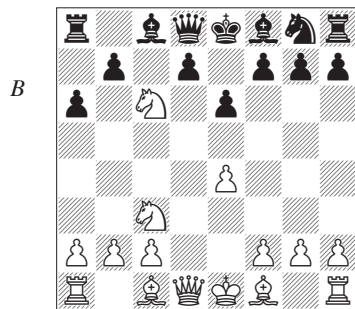


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5 The Popular 5 Nc3 a6 6 Nxc6

1 e4 c5
 2 Nf3 e6
 3 d4 cxd4
 4 Nxd4 Nc6
 5 Nc3 a6
 6 Nxc6 (D)



This direct move brings about a structure that is totally different from those that usually arise in the Taimanov, and is quite unusual for the Sicilian as a whole. Black can be happy that White's centralized knight is gone, and that his pawn-centre will be bolstered, but that is not the end of the story. White can develop his pieces freely and actively, while Black's pieces can have problems finding active posts. The move ...a6 can turn out to have little or no function in the resulting positions, and may only get in

the way of the c8-bishop. The pawn can also come under attack, and quite often one sees Black playing ...a5 and ...a4 in an effort to liquidate the pawn and to generate some queenside play.

Quite often White meets ...d5 with e5. Then he can sometimes use his spatial plus to launch a kingside attack, but more often he adopts a central strategy, with the c4 advance regularly featuring in this plans.

Note that 6 Nxc6 was Joe Gallagher's recommendation in *Beating the Sicilian 3*, so if you play 5...a6 as Black you should expect to meet it quite often.

6 ... **bxc6**

6...dxc6 "is just bad for Black and is never played" – Gallagher. This didn't stop Keres failing to win against it once, but White certainly has a substantial advantage after 7 Wxd8+ Qxd8 8 Qf4 .

Now (after 6...bxc6):

A: 7 e5 75

B: 7 Qd3 77

A)

7 e5 Wc7

7... Qe7 8 Qd3 Wa5 9 We2 Nd5 10 Qd2 Qb4 11 Nxd5 Qxd2+ 12 Wxd2 Wxd2+ 13 Qxd2 cxd5 14 b4 gave

White a slight advantage in Timman-Ljubojević, Amsterdam Euwe mem 1988.

8 f4 d5

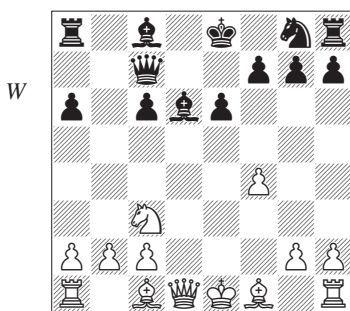
Or:

a) **8...d6** 9 exd6 – 8...d5 9 exd6.

b) **8...f5** 9 e3 b8 10 b1 h6 11 e2 e7 12 0-0 0-0 (Hellers-Renet, Haifa Echt 1989) 13 d2 ± Hellers.

c) **8...c5** should probably be met by **9 e4**, since **9 d3** c4 10 e4 b8 11 0-0 f5 12 exf6 xf6 13 f5 (Andres-Lebrede, Havana 1987) 13...d5 leads to extreme complications that may not be at all bad for Black.

9 exd6 xd6 (D)



10 e4

Or:

a) **10 g3** f6 11 g2 b7 = Tringov-Taimanov, Leningrad 1967.

b) **10 g4** f5 11 h5+ g6 12 f3 f6 13 c4 f7 14 0-0 (14 d2 b7 15 0-0 c5 16 e2 he8 17 he1 xf4 18 xe6+ g7 = Timman-Illescas, Novi Sad OL 1990) 14...b7 15 d2 c5 16 h3 d5 17 d3 c6 18 ae1 (White is probably a little better here; after Black's next move

the position explodes) 18...ab8 19 xd5 exd5 20 c3! he8! 21 xf6 dxc4 22 c3 xe1 23 xe1 e8 24 d1 f8 (24...e4 25 h8 e8 26 d2 e7 27 e5 g5 28 f2 gxf4 29 xf4 e6 30 f1 and Black is fighting for a draw, Sax-J.Horvath, Hungarian Ch 1993) 25 h8 and now the continuation **25...h6?** 26 xc4+ (26 e5!?) 26...f8?, given by Sax as unclear, loses after 27 d4. Instead, **25...e2** is possible, e.g. 26 xc4+ e6 27 d7+ e7 28 xe6+ xe6 29 a7 xc2 30 xa6+ d5 with an unclear ending.

10 ... e7

10...xf4 11 xf4 xf4 12 d4 e5 13 d6+ f8 14 xf4 exf4 15 xc8 xc8 16 xa6 is fairly unpleasant for Black.

11 d3

Now:

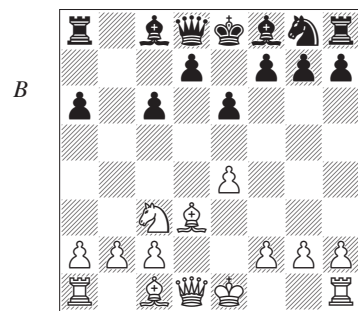
a) **11...c5** 12 e2 h6 (this knight manoeuvre should not be delayed; 12...b7 13 0-0 h6 14 b3 f5 15 b2 d4 16 xd4 {this is the problem} 16...cxd4 17 f5 exf5 18 xf5 0-0 19 af1 is unpleasant for Black, Mokry-Benjamin, Moscow OL 1994) 13 g5 (13 0-0 f5 14 b3 d4 15 f2 b7 16 b2 d8 = D.Johansen-Andersson, Thessaloniki OL 1984) 13...f5 14 0-0 g6 (14...d4 15 e5 ±; 14...h6 is met by 15 f3 intending e5 and covering d4) 15 d2 0-0 16 xf5 exf5 17 c3 b7 (Ulybin-Emelin, Russian Ch (Elista) 1994) 18 ae1 ae8 (18...c6!?) 19 e3 and now Black must play **19...c6**, rather than **19...xg5?** 20 xe8 xf4? (given as at least satisfactory for Black

by both Ulybin and Ftačnik), which loses to 21 ♖xf4! ♗xf4 22 ♗e7.

b) 11...♘f6 12 0-0 c5 (12...0-0 13 ♗e2 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 g6 15 ♙e3 ♙f6 16 ♖ab1 ± Malaniuk-Karpov, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1983) 13 ♗e2 ♘xe4 (13...0-0?! 14 ♘g5! is good for White, Ulybin-Kalegin, USSR 1987) 14 ♙xe4 ♖a7 (14...♙b7?! has been played by Taimanov, but is riskier: 15 f5 exf5 16 ♙f4 ♗c8 17 ♙xb7 ♗xb7 18 ♖ae1 ♖f8 19 ♗e5 with some advantage for White, Egiazarian-Taimanov, Erevan Petrosian mem 1994) 15 ♙e3 0-0 is OK for Black, Ulybin-Bashkov, Cheljabinsk 1993.

B)

7 ♙d3 (D)



This developing move seems best. Now Black's best and most natural continuation is to advance his d-pawn two squares. The alternatives are significant mainly due to transpositional possibilities, in particular from Chapter 6, Line C.

- B1:** 7...d6 77
- B2:** 7...♗c7 78
- B3:** 7...d5 80

7...e5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 f4 d6 – 7...d6 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 f4 e5 ±.

B1)

7 ... d6
8 0-0 ♘f6
9 f4

According to ECO's classification, this is now B82 – a Scheveningen.

9 ♗e2 ♙e7 10 ♘a4 (10 f4 – 9 f4 ♙e7 10 ♗e2) 10...0-0 11 c4 e5 12 c5 d5 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xe5 ♖e8 gave Black reasonable compensation in Petrenko-Rufitskaya, USSR corr. Cht 1991-4.

9 ... ♙e7

Alternatives:

a) 9...e5 10 ♖h1 ♙e7 11 fxe5 (11 ♗e1 – 9...♙e7 10 ♗e1 e5 11 ♖h1 =) 11...dxe5 12 ♙e3 0-0 13 ♘a4 ± Van der Wiel-Zapata, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

b) 9...♗c7 and now:

b1) 10 ♗e1 is quite a good move, e.g. 10...d5 11 ♗g3 g6 12 ♙e3 ♙e7 13 ♙d4 ± Van der Wiel-Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1988.

b2) 10 ♗f3 ♙b7 11 b3 c5 12 ♙b2 ♙e7 13 ♖ae1 ♘d7 14 ♘d1! ♙f6 15 ♙xf6 gxf6 (15...♘xf6 16 ♗g3 0-0 17 e5 gives White a strong attack) 16 ♗h5 ± Gallagher-Landenbergue, Martigny 1993.

b3) 10 ♗e2 and now:

b31) 10...e5 11 ♖h1 ♙e7 12 fxe5 dxe5 13 ♙e3 0-0 14 ♘a4 ± Lau-Kruszynski, Berlin 1997.

b32) 10...d5?! 11 ♙d2 ♙e7 (“it would require a brave man to take the b-pawn with ...♗b6+, but if White doesn't feel like risking this he could first play ♖h1” – Gallagher) 12 ♖ae1

0-0 13 ♖h1 ♜e8?! (Black should try 13...d4 followed by 14...e5) 14 e5 ♟d7 15 ♟a4 (“this, followed by c4, is very common in these lines and ensures that White can at least hold his own on the queenside” – Gallagher) 15...♟c5 16 ♟xc5 ♟xc5 17 c4 a5 18 ♜c1 ♜b6 19 b3 ♟d7 20 ♜f3 g6 21 ♟e1 gave White good attacking possibilities in Kosten-Collinson, British Ch (Plymouth) 1989.

b33) 10...♟d7 11 ♟a4 (11 ♖h1 ♟e7 – 9...♟e7 10 ♜e2 ♟d7 11 ♖h1 ♜c7) 11...♟e7 12 c4 ♟f6 (12...c5 13 b3 ♟b7 14 ♟b2 0-0 15 ♜ad1 ♟c6 16 e5 g6 17 ♟e4 favours White, Yilmaz-L.Milov, Simferopol/Alushta 1992) 13 ♟e3 c5 14 ♜f2 ♟b7 15 ♟c2 0-0 16 ♜ad1 ♟c6 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♟xc5 exf4 19 ♟xf4 e5 20 ♟e3 ± Kosten-Andruet, Toulouse 1990.

10 ♜e2

Gallagher suggests 10 ♜f3.

10 ♜e1 e5 11 ♖h1 exf4 12 ♟xf4 0-0 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♟xe5 ♟e6 15 ♜d1 ♟d7 16 ♜g3 g6 17 ♟c7 ♜c8 18 ♟e4 f5 19 ♟f2 ♟f6 20 ♟e5 c5 = Short-Tal, Skellefteå World Cup 1989.

10 ... ♟d7

11 ♖h1 ♜c7

Now:

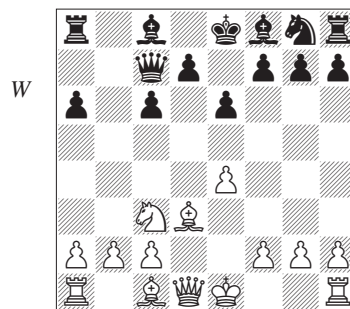
a) 12 ♟d2 0-0 (12...♟f6?! 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♟e4 gave White, according to Plaskett, “a dangerous initiative” in Bezold-Plaskett, Hastings 1996/7) 13 ♜ae1 (13 ♜f3 possible) 13...♟c5 14 e5 d5 15 ♟xh7+!? (this is only enough to draw) 15...♟xh7 16 ♜h5+ ♟g8 17 ♜e3 f5 (17...f6 18 ♜h3 does not give Black winning chances) 18 ♜h3 ♟d7 19 ♜ff3 ♟e8 20 ♜h7+ ♟f7 21 ♜h5+

♟g8 22 ♜h7+ ♟f7 23 ♜h5+ ♟g8 1/2-1/2 Reeh-J.Horvath, Mitropa Cup (Leibnitz) 1990.

b) 12 ♟a4!? (“often a good idea when Black has played an early ...♟d7 as it prevents ...♟c5” – Gallagher) 12...0-0 13 c4 c5 14 b3 ♟b7 15 ♟b2 ± Gallagher.

B2)

7 ... ♜c7 (D)



This often leads to positions that can be reached via 5...♜c7 6 f4 a6 7 ♟xc6 bxc6, and can also arise via the Kan move-order 4...a6 5 ♟c3 ♜c7 6 ♟d3 ♟c6 7 ♟xc6 bxc6.

8 0-0

8 f4 – 5...♜c7 6 f4 a6 7 ♟xc6 bxc6 8 ♟d3.

8 ... ♟f6

8...c5 9 ♜e2 ♟b7 10 f4 – 5...♜c7 6 f4 a6 7 ♟xc6 bxc6 8 ♟d3 c5 9 ♜e2 ♟b7 10 0-0.

9 f4

Or:

a) 9 ♟g5 ♟e7 10 ♖h1 d5 11 f4 is unclear, Tseshkovsky-Anikaev, USSR 1967.

b) 9 ♜e2!? and now: