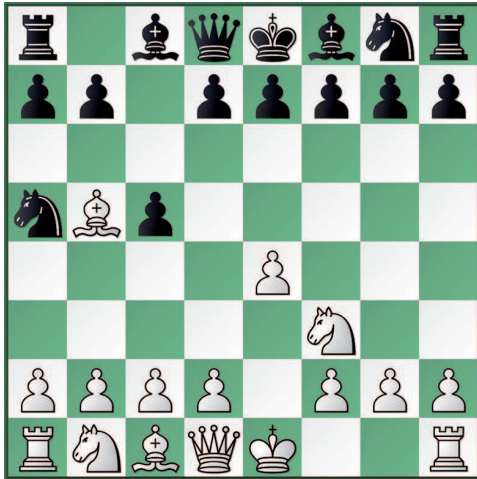


# STRANGE - AS EARLY AS MOVE 3

## Leonid Kritz assesses a knight move to the edge

Sicilian Defence B30: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♟c6 3.♙b5 ♟a5!?



The popularity of the Rossolimo Variation has been at a very high level for years but it recently received further impetus with the WCh match Anand-Gelfand. It cannot really be said that White actually gets an advantage, but Black does come under pressure. In many lines he manages to get the bishop pair but the doubled c-pawns inflicted on him involve a noticeable limiting of the mobility of his pawns. Therefore it is obvious that he must make an attempt to avoid the doubling. One quite safe procedure consists of simply moving the knight out of the way – to the edge of the board. This may look

bizarre, but there are two good arguments in favour of it: firstly, the white ♙b5 also gets into difficulties; secondly, especially after White has played a successful d2-d4, the black knight can possibly get to c4 and then the move 3...♟a5 would be completely justified. Till now there have not been many strong players who have employed the knight move, the best known being Vladimir Akopian and Zdenko Kozul. According to Leonid Kritz all White has is a setup which promises success.

He starts with 4.c3! a6 5.♙a4 (the bishop belongs on c2, not e2) 5...b5 6.♙c2; the following moves can occur in various move orders: 6...♙b7 7.0-0 e6 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♟f6 10.♙e1.



Now 10...d5 11.e5 is slightly better for White; and for Black 10...♙e7 11.♟bd2 ♙c8! is preferable, preventing as it does 12.b3: 12...♙c7 13.♙d3 ♙c3+-. But White first plays 12.♙d3 and then b3, and if need be (after ...♟c6) also a3. Black has achieved a decent position but it is not easy for him to really become active. White will gradually improve the positions of his pieces and will then be able to rely on his superior centre.

**Conclusion:** It looks simple, and it is. But in practice it is Black who can count on having far greater chances. More than 50% of players fall down the simple move 4.c3.



Zdenko Kozul: the Croatian GM and 2006 European champion likes playing 3...Na5 against weaker opponents and can point to a 100% result