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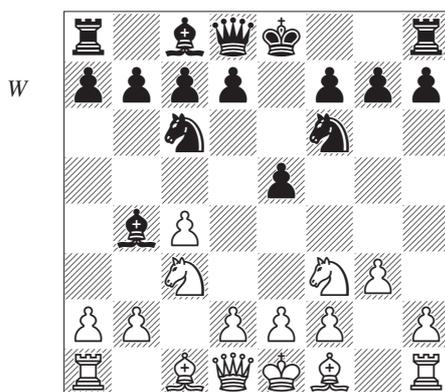
5 The Reversed Rossolimo

The Rossolimo Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 ♙b5) is a popular reply to the Sicilian. It initially leads to closed positions, but still poses a stern challenge and gives rise to fighting play with chances for both sides. With that in mind, it is no surprise that with reversed colours it is one of the principal replies to the English Opening. Without an immediate opening of the position, it is not so easy for White to make his extra tempo count for more than a slight initiative, while Black can hope for winning chances based on the imbalance that is present in the game from the outset.

In the position after 1 c4 e5 2 ♗c3 ♗f6 3 ♘f3 ♗c6, White has two main approaches. One is the fianchetto with 4 g3, akin to Dragon lines of the Sicilian, while the other is 4 e3, more in keeping with the Paulsen or Scheveningen. In this chapter we focus on lines where Black replies with ...♙b4, but obviously it is also possible for him to play by analogy with an Open Sicilian, by making an early ...d5 advance. Against 4 e3, this allows immediate pressure against the black position (though a subsequent ...d5 may be an idea to be considered if White is incautious in his development), but it is a popular and respected system versus 4 g3 (the Reversed Dragon), and is examined (together with other non-...♙b4 approaches against g3 lines) in Chapter 6.

The Games

In Games 13 to 15 we examine one of the main lines of the Reversed Sicilian after 1 c4 e5 2 ♗c3 ♗f6 3 ♘f3 ♗c6 4 g3 ♙b4 (*D*).



Game 13 features 5 ♗d5. In the game White achieved a space advantage and better centre, which he brought to fruition in instructive fashion.

In **Game 14** we analyse 5 ♙g2, and in particular the main position after 5...0-0 6 0-0 e4 7 ♗e1. We see White trying to increase the value of his bishop-pair by means of a pawn sacrifice, which was neutralized by Black.

The other destination for the knight, namely 7 ♖g5, is the subject of **Game 15**. White carries out a typical pawn sacrifice to slow down Black's development, and this is countered in even more radical fashion by Black.

The final two games of the chapter feature the line 1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♗f6 3 ♗f3 ♗c6 4 e3 ♘b4. In **Game 16** we analyse 5 ♚c2 (together with a brief look at alternatives to 4...♘b4, notably 4...♘e7). A typical ending was reached in the game, which White won with very instructive technique.

In **Game 17** we deal with 5 ♗d5. In the game White obtained a space advantage, which he gradually increased, although tactics could have saved Black.

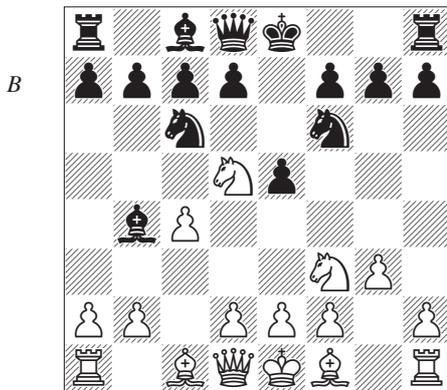
Game 13 [A29]

Joel Lautier – Bu Xiangzhi

Taiyuan 2004

1 c4 ♗f6 2 ♘c3 e5 3 ♗f3 ♗c6 4 g3 ♘b4 5 ♗d5 (D)

With this jump White avoids the damage to his structure by ...♘xc3, and threatens to win the e5-pawn. In the next game we shall see the more usual 5 ♘g2.



5...♘c5

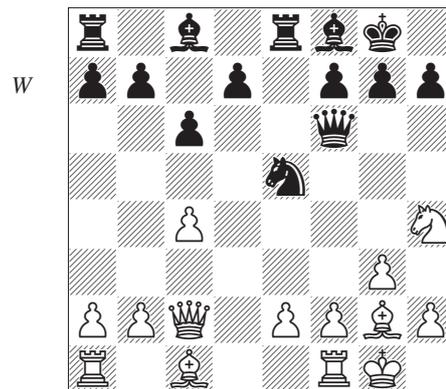
This is the most common, although since White has lost control of e4, 5...e4 is to be considered too, driving the f3-knight to the edge. Whether e4 can be supported satisfactorily after 6 ♗h4 is another question.

a) After 6...d6 there is the threat of ...g5 winning a piece. 7 ♗xb4 ♗xb4 8 d4 exd3 9 exd3 0-0 was played in Korchnoi-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 1993, without any problems for Black. Subsequently White showed that he could have played 7 ♘g2!, threatening to capture the pawn with 8 ♗xf6+ and ♘xe4, since 7...g5?! is not to be

feared (7...♘c5 is better). There follows 8 ♚a4! and after 8...♘d7 (or 8...♘a5 9 ♗xf6+ ♚xf6 10 ♘xe4, threatening ♘xc6+; if 8...♘c5, then 9 d4! ♘xd4 10 ♘xg5, since after 10...♘f2+? White wins with 11 ♗xf2 followed by ♗xc7+, or even 11 ♗d1 followed by ♚f1, etc.; 10...♘b2 is better, but after 11 ♚b1 all Black's pieces are compromised) 9 ♗xb4 ♗d4 10 ♚d1 gxh4 11 ♗c2! h3?! 12 ♘xe4! and White gained the advantage in Topalov-Adams, Las Palmas 1993.

b) 6...0-0 7 ♘g2 ♚e8 8 0-0 and now:

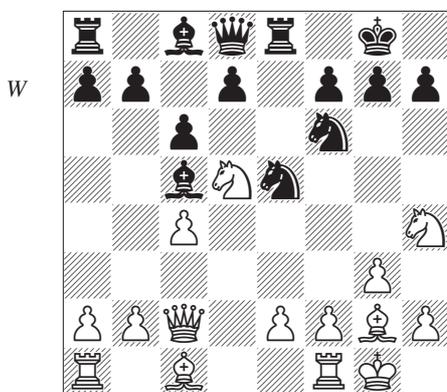
b1) Black can retreat his b4-bishop to a 'safe' square with 8...♘f8?!. Then White must play 9 d3 to get rid of the annoying e4-pawn and win space; there follows 9...exd3 10 ♚xd3 ♗e5 11 ♚c2 c6 12 ♗xf6+ ♚xf6 (D).



The c1-bishop is still to be developed. Which square is best? Evidently on the long diagonal, the more so because of the threats that are thus

created against the black queen. Here 13 b3! is possible, reinforcing the c4-pawn to boot. The discovered attacks by the e5-knight are not to be feared; e.g., 13...dxc4? loses material: 14 bxc4 ♖xa1 15 ♙b2 ♗xa2 16 ♜a1. Better is 13...d6, and after 14 ♙b2 ♗h6 White needs to bring his queen's rook into play to start pushing his kingside pawns afterwards. Petrosian-Liebert, Siegen OL 1970 continued 15 ♜ad1 ♘g6 16 ♘f5 ♗h5 17 ♘d4, when the white pieces occupy optimal places.

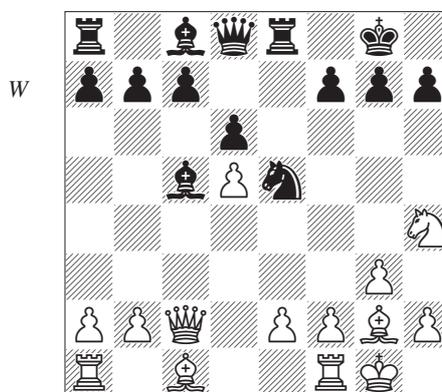
b2) It is better to withdraw the b4-bishop to a more active square, by playing 8...♙c5 9 d3 exd3 10 ♗xd3 ♘e5 11 ♗c2 (11 ♗c3 is also possible) 11...c6 (D).



After 12 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6, playing like in line 'b1' with 13 b3?! is not to be recommended due to 13...dxc4!, and the presence of the bishop on c5 makes all the difference, winning material. Kasparov suggests a slower treatment by 13 ♙d2, with the same idea. The other line under discussion starts with 12 ♙e3, which is currently considered satisfactory for Black after 12...cxd5 13 ♙xc5 d6 14 ♙d4 dxc4 15 ♜ad1 d5! 16 e4 ♙g4! 17 f3 ♙d7, Lautier-Kasparov, Moscow 2002.

b3) It is also possible to leave the bishop on b4 for the time being, and continue development with 8...d6; e.g., 9 d3 exd3 10 ♗xd3 ♘e5 11 ♗c2 ♘d5 12 cxd5 ♙c5 (D).

Here again White must decide on the development of the c1-bishop. For similar reasons to those seen above, the best is 13 b3! (if 13 ♙d2, Black manages to develop comfortably with 13...♙g4, hitting e2, and if 14 ♙c3 there's time for 14...♗d7, when ...♙h3 can be played, or



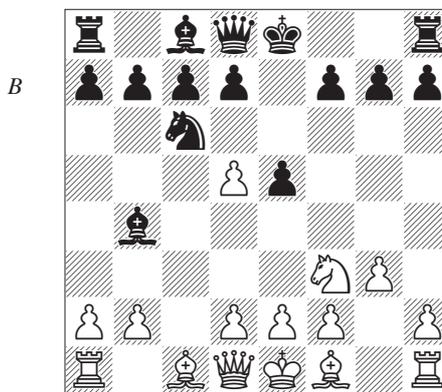
14...♗g5!/? seeking complications: 15 h3? is met by 15...♙xh3!, etc.). Then:

b31) 13...♙g4 is met by 14 h3, and the bishop has to go back to d7 since it would be out of play on h5.

b32) The jump 13...♘g4 is not promising either due to 14 ♙b2 ♗g5 15 ♜ad1, with the idea of neutralizing the pressure on f2 by ♙d4.

b32) 13...♗e7 was chosen in Lautier-Karpov, Dortmund 1993. There followed 14 ♙b2 a5 15 a3 (without allowing any counterplay, which would appear after 15 ♜ae1 a4!) 15...♘g6 16 ♘xg6 hxg6 17 e4. Here Black, in his urge to minimize the effect of f4, weakened his position with 17...g5, which eventually made that very same break even stronger. Lautier suggested 17...♙d7 18 ♜fe1 f6 19 ♗c4 ♗f7 20 ♙d4 ♙xd4 21 ♗xd4, with only a slight edge for White because of his space advantage.

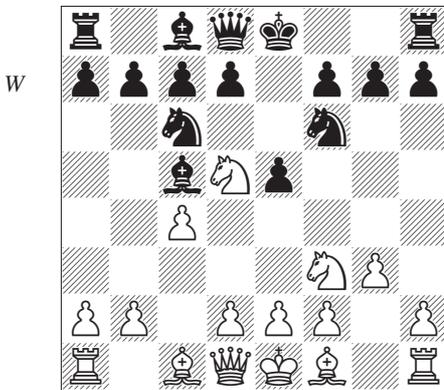
Lastly, we must look at 5...♘d5 6 cxd5 (D).



Here 6...♘d4 is best (6...e4? is a well-known mistake: 7 dxc6 exf3 8 ♗b3! 1-0 Petrosian-Ree,

Wijk aan Zee 1971). There may follow 7 cxd4 exd4 8 g2 (another variation is 8 c2 e7) 8... e7 9 0-0 c5, when White needs space, so he must get rid of the d4-pawn with 10 e3. After 10... dxe3 there follows 11 fxe3 opening the f-file and giving more strength to a future d4, to keep a central majority. 11...d6 (or 11...0-0 when White gets a good game with 12 b4! cxb4 13 b2) 12 b4! f6 (after 12... cxb4 13 a4 + d7 14 xb4 , White's central majority supported by the g2-bishop gives him the advantage) 13 b1 0-0 14 bxc5 dxc5 15 d4! cxd4 16 b2 b6 (if 16... dxe3 !?, then 17 xf6 gxf6 18 d4 , getting back one of the pawns, with compensation for the other one due to the weakness of the black king's position and the strong passed pawn on d5; however, this is not clear and White is probably not better) 17 xd4 xd4 18 xd4 a6 19 f2 d6 and here White can play 20 f4 ! ad8 (bringing yet another white pawn to the centre with 20... xf4 21 gxf4 favours White) 21 c1 with advantage. M.Gurevich-Hauchard, Belfort 1999 continued instead 20 c1 , which allowed Black to challenge the c-file and complicate the game by 20... ac8 ! 21 c6 a3 !

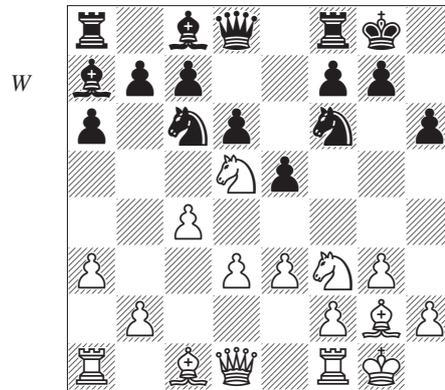
We now return to 5... c5 (D):



6 d3

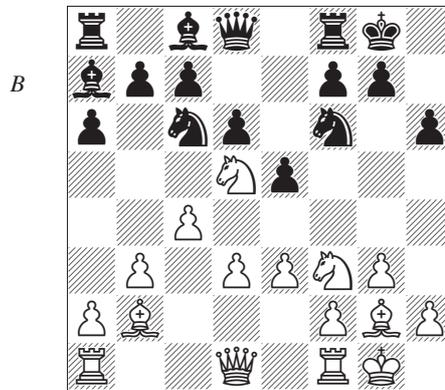
There are several move-orders. Something worth noting happens after 6 g2 0-0 7 0-0 h6 8 d3 d6 9 a3 a6 10 e3 a7 (D).

See how the retreat of the black bishop, which would be forced after d4 or b4 by White, is made in advance in order to be able to reply more freely to those moves. Now 11 c3 ! is an instructive manoeuvre – White also retreats



his centralized knight. Lautier-Sulypa, French Cht 1996 continued 11... b8 ! (it is not clear this move is useful, and so 11... e6 is better; with the bishop still on c5, the move 10... e6 ? would lose a piece because of 11 d4!, followed by xf6 + and d5) 12 c2 (perhaps the 'forced' 12 b4 is better, and then the move chosen) 12... e6 13 b4 d7 14 d1 , reaching a Reversed Sicilian.

What is the reason behind 11 c3 ? Let's see how the game Khalifman-Short, Linares 1995 developed, and we shall have the answer: 9 e3 (instead of 9 a3) 9...a6 10 b3 a7 11 b2 (D).



Black found an excellent plan: 11... xd5 ! 12 cxd5 e7 13 d2 b5! 14 c1 b7 15 e4 c6 16 dxc6 xc6 17 f3 c8 18 d2 f6 , deploying all his forces to good places, with an easy game.

6...h6

Black denies White the possibility of playing g5 .

7 a3 a5