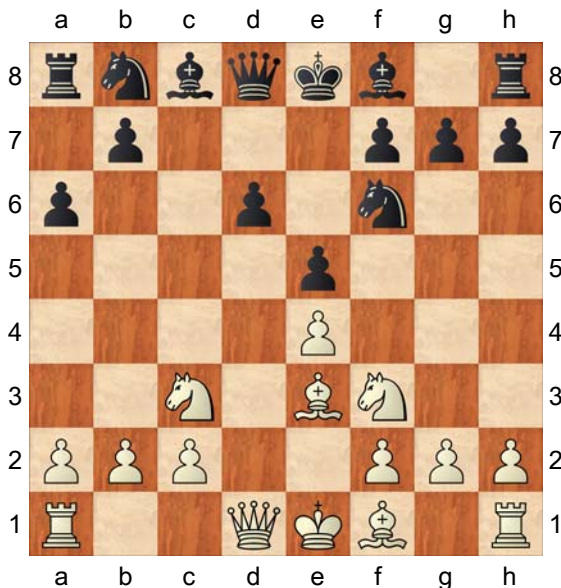


Najdorf Sicilian **Focus on the Critical d5 Squar**

One the most common openings in the past 50 years is the Najdorf variation of the Sicilian Defense. The Najdorf offers many different possibilities, starting from extremely sharp, poison pawn variation (1. e4, c5 2. nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bg5 e6 7. f4 Qb6 8. Qd2 Qxb2!) to extremely positional lines (1. e4, c5 2. nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be2 e5 7. Nb3 ...) Somewhere between those two lines is the following position, which I will try to explain. 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nf3 Diagram

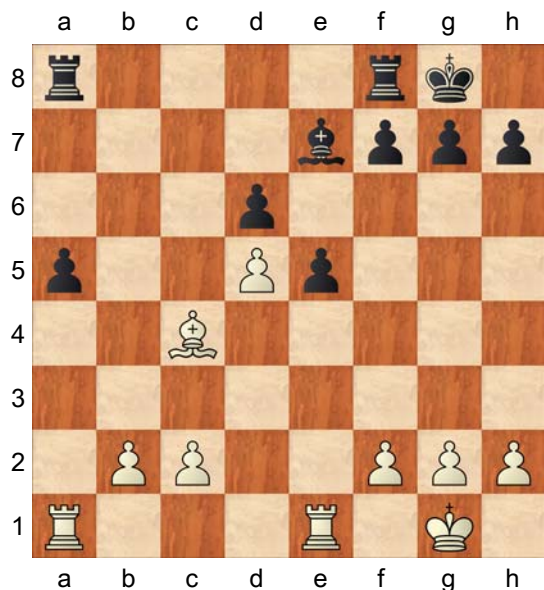


If we look deeply at this pawn structure, we can agree that black has a backward d6 pawn that can come under attack from white's minor and major pieces on the d file, at some point in the future. He also has a "weak" d5 square, that no black pawn can control. What is the strategical battle in this position? White

will try to keep full control over the d5 square, and try to maintain the possibility of placing and keeping a piece on d5. Fully controlling the d5 square allows white to affect both sides of the board. In order to assure that control, white wants to trade off black pieces that can control d5. For example, he wants to play with Bg5, in order to trade off the Knight on f6. He also will increase the number of his own pieces that can control d5, with maneuvers like bishop to c4, then b3, and the knight on f3 going to d2-c4-e3. It seems that white has full control of the situation. So why does black choose to create this pawn structure? The answer is because this is one of the rare Sicilian pawn structures that gives the black side a slight space advantage. So what is black's goal? Black will try to control d5 with pieces as much as he can, along with two possible ideas. One is to not allow white to keep a piece on d5. If white has to recapture on d5 with the e4 pawn, then the pressure down the d file vanishes. This pawn structure we can judge as playable for both sides, and the result of the game will result in who plays better chess. The second, and better plan for black is to be able to push the d pawn to d5. That move (d6-d5) played at the right moment usually allows a strong initiative for black. Qc7 The main idea of this move is that black prevents the white bishop from coming to c4. (where it can help control d5) Other possibilities in this position are:
 7...b5 trying to put the bishop on b7 to help control d5.;
 7...h6 to prevent the removal of the Knight on f6.;

7...Be6 like b5, to increase control of d5.; 7...Be7 is a main line. Its a flexible line which doesn't declare black's plan on how he will try to control d5. 8.a4 Be7 [8...Be6 Kamsky - Kovacevic, Plovdiv 2010; An interesting game in which black tried to play d5-d6 without proper preparation. 9.a5 Qc6 an extra piece to support the move d5 10.Ng5 Nbd7 11. Ra4! since d5 is unstoppable, white wants to have his rook active across the 4th rank. 11...d5 12.exd5 Bxd5 13.Nxd5 Nxd5 14.Qf3 N7f6 (14...Qxa4 15.Qxf7+ Kd8 16.Ne6+ Kc8 17.Qe8#) 15.Rc4 Qd7 16.Bd3 Bb4+ 17.Ke2! Nxe3 18.fxe3! full control of the d4 and f4 square. The rook, queen, knight, and bishop fully control all the important light squares. 18...Bxa5 19.Rc5 Bb4 20.Rxe5+ Be7 21.Rf1 Qc7 22.Qf5 Rd8 23.Rf4 Qd7 24.Rd4 Qc7? Qc8 is the only move. 25.Rde4 Rd7 26. Rxe7+ Rxe7 27.Rc4 With the rook coming to c8, white is easily winning.] 9.a5 The main move, to take space on the queenside. Nbd7 10.Be2 0-0 11.0-0 b5! In my opinion this is absolutely the best move. [Possible is 11...Nc5, Statistics say black has a good result percentage wise here. However, I very much doubt this can be a good move. It does not fight for the d5 square! Regardless of the database, I do not believe it can be good. 12.Nd2 Be6 13. Bf3 preventing d6-d5 13...Rfd8 (Sixty four years ago, this was played. Tolush - Bronstein Parma 1947 13...Rac8 14.Qe2 h6 15.Rfd1 Qc6 16.Ra3! Keeping the knight on c3. 16...Rfe8 17.Rc1 Bf8 18.b4 Ncd7 19.Qd3 Qc7 20.Nd5 Bxd5 21.exd5 Qd8 22.c4 Qe7 23.Qb1 e4 24.Be2 With the better position for white. In this game, the legendary Bronstein managed to win

it in the end.) (Bologan - Safarli, Reggio Emilia 2010) 14.b4 Nb3 15.Nd5 Nxd5 (Perhaps better is: 15...Bxd5 16.cxb3 Be6 17.Bb6 Qc3 18.Bxd8 Rxd8 19.b5 axb5 20.Qe2 d5 and black could have excellent compensation for white material advantage.) 16.exd5 Nxa1 17. dxe6 d5 18.exf7+ Kf8 (18...Kxf7 19.Qxa1 d4 20.Qa2+ Kf8 21.Bh5 g6 22.Bh6+) 19. Qxa1 d4 20.Ne4 dxe3 21.fxe3 With excellent compensation, and great initiative for white.] 12.axb6 Nxb6 13.Nd2 a5! does not allow the maneuver Nb3-Na5, and taking space on the queenside. 14.Bxb6 [Possibly better is 14.Nb5 Qb7 again, controlling d5. 15.c4 Bd7 16.Nc3 a4 17.Qc2 Rfc8 18.Qd3 Bc6 with an unclear position. In the main game, the move Bxb6 is clearly an attempt by white to draw.] Qxb6 15.Nc4 Qc5 16.Nd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5 Qxd5 18.exd5 Ba6 19.Rfe1 Bxc4 20.Bxc4 Diagram

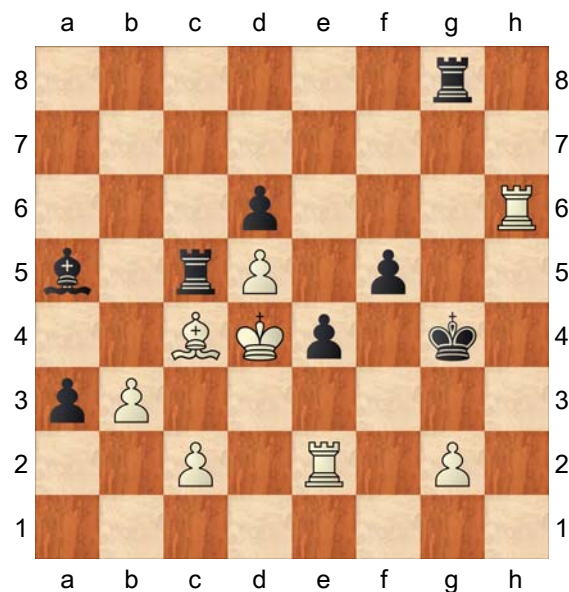


This position is very interesting. It seems to be absolutely equal (it probably is), material is equal and opposite colored bishops are left on the board.

But.... black has an excellent pawn set up, that allows him the chance to play for a win. Why? If the black bishop comes to c5, he will threaten the white kingside, while helping white's a5 and d6 pawns keep back white's b, c and d pawns. So material will be equal, but black's 4 versus 3 pawns on the kingside will have chances to advance. This could create pressure on the king, or create pawn weaknesses that could be exploited. Rfc8 21.b3 Bd8! on his way to c5 22.Ra4 f5 23.f3 Kf7! 24.Kf1 Kf6 Black's King is much more centralized than Whites. 25.Ke2 Rc5 26.Kd3 Rac8 27.Re2 Bb6 Black slowly has improved his pieces to their ideal position, and now is ready to play with the kingside pawns. 28.Ra1 h5 29.Rf1 R5c7! The bishop's diagonal is open, and the rooks are positioned to be flexible. 30.Ra1 g6 using one of the main principals of the endgame. DON'T HURRY! 31.Ra2 Rc5 32.Ra4 g5 33.h3 Rg8 34.Ra1 g4 35.hxg4 hxg4 36.Rh1 Kg5! The black king penetrates to attack on the weak dark squares, and goes after the pawns on f3 and g2. 37.Kd2 a4 possibly creating a passed pawn. 38.fxg4 Kxg4 39.Rh6 Ba5+ 40.Kd3 e4+ 41.Kd4 a3! Diagram

(Diagram)

As you can see, the white pieces are passive, and without any active coordination. Black's pieces are all active and threatening something. 42.c3 Bb6 43.Rxd6 a2 44.Re1 Rc6+ 45.Ke5 Bf2! the winning move. Black's passed a pawn is unstoppable because the King on e5 is misplaced. 46.dxc6 Bxe1



47.Rd1 Bxc3+ 48.Ke6 Rg7 49.Kd5
White Resigned.

0-1