

□ Closed Sicilian

■ Intro

1.e4 c5

The basic idea of the Sicilian Defence is that Black wants to exchange a semi-central pawn for a central pawn. This is a good strategical exchange because Black remains with a powerful dynamic centre. Anyway, in Closed Sicilian, White avoids this.

2.Nc3

This is the Closed Sicilian. Playing 2.Nc3 White takes under control the central d5-square. White could play also 2.f4 entering Grand Prix Attack (GPA), but Black has a good gambit against it:

[2.f4 d5 3.exd5 Nf6 4.Bb5+ (4.c4? e6 5.dxe6 Bxe6 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Nc3 Bd6 and White's play is stumped by his extra d-pawn.) 4...Bd7 5.Bxd7+ Qxd7 6.c4 e6 7.Qe2 Bd6 8.dxe6 fxe6 9.d3 Nc6 10.Nf3 0-0 11.0-0 Rae8 12.Nc3 e5]

2...Nc6 This is the most played move here because Black does not reveal yet his future plans. In addition, this is a good move for any other Black's continuations.

Let's talk a bit about Black's possible development setups. As in any opening, Black can choose between more setups of his pieces... and his central pawns. A good understanding of the normal Black's setups is very important.

The first reason is if Black plays wrong, then we will know which are the disadvantages of his setup and know how to exploit them. In the Closed Sicilian, the black dark-squares bishop is not well placed on the f8-a3 diagonal. In Open Sicilians, this bishop is doing well on e7 or other squares on f8-a3 because after the exchange c5xd4 that diagonal will be free. Or, after c5xd4 and Nf3xd4, the d-file will be opened, so the bishop is good on e7 protecting his central pawn on d6.

In the Closed Sicilian the things are different: the black c5-pawn will remain there for a long time, and, moreover, the d-file will remain closed. So, Black has to develop this bishop on g7. Moreover, on g7 the bishop will exert a good pressure on White's queenside, and, very

important, it controls the d4 square.

Because of the development of the bishop on g7, we know the best place for the knights: one on c6 helping the bishop to control the d4-square, another knight on e7 without closing the long diagonal.

About the pawns: with the bishop fianchettoed, it would be wrong for Black to advance the e-pawn on e5. Beside blocking the bishop, it would leave a "hole" on d5. The black d-pawn aims for d5, even if usually, Black prepares this advance playing first: e7-e6 and d7-d6.

We can talk about the future Black's plan too. Because of the development of the bishop on the long diagonal, and because of the c5-pawn, Black will play on the queenside, trying to open the lines there playing b7-b5-b4, a7-a6-a5-a4-a3. This takes some time however and Black also has to lose a tempo with a7-a6 sustaining b7-b5.

[Another Black's idea is to advance the pawn on d5: 2...e6 3.f4 d5 (after 3...a6 Black wants a "large fianchetto" on b7 playing b7-b5, so White develops his light-square bishop on the long diagonal. This is the only variation when White does not develop his bishop on c4 or b5. 4.g3) 4.Nf3 dxe4

(4...d4?! is not strategically good for Black. White attacks on the kingside, so he wants the centre to be closed. Playing d5-d4, Black renounces at the central tension, so White can attack undisturbed.

5.Nb1 ...heading to the kingside without blocking the bishop on f1. Long manoeuvres are allowed now when the centre is closed (Nb1-d2-f1-g3).

5... Nf6 6.Bb5+ exchanging a bishop that will be a "bad" bishop after d2-d3. 6... Bd7 7.Bxd7+ Nbx7 8.d3± and White has space advantage on the kingside and good prospects for an attack there.)

5.Nxe4 in this position, White has a strong

outpost on e5, but Black also has one on d4. However, White has an advantage because his f1-bishop is not blocked and has a tempo up in development.

5... Nc6 6.Bb5 the bishop fights indirectly for the d4 square pinning the c6-knight.

6... Bd7 7.0-0 Nf6 8.d3±

White has better prospects. He has a good control over the center and can start an attack on the kingside by Qd1-e1-h4 and f4-f5.]

[

2...d6 This is not a new idea for Black because he can develop the knight on c6 later. However, Black has to be careful to his pawn play in the center. For example:

3.f4 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bc4 e6? This leaves the d6-pawn unprotected, so: 6.d4!

White opens the d-file against Black's weakness.

6... cxd4 7.Nxd4±]

3.f4 Only this move is a mark of the Closed Sicilian. White could still enter Open Sicilian by playing 3.Nf3 followed then by 4.d4.

Now, this is the Closed Sicilian or Grand Prix Attack (GPA). There are some differences between these systems, the main being that White's knight on c3 is not specific to all variations of the real GPA. Anyway, this system is often referred as GPA.

Another system, also called Closed Sicilian is with the white light-square bishop developed on g2. That setup does not offer White too much from the opening.

In our Closed Sicilian, White will develop the bishop mainly on c4 targeting directly the black king. Against one of Black's possible setups, we will develop this bishop on b5.

In this system, the white queen will often transfer to the kingside via d1-e1-g3 or h4, so the development on fianchetto with g2-g3 specific to other Closed systems would hamper this attacking maneuver.

Let's see the consequences of the f2-f4 advance:

- gains space in the center and kingside;
- prepares the opening of the f-file after f4-f5;

- makes possible the maneuver Qd1-e1-g3/h4;
- the bad consequence is the closing of the c1-bishop's diagonal. However, White will try later to open it by f4-f5.

Black has now 3 main lines which we will present here briefly and then we will study in detail in the following lines:

A) 3... **d6**

[B) 3...g6 This move is the strongest Black's continuation. He delays the advance of the central pawns until White decides where he develops the f1-bishop. 4.Nf3 Bg7

Now White has to choose a place for the bishop in order to continue his development.

We will consider the correct move:

5.Bb5 developing the bishop on b5, White's strategy differs from the lines when he develops the bishop on c4. Because the bishop attacks the c6-knight White will mainly focus on the center.

(Usually we choose to develop the bishop on c4. However, because Black didn't play yet d7-d6, he can play e7-e6 and directly d7-d5 attacking on c4:

5.Bc4?! e6 6.0-0 Nge7 7.d3 0-0 8.Qe1 d5 9.Bb3∞ This position can be met in Closed Sicilian when Black plays d7-d6 first, but of course White will be a tempo up in that case.)]

[

C) 3...e6 4.Nf3 d5 this also leads to different positions. Black fights against White's flank attack with a counter attack in the centre.

5.Bb5 Nge7

(5...Nf6 this leads to a strategical game. 6.d3 Be7 7.Bxc6+ bxc6 a typical pawn structure that we will study in the following lines. 8.0-0 Ba6 9.e5 Nd7 10.b3 c4 11.dxc4 dxc4 12.Re1 Nb6 13.Ne4 0-0 14.Be3±)

6.Qe2 White puts pressure on Black's d5-pawn in order to clarify the central tension. After that he can begin a flank-attack.

6... d4 7.Nd1 a6 8.Bxc6+ Nxc6 9.d3 Be7 10.0-0 0-0 11.Nf2→ with five pieces and two pawns ready for attack the black king, White prospects are very good.]

4.Nf3 g6 5.Bc4

as Black moved d7-d6 already, the bishop comes on c4 as Black loses a tempo by e7-e6 and d6-d5.

5... Bg7 6.0-0

This is an important initial position for the Closed Sicilian.

Black has to decide now where to develop his g8-knight: on e7 or f6.

6... e6

[After 6...Nf6 7.d3 0-0 8.Qe1 White's plan is simple and logical:

- 1) f4-f5 opening the f-file and the c1-h6 diagonal
- 2) Qe1-h4, Bc1-h6, Nf3-g5.
- 3) threat to deliver mate on h7 after f4xg6, the sacrifice Rf1-xf6, and Bh6xg7]

7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1

White has a good control over the center, good cooperation between pieces and is ready to start a kingside attack.

Also, because of the pin on the e-file, Black cannot play d6-d5 yet.

8... 0-0

[8...h6 this is a prophylactic move against the maneuver Nf3-g5.

9.Bb3 also a prophylactic move, White wants to meet d6-d5 by e4-e5.

9... a6 Black tries to seize the initiative on the queenside prior to castle.

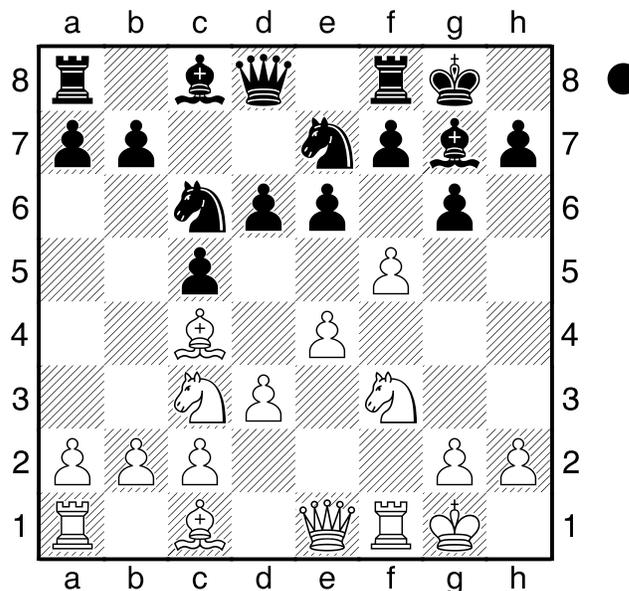
10.e5 by this move, White weakens Black's dark squares. When the kingside attack doesn't work, White attacks in the center.

Nf5 11.Kh1! Nfd4 12.Nxd4 Nxd4 13.Ne4 The d6- and c5- pawns are under attack. 13... dxe5 14.fxe5 Bxe5 15.Bf4 Bxf4 16.Rxf4 Qc7 17.Qf2 0-0 18.Rf1± White regains the pawn (c5) and maintains the pressure using the f-file.]

9.f5 Diagram

The final target of White's attack is h7. He plans to play Qh4, Bh6 and Ng5.

All White pieces are in attack on the kingside.



We will study this position in detail in the future lines.

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□ **Systems ...e6**
 ■ **2...e6 3.f4 a6**

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6 3.f4 a6 4.g3

[After that early a7-a6, White doesn't develop the bishop on f1-a6 diagonal: 4.Bc4? b5̄]

4...d5

[or 4...b5 5.Bg2 Bb7 6.d3 d5 7.Qe2 Nc6 8.Nf3 (the d5 pawn is indirectly defended. 8.exd5? Nd4 9.Qf2 exd5)

8...Nd4 by this move, Black forces the opening of the f8-a3 diagonal for his f8-bishop.

9.Nxd4 cxd4 10.Nd1 the black d4-pawn is strong and weak in the same time. It is somewhat hampering White's play, but can be an easy target later in the middlegame.

10... Bb4+ 11.Bd2 (11.c3?! Bc5=)
 11...Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2 Qb6 13.0-0 Ne7 14.f5!
 a thematic advance of the f-pawn which offers White a good attack on the kingside. 14... dxe4 (14...exf5? 15.exf5±) 15.dxe4 d3+ (15...e5 16.f6! gxf6 17.Qh6 Ng6 18.Nf2±)
 16.Qe3 Qxe3+ 17.Nxe3 dxc2 18.Rac1±
 Giorgadze 2585 - Marin 2561, 2001]

5.d3 White wants to remain with a pawn on e4.

5... dxe4

[5...Nc6 6.Nf3 Nf6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0

This is another possible setup of Black's pieces (developing the bishop on e7 and the knight on f6). Black also maintains the tension in the centre.

9.Ne5!

With the support of the f4-pawn, White install a strong knight on e5.

9... Nd4

(it is not good for Black to open the lines where White attacks. 9...Nxe5?! 10.fxe5 Nd7 11.exd5 exd5 12.Nxd5 Nxe5 13.Qh5± and White is much better)

10.exd5 Nxd5

(10...exd5 11.g4!± with the center secure, White gains in space on the kingside.)

11.Nxd5 exd5 12.Be3

TO DO list:

- send away the black knight by c2-c3
- by d3-d4 try to create an isolated pawn on d5, then attack it on the d-file
- place the rooks on the d- and e-files; queen can come on b3 (after c3 is played)]

6.dxe4 Qxd1+ an open file is in advantage for the player who is better developed, so Black doesn't wait for Be3.

7.Nxd1 Bd7 8.Bg2 Bc6 Black wanted his bishop on the long diagonal without weakening his pawn structure playing b7-b6 or b7-b5.

9.Ne2 Nf6 10.Nf2 Nbd7 11.0-0

[an interesting idea is: 11.g4!? h6 12.h4→ gaining in space on the kingside. In the endgame, the advanced pawns are an advantage when they have the support of the pieces.]

11...0-0-0 12.c4 followed by e4-e5 and White has a better endgame due to his space advantage.

TO DO list:

- play e4-e5 and Nf2-e4 with threats against d6 and c5
- try to occupy the d-file and use the outpost from d6

- gain space on the kingside
- prepare and play f4-f5 and use the weakness of the f7-pawn.

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□ **Systems ...e6**

■ **2...e6 3.f4 d5 4.Nf3 d4**

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6

Black wants to advance d7-d5.

3.f4 d5 4.Nf3

White developed both knights in classical positions and leaves the choice about the center structure to Black who has 4 possibilities:

- 1.) 4...d4 blocking the centre
- 2.) 4...Nf6 developing further the kingside
- 3.) 4...dxe4 opening the d-line in order to use the d4-square
- 4.) 4...Nc6, followed by Nge7.

4... d4

By this move, Black wants to gain space in the centre. However, in the same time, Black closes the center and White gets free hands for a kingside assault.

5.Nb1

The knight heads to the kingside or c4 via d2.

[Also possible is: 5.Ne2 Nf6 6.Ng3 Nc6 7.Bb5 Bd7 8.0-0 Be7 9.d3 a6 10.Bxc6 Bxc6 11.f5 (11.Ne5±) 11...Bd7 12.Ne5 0-0 13.Nh5 (⊔ 13.Nxd7 Nxd7 14.Nh5) 13...exf5 14.Nxf6+ Bxf6 15.Nxd7 Qxd7 16.Rxf5± Nogradi 2280 - Szabo 2560, 1994]

5...Nf6 6.Bb5+

White gets rid of his light-square bishop before d2-d3.

Bd7 7.Bxd7+ Nbx7 8.d3 Be7 9.0-0 0-0 10.a4!

A prophylactic move against Black's expansion on the queenside by b7-b5. Also, it prepares a possible Nd2-c4.

Qa5

[for playing b7-b5, it is not good to play

10...a6? because of 11.a5! and Black will never have a pawn on b5. If Black wants to play b7-b5, he must play first b7-b6, then a7-a6 and b7-b5.]

11.Nbd2 Rac8 12.Nc4 Qa6 13.b3

[the role of b2-b3 is to overprotect the knight on c4. For example: 13.Kh1?? Nxe4 14.dxe4 Qxc4]

13...Rfd8 14.Bd2±

White has a clear advantage: space advantage and better pieces on both flanks. He will start now a direct attack against the black king. In the same time, Black is not able to obtain some counter-play on the queenside. The rest of the game between a grandmaster and a computer is instructive:

Re8 15.Qe1 Qc6 16.Kh1 Rc7 17.Qg3 Rd8 18.Qh3

to clear the g-pawn's way. **Rf8 19.Rae1 Rcc8 20.Kg1** Black has no moves, so White has time to put his pieces in the best positions. The king was not well placed on the long diagonal where is the black queen. **Rcd8 21.Re2** the rook will come on the g-file via e2-g2. **Rde8 22.g4 Rc8 23.g5 Ne8 24.f5 Nc7 25.f6!!** the white pawns destroy Black's king shield. **gxf6**

[25...Bd8 26.Nfe5 Nxe5 27.Nxe5 Qe8 28.fxg7 Kxg7 29.Qh6+ Kg8 30.Rf4 and White checkmates after Rh4.]

26.gxf6 Bxf6

[26...Nxf6 27.Rg2+ Kh8 28.Ng5! a6 29.Rxf6 Bxf6 30.Qxh7#]

27.Qg3+ Kh8 28.Nce5 Nxe5 29.Nxe5 Qe8

[29...Bxe5 30.Qxe5+ f6 31.Rxf6 Rxf6 32.Qxf6+ Kg8 33.Rg2#]

30.Rxf6 and Black resigned.

□ Systems ...e6

■ 2...e6 3.f4 d5 4.Nf3 Nf6

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6 3.f4 d5 4.Nf3 Nf6

Black develops the kingside and keeps the central tension.

5.Bb5+ Nc6

[5...Bd7 6.Bxd7+ Nbx7 (6...Qxd7? 7.Ne5 Qd8 8.exd5 exd5 9.Qe2 Be7 10.Qb5±) 7.d3 with the idea e4-e5. 7... Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Qe2 d4 10.Nd1 b5 (Zeidler 2275 - Fedorov 2564, 2002) 11.c4!± blocking the advance of the black pawns on the queenside prior starting the attack on the kingside.]

We can also get the same position after: 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 e6 4.Nf3 d5 5.Bb5 Nf6.

6.d3 Be7

[6...dxe4 is wrong because after 7.Bxc6+ bxc6 8.Nxe4 Nxe4 9.dxe4± the c5- and c6-pawns are very weak.]

7.Bxc6+

White changes the black pawn structure but trades a bishop for a knight.

7... bxc6 8.0-0

This is a typical pawn structure that can arise in Closed Sicilian.

Black has double pawns on the c-file. They are not weak in this formation but they cannot advance without creating weaknesses on the queenside. Therefore Black's play is limited. Black has the bishop-pair but they are not stronger than White's knights in this position. The 2 white knights have a better mobility in this structure and can easily occupy any weak square that can arise in Black's position.

8... Ba6 with the idea c5-c4

[If Black moves the d-pawn, the double c-pawns become very weak:

8...d4? 9.Nb1 0-0 10.Na3 followed by Nc4 and Nfe5.]

[8...dxe4? 9.dxe4]

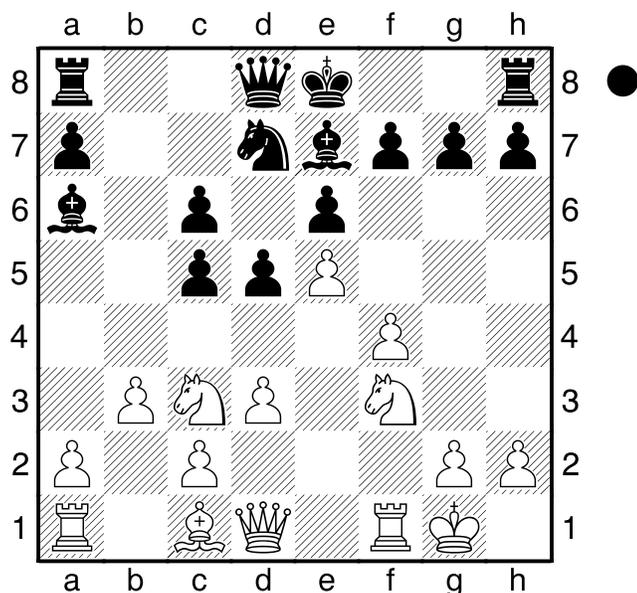
9.e5! White closes the center and also gains space.

[not 9.Re1 Qb6 10.Kh1 c4± and Black opens up the position for his bishops.]

9...Nd7 10.b3! Diagram

A very fine move. After 10...c4 11.d3xc4, Black will have to retake on c4 with the pawn.

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Otherwise after Bxc4, Black repairs his pawn structure and activates his bishops.

10... **c4** only Black's counter-play.
[after 10...0-0 11.Qe1± White threatens with a kingside attack by Qg3, f4-f5 and Bh6.]

11.**dxc4** White opens the d-file and prepares the maneuver Nc3-e4-d6.
[of course, not 11.bxc4? dxc4 12.d4 Nb6 13.Rb1 Nd5 and Black is better.]

11...**dxc4** 12.**Re1**□ taking the rook out from the dangerous diagonal.
You can see now another advantage of the b2-b3 move. When Black wants to free his a6-bishop by c4xb3, White will open the a-file with pressure against the weak a7-pawn.

12... **Nb6** aiming at d5.
[12...Nc5 13.Be3±]

13.**Ne4** 0-0
[13...Qxd1 14.Rxd1 cxb3 15.axb3 Be2 16.Rd2 Bxf3 17.gxf3± and Black remains with 2 weak pawns on the queenside.]
[13...Nd5 is not good because of 14.bxc4! Bxc4 15.Nd6+ Bxd6 16.exd6 Qxd6 17.Ne5± followed by c2-c4]

14.**Be3**
[also good is 14.Qe2!? with the idea Qf2, Be3, Rad1 with attack on the queenside.]

14...**Nd5** 15.**Qd2** defending the f4-pawn, prepares Bc5 exchanging the dark-squares bishops and installing the knight on d6.
15... **Nxe3** Black has to give his good knight for the white "bad" bishop, otherwise Bc5!
16.**Qxe3** Black weak a7- and c6- pawns are a sure problem in the coming endgame.
16... **Qb6** 17.**Rad1** taking under the control the d-file and the outpost on d6.
17... **Rfd8** 18.**Nd6!** **cxb3** 19.**axb3**± with a clear advantage to White.
Adams 2610 - Lautier 2580, 1992

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□ **Systems ...e6**
■ **2...e6 3.f4 d5 4.Nf3 dxe4**

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6 3.f4 d5 4.Nf3 dxe4

Two files are opened after this exchange. White will have the e-file and the outpost on e5, and Black will have the d-file and the outpost on d4.

5.Nxe4 Nc6

As in the previous system, we can have the same position after another move order: 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 e6 4.Nf3 d5 5.Bb5 dxe4 6.Nxe4, but White can also choose: 6.Bxc6+! or, even 6.Ne5.

[Black has other choices too:

1)
5...Nd7 6.g3 We choose again to develop the bishop on g2 in this variation because the long diagonal is not blocked by Nc6.

A) 6...Ngf6 7.Nxf6+ Nxf6 8.Bg2 Be7 9.b3 0-0 10.Bb2 Qc7 11.0-0 b6 12.f5!

(White can choose to follow the initial strategy using the outpost: 12.Ne5 Bb7 13.Bxb7 Qxb7 14.Qf3 but this is not so clear as the direct attack.)

12...exf5 13.Nh4 Rb8 14.Nxf5 Bxf5 15.Rxf5 Rbd8 16.d3 Ne8 Tiviakov 2635 - Cherniaev 2504, 2003 17.Qe2± ;

B) 6... 6...Be7 7.Bg2 Ngf6 8.Nf2 heading to d3 with the idea to fix a knight on e5.

8... Rb8 9.b3 fianchettoing the dark-square bishop, White strengthens his position on e5 and his pressure against Black's kingside.
9... Qc7 10.Bb2 b6 11.Qe2 Bb7 12.0-0 0-0 13.c4 a6 14.Rae1 Rfe8 15.Nd3! b5 16.Nde5± Sveshnikov 2565 - Jelen 2374, 2002]

[2]

5...Be7?! Black plays without fighting for the centre, so the best move is: 6.d4! cxd4

7.Qxd4

(7.Nxd4 is also possible.)

7...Qxd4 8.Nxd4 a6 (8...Nf6 9.Nxf6+ Bxf6 10.Nb5±)

9.g3! Nf6 10.Bg2 Nbd7 11.Bd2!±

and Black has big problems in this endgame (Adams).]

[3]

5...Nf6 6.Bb5+ Bd7 7.Bxd7+ Nbx7 8.Qe2 the queen enters the play using the light squares where the bishop was exchanged. In addition, the queen occupies the e-file and "looks" to the e5-outpost.

8... Be7 9.d3 0-0 10.0-0 b5 11.Bd2 heading to c3 with control over the long diagonal.

11... Qc7 12.Rae1 c4 13.d4! Nxe4 14.Qxe4 Nf6 15.Qe2 Nd5 16.Ne5 Rad8 17.f5 opening the f-file. exf5 18.Rxf5 Bf6 19.Qg4∞ Motwani 2425 - King Daniel 2545, 1991.

White has better chances.]

6.Bb5

Against Black's plan to install a knight on the d4-outpost.

6... **Bd7** preparing to replace the c6-knight with the bishop. However, that position of the bishop is threatened by Nf3-e5.

7.0-0 Nf6

[7...Nh6 heading to d4 via f5. 8.b3 Nf5 9.Bb2 Be7 10.a4± followed by Ne5.]

[

7...Be7 8.d3 Nf6

(after 8...a6 9.Bc4 b5 10.Bb3 White can attack the black c5-pawn by: Ne4, Be3, Qe1-f2.)

9.Be3 b6 10.Ne5 using the e5-outpost,

White creates pressure on Black's position. Nxe5 11.fxe5 replacing the knight with the pawn, White gets more space and an open file against the backward f7-pawn.
Nxe4 12.Bxd7+ Qxd7 13.Qf3 0-0 14.Qxe4±]

8.d3

[a strong attack can begin after: 8.Nxf6+ Qxf6?!

(8...gxf6∞ Black had to recapture with the pawn)

9.Ne5 Rc8 10.Nxd7 Sadler 2650 - Lautier 2645, 1998 Qd4+ 11.Kh1 Qxd7 12.f5→]

8...a6 9.Nxf6+ gxf6 10.Ba4 Nd4 11.Bxd7+ Qxd7 12.Be3 Nf5 13.Qe2 0-0-0 Polgar 2722 - Kramnik 2777, 2003.

Kramnik castled long as the g-file is open.

Anyway, White has good chances for an attack on the queenside too, especially because of the advanced black pawns. For example:

14.a3 Rg8 15.b4 sacrificing a pawn, White opens the lines against the black king.
cx4 16.axb4 Bxb4 17.Bb6 Rde8 18.Rfb1 Bd6 19.Qe4 Δh5 20.Rxa6 bxa6 21.Qa8+ Bb8 22.Bd4+-

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Systems ...e6



2...e6 3.f4 d5 4.Nf3 Nc6+Nge7

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6 3.f4 d5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Bb5 Nge7

Black wants to keep a knight on c6 and by developing the bishop on g7 to make pressure on d4.

6.Qe2!

By this move, White hinders Black's plans. g7-g6 is bad because of 7.exd5 and 8.Qe5.

6... **d4**

[6...dxe4 7.Nxe4 a6 8.Bxc6+ Nxc6 9.b3! Be7 10.Bb2 0-0 11.0-0±]

[6...a6 7.Bxc6+ bxc6 forced because otherwise the d5-pawn hangs. 8.d3

a typical position, but Black has the pawn on a6 taking the good square of the c8-bishop and the knight on e7 that has no play.

8... g6 (8...Ng6 9.f5!±) 9.0-0 Bg7 10.Qf2 White attacks the weak black pawns.
10... d4 (10...c4 11.Ne5!±) 11.Na4 Qa5 12.b3 0-0 13.Ba3+- Hickl - Yousifides, 1988]
[6...g6 Black tries to develop his pieces following his plan, but: 7.exd5 exd5 8.Qe5! Rg8 9.Qe3! Qd6□ (9...d4 10.Ne4 Bg7 11.Qa3 and Black has to weaken his pawn's structure. b6 12.Ne5 Qc7 13.0-0±) 10.d4 c4 11.b3 a6 12.Bxc6+ Qxc6 13.Ne5 Qc7 14.0-0±]

Now that the center is closed, White can begin the attack on the kingside.

7.Nd1 a6 8.Bxc6+ Nxc6 9.d3 Be7 10.0-0 0-0

[Black can try to castle long, but White using a4, Ne5, f5 and Bf4 makes wrong the Black's plan.

10...b5 11.Ne5! Bb7 12.Qh5 White want to weaken Black's pawn structure. g6 13.Qh3 Qc7 14.Nf2 Bd6 15.a4 b4 16.Nc4 Be7 17.f5! gxf5 18.exf5 0-0-0 19.Ne4±]
[10...b6 11.Nf2 Bb7 12.Bd2 Qd7 Petrosian 2444 - Minasian 2571, 2003 13.Ne5!±]

11.Nf2 b5 12.Bd2 taking under control the a5- and b4- squares and making the connection between rooks.

12... a5

[12...Bb7 13.g4 the centre is secured (after d5-d4), so a pawn assault on flank is correct. 13... Rc8 14.g5 Re8 15.Ng4 Bf8 16.Qg2 Kh8 17.Kh1 f5 18.gxf6 gxf6 19.Rg1 Bg7 20.f5 exf5 21.Nh6±]

13.a4 with a few prophylactic moves, White can delay Black's operations on the queenside.

13... bxa4 **14.Rxa4 Ba6 15.Raa1 Qc7**

16.Ne5 a4

[16...Nxe5 17.fxe5 Qxe5 18.Ng4 Qc7 19.e5→]

17.Nc4 Rab8 18.Bc1 Bxc4 19.dxc4 Rb4

20.Ra3! By this rook lift using the 3rd rank, White obtains a dangerous attack on the kingside.

20... **Re8 21.Rh3 Bf8 22.Qh5 h6 23.Ng4+-** Black resigned. Eingorn 2585 - Tischbierek 2480, 1991.

All white pieces are in attack and Black has only one bishop to defend his king.

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□ **Systems ...e6**

■ **2...e6 3.f4 Nc6 4.Nf3 Nge7**

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6 3.f4 Nc6 4.Nf3 Nge7

The same idea as in the previous line, Black plays Nge7 with the idea to fianchetto on g7 and play Nc6-d4 and Ne7-c6. The difference is that the d-pawn has not moved yet.

We can reach to this position after 1.e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 e6 4.Nf3 Nge7.

5.d4! a variation where White opens the center.

The Open Sicilian that results now is not so good for Black.

[Now after 5.Bb5 Nd4 is possible.]

5...cxd4

[5...d5 is not good, because: 6.dxc5 Qa5 (6...d4 7.Nb5± Campora 2500 - Rodriguez 2265, 1989) 7.Bd2! Qxc5 8.Nb5 Nb4 (8...Nd8 9.Bc3±) 9.c3 Na6 10.e5 Nf5 11.Nfd4 Nxd4 12.cxd4 Qb6 13.Qa4 Bd7 14.Rc1±]

6.Nxd4 Nxd4

[6...d5 7.Be3 dxe4 (7...a6 8.Nf3! dxe4 9.Qxd8+ Nxd8 10.Nxe4 Nd5 11.Bd2± Bronstein - Razuvaev, 1973 ; 7...Nxd4 8.Bxd4 Nc6 9.exd5 exd5 10.Qe2+! Be6 11.0-0-0!±) 8.Nxc6 Qxd1+ 9.Rxd1 bxc6 10.Nxe4 Nd5 11.Bd2 followed by c2-c4 and Bc3 with better endgame for White because of the weakness on c6.]

7.Qxd4 Nc6

[7...d5 again is not good because after the exchanges: 8.Bb5+ Bd7 9.Bxd7+ Qxd7 10.exd5 Nxd5 11.Nxd5 Qxd5 12.Qxd5 exd5 13.Be3± Black remains with a isolated pawn

on d5.]

[7...a6 8.Bd3 with the idea Qf2, Be3, Nc3-e2-d4, and f4-f5 with strong attack.]

8.Qd2!

The dark-square bishop will come on the long diagonal via b2 with pressure on g7. With this arrangement, the queen keeps his position on the open d-file and controlling the dark-squares from the center.

8... a6

[8...Bb4 with the idea to double White's pawns on the c-file is not good: 9.a3 Qa5 10.Rb1 forcing the exchange and getting the rook on the future open b-file Bxc3 11.bxc3± and the weakness of the Black's dark-squares, especially d6, and White's bishop-pair gives a clear advantage to White.]

9.b3 b5 10.Bb2 Bc5

[10...b4 11.Na4 followed by c2-c4]
[10...Bb7 11.0-0-0 d6 12.h4 Qc7 13.h5→]

11.0-0-0 White has a strong pressure on the d-file and long diagonal.

11... Qb6 12.Kb1 0-0

[12...Be3 13.Qd6 Bc5 14.Qd3 Be3 15.Nd5! exd5 16.Bxg7 Nb4 (16...Rg8 17.exd5 Rxg7 18.dxc6±) 17.Qc3 Rg8 18.exd5 Qc5 19.Qe5+ Qe7 20.Qxe7+ Kxe7 21.Bc3 Bc5 22.a3 Nxc2 23.Kxc2± Gather 2473 - Kubach 2515]

13.h4!? with the idea Rh3-g3-g7

13... Be3 14.Qd6 f5 15.Rh3 fxe4 16.Rg3

Bxf4

[16...Rf7 17.Nxe4 Bxf4 18.Rxg7+ Rxg7 19.Nf6+ Kf7 20.Qxf4+-]

17.Rxg7+ Kxg7 18.Nd5+ Kg8 19.Qxf8+

[19.Nxf4? Qb8±]

19...Kxf8 20.Nxb6 Rb8 21.Nxd7+ Bxd7

22.Rxd7± Tong Yuanming 2510 - Wang Zili 2520, 1997

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□ Systems ...d6

■ 6...e6 7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1 0-0

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 d6

After this move, White will develop the bishop on c4. Black can play in many variations e7-e6 and then d6-d5, but he loses a tempo because of this d7-d6 move. When Black plays directly g7-g6 and Bg7 without an early advance of the d-pawn, White will develop the bishop on b5 because playing Bc4 Black can enter some variations with a tempo up.

So:

1) When Black plays an early d7-d6 White plays Bc4.

2) When Black plays without d7-d6 White plays Bb5.

4.Nf3 The knights before the bishops.

4... g6 5.Bc4 Bg7 6.0-0

White completely developed the kingside. His pieces and pawns are arranged for a kingside attack:

- Bc4 attacks on f7 and will pin that pawn after Black castles

- The queen will easily come on the kingside via e1

- The f3-knight will attack from g5

- The rook will attack on the f-file after f4-f5 and is ready to sacrifice for the f6-knight

- The c1-bishop will have an open diagonal after f4-f5.

On the other hand, Black will try to create a counter-play on the queenside using the g7-bishop, knight on d4 and the queenside pawns (a6, b5-b4).

In this position, Black has to choose where to develop the g8-knight. Usually, Black develops this knight on e7 (after e7-e6). Or the other alternative is, of course, Nf6.

6... e6 7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1 Nd4

The main lines 8...0-0 and 8...h6 are analyzed in the next lines.

[It is not good: 8...d5 9.exd5±]

9.Nxd4 cxd4 This recapture with the pawn is

the scope of Black's previous move.
Now, the c-file is opened and Black hopes to obtain pressure against the c2-pawn.

[Afer 9...Bxd4+? 10.Be3± Black just loses important time.]

10.Ne2 0-0

[After 10...d5 White exchanges the light-square bishops: 11.Bb5+ Bd7 12.Bxd7+ Qxd7 and after 13.e5± the black d4-pawn is weak and the g7-bishop closed. White will play: Qf2, b3 and Bb2 with attack on d4.]

11.Bb3 - an important move in this variation. White can push e4-e5 when Black plays d6-d5.

Characteristic of this position is the Black's d4-pawn. This pawn splits the board in two and Black wants to play on the queenside using the c-file and the a-pawn. White's chances in a kingside attack are diminished after the exchange of the f3-knight, an important piece in attack.

Therefore, White's plans are different now. He will focus in the centre against Black's d4-pawn. Using that weakness, White will succeed to weaken Black's position in the centre. In order to protect his d4-pawn, Black will not have much time for active plans on the queenside. Moreover, White has one more idea: to advance e4-e5, blocking the black bishop on g7 and weakening the dark-squares in Black's structure.

A maneuver which serves all White's plans is Ne2-g1-f3 attacking on d4 and supporting the pawn on e5.

11... Nc6

[11...Kh8 12.Qf2 White provokes the weakening of Black's structure. e5 -the g7-bishop is closed, the b3-bishop is opened.
(12...Qb6 13.Qh4!→ gaining a tempo and with the idea Rf1-f3-h3.)
13.Qh4! Nc6 14.Qxd8 Nxd8 15.f5± the difference of quality between the 2 armies bishops is clear.]
[

11...Bd7 12.Bd2 Rc8 (12...b5 13.f5!?) followed by Qg3 with attack on d6. Black has big problems with f6 and d6.)

13.Kh1 starting the manœuvre of the knight Ng1-f3.

13... a6 14.Ng1 Nc6 15.Nf3 Kh8 16.Qf2 b5 17.a4 (17.c3!?!±) 17...Na5 18.Bxa5 Qxa5 19.axb5 Qxb5 Anand 2765 - Scholz 2235, 1997 20.Ba4 Qb7 21.Bxd7 Qxd7 22.Nxd4±]

[11...a5 12.a4 White must block the black a-pawn advance. Bd7 (12...Nc6 13.Qg3± ; 12...d5 13.Qf2±) 13.Bd2 Kh8 14.Kh1 again the knight manœuvre 14... f5 15.Ng1 Nc6 16.Nf3 Qe7 Short 2670 - Malisauskas 2515, 1998 17.e5!±]

[11...d5 12.e5 Nc6 (12...Qb6 13.Nxd4! Qxd4+ 14.Be3 Qxb2 15.Bc5 b6 16.Bxe7 Re8 17.Bb4±) 13.Kh1 f6 14.exf6 Bxf6 15.Bd2 Bd7 16.Ng1 Qb6 17.Nf3 Bg7 18.Qh4 a5 19.a4± Gdanskys 2485 - Gralka 2300.

White's strategy in the center triumphed: Black's center is weak and his queenside attack stopped. Now White can combine the pressure on the centre using the e-file, the e5-square with an attack against the black king.]

12.Bd2! against Nc6-a5 and supports eventually a2-a4-a5.

12... a5

[12...Kh8?! 13.a4 f5 14.Ng3 Δfxe4 15.Nxe4↑]

[12...f5?! 13.exf5 gxf5 14.Ng3 Qe8 15.Qe2 Qg6 16.Rae1 Re8± Bangiev]

[12...d5?! 13.e5± f6 14.exf6 Bxf6 15.Kh1! with the idea Ng1-f3-e5 against black bad bishop on c8 and weaknesses of e5- and d4-squares. a5 16.a4

A) 16...Qb6 17.f5! exf5 (17...gxf5 18.Nf4→) 18.Nf4 Ne7 19.Qg3!± with the idea Nh5 and Rae1 ;

B) 16...Qd6 17.Ng1 Bd7 18.Nf3 Nb4 (18...Rae8 19.Qf2±) 19.Qf2 Qc5 20.Bc3! Nc6 21.Rae1 b6 22.Bd2± with the idea Qg3 and f4-f5. Short 2660 - Gelfand 2665]

[12...Bd7 13.f5!? exf5 14.Ng3→]

13.a4 Qb6 14.g4!?

In the previous variations, we saw the main White's idea (the attack on the d4-pawn and the weakening of Black's centre).

Now we will see a typical attack against the black king.

Bd7 15.f5 Ne5 16.f6 Bh8 17.Qh4 Qc5 18.Nf4 Rae8 19.Nh3 with the threat Ng5 ...1-0 in the game Ciobanu 2207 - Grapsa, 2000.

□ - variation 1#
 ■ 9...gf5

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1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 d6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bc4 Bg7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1 0-0

An important variation when Black castles. GM Nigel Short comments about 8...0-0: "Walking straight into trouble. I was somewhat surprised to see a highly respected theoretician like Lembit Oll allow the following attack."

9.f5! - a typical sacrifice.

White opens the lines (the c1-bishop diagonal and the f-file) against the black king.

9... **gxf5**

Another Black's possible continuation is 9...d5 that we analyze in the next lines (variations 2# and 3#).

[9...exf5?! "leads to a ferocious assault on the Black king position." (Short) 10.Qh4 with the idea Bg5 or Bh6 and Ng5]

10.Qh4

Some ideas in this position:

White's plan is to play: Bh6 (blocking the pawn on h7) followed by Ng5 (attacking the h7-pawn) and then Bh6-g7 or Bh6-f8 clearing the queen's way to mate on h7.

Black has some possible defences, but his task to defend his king is harder than White's one to attack. One of the Black's ideas is to exchange the very dangerous White's knight on f3 and

then to exchange the queens with the manoeuvre Ne7-g6 followed by Qd8-h4. Against this manoeuvre, White has the move Qh4-h5 (we will see later).

Black has the possibility to exchange the knight on f3, but this will clear white rook's way for the lift: Rf1-f3-h3 or g3.

Another Black's weakness that White exploits in many variations is the d6-pawn. This pawn cannot advance because of White's total control on d5, so White can attack it using the manoeuvre Nc3-b5. Often when Black succeeds to exchange the queens, White regains his pawn back and maintains a better position for the endgame will come.

Also, in some variations White can play Bg5 pinning the black knight on the h4-d8 diagonal. Below are some possible continuations:

10... **fxe4**

[10...Ng6 11.Qxd8 Rxd8 (11...Nxd8 12.Nb5±) 12.exf5 exf5 (12...Nge5 13.Bg5±) 13.Bg5 with the idea Rae1]

[10...Ne5 11.Nxe5± followed by Bg5]

[10...d5 11.exd5

A) 11...Nxd5 12.Bg5 f6 (12...Nf6 13.Ne2→) 13.Bd2± ;

B) 11...exd5 12.Bb3 Be6 13.Be3 b6□ 14.Qh5!± the idea of Qh5 is to avoid Ne7-g6 and Qd8-h4 exchanging the queens.]

11.dxe4 Nd4 Black has to exchange the white f3-knight.

[11...d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.Bd3 Bf5 14.Bxf5 Nxf5 15.Qg4 Nce7 16.Bg5→ with the idea Nh4]

[11...Ng6 12.Qh5 Nce5 13.Bh6!! Nxc4 (13...Nxf3+ 14.Rxf3 Qh4 15.Qxh4 Nxh4 16.Rg3 Ng6 17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Rd1±) 14.Ng5 Bd4+ 15.Kh1 Nce5 16.Nxh7 Kxh7 17.Bg5±]

12.Qh5 After the exchange of the f3-knight, Black can force the queens exchange by Ng6 followed by Qh4. So, White uses his resource: Qh4-h5.

12... **f6**

[12...Ng6 13.Ng5 h6 14.Nxf7 Rxf7 15.Qxg6 Rxf1+ 16.Bxf1 Nxc2 17.Bxh6 Qf6 18.Qe8+

Qf8 19.Qxf8+ Bxf8 20.Bxf8 Nxa1 21.Bxd6≡
Poluljahov]
[12...Nxc2 13.Bh6→]
[12...Qe8 13.Nxd4 cxd4 14.Ne2→]
[12...f5 13.Bh6 Qe8 14.Qxe8 Nxf3+
15.Rxf3 Bd4+ 16.Kh1 Rxe8 17.Nb5 Be5
18.Bf4±]

13.Nxd4 cxd4 14.Ne2

[14.Nb5!? Nc6 15.Rf3! an idea that is worth
consideration.]

14...Nc6

[Black has a good manœuvre here, so I think
that 14.Nb5 is better for White. 14...Qc7!
15.Bd3 Qc5=]

15.Nf4 Qe8 16.Qh3 f5

[16...Nd8□ 17.Qh4!±]

17.exf5 d5 18.Bd3 e5 19.Nxd5 e4 20.Bc4+-

Milliet 2240 - Calotescu 2334, 2003

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□ - variation 2#

■ 9...d5 10.Bb3 dxe4

**1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 d6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bc4
Bg7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1 0-0 9.f5 d5
10.Bb3 dxe4** --Variation 2#. 10...c4 is

analyzed in Variation 3#

Also, Black can play:

[10...gxf5 11.exd5 exd5 12.Qh4±
- entering variation 1#]

[10...exf5 11.exd5 Nd4 12.Bg5 Re8 13.Qh4
Nxb3 14.axb3 h6 15.Bxh6 Nxd5 16.Bxg7
Kxg7 17.Nxd5 Qxd5 18.Rfe1 Be6 19.Qf2±]

[10...d4 opening the b3-bishop and closing
the position in the centre is in White's
advantage 11.Ne2± exf5 12.Qh4 Na5
13.Bg5→]

[10...Nd4 11.Nxd4 Bxd4+ 12.Kh1 c4
13.dxc4 dxc4 14.Bxc4 exf5 Geller 2437 -
Kosov 2280, 2002 15.Bh6 Re8 16.Rd1±]

11.dxe4 exf5

[11...gxf5 12.Qh4 Ng6 (12...Nd4 13.Bg5
forcing f7-f6 which closes the g7-bishop and
weakens Black's pawns structure. f6
14.Be3↑) 13.Qh5→ (Gdanski 2485)]

12.Qh4

This variation is characterized by very sharp
moves and lines but it is an excellent tactical
training too. We for sure can improve our
tactical skills analyzing this position.

12... Nd4

[other move here is: 12...fxe4 13.Ng5 h6□
and here White starts a decisive attack
14.Bxf7+!! Kh8 15.Ngxe4 A very sharp
position with many variations. It is practically
impossible to memorize all the variations from
below, but White's task to attack is easier than
Black's one in defending his position.

A) 15...Ng8 16.Bg5 Qd4+ 17.Kh1 Bf5
18.Bd5± ;

B) 15...Nf5 16.Qxd8 Rxd8 17.Bxg6± ;

C) 15...Kh7 16.g4 Ng8 17.Bg5± ;

D) 15...Qd4+ 16.Kh1 Nf5 17.Rxf5 gxf5
(17...Bxf5 18.Bxh6 Rxf7 19.Be3±±)

18.Bxh6 Rxf7 19.Be3+ Kg8 20.Bxd4 cxd4
21.Nd6! dxc3 22.Qc4 Ne5 23.Qxc3 Rf8
24.Qb3+ Kh7 25.Re1→ ;

E) 15...Bf5 16.Bxh6

E1) 16...Bd4+ 17.Kh1 Rxf7 18.Ng5 Rf6

(18...Qe8 19.Nce4± ; 18...Kg8 19.Nxf7

Kxf7 20.g4±) 19.Nce4 Nd5□ (19...Bxe4

20.Bf8+ Kg8 21.Qh7+ Kxf8 22.Rxf6+- ;

19...Kg8 20.Bg7!! Kxg7 21.Qh7+ Kf8

22.Nxf6 Bxf6 23.Qf7#) 20.Nxf6 Qxf6

21.c3 Be3 22.Rad1± ;

E2) 16...Rxf7 17.Rad1! Bd4+ 18.Rxd4!

cxd4 19.Nf6!!+-]

13.Bg5 Nxf3+ 14.Rxf3 White also has the
control over the centre using his rooks.

14... Qd4+ 15.Rf2! Nc6

[15...c4?! 16.Rd1 Qe5 17.Bxc4+-]

16.Rd1 Qe5

[16...Qb4?! 17.a3 Qa5 (17...Qb6

18.Nd5+-) 18.Nd5 h5 (18...Nd4 19.Nf6+

Bxf6 20.Bxf6 h5 21.g4! fxg4 22.Qg5 Kh7

23.Bxd4+- ; 18...fxe4 19.Nf6+ Bxf6

20.Bxf6+-) 19.Nf6+ Bxf6 20.Bxf6+-]

17.exf5 Bxf5 18.Nd5

[Other good continuation here is: 18.Re2 Qb8

19.Nd5 Nd4 20.Rf2 Qe5 21.c3 Nc6

22.Nf6+ Bxf6 23.Bxf6 Qe3 24.Kh1

Black is hopeless against Rf2-f3 and mate on

g7 or h7; 1 - 0 Smithers 2225 - Rost 2480, 1996]

18...Nd4

[18...b5 19.Nf6+ Bxf6 20.Bxf6 Qe3 21.Bd5 Rad8 (21...Rac8 22.Rdf1 Rfe8 23.g4!+-) 22.Bxd8 Rxd8 23.Qf6 Be6 24.Rd3 Qxd3 25.cxd3 Rxd5 26.Re2±]

[18...Rad8 19.Bxd8 Rxd8 20.Rff1± Δb5 21.Ne7+-]

19.c3! Nxb3

[19...Ne6 20.Bf6! Qe4 (20...Bxf6 21.Nxf6+ Kg7 22.Nd7 Qe3 23.Qf6+ Kg8 24.Nxf8+-) 21.Qh6! Qxd5 22.Bxg7±]

20.Rxf5!

[20.axb3? f6±]

20...Qe2

[20...gxf5 21.Bf6! Qe2 22.Ne7+ Kh8 23.Bxg7+ Kxg7 24.Qg5+ Kh8 25.Qf6#]

21.Re1 Qd3 22.Ne7+ Kh8 23.Rf3 Qd6

24.Rh3 h5 25.Qxh5+ gxh5 26.Rxh5+ Bh6

27.Bxh6 Qg6 28.Nxg6+ fxc6 29.Rh3

1-0 Parligras 2525 - Popovici 2448, 2003

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□ - variation 3#

■ 9...d5 10.Bb3 c4

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 d6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bc4 Bg7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1 0-0 9.f5 d5 10.Bb3 c4 - Variation 3#

Black wants to destroy White's centre: he gives the c-pawn in order to make a strong centre. However, in this variation, White's advantage is incontestable.

11.dxc4 Now Black has two main continuations: 11...dxe4 and 11...d4

11... dxe4

[11...d4 12.f6! Bxf6 13.e5! Clearing the e4 square with gain of tempo.

13... Bxe5

(Oll in his game with Short preferred to keep the bishop: 13...Bg7 14.Ne4 Nxe5 15.Nxe5 Bxe5 16.Bg5 and the pressure is immense. 17.Nf6+ is threatened. f5 17.Qh4 Rf7 18.Nf6+ Bxf6 19.Bxf6 Qf8 20.Bxd4 Nc6 21.Be3 with the idea c4-c5 Qe7 22.Qxe7

Rxe7 Short 2660 - Oll 2645, 1998 23.Bg5! Re8 24.Rad1 e5 25.c5+ Be6 26.Rd7± Short)

14.Nxe5 dxc3 15.Qxc3 Nxe5 16.Qxe5 and White has the advantage of a very active bishop-pair in open position. Moreover, his pawn majority on the queenside can advance quickly after the manoeuvre c2-c3 and Bb3-c2. Nf5 17.c3 f6 18.Qe4 Qb6+ 19.Rf2 Kg7 (19...Bd7 20.g4 Nd6 21.Qd4 Qxd4 22.cxd4 Rac8 23.Bh6 Rf7 24.c5 Ne4 25.Re2 f5 26.gxf5 gxf5 27.Rg2+ Kh8 28.Bf4± ; 19...h5 20.Bf4 Kh8 21.Rd1 e5 22.Bc1 Rd8 23.Rxd8+ Qxd8 24.c5± Ftacnik) Macieja 2490 - Ftacnik 2585, 1998 20.Bc2± with the idea to promote the pawns on queenside: a2-a4, b2-b4.]

[11...dxc4?! is bad because of 12.f6! Bxf6 13.Bxc4 Ne5 14.Bb3± and all White's pieces are very active.]

12.f6! a move that has to be remembered in this variation.

12... exf3

[12...Bxf6 13.Nxe4 Bg7 14.Bg5 f6 (14...f5 15.Rd1 Qc7 16.Nd6 e5 17.c5+ Kh8 18.Nb5 Qb8 19.Qh4+- Mitkov 2515 - Samalvuo 2410, 1998 ; 14...h6 15.Rd1 Qc7 16.Bf6± Beshukov 2463 - Shomoev 2373, 2001) 15.Bf4 White provokes e5 to open the diagonal for his bishop on b3. e5 16.Be3 Kh8 17.Rd1 Qc7 Bruzon 2589 - Queseda 2244, 2001 18.Nc3!± Bruzon]

13.fxc7 Kxg7 14.Rxf3 Nf5 15.Ne4 e5 16.c3± Gasanov 2454 - Shkuro 2247

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□ Systems ...d6

■ 6...e6 7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1 h6

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 d6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bc4 Bg7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 Nge7 8.Qe1 h6

Black delays the castle and playing h7-h6 he protects against Nf3-g5.

9.Bb3 A useful move in order to play e4-e5 when Black plays d6-d5.

9... a6

[9...Rb8 with idea b7-b5 10.Be3 White wants to play e4-e5 after which the black c5-pawn will hang.

10...

A) 10...b5 11.e5! Nf5 12.exd6 (12.Bf2!?) 12...Nxe3 13.Qxe3 Bd4 (13...Nd4? 14.Ne5 Qxd6 15.Ne4 Qb6 16.c3+- , xc5 ; 13...Qxd6?! 14.Ne4 Qd4 15.Nxd4 Bxd4 16.Kf2! Bxe3+ 17.Kxe3 c4 18.dxc4 bxc4 19.Nd6+ Ke7 20.Nxc4 Ba6 21.Rfb1±) 14.Nxd4 cxd4 15.Qf3 Qxd6 16.Ne4± Gurevich ;

B) 10...0-0 11.Rd1

(Now, the advance 11.e5?! doesn't work because Black can protect the c5-pawn with 11... b6 12.Ne4 Nf5̄)

11...Nd4 12.Bxd4 cxd4 13.Ne2 Nc6 14.Qf2 Qb6 Reinderman 2539 - Gurevich 2476, 2001 15.c3! White has plenty of resources to attack the d4-pawn. Thus he succeeds either to weaken Black's pawns, or to make a strong white pawn centre. 15... dxc3 (15...e5 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.cxd4 exd4 18.Nf4 Kh7 19.Qg3↑ x d4, f7, g6, <=> c, f) 16.Qxb6 axb6 17.bxc3 b5 18.d4±]

[9...Nd4 10.Nxd4 cxd4 11.Ne2 0-0

A) also possible is: 12.Qf2 Nc6 13.Bd2 Kh7 14.c3 Qb6 15.Nxd4! Nxd4 16.Be3 Qa6 17.Bxd4 Qxd3 18.Bxg7 (18.e5+-) 18...Kxg7 19.Rad1 (19.Rfe1!+-) 19...Qxe4 20.Rxd6± Georgadze 2525 - Novikov 2580, 1992 ;

B) 12.Kh1 with idea Ne2-g1-f3. The knight on f3 sustains the advance e4-e5. f5 13.Ng1 Kh8 14.Nf3 Bd7 15.Bd2 Rc8 16.Qg3 fxe4 17.dxe4 d5 18.exd5 exd5 19.Nh4± Topalov 2700 - Van Wely 2570, 1996 (19.Ne5!/? ; 19.Qf2!/?±)]

[9...b6 by b6, Black defends his c5-pawn and opens the c8-bishop.

10.Kh1 Na5 11.Ba4+ Bd7 12.Bxd7+ Qxd7

13.Be3 0-0 14.Rd1 Qb7 15.Qh4 f5 16.Rfe1 (16.e5± Fritz) 16...Rae8 17.e5 d5 18.d4 Qc6 19.Ne2 Rf7 20.c3 Rc8 21.b3 c4 22.b4 Nb7 23.a4± White wants to block the queenside and then start the attack on the kingside ; Christiansen 2559 - Xu Jun 2654, 2002]

10.e5

White plays in the centre weakening Black's central position, especially the dark-squares.

Nf5

[10...d5 11.Qf2 b6 12.Bd2 Na5 (12...0-0?! 13.Ne2!/? Bb7 14.a4± with idea a4-a5) 13.Ne2 Nxb3 14.axb3 with idea 15.b4 Nc6 15.d4±]

[10...dxe5 11.fxe5

A) 11...Nxe5 12.Nxe5 Qd4+ 13.Kh1 Qxe5 14.Qf2!≡ Anand (14.Ne4± with idea Bf4; Bangiev);

B) 11...g5! 12.Ne4 g4 13.Nf6+!± Anand Bxf6 14.exf6 Nf5 15.Nd2↑]

11.Kh1! A useful move. White avoids to be checked on d4.

11... Nfd4

[11...Ncd4!/? (Van Wely)]

[11...0-0 12.Ne4 c4 13.dxc4 dxe5 14.g4!± Anand]

[11...dxe5 12.fxe5 Qc7 13.Ne4 Nxe5 14.Bf4 Nxf3 15.Bxc7 Nxe1 16.Raxe1 Bd7 17.c3 Rc8 18.Bb6 Bb5 19.Nxc5?!

(19.g4!/?∞) 19...0-0 (19...Rc6̄) 20.a4± Gather 2473 - Scuderi 2336, 1999]

[11...d5 12.Ne2 h5 13.c3 b6 14.Ng3 Nce7 15.Nxf5 Nxf5 16.d4= Khalifman 2628 - Van Wely 2629, 1999 (16.Be3±)]

12.Nxd4

[12.Ne4!/? Anand 2725 - Gelfand 2700, 1996]

12...Nxd4 13.Ne4 dxe5 14.fxe5 Bxe5 15.Bf4 Bxf4 16.Rxf4 Qc7 17.Qf2 0-0 18.Rf1 f5 19.Nxc5 Nxb3 20.Nxb3 e5 21.Rc4 Qd6 Gather 2473 - Bock 2550, 1999 **22.Re1 Be6 23.Rh4 Kg7 24.Nc5 Bd5 25.c4 Bc6 26.d4 b6**

[26...e4 27.d5+-]

27.Nb3∞

□ **Systems ...d6**
 ■ **6...Nf6 7.d3 0-0**

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 d6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bc4 Bg7 6.0-0 Nf6 Another development of the knight (other than Nge7).

In this variation, White's attack is even stronger. The f6-knight is exposed to the pin Bg5 and/or on the f-file: White can eliminate the knight by the exchange sacrifice Rf1-xf6.

7.d3 0-0 8.f5

After 7.d3, White opens the diagonal for the c1-bishop immediately. In other variations, White moves Qd1-e1 prior to f5. The reason is that Black has castled already, being a tempo up than in variations with Nge7 when Black loses a tempo with e7-e6.

gxf5 8...

[another interesting choice is: 8...e6 9.fxc6 fxc6 (9...hxc6 10.Bg5) 10.e5! White spoils Black's central pawns dxe5 11.Ng5 Nd4 12.a4±]

9.Qe1!

Remember: White does not recapture on f5, but plays Qe1 now. It is important the move order in this system. The idea of f4-f5 was to open the lines for the c1-bishop, the f1-rook, and to eliminate the g6-pawn. White remains with a pawn on e4 to control the f5-square.

White is a pawn down, but he gains a strong attack, fully compensating the material.

9... fxe4

[9...Na5 This is a sharp line, but White has strong attacking moves.

10.Qh4 Nxc4 11.dxc4 Nxe4 (11...fxe4 12.Ng5 h6 13.Ngxe4 Nxe4 14.Nxe4 -> the main line) 12.Nxe4 fxe4 13.Ng5 h6 14.Nxe4 White attacks with two major pieces and two minor ones and Black defends with a pawn, a bishop and a rook. He hardly can bring the queen in defence. Some games proved the White has success in attack. 14...

B23

A) 14...f5 15.Bxh6 Rf7 (15...Bxh6 16.Qxh6 fxe4 17.Qg6+ Kh8 18.Rxf8+ Qxf8 19.Rf1 1-0 Rubzova - Schul, 1969 ; 15...e6 16.Qg3 Qc7 17.Nxd6 Kh7 18.Bxg7 Qxg7 19.Qxg7+ Kxg7 20.Rae1 1-0 Domulis - Prischepov) 16.Ng5 e6 17.Qh5+- ;

B) 14...Kh7 15.Rf3 f6 16.Bd2 Bd7 17.Raf1 Qe8 18.Rg3 threatening Rxg7 h5 (18...Qf7 19.Ng5± ; 18...Rf7 19.Qh5) 19.Bc3 Rd8 20.Re1 Be6 21.Ng5+ fxc5 22.Rxg5 Rf6 23.Rxe6 1-0 Nilsson - Valkesalmi, 1995]

[9...e6?! 10.exf5 d5 11.Bb3 Qa5 12.fxe6 fxe6 13.Qg3±]

10.dxe4 This is the key-position in the 6...Nf6 variation.

All white pieces are in attack.

10... **Bg4** in order to exchange the f3-knight.

[10...Nd4 with the same idea: to exchange the f3-knight. 11.Qh4 Qd7 (11...Nxc2? 12.Bh6 Nxa1 13.Ng5 d5 14.Nxd5+-) 12.h3 b5 13.Bd5 Nxd5 14.Nxd5 f6 to defend g5 15.Nxd4 cxd4 Angelov 2335 - Kaminski 2315, 1990 16.Bh6±]

[10...Ng4!? Black defends the h6-square to can play h7-h6. 11.Qh4 Nce5 12.Nxe5 Nxe5 13.Be2±]

11.Qh4

[Also a very good example is the following game: 11.Bf4 Bxf3 12.Rxf3 Nh5 13.Bg5 Ne5 14.Rh3 Nxc4 15.Qh4 Bd4+ 16.Kh1 f6 17.Qxh5 Rf7 18.Bh6 Ne5 19.Nd5 c4 20.c3 Bc5 21.Rf1 Kh8 22.Rf5 e6 23.Bg5! 1-0 Sorokin 2400 - Baburin 2500, 1988]

11...Bxf3 12.Rxf3 Ne5 13.Rh3 Ng6

[13...Nxc4 14.Nd5+-]

14.Qg3 Qd7 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.Bxd5 e6 17.Bb3 d5 18.Qf3 c4 19.Ba4! Qxa4 20.Qh5 Rfd8 21.Qxh7+ Kf8 22.Bh6 Bxh6 23.Rxh6 Ke8 24.Rf1 Rd7 25.Qg8+ Nf8 26.Rxe6+! Kd8 27.Qxf8+ Kc7 28.Qc5+ Kd8 29.Rh6 1-0 Hodgson - Nunn, 1978

B23

 Systems ...g6

 3...g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bb5 Nd4

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7

In this variations Black delays the development of the d-pawn. Now if White develops his bishop on c4, Black after e6, Nge7 will have a tempo up advancing directly d5. For this reason, White develops the bishop on b5 fighting for the center.

This development is better for Black against the Closed Sicilian. Then, why so many grandmasters play d7-d6 so early? The answer is given by the possible transpositions with Open Sicilian. If Black wants to play Najdorf or Dragon variation, than he needs to play 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 d6(!), otherwise White can play 3.Nf3 and 4.d4 entering Open Sicilian and Black cannot choose anymore his preferred systems.

5.Bb5

Black has two continuations now: 5...Nd4 avoiding the exchange on c6 and 5...d6 analyzed in the next line.

5... Nd4

[5...e6? is not good because it weakens too much the dark-squares on the centre. 6.e5!± d5 7.d4!±]

6.Bc4 White could leave the bishop on b5 and castle short, but we prefer this line.

6... d6

[another important continuation is: 6...e6 7.e5! closing the black g7-bishop and weakening the d6-square and the c5-pawn. 7...

A) 7...d6 8.0-0 Nxf3+ (8...Nh6 9.Nb5! Nxb5 10.Bxb5+ Bd7 11.Bxd7+ Qxd7 12.d4 cxd4 13.Qxd4 Nf5 14.Qf2± and Black has problems with his dark-squares bishop.) 9.Qxf3 d5 Lau Ralf 2515 - Lagunov 2405, 1994 10.Bb5+ Bd7 11.Bxd7+ Qxd7 12.d4 cxd4 13.Ne2± and White has a strong outpost on d4 for his knight. ;

B) 7...d5 8.Nxd4 cxd4 (8...dxc4? 9.Ndb5+-) 9.Bb5+ Bd7 10.Bxd7+ Qxd7

11.Ne2 f6 12.Nxd4 fxe5 13.fxe5 Bxe5 14.Nf3 Bg7 15.0-0 Nf6 (15...Ne7 16.d4 0-0 17.Qd3 Nc6 18.Be3±) 16.Qe2 0-0 17.d3 Qd6 Tarassow - Kiwiziki, 1966 18.Be3∞ It cannot be said that White is better in this position, but Black's central pawns are somewhat weak in the endgame will come. White has two pawn islands while Black has three - this is an advantage in endgames.]

7.0-0 e6

[7...Nf6 8.e5! dxe5 9.fxe5 Nxf3+ 10.Qxf3 Qd4+ 11.Kh1 Qxe5 (11...Qxc4? 12.exf6 exf6 13.d3 Qg4 14.Re1+ Kd8 15.Qd5+ Qd7 16.Qxc5 b6 17.Qf2± Bb7? 18.Bh6 1-0 Sedlak 2445 - Kosanovic 2425, 2002) 12.Bb5+ Kf8 13.d3≡ Black hardly can find a way to make the connection between his rooks. White has nothing special in attack, but after he will develop the a1-rook on the e-file Black will have problems - he lacks any control in the center.]

8.e5!? Nxf3+ 9.Qxf3 d5 10.Bb5+! Bd7 11.Bxd7+ Qxd7 12.d4! cxd4

[12...b6 13.Be3±]

13.Ne2 Ne7 14.Nxd4 Nc6 15.Nb3!? 0-0 16.Be3 Rfc8 17.c3± Sutovski 2657 - Tiviakov 2631, 2002

B23

 Systems ...g6

 3...g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bb5 d6

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 g6

[We can also choose to play this solid and strategic system when Black plays with 3... d6: 3...d6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bb5 Bg7 6.Bxc6+]

4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bb5 d6

Black wants to complete his development playing Nf6, so he needs to play d6 in order to avoid e4-e5.

6.Bxc6+ bxc6 7.d3 Nf6

[Black can choose: 7...Nh6 which is not bad at all, but few players know about this

possibility

8.0-0 0-0 (8...f6 9.f5!± Δgxf5 10.Nh4±)
9.Qe1

- A)** 9...Bg4 10.f5 Bxf3 (10...e6??
11.f6!+-) 11.Rxf3± ;
- B)** 9...Qb6 10.Qh4 c4+ 11.Kh1 cxd3
12.f5! d2 13.Bxd2 Qxb2 14.Rab1 Qxc2
15.fxg6 fxg6 16.Rfc1+- ;
- C)** 9...Rb8 10.Qh4 Ng4 11.h3 Nf6 12.Rb1
Nd7 13.Be3± with the idea f4-f5 ;
- D)** 9...c4 10.dxc4 Qb6+ 11.Kh1 Qb4
12.Nd5 Qb7 13.Nb4± with the idea Nd3 ;
- E)** 9...f5 10.e5 Qc7 11.Qg3 Rb8 12.Re1
Nf7 13.b3 Nd8 14.Na4 Ne6 15.Bb2 d5
Hebden 2315 - Fedorovicz 2435 16.Ng5!± ;
- F)** 9...e6 10.e5!± with the idea Ne4 ;
- G)** 9...f6 10.Qh4 Nf7 11.Be3 e5 12.fxe5
fxe5 13.Qg3 Be6 14.b3± Pessi 2355 -
Musat 2345, 1996]

8.0-0 0-0 9.Qe1 In this system White combines actions on the kingside with strategic play in the centre where the black pawns are doubled and weak.

9... **c4** Black wants to open the lines to give force to his bishop-pair.

- [9...Bg4?! 10.Qh4 Bxf3 (10...Qd7 11.Nd1± ;
10...e6 11.Nd2!±) 11.Rxf3 e6 12.f5 Nd7
13.Bg5→ Bf6? 14.fxg6 fxg6 15.Rxf6 Nxf6
16.Rf1+-]
- [9...Qb6 10.Kh1 c4 11.dxc4!± ΔBe6 12.b3]
- [9...Rb8 10.b3 Qd7 11.Bd2 Ne8 12.Qh4
Nc7 13.Rae1 Ba6 14.f5± Nb5 15.Nxb5
cxb5 16.Ng5 provoking a fatal weakness on
the black kingside. h6 17.Nh3 Kh7 18.Rf3!
Rbe8 19.Ref1 Bc8 20.fxg6+ fxg6 21.Rf7 h5
22.Qg5 1-0 Hebden 2550 - Umesh 2235,
1995]
- [9...Nd7 10.Kh1 Rb8 11.b3 Re8 12.Bb2
Qa5 13.e5! Qd8 14.Qh4± with the idea Ne4,
Rae1 and c4; Keitlinghaus 2525 - Gisbrecht
2400, 1997]
- [9...Ne8 10.Qh4 f5 11.Bd2 (11.e5!?±)
11...Nc7 12.Rae1 Ne6 13.exf5 gxf5
14.Rxe6! Bxe6 15.Ng5 Rf6 16.Qxh7+ Kf8
17.Nxe6+ Rxe6 18.Qxf5+ Rf6 19.Qg4±
King 2535 - Leib 2193, 2001]

10.dxc4 Ba6 11.e5! dxe5

[11...Nd7 12.e6! Bxc4 13.exd7 Bxf1
14.Kxf1 Qxd7 15.Be3±]

12.fxe5 Ng4

[12...Nd7 13.e6!±]

13.Qe4 Bc8

[13...Qb6+ 14.Kh1 Nf2+? 15.Rxf2 Qxf2
16.Be3+-]

14.Kh1 Bf5 15.Qe2 Qb8 16.Re1± Fressinet
2501 - De Vreugt 2498, 2000