

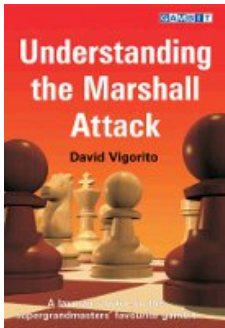


## Boxing the Compass

David Vigorito



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## New England Nor'easters Week One

The New England Nor'easters entered the 2011 season under slightly different circumstances than we did in 2010. Last year we were a new team; this year we come to the USCL as defending champions. Our schedule looks a bit rougher this year, and not surprisingly the powers that be decided to start the season with us facing our cross-town rivals, the Boston Blitz.

The line-ups were as follows:

- **Board One**  
SM Jorge Sammour-Hasbun (Boston) – IM Robert Hungaski (New England)
- **Board Two**  
IM David Vigorito (New England) – FM David Griego (Boston)
- **Board Three**  
NM Vadim Martirosov (Boston) – NM Alex Cherniack (New England)
- **Board Four**  
NM Alex Fikiet (New England) – NM Christopher Gu (Boston)

The New England squad was comprised of two Connecticut players and two Massachusetts players, while "Boston" used three Rhode Island players and one Massachusetts player. They also now play in Rhode Island. Essentially, New England (the region, not the team) has enough good players scattered around that is easy to field two teams, and how the teams are built is not so relevant to the team names.

Interestingly enough, for this match I was more familiar with the Boston players than my own teammates. I have known Jorge, Dave, and Vadim for decades, while on my own team it is only Alex Cherniack who I have known forever, while Robert and Alex Fikiet are newer friends.

The match started under dubious circumstances, as the Connecticut contingent arrived a good forty minutes late. We were not terribly upset by this, as these guys have to drive a long way and sometimes traffic can get quite heinous. Last year Robert made the long trek many times and still performed at a near-2700 level. Still, giving time odds in two games did not help our cause and I understand why the Boston team was playing in Providence.

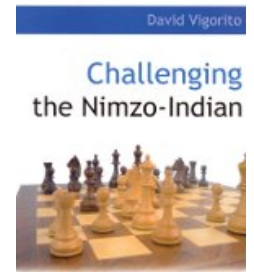
Over the board, we actually started well.

**Vigorito, David – Griego, David**  
 USCL, 31.08.2011  
 Semi-Slav [D44]

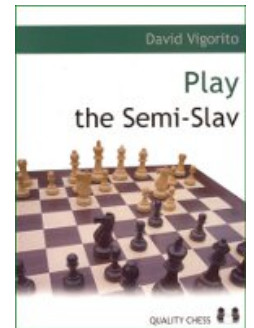
Many of our readers will not be familiar with FM Griego, but New Englanders know him quite well. When I started coming up through the ranks in the early 1990s, Griego was a 2500+ beast when such a rating was very uncommon. Dave was a superb theoretician in the pre-computer days.

We have kept in touch here and there over the years and while I knew he may show some rust, I knew that he was not completely out of touch and could hardly take him lightly. That said, since we last faced each other (in 1995!) I have learned a little bit.

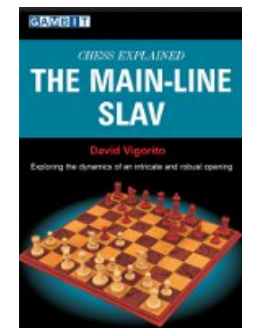
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## 1.c4 e6

I did not really know what to expect in the opening, but Dave sticks with his old repertoire.

## 2.Nf3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bg5

I decide to go right into the main lines.

## 5...dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 11.g3

The alternative is 11.exf6, which is probably no less strong, but Black has more ways to deviate from the main lines.

## 11...Rg8

I had never seen Dave play this, but it was not completely unexpected. I believe he used to favor the lines with 11...Qa5 12.exf6 b4 13.Ne4 Ba6.

## 12.Bxf6

I had taken a look at this sideline in preparation for the game. I did not really expect Dave to just play his ...Qa5 stuff, so I had to guess where he may deviate. I guessed right, and in turn I avoided the main lines hoping that he would be less familiar with this continuation. The main line goes 12.h4 Rxg5 13.hxg5 Nd5 14.g6 fxg6 15.Qg4 with tremendous complications. I figured that my opponent would only play 11...Rg8 if he was ready for this stuff, so I deviated.

## 12...Nxf6 13.exf6 Qxf6 14.Bg2 Bb7 15.a4



[FEN"r3kbr1/pb3p2/2p1pq2/1p6/P1pP4/2N3P1/1P3PBP/R2QK2R b KQq - 0 15"]

## 15...b4?!

My opponent thought for twenty-seven minutes here, so I knew that I had made the right opening choice. In fact Black is totally OK if he plays 15...0-0!, but if you do not "know" this before the game, it looks a bit too bold. The text move is natural, but it drives the white knight where it wants to go and more importantly, it weakens the c4-pawn.

## 16.Ne4 Qg7 17.Rc1 c3

Instead, 17...0-0 has been played. After 18.Rxc4 f5, I intended 19.Nc5 (rather than 19.Nd2) 19...Bxc5 20.Rxc5 Rxd4 (or 20...Qxd4 21.Qxd4 Rxd4 22.Bxc6 with an extra pawn) 21.Qc1 with a clear advantage.

## 18.bxc3 0-0 19.Qb3

I also considered 19.Qf3, but 19...f5 20.Nc5 Bxc5 21.dxc5 Qe5+ is fine for Black. Instead, 19.0-0 looks like a mistake after 19...f5, but this is good for White too; for example, 20.Nd2 bxc3 21.Rxc3 Qxd4 22.Qb3!.

## 19...c5



[FEN"2kr1br1/pb3pq1/4p3/2p5/Pp1PN3/1QP3P1/5PBP/2R1K2R w K - 0 20"]

White has several tempting options here, which for me usually means a mistake.

### 20.dxc5?!

This is not bad, but other moves were better. The computer likes 20.Qc4!?. I did not play 20.cxb4 because of 20...Rxd4, but here the computer shows 21.Nd6+! Bxd6 22.Bxb7+ when White is much better. I wanted to play the simple 20.0-0 Bd5 21.Qb2+- (or 21.Qb1), which I think is best now, but over-the-board I wanted to go for a direct refutation. Unfortunately, I missed a couple of things in my calculations.

### 20...Bd5!

Black cannot use the pin on the e-file: 20...Qe5 21.f4 and 20...Bxe4 21.Bxe4 Qe5 22.Qxb4 leaves White threatening mate on b7, so there is no time for ...f5.

### 21.Qxb4

Bad is 21.c4? Bxe4 22.Bxe4 Qd4! (22...Qe5 23.Qe3 is not so clear) 23.Qe3 Bh6! and Black wins!

### 21...f5 22.Nd6+



[FEN"2kr1br1/p5q1/3Np3/2Pb1p2/PQ6/2P3P1/5PBP/2R1K2R b K - 0 22"]

This is the key position.

### 22...Rxd6

Over-the-board, I thought that this was best (because I missed something). Now I am not so sure. 22...Bxd6 23.Bxd5 Qe5+! (I had calculated 23...exd5 24.cxd6 Qe5+ 25.Kd2 when White is winning) Now White is forced to play 24.Be4 (only move) Bc7 (only move) 25.Qb7+ Kd7 26.0-0 fxe4 27.Rfd1+ Ke7 28.Rd6, when White has a strong initiative for the piece, but it's not over yet.

### 23.cxd6 Bxg2



[FEN"2k2br1/p5q1/3Pp3/5p2/PQ6/  
2P3P1/5PbP/2R1K2R w K - 0 24"]

It is hard to believe that White will castle in a couple of moves.

### 24.Qc5+

Here I had a healthy time advantage of forty-four minutes to ten. Black has a tough decision to make.

### 24...Kd8?

Black thinks himself down to five minutes and falters. Also losing was 24...Kb8? 25.Qb5+ (25.Rb1+ Bb7 26.0-0) 25...Qb7 (25...Bb7 26.Qe8+ Bc8 27.Rb1+) 26.Qe8+ Qc8 27.Rb1+ Bb7 28.d7; But 24...Kd7! would keep Black in the game; for example, A) 25.Rg1?! Bf3; B) 25.Qc7+ Ke8 26.Qc8+ Kf7; C) 25.Qxa7+ Kxd6 (25...Kc6!?) 26.Rd1+ Kc6 27.Qa8+ Qb7; D) 25.Rd1! Ke8 26.Rg1 Bd5 27.Qc8+ Kf7 28.Rxd5 exd5 29.Qxf5+ Qf6 30.Qxd5+ Qe6+ 31.Qxe6+ Kxe6, when White is better in the endgame, but it's a long road to victory.

### 25.Rb1! Bb7

Instead, 25...Ke8 A) over-the-board, I thought of 26.f3!?, but 26...Bxd6! (26...Bxh1 27.Qc8+ Kf7 28.Rb7+; 26...Bxf3 27.0-0!) 27.Qxd6 Qxc3+ 28.Qd2 Qxd2+ 29.Kxd2 Bxh1 30.Rxh1 allows Black to escape into a pawn down rook ending.; B) 26.Rb8+ is much simpler: 26...Kf7 27.Rg1 Be4 28.Qxa7+ Kf6 29.Qxg7+ Kxg7 30.d7 Be7 31.Rxg8+ Kxg8 32.a5 will win for White.

### 26.0-0!



[FEN"3k1br1/pb4q1/3Pp3/2Q2p2/P7/  
2P3P1/5P1P/1R3RK1 b - - 0 26"]

### 26...Qd7

26...Qh7!? sets a last trap: 27.Qxa7? (27.Qd4! covers both h8 and h4 and wins easily) 27...Qxh2+. Now White's moves come very easily.

### 27.Qxa7 Rg7 28.Rb6 Bxd6 29.Rd1 Bd5



[FEN"3k4/Q2q2r1/1R1bp3/3b1p2/P7/2P3P1/5P1P/3R2K1 w - - 0 30"]

### 30.Rxd6! 1–0

Soon after this game ended, Board Four fizzled to a draw, and then Robert suffered his first loss ever in USCL play.

**Sammour Hasbun, Jorge – Hungaski, Robert**  
USCL, 31.08.2011



[FEN"r1r1k3/R2bb1pp/2pp4/4np2/2PN4/1P2B1P1/5PBP/3R2K1 w - - 0 26"]

**26.Rxd7! Kxd7 27.Nxf5 Ke6? 28.Bh3!** and White won quickly.

So the match all came down to Board Three. Last year, Alex was an absolute rock on Board Four, but this year his rating has gone up, so he was promoted. Both Vadim and Alex are friends of mine and I think they are quite evenly matched. On this night Vadim had the longer reach.

**Martirosov, Vadim – Cherniack, Alex**

USCL, 31.08.2011  
Dutch Defense [A90]

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d5 5.Nf3 c6 6.0–0 Bd6 7.b3 Qe7 8.Bb2 0–0 9. Qc1 b6**

Much more in the spirit of this variation is 9...b5.

**10.Ba3 Bxa3 11.Qxa3 Qxa3 12.Nxa3 Nbd7 13.Rac1 Bb7 14.Ne5**

14.cxd5 exd5 15.Rc2 Rfe8 16.Rfc1 Ne4 17.Ne1 a5 18.Nd3 was Skembris-Rahal Paretana 1999, with a slight advantage to White.

**14...Nxe5 15.dxe5 Ng4 16.cxd5 exd5 17.f4 Ne3 18.Rfe1 Nxe2 19.Kxg2**

Black is doing OK here. However, I was trying to find good waiting moves until White moved the knight, so that I could start advancing the queenside pawns. (If 19...c5, White has at least an equal game with 20.Nb5–d6; if 19...d4, then 20.Nc4.) More constructive options were 19...a5 or 19...Rfc8.

**19...a6 20.Kf2 c5?**



[FEN"r4rk1/1b4pp/pp6/2ppPp2/5P2/ NP4P1/P3PK1P/2R1R3 w - - 0 21"]

### 21.Rb1!

This move escaped my calculations, which were directed towards g4 backed up by a rook on the other side of the board. White threatens 21.b4 with a minority attack. Moving the a- or b-pawns allows the knight to come into the game, and 21...c4 gives it a dream square on d4. My plan was to sideline the knight on a3 for as long as possible. Unfortunately, it wrecks my pawn structure.

### 21...Rac8 22.b4 cxb4 23.Rxb4 Rc6

23...b5 24.Rb2 and 25.Nc2.

### 24.Rd1 b5 25.Nb1 Rc4

25...Rfc8 26.Rb2 Rc2 27.Rxc2 Rxc2 28.a3 a5 offered better chances for equality.

### 26.a3 Rfc8 27.Nd2 Rc1

27...Rxb4 28.axb4, followed by knight to d4, was unpalatable, so I aimed for attacking the a-pawn from behind.

### 28.Rxc1 Rxc1 29.Rb1 Rc3?!

Practically forcing my opponent to get rid of his vulnerable a-pawn. I considered 29...Rxb1 30. Nxb1 d4, but stopped looking after 31.e3 dxe3+ 32. Kxe3 and the king steps in. Although here 31...d3 32.Ke1 Kf7 33.Kd2 Ke6 34. Kxd3? loses to 34...Be4+, which gives me time to activate my king even if the d-pawn falls. Another alternative was 29...Rc7 30.Nf3 h6 31.Nd4 g6 32.Ke3 Kf7, but White still has a much more comfortable position.

### 30.a4 Bc6 31.axb5 Bxb5 32.Nf3 Rc4 33.Rd1 Rc5 34.Nd4 g6 35.Ra1 Bc4 36. Rb1

In theory the a-pawn is difficult for the knight to stop, but in practice I need at least five moves to make it dangerous. White, in the meantime, has a protected passed pawn on e5, a perfect outpost for the knight on d4, and a rook just itching to wreak havoc on the bottom two ranks. The rook ending is quite bad for me, but it offers the most drawing chances.

### 36...Bb5 37.Nxb5 axb5 38.Ra1?!

My pawns aren't going anywhere after 38.Ke3, and upon 38...Kf7 39.Kd4 Rc2 40.Rxb5 Rxe2 41.Rb7+ Ke6 42.Rxh7, White would have been winning comfortably.

### 38...d4 39.Ra8+ Kf7 40.Rd8





[FEN"3R4/5k1p/6p1/1pr1Pp2/3p1P2/  
6P1/4PK1P/8 b - - 0 40"]

#### 40...Rc4?

By this point it was obvious that I had to jettison pawn to stay in the game. A much better way to do this was 40...b4, and if 41.Rxd4 (or 41.Rb8 Rc2 42. Ke1 Rb2 43.Rd8 b3 44.Rxd4 Ra2) 41...Rb5 42.Rd2 Ke6 43.Ke3 Rb7 44.Kd3 Kd5, I would have been in cheapo territory to possibly save the draw.

#### 41.Ke1 Ke7 42.Rb8 Rc1+ 43.Kd2

White has a won position. At this point, both Vadim and I had less than five minutes on the clock, so please take the accuracy of our remaining moves with a grain of salt.

#### 43...Rh1

The trouble with holding onto the b-pawn with 43...Rb1 44.Rb7+ Ke6 45. Rxh7 Kd5 46.Rd7+ Kc4 is that the e-pawn is insanely fast after 47.e6; for instance, 47...Rb2+ 48.Kd1 Rb3 49.e4 Rd3+ 50.Kc2 Rc3+ 51.Kb1 Rb3+ 52. Ka2 Re3 53.Rd5!.

#### 44.Rb7+ Ke6 45.Rxh7 b4 46.Rb7 Rxh2 47.Rxb4 Kd5 48.Kd3 Rg2 49.Rxd4 + Ke6 50.Rd6+ Kf7 51.Rf6+ Kg7 52.Ra6 Rxc3+ 53.Kd4 Rg2 54.Ra7+ Kh6 55.Ra2 g5 56.e6 Kg6 57.fxc5

White had to capture, as I was threatening to create my own passer with 57... g4. Recapturing puts my rook in an awkward space with no checking distance.

#### 57...Rxc5 58.Ke5 Rg4 59.Ra8 Re4+ 60.Kd6 Rd4+ 61.Ke7 f4



[FEN"R7/4K3/4P1k1/8/3r1p2/8/4P3/8 w - - 0 62"]

#### 62.Rg8+?

My perseverance almost paid off. 62.Kf8 Re4 63.e7 Rxe2 64.Ra5! cuts off the black king and wins.

#### 62...Kf5 63.Rf8+



[FEN"5R2/4K3/4P3/5k2/3r1p2/8/4P3/8 b - - 0 63"]

### 63...Ke4?

My teammates asked me afterward why I didn't play 63...Kg4. With one minute left all I saw was 64.Kf6 Re4 65.Rg8+ Kh4? 66.Kf5 Rxe2 67. Rg4+, followed by Rxf4 and Re4. Had I dug a few seconds deeper, I might have found 65...Kh3! 66.Kxf5 Rxe2 drawing with the same trick that White uses in the game.

### 64.Kf6 Rd6 65.Kf7 Ke3 66.e7 Rd7 67.Ke6 Rxe7+ 68.Kxe7

Hoisted by my own petard. A well played game by Vadim.

### 68...Kxe2 69.Rxf4 1-0

Thus, the New England Nor'easters suffered their first USCL loss. Ever! We are now +0 =2 -1 against Boston and 11-0 against everyone else. Next up, we have another tough match against the 2009 USCL Champion New York Knights.

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