

Eddy The Dragon Slayer I:

There is a cool feature from the USCF website where you can look up the “top opponent” of a player. As of now, Eddy’s top opponent is Ajith, a 8 years old Indian kid who started to learn chess when he was 5 years old, a big head-start vs Eddy, who started when he was almost 7.

In Oct 2014, the two kids had their first battle on the chess board and they have since played 7 formal games in total, every one of which a very intense battle between not only themselves but two chess dads. In the first couple of games, Eddy was still unrated and Ajith was U500. The game was pretty chaotic as expected, even coming out of the boring Italian opening. Tactics and blunders dominated these games and Eddy usually rises out of the fireworks as winner, until one day, Ajith played the Sicilian Dragon against Eddy and won.

Later I learned that Ajith’s dad is himself a good chess player, with USCF rating of U1900. Obviously he is strong enough to guide Ajith with the opening preparation against Eddy.

Thanks to that lose, Eddy had the opportunity to get out of the Single-Opening repertoire. He literally played the Giucco Piano with both white and black for a ridiculously long period of time. For some reason most kids in Princeton area played that opening as beginners. We studied the main lines of the Dragon, and Eddy defeated Ajith in the next tournament. Then his dad showed him some other lines of dragon, then Eddy lost – that’s Eddy’s 2nd lost to Ajith. To deal with Ajith, Eddy had very extensive study of the Dragon and became so good at it that he even beat some other player 200 higher rated with the opening. Since then I called him “Eddy the Dragon Slayer”.

At some point, we realized it’s impossible to prepare against all opening variations. The best way to step out of your opponent’s opening trap is to walk into out-of-book territories as soon as possible, even it means you are playing subpar moves according to the theories. After that, you’ll be playing real chess, instead of other people’s book preparation. The 3 wins Eddy had against Ajith after the 2nd lose were all very insane games with crazy sacrifices, some of them very unsound, but nevertheless, those moves really shocked Ajith and he couldn’t defend the coming checkmates. Each time we had the chance to play black, we always change our repertoire so he can’t prepare us. Ajith is a 1.d4 player – We played Benko, Nimzo and Kings Indian. It’s impossible to get to the detailed theories of each opening but at least as black, we can steer the direction of the opening more than white. Besides, what Eddy needs usually is not an opening that gives him a better position after the opening, he only needs a playable middle-game, even his position is slightly worse – most of the time his position is down a pawn or so after opening against Ajith, but that doesn’t seem to matter much because of his attacking style.

Eddy The Dragon Slayer II:

In the latest game with Ajith in the NJ Grade Championship, Eddy played white against Ajith. Ajith has been playing a version of Kan/Taimanov as black for the last several months. He stopped playing Dragon because he got crushed by Eddy the Dragon Slayer each time.

Right before the game, Ajith told Eddy that his dad prepared a very strong line of the Kan, even Caruana fell to this trap! Wow, that's a lot of psychological pressure! Ok, what he didn't know was, he will never get to play the Kan as he dreamed of, because we are going for an anti-sicilian opening! Ajith was obviously surprised by this very rare choice of opening by Eddy. The opening is known to for lack of punch for white – Eddy is known to be an attacking player, his dad would never dreamed of Eddy playing this opening. We spent 3 days before the tournament and got 8 lines prepared for Ajith. Eddy just blitzed out the opening moves quickly, and Ajith takes more and more time because his position got worse and worse, slowly but steadily. At around move 12, Eddy got an exchange up – the game was essentially over by that time because Eddy's endgame is very precise. But Ajith played on – many Indian kids have a no-resign policy as their dads force them to. Eddy wouldn't give him any chance to draw with exchange down. By move 40, Eddy sac-ed a piece so he can successfully promote a queen. That's the end of the game. Bravo for Eddy's creative yet robotic execution in the endgame. Bravo for our excellent job preparing the opening.

A good player need a good opponent so he can be challenged and grow. Until next time Ajith!