

IM Dejan Nestorović ♦ GM Nikola Nestorović

SECRETS OF POSITIONAL SACRIFICE



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Authors

GM Nikola Nestorović, IM Dejan Nestorović

Editorial board

Vitomir Božić, Irena Nestorović, Miloš Perunović, Branko Tadić, Igor Žvegljić

Cover design

Aleksa Mitrović

Translator

Ivan Marinković

Proofreading

Vitomir Božić

Contributors

Katarina Nestorović, Lazar Nestorović

Editor-in-chief

Branko Tadić

General Manager

Vitomir Božić

President

Aleksandar Matanović

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Izdavač

Šahovski informator

11001 Beograd, Francuska 31, Srbija

Phone: (381 11) 2630-109

E-mail: sales@sahovski.com

Internet: <https://www.sahovski.com>

A Word from the Author

“Secrets of Positional Sacrifice” is the second book, created within the premises of the Nestorović family chess workshop. I would like to mention that the whole family contributed to this book. We are also extremely thankful to our friends, who, thanks to their previous experience, have introduced us to the process of creating chess books, with their invaluable advice and ideas.

Considering the abundance of material regarding this topic that was gathered, we decided to make this book only the first, lower level of the “Positional sacrifice” edition. My father and I worked hard to make sure that the new book will be as interesting as the first one, but also more adapted to the wider audience.

Although the book mostly covers the more recent games, we could not help but include the beautiful creations of “old masters”, that we consider classical today. When it comes to dividing the book into chapters, there were multiple, interesting possibilities, but we opted for sectioning it based on a subject of sacrifice. Hence, there are five chapters within the book: positional pawn sacrifice, exchange sacrifice, piece sacrifice, queen sacrifice and finally, the unavoidable section dedicated to the classics.

There are a lot of interesting ideas presented in the book, applied by world class players, as well as by the less known ones. We kept the analysis of their games simple and easy to follow, and we made sure to include plenty of diagrams and explanations within the text.

Also, the addition to the book are exercises, given at the end of each chapter, which are meant to test the reader’s newly acquired knowledge. Exercises are mainly based on the correct assessment of asymmetric positions, and of course on accurate calculation.

We hope you will enjoy the book, at least as much as my father and I enjoyed writing it, and we have no doubt that our book will improve your chess knowledge and the feeling for positional sacrifice.

GM Nikola Nestorović

CONTENTS

A Word from the Author	3
SYSTEM OF SIGNS	6
THE POSITIONAL PAWN SACRIFICE	7
<i>Magnus Carlsen 2853 – Wesley So 2779</i>	9
<i>Ruslan Ponomariov 2704 – Evgeny Bareev 2675</i>	15
<i>Anish Giri 2764 – Nils Grandelius 2663</i>	21
<i>Georg Kilgus 2461 – Bence Korpa 2542</i>	26
<i>Sanan Sjugirov 2673 – Artur Jussupow 2581</i>	31
<i>Alexei Shirov 2700 – Peter Svidler 2660</i>	35
<i>Yu Yangyi 2709 – Wei Yi 2732</i>	40
<i>Kidambi Sundarradjan 2433 – Pentala Harikrishna 2354</i>	46
<i>Levon Aronian 2805 – Ivan Ivanišević 2613</i>	50
<i>Jorden van Foreest 2671 – Nils Grandelius 2663</i>	54
<i>Hans Tikkanen 2566 – Péter Lékó 2723</i>	59
<i>Alexey Dreev 2695 – Curt Hansen 2610</i>	64
<i>Kidambi Sundararajan 2487 – Gadir Guseinov 2659</i>	69
<i>Veselin Topalov 2816 – Hikaru Nakamura 2814</i>	73
<i>Baadur Jobava 2651 – Wang Hao 2610</i>	78
EXAMPLES	83
SOLUTIONS	84
THE POSITIONAL EXCHANGE SACRIFICE	85
<i>Dejan Nestorović 2417 – Boško Abramović 2499</i>	87
<i>Vladimir Epishin 2585 – Mladen Palac 2560</i>	91
<i>Sergey Karjakin 2778 – Fabiano Caruana 2773</i>	94
<i>Evgeniy Najer 2666 – Ehsan Ghaem Maghami 2603</i>	97
<i>Boban Bogosavljević 2520 – Dejan Nestorović 2404</i>	100
<i>Matthias Röder 2420 – Georgy Timoshenko 2568</i>	104
<i>Eltaj Safarli 2488 – Arthur Pijpers 2000</i>	107
<i>Teddy Coleman 2266 – L'ubomir Ftáčnik 2573</i>	111
<i>Varuzhan Akobian 2661 – Andrey Baryshpolets 2591</i>	114
<i>Konstantin Sakaev 2634 – Dmitry Kokarev 2551</i>	119
<i>Rainer Buhmann 2567 – Trajče Nedev 2528</i>	124
<i>David Shengelia 2543 – Richárd Rapport 2759</i>	129
<i>Nikita Vitiugov 2608 – Vitaly Tseshkovsky 2513</i>	134
<i>Hou Yifan 2652 – Ding Liren 2773</i>	138
<i>Garry Kasparov 2805 – Alexei Shirov 2740</i>	144
EXAMPLES	149
SOLUTIONS	150
THE POSITIONAL PIECE SACRIFICE	151
<i>Sergei Lobanov 2522 – Vladimir Fedoseev 2676</i>	153

Hikaru Nakamura 2787 – Mariya Muzychuk 2554.....	157
Ruslan Pogorelov 2411 – Tigran Gharamian 2557.....	161
Fabiano Caruana 2736 – Anish Giri 2714.....	165
Alexander Grischuk 2710 – Alexei Shirov 2720.....	169
Sandipan Chanda 2579 – Vassily Ivanchuk 2726.....	173
Maxim Matlakov 2698 – Vladimir Fedoseev 2674.....	177
Yasser Seirawan 2595 – Jonathan Tisdall 2480.....	181
Dragan Kosić 2501 – Nikola Nestorović 2405.....	186
Mateusz Bartel 2609 – Viorel Iordăchescu 2584.....	190
EXAMPLES.....	195
SOLUTIONS.....	196
THE POSITIONAL QUEEN SACRIFICE.....	197
Miloš Perunović 2570 – Nikola Sedlak 2568.....	199
Viktor Haring 2297 – Jan Vykouk 2440.....	204
Ruslan Ponomariov 2705 – Wang Hao 2643.....	209
Ruben Felgaer 2618 – Ilia Smirin 2652.....	214
Andrey Esipenko 2677 – Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2784.....	219
Dmitry Bocharov 2611 – Evgeny Tomashevsky 2724.....	224
Anton Filippov 2644 – Husein Aziz Nežad 2394.....	229
Daniil Dubov 2702 – Andrey Esipenko 2686.....	235
Patrice Etchegaray 2350 – Aleksander Delchev 2629.....	239
Zdenko Kožul 2585 – Evgenij Miroshnichenko 2500.....	242
Ni Hua 2670 – Alexander Moiseenko 2726.....	245
Dejan Nestorović – Sreten Đukanović.....	252
Thorsteinn Thorsteinsson 2317 – Alexander Khasin 2511.....	256
Murali Karthikeyan 2495 – Sarkar Rajdeep 2145.....	261
Evgeny Bareev 2721 – Vassily Ivanchuk 2710.....	266
EXAMPLES.....	271
SOLUTIONS.....	272
EVERGREEN.....	272
Tigran V. Petrosian – Boris Spassky.....	275
Isaak Boleslavsky – Vladimir Savon.....	280
Andor Lilienthal – Viacheslav Ragozin.....	284
Ljubomir Ljubojević – Albin Planinec.....	289
Branko Damljanović 2555 – Dragoljub Velimirović 2535.....	293
Ljubomir Ljubojević 2600 – Lajos Portisch 2630.....	298
Lubomir Kavalek 2540 – Wolfgang Uhlmann 2555.....	303
Mikhail Botvinnik – Bent Larsen.....	308
Boris Spassky 2660 – Robert J. Fischer 2785.....	313
EXAMPLES.....	319
SOLUTIONS.....	321

The positional pawn sacrifice



MAGNUS CARLSEN 2853 – WESLEY SO 2779 [B 90]

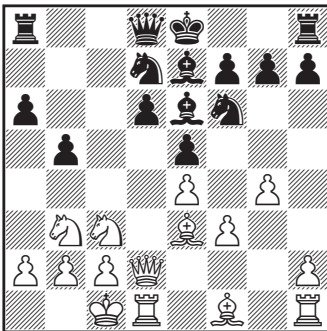
Saint Louis 2015

Every single encounter between the reigning World Champion Magnus Carlsen and one of the most serious contenders for the world throne, the naturalised American GM Wesley So, is eagerly anticipated by chess fans worldwide. Carlsen and So certainly didn't disappoint the audience when facing off against each other at the 2015 Sinquefeld Cup in Saint Louis, USA, new Mecca of the chess world. The opening choice indicates that we are to witness a highly interesting duel. Both players have a lot of experience in the Najdorf Sicilian, having played this sharp line on numerous occasions with both colours.

**1. e4 c5 2. ♖f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6
5. ♜c3 a6 6. ♚e3 e5 7. ♜b3 ♚e6 8. f3**

After a couple of well-known introductory moves, one of the most frequently seen positions in this line of the Sicilian Defence has been reached. Very complex positions, full of dynamics, with both sides' chances, almost without exception emerge during the course of the game.

8... ♜bd7 9. ♚d2 b5 10. 0-0-0 ♚e7 11. g4!

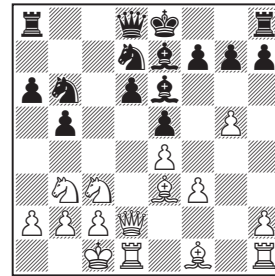


This thematic advance of the g-pawn is extremely important. White seizes initiative on the kingside and simultaneously prevents the characteristic Sicilian d6-d5 blow in the centre.

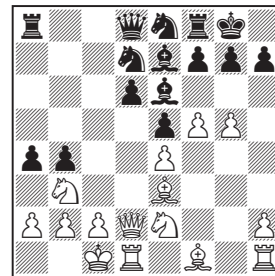
11... b4

A major crossroad for the Najdorf Sicilian fans in this particular line. The other, equally playable possibility is 11... ♗b6, making room on the d7-square for the retreat of the other knight, in case of g4-g5.

11... ♗b6 12. g5 ♗fd7

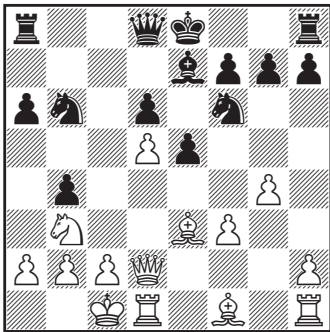


13. ♗a5!± An extremely important motif which will be more thoroughly discussed during the later course of the game. The most forcing line starts with 11... 0-0 12. g5 b4 13. ♗e2 ♗e8 14. f4 a5 15. f5 a4



16. ♗bd4! An important tactical motif which prevents Black from capturing the white knight with the a-pawn, hence severely compromising the white king's position. 16... exd4 17. ♗xd4 b3 18. ♖b1 bxc2+ 19. ♗xc2 Eventually, Black will be forced to give up his light-squared bishop and 19... ♚b3!∞ is the best way to do so! The arising position is extremely complex and offers countless possibilities for both sides.

12. ♖d5 ♗xd5 13. exd5 ♖b6



14. ♖a5!! With this subtle knight manoeuvre Carlsen proposes a purely positional sacrifice of his central d5-pawn! His main idea is to gain control over the complex of light squares which should be more than sufficient compensation for the sacrificed material. In case of declining the sacrifice, Black must be prepared for long suffering due to the mighty white knight fortified in the heart of his position.

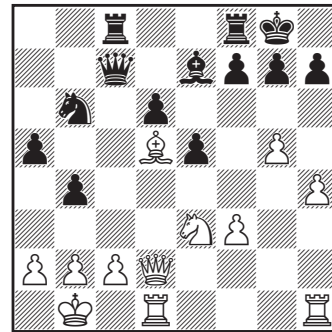
Interesting, but very seldom played continuation is 14. ♖xb4!? Morozevich tried to find some fresh ideas here, aiming to seize the initiative. However, if Black reacts correctly, an unclear position emerges. 14... ♗fxd5 15. ♗xb6 ♖xb6 16. f4!∞ Alexander Morozevich 2774 - Leinier Domínguez Pérez 2695, Sarajevo 2008.

14... ♗bxd5! The most principled reaction. There is no better alternative. 15. ♖c4 ♗xe3 16. ♗xe3 0-0 17. ♗c4 White consistently executes his plan by playing logical developing moves and gradually gains control over light squares in the centre, which guarantees him full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but no more than that!

17... ♖d7 18. h4 With this typical pawn advance White demonstrates his ambitions against the black king and restricts the mobility of the black bishop.

18... a5 19. g5 ♖c8 20. ♗d5 Additionally, White secures the d5 stronghold and increases pressure on light squares.

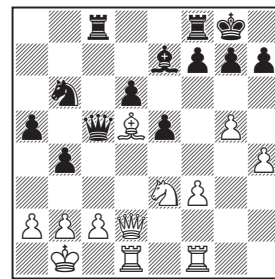
20... ♖b6 21. ♖b1 ♖c7



22. ♖hf1! White clearly demonstrates his intention to open the f-file, consequently increasing pressure on the most vulnerable spot, the f7-pawn.

22... ♖xd5?! A doubtful decision! By giving up his knight for the white bishop Black definitely surrenders the control over the d5-square and allows White to reach a standard position where his knight will be dominant compared to Black's dark-squared bishop.

22... ♖c5!



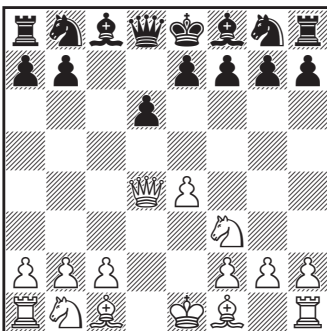
The correct continuation. Black improves the position of his queen and awaits for the opponent's reaction. 23. f4 exf4! Eliminates possibility of further advance of the f-pawn and creates counter-chances on the e-file. (Also playable was 23... ♖h8 24. f5 f6 25. g6! but Black's position doesn't look very promising due to numerous weaknesses on light squares and the a2-g8 diagonal. White has a strong initiative which guarantees him more than just a compensation for the sacrificed pawn.) 24. ♖xf4 ♖xd5! This exchange oper-

ANDREY ESIPENKO 2677 – MAXIME VACHIER-LAGRAVE 2784 [B 53]

Wijk aan Zee 2021

Andrey Espenko, one of the most promising young players, received invitation to take part in the most prestigious chess event, Tata Steel Masters at Wijk aan Zee. This huge honour needed to be justified. As the tournament progressed, Espenko's anxiety disappeared, a series of victories began, and consequently his self-confidence skyrocketed. His well-deserved victory over the reigning World Champion was cherry on top. At that point, a slight chance of Espenko even winning the tournament as a sole winner appeared! Eventually, he ended up right behind tournament winners, which brought him a breakthrough over the borderline of 2700 ELO points. It has become obvious that not only Russia, but also the whole world got a new rising chess star, capable of accomplishing brilliant results!

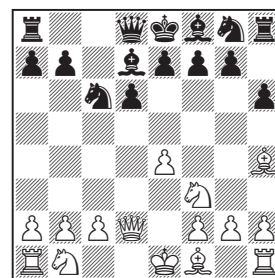
1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 When White wants to avoid discussion in the main lines of the Sicilian Defence, he usually reaches for a variant in which there are not too many forced events. One of the most interesting such variants is the one following the **4. ♖xd4!** move.



Black, of course, gets an opportunity to speed up development of his minor pieces, by attacking the white queen. On the other side, White can either strive for strategic schemes, or enter the position strongly reminiscent of

the main Sicilian lines. Of course, both sides have enough resources to reach a satisfying position. **4... ♗c6** The most common and definitely the most logical move. Black wants to win a tempo and to obtain the immediate feedback about the type of position White has decided to play here.

4... a6!? Preventing ♗b5, in order to be able to attack the white queen with tempo. **5. c4** Using the opportunity to seize the space in the centre. **5... ♗c6 6. ♖d2** The most common place for white queen. It is obvious that the white dark-square bishop will be deployed to the long diagonal, after b3 and ♗b2. **6... ♗f6 7. ♗c3 g6 8. b3 ♗g7 9. ♗b2 0–0 10. ♗e2** Characteristic "Maroczy bind" position! It is interesting that similar structure may also emerge in case of **1. d4, 1. c4** or even **1. ♗f3!**; **4... ♗d7!?** Another way to prevent White from playing ♗b5, with the idea of preserving queen's central position. **5. ♗g5!?** (5. c4 It is possible to create above mentioned pawn structure here, as well. **5... ♗c6 6. ♖d2 g6 7. b3 ♗g7 8. ♗b2 ♗f6 9. ♗c3**) **4... ♗c6 6. ♖d2 h6 7. ♗h4**

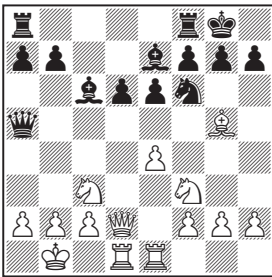


7... g5! Very ambitious advance of the g-pawn enables quick activation of the black dark-square bishop, with the idea of seizing the initiative, while battling for control of dark squares. **8. ♗g3 ♗g7 9. c3 ♗f6 10. ♗d3**

5. ♖e3!? Modern way of treating this position. Main promoters of this idea grandmas-

ters Demchenko and Harikrishna. They have recently played quite a few games in this line, achieving good results.

5. ♖b5!? The most common continuation, in which "genuine Sicilian positions" can still appear. The idea is to waste no time on the queen's retreat and to mobilise all the forces as soon as possible, simultaneously going for the opposite castling position. 5... ♗d7 6. ♗xc6 ♗xc6 7. ♘c3 ♘f6 8. ♗g5 e6 9. 0–0–0 ♗e7 10. ♖he1 0–0 11. ♘b1 ♗a5 12. ♗d2 Threatening ♘d5!



12... ♗a6!?!∞ Black has mobilised his forces, preparing to play the position with opposite castlings. All he needs to do is to bring the king's rook to c8, followed with the pawn advance. On the other hand, White usually brings his knight from f3 to d4, trying to advance his kingside pawns towards the position of its counterpart. The resulting position provides great pleasure to players and even greater one to neutral observers, which can enjoy entertaining attacks on opposite flanks.

5... ♘f6 6. ♗e2 g6 The most perspective method of developing the bishop.

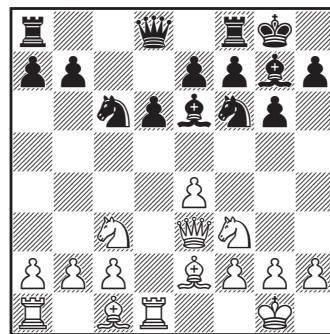
6... e6!? An absolutely equal possibility. Black opts for an elastic pawn structure in the centre. 7. c4 ♗e7 8. 0–0 0–0 9. ♘c3 b6 The most logical method of completing the queenside development. 10. ♖d1 ♗c7 11. b3 ♗b7 12. ♗b2 ♖ad8 13. ♖ac1 Threatening ♘d5! 13... ♗b8!∞ Typical "hedgehog" position. There are some minor differences in comparison with the original position. White's queen and the knight on f3 are still to find more natural placement.

7. 0–0 ♗g7 8. ♖d1 Directed against the d5 break.

8. h3!? A very common continuation, establishing control of the g4–point and preventing access of Black's minor pieces. Otherwise, Black would probably play ♗g4, aiming to exchange the knight on f3 and to start battling for control of dark squares. 8... 0–0 9. ♖d1 ♘d7 10. ♘c3 b6 11. b3 ♗b7 12. ♗b2∞ Very interesting strategic position.

8... 0–0 9. ♘c3!? ♗e6!? French grandmaster decided to follow the Sicilian Dragon pattern in developing his minor pieces. However, the position significantly differs from the classical Dragon setup, mainly due to the placement of the white queen.

9... ♗g4!? A different concept. This bishop is ready to be exchanged, giving Black a possibility to form his pawn structure in a somewhat different manner. 10. ♘d5 ♘d7! This is the basic difference. Black wants to push the white knight away by playing e6. 11. c3 e6 12. ♘f4 ♗e7 13. b3 (13. ♗d3?! ♘c5! 14. ♗xd6 ♗xd6 15. ♖xd6 ♘xe4) ♖fd8 14. ♗a3 ♘f6∞ White is trying to exert some pressure on the d6–pawn, whereas Black develops logically, thus achieving a normal position with mutual chances.



10. ♘d5! A very important motif in Esipenko's concept. He places his knight in the dominant central position, thus starting to exert pressure in this part of the board. Sooner or later, Black will have to decide how to deal with it. Is he going to exchange it, and if yes,