

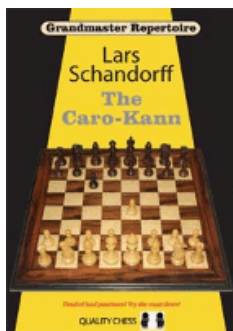


Boxing the Compass

Charles Riordan

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CHESSTHEATRE

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New England Nor'easters Week Ten

Going into Week Ten, we had clinched first place in the Eastern Division of the U.S. Chess League, and found ourselves in a match with no playoff implications for either side: our opponents, the Manhattan Applesauce, had been knocked out of contention the week before. Still, we wanted to keep momentum going heading into the playoffs, and Manhattan doubtless wanted to hand us our first defeat of the season – there is, of course, such a thing as playing for pride.

The line-ups were as follows:

- **Board One**
IM Lev Milman (Manhattan) – IM Sam Shankland (New England)
- **Board Two**
FM Charles Riordan (New England) – IM Eli Vovsha (Manhattan)
- **Board Three**
WFM Elizabeth Vicary (Manhattan) – FM Braden Bournival (New England)
- **Board Four**
NM Carey Theil (New England) – James Black (Manhattan)

When the match started, it was clear we were in for a fight. On board one, IM Milman played an aggressive main line against Sam's Caro-Kann, sacrificing his g-pawn for an attack on the black king. Sam accepted the sacrifice, buckled down, and found a way to obtain two rooks for a queen while defusing White's attack. After the smoke cleared, IM Milman made the fatal error of giving Sam a passed h-pawn, which proved to be decisive.

Milman, Lev (2467) – Shankland, Sam (2498)
USCL New England vs. Manhattan (10), 25.10.2010
Caro-Kann Defense [B19]
Notes by Shankland

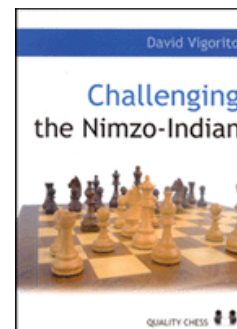
1.e4 c6

I spent awhile before the match wondering how far I wanted to advance this pawn. Ultimately, I think I made the right choice!

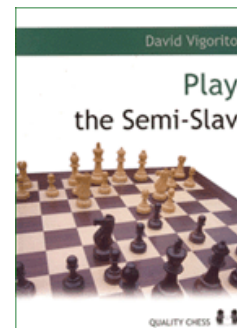
2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 h6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.h5 Bh7 9. Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 e6 11.Bd2 Ngf6 12.0-0-0 Be7 13.Kb1 0-0 14.Ne4 Qc7



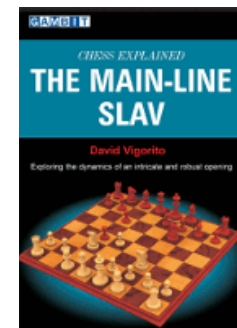
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Chess Explained: Main-Line Slav
by David Vigorito

An over-the-board inspiration. 14...Nxe4 is more normal 15.Qxe4 Nf6 16.Qe2 Qd5 17.Rde1.

15.g4!?

Interesting pawn sacrifice, although I am unsure of its objective merits. 15. Nxf6+ Nxf6 16.g4!? This looked similar to the game, but in reality the positions are extremely different. (16.Ne5 c5=; 16.Rhg1 Ng4! Stopping g4 17. Qe2 Rfd8 Black is not worse 18.Ne5 Nxe5 19.dxe5 Rd5 with counterplay along the d-file) 16...Nxe4 17.Rhg1 f5 18.Qe2 Bf6! (18...Qd7 19.Ne5+-) 19. Qxe6+ Kh8 unclear, Black may have given the pawn back, but he has a solid position and active pieces, giving him even chances. 15.Rhg1 Ng4! Black prevents g4 and soon looks for his own counterplay in the center.

15...Nxe4 16.Rhg1

16.Rdg1!? This aggressive move was once played by Victor Bologan. The idea is rather sickening: 16...f5 17.Qc4 Rf7 18.Qxe6 Nf8 19.Qb3 This is similar to the game variation, but Black can't capture on e4. Luckily, because White's rook has left d1, Black can look for counterplay in the center while leaving the tension on the kingside. (19.Qc4 is similar, but now the best is just Qd7-e6: 19...Qd7 20.Ng3 (20.Rxe4 fxe4 21.Ne5 Qe6= Bologan-Khenkin, France 2001) 20...Qe6=) 19...Qb6 (19...fxe4 20.Rxe4 exf3 21.Bxe6 Bf6 22. Bxe7 Bxe7 23.h6 With the rook on h1 instead of d1, Kh8 is now impossible and White wins.) 20.Qc4 Qb5=.

16...f5

16...Ngf6 17.Bxe6.

17.Qc4 Rf7!

Changing the order of operations. Now Qxe6 can be met by the in-between move Nf8!. 17...fxe4? 18.Qxe6+ Rf7 (18...Kh8 19.Qxe4 Rf7 20.Qxe4+- With an extra pawn and an attack, White is winning) 19.Rxe4 exf3 a) 19...Bf8 20. Rf4! Nc5 Only move. (20...Nf6 21.Ne5+-) 21.dxc5 exf3 22.Be3+/- I highly doubt Black will survive this; b) 19...Bf6 20.Bxe6 exf3 21.Bxe7 Bxe7 22. Rde1 Kf8 23.h6+- Black gets massacred; c) 19...Nf8 20.Rxe7+! Kxe7 21. Qxe6+ Kg8 22.Rg1+-; 20.Rxe7+! Kxe7 21.Qxe6+ Kg8 22.Rg1+-.

18.Nc3



[FEN "r5k1/ppqnbrp1/2p1p2p/5p1P/2QP2n1/
2N2N2/PPP1P2/1K1R2R1 b - - 0 18"]

18.Qxe6 Nf8! 19.Qb3 fxe4 20.Rxe4 exf3 21.Bxe6 (21.Rxe7+?? Kxe7 22.Rg1 + Bg5! Now the rook on f7 is defended 23.Bxe5 hxe5 24.Rxe5+ Kh8+- White ran out of pieces to attack with; 21.Rde1 Bf6 22.Bxe6 Kh8=+/) 21... Bf6 Black has sufficient defensive resources 22.Bxe7 Bxe7 23.h6 Kh8 24. Rde1! I must confess, I completely overlooked this move. Fortunately Re8 saves the day. (24.hxe7+ Rxe7 25.Rxe7 Qxe7 26.Qxf3 Black is marginally better with a piece for two pawns, but with his king being so exposed a draw is by far the most likely result) 24...Re8 (24...Bxd4 25.Rg8+ Kh7 26.Qd3+-)

25.hxg7+ (25.a4 Ree7=+) 25...Rxc7 26.Qxf3 Again, with a likely draw(26.Rxc7 Qxc7=+).

18...Qd6 19.Rge1?

19.Rde1 Unfortunately, this is White's best, and it leads to an even endgame. 19...Nb6! It's much more important to trade queens than to save the e6-pawn 20.Qb3 (20.Qxe6 Qxe6 21.Rxe6 Rd8=) 20...Qb4! (20...Nd5?! 21.Ne5! Nxe5 22.dxe5 Nxc3+ 23.Qxc3 Qc5 24.Qg3) 21.Rxe6 (21.Qxe6 Nc4 22.Bc1 Na3+-+) 21...Qxb3 22.axb3 Rd8=. 19.Ne5?! This move concerned me a bit in the game and it looks like the only way to keep up the initiative, but my silicon friend is saying that Black is better. After looking through all the variations very deeply I tend to agree, but still during the game a lot of the positions looked less than safe. 19...Ndx5 20.dxe5 Qxe5 21.Rge1 a) 21.Rde1 Qh2-/+ With e6 hanging this kind of position looked scary, but really Black is close to winning.; b) 21.Bf4 Qf6 22.f3 Nf2 23.Rd7 (23.Rg6 Nxd1) 23...Nh3 24.Rg6 Qh4-/+ Somehow Black holds together, although I was still a bit worried.; c) 21.f3 Ne3-/+; 21...Qh2 22.Qxe6 (22.Rxe6 Bf6-/+ 23.f3 Ne5 24.Qf1 Qxh5) 22...Rd8=/+.

19...Nxf2!

Time to go down a queen.

20.Rxe6

Only move. I spent some time here considering whether to take d1 right away or to throw Nb6 in first. I think I made a good call. 20.Rc1? Ne4-/+ 21.Nxe4 fxe4 22.Rxe4 Qd5! White hardly has any compensation for the missing pawn. (22...Rxf3? 23.Rxe6 Nb6 24.Qe2!).

20...Nxd1

20...Nb6 The computer likes this move, but it reaches the same position except that the knight is on b6 rather than d7, which I did not really think was an improvement because Nf8 will often be necessary to get rid of the enemy queen. 21.Qe2 (21.Qb3 Qb4) 21...Nxd1 22.Rxd6 Nxc3+ 23.bxc3 Bxd6 24.Qe6= I think Black's winning chances are less here than in the game; 20...Qb4 This looks very tempting- if White trades queens he will be close to lost in the ending. Unfortunately, the tactics do not favor me. 21.Qe2! Nxd1 22.Nxd1! +/- After the discovered attack on the queen, Black is unable to defend his e7-bishop.

21.Rxd6 Nxc3+ 22.Bxc3 Bxd6=/+



[FEN "r5k1/pp1n1rp1/2pb3p/5p1P/2QP4/2B2N2/PPP5/1K6 w - - 0 23"]

I think White should hold a draw here with best play, but it's hardly a pleasant task.

23.Qe6?!

Not a terrible move, but 23.Nh4 was more to the point: 23...f4 24.Qe6 f3 25.Nxf3 Bc7 Black breaks the pin next and will be slightly better, but White should hold the draw 26.a4 Nf6 27.Ne5 Bxe5 28.dxe5 Re8 29.Qh3 Nd5=/+.

23...Bc7 24.Nh4 Nf8?

This was my original plan, but I somehow completely overlooked 24...Nf6!, which would leave Black firmly in control: 25.Ng6 (25.Nxf5 Re8 26.Qb3 Nd5+) 25...Re8 26.Qb3 Nd5+ Black should be able to wrap this up without too much trouble; 24...Raf8 25.Ng6.

25.Qb3 Rd8

25...Re8 This looked possible, but some ridiculous knight jump to the corner is bothersome. 26.Ng6 (26.Qxb7? Bg3 27.Qxc6 Re6 28.Qh1 Bxh4 29.Qxh4 f4-/+) 26...Ne6 (26...f4? 27.Nh8! The reason I rejected Re8. White would be in big trouble if not for this move, channeling Piket-Kasparov... 27...Ree7 (27...Kxh8 28.Qxf7+-) 28.Nxf7 Rxf7 29.Be1+/=) 27.Qxb7 unclear. White has more counterplay than I cared to allow 27...Nd8 Although I might have changed my mind if I had seen this move 28.Qxa7 f4 29.Nxf4 Bxf4 30.Qc5 Black is of course better, but the queenside pawns will be hard to deal with. Throw that in with not seeing Nd8 and we have a strong case for putting the rook on the d-file instead.

26.Nxf5?



[FEN "3r1nk1/ppb2rp1/2p4p/5N1P/3P4/1QB5/PPP5/1K6 b - - 0 26"]

26.Ng6! This move is just barely good enough for a draw. 26...Rdd7 (26...f4 27.Ne7+) 27.Bb4 f4 28.Nxf8! White just barely escapes (28.Ne7+? Rdx7 29.Bxe7 f3 30.Bh4 g5 31.hxg6 Nxc6 32.Bf2 Kg7=+/+ Although my silicon friend initially professes its love for White here, I think it has no idea what it's talking about. With Black's well placed pieces and running kingside pawns, White will be lucky to draw.) 28...Rxd4 (28...f3?? 29.Nxd7 f2 30.Nf6+! Kh8 (30...gxf6 31.Qf3+-) 31.Qc4 Rxf6 32.Qf1+/-) 29.c3 Rxb4 30.cxb4 f3 (30...Kxf8 31.Qe6= White will give a perpetual) 31.Ng6 f2 32.Ne7+ Kf8 33.Ng6+ Kg8 34.Ne7+= White draws by one tempo; 26.Qxb7 Bg3.

26...Rd5 27.Ne3 (Only move.) 27...Rxb5+

27...Rf3? This is tempting, but bad. 28.Qxb7! White turns the tables- the tactics work out for him. (28.Nxd5 Rf1+) 28...Bf4 (28...Rxe3 29.Qxc7+/-) 29.Qxc6 Bxe3 30.Qxd5+- Qxd5 just had to come with check, what a good way to spoil a lovely day at the office.

28.a4 Bf4!

Dominating the white knight. White's only possible counterplay is to try to somehow make the white knight attack the f7-rook.

29.Nc4

The knight is cut off from the kingside.

29...Rd5 30.Na5 h5! 31.Nxb7

31.Be1 h4 (31...Rxd4) 32.Qh3 Rxd4.

31...h4 32.Na5

32.Be1 h3 33.Qxh3 Rxb7—+.

32...h3 33.Nxc6



[FEN "5nk1/p4rp1/2N5/3r4/P2P1b2/
1QB4p/1PP5/1K6 b - - 0 33 "]

White almost gets counterplay, but he is hopelessly lost after Black's next accurate move.

33...Rdd7 (Only move.) 34.Bb4

34.Bd2 h2 35.Qh3 Bd6.

34...h2 35.Qh3 Rf6 36.Bxf8 Kxf8

36...Rh6?? 37.Qxd7 h1Q+ 38.Ka2 Kxf8 (38...Qxc6 Initially I thought White could resign in this position, luckily when double checking my calculations I found that after Qxg7 my advantage is not as big as I initially thought. 39. Qxg7#) 39.Qe7+ Kg8 40.Qe8+ Kh7 41.Ne7+/-.

37.Qh8+ Kf7 38.Qh5+ Kg8 39.d5

39.Qe8+ Kh7 40.Qe4+ (40.Qh5+ Rh6 41.Qf5+ Kg8—) 40...g6—+.

39...g6 40.Qh3 Rh7 0-1

I may have been a bit too liberal in giving myself exclamation points in this game, but defensive and technical play have never been my strong-suits (especially when playing against a queen), so I was very proud of some of the moves I found to put the game away once things had swung in my favor after a complicated and well-played middlegame by both sides. On the whole, I've been very happy with my play in four of the five games this season, and hopefully my mini-winning streak will continue into the playoffs, thus helping New England continue their not-so-mini winning streak.

Brad's game was the next to finish. His opponent was also in an aggressive mood, and played an early pawn sacrifice in the Rossolimo Sicilian. This line can be quite tricky for those who don't know it, but Brad's theoretical knowledge is impressive. He played the best moves quickly and confidently, and then skillfully converted his opening advantage, organizing his pieces behind a wall of central pawns for a crushing kingside attack.

Vicary, Elizabeth (2081) – Bournival, Braden (2381)

USCL New England vs. Manhattan (10), 28.10.2010

Sicilian Defense [B51]

Notes by Bournival

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 d6

This is a good choice for Black when he is playing for a win as the resulting positions that come out of this opening contain many imbalances that offer both sides chances to win.

4.0-0 Bd7 5.Re1 Nf6 6.c3 a6 7.Bxc6

Going for the well known pawn sacrifice line. White has two other tries in this position: 7.Ba4 b5 (7...c4 is also possible.) 8.Bc2 e5 When the position closely resembles a Ruy Lopez where Black has got in c7-c5 quickly.; 7.Bf1 Bg4 8.d3 e6 9.h3 Bh5 10.g4 Bg6 11.Nh4 Nd7 is another try for White if he wants to play a more positional game.

7...Bxc6 8.d4



[FEN "r2qkb1r/1p2pppp/p1bp1n2/2p5/3PP3/2P2N2/PP3PPP/RNBQR1K1 b kq d3 0 8"]

8...Bxe4

Black is obliged to accept the pawn sacrifice as the position after 8...e6 9.d5! Bd7 10.Bg5 is greatly in White's favor.

9.Bg5 Bd5

With Bg5 White threatens to capture on f6, so Black moves his bishop. This square is considered by theory to be the best as it stops c3-c4 temporarily, forcing the knight to be developed to the more passive d2-square before it is possible.

10.Nbd2 e6 11.c4 Bxf3

11...Bc6 12.d5 is good for White.

12.Qxf3 cxd4 13.Bxf6

13.Qxb7? Be7 and Black's kingside pawn structure remains intact.

13...gxf6 14.Qxb7 Be7!?



[FEN "r2qk2r/1Q2bp1p/p2ppp2/8/2Pp4/8/PP1N1PPP/R3R1K1 w kq - 0 15"]

Before the game I had looked at this move, Black has a few alternatives here such as 14...Qc8 or 14...Bg7, but the text is a solid move, the idea is to play Qc8 next to drive the queen out of Black's position.

15.Qc6+?

This is certainly a mistake as the king is better on f8 than e8 in almost all variations. 15.Nf3 Qc8 16.Qe4 Rb8 17.Qxd4 Qc5 18.b3 Qxd4 19.Nxd4 Kd7 With a fairly equal ending. Black's structure is slightly compromised, but he has dynamic possibilities with the bishop and strong control of the center. Objectively the position is roughly equal, but both sides have chances here.

15...Kf8 16.Qe4 f5

16...e5? 17.Nf3 Rb8 18.b3 Qd7 19.Nh4 Gives White excellent control of the light squares and with such a strong knight coming to f5 White must be better despite being down a full pawn.

17.Qxd4 Bf6 18.Qf4?

This move allows Black to gain a crucial tempo with Rg8-g4. A better square for the queen is on d3. Also notice that if White had played the same moves without Qc6+, Qxf5 would now be a serious threat because of the pin on the e-file. This is an illustration of why the king is much better on f8 than e8. 18. Qd3 Bxb2 19.Rab1 Bf6 20.Rb7 Rb8 21.Reb1 Rxb7 22.Rxb7 Rg8=/+.

18...Rg8

18...Bxb2?! 19.Rab1 Be5 20.Qh6+ Bg7 21.Qe3 Qc7 22.Rb3 and White will follow up with Rb1 and Rb7 next, giving him plenty of activity in compensation for the pawn.

19.Rad1?

After this move, I believe White is lost. It was best to just protect the b-pawn with 19.Rab1 Rg4 20.Qf3 Kg8 21.h3 Rg6 22.b3 Kh8=/+.

19...Rg4 20.Qf3 Bxb2



[FEN "r2q1k2/5p1p/p2pp3/5p2/2P3r1/5Q2/Pb1N1PPP/3RR1K1 w - - 0 21"]

Now that White has wasted time with Rad1 it makes it much easier to grab this pawn.

21.h3 Rg6

21...Rd4 is an interesting move I considered during the game. It just felt funny to me though blocking the bishop on b2.

22.Nb3 Rc8

22...Be5? 23.Rxe5!.

23.Qb7 Rxc4 24.Qxa6 Qg5!



[FEN "5k2/5p1p/Q2pp1r1/5pq1/2r5/1N5P/Pb3PP1/3RR1K1 w - - 0 25"]

After this move it is clear Black will have a very strong attack against White's king.

25.Qa8+?

This makes Black's job much easier, better is 25.Qxd6+ Kg7 26.g3 f4 27.Rd3 Black's attack should be winning here after 27... Bc3 but at least White has won the d6-pawn and his queen can help defend the kingside.

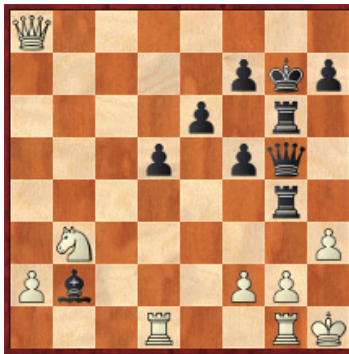
25...Kg7 26.Kh1

White's idea is to avoid playing g3 by playing Rg1, it becomes clear in a few moves that g3 must be played anyhow which means this plan was a failure.

26...d5!

This shuts the queen on a8 out of the game.

27.Rg1 Rg4!



[FEN "Q7/5pkp/4p1r1/3p1pq1/6r1/1N5P/Pb3PP1/3R2RK w - - 0 28"]

Forcing g3.

28.g3 (28.hxg4? Rh6#) 28...Qh5 29.Kg2

29.Kh2 Rh6 30.h4 Qxh4+ 31.gxh4 Rhxh4#.

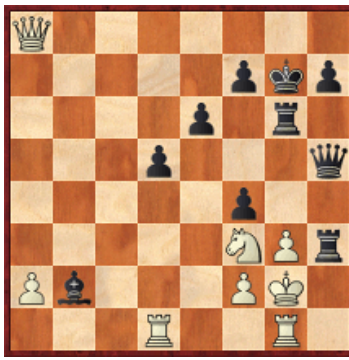
29...Rh4

29...Rxc3+! 30.fxg3 Qe2+ 31.Kh1 Qf3+ 32.Kh2 Be5 was the "cleanest" way to victory, as pointed out by my teammate Sam Shankland after the game. Although the text move is just winning easily too.

30.Nd2

30.Rh1 Rxc3+! 31.Kxc3 Rg4+ 32.hxg4 (32.Kf3 Ra4++) 32...Qxc4+ 33.Kh2 Be5+ 34.f4 Bxf4#.

30...Rxc3 31.Nf3 f4 0-1



[FEN "Q7/5pkp/4p1r1/3p3q/5p2/5NPr/Pb3PK1/3R2R1 w - - 0 32"]

Now there is no defense to either Rxg3 or simply fxg3.

On Board Four, Carey got his first win of the season against James Black, playing a nice positional game out of a King's Indian Attack. Having obtained everything he could want out of the opening, Carey slowly built up the pressure until his opponent blundered in a hopeless position. At this point, having seen my teammates win, I gritted my teeth and pushed for victory – and promptly went down in flames, as IM Vovsha completely outplayed me in a time scramble. Still, with the match already in hand, the loss was relatively easy to take. (Maybe I should just bill myself as team mascot?!)

With the victory, New England set a USCL record by going 9½-½ in the regular season. Our goal at the beginning of the year was simply to make the playoffs, but now our sights are set a little higher. But the path to the championship is a rocky one – standing in our way are the defending champion New York Knights. Last year, they barely made the playoffs as a fourth seed, but crushed everyone in the postseason. Will lightning strike twice? The match will take place on Monday, November 1, at 7:00. As always, all games will be broadcast live at the Internet Chess Club. Be sure to tune in!

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