



Boxing the Compass

Charles Riordan



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New England Nor'easters Week Four

After scoring our first half-point of the season in Week Three, we were brought crashing down to Earth by the Philadelphia Inventors, who scored a dominant 3½-½ victory. Philadelphia has revamped their lineup this season, bringing GM Sergey Erenburg onto their team, as well as a new fourth board in NM William Fisher, whose rating has jumped nearly 300 points in the past year. Together with longtime stalwarts FM Thomas Bartell and IM Jay Bonin, they presented a formidable challenge: their average team rating was 2473!

The line-ups were as follows:

- **Board One**
GM Sergey Erenburg (Philadelphia) – GM Sam Shankland (New England)
- **Board Two**
IM Robert Hungaski (New England) – FM Thomas Bartell (Philadelphia)
- **Board Three**
IM Jay Bonin (Philadelphia) – FM Braden Bournival (New England)
- **Board Four**
NM Mika Brattain (New England) – NM William Fisher (Philadelphia)

On Board One, Sam Shankland fought his way to equality against a quiet but poisonous sideline of the Rossolimo Sicilian.

Erenburg, Sergey (2679) – Shankland, Sam (2624)
USCL Week Four, 19.09.2011
Sicilian Defense [B51]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nc6 4.0-0 Bd7 5.Re1 Nf6 6.h3

A popular sideline. The main line runs 6.c3 a6 7.Bf1 Bg4; White hopes that it will be worth a tempo to prevent this idea.

6...a6 7.Bf1 e5 8.c3 Be7 9.d4 Qc7 10.Nbd2 0-0



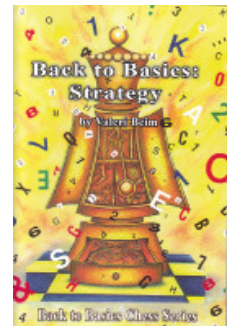
[FEN "r4rk1/1pqbbppp/p1np1n2/2p1p3/3PP3/2P2N1P/PP1N1PP1/R1BQRBK1 w -- 0 11"]

10...b5 has been played twice in games between grandmasters, but Sam's choice seems equally valid, not giving White a target on the queenside. A

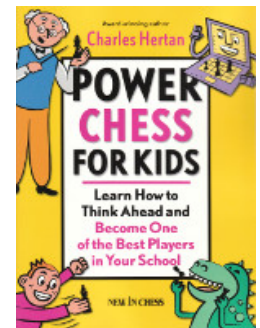
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game between Shirazi and Fedorchuk from 2008 showed what White is after: 10...b5 11.a4 Rb8 12.ab ab 13.d5 Na5 14.b4 Nb7 15.Ba3 with "Ruy Lopez-esque" play against the black knight on b7.

11.Nc4 cxd4 12.cxd4 exd4 13.Nxd4 b5 14.Ne3 Rfe8

Obviously, the pawn is poisoned: 14...Nxe4?? 15.Nd5 wins a piece.

15.b3

Defending the e-pawn with f3 gives Black tactical possibilities based on the loose dark squares around the white king. One surprising line runs 15.f3? Nxd4 16.Qxd4 d5! 17.Nxd5 (17.exd5 Bc5 18.Qd3 Qg3) 17...Nxd5 18.Qxd5 Bxh3 19.gxh3? Qg3+.

15...Bf8 16.Bb2



[FEN "r3rbk1/2qb1ppp/p1np1n2/1p6/3NP3/1P2N2P/PB3PP1/R2QRBK1 b - - 0 16"]

16...Nxe4

Black's other attempts to take the pawn do not work; if Black does not capture, White will shore up his position and be slightly better. Sam finds the most precise equalizing line. 16...Rxe4?! 17.Nxc6 Bxc6 18.Bxf6 gxf6 19.Bd3 with way too much compensation, as the knight on f5 will be dominant; 16...Nxd4 17.Qxd4 Rxe4? 18.Nd5! Rxd4 19.Nxc7 is a simple win.

17.Rc1 Qb7 18.Ndf5 Ne7



[FEN "r3rbk1/1q1bnppp/p2p4/1p3N2/4n3/1P2N2P/PB3PP1/2RQRBK1 w - - 0 19"]

19.Nxd6 ½-½

The spectators had been briefly concerned with 19.Nxe7+ Bxe7 20.Nd5, but after 20...Bd8 there is no obvious way to continue. GM Erenburg thought for a while, took back his pawn on d6, and offered a draw, as the pawn structure is completely symmetrical and Black's pieces are becoming just as active as White's.

Sadly, this was to be our only half point of the match! The trouble began when IM Bonin played a tricky line against FM Bournival. Braden used a lot of time in working out a complicated sacrifice, but it, unfortunately, didn't

turn out as well as he had hoped. IM Bonin allowed the win of a pawn next to his king, but proved that his own attack in the center was more important.

Bonin, Jay (2438) – Bournival, Braden (2396)

USCL Week Four, 19.09.2011

Queen's Pawn Game [D00]

1.d4 d5 2.Bg5 c5 3.dxc5 f6 4.Bc1 e5 5.e4

Five moves in, and we're completely out of theory! IM Bonin often finds a way to reach original positions, and plays them well.

5...dxe4 6.Qxd8+ Kxd8 7.Nc3 Nd7 8.Nxe4 Nxc5 9.Ng3 Be6 10.f4 Ne7 11.fxe5



[FEN "r2k1b1r/pp2n1pp/4bp2/2n1P3/8/6N1/PPP3PP/R1B1KBNR b KQ - 0 11"]

11...Nc6

After a long think, Braden decides to sacrifice a pawn in an attempt to seize the initiative. One can understand his choice. After the more natural looking recapture, there is 11...fxe5 12.Nf3 Nc6 13.Be3! This is the best way to prepare queenside castling. (13.Bg5+ pushes the black king where it wants to go, 13...Kc7 14.Bb5 Bd6; 13.Bb5 Nb4) 13...Kc7 14.0-0 Re8 15.Bb5 Bg4+ = and while Black has defended against the immediate threats, White's pieces are more active and his king is safer, giving him a slight advantage.

12.exf6 Nb4 13.Bg5 Ke8 14.0-0 gxf6



[FEN "r3kb1r/pp5p/4bp2/2n3B1/1n6/6N1/PPP3PP/2KR1BNR w - - 0 15"]

15.Bb5+

IM Bonin is understandably reluctant to capture the pawn, but in fact the silicon beast shows that after 15.Bxf6! Bh6+ (15...Rg8 16.Bb5+ Kf7 17.Bd4 Rc8 18.N1e2! and I can't find a good follow-up for Black) 16.Kb1 Bxa2+ 17.Ka1 Rf8 18.Bc3 a5 19.b3, White fights off the attack with a winning position. Still, the game continuation also gives White the advantage, and is perhaps a little more clear.

15...Kf7 16.Rf1 Nxa2+ 17.Kb1 Be7 18.Nf3 Kg6?!

It is tough to see, but this move actually walks Black's king into the firing line. But at this point, the position was already difficult to defend, especially considering that White had a big edge on the clock.

19.Be3 Nb4 20.Nh4+ Kf7 21.Bxc5! Bxc5 22.Ne4+- Be7 23.Ng5+ winning a piece. **1-0**

Board Two saw Black gain a lead in development after kicking IM Hungaski's queen around the board for a few moves. Hungaski tried a tactical shot, but a flurry of tactics lead to an endgame where FM Bartell had the advantage, and Bartell managed to convert.

Hungaski, Robert (2621) – Bartell, Thomas (2405)
USCL Week Four, 19.09.2011

17.d5



[FEN "r4rk1/1p3pbp/1nqpb1p1/pN6/P2PnQ2/1B5P/1P2NPP1/R1B1K2R w KQ - 0 17"]

17...Nxd5!?

17...Bxd5 18.Bxd5 Qxd5 19.Nc7 Qc6 20.Nxa8 Rxa8 21.0-0 Nxa4 also seems very good for Black, who has a monster bishop on g7 and good potential to reroute a knight to b3 or d3. It seems like Black is spoiled for choice in the initial position.

18.Qxe4 Nb4! 19.Qxc6 bxc6 20.Nbd4 Bxb3 21.Nxb3 Nc2+ 22.Kd1 Nxa1 23.Nxa1 Rab8



[FEN "1r3rk1/5pbp/2pp2p1/p7/P7/7P/1P2NPP1/N1BK3R w - - 0 24"]

After a forced sequence of moves, we reach an endgame where I would much rather be black. Despite the nominal material deficit, Black's mobile pawns and pressure along the b-file give him the edge. FM Bartell played the rest of the game very well, and IM Hungaski could not find a way to hold the position.

24.Nc3 Rfe8 25.Nc2 Rb3 26.Kd2 d5 27.Re1 Rxe1 28.Nxe1 Rb4 29.Nc2 Rc4 30.Kd3 Bxc3 31.bxc3 Rxa4 32.Ba3 f6 33.Bc5 Ra2 34.Na3 Kf7 35.c4 Ke6 36.Kc3 dxc4 37.Kxc4 a4 38.Kb4 Kd5 39.Nc4 f5 40.Nb6+ Ke4 41.Kc3 f4 42.Nd7 Kd5 43.Ba7 h5 44.h4 Ra1 45.Nf6+ Ke5 46.Bd4+ Kf5 47.Ne8 Ke6 48.Nc7+ Kd7 49.Na6 Kd6 50.Ba7 Rg1 51.Bb8+ Ke6 52.g3 fxg3 53.fxg3 Kf5 54.Nb4 Kg4 55.Nd3 a3 56.Ne5+ Kh3 57.Nf3 Rb1 0-1

NM Mika Brattain fared no better against the dangerous NM Fisher. Mika found his bishop slightly stranded on h4, and attempted to solve the problem by launching his g-pawn up the board. Unfortunately, this opened up his king a little too much, and Black was later able to launch a mating attack.

So, another disappointing match in what has been a dissatisfactory season so far. We will lick our wounds and attempt to crawl back into contention in what looks like a must-win match against Boston in Week Five.

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