



C O L U M N I S T S

The Instructor

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Opening Catastrophes

“How does a strong player come to lose in just 18 moves? I should know, because I have lost several games just as quickly. If you want to lose a miniature, then here are three helpful tips. First of all, it is a big help if you are Black. Losing in under 20 moves with White requires a special talent which few possess. Secondly, choose a provocative opening in which you try to realise strategic ambitions, but at the cost of backward development and delayed castling. Thirdly, if something goes slightly wrong, don't reconcile yourself to defending a bad position - seek a tactical solution instead! Don't worry about the fact that tactics are bound to favour the better developed side; just go ahead anyway. Follow this advice and at least you will get home early.” *John Nunn's Best Games*

In the games we shall now examine, Black was the winner; so Doctor Nunn's first recipe was not exploited here. However, the other two recipes were carried out in exemplary fashion.

Makarychev – Dvoretsky Training Game, Moscow 1970

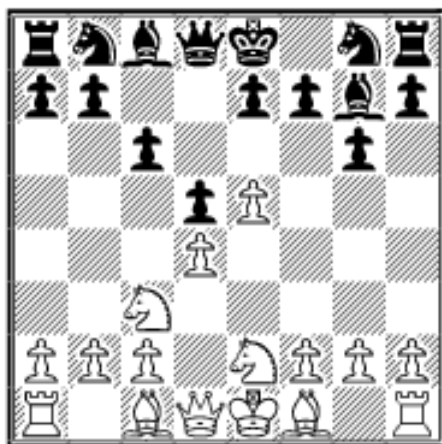
1. e2-e4 g7-g6 2. d2-d4 Bf8-g7 3. Nb1-c3 c7-c6 4. Ng1-e2?! d7-d5

On 4...d6 5 g3, with Bg2 and 0-0 to follow, White develops his pieces harmoniously.

5. e4-e5



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Why did Sergei Makarychev develop his knight to e2? With this pawn structure, sooner or later Black will have to play e7-e6. But first, he must bring out the bishop at c8 - this piece has no future otherwise. If White's knight stood on f3, Black would continue 5...Bg4! On 4 f4 d5 5 e5, Black has a choice between 5...h5 6 Be3 Nh6 7 Nf3 Bg4 8 Be2 e6 and 5...Nh6 6 Be2 f6 7 Nf3 Bg4 8 Be3 e6. In either case, he successfully resolves the problem of his light-squared bishop (which of course does not mean he solves all of his opening problems - White still maintains an impressive space advantage).

But with the knight on e2, the bishop has nowhere to go - it will not feel comfortable on f5, nor on g4.

Nevertheless, all of this is achieved at too high a price (in the spirit of Nunn's second bit of "advice"!) In order to frustrate his opponent's plan, White has simultaneously violated **two of the basic opening principles (quick development and fighting for the center)**. His knight stands in the way of his bishop, and it also fails to control the central square e5. That is the place where Black immediately takes aim.

5...f7-f6! 6. Bc1-f4?

White is consistent: he does not want to play f2-f4, which would give the enemy bishop access to g4 and f5. But he still should have supported e5 with a pawn, because there are no longer enough pieces to do the job - one result of the knight's unfortunate development to e2.

6...Nb8-d7

Since White can neither defend his e-pawn nor advance it (7 e6? Nf8), it must be exchanged at f6, giving up the center and aiding the development of Black's pieces.

7. e5xf6

Note that the e-pawn made three moves and then disappeared from the board - this means that the tempi used to advance it have been wasted. Nimzovich used to call such pawns (and pieces) "tempo-devourers".

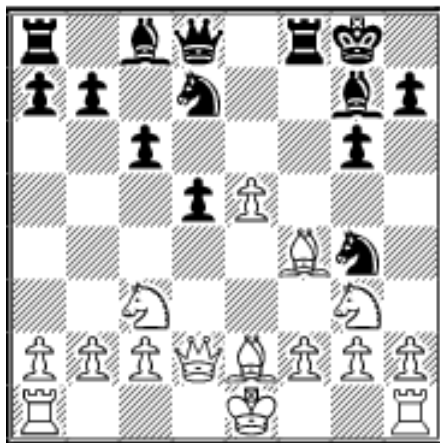
7...Ng8xf6 8. Qd1-d2 0-0 9. Ne2-g3

One can understand Makarychev's desire to develop his kingside pieces as quickly as he can. But still, he should have waited a little longer - 9 f3!? first was better, in order to cover the important squares g4 and e4.

9...e7-e5!

With a lead in development, one must open the game energetically.

10. d4xe5 Nf6-g4 11. Bf1-e2



How does Black continue? The tempting 11...Nxf2? fails to 12 0-0! (or 12 Rf1!). The most natural move would be 11...Ndx5, when White cannot castle either way (12 0-0? Nxb2!). Of course, Black must reckon with 12 f3, after which his knight has no comfortable retreat. But

Black's position is so strong, that he has every right to proceed with material sacrifices .

11...Nd7xe5! 12. f2-f3?!

And now Makarychev follows Nunn's third "recommendation: bravely marching forward, into the tactical melee. On the other hand, by now it's hard to recommend anything. On 12 h3, the simplest way of maintaining Black's advantage is 12...Qf6!? Nor is the sharper 12...Nxf2 bad, considering lines like 13 Rf1 d4!? or 13 0-0 Nxf3+!? 14 gh Bxf3 15 Rf2 Qh4.

Perhaps White's best course was to give a "testimonium paupertatis" (testament of poverty), in Alekhine's trenchant phrase, with 12 Nd1. But here too, White's position is not to be envied.

12...Rf8xf4! 13. Qd2xf4 Bg7-h6

13...Qb6 would have been much weaker, in view of 14 Nd1!

14. Qf4-a4

It seemed to me that 14 Qd4 Be3 15 Qa4 (the bishop is a threat on e3, but the knight would be still worse) would have been a little harder to deal with. Black would have continued his attack by 15...Bf2+ 16 Kf1 Qh4 17 fg Bxg3. Later it was discovered that even with the queen on d4, Black could play 14...Ne3!!, and if 15 Qxe5, then 15...Bf4! and the queen has no retreat.

14...Ng4-e3 15. Nc3-d1

Also hopeless was 15 Kf2 Qb6. Now, before taking the g2-pawn, it's important to secure the b6 square for the queen.

15...b7-b5! 16. Qa4-b3 Ne3xg2+ 17. Ke1-f2 Bc8-h3

White resigned, as he is defenseless against the threat of 18...Qb6+. If 18 Nf1, then 18...Qh4+.

Csom – Dolmatov Frunze, 1983

1. c2-c4 c7-c6 2. Ng1-f3 d7-d5 3. b2-b3 Ng8-f6 4. Qd1-c2 e7-e6 5. Bc1-b2 Nb8-d7

6. d2-d4?!

Why does Istvan Csom postpone the development of his light-squared bishop? First he wants to see where the enemy bishop will be developed. In reply to 6...Be7 there would follow 7 e3 and 8 Bd3. But if 6...Bd6 (with the idea of quickly preparing for e6-e5: 7 e3 0-0 8 Bd3 Re8), White would fianchetto his bishop, and after 7 g3 0-0 8 Bg2 Re8 9 0-0, the move e6-e5 loses much of its force.

Having guessed his opponent's strategic plan, Sergei Dolmatov changes the course of the battle.

6...Nf6-e4!

Every chessplayer must have an understanding of the basic ideas of every opening - not just the ones included in his own opening repertoire - because sometimes, positions occur which are not at all typical of the opening he started out playing. That's what happens here: after 7 e3 f5, we get a version of the "Stonewall Dutch" that favors Black. The Hungarian GM, not wanting to play that sort of position, fianchettoes his bishop.

7. g2-g3?! Bf8-b4+ 8. Nb1-d2?

White does not yet sense the danger. Of course, 8 Nc3? Qa5 9 Rc1 Qxa2 was bad; but he had to reply 8 Nfd2.



Dolmatov's next strong move sets his opponent insoluble problems. It's amazing how quickly White's apparently solid position goes critical.

8...Qd8-f6!

The threat is 9...Bxd2+ 10 Nxd2 Qxf2 mate.

9. Ra1-d1

Csom gives up the exchange. The alternative was the pitiful 9 Bc1, which would be met by 9...e5 10 Bg2 ed 11 0-0 Ndc5.

9...Bb4xd2+ 10. Rd1xd2 Ne4xd2 11. Qc2xd2 0-0

White managed to make use of some inaccuracies from his opponent later on to drag out the game, but he could not save it.

In the games we have looked at so far, White's unfortunate opening play was refuted by comparatively simple means. In the next game, played recently, Black had to resort to a series of spectacular sacrifices.

Macieja – Ivanchuk Moscow wch 2001 (rapid)

1. e2-e4 e7-e6 2. d2-d4 d7-d5 3. Nb1-c3 Ng8-f6 4. e4-e5 Nf6-d7 5. Nc3-e2 c7-c5 6. f2-f4 Nb8-c6 7. c2-c3 Bf8-e7 8. Ng1-f3 0-0 9. a2-a3

Here's an entertaining game (Berkvens - Hummel, Hoogoven 2000): 9 h4 f6 10 a3 a5 11 Ng3 b6 12 Bd3 Ba6 13 Bxh7+ Kxh7 14 Ng5+ Kg8 (14...fg? 15 hg+ Kg8 16 Rh8+! Kxh8 17 Qh5+ Kg8 18 g6 and wins) 15 Nxe6 Qe8 16 Qg4 Qf7 17 Nf5 Kh8 18 Nxf8 Bxf8 19 h5 fe 20 Qg6 Qe8!? 21 de Bd3 22 Qxc6 Bxf5 23 Qxd5 Nf6 24

Qf3 Rd8 25 Be3 Rd3 26 Rh4? (26 Qe2 Nd5, with initiative) 26...Nd5. White resigned.

9...a7-a5 10. h2-h4

The earlier move was 10 Ng3.

10...f7-f6 11. Ne2-g1?!

11 Ng3 would have led to a position from the above-cited game. By going to g1, the knight forestalls the typical idea of the exchange sacrifice at f3; however, this puts White far behind in development, which is energetically exploited by Ivanchuk.

11...c5xd4 12. c3xd4 Qd8-b6 13. Bf1-d3 f6xe5 14. f4xe5



An instructive evaluation of a similar position from this same variation of the French Defense was given by the master A. Kosikov in Dvoretsky and Yusupov's book, *Opening Preparation*:

“Black has a strange clump of pieces on the queenside (Qb6, Nd7, Bc8, Ra8), which get in the way of each other's development. One could, of course, continue 11...Qc7, intending Nb6 and Bd7; but in that time, White could also complete his development; and then his advantage in space would have a major influence on the rest of the game.

But let's look at this situation from a different point of view. Well or ill, but Black has now gotten four of his pieces developed; meanwhile, his opponent has only

developed his bishop and his knight - and that piece takes away the best square f3 from the other knight. Plus, it's Black's move. Black's sizable lead in development is obvious. It's well known that this is not a very important factor in closed positions. So Black must open the game by clearing away the pawn barricades.

14...Nd7xe5! 15. d4xe5 Nc6xe5 16. Bd3-c2

Black is also better after 16 Bb1 Bd7 17 Qc2 Ng6 18 h5 Rac8.

16...Bc8-d7 17. Qd1-e2 Ra8-c8!

The most energetic. After 18 Nxe5 Bxh4+, we have the following pretty variations:

19 Rxh4 Rxc2!, and wins; 19 Kd1 Bxa4! (19...Qd4+ 20 Nd3 is inferior) 20 Bxa4 Qd4+ 21 Nd3 Qxa4+ wins; 19 Kd2 Qd4+ 20 Qd3 (20 Bd3 Ba4! wins) 20...Rf2+ 21 Ne2 Rxe2+! 22 Kxe2 Bb5! wins.

18. Bc2xh7+ Kg8xh7 19. Qe2xe5

19 Nxe5 Bb5 wins.

19...Be7-d6 20. Bc1-e3?

White overlooks his opponent's powerful 21st move. But even after 20 Qh5+ Kg8 21 Ne2 e5, Black's initiative more than compensates for the sacrificed material.

20...Qb6-b3 21. Nf3-d2



21...Rf8-f1+!! 22. Ke1xf1
Qb3-d3+ 23. Kf1-f2
Bd6xe5 24. Ng1xf3
Be5xb2 25. Ra1-b1 Rc8-
c2 26. Rh1-d1 e6-e5 27.
g2-g3 Bd7-g4 White
resigned.

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