



COLUMNISTS

*From the Archives*Hosted by
Mark Donlan

From the Archives...

Since it came online over eight years ago, [ChessCafe.com](#) has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

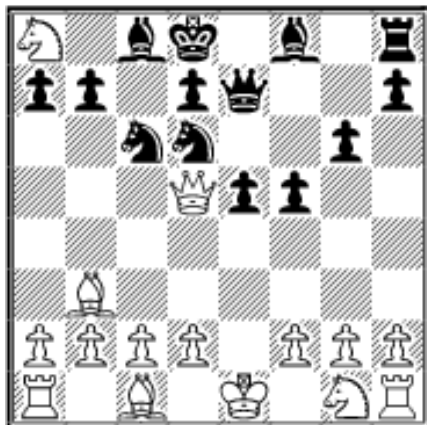
Watch for an item to be posted online at least once each week, usually on Thursday or Friday. We will update the [ChessCafe](#) home page whenever there has been a "new" item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

The Kibitzer by Tim Harding

Frankenstein and Dracula at the Chessboard

Not long after Christmas, I first got online and discovered the chess newsgroups. One of the earliest postings I read was in a thread about the Vienna Game where somebody raised the question: “what was the Frankenstein-Dracula Variation and how did it get its name?” I am to blame for inventing the name and since the variation is good coffee-house chess, what better starting point for my new column at [ChessCafe](#)?

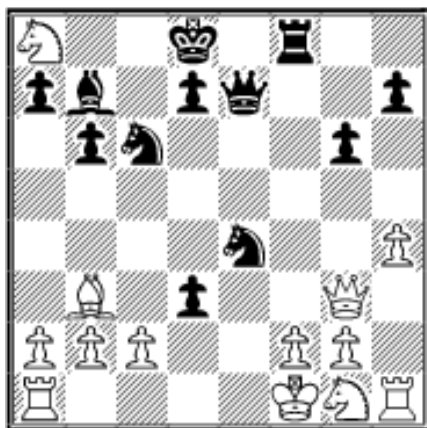
The variation arises after 1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Bc4 (or the way I used to play it, 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 Nc3) and soon gets very blood-thirsty: 3...Nxe4!? 4 Qh5 (threatening mate in one move) 4...Nd6 (defending f7) 5 Bb3 (Black gets a respite for one move.) 5...Nc6 (Not forced, but necessary if Black wants to keep his extra pawn.) 6 Nb5! (threatening mate in two) 6...g6 7 Qf3 f5 (Probably better than 7...f6) 8 Qd5 (continuing the crude threats to f7) 8...Qe7 (best) 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8.



Black has, temporarily, sacrificed a whole rook but of the course the white knight is unlikely ever to emerge from a8, except sometimes to exchange itself for a black pawn on b6. So, in effect, the Frankenstein-Dracula Variation is an exchange sacrifice by Black, about which it is hard to come to definite conclusions. After the normal 10...b6 White has tried a host of moves: 11 Nf3, 11 d4, 11 d3, 11 Nxb6, 11 Qf3.

In the first chess book I wrote, *Bishop's Opening* (published by The Chess Player of Nottingham, England in 1973), I discussed this variation and said (on page 45) that: 'One thing is certain: after 5...N-B3 sharp and often hair-raising play is inevitable; in this chapter a game between Dracula and the Frankenstein Monster would not seem out of place.' The colourful name seemed to catch on, and when I returned to analysing this line again in my 1976 book on the Vienna Opening (also published by Chess Player), the relevant chapter was called Frankenstein-Dracula Variation and began with the sentence: "If the Frankenstein Monster and Count Dracula were to sit down to a game of chess, what would happen?" Later B.H.Wood had published in his magazine *Chess* [December 1978, pp.82-85] a fanciful story in which I indeed imagined such an encounter, written in the form of an excerpt from Jonathan Harker's diary that Bram Stoker supposedly cut from the published version of his novel *Dracula*.

My article included four games with the variation, purportedly played at the Borgo Pass Open in Transylvania. In case you are wondering who won: the Frankenstein-Dracula game followed Hansen-Nunn, student Olympiad 1974: 1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nxe4 4 Qh5 Nd6 5 Bb3 Nc6 6 Nb5 g6 7 Qf3 f5 8 Qd5 Qe7 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 b6 11 d3 Bb7 12 h4 f4 13 Qf3 Bh6 14 Qg4? e4! 15 Bxf4 exd3+ 16 Kf1 Bxf4 17 Qxf4 Rf8 18 Qg3 Ne4!



19 Qc7+ Ke8 20 Nh3 Nxf2 21 Nxf2 Qe2+ 22 Kg1 Qxf2+ 23 Kh2 Qxh4+ 24 Kg1 Qd4+ 25 Kh2 Ne5 26 Rhf1 Ng4+ 27 Kg3 [If 27 Kh1 Bxg2+! 28 Kxg2 Ne3+ and mates.] 27...Qe3+ 28 Kxg4 h5+ 29 Kh4 g5+ 30 Kxh5 Rh8+ 31 Kg6 Be4+ 32 Rf5 Bxf5+ 33 Kxf5 Rf8+ 34 Kg6 Qe4+ 35 Kg7 Qe7+ 36 Kg6 Qf6+ 37 Kh5 Qh8+.

I now quote from my story in *Chess*: "At this point, where the Count had forced mate in his grasp, something happened which even now I do not understand ... Was it the tiny crucifix around the neck of the white king which only now did Dracula in horror espy?"

Was it the morning's first ray of sunshine gleaming in through the shutters? ..."

Dracula then flees in the shape of a bat; the Frankenstein Monster plays 38 Kg4 and duly wins on time in an utterly lost position. At the time I wrote that article, many people thought that Nunn had put the variation out of business, but it has enjoyed a revival in correspondence tournaments in recent years. Instead of 14 Qg4?, White can play 14 Bd2 (My old recommendation 14 Ne2 leads only to equality.) 14...e4 (or 14...Nd4 15 Qg4 transposing to Nielsen-Altshuler, below) 15 dxe4 Nd4 (or 15...Nxe4 16 0-0-0 Rf8 17 Bd5) 16 Qd3 with some advantage to White according to Russian analysts Tseitlin and Glazkov in their 1995 Batsford book *The Complete Vienna*.

This is not primarily a theoretical article, but I may return to look at the variation in detail in a subsequent column. I would be interested in hearing of readers' experiences with the variation or any light they can throw on the historical points discussed below.

What was the origin of this variation? Despite its hectic plunge into early complications, this is no 19th century romantic gambit. White's approach of provoking sacrifices which he then hopes to refute by a combination of alert defence and well-timed counterattack is based ultimately on the belief that he can exploit the insecure position of the black king in the centre rather than on any intention to win on material. This approach to the opening, linked to specific middlegame tactical problems, is far more complex than that of the gambiteer and is a typical late 20th century strategy. Most of the games in my database are postal games and some Soviet over-the-board games from post-1950 and the earliest example I have found of 6 Nb5 (a move mentioned by von Bardeleben) is the game Mieses-Burn, Paris 1900, in which Black played 7...Nf5 instead of 7...f5. Then 7...f6 was seen in Viachirev-Rozenkrantz, St Petersburg 1909 and another Viachirev game went 7...f5 8 Qd5 Qf6.

Unfortunately, I currently do not have access to some of the most important source material I used in researching the Bishop's Opening and Vienna Game in the 1970s – the chess collection bequeathed by historian H.J.R.Murray to Oxford University's Bodleian Library, notably the Schlechter edition of Bilguer's *Handbuch des Schachspiels*, the precursor of ECO. However, I do have Mieses' 1921 supplement in which on pages 30-31 (without citing any game references) he gives this line: 6 Nb5 g6 7 Qf3 f5! 8 Qd5 Qe7 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 b6 11 Qf3 Bb7 12 Nxb6 axb6 13 d3 Nd4 14 Qh3 f4! with advantage to Black. In a note, he says 11 Qf3 is 'probably best. Unfavourable for White is 11 Nf3 Bb7 and Black has a strong attack. The whole variation is not recommended for White.' Of course, Mieses fails to pinpoint White's best approach and it is only with the development of the 11 d3 line that the first player began to score successes in the variation. On the rare occasions the Frankenstein-Dracula appeared in master play, it was often mishandled by White so this has been a good case where amateurs and minor masters have done most to develop the theory.

The earliest game I have found with 8...Qe7 leading to Black's rook sacrifice is Weaver Adams v Lyman, Boston 1946; Adams indeed played 11 d3 Bb7 12 h4 (12...f4 13 Nd5 Nd4 14 Qh3?! Bh6 and Black eventually won) so he may be the

one who deserves credit for pioneering this plan. It appears to have been developed independently by American players like Adams and Santasiere and by several obscure Russian players before it was used to good effect in the 1960s by the Danish correspondence master Julius Nielsen, notably in his win against R. Altshuler in the final of the 5th Correspondence World Championship:

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Bc4 Nxe4 4 Qh5 Nd6 5 Bb3 Nc6 6 Nb5 g6 7 Qf3 f5 8 Qd5 Qe7 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 b6 11 d3 Bb7 12 h4 f4 13 Qf3 Nd4



(Generally more popular than 13...Bh6 as played by Nunn in the game above) 14 Qg4 Bh6 15 Nh3 N6f5 16 Ng5 Bxg5 17 hxg5 f3 18 g3 e4 19 Be3 Nxe3 20 fxe3 f2+ 21 Kf1 Nf3 22 Qf4 d6 23 Qf6 Nd2+ 24 Ke2 Qxf6 25 gxf6 Nxb3 26 axb3 exd3+ 27 cxd3 Bxh1 28 Rxh1 Kd7 29 g4 h5 30 gxh5 gxh5 31 e4 Rxa8 32 Rxh5 Ke6 33 Rf5 Kf7 34 Rxf2 Rh8 35 b4 Rh5 36 Ke3 Rb5 37 Kd4 1-0.

In recent years, Black has tended to develop his bishop on g7 rather than h6. To

conclude, here is a recent example, from the 1994 British Postal Teams Championship, J.J. Carleton-J.A. Tait: 1 Nc3 Nf6 2 e4 e5 3 Bc4 Nxe4 4 Qh5 Nd6 5 Bb3 Nc6 6 Nb5 g6 7 Qf3 f5 8 Qd5 Qe7 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 b6 11 d3 Bb7 12 h4 f4 13 Qf3 Nd4 14 Qg4 Bg7 15 Bd2 Bxa8 16 Nh3 (Formerly 16 0-0-0, 16 h5 and 16 c3 had been tried here) 16...N6f5 17 Ng5 h5 18 Qh3 Rf8 19 c3 Nxb3 20 Qxh4 Nxb3 21 axb3 Bf6 22 Rxa7 Bxg2 23 Qh2 1-0.



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2004 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.