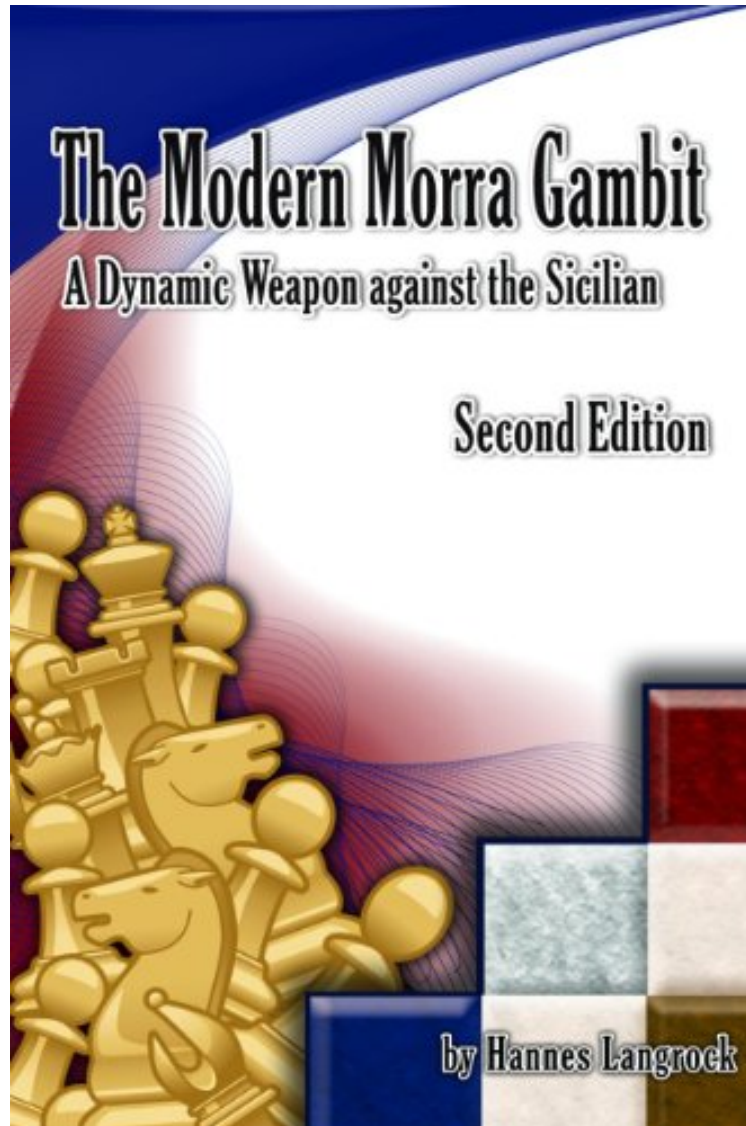


The Modern Morra Gambit: A Dynamic Weapon against the Sicilian

Hannes Langrock

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Hannes Langrock : The Modern Morra Gambit: A Dynamic Weapon against the Sicilian before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Modern Morra Gambit: A Dynamic Weapon against the Sicilian:

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By Frederick The pawn sacrifice 1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.Nxc3 against the Sicilian Defense is known as the Morra Gambit after the Frenchman who advocated it several decades ago, or (usually in the U.S.) as the Smith-Morra Gambit, referring to the late Ken Smith, a Senior Master who was a staunch advocate of the gambit, but scored 0-3 with it at the San Antonio 1972 international chess tournament. The gambit is usually ridiculed by grandmasters, but has many advocates among lesser players. White gets some play for a pawn, though probably not quite enough if Black knows what he is doing. If he doesn't (and many amateurs won't), White has excellent chances to score a swashbuckling tactical victory.

Langrock's book is far and away the best book ever written on the gambit. It is also the most objective: Langrock, although an advocate of the gambit, tries hard to be even-handed in his assessments. Unlike some other authors, he admits when a line is good for Black. For example, Langrock admits that Black has scored a staggering 12.5 out of 13 games after 4...Nc6 5.Nf3 d6 6.Bc4 a6 7.0-0?! (his assessment; he recommends 7.Bg5 Nf6 8.Bxf6) Nf6 8.Qe2 Bg4! 9.Rd1 e6 10.Bf4 Qb8! 11.h3 Bxf3 12.Qxf3 Be7. He also admits that some lines that other analysts have pronounced weak, such as the fianchetto variation with an early ...g6, and the "Chicago Variation" with ...a6, ...b5, and ...Ra7-d7, are sufficient for equality with best play. He even acknowledges that 4...Nc6 5.Nf3 e5, which has been almost universally condemned, may be playable. Langrock also has a great deal of original analysis.

The only serious problem with the book is its organization. Langrock buries two important lines (the aforementioned 6...a6, which he calls "the notorious 6...a6!?") and the Finegold Defense (with ...d6, ...e6, ...Nf6, ...a6, and ...Nbd7) on pages 278 and 248 of Chapter 10, entitled "Sidelines," where they are very difficult to find. This is a very odd placement, since Langrock calls the Finegold Defense "very important" and, as noted above, admits that Black has scored 12.5-.5 in what has been considered the main line of "the notorious 6...a6!?" Notorious, indeed. The Finegold Defense was the subject of a well-reviewed book by Bob Ciaffone and International Master Finegold (one of the highest-rated IM's in the world), while Grandmaster Joe Gallagher recommends 6...a6 in his popular book "Beating the Anti-Sicilians." Despite this flaw, anyone interested in playing the Morra Gambit should certainly get this book. Devotees of the Sicilian may also want to get it to see what their gambit-playing opponents will be reading. Anyone who gets this book should also read the reviews by IM's John Donaldson, Jeremy Silman, and John Watson, available on the Internet, all of which further the theoretical discussion.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. a bible

By Peter J. Savino great book well written effort of love of the game two thumbs way upeasy to read and follow all lines and sub-varies there

The Dynamic Morra Uncompromising Aggression versus the Sicilian

When the first edition appeared more than five years ago, FM Hannes Langrock's groundbreaking work breathed new life into a gambit that conventional wisdom viewed as no more than a nuisance for Black. A nuisance?! Au contraire! As noted by German grandmaster Karsten Mller, "The Morra Gambit is well-suited for players striving for tactical and uncompromising play, as Whites better development often leads to a dangerous initiative. Furthermore, traditional Sicilian players may be taken by surprise and removed from their main line repertoire." In this completely revised second edition, the author probes the secrets of this gambit with tactical acuity and strategic objectivity. He concludes that "Most of Blacks defensive systems objectively offer acceptable prospects in a complicated battle. Nevertheless, I can promise that every talented attacking player who studies the Morra Gambit will achieve excellent practical results. The positions that arise are extremely difficult to play, especially if the defender is not familiar with them."

About the Author Hannes Langrock is a German International Master living in Hamburg. He has played the Morra Gambit successfully against both grandmasters and international masters. He has been a regular contributor to ChessBase and co-author, with Karsten Mller and Matthias Wahls, of *The Modern Scandinavian*. In 2002, he was the winner of the German Individual Cup.