

Introduction

Stop me if you've heard this before...

One evening at the Marshall Chess Club in early 2008 while Yury Lapshun and I, Nick Conticello, were awaiting publication of our first book, *Play 1 b4!*, Yury came up to me and said: 'I have an idea for another book. It's all about piece sacrifices for White in the Open Sicilian. Want to write it with me?'

I gave the matter due deliberation, but this time I replied: 'You know, there's a pretty good old Batsford book called *Sacrifices in the Sicilian* by David Levy that had a similar idea. I don't want to do a rehash of that book.' I described Levy's book for Yury and he assured me that what we would do would be quite different. So I agreed...again.

Later, after the contracts were signed and the work well under way, someone told me about a book by GM Jacob Aagaard on combinations, and that every one was a Sicilian! I got hold of a copy of that book, and was re-

lieved to discover that what we were doing was also far removed from Aagaard's approach. I'm sure, after reading this introductory essay or perusing this book, our readers will agree.

Our aim

First, let me clear up any possible misconceptions right at the start. This is not a repertoire book or a theoretical opening guide, although readers seeking guidance in those areas may well find useful items herein. It is certainly not an endgame book either, although a few thematic endings will be analysed. Moreover it is not intended to be encyclopaedic, nor is it a quiz or puzzle book. So what is it then?

This book is a collection of well-analysed games featuring thematic, active piece sacrifices by White in the Open Sicilian. Yury and I are firm believers in annotating complete games as thoroughly as possible. We under-

stand that most of our readers will be ambitious amateurs, who will not be aware of certain ideas and technical matters that professionals take for granted. Therefore we have spelled things out to an extent that might annoy strong players. We are sorry about that, but we ask those folks to remember that they are not our primary audience. (Of course, we believe strong players will find some useful information here, and we hope that coaches too will find this book helpful.)

We have analysed each game independently, aided by engines such as *Fritz* and *Rybka*. Of course, when our lines are identical with published commentary, we have credited the published sources as much as possible. Any lapses in this regard are chiefly my responsibility and are inadvertent. I apologize in advance for any such omissions.

Active Piece Sacrifices

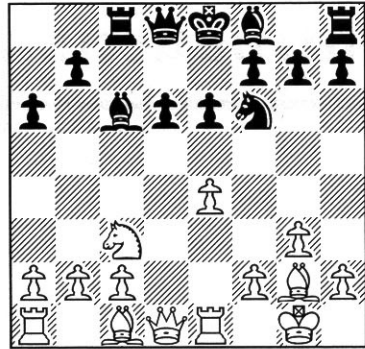
What exactly do I mean by 'active piece sacrifices'? I hope the following two examples will make this term clear.

Game 1
W. Browne-J. Kaplan
San Antonio 1972

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 e6

Black's move order is designed to avoid the Keres Attack against the Scheveningen.

6 g3 a6 7 ♙g2 ♙d7 8 0-0 ♖c8 9 ♚e1 ♜f6 10 ♜xc6 ♙xc6



11 ♜d5!

Here is a perfect illustration of an active sacrifice. It need not be accepted at once, but sooner or later this pesky knight must be dealt with, as its presence is intolerable. As Browne points out in his notes, the attempt to keep developing calmly with 11...♙e7 allows 12 ♜xe7 ♚xe7 13 b3 threatening 14 ♙a3 with a nice advantage.

11...♙xd5 12 exd5 e5 13 f4 ♚c7 14 ♚e2! ♜d7

The attack keeps rolling after 14...♚xc2 15 ♙d2! ♚xb2 16 ♖ab1 (Browne).

15 ♙h3 f6 16 ♙e3 g6 17 ♙e6 ♙g7 18 ♖ac1

Threatening to roll the queenside pawns.

18...♚c4 19 ♚g4 ♖c7 20 b3! ♚c3?

After 20...♚b5 Browne analyses a long variation: 21 ♙f7+! ♙d8 22 ♚e6 ♖f8 23 ♚xd6! ♖xf7 24 c4 ♚a5 25 b4! (the point of this combination is that Black's queen cannot stem the pawn advance with a dark-square blockade) 25...♙f8

26 ♖e6 ♗c5 27 bxc5 ♙xc5 28 d6 ♖cd7
 29 fxe5 ♙xe3+ 30 ♖xe3 ♚c5 31 exf6,
 which he considers to be winning.

21 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 22 ♚e6+ ♗d8

22...♗e7 simply hangs the d-pawn.

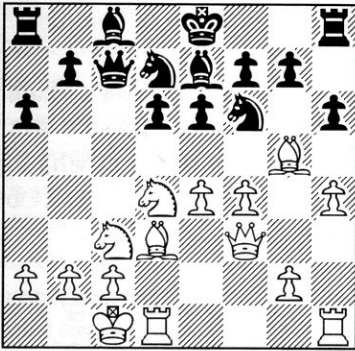
23 ♙b6+ ♗c8 24 ♖e4 1-0

On the other hand, consider this bizarre idea in a standard Najdorf:

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6

5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♙g5 e6 7 f4 ♙e7 8 ♚f3 ♚c7

9. 0-0-0 ♗bd7 10 ♙d3 h6 11 h4!?



An idea first played by Velimirovic, I believe. I would categorize this as a passive sacrifice, as Black need not take the bishop, but can improve his position with, say, 11...♗c5! and then decide what to do. (Please also examine Minic-Fischer in the introduction to Chapter 4 for a similar example.)

Which Sacrifices are Covered?

The sacrifices we will examine in separate chapters are those involving ♗d5, ♗xe6, ♙xe6, ♗f5, ♗(x)b5, and ♙(x)b5. The seventh chapter will consider ♙d5, ♖xf6 and other miscellaneous sacrifices,

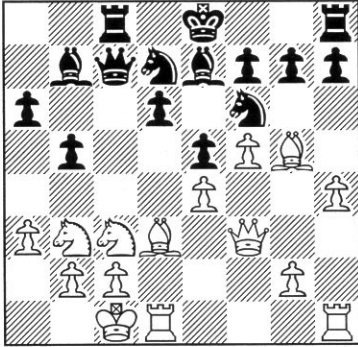
including queen ones. We did not, however, think it necessary to include any examples of a ♖xh5 sacrifice, as this idea is now common in all sorts of openings, not just the Sicilian. (If you really want to see some examples of ♖xh5, just curl up with a copy of Fischer's *My 60 Memorable Games* and study his victories over Larsen and Gligoric.)

Why devote an entire book to piece sacrifices in the Open Sicilian, you may ask. The reason is quite simple: *without a full understanding of these ideas you cannot win with White in this opening!* The Open Sicilian is virtually unique among responses to 1 e4 in that Black acquires with no effort an extra centre pawn and a half-open file for his rooks. Therefore Black has a ready-made counterattack available on the queen-side and/or in the centre. On the other hand, White has more space, a lead in development and the initiative. According to the teachings of Steinitz, White must use these advantages to attack or suffer unpleasant consequences. A complicating factor is that Black need not always castle quickly, thanks to his extra central pawn. Witness the following game, cited by Daniel King in his book *Winning with the Najdorf*. No comments are needed – just watch the master at work:

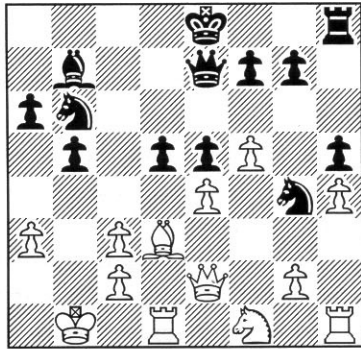
Game 2
W.Ader-R.Fischer
 Santiago 1959

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6

5 ♖c3 a6 6 ♙g5 e6 7 f4 ♙e7 8 ♜f3 ♜c7
9 0-0-0 ♝bd7 10 f5?! e5! 11 ♝b3?! b5
12 a3 ♙b7 13 h4 ♜c8! 14 ♙d3



14...h5! 15 ♙b1 ♝b6 16 ♝d2 ♝g4 17
♙xe7 ♜xe7 18 ♝f1 ♜xc3! 19 bxc3 d5 20
♜e2



20...0-0! 21 ♙xb5 axb5 22 ♜xb5 ♝c4
23 ♜b4 ♜xb4 24 cxb4 ♝f2 25 ♝g3
♝xa3+ 26 ♙b2 ♝c4+ 27 ♙b3 ♝e3 28
♜d2 ♝xh1 29 ♜xh1 dxe4 30 ♝g3 ♙d5+
31 ♙a4 ♜a8+ 32 ♙b5 ♜b8+ 33 ♙c5
♜c8+ 34 ♙d6 ♝c4+ 35 ♙d7 ♝xd2 36
♙xc8 ♙c4 0-1

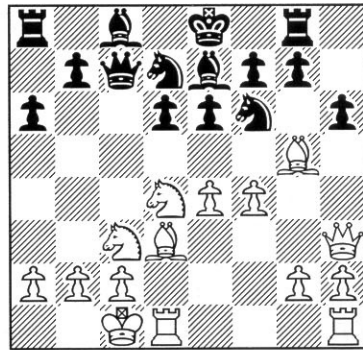
See what I mean? Ader did nothing outrageously bad, but he got crushed.

Fischer's structure let him keep central lines closed while he prepared his counterattack. Notably too his 14...h5! stonewalled White's kingside play and once everything was rolling, he could safely castle on move 20 so his last rook could join the party. A model win for Black against uninspired White play.

Contrast that with what could have happened to Black in the following extract from a recent game at the Marshall Chess Club between two masters. (I'll not give their names for reasons which will soon become obvious.)

1 e4 c5 2 ♝f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♝xd4 ♝f6
5 ♖c3 a6 6 ♙g5 e6 7 f4 ♙e7 8 ♜f3 ♜c7
9 0-0-0 ♝bd7 10 ♙d3 h6 11 ♜h3 ♝g8?

Practice has established 11...♝b6! as the best move.



White played 12 ♙xf6? ♝xf6 13 f5 e5 and suffered a similar fate to Mr. Ader. However, after working through this book a reader unfamiliar with this line might spot 12 e5! dxe5 13 ♝xe6! with a strong attack, which I saw while kibitzing and later found in John Nunn's 1988 *The Najdorf for the Tournament Player*.

It's hard to play the Open Sicilian, and many players choose quieter approaches such as 2 ♖c3 or 2 c3, but Yury and I feel that the Open is the way to go, and we have written this book to encourage people to take the plunge.

A Note on Sources

When a published source is cited in this text we will generally do so by the name of the writer and not the work. More specifically, 'Nunn' will refer to the book cited above unless otherwise stated, and 'Levy' will refer to *Sacrifices in the Sicilian* unless otherwise noted.

We wish to single out a book here which we found particularly useful: *The Najdorf Variation* by Geller, Gligoric, Kavalek and Spassky is the beau ideal of an opening book. It offers theory and game analysis by four top grandmasters, and a number of lines from this work are still quoted in opening books over thirty years later, often, sad to relate, without attribution. Here when one of those four names is cited in relation to the Najdorf, it is from this work. (The only exception is Gligoric-Bobotsov in Chapter 7.)

Division of Labour

Yury Lapshun selected all the games

and is chiefly responsible for the analysis in Chapters 1-6. I wrote all the chapter introductions and am primarily responsible for the selection of games and commentary in Chapter 7.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to express gratitude to the following for their invaluable aid in the production of this book:

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Finally, the good people at Everyman Chess, especially our editor for both of our books, grandmaster John Emms.

On behalf of Yury and myself, we wish the reader gains as much pleasure and profit from reading this work as the authors have experienced in writing it.

Nick Conticello,
New York
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