

A LOT OF BLANKS

Evgeny Postny deals with a Carlsen Variation

Nimzo-Indian E20: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3
♙b4 4.f3 c5 5.d5 0-0 6.e4 d6



It is noticeable that above all 4.f3 is played whenever Magnus Carlsen comes up with a Nimzo-Indian. Perhaps his opponents believe that they do better against Carlsen with sharp variations. So far the world champion has been varying quite early on: first 4...d5 and after 5.a3 once 5...♙xc3+ (against Anand in the WCh), then 5...♙e7 (Nakamura in Zürich); after that 4...0-0 (Karjakin in Shamkir) and finally 4...c5 (Nakamura also in Shamkir). The latter game was the reason why Evgeny Postny turned his attention to this variation. It is clear that 7.♙d3, although often seen in practice, is not sufficient: 7...♗bd7 and then 8...♗e5 immediately hit the sensitive spot. Two other continuations require consideration.

A) 7.♙d2 was slightly surprisingly the choice of Nakamura. Carlsen replied 7...♗bd7 8.♗ge2 ♗e5, to carry out the exchange on d5 only after 9.♗g3: 9...exd5 10.cxd5. Postny, (like Stohl in CBM 160), is not quite clear about how to evaluate the position. The fact that Nakamura got an advantage could probably be attributed to Carlsen's less than perfect play. On the other hand it is clear that in the B) variation a quite similar situation often arises, without ♙d2 having been played or in fact ever being played.



Hikaru Nakamura: surprisingly played 7.Bd2

B) 7.♗ge2 is preferred by most experts, in particular Sergey Volkov, who is represented in the Mega database with countless 4.f3 games, plays this (till 2003 he still used 7.♙d2). Postny now considers four moves for Black: 7...♗h5, 7.exd5, 7...♙e8, 7...b5.

A little knowledge is required in the case of 7...♗h5. First 8.g4 ♗h4+ 9.♗d2 ♗f6 and now one should go into the endgame with 10.♙e1!

At this point only the most frequently played move is gone into in more detail: 7...b5. White then moves his knight away from e2. 8.♗f4 is intended to provoke 8...e5, but it is not clear whether that is really necessary and whether it is in White's favour.

After 8.♗g3 things are quieter: 8...bxc4 9.♙xc4 ♗a5 and Postny now analyses on the DVD the as yet unplayed 10.0-0. Black should not accept the pawn sacrifice (10...♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♗xc3 12.♙b3! – see the analysis in the database), but 10...♙a6. Practice will have to show whether that equalises.

Conclusion: There are still a lot of blanks in the theory of this variation. As Evgeny Postny writes, engines sometimes overrate Black's prospects.