fxe3 d4=

13...♞g4 14.g3 ♞xe3 15.fxe3 ♞b7=

