

DON'T FEAR THE HEDGEHOG

Krisztian Szabo analyses an important Paulsen variation

Sicilian B44: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♘b5 d6 6.c4 ♗f6 7.♗1c3 a6
8.♘a3 ♕e7 9.♕e2 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♕e3 ♖b7
12.♞b3 ♘d7 13.♟fd1



Anyone going into the Paulsen System with ...e6 and ...♗c6 (or vice versa) and only playing ...a6 later on, avoids specific variations, but also “runs the risk” that White will force him into a hedgehog structure with 5.♘b5 and 6.c4. The variation which leads to the diagram is of course not forced then, but in each case the moves are the ones most often played. The justification for the strange looking 12.♞b3 is: Black does not have an ideal position with his ♗c6, that knight belongs on d7; he would then on his next move play ...♗e5 and then ...♗ed7.

In his article, Krisztian Szabo first turns his attention to sidelines. In 13...♟e8, 13...♟b8 or 13...♞c7 Black is playing typical Hedgehog moves, but ones which do not allow him to equalise. The most popular is a move which is not typical of the Hedgehog 13...♗c5, with which Black takes into account the specific position on the board. After 14.♞c2 less attention is paid to 14...♞c7 in the article on the DVD; 14...♕f6 is more interesting and is usually met with 15.♟ac1.



Black emphasises his ambitions on the king-side if he plays 15...♕e5. After 16.♗ab1 both 16...♞h4 and 16...f5 are very sharp, though nevertheless better for White after super-accurate play. So far, White has always met the solid (and waiting move) 15...♞e7 with 16.♗ab1 and then 16...♗b4 17.♞d2 ♟fd8 should be completely okay for Black.

In the most recent game with the variation being discussed, Parimarjan Negi successfully deviated with 15.♟ab1. Although already played back in 1972 in Averbakh-Polugaevsky, there have so far been only a few experiments with this move. After 15...♗b4 16.♞d2 all four games continued with 16...♕xc3, but Szabo also analyses the intermediate move 16...♕e5 (17.f4 ♕xc3).

Conclusion: 5.♘b5 is not very popular with top players, but that could change since the positions which arise are full of possibilities.



Parimarjan Negi: successful deviation from the main variation with 15.Rab1