All,  
We have been discussing the Kan variation of the Sicilian Defence as of late. I have demonstrated in two consecutive games how black should approach the opening. In those games, I have illustrated the objectives of the defence and the failures in the white approach to defeat black’s long-term aspirations.  
Here, I provide an example on how white is best to tackle the Kan variation. An aggressive, direct king-side attack is often the best way to conquer such a strong defence as the Kan.  
In this particular game, we will see a rarity, in that I have to attack my opponent and sacrifice a piece to get the tactics rolling. The king hunt has many tactics involved and I will think that you will enjoy a very lovely methodical game.

[Event "Woodhouse Cup 2012-2013"]

[Site "York, ENG"]

[Date "2012.10.27"]

[Round "3.2"]

[White "Ross, Chris"]

[Black "Dannenberg, James"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "B43"]

[WhiteElo "2247"]

[BlackElo "2125"]

[PlyCount "83"]

[EventDate "2012.10.27"]

[WhiteTeam "York A"]

[BlackTeam "Bradford Central"]

{B42: Sicilian: Kan Variation}  
1. e4 c5

2. Nf3 e6

3. d4 cxd4

4. Nxd4 a6   
{There is always a slight queer feeling in me when I have to face my own defences. Luckily, I have variations, which I know tackle black’s plans. Naturally, I believe that black can equalise in many of them, and hence, why I adopt the Defence on a regular basis. However, accuracy is required to achieve that equality.}  
5. Bd3  
{The most direct response to the Kan. I have faced this position many times as white and have studied it in depth. White is intent on a king-side attack and places his pieces on the most aggressive squares.}  
5... Nc6  
6. Nxc6   
{Played in the style of Fischer himself. White voluntarily exchanges this knight, as it is often a tactical liability, as I have duly demonstrated in my own games as black. The retreat to b3 is slow and passive, whereas the more direct exchange puts the question to black’s central pawn mass.}  
6... bxc6  
7. c4   
{Clamping down on the d5 square. This move restricts black somewhat in his mobility. Black has several choices now and needs to decide on how he wishes his central pawns are to be best placed.}  
7... Nf6   
8. O-O   
{Naturally, 8. E5? Is a blunder as the E-pawn drops off after 8... Qa5+, a neat trick, which I have executed on a number of occasions.}   
8... d5   
{Played in the style of Petrosian. Here, an in depth study of the Fischer-Petrosian game in the Buenos Aires Candidates Final match in 1971 (see below in the opening references), will provide one an excellent understanding of the opening. Accordingly, I do not play Fischer’s continuation, fearing that my opponent has something prepared. I enter into a line I have studied myself and believe it to be a good continuation.}  
9. Nd2 Be7   
10. Qc2 h6   
{I feel this to be a bit of a luxury. Black has to prevent e4-e5 tactics with h7 dropping off, but the pr3 move seems too slow. White can now complete development and begin to formulate a plan.}   
11. b3 O-O   
12. Bb2 a5   
{With the intension of developing the light-squared bishop on a6. I’m unsure to the bishop’s effectiveness on a6, but I am not wanting to exchange light-squared bishops so easily.  
Time for a plan and to figure out a way to continue with the king-side attack.}  
13. cxd5 cxd5   
14. e5   
{Further exchanges on d5 open up the position and give black chances to equalise. The central files need to be kept closed, as it is the weakened black king-side, which is where I am aiming for. The spearhead on e5 makes black’s defences that more difficult to find.}  
14... Nd7  
{And it is here, where the first critical position is reached.

Let’s take some positional aspects into account here, before we begin to look at the king-side attack.  
The open C-file is naturally very attractive for me. If I can penetrate down onto the 7th rank, or even onto c6, white would be massively better. Although positionally desirable, it is not tactically viable at the moment.  
15. Qc6 seems tempting, but black has the startling 15... Bb7! Which took me a while to find. Annoyingly 16. Qxb7 Nc5 17. Qb5 Rb8 drops the bishop on d3, where the black knight is well placed and black has exchanged his horrible light-squared bishop for my strong one.  
15. Qc6 Nc5 16. Qxa8 Qb6 also gave me reason for concern. The white queen is trapped and although I can get two rooks for the lady, this variation is unnecessary.

Turning our attention to the king-side attack now, we need to consider whether white is obliged to use pawns to aid in his attack. F2-f4 seems natural, but what does it actually achieve? Pushing onto f5 could be played, but as long as black makes sure f5-f6 is not going to fatally weaken h6 (say if black is able to play Be7-f8), then, the launch of the F-pawn achieves little. G2-g4 is a sheer hack and deserves no further comment.

Therefore, it suggests itself that the white pieces are required to assault the black king.  
Next stage. The black minor pieces, namely, the light-squared bishop and the black knight.   
The light-squared bishop only has one effective square, that being on a6. On a6, this bishop would either exchange itself for white’s strong bishop or gain tempo on the rook on f1.  
The black knight does not have many squares. It can hop into c5, but from there, it has little hope. Penetrating into d3 is an option, but once again, from d3, it has no real prospects.  
Bringing all of that together then, white’s move and plan was easy to conceive. There is also another very subtle point to the text-move, but that does not come clear for another 12 moves! A hint to that little neat point is the sheer restricted and undefended nature of the black queen-side pieces.}  
15. Rfc1!  
{A deeply calculated move and a very powerful move to face. The rook is not needed behind the F-pawn, as that pawn is to remain on f2, closing up the g1-a7 diagonal, making the white king very safe indeed. The rook moves away from tempo-gaining bishop moves to a6. The white queen can sneak back around via d1 into g4 and head for the king-side, but more relevantly, and of critical importance, is that the rook on a1 is needed for a very delicate pin. More later.}   
15... Nc5   
{A natural move, but one that forces white to act aggressively. If black did not respond quickly, white would play Qc6 or Qc7 and dominate the C-file, with a clear and large positional plus.}  
16. Bh7+   
{White is not wanting to give up his lovely light-squared bishop for the black knight. It is too valuable for such an exchange. The black knight is sat well on c5 and needs to be chased away.}  
16... Kh8   
17. Bd4!  
{Sacrificing a bishop!  
There is another very important point to the move, but the immediate problem for black is that his knight on c5 cannot be supported. Retreats would permit the white light-squared bishop to scamper back to d3 and black has not resolved the problem of the open C-file and the future penetration down into c6 or c7.  
The most important point of the text-move though, is that the bishop is being brought to bear on the king-side and aid in the attack.}  
17... Na6  
18. Nf3   
{Extremely consistent. The white pieces are manoeuvred around to the king-side attack. The d4 outpost, in front of the passed pawn is secured, the e5 pawn safeguarded. The black minor pieces on the queen-side still have not found a way to untangle themselves. If white is permitted, he will play a2-a3 next move, to stop any of the black minor pieces coming into b4 and it would be difficult for black to move.  
Now, we see another very important reason to why the F-rook had to be brought to c1 and not the A-rook, as a2-a3 would be defended by the a1-rook.}  
18... Nb4

19. Qb1 g6   
{Trapping the white light-squared bishop. If black does nothing, white will simply play a2-a3 and ask the question of the black night, which does not have a good square to run to.}  
20. Bxg6 fxg6   
21. Qxg6 Bg5   
{Black cannot permit the h6 pawn to drop off, as this would give white 3 pawns for the piece and a continuing initiative.

Now we see the importance of my 17th move, for if white were to take on g5, black could recapture with the queen and secure things up. No, g5 needs to be hit again.}  
22. Be3   
{Thus, the dark-squared bishop is forced into the battle.   
22. A3 was tempting and I would have played this, if I had not found this continuation satisfactory enough. Again, it was about consistency in the piece play and the pressure that mattered to me.}  
22... Qe8   
{Sadly enough for black, he does not have any good responses here. The winning of the 3RD pawn is inevitable.  
22... Rg8 is neatly met by 23. Qf7 and the tactics are all white’s. 23... Rg7 24. Bxg5 hxg5 25. Qh5+ and white will round up either the G-pawn or hit the loose pawn on e6 with Nd4. Rc3 is also coming in for white.}  
23. Qxe8 Rxe8   
24. Nxg5 hxg5  
25. Bxg5   
{And the rest is sheer technique. White has three pawns for the piece, two connected passed pawns on the king-side, a potential one on the queen-side and possible king-hunts with Rc3/Rh3/Rg3. The 3RD rank is just as important for penetration as well as the 7TH rank. Finding a move now for black is just about impossible.}  
25... Ra7   
{Black was naturally worried about the white rook penetrating onto the 7TH rank, which was a threat. However, as stated, it is also possible to penetrate via the 3RD rank, which makes the move rather irrelevant. Now comes another feature, which I had perceived when playing my 15TH move. Although I had not seen the position or the precise trap, the general vague idea had occurred to me, helping me in the decision to move the F-rook, instead of the A-rook.}

26. a3 Na6   
{The natural retreat. Entering into d3 is bound to get into trouble, since the knight has no retreat squares.  
26... Nd3 27. Rc3 Ba6 28. Rd1 and white will simplify things down giving him a big advantage, where he will be the exchange down for three pawns.}   
27. b4!   
{White is keen on creating a passed pawn on the queen-side, to add to those which he has on the king-side. Having passed pawns on both sides of the board will make black’s job of defending everything, that much harder than he really wants. The point is though, that the black minor pieces are just in the way of each other and none of the queen-side pieces for black defend each other. They are actually on very vulnerable squares. The knight on a6 for instance has nowhere to go.  
26. Bd2 certainly came to mind, but I was reluctant to move the bishop away from the black king. I was convinced that a future Bf6 and a rook switch to the king-side was going to prove decisive.}  
27... axb4   
28. axb4 Rc7   
{As good as capitulating. White has all sorts of plans in this position. Ra3/Rh3/Rg3, or Ra5 and Rca1 and b4-b5 are all in the offing.}  
29. Rxc7 Nxc7   
30. Ra7   
{There is a fitting justice that it is the A-rook that penetrates onto the 7TH rank, after having rejected 15. Rac1 for the more accurate 15. Rfc1!}  
30... Nb5   
31. Bf6+ Kg8   
32. Rg7+ Kf8  
33. h4   
{Thus, the passed H-pawn runs down the board to seal the victory. Black could have resigned here with due dignity.}  
33... Nd4   
{Running the D-pawn achieves little, apart from its loss.   
33... d4 34. h5 d3 and if nothing else, 35. Rg3 rounds the pawn up. White will always have Bg5 to hit the d2 square if the pawn advances.}

34. h5 Nf5   
35. Rc7   
{35. Ra7 may have been more accurate, but I wanted to discourage black from playing Ne7. In that sense, Bxe7 would win the piece, since the c8 bishop would be left loose}  
35... Ba6   
{Again, advancing the D-pawn achieves little. White could even then push his queen-side pawn to cut out the black light-squared bishop. 35... d4 36. b5 d3 37. Kf1 seems a good enough continuation.}   
36. g4   
{36. H6 Nxh6 37. Bg7+ is another way to go, but I wished to remain as accurate as possible to the finish. I did not want to give black any small hope of saving the position.}  
36... Rc8   
{Another desperate effort to enter into an opposite-coloured bishop ending, where black may have drawing chances. White need not get involved in such complications though and can keep things extremely simple.}  
37. Ra7   
{Gaining tempo on the bishop and maintaining the 7TH rank. The white H-pawn is going to run home if not challenged quickly.}  
37... Be2

38. gxf5 Bxh5   
39. fxe6 Bg4   
{The win is trivial.}

40. Rf7+ Ke8   
41. Rg7 Bxe6   
42. Re7+   
{And having reached the time control, my opponent eventually resigned. A very instructive game.}  
42... 1-0

Opening references

A.  
10. Qe2 O-O 11. f4 dxe4 12. Nxe4 Rb8 13. Ng5 Bc5+ 14. Kh1 Bd4 15. Nf3 c5 16. Nxd4 cxd4 17. b3

Qd6 18. Bb2 Bb7 19. Rad1 Rbd8 20. h3 Rfe8 21. Qf2 e5 22. fxe5 Qxe5 23. Rde1 Qh5

24. Kg1 Be4

Kobalia,M (2625)-Asmundsson,I (2338)/Chalkidiki 2002/CBM 092/1/2-1/2 (50)

B.  
10... Bb7 11. b3 h6 12. Bb2 O-O 13. Rae1 a5 14. a3 Nd7 15. Qd1

Bf6 16. e5 Be7 17. Qg4 Re8 18. Re3 Bg5 19. f4 f5 20. exf6 Bxf6 21. Be5 Qb6

0-1 Lehmann,A (2181)-Malakhatko,V (2617)/Winterthur 2006/EXT 2007

C.  
[Event "Candidates final"]

[Site "Buenos Aires"]

[Date "1971.10.19"]

[Round "7"]

[White "Fischer, Robert James"]

[Black "Petrosian, Tigran V"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "B42"]

[WhiteElo "2760"]

[BlackElo "2640"]

[PlyCount "67"]

[EventDate "1971.09.30"]

[EventType "match"]

[EventRounds "9"]

[EventCountry "ARG"]

[Source "ChessBase"]

[SourceDate "1999.07.01"]

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 a6 5. Bd3 Nc6 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. O-O d5 8.

c4 Nf6 9. cxd5 cxd5 10. exd5 exd5 11. Nc3 Be7 12. Qa4+ Qd7 13. Re1 Qxa4 14.

Nxa4 Be6 15. Be3 O-O 16. Bc5 Rfe8 17. Bxe7 Rxe7 18. b4 Kf8 19. Nc5 Bc8 20. f3

Rea7 21. Re5 Bd7 22. Nxd7+ Rxd7 23. Rc1 Rd6 24. Rc7 Nd7 25. Re2 g6 26. Kf2 h5

27. f4 h4 28. Kf3 f5 29. Ke3 d4+ 30. Kd2 Nb6 31. Ree7 Nd5 32. Rf7+ Ke8 33. Rb7

Nxb4 34. Bc4 1-0

Chris Ross  
October 2012