

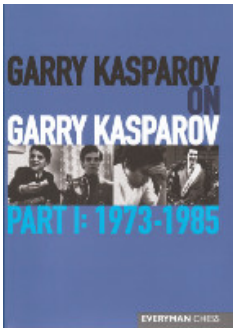


Boxing the Compass

David Vigorito



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New England Nor'easters Week Nine

In the penultimate week we faced the Carolina Cobras. We were in a similar position as both teams would need a win to keep any playoff chances alive.

The line-ups were as follows:

- **Board One**
IM David Vigorito (New England) – IM Jonathan Schroer (Carolina)
- **Board Two**
FM Kassa Korley (Carolina) – IM Jonathan Yedidiao (New England)
- **Board Three**
FM Braden Bournival (New England) – FM Ronald Simpson (Carolina)
- **Board Four**
NM Craig Jones (Carolina) – NM Ben Goldberg (New England)

Interestingly enough, Korley was their second lowest roster player, but he was playing Board Two ahead of two other masters. This is because he had gained a lot of strength since the official rating list was used, and USCL rules allow such switches if the official ratings are within fifty points of each other. This proved to be a wise decision.

In this match we were certainly rating favorites on boards 1-3, but we were well behind on Board Four. Brad had White on Board Two and won a clean game.

Bournival, Braden (2396) – Simpson, Ronald (2317)

USCL (9), 26.10.2011

Sicilian Defense [B76]

Notes by Bournival

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 Nc6 8.Qd2 0-0 9.0-0-0

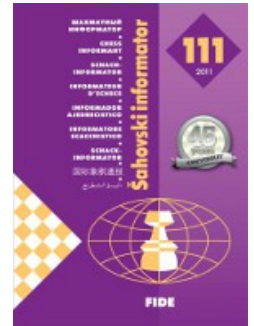


[FEN "r1bq1rk1/pp2ppbp/2np1np1/8/3NP3/2N1BP2/PPPQ2PP/2KR1B1R b - - 0 9"]

9...Rb8?!

I believe this is an attempt by Black to avoid opening theory. In an opening as sharp as the Sicilian Dragon, such novelties rarely work since even in the theoretical lines Black is often walking a razor's edge.

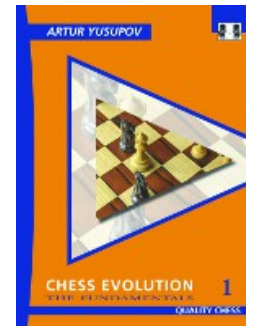
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10.g4 Be6 11.Kb1!

This move is common in many lines of the Sicilian, here it's a very useful waiting move. Black must decide on a plan at this point. 11.Nxe6 fxe6 12.Bc4 Qd7 seems OK for Black.

11...d5

This move is not great, but it's already hard to recommend moves for Black. This move is consistent with Black's setup, but seems to basically lose by force. 11...Nxd4 12.Bxd4 This transposes into the line 9...Nxd4 10.Bxd4 Be6, with the moves g4 and Rb8 thrown in. Black never plays Rb8 in this line and White often plays g4, so this would be an improved version for White in a line that has a very shaky theoretical standing to begin with. 11...Qa5 12.Nxe6 fxe6 13.Bc4 and now Black no longer has Qd7 to guard the e6-pawn.

12.g5

12.Nxe6? This move order is bad because of the following trick. 12...fxe6 13.g5 d4! 14.Bxd4 (14.gxf6 Bxf6) 14...Nxd4 15.Qxd4 Qxd4 16.Rxd4 Ng4+/. 12.Qe1 also looks very good, but I liked the line in the game more as it was more forcing and gave Black a little less counterplay.

12...Nh5 13.Nxe6 fxe6 14.exd5 exd5 15.Qxd5+

15.Nxd5 e6 16.Nc3 Bxc3 17.bxc3 Qxd2 18.Bxd2 Rxf3 with counterplay.

15...Qxd5 16.Nxd5 e6

16...Rxf3 17.Be2 Rff8 18.Rhe1 is extremely good for White, as Black has a weak e-pawn, a sidelined knight on h5, and a shaky king.

17.Nc7 Rxf3 18.Bc1



[FEN "1r4k1/ppN3bp/2n1p1p1/6Pn/8/5r2/PPP4P/1KBR1B1R b - - 0 18"]

This is the position I had seen when playing 12.g5. Black has serious problems guarding the e6-pawn and white's light-squared bishop is an absolute monster.

18...Nd4

18...e5 19.Bc4+ Kh8 20.Ne6 This move obtains the bishop-pair. With the board wide open, the knights will be no match for the bishops. 20...Nf4 21.Nxg7 Kxg7 22.Rd7+ Kh8 23.b3 with Bb2 next, Black is in serious trouble.

19.Bc4 Rc8

19...b5 20.Bxe6+ Nxe6 21.Nxe6 Be5 was more stubborn.



[FEN "2r3k1/ppN3bp/4p1p1/6Pn/2Bn4/5r2/PPP4P/1KBR3R w - - 0 20"]

20.Rxd4! Rxc7 21.Bxe6+ Kf8 22.Re4 Rf2 23.Bb3?!

Still winning, but not the most accurate. During the game I spent plenty of time trying to make b3 work, but in the end I decided to just play it safe and not allow black any counterplay.

23.b3 Rxc2 24.Ba3+ Ke8 25.Bg4+ Kd8 26.Rd1+ Rfd2 27.Rxd2+ Rxd2 28.Rc4! Ke8 29.Rc7+- I had actually seen this variation during the game, but for some reason I got a bit timid that my king would be exposed. Still this doesn't matter, as Black is just lost here. 23.Rhe1 Rxc2 24.Bd5! I had only considered Bb3 during the game. (24.Bb3 Rc8 when it is not so easy.) 24...Rxc1+ (24...Rc8 25.b3 This is the difference between putting the bishop on the d5- or b3-square, White now has the crushing Ba3+ coming.) 25.Kxc1 Bxb2+ 26.Kb1+-.

23...Re7 24.Rxe7 Kxe7 25.Be3 Rf5 26.Re1

Getting the last piece into the game.

26...Kf8

26...Re5 27.Bc5+ Kd7 28.Rxe5 Bxe5 29.Bxa7 Bxh2 30.Bg8 Ke7 31.a4 with the idea of Bd5 next move. 31.Bxh7?? Kf7.

27.h4 b6 28.Bd2 Bd4 29.a4

Making luft so the white rook can get active.



[FEN "5k2/p6p/1p4p1/5rPn/P2b3P/1B6/1PPB4/1K2R3 b - - 0 29"]

29...Nf4??

29...Bc5 is better, but Black is still lost; for example, 30.Be3 Bxe3 31.Rxe3 Rf4 32.Rc3 Rxh4 33.Rc7 a5 34.Rxh7 Rg4 35.Rb7 Rxg5 36.Rxb6 when white's queenside pawns will be too fast.

30.Re4 Bf2

30...Be5 31.Bb4+ Kg7 (31...Ke8 32.Bc3) 32.Rxe5! Rxe5 33.Bc3+-.

31.Bxf4 1-0

About halfway through the match things were looking pretty good. Jonathan had a pretty nice endgame out of his Berlin Defense and I had both a monstrous position and time advantage against Schroer. Ben was in trouble, but he seemed to be fighting back a bit.

Suddenly everything went haywire. Jonathan's position suddenly imploded. Ben managed to defeat the higher-rated Jones from a bad position. This gave Ben a 3-0 record in his first USCL season, and he had had Black every game. I was winning easily it seemed, so 3-0 looked to be on the cards. However, I managed to botch the almost winning position.

Vigorito, David – Schroer, Jonathan

USCL (9), 26.10.2011



[FEN "3r3r/p5p1/1p2kn1p/n1p3P1/5B1P/2P2B2/P4PK1/3R3R b - - 0 23"]

White's position is overwhelming. Black's a5-knight is out of play and his king is not safe.

23...Kf5

My opponent made this move with just a couple of seconds on the clock. 23...hxg5 24.hxg5.

24.Bc1?

I had about ten minutes left, and I quickly saw the winning line 24.gxf6 Kxf4 25.fxg7 (White wins easily after 25...Rxd1 26.Rxd1 Rg8 27.Rd7; or 25...Rhg8 26.Rxd8 Rxd8 27.Bd5; but then I noticed 25...Rdg8 26.Rd7 Rh7 when I am losing the g-pawn and would even stand worse. Unfortunately, in my mind's eye, I did not notice that the f-file was cleared and I could play 27.Rf7+! Ke5 28.Re1+ Kd6 29.Rd1+ Ke6 30.Rdd7 protecting the pawn and winning easily.) The move played is not bad and I would quickly achieve a winning position again, but by now I was as low on time as my opponent. I always play my USCL games on a real board, but in time pressure it is necessary to switch to the computer. I always find this transition to be very difficult, especially considering I use a little ten-inch netbook.

24...hxg5 25.hxg5 Rxd1? 26.Rxd1 Nh5 27.Rd7 a6 28.Rf7+ Ke5 29.Bxh5 Rxh5 30.Rxg7 Nc4 31.Rf7 Rh8 32.Kg3 Rh1 33.Bf4+ Ke6 34.Rf6+ Ke7 35.Kg4 Ra1 36.Kf5 Rxa2 37.Re6+

37.g6 Rxf2 38.g7 was an easy win.

37...Kf8 38.Bg3 Rc2



[FEN "5k2/8/pp2R3/2p2KP1/2n5/
2P3B1/2r2P2/8 w - - 0 39"]

39.f4?

39.g6 Rxc3 40.Bf4 Rf3 41.Kg4 wins.

39...Rxc3 40.Bh4 Ne3+ 41.Ke4 Ng2 42.Bf2

I had seen that 42.Rf6+ Kg7 43.Bf2 Rc4+ 44.Kf3 Nxf4! would lead to a draw.

42...Rc4+ 43.Kf3 Rxf4+

My opponent could have tried to go into the above line with 43...Nxf4. I intended to play 44.Rxb6 to keep the game going.

44.Kxg2 Rg4+ 45.Kf3 Rxc3 46.Rxb6 ½-½

I achieved nothing in the R+B vs. R ending, so the game was eventually drawn.

At least I did not find a way to lose. So we won 2½-1½ thanks to Ben's heroics. Next week we face Baltimore. We need to win, and then will need a little help to make the playoffs. I hope there will be several more 2011 columns to come!

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