

Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Edited by

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&

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Introduction

Experts vs. the Sicilian was invented in a brainstorming session-turned-argument in 2004. Together with *Learn from the Legends* by Mihail Marin, it was the first release from Quality Chess. We liked the format and so did the public, so it was natural to return to it at some point. That it would take seven years is a surprise, but the right idea did not exist before then.

Experts on the Anti-Sicilian includes articles from many writers, all of them grandmasters (with the exception of Andrew Greet who prefers to just write like one...) and all of them experienced in their field. The focus is a bit different from the first Experts book where White went out with all guns blazing in the main lines, hoping for an advantage against some of the best openings of our day.

The anti-Sicilian lines do not have as strong a theoretical reputation as the Open lines (which are characterized by 2.♘f3, 3.d4 4.♗xd4 and 5.♗c3 in reply to almost anything) but anti-Sicilians are played in roughly a third of all games that start 1.e4 c5. Success in this area of opening theory is important for everyone playing the Sicilian, with White or with Black.

This book, like the previous Experts volume, was written by the authors as they wanted to write it. Most of them have followed the traditional ABC format, while others have decided to put their own flavour on things. Beyond this, some chapters are repertoires offering (mainly) Black suitable advice against a certain line; while others have a more holistic approach, investigating (sometimes deeply) lines in every direction.

The authors and their articles are:

GM Boris Avrukh was already famous as a player before his surname became a verb (coined by Artur Yusupov) in the wake of his two-volume repertoire on 1.d4: *Grandmaster Repertoire 1* (2008) & *Grandmaster Repertoire 2* (2010). “To Avrukh your opponent” is to play a theoretical improvement first suggested by Boris. Boris recently won the *ChessPublishing* “Opening Book of the Year for 2010” (for GM2), became the coach of the Israeli national team and is just about to publish his repertoire book for Black *Grandmaster Repertoire 8: The Grünfeld Defence*, Quality Chess 2011. His chapter **The Grand Prix Attack with 3...e6** gives a fascinating repertoire for Black against 2.♗c3 ♗c6 3.f4.

GM Jacob Aagaard has won the *ChessCafe* Book of the Year prize (*Excelling at Chess*, 2002) and the *English Chess Federation* and *Guardian* Book of the Year awards (*Attacking Manual 1 & Attacking Manual 2*, 2010). As a player he has won the British Championship and several opens. **A Classical Repertoire against 2.c3** gives a complete repertoire for Black after 2...♗f6, excluding irrelevant stuff such as 3.d3, 3.♖c2 and other nonsense...

GM Tiger Hillarp Persson should be well known to our readers due to his popular book *Tiger's Modern*. Perhaps we should mention that Tiger thought the name *Tiger's Modern* sounded immodest, but he was outvoted. Tiger has twice been Swedish Champion and has won numerous international events. Tiger's two chapters present a repertoire for Black against **2.♭f3 ♫c6 3.♭b5** and **2.♭f3 d6 3.♭b5†**. In the former case he recommends 3...d6 and in the latter 3...♫d7. Thus the reader is offered a line against the Rossolimo System and *two* lines against the Moscow System.

As mentioned above, **IM Andrew Greet** is the only non-GM in the book, but the Englishman makes up for it by being the 2010 Scottish Champion. Greet explains the subtleties of the **Moscow Variation with 5.c4**. That is, the position after **2.♭f3 d6 3.♭b5† ♫d7 4.♭xd7† ♖xd7 5.c4**. Greet's focus is on suggesting ideas for White that avoid the notorious equalizing lines created by Ivanchuk and Agdestein.

GM Christian Bauer is a former French Champion and a specialist in offbeat anti-Sicilians. Bauer has proved these lines can work in international opens, as his FIDE rating of 2633 testifies. Bauer covers the following lines: **2.♭f3 d6 3.♭c4**, **2.♭f3 d6 3.c3 ♫f6 4.h3**, **The King's Indian Attack: 2.♭f3 e6 3.d3 or 3.g3** and **2.♭f3 e6 3.c3 d5 4.e5 d4**. In each case, Bauer offers far more than a repertoire; he shares his ideas and improvements in total coverage of these lines.

In contrast **GM Milos Pavlovic** offers a strict repertoire approach. The Serbian opening expert's chapter is called **A 10-minute repertoire against the Closed Sicilian**. The title is tongue-in-cheek, but there is no denying Pavlovic provides a quick and effective answer to the Closed Sicilian.

GM Matthieu Cornette of France is an expert on the **2.♫c3 ♫c6 3.♭b5** variation. This is sometimes known as the Modern Grand Prix, but Cornette's preference is to call it the Tiviakov Grand Prix to honour its strongest exponent. Cornette offers in-depth and extensive coverage of a line that no book has ever before studied in such depth. In fact, Cornette's chapters could have been a reasonably sized book on their own...

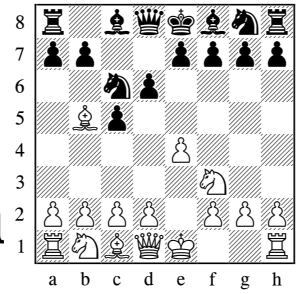
GM Colin McNab has been Scottish Champion four times and has had even greater success as a World Champion chess puzzle solver. In his chapters McNab recommends a repertoire for Black against three lines that could and should have been included in *Grandmaster Repertoire 6: The Sicilian Defence*: **2.a3**, **2.f4 d5** and **2.♭f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♫xd4 ♫f6 5.f3**.

GM John Shaw has been Scottish Champion just three times. In his chapter on **2.d3** he offers a quick repertoire for Black against this offbeat line. One of the tricks of 2.d3 is that White often retains the option of transposing to a Closed Sicilian, so the repertoire in this chapter is designed to be consistent with Pavlovic's anti-Closed Sicilian line.

GM Peter Heine Nielsen is the highest rated player of our authors and has been Danish Champion five times. Nielsen's opening expertise is so highly regarded that World Champion Viswanathan Anand selected him as his second. Nielsen offers a repertoire for Black after **2.b3 g6**. The 2.b3 variation is a quirky yet increasingly popular sideline; Nielsen's witty counter-fianchetto is a serious attempt at refuting it.

Chapter 3

Tiger Hillarp Persson



Beating 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 with 3...d6

Variation Index

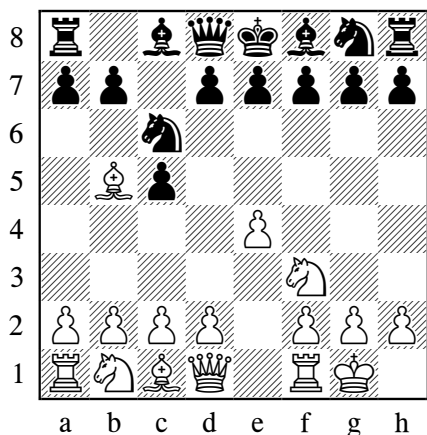
1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5

3...d6

Game 1 – 4.d4 cxd4 5. ♖xd4 ♙d7 6. ♗xc6 ♗xc6 7. ♘c3	71
Game 2 – 4.d4 cxd4 5. ♖xd4 ♙d7 6. ♗xc6 ♗xc6 7.c4	74
Game 3 – 4. ♗xc6† bxc6 5. 0–0 ♙g4 6.d3	78
Game 4 – 4. ♗xc6† bxc6 5. 0–0 ♙g4 6.h3	80
Game 5 – 4. 0–0 ♙d7 5. ♞e1 ♘f6 6.c3 a6 7. ♗f1 ♙g4 8.d3	83
Game 6 – 4. 0–0 ♙d7 5. ♞e1 ♘f6 6.c3 a6 7. ♗f1 ♙g4 8.d4!?	88
Game 7 – 4. 0–0 ♙d7 5. ♞e1 ♘f6 6.c3 a6 7. ♗xc6!?	93
Game 8 – 4. 0–0 ♙d7 5. ♞e1 ♘f6 6.c3 a6 7. ♗a4	98

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5

Compared with 2...d6 3.♙b5†, this is a significantly more aggressive move. You do not have to worry about White wanting a draw here.

**3...d6!?**

Both 3...g6 and 3...e6 are more common in this position, and that is one of the reasons why I prefer 3...d6 – because your opponent will be less likely to have played against it. Still, if it is only the third most popular move, there surely must be some problem with it? After spending a few weeks on this line, I think the answer is just that it is slightly more difficult to play than the other lines.

After 3...g6 4.0–0 ♙g7 5.♙xc6 dxc6 6.d3 Black has a number of decent set-ups to choose between, but White is safely in the driving seat, without taking too many risks. In the 3...e6-line it seems that the plan involving c3 and ♙a4 is dangerous for Black. Therefore I recommend that you give the complicated 3...d6 a chance.

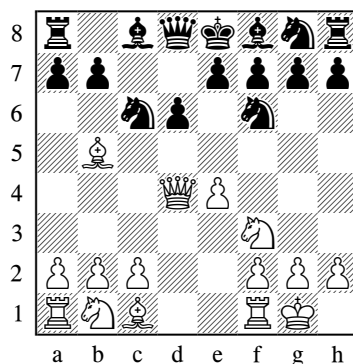
This chapter consists of eight and a half games. First we look at the lines beginning with **4.d4 cxd4 5.♖xd4 (Games 1&2)**, then continue with **4.♙xc6† bxc6 (Games 3&4)** and finish with **4.0–0 ♙d7 5.♞e1 ♘f6 6.c3 a6 (Games 5–8)**.

Game 1**Kamsky – Mohota**

Philadelphia 2005

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♖xd4 ♙d7

5...♘f6 is an interesting alternative:



a) 6.c4 ♙d7 7.♙xc6 ♙xc6 transposes to the note to Black's 7th move in Game 2. You should only choose 5...♘f6 if you are happy to forgo the early lunge by the f-pawn that is the main line of that game.

b) 6.♘c3 e5 7.♖d3 h6 followed by ...♙e7 and ...a6 seems fine for Black.

c) 6.e5 ♖a5† 7.♘c3 ♖xb5 8.♘xb5 ♘xd4 9.♘fxd4 dxe5 10.♘c7† ♘d7 11.♘xa8 exd4 12.♙f4 ♘c6 13.0–0–0 ♘d7 14.♞xd4 e5 15.♞c4† ♙c5 This is rather unclear, although I suspect that Black is a bit better.

6.♙xc6 ♙xc6 7.♘c3

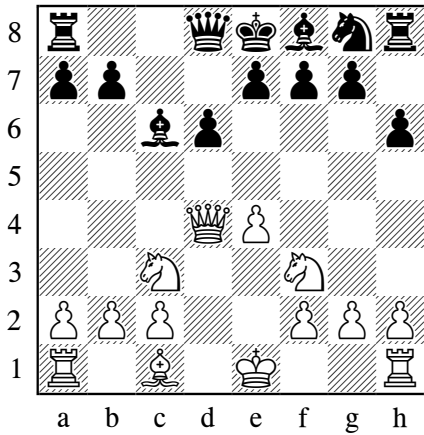
White can dissuade Black from ...♘f6 with 7.♙g5, but Black gets the better game with 7...e5! 8.♖e3 f6! 9.♙h4 ♖b6 (9...♘e7!? intending ...d5, looks even stronger) 10.♖xb6 axb6 11.♘c3 b5 12.♘d2 b4 13.♘d1 ♘e7 14.f3 d5 Mastrovasilis – Atakisi, Athens 2008.

7.c4 is seen in the next game.

7...h6!?

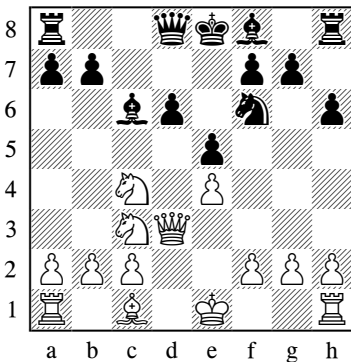
Preparing ...e5 and ...♟f6. With this move we start treading less known territory. In 80% of games Black plays 7...♟f6 8.♙g5 e6, which leads to a very complex tabiya that would take another chapter to explain.

It is a bit risky to play a move like 7...h6, since there is only a handful games played between strong opponents. But I believe it is always better to head for the new ground; to be, if not an explorer, then at least a colonist of the unknown.

**8.♙e3**

With this move, White plans 0-0-0 followed by ♟f3-h4-f5. There are a couple of alternatives:

8.♞d3!? This is played with the intention of following up with ♟f3-d2-c4-e3-(f5). 8...e5 9.♟d2 ♟f6 10.♟c4 (10.0-0 leads to a position discussed below after 8.0-0)



Black now has a choice:

a) He can force the game into a rather drawish endgame with:

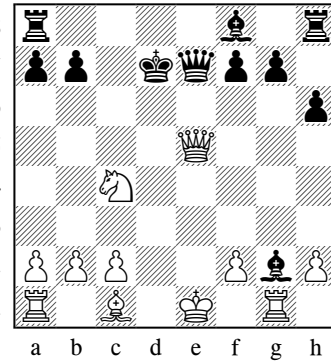
10...♟xe4 11.♟xe4 d5 12.♞g3!?

After 12.♟xe5 dxe4 13.♞xd8† ♞xd8 14.♟xc6 bxc6 15.♙e3 ♞d7 16.♟e2 ♙d6 a draw seems likely.

12...dxc4

12...dxe4 13.♞xe5† ♞e7 14.♟d6† ♟d7 15.♞f5† ♞e6 16.♞xf7† ♞e7 17.♙f4± Tseitlin.

13.♞xe5† ♞e7 14.♟d6† ♟d7 15.♟xc4 ♙xg2! 16.♞g1



And now instead of blundering with 16...♞e8? 17.♙f4, as in Rozentalis – Borge, Copenhagen 1996, Black could have gained the upper hand with:

16...♙d5!

b) 10...♙e7

This is critical, since Black may not be able to avoid this type of position if White plays 0-0 before going ♟c4.

11.♟e3 0-0

11...♟d7!? 12.♟f5 ♟c5 13.♞c4 ♙f8, followed by ...g6, ...♙g7 and ...f5 is unclear.

12.0-0

12.♟f5 ♙d7 13.g4 ♙xf5 14.gxf5 ♞b6 15.♙e3 ♞xb2 leads to a long sharp line that ends in approximate equality, but I am not totally convinced by this line. I would have more

faith in the above-mentioned 11...♗d7!? as Black.

12...♙e8 13.a4

13.♖d1 ♙f8 14.♗f5 ♙c8 15.♗g3 g6 16.♙xh6 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 ♙xe4 18.♙xf8 ♙xf5 19.♙xd6 ♙xc2 is equal.

13...a6

13...♙f8!?

14.a5

14.♗f5 ♙f8 15.♖d1 is awkward for Black, so he should opt for one of the earlier alternatives.

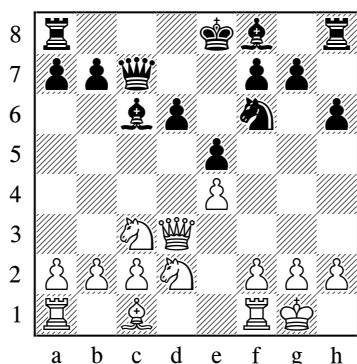
14...b5 15.axb6 ♗xb6 16.♗cd5 ♗xd5

17.♗xd5 ♙xd5 18.♗xd5

½–½ Zvjaginsev – Navara, Rijeka 2010.

8.0–0 e5 9.♗d3 ♗f6 10.♗d2 ♙e7

10...♗c7!



This tricky move prepares to meet 11.♗c4 with 11...♗xe4!, while other moves can be met by ...♖d8, intending ...d5!

11.♗c4

The knight again heads to e3, but this time without giving Black the opportunity to take on e4.

11...b5!?

11...0–0! 12.♗e3 ♖e8 might be safer, transposing to Zvjaginsev – Navara above.

12.♗e3 b4 13.♗cd5 ♗xd5 14.♗xd5 ♙xd5

15.♗xd5 0–0

This has been played in several games, including Zelic – Tiviakov, Ohrid 2001.

It seems that White can claim a slight advantage with:

16.a3

The standard operation in this kind of structure where Black has moved the pawn to b4 prematurely.

16...bxa3 17.♙xa3

Black will suffer.

8...e5 9.♗c4!?

After 9.♗d3 ♗f6 10.0–0–0 ♙e7 11.h3 ♗a5 12.♗d2 0–0 followed by ...d5 (prepared, if necessary, with ...♖f8), Black is doing very well.

9...♗f6 10.0–0–0

Now we can see the main point behind 9.♗c4; White is threatening to take on e5, which forces Black to move the queen. This in turn makes it easier for White to carry out the ♗f3–h4–f5 manoeuvre, since the knight will not be exposed to tactics involving ...♗xe4 followed by ...♗xh4.

10...♗c8

It is quite possible that 10...♗a5!? is a stronger move here. Looshnikov – Bylino, St Petersburg 2002, continued: 11.♗d2 d5 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13.♗b3 ♗b4 14.♗xb4 ♗xb4 15.a3 ♗a6 16.f3 b6 With approximately equal chances. It seems a bit shaky for Black though, after something like 16.f4!?

I do not like releasing the tension so early, and would suggest: 11...♙e7!? 12.♗b3 ♗d8 This is paradoxical, but good; Black will use the knights on c3 and b3 to accelerate the pawns down the a- and b-files. 13.f3 0–0 14.g4 ♙c8 15.♗d3 ♗c7 (15...a5!?) 16.g5 hxg5 17.♙xg5 d5! A neat idea. 18.♙xf6 dxe4 19.♗xe4 ♙xe4 20.♗xe4 ♙xf6 With some advantage for Black.

11.♗d3

Black was threatening to play ...♙xe4.

11...♙e7!

11...a6 12.♘h4 b5 (12...g6!? 13.f4 ♖c7 is an improvement, but it needs testing) 13.f4 b4 14.fxg5 dxe5 15.♘d5 ♙b5 16.♗d2 White had a strong initiative in Hou Yifan – Arun Prasad, Gaziantep 2008.

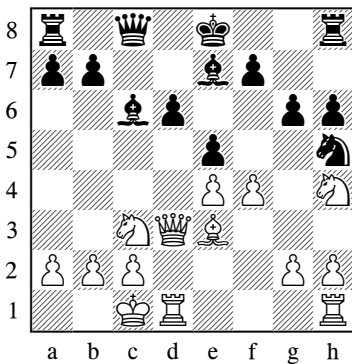
12.♘h4 g6 13.f4

This is very principled and possibly best, although it does not promise White any advantage. A more careful approach would be 13.h3, when Black has to come up with a plan. 13...a6 is a nice waiting move, since 14.f4 exf4 15.♙d4 ♗e6 doesn't work out well for White. Better is 14.♙b1 b5 15.f4 (15.a3!?) 15...♘h5 16.♘f3 exf4 17.♙d2 0–0 18.♘d4 ♙b7 with a complicated position where it is difficult to say who is better. Instinctively, I would not mind playing the black side.

13...♗g4?!

Black goes astray, but that g2-pawn smelled just too yummy. Sadly, there is only one road for Black after this and it goes down, down, down.

Instead 13...♘h5! is much stronger.



Black hits the f4-pawn and the knight on h4, forcing White to play energetically in order to keep the balance. Sacrificing a piece with 14.fxg5 ♙xh4 15.exd6 ♗e6 16.♗hf1 ♙g5 17.♘d5 ♙xe3† 18.♗xe3 ♙xd5 19.♗xd5 0–0

does not work, and 14.♘f3 ♘xf4 15.♙xf4 exf4 16.♘d5 ♙xd5 17.exd5 0–0 (17...♗c5 18.♗he1) 18.♗e4 ♗e8 19.♗xf4 ♗c5 is fine for Black. After 20.♗xh6 ♙f6 21.♗he1 ♙xb2† the game ends in a draw.

14.♘f3 ♗xg2

No better is 14...exf4 15.h3 ♗xg2 16.♙d4, when ♗dg1 will make Black unhappy on the next move. There is not much to be said about the rest of the game; Kamsky never takes his eyes off the ball.

15.fxg5! ♗xf3 16.♗hf1 ♗xf1 17.♗xf1 dxe5 18.♘d5 ♙xd5 19.exd5 0–0 20.d6 ♙d8 21.♙xh6 ♗e8 22.♗b5 ♗b8 23.♙e3 a6 24.♗b3 b5

So far the game seems to make sense, but the rest is flawed in some way. I include the final moves for the reader as an exercise in fantasy.

25.d7 ♗e6 26.♙c5 ♗c8 27.♙b1 ♘xd7

I doubt that this is what really happened, although the result seems logical (in the position a few moves ago).

1–0

Game 2**Ni Hua – Bluvshstein**

Edmonton 2009

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♙b5 ♙d7 6.♙xc6 ♙xc6 7.c4

White has a certain scenario in mind; a few moves into the future the c- and e-pawn will make it difficult for Black to do anything in the centre. Nothing to worry about really, but why let White have his way?

7...f5!?

This idea has stood the test of time, and seems sound enough to be my recommendation. The solid alternative is: