

Michael Adams

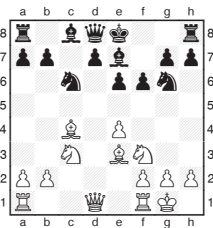


Old gambit, new angles

In recent years the reputation of romantic openings like the King's Gambit and Evans Gambit have been on the up. However, the Morra Gambit, despite being able to be employed against the Sicilian, and hence cutting out a lot of theory, has languished and has frequently been derided by strong players.

Indeed, you can find some of these views quoted between chapters in the inspiring book *Mayhem in the Morra* by Marc Esserman (www.qualitychess.co.uk) that casts the opening in a totally new light. I always thought the Morra was quite reasonable and was mainly discouraged by the possibilities to transpose to the c3 Sicilian, which are also covered in the book.

I have fond memories of an outing from long ago:



M. Adams - W. Watson
Eastbourne 1990

10.Qd1-e2

The book's recommendation here is 10.Nc3-b5 0-0 11.Ra1-c1.

10... **a7-a6**

10...0-0 11.Rf1-d1 is better, although White has good compensation.

11.Nc3-a4 **Qd8-c7**

12.Na4-b6 **Ra8-b8**

13.Ra1-c1 **0-0**

14.Rf1-d1

14.Nb6-d5 e6xd5 15.e4xd5 Kg8-h8 is less effective here with Black's king tucked away in the corner.

14... **f6-f5**

15.e4xf5 **Rf8xf5**

16.Qe2-d3

16.Bc4-d3 is also interesting.

16... **Kg8-h8**

Black had to play 16...Rf5-f7 17.Nb6xd7 Qc7xd7 18.Qd3xd7 Bc8xd7 19.Rd1xd7 Nc6-e5.

17.Nb6xd7 **Bc8xd7**

18.Qd3xd7 **Qc7xd7**

19.Rd1xd7

With the bishop pair, more active pieces and the better structure, I won quite easily.

19... **Ng6-f8**

20.Rd7-d2 **Be7-b4**

21.Rd2-e2 **Rb8-d8**

22.a2-a3 **Bb4-c5**

23.Bc4xa6 **Bc5xe3**

24.Re2xe3 **b7xa6**

25.Rc1xc6 **Rf5-b5**

26.b2-b4 **a6-a5**

27.b4xa5 **Rb5xa5**

28.g2-g3 **Rd8-d5**

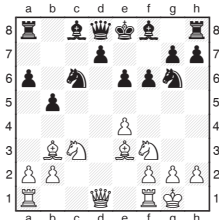
29.Rc6-c8 **Kh8-g8**

30.Rc3-b3 **Kg8-f7**

31.Rb3-b7+ **Nf8-d7**

Black resigned, as 32...Rd5xe5 33.Rb7xd7+ Kf7-f6 34.Rc8-f8+ Kf6-g6 35.Rf8-g8 is winning.

Most of the analysis in the book is a far cry from my unexciting handling above. The pulsating action in the game below, in which the author took his greatest scalp, is fairly typical.



M. Esserman - L. Van Wely
Orlando 2011

11.Nc3-d5 **e6xd5**

If 11...Ra8-b8 White leaves the knight in place and

improves his position further with 12.Ra1-c1.

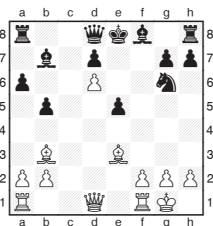
12.e4xd5 **Nc6-e5**

13.d5-d6

With the king's bishop hemmed in, the g8 square covered and other pieces preventing the king heading to the other side of the board, Black is in serious difficulties.

13... **Bc8-b7**

14.Nf3xe5 **f6xe5**



15.f2-f4

Opening more lines.

15... **Qd8-f6**

Black had to walk a tightrope with the virtually impossible to find 15...e5xf4 16.Rf1-e1 f4xe3 17.Re1xe3+ Bf8-e7 18.Qd1-d4 for further analysis you'll have to buy the book, but Black is only surviving by the skin of his teeth.

16.f4xe5 **Qf6xe5**

17.Be3-g5

More fun than the rather effective 17.Bb3-f7+ Ke8-d8 18.Be3-b6+ Kd8-c8

19.Rf1-e1

17...Bf8-e7

17...Qe5xg5 18.Qd1-e1+ Bf8-e7 (18...Ke8-d8 19.Qe1-a5+ Kd8-c8 20.Qa5-c7mate) 19.Bb3-f7+ is decisive.

18.Bb3-f7+ **Ke8-d8**

19.d6xe7 **Ng6xe7**

20.Qd1-d2 **Kd8-c8**

21.Ra1-c1+ **Ne7-c6**

22.Rf1-d1 **Qe5-f5**

23.Bg5-f4 **Qf5xf7**

24.Qd2-d6 **Kc8-d8**

25.Rc1xc6 **Bb7xc6**

26.Qd6xc6

Black resigned, as 26...Ra8-c8 27.Bf4-g5+. Marc mentions that Loek sportingly pretended to castle kingside as a joke before resigning and even wrote an amusing foreword to the book!