



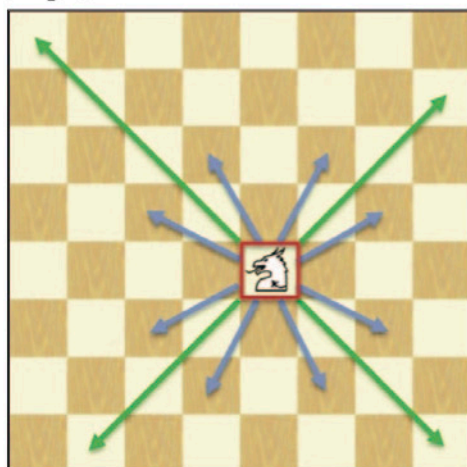
The Chess of the Dragon



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*In this article, I would like to introduce you to a **new chess piece: The dragon, half knight and half bishop**; and the rules behind the “Dragon Chess” as we have baptized such new modality.*

As well as the queen, which moves as **rook** and **bishop**, the **dragon** combines the movements of both **knight** and **bishop**, quite normally. The rules developed for its introduction and use are very simple:



We use the standard chessboard and the standard initial position of the pieces, while having the new piece as a reserve, one dragon per each player.

The **dragon** can enter the game by placing it in any free square of the first rank, at any time each player considers it appropriate, where such action would stand as one move. Furthermore, as it happens with the **queen**, a player can promote a **dragon**, no matter how many of them are in play.

Note: before anyone calls me heretic or throw up their hands in horror, **I beg you at least to read the following paragraph.**

ORTHODOXY AND INNOVATION

I do consider myself as a great advocate for chess traditions. For example, I do not like the **Fischer Random**, since in my opinion the game loses its natural harmony when changing the initial square of the pieces.

I edit and manage the last “old-fashioned paper” chess magazine in Spanish language worldwide, so I can be defined not only as an orthodox, but even a romantic!

RULES AND ADVANTAGES

Dragon = knight + bishop

It starts as a reserve piece and enters in the game by the first rank.

It revolutionizes the openings and features amazing combinations without the involvement of any chess engine.

¿QUEEN OR DRAGON?



*An interesting debate arises from the relative value of the **dragon** over the **queen**.*

*At first thinking, one can assume that since the **rook** is stronger than the **knight**, so must be the **queen** over the **dragon**.*

*However, the **dragon** is like a flying **knight**, and the **knight** is the most enigmatic and difficult piece to handle in chess, with its ability to jump. Also, do not forget that a **knight** check cannot be covered.*

*The **dragon** inherits such features from the **knight**, correcting its weakest point, which is the slowness to move from one point to the other along the chessboard. Still, a **queen** is a **queen**!*

Queen or Dragon?

What do you think?

But, without pretending to replace the classical chess at all, "**Dragon Chess**" may be very well welcomed. Firstly, as a main alternative to have a good time or escaping from the routine; secondly as an intellectual challenge of great attractive, but also as a powerful training tool for calculation and tactical ability.

I do believe that the simple rules that we have developed pay respect to the essence of our beloved game by preserving the harmony of the position and initial development. To sum up, I think the more you like classical chess, the more you will enjoy **Dragon Chess**.

CAPABLANCA'S CHESS

In the Issue 138 of *Peón de Rey*, I debated the idea of **Capablanca** who, after being tired of the ever-growing theoretical developments, proposed the introduction of a new piece which would move as knight and bishop, and to which I referred as the "**minister**".

To be fair, "*Capa*" wanted to give birth to two new pieces: the "**marshal**", which would move as rook and knight, and the "**chancellor**", which would move as bishop and knight. The Cuban GM developed a 10x10 square chessboard, which later was modified to 10 columns and 8 rows, so to not delay the contact between armies.

I have never liked the idea of extending the board in order to give space to new pieces, since the game loses its harmony. Even more, I dare to suppose that the game, especially at the opening, would become too complex to be understandable, with so many pieces from one side and the other ready to enter combat.

SEIRAWAN'S CHESS

In the year 2011, I read in **ChessBase** website an interview conducted by **Ana Matnadze** to American GM **Yasser Seirawan**, in which he explained his proposal to enter Capablanca's pieces, to which he changed their name for "**elephant**" and "**hawk**" as reinforcements of the first rank, an idea which I have considered a long time ago.

In Seirawan's chess, when white plays 1.♘f3, white player can place a reinforcement piece in the g1 square as part of the move. Therefore, each player has eight opportunities to enter the two pieces.



Yasser claimed that his modification of chess was highly funny, and I agree with that; but still it seemed to me that the game would quickly turn into an unnatural and hardly understandable course for most human beings.

Hard enough is normal chess as for to add **two elephants** and **two hawks** at first sight!

THE CHESS OF THE DRAGON

After a while, the idea of **Dragon Chess** became to evolve in my head. Frankly, I should admit, I only imagined such after seeing "**Game of Thrones**". However, I soon understood that the figure of such mythological creature fitted perfectly with the features of the new piece. In the same line of thinking as **Seirawan** imagined the flight of a **hawk**, even more reasonable was to depict it as a **dragon**, since this new piece featured an enormous potential, as we will promptly test. In order to not filling up the whole board, each player has a **dragon** in reserve, and we prevent ourselves from using the "**marshal**" or "**elephant**" while keeping the complexity of the game as manageable.

The main novelty, and an improvement of **Seirawan's Chess** in my opinion, is the way the new piece enters the game: each player has the freedom of introducing the dragon in any square of the first rank, at any moment during the whole game. This endows the game with a high strategic enrichment, while at the same time allows the development of natural play in the opening.

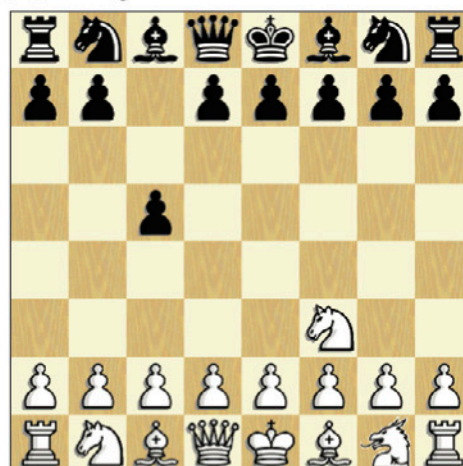
THE DRAGON IN THE OPENING

According to my experience, the opening must be played following the classical chess rules: development, center and space, with a fast castling. It is unclear if including the **dragon** early in the game may be a good idea.

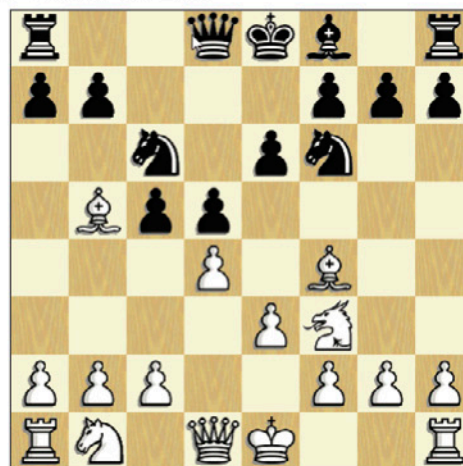
The following game is one of the first I played against **Alberto Bañón**, creator of the **App of The Dragon**. My opponent introduces the **dragon** early at the second move, and, after some inaccurate play by black, his **dragon** will land perfectly placed in the f3 square.

Alberto Bañón – Miguel Illescas
App of the Dragon Test, 2019

1.♘f3 c5 2.♘g1



2...♘c6 3. d4 d5 4.♙f4 ♘f6 5.e3 ♙g4 6.♙b5 e6
7.♙e2 ♙xf3? 8.♙xf3



One of the things I like most about this modality is that we cannot ask for an engine opinion! But my intuition tells me that White should be better here, since in addition to the bishop pair he is ahead in development, with the dragon occupying a central square in which it enjoys great activity.

8...♙d6 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.♙xd6 ♖xd6 11.♙e5



In my fight for survival, I had anticipated this response from Alberto. It was time to restore the balance of forces on the board, although this implied a decision that would lead to a scenario full of uncertainty.

11...♙b8!

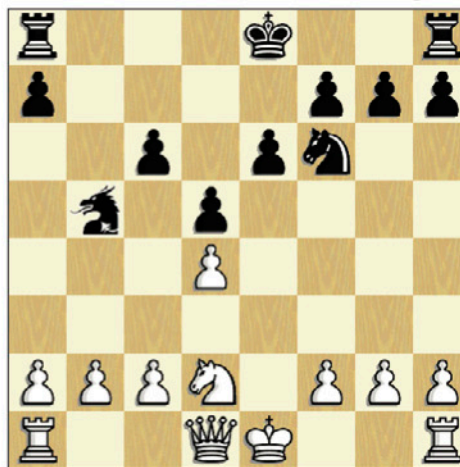


I offer my queen in exchange for his dragon, so as not to delay my development. It is not I thought the exchange was favorable, but I did not see anything better. The game continued:

12. ♙xd6+ ♙xd6 13. ♙d2 cxd4 14. e3xd4 ♙b5

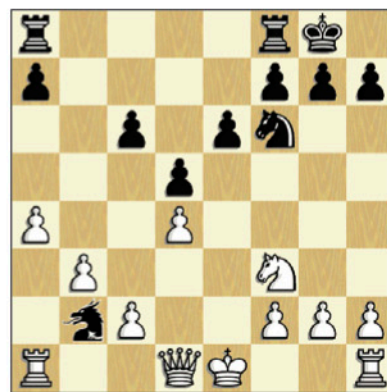
ATTACKING WITH THE DRAGON

CAs many readers may already have guessed, the dragon is a piece with an enormous attacking potential, as we can see in the following analysis:



With my last move, I activated my Dragon: it tackles the d4 square while prevents enemy from castling. I remember calculating variations such as 15.♙f3 0-0 16.a4 ♙c4 17.b3 ♙b2!?

Analysis Diagram

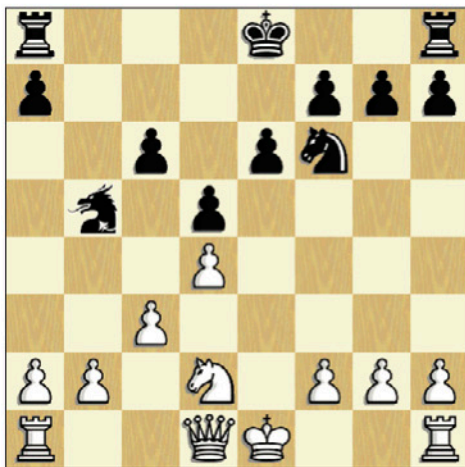


The analysis diagram above shows the agility of the Dragon during the melee combat. If 18.♙b1 then it follows the upsetting 18...♙c3+.

I thought the best for White was 18.0-0, allowing the exchange of his queen for the fearsome black dragon, when in that case we would reach an endgame where I kept the hope of getting some advantage by achieving the c5 breakthrough.

To my surprise, White replied with the worst possible move. Surely, Alberto had not paid much attention and quickly dispatched his turn, since it was about trying the app.

15.c3??



Like a lightning falling over a clear sky, the dragon's fury came. Fire and death onto the careless white monarch.

15... d3 mate.



The dragon covers f1 and e2 as bishop, while checks and mates as knight.

The era of the dragon has begun!



App of the Dragon, by Alberto Bañón

The interested reader can download the app for Windows created by our collaborator Alberto Bañón.

You can play games on your own computer—ideal for use in schools—or challenge any friend to a game via email.

