

Understanding the Chess Openings

Sam Collins

**How Modern Openings are Played:
A Comprehensive Guide**



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Sam Collins

GAMBIT

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
(D)	see next diagram

Introduction

If there's one thing I've discovered, it's my complete inability to write a decent introduction. Talking about things like 'the point of this book' or 'how to use this book' strikes me as ludicrous – the point of this book is to try to teach some stuff to a reader, and it is best used by reading some and preferably a lot of it. So now that I've confessed my shortcomings, I'll try to write something approaching an introduction, promising nothing except brevity.

In my limited coaching experience, I've often had to explain various openings to my students. Most of these openings I don't play myself, so I had to acquire some sort of working knowledge (from opening manuals, databases, player biographies, tournament reports, lectures and blitz games) into all the main variations likely to arise in my students' games. What I call 'working knowledge' is an understanding of where the pieces go and why they go there, a basic idea of what both sides want from a particular position and how they might try to get it. This kind of information used to be contained in books called opening primers, which died out for some reason. Perhaps people thought that, with the rapid growth of opening knowledge, a single relatively small volume couldn't deal with all the openings unless there was no explanation but just endless reams of variations. They could be right, but I think (and hope) that the opposite is the case – precisely because of the growth of chess data, when even club players have extensive databases, what is needed is a simple verbal introduction to each opening, coupled with some of the most important main lines and indicative variations. This is the way I try to explain openings to my students, and this is the way I've tried to write this book. So at its narrowest, this book consists of the notes I plan to refer to before I teach someone a specific opening – at its broadest, it's a series of lessons in openings for club players. I'm sure a lot of people at extremes of the rating spectrum won't get anything out of it – either because they find it too detailed or too simplistic – but hopefully most players in need of a general opening education will find this book sufficient to provide it.

Two points remain, one about me and one about you. First, this book is written by me, and while I would call it broadly objective it could still be called a personal view of modern openings. Accordingly, at certain points I mention alternatives to main-line theory or advocate sidelines which I think are more promising than well-trodden paths, and I warn the reader against certain lines, not because a top GM refuted it but because 'I don't like creating such a big centre before I'm fully developed' or something similar. I think I've always included the main variations even if I prefer alternatives, and when I'm expressing a personal opinion rather than theoretical 'fact' I've flagged it as such, but the conclusions drawn in this book should always be tested against the reader's own chess sensibilities, assimilated if they make sense and rejected if they don't. Second, I think this book makes sense (I'm in serious trouble if it doesn't) but it only makes complete sense in its entirety. Certain positions (for instance, involving an isolated queen's pawn) arise so often in so many openings that it wasn't practical to explain a typical position each time it came up – instead, a comment like 'with a typical IQP position' is all the reader gets, while the complete discussion of IQP positions is confined to the Nimzo-Indian section since this is the opening which creates this structure most often. Similarly

Maroczy Bind positions pop up all the time, but for a better understanding of them the reader should look to the discussion in the Sicilian section. So the book is best read as a whole, though not necessarily in any particular order – each section informs each other section to a certain extent, and I think this mirrors modern opening play, when a good idea in one context is quickly borrowed and applied in a bunch of other settings.

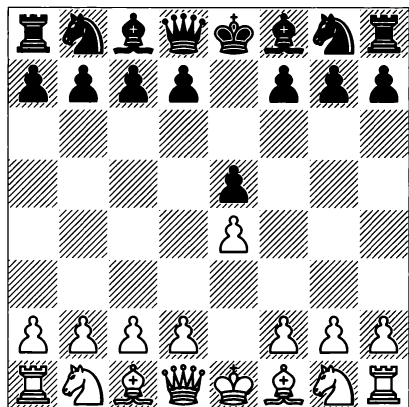
I'm in danger of breaking my promise. Hope you like the book.

Sam Collins
Dublin 2005

Section 1: Open Games

1 e4 e5 (D)

W



Open Games are the logical place to start both one's chess education and this book. 1 e4 has the following benefits:

1) It gains central control (of the d5-square).

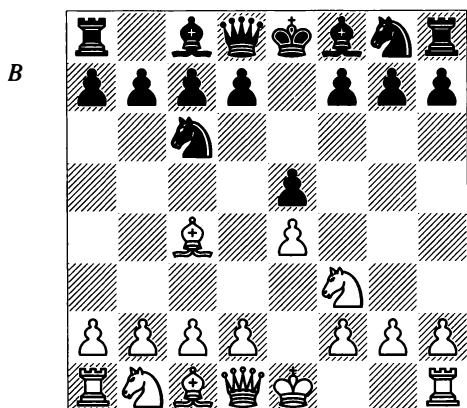
2) It allows the f1-bishop (and, where appropriate, the queen) to develop, and gives the g1-knight another square.

3) Because of point '2', it brings White one move closer to kingside castling.

An obvious complement would be 2 d4, with potential development of every minor piece and excellent central control. In order to frustrate 2 d4, as well as to get all of the above benefits for himself, Black plays 1...e5.

Italian Game

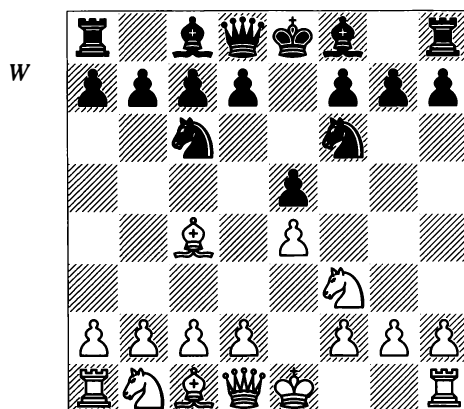
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♕c4 (D)



This move signals the beginning of the Italian Game. The development of White's bishop to c4 prepares castling, eyes the f7-pawn and hinders an early ...d5. We would need a pretty compelling reason not to play such an obviously logical move and unfortunately such abstention is justified by the fact that Black, by most accounts, has a pretty easy route to equality in all variations. Attention has thus moved away from the Italian Game, with its more durable neighbour the Spanish Game (Ruy Lopez) proving a more promising route to an enduring edge for White.

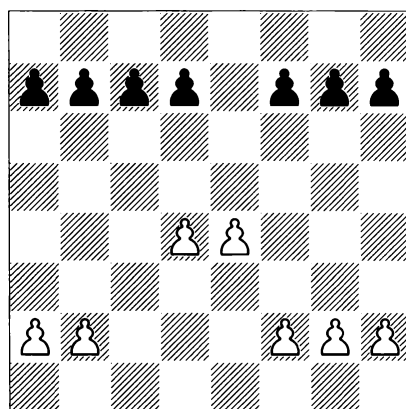
The Italian Game has several distinct branches. Initially, Black used to respond in kind with 3...♕c5 (a move still very popular today, and quite probably Black's clearest route to equality). We'll examine White's various attempts to get something against this, from the early systems based on blowing Black off the board with c3 and d4, through the tricky and interesting Evans Gambit, to the current fashion of quiet d3 systems, preparing solid development before further central adventures. Then we must examine the

Two Knights Defence, which arises after 3...♘f6!? (D).



This is a more ambitious attempt by Black to wrest the initiative.

Perfect Centre

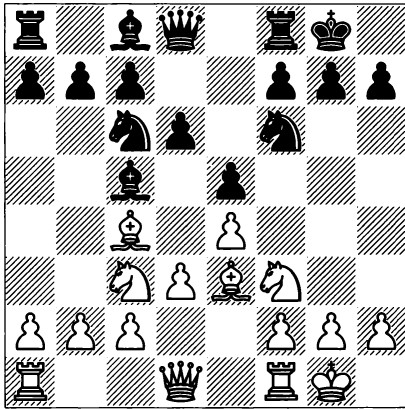


This structure is the classical ideal. It comes about when White supports his d-pawn with c3, and Black exchanges with ...exd4 cxd4. The white pawns dominate the centre and give White more space, which enables him to develop his pieces actively.

Black has two options: either restrain the pawns with ...d6 followed by putting pressure on e4 (with a knight on f6 and a rook on e8, for instance), or (more actively) to get one of the pawns to move, whereupon the centre loses a great deal of its flexibility and thus is easier to attack. This is achieved by hitting the e-pawn with ...dxf6 or ...d5.

Bishop Exchanges

B



I've selected a very boring position from the Giuoco Piano to talk about captures for a

moment. In the diagram position, captures are bad, and here's why:

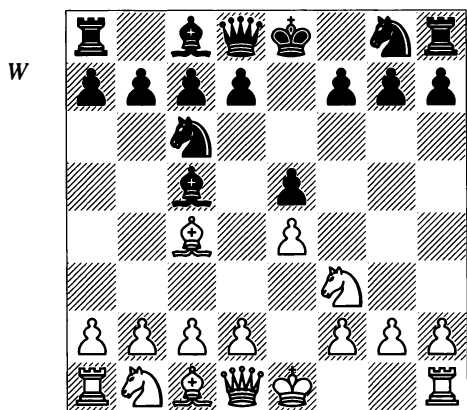
1) If the black bishop takes on e3, then after fxe3 White has strengthened his centre as well as now having a half-open f-file to work on. Also he's covered the d4-square.

2) If White plays dxc5, then after ...dxc5 Black has increased his control over d4 with his pawn and the d-file with his major pieces.

"But what about Black's doubled pawns?" What indeed. Doubled pawns, trebled pawns, exposed kings in the middle of the board, knights stuck on a8 – nothing in chess is a weakness unless it can be attacked. Doubled pawns are *prima facie* weaker than other pawns, because instead of having a pawn on an adjacent file (which can protect it) it now has a pawn behind it (which can't), but this doesn't mean that they're vulnerable in every position. The key to using one's pawns well lies in one key idea – pawns should serve pieces, not the other way around. So your pieces shouldn't be stuck defending pawns, but if your pawn-structure is offering you open files for your rooks and beautiful outposts for your pieces then it's a good structure; it doesn't matter what it looks like.

Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♕c4 ♕c5 (D)



This is the Giuoco Piano. Three systems deserve consideration:

1) 4 c3 followed by an immediate d4. If Black isn't careful he can end up very lost very quickly, but theoretically White is struggling to equalize against precise defence.

2) The Giuoco Pianissimo ('very quiet game') variations with d3.

3) 4 b4!?, the Evans Gambit, which has been tried by several strong players (the British grandmaster and former world championship contender Nigel Short has used this on and off for several years, with mixed results).

Møller Attack

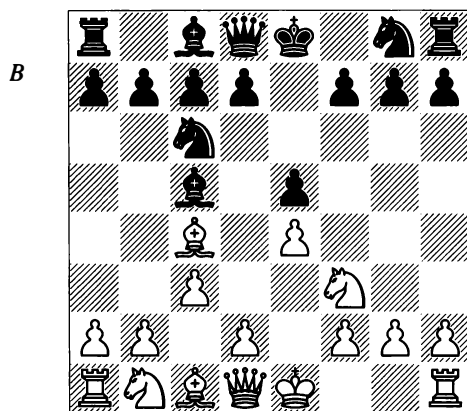
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♕c4 ♕c5

Note that 3...♘d4 can be profitably met by either 4 ♘xd4 or 4 c3, but not 4 ♘xe5?? when 4...♔g5! is already winning for Black! 5 ♘xf7 (5 ♕xf7+ ♖e7 is no real improvement for White) 5...♔xg2 6 ♔f1 ♔xe4+ 7 ♕e2 ♘f3#.

3...♕e7 is slightly passive when White still has the option of d4. After 4 d4 d6 (4...exd4 5

♘xd4 d6 6 0-0 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 0-0 is a rather prospectless position for Black; in particular after 8 h3! he has spatial and developmental difficulties) 5 d5 ♘b8 6 ♕d3! (both preparing c4 in response to ...c6, and stopping ...f5) White has a lasting space advantage. The position reminds me of an Old Indian (e.g., 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 e4 e5 5 d5 ♕e7), but with Black having lost some time.

4 c3 (D)



A natural reaction to Black's last move – White plans a quick d4, creating a two-abreast pawn-centre while gaining time on the c5-bishop. Black must be very accurate in his response to avoid getting creamed.

4...♘f6!

Highlighting the disadvantage of the pawn on c3 – White no longer has ♘c3, defending his e-pawn while developing. This move is the most challenging and certainly the best of Black's options here.

4...d6 is OK but allows White to achieve all his central goals: after 5 d4 exd4 (5...♕b6 6 dxe5 costs Black a pawn after 6...dxe5 7 ♔xd8+ or 6...♘e5 7 ♘e5 dxe5 8 ♕xf7+) 6 cxd4 ♕b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♘f6 8 0-0! 0-0 (8...♕xc3?

9 bxc3 ♖xe4 is far too risky: after 10 d5 ♗e7 11 ♖d4 ♗f6 12 ♙g5 White's compensation is overwhelming) 9 ♙g5 Black has no real compensation for White's nice centre.

4...♖e7 5 d4 ♙b6 is another playable line, but again White is simply better after 6 ♙g5!.

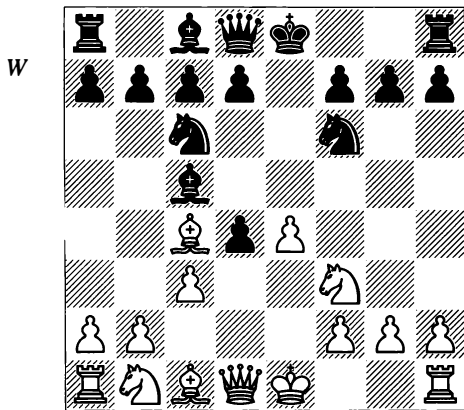
After 4...♗f6! White is at a crossroads. He can abandon his plan of a quick d4 with 5 d3 (the Giuoco Pianissimo), or he can launch a barrage of tactics with 5 d4.

5 d4

While this is the most ambitious move, theoretically it gives White nothing. Black is simply too solid to be steamrollered like this.

5 d3 is the Giuoco Pianissimo – Black has no problems after 5...0-0 6 0-0 a6 7 ♗bd2 ♙a7 8 ♖e1 d6. Now many players have fallen for 9 ♗f1? ♗g4, when Black is already better.

5...exd4 (D)



6 cxd4

6 e5 d5! (really, really essential – this resource is a vital feature of a wide range of Open Games) 7 ♙b5 ♗e4 8 cxd4 ♙b6 leaves Black solidly placed – in fact White needs to be a little careful, since after ...0-0 and ...f6 Black will start putting some major pressure on d4.

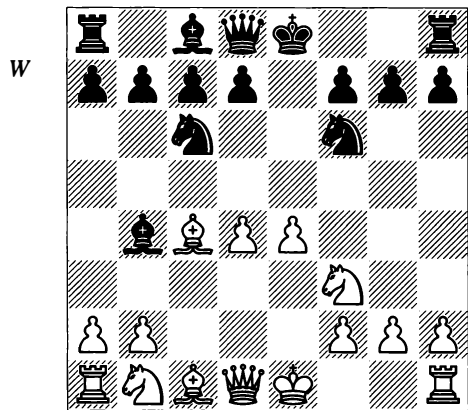
6 0-0 can be comfortably met by 6...♗xe4, viz. 7 cxd4 d5 8 dxc5 dxc4 9 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 10 ♙d1+ ♙d7 11 ♙e3 ♗e7 12 ♗a3 ♙e6

when White can equalize with 13 ♗b5 and 14 ♙f4, but this hardly gets the blood pumping.

6...♙b4+! (D)

While Black's fourth move is a matter of taste to a certain extent, this check is absolutely essential.

The inattentive 6...♙b6? leads to a lost position after 7 d5! ♗e7 8 e5!; for instance, 8...♗g4 9 d6! ♗xf2 10 ♖b3 ♗xh1 11 ♙xf7+ ♗f8 12 ♙g5.



7 ♗c3?!

This was the whole point – White sacrifices material in order to castle rapidly. From a modern perspective, however, this line is looking increasingly dubious, and if Black is well prepared, he should have no problems emerging from the opening with a sizeable advantage.

7 ♙d2 is a quieter option, which doesn't promise anything after 7...♙xd2+ 8 ♗bxd2 d5!.. Now 9 exd5 ♗xd5 10 ♖b3 used to lead to interesting IQP battles after 10...♗ce7, but even this modest possibility has been denied White with the innovation 10...♗a5! (Korchnoi's idea, I think), with the cute point that 11 ♖a4+ ♗c6! leaves White with no good way to meet the threatened ...♗b6, bagging the 'minor exchange'. 12 ♖b3 leads to a repetition, while 12 ♙b5 ♙d7 13 0-0 0-0 gives Black a very comfortable IQP position –

White's queen, bishop and d2-knight are all oddly placed, while his structural weakness is permanent.

7...♟xe4!

Black can transpose to the 4...d6 line with 7...d6, but why would he want to? The text-move is simply good for him.

8 0-0 ♖xc3!

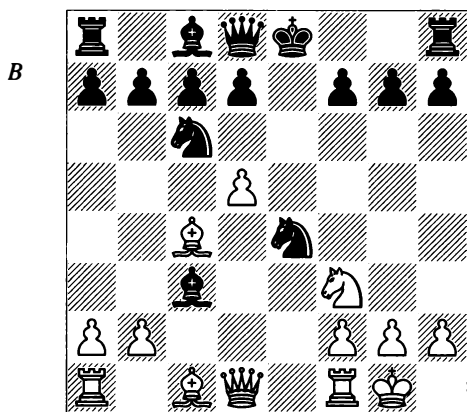
This avoids perhaps the main trap in White's play.

8...♟xc3? 9 bxc3 ♖xc3 (9...d5 also gets into trouble after 10 cxb4 dxc4 11 ♖e1+) is bad for a couple of reasons – 10 ♖xf7+, for instance, isn't a bad move, but the most decisive response is certainly 10 ♖a3!, with a winning advantage; for instance, 10...d5 11 ♖b5 ♖xa1 12 ♖e1+ ♖e6 13 ♖a4!.

9 d5! (D)

This is the Møller Attack – Black, though a piece up, is liable to lose one or (if careless) two of his developed pieces, but if he keeps a clear head he can expose 9 d5 as a bag of tricks.

After 9 bxc3 d5! White has no compensation at all for his pawn deficit.



9...♙f6!

This looks best.

9...♟e7 gives White reasonable compensation after 10 bxc3.

9...♟e5 is another tricky move. After 10 bxc3 ♟xc4 11 ♖d4!, Black's best is 11...0-0,

again leaving White some play for the pawn after 12 ♖xe4 ♟d6 13 ♖d3.

10 ♖e1 ♟e7 11 ♖xe4 d6

So White is left with the burden of proving compensation for his lost pawn.

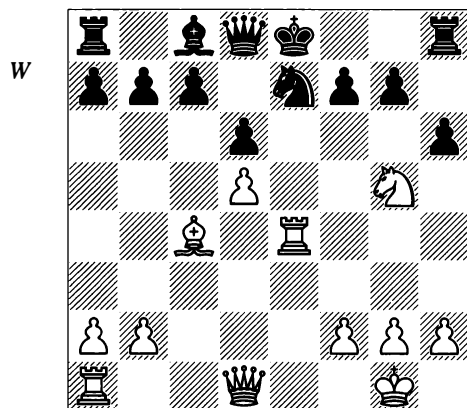
12 ♖g5

Almost certainly best, exchanging a key defender, but even this looks insufficient.

12...♖xg5 13 ♟xg5 h6! (D)

This move has been the final nail in the Møller Attack's coffin.

13...0-0 14 ♟xh7! leads to perpetual if Black takes the knight, though even after the knight sacrifice, 14...♖f5!? is a good way to play on.



14 ♖e2

Retreating would be tantamount to resignation, but Black has a convincing answer to the trebled forces on the e-file.

14...hxg5! 15 ♖e1 ♖e6 16 dxe6 f6

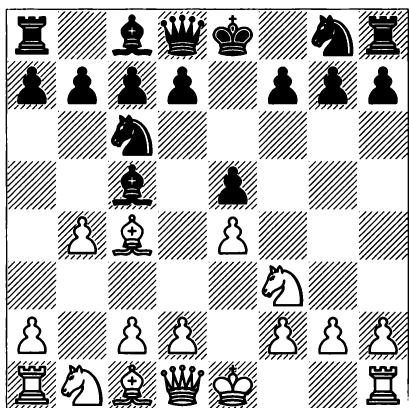
Black is a pawn up with a rock solid position.

Evans Gambit

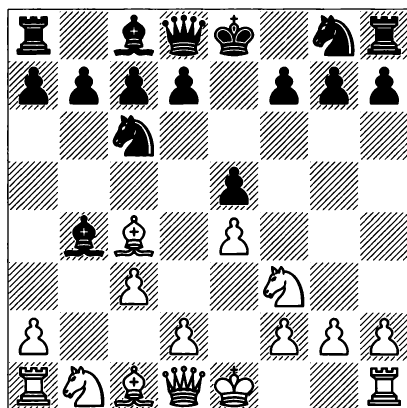
1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♖c4 ♖c5 4 b4!? (D)

Given the failure of White's c3 and d4 plan, some GMs have turned to this old favourite of Captain Evans. The idea is quite straightforward – considering the importance

B



B



of time in the execution of White's central advance, the black bishop is lured to a square from which it will have to run after a c3 advance. A subtler point is that, with the disappearance of the b-pawn, ♖a3 can come into play in some variations.

As with so many of the romantic openings, today the Evans is regarded as playable but toothless. Black has a variety of ways to return material while totally equalizing.

4...♙xb4!

It has often been said that the way to refute a gambit is to accept it. Black grabs a pawn so as to have the option of offloading some material himself in order to neutralize White's initiative.

4...♙b6 is also playable, but allows White some pressure after 5 a4!; for instance, 5...a6 6 ♘c3 ♘f6 7 ♘d5!? and Black has some problems to solve.

5 c3 (D)

5...♙a5

This was recommended as best by Lasker in his London lectures. The bishop has to go somewhere, so it avoids being hit by d4 and maintains control of some vital squares. Black has a few decent alternatives though.

5...♙e7 6 d4 ♘a5 is a solid though uninspired way to meet this gambit, returning the pawn so as to free the black position. White can maintain the tension with 7 ♙e2!? (7 ♘xe5 ♘xc4 8 ♘xc4 d5! 9 exd5 ♙xd5 10

♘e3 ♙d7, with equality, is more sedate) 7...exd4 8 ♙xd4! leads to a very complex position, when 8...♘c6!? (8...♘f6 9 e5 ♘c6 10 ♙h4 ♘d5 11 ♙g3 g6 12 0-0 ♘b6 13 c4 d6 14 ♙d1 ♘d7 15 ♙h6! gives White a promising attack) 9 ♙xg7 ♙f6 10 ♙g3 d6 is given by Kasparov as unclear.

5...♙c5?! (walking into White's planned d4 advance) 6 d4! exd4 7 0-0! d6 8 cxd4 ♙b6 9 ♘c3 ♘a5 (9...♘f6? 10 e5 dxe5 11 ♙a3 is crushing) 10 ♙g5 forces Black to be careful. 10...♘e7! 11 ♘d5 f6 12 ♙xf6 (12 ♙f4 is possible) 12...gxf6 13 ♘xf6+ ♙f8 14 ♘g5 appears to lead to a draw.

Finally, 5...♙d6!?, an old idea of Pillsbury's, was tried recently by great Russian hope Alexander Grishchuk where he demonstrated that Black has no problems here either. The idea is simply to tuck the bishop away while pre-empting d4, so that Black gains time to complete his development. After 6 d4 ♘f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♙e1 h6!, preparing ...♙e8 and ...♙f8, Black is at least equal.

6 d4 exd4

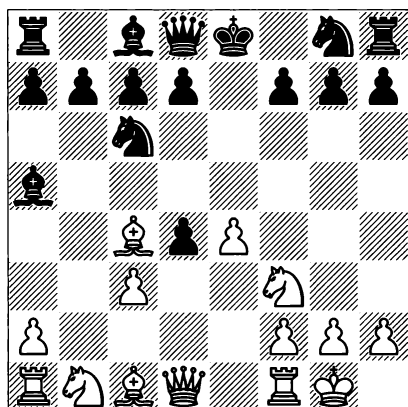
6...d6 7 0-0 (7 ♙b3 is stronger) 7...♙b6 is the Lasker Defence, when White can regain the pawn by capturing on e5 and d8, but is unable to retain the initiative.

7 0-0 (D)

7...♘ge7!

The method advocated by Lasker and Nimzowitsch. and the reason the Evans isn't seen

B



that much these days – rather than blindly grabbing everything in sight, Black prepares a quick central counter.

7...♖b6?! 8 cxd4 d6 transposes to the 5...♖c5 line.

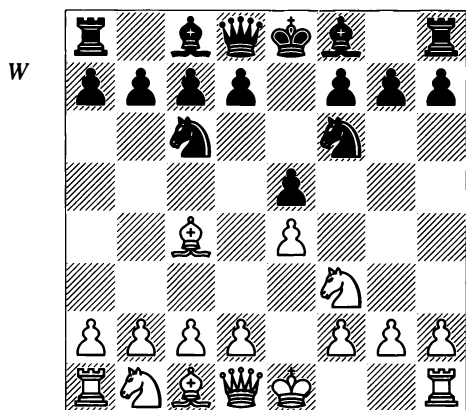
7...dxc3 is very risky, though Chigorin thought it was playable: 8 ♖b3 ♖f6 9 e5 ♖g6 10 ♘xc3 ♘ge7 11 ♖a3 and White has a very strong initiative for his two pawns.

8 cxd4 d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♖a3 ♖e6

White has some compensation, but I'd prefer Black here.

Two Knights

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♘f6 (D)



While the safe 3...♙c5 has never been under a cloud, more ambitious players began to search for something a little more aggressive than the sedate waters of the Giuoco Pianissimo. The Two Knights Defence fits the bill – by immediately launching an attack on the e4-pawn, Black tries to seize the initiative. This is the first truly counterattacking line for Black that we have examined in the book so far. There are three paths White can consider:

1) The main line, 4 ♘g5, putting the finger on the main problem with this knight development. There is no convenient way to defend the f7-pawn, so Black needs to launch an immediate attack, and we'll see how he does just this.

2) Defending the e4-pawn – Black should have no problems here, whether he chooses to transpose into Giuoco Pianissimo territory or keep the game in the Two Knights Defence.

3) The Max Lange Attack with 4 d4 – again a line which, while it has had its fair share of glorious victories, seems dead and buried by current theory.

Two Knights Main Line

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♘f6!?

While Black has no cause for concern in the Giuoco Piano, more aggressive players might want a slightly more complex position in which they have better chances to outplay their opponent. The Two Knights, at heart, is a pawn sacrifice, and Black's compensation appears to be OK.

4 ♘g5

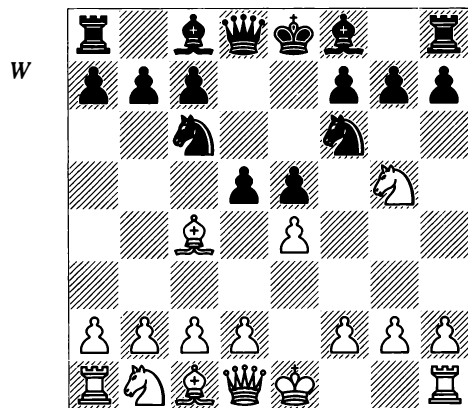
Highlighting the defect in Black's development – there's no easy way to defend f7.

4 d3 is tame – Black can transpose to Giuoco Pianissimo lines with 4...♙c5, while 4...♙e7 5 0-0 0-0 leaves him with options of playing for ...d6 or ...d5.

4...d5! (D)

Striking in the centre tends to be a good way to play openings, and here it represents Black's strongest way by far.

4...♙c5 is a crazy sideline, best defused with 5 ♙xf7+ ♖e7 6 ♙d5!.



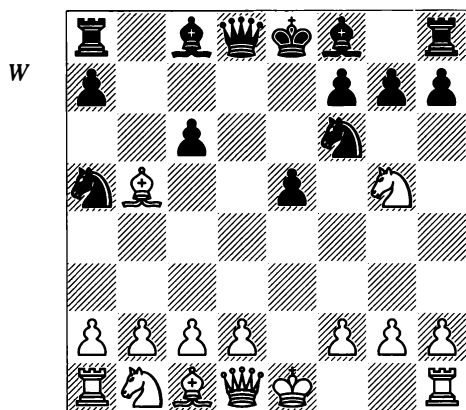
5 exd5 ♘a5

Black has a couple of gambit alternatives, but both are dubious after bishop retreats

which leave the b-pawn very weak: 5...♖d4 6 c3 b5 7 ♙f1!; 5...b5 6 ♙f1!.

Note that 5...♖xd5 is very dodgy after 6 d4! with massive pressure.

6 ♙b5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6 (D)



Gaining time on the bishop is more important than dragging the a5-knight back into play.

8 ♙e2

8 ♗f3 is an alternative. Black has several good responses, including 8...♗b8! 9 ♙xc6+ ♖xc6 10 ♗xc6+ ♖d7 with enough for the pawns.

8...h6

The knight isn't great on g5, but by kicking it Black plans to gain more time with ...e4 or else push it to the side of the board.

9 ♖f3

9 ♖h3 was an old Steinitz idea which was used by Fischer. Play can proceed 9...♙c5 10 0-0-0 11 d3 ♙xh3 12 gxh3 ♗d7 13 ♙f3 (13 ♙g4 ♖xg4 and 14...f5 gives Black a nice attack) 13...♗xh3 when White has a weakened kingside but is compensated by his two bishops on an open board.

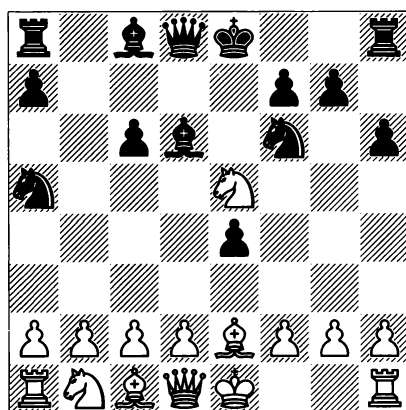
9...e4 10 ♖e5 ♙d6 (D)

Gaining more time. Now White has a choice of how to defend the knight.

11 d4

11 f4 exf3 12 ♖xf3 is also OK for Black, since his development coupled with the

W



slightly shaky white king provide enough compensation.

11...exd3 12 ♖xd3 ♗c7 13 b3 0-0

Black has enough compensation – good development and active squares for his pieces. He should proceed with ...c5 and ...♙b7, while White will aim to consolidate the extra pawn. Another crucial factor is the knight on a5 – very often Black's success or failure hinges on whether it can be brought into the game.

Max Lange Attack

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♙c4 ♖f6 4 d4

Immediately causing trouble, but Black has done nothing wrong and so has no cause to fear such audacious play.

4...exd4 (D)

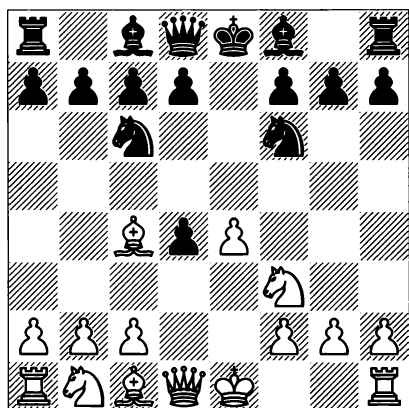
5 0-0

5 e5 d5! 6 ♙b5 ♖e4 7 ♖xd4 is the start of a quieter, more positional line. White plans to get a better pawn-structure and free development in exchange for the two bishops. After 7...♙d7 8 ♙xc6 bxc6 9 0-0 ♙c5 10 f3 ♖g5 11 ♙e3 ♖e6 Black is fully equal.

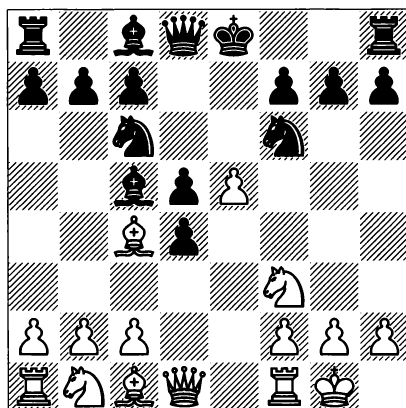
5...♙c5

Black has a tempting alternative here, namely 5...♖xe4 6 ♗e1 d5 7 ♙xd5 ♗xd5 8 ♖c3 ♗a5 9 ♖xe4 ♙e6 10 ♙d2 ♗h5 11 ♙g5 ♙d6! with no problems.

W



W

**6 e5**

This is the starting position of the Max Lange Attack. As with so many of the lines in the Italian Game, it is very dangerous but a well-prepared and careful player should have no problems as Black.

6...d5! (D)

Again, this move is vital.

7 exf6 dxc4 8 ♖e1+ ♙e6 9 ♘g5 ♚d5!

Black protects the e6-bishop and simultaneously prepares to castle queenside (the

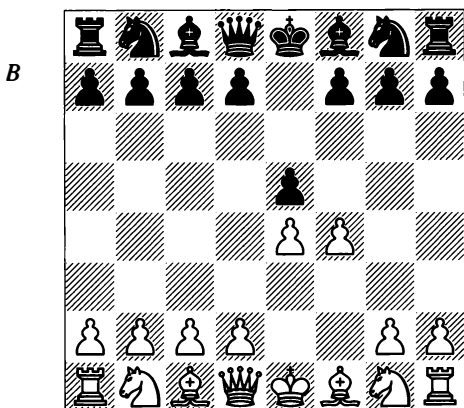
kingside isn't too tempting with that f6-pawn sitting in the middle of the fortress). It's true that the queen is a target for White's development, but analysis has demonstrated that it's worth the risk.

10 ♘c3 ♚f5 11 ♘ce4 0-0-0!

White is struggling to hold his position together – Black has excellent central control and the imminent opening of lines on the kingside doesn't bode well for the white monarch.

King's Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 f4 (D)



The King's Gambit is something of a has-been. While 2 f4 was considered mandatory among gentlemen of the 19th century, with time and the evolution of defensive technique the opening has gradually developed an horrendous reputation, to the point where even today's rabid attacking players hold it in disdain: Shirov has given the move a 'dubious' annotation, while Morozevich commented on his choice of 2 ♖f3 that "I used to blunder a pawn with 2 f4 exf4, but now I have grown up." The King's Gambit is still a viable choice but neither an advantage nor an attack against a well-prepared defender is assured.

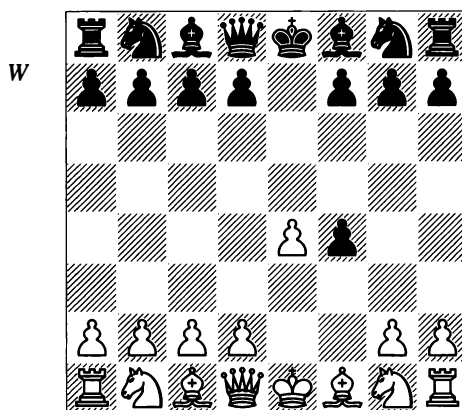
2...exf4 (D)

The critical test of a gambit is normally its acceptance, and this is especially true here. In fact White isn't really threatening 3 fxe5 in view of 3...♗h4+ 4 g3 ♗xe4+ picking up a rook, and so Black has some flexibility in his choice of defence. However, White can generate some advantage against all the lines where Black declines the pawn.

2...♙c5 3 ♖f3 d6 4 ♖c3 ♖f6 5 ♙c4 ♖c6 6 d3 ♙g4 7 ♖a4 ♙b6 8 ♖xb6 axb6 9 0-0 gives White a risk-free edge.

2...♖f6 3 ♖f3 ♖xe4 4 d3 ♖c5 5 fxe5 d5 6 d4 ♖e6 7 c4 ♙b4+ 8 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 9 ♗xd2 c6 10 ♖c3 and White has a useful space advantage.

2...d5 3 exd5 e4 4 d3 ♖f6 5 dxe4 ♖xe4 6 ♖f3 ♙c5 7 ♗e2 ♙f5 8 ♖c3 ♗e7 9 ♙e3! is good for White – 9...♙xe3 10 ♗xe3 ♖xc3 11 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 12 bxc3 ♙xc2 13 ♙d2 with a strong initiative.



3 ♖f3

The main line, but there are some alternatives.

The first is especially interesting. 3 ♙c4!? was used by Fischer (with a 100% score!). Black has tried several dubious defences (such as the Bryan Countergambit: 3...b5?! 4 ♙xb5 ♗h4+) but his most established line is 3...♖f6 4 ♖c3 c6, and after 5 ♙b3 d5 6 exd5 cxd5 7 d4 ♙d6 8 ♖f3 (8 ♖ge2 0-0 9 ♙xf4 was Fischer's suggestion, but after 9...♙xf4 10 ♖xf4 ♗e8+ 11 ♖fe2 Black is obviously OK) 8...0-0 9 0-0 ♙e6 Black is completely fine.

3 ♖c3 hasn't caught on, because after 3...♗h4+ 4 ♙e2 d5! 5 ♖xd5 ♙g4+ 6 ♖f3 Black can play on with 6...♙d6 or force a perpetual by 6...♖c6 7 ♖xc7+ ♙d8 8 ♖xa8

♖e5 9 h3 ♗xf3+ 10 gxf3 ♖g3 11 d4 ♖xf3+ 12 ♖e1 ♗g3+.

3...g5

3...d6 was featured in an article Fischer wrote for *Chess Life* in which he claimed it was the refutation of the King's Gambit. After 4 d4 g5 5 h4 g4 the knight must retreat with an unclear game, since 6 ♖g5 fails to 6...f6 7 ♖h3 gxh3 8 ♖h5+ ♗d7 9 ♗xf4 ♖e8 10 ♖f3 ♗d8 with much better chances for Black, as analysed by Fischer.

3...h6!? would probably be my choice with Black. After 4 d4 g5 5 ♖c3 (5 h4 can now be met by 5...♗g7) 5...♗g7 6 g3 fxg3 7 hxg3 d6 White is struggling to demonstrate enough compensation for the pawn.

3...♖f6 4 e5 ♖h5 introduces an important holding concept – White will have great difficulty recouping his pawn, but can generate enough compensation with 5 d4 d5 6 c4 ♖c6 7 cxd5 ♖xd5 8 ♖c3 ♗b4 9 ♗e2.

3...d5 4 exd5 ♖f6 is the cleanest equalizing attempt – after 5 ♗b5+ c6 6 dxc6 ♖xc6 7 d4 ♗d6 the game is level.

4 h4

4 ♗c4 ♗g7 (4...g4 5 0-0 gxf3 6 ♖xf3 is the Muzio Gambit, where White's attack seems to be enough for a perpetual, but no more than that, after 6...♖f6 7 e5 ♖xe5 8 ♗xf7+!? ♗xf7 9 d4 ♖xd4+ 10 ♗e3 ♖f6 11 ♗xf4) 5 h4 h6 6 d4 d6 is similar to the 3...h6 variation.

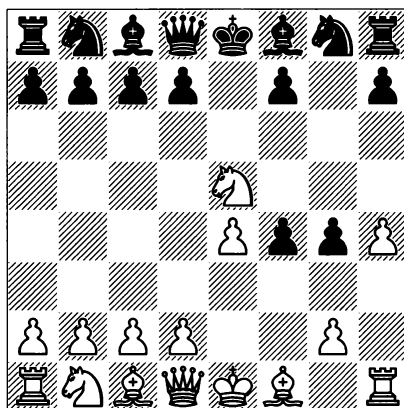
4...g4 5 ♖e5 (D)

5...♖f6

5...d6 is less ambitious. After 6 ♖xg4 ♖f6 White should take the knight, since 7 ♖f2?! ♗g8 8 d4 ♗h6 is uncomfortable.

6 d4

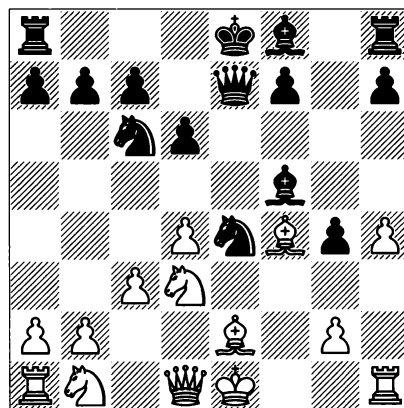
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6 ♗c4 d5 7 exd5 ♗d6 8 d4 ♖h5 9 0-0 ♖xh4 10 ♖e1 ♖xe1 11 ♗xe1 0-0 12 ♖c3 leaves White with some compensation.

6...d6 7 ♖d3 ♖xe4 8 ♗xf4 ♖e7 9 ♗e2 ♖c6 10 c3 ♗f5 (D)

W

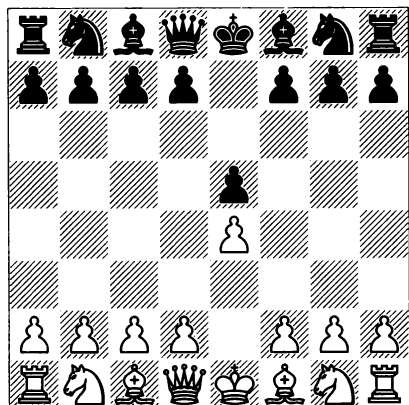


Black has no problems – he will castle queenside with good development and a safe king.

Rare 2nd moves

1 e4 e5 (D)

W



2 dxc3 (D)

The Vienna was initially conceived as aiming for an improved King's Gambit, but is considered rather toothless today.

2 dxc3, the Bishop's Opening, is often used to transpose to the Italian Game, especially since Black is denied the opportunity of playing the Petroff. Here we look at some of White's attempts at keeping the game in independent channels. 2...dxf6 3 d3 dxc6 (3...c6!? – intending ...d5 – is also very logical) 4 dxc3 (4 f4 d5! is fine for Black) 4...b4 5 dxf3 d5 6 exd5 dxd5 7 0-0 dxc3 8 bxc3 d4 and I can't believe that Black is any worse here.

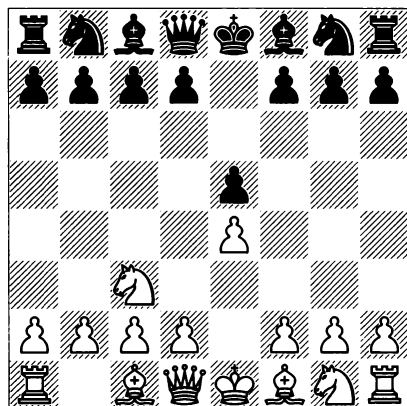
The Centre Game, 2 d4, has never been popular, probably for good reason. This is a case where the early 'development' of the white queen really does lose time. 2...exd4 3 Qxd4 (3 c3 dxc3 4 dxc4!? cxb2 5 dxb2 is the Danish Gambit; then 5...d5! 6 dxd5 dxf6 returns one of the pawns in order to develop quickly, and White's best option is now 7 dxf7+ Qxf7 8 Qxd8 d4+ 9 Qd2 dxd2+ 10 dxd2 with a balanced endgame) 3...dxc6 4 Qe3 dxf6 5 d2 d7 6 dxc3 d5 7 exd5 dxd5. Black is fully equal after an exchange

on d5, while 8 Qg3 dcb4! only creates problems for White.

Concerning Black's 2nd move options after the standard 2 dxf3, we'll deal with the good ones in subsequent sections. Which leaves the, erm, bad ones.

2 dxf3 f5 (2...d5 is the Elephant Gambit, which also chucks away a central pawn for negligible compensation: 3 exd5 d6 {3...e4 4 Qe2 followed by d3 is strong} 4 d4 e4 5 dxe5 dxf6 6 d5+ d7 7 dxd7 dxd7 8 c4 and Black has virtually nothing for the pawn) is the Latvian Gambit. While Latvia has given the chess world a host of wonderful attacking players, most notably the great World Champion Mikhail Tal, it has yet to invent a decent opening. This particular one is rubbish. 3 dxe5 Qf6 (3...fxe4? 4 Qh5+ is game over; 3...dxc6 can be met by 4 d4!, since 4...fxe4? 5 Qh5+ is still terminal) 4 dxc4 (4 d4 d6 5 dxc4 fxe4 6 dxc3 is a good alternative) 4...fxe4 5 dxc3 Qf7 6 de3 c6 7 dxe4 d5 8 dg5 Qf6 9 dxf3 d6 10 d4 and Black has nothing for his material deficit.

B

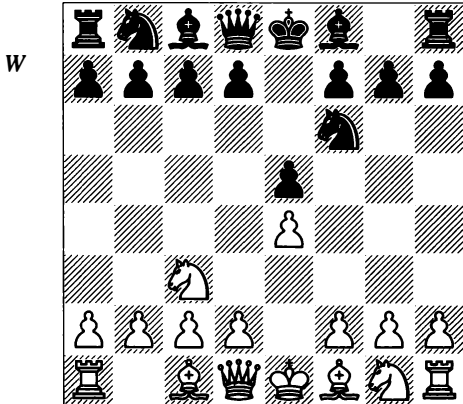


2...dxf6! (D)

2...dxc6 gives White a wider choice; for instance, 3 f4!? is a truly dangerous gambit,

while 3 ♟c4 ♟c5 4 ♞g4! gives White good pressure.

2... ♟c5 is fully playable, since 3 ♞g4? fails to 3... ♞f6! 4 ♞xg7 ♜g8 5 ♞h6 ♟xf2+! 6 ♞d1 d5! , threatening ... ♞g6 winning the queen.



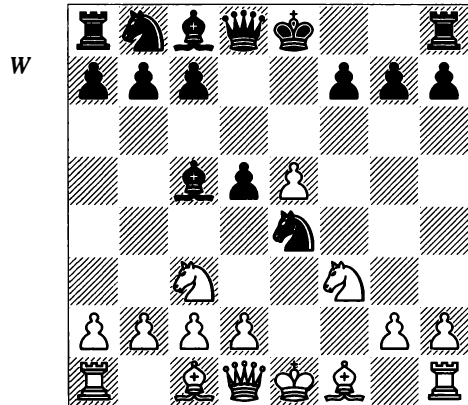
3 f4

3 $\text{♟c4} \text{♞xe4!}$ (of course, this isn't forced) 4 ♞h5 (4 ♞xe4 d5 is fine for Black) leads to a very sharp variation: 4... ♞d6 5 $\text{♟b3} \text{♞c6}$ (5... ♟e7 6 ♞xe5 0-0 is a good alternative) 6 ♞b5 g6 7 ♞f3 f5 8 ♞d5 ♞f6 9 ♞xc7+ ♞d8

10 ♞xa8 b6 when Black has a commanding lead in development in return for White's extra exchange. A typical continuation runs 11 $\text{d4!?} \text{♞xd4}$ 12 ♞f3 ♟b7 13 ♞xd4! exd4 14 ♟g5 ♞xg5 15 ♞xg5 ♟xg2 16 ♞g1 ♟xa8 17 0-0-0 ♟g7 with a balanced game.

3 g3 is an old Smyslov favourite. After 3... d5 4 $\text{exd5} \text{♞xd5}$ 5 $\text{♟g2} \text{♞xc3}$ 6 bxc3 ♟c5 and ...0-0 Black has no problems.

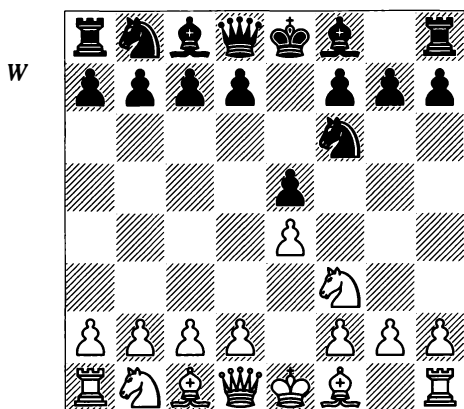
3... d5! 4 $\text{fxe5} \text{♞xe4}$ 5 ♞f3 ♟c5! (D)



Black is absolutely fine. In fact, I prefer his position.

Petroff

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♙f6 (D)



Once thought to be merely dull and unambitious, the Petroff is now known to be dull, unambitious and a real pain in the neck for White. White has trouble establishing any kind of workable edge against such a solid system, and it has recently been taken up by many of the world's elite. While the opening's aim has always been equality, in order to try for an advantage White has to sharpen the play significantly, and so Black has his fair share of wins here.

3 ♙xe5

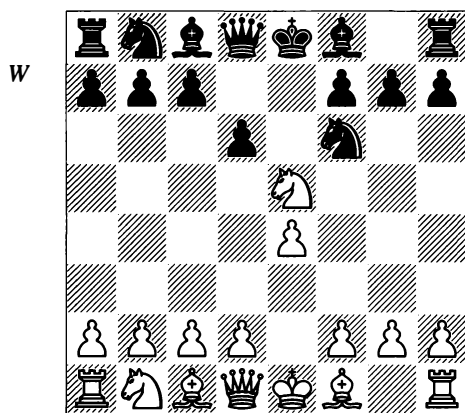
3 d4 is the other main continuation. After 3...♙xe4 (3...exd4 4 e5 is more problematic for Black) 4 ♙d3 d5 5 ♙xe5 White's e5-knight is vulnerable to exchange. Which line to select is a matter of taste. A typical continuation runs 5...♙d7 6 ♙xd7 ♙xd7 7 0-0 ♙d6 (7...♙h4!? 8 c4 0-0-0 is more enterprising) 8 c4 c6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 ♙h5, when Black's best is probably to ditch the pawn for some compensation after 10...0-0! 11 ♙xd5 ♙c6.

3 ♙c3 is tame. As well as transposing into the Four Knights via 3...♙c6, Black can try 3...♙b4, though White has a little something after 4 ♙xe5 0-0 5 ♙e2 ♙e8 6 ♙d3 ♙xc3 7

dx3 ♙xe4 8 ♙f4! (stopping ...d5) and 9 0-0 in view of his two bishops in a pretty open position.

3...d6 (D)

3...♙xe4 is playable, contrary to popular belief, but after 4 ♙e2 ♙e7 5 ♙xe4 d6 6 d4 dx5 7 dx5 ♙c6 instead of hanging on to the pawn with 8 ♙b5 ♙d7 when Black quickly gets castled, I prefer the simple 8 ♙c3!, when 8...♙xe5 9 ♙xe5+ ♙xe5 10 ♙f4 gives Black a dreadful endgame since he can't avoid material losses or falling further behind in activity.



4 ♙f3

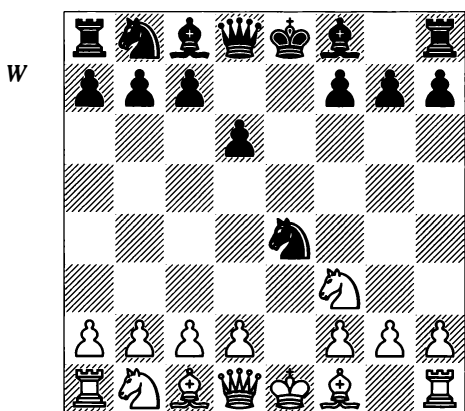
4 ♙xf7 ♙xf7 is a very sharp continuation which hasn't been refuted but isn't thought to lead to an advantage. 5 d4 ♙e7 6 ♙c3 c6 7 ♙c4+ d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 ♙xd5 ♙e6 10 ♙e3 ♙xc4 11 ♙xc4 ♙c6 and White has three pawns and an initiative for the piece, with balanced chances.

4 ♙c4!? is a slight twist on the main variations.

4...♙xe4 (D)

5 d4

5 ♙e2 ♙e7 6 d3 ♙f6 7 ♙g5 is a horrible line, forcing Black into an endgame where he



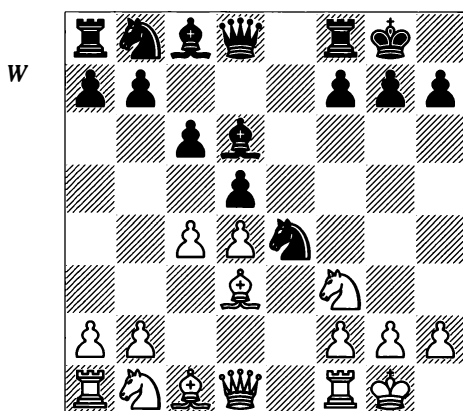
is one or two tempi down. This is insufficient to give White any kind of advantage, but of course it's very difficult for Black to generate winning chances here.

5 ♖c3 ♖xc3 6 dxc3 has recently become rather popular. White compromises his pawns in return for more rapid development. After 6...♗e7 7 ♗f4 White plans ♖d2 and 0-0-0. Black can castle on either side, in each case with approximate equality.

5...d5 6 ♗d3 ♗d6

6...♗e7 7 0-0 ♖c6 8 c4 ♖b4 is another major line – after 9 ♗e2! 0-0 10 ♖c3 (10 a3 ♖c6 11 cxd5 ♖xd5 12 ♖c3 ♖xc3 13 bxc3 gives White a light initiative in return for his compromised structure) 10...♗f5 (10...b6!? is the latest wrinkle, when 11 a3 ♖xc3 12 bxc3 ♖c6 13 cxd5 ♖xd5 gives Black a rather attractive position) 11 a3 ♖xc3 12 bxc3 ♖c6 13 cxd5 ♖xd5 14 ♗f4 ♖a5! 15 ♗xc7 b6 Black has definite compensation for the pawn.

7 0-0 0-0 8 c4 c6 (D)



Despite the apparent symmetry, there are three factors in White's favour:

1) His c4-pawn is better than the one on c6, since it attacks d5 (and can push to c5) while its counterpart merely defends.

2) The knight on e4, even though it seems well placed, would rather be back on f6, since on its current post it can be harassed with ♗e1, ♖c2 and ♖c3.

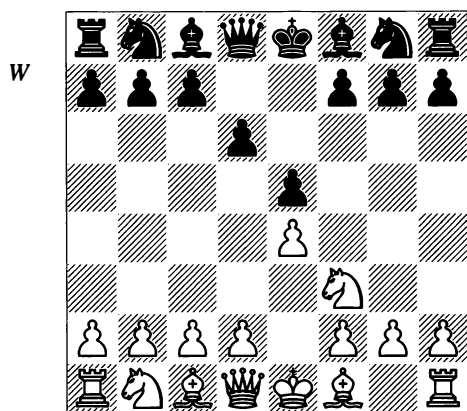
3) It's White's move.

Having said all this, Black is obviously very solid and is just a couple of tempi away from full equality. White has tried several lines, and it is unclear which is best. My own preference would be 9 ♖c2 ♖a6 10 a3 ♗g4 11 ♖e5, when Black needs to be very precise – even in the theoretical recommendation of 11...♗xe5 (11...♗h5 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 ♖c3 is also nice for White) 12 dxe5 ♖ac5!? 13 f3 ♖xd3 14 ♖xd3 ♖c5 15 ♖d4 ♖b3 16 ♖xg4 ♖xa1 17 ♗h6 his position is on a knife edge.

Philidor

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 (D)

2...f6?? doesn't even defend the pawn: 3 ♜xe5! fxe5? 4 ♜h5+ ♔e7 (4...g6 drops the rook in the corner) 5 ♜xe5+ ♜f7 6 ♙c4+ d5 (6...♙g6? 7 ♜f5+ ♙h6 8 d4+ g5 9 h4) 7 ♙xd5+ ♙g6 8 h4 h5 9 ♙xb7! and White wins.



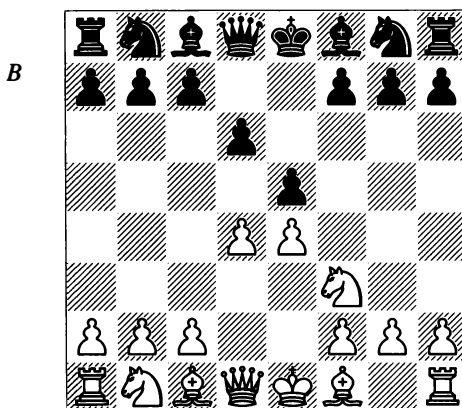
Holding the pawn this way is definitely solid, but Black renounces the chance to play ...d5 in one go. Having said this, he rarely gets the chance to play ...d5 in one go anyway, and anchoring his e5-pawn simply can't be wrong. Nimzowitsch's comment that "In the open game after 1 e4 e5, either d3 or d4 – now or later – is always a correct move" still seems valid today, and is equally applicable to Black's ...d6 and ...d5.

3 d4 (D)

3...♜f6

3...♜d7 is an inaccurate move-order, since after 4 ♙c4 Black can't play 4...♜gf6? due to 5 ♜g5, while after 4...c6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 ♜g5! ♙xg5 8 ♜h5 ♜e7 9 ♜xg5 ♜xg5 10 ♙xg5 White has the two bishops in the endgame.

3...exd4 4 ♜xd4 (we'll see the recapture with the knight in a later note) 4...♜f6 (4...♜c6

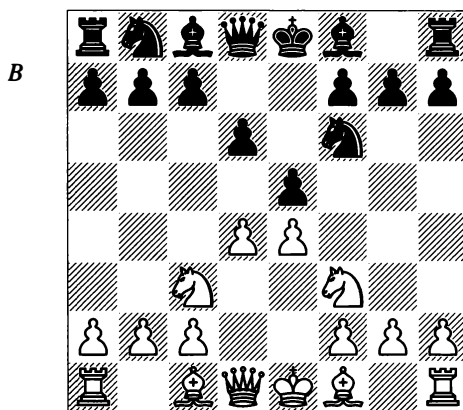


5 ♙b5 keeps the queen centralized) 5 ♙g5 ♙e7 6 ♜c3 followed by 0-0-0 is better for White.

3...f5 doesn't lose on the spot, but after the simple 4 ♜c3! Black will struggle to get out of the opening without any scratches.

4 ♜c3 (D)

4 dxe5 is a good alternative: after 4...♜xe4 5 ♜d5 ♜c5 6 ♙g5 ♙e7 7 exd6 ♜xd6 8 ♜c3 White is a bit more active.



4...♜bd7

This line, the Hanham Variation, is Black's most solid method, holding the centre. It has

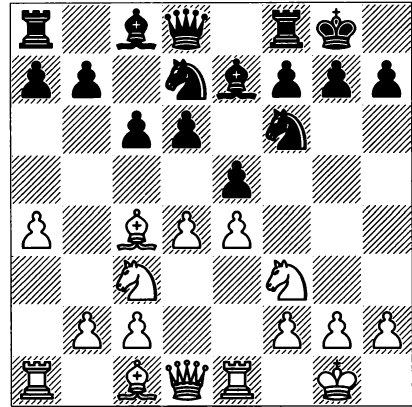
been a favourite of Grandmaster Vladimir Georgiev (I know because he beat me with it!).

4...exd4 5 ♖xd4 ♙e7 has been a long-time pet line of top French grandmaster Etienne Bacrot. White can play solidly and classically with 6 ♙e2 and 7 0-0, while 6 ♙f4 (6 g3 is another logical option; for instance, 6...d5!? 7 exd5 ♖xd5 8 ♙d2 ♖f6 9 ♙e3 0-0 10 ♙g2 ♖g4 with an unbalanced position) 6...0-0 7 ♔d2 and 8 0-0-0 leaves a position similar to a Sicilian, but where Black doesn't have the half-open c-file with which to trouble the white king.

5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 (D)

White is a little better, since his space advantage permits him to develop his pieces to good squares. He should play b3, ♙b2 and then do something constructive with his rooks

B



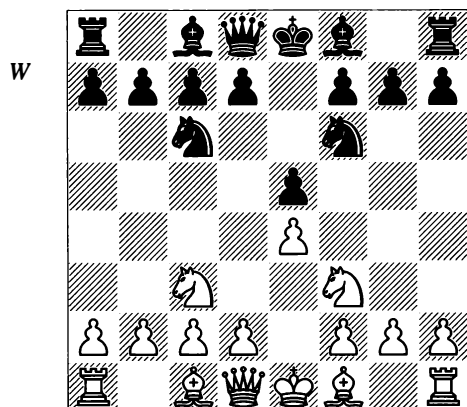
(the Ruy Lopez idea of ♖e2-g3 is also worthwhile), while Black generally sets up a solid barrier with ...a6, ...b6, ...♙b7 and ...♔c7, while ...♜e8 and ...♙f8 can lend some solidity to the kingside.

Four Knights

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 (D)

3...g6 is an interesting choice, when White should probably try 4 d4.

3...♗c5 4 ♘xe5! should be good for White. Note that 4...♗xf2+? 5 ♖xf2 ♘xe5 6 d4! leaves White with the centre and two bishops.



Imaginatively titled the Four Knights, this has long been known to give White no real advantage.

4 ♗b5

This is a Ruy Lopez-type interpretation – White is threatening to take on c6 and e5.

4 d4 is a less promising version of the Scotch since White has already committed his knight to c3. After 4...exd4 5 ♘xd4 (the Belgrade Gambit, 5 ♘d5, causes Black no real difficulties after 5...♗e7 6 ♗f4 d6 7 ♘xd4 0-0) 5...♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 0-0 d5! 9 exd5 (9 e5 ♘g4 and 10...f6 is also fine for Black) 9...cxd5 10 ♗g5 c6 Black has no problems.

4...♗b4

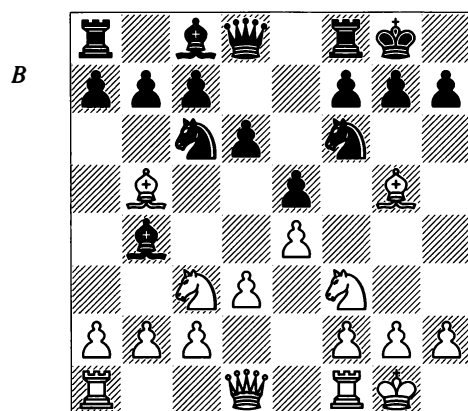
This is probably safest, but if Black is feeling ambitious there is a good alternative in 4...♘d4, which was Rubinstein's choice. White can now wimp out by 5 ♘xd4 exd4 6 e5 dxc3 7 exf6 ♗xf6 8 ♗e2+ ♗e7 with a very

likely draw, or play 5 ♗a4 when 5...c6!? (or 5...♗c5) 6 ♘xe5 d6 7 ♘f3 ♗g4 gives Black reasonable compensation.

5 0-0 0-0

5...d6? comes close to losing: 6 ♘d5 followed by 7 d4 and 8 ♗g5.

6 d3 d6 7 ♗g5 (D)



Now ♘d5 is the obvious threat, fatally weakening the black kingside.

7...♗xc3

Black can't maintain the symmetry with 7...♗g4?: 8 ♘d5 ♘d4 9 ♘xb4 ♘xb5 10 ♘d5 ♘d4 11 ♗d2! c6 (11...♗d7 12 ♘xf6+ gxf6 13 ♗xf6 threatening ♗g5#) 12 ♘xf6+ gxf6 13 ♗h4 ♗xf3 14 ♗h6 ♘e2+ 15 ♖h1 ♗xg2+ 16 ♖xg2 ♘f4+ 17 ♖h1 ♘g6 18 ♗g1 with a huge attack.

8 bxc3 ♗e7

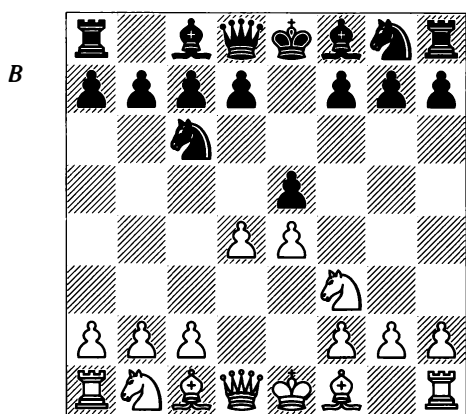
The position is balanced – White will play ♗e1 and d4, but this isn't sufficient for anything substantial after ...♘d8 and ...c5. The two bishops need open diagonals to function properly, and here Black is solid enough to be able to keep things closed. In addition he has comfortable squares for his remaining pieces – his bishop is the right colour, not being impeded by his central pawns.

Scotch Game

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♙c6 3 d4 (D)

Garry Kasparov has called the Scotch Game “the only serious alternative to the Ruy Lopez”. He tends to be well up on such things so his opinion is worth attention. White immediately pulls the trigger on d4, liquidating Black’s central strong-point and opening up further lines for his pieces.

This advance cannot be profitably prepared with 3...c3, the Ponziani Opening, since after 3...♙f6 4 d4 ♘xe4 5 d5 ♘e7 6 ♘xe5 ♘g6 7 ♗d4 ♗e7 8 ♗xe4 ♗xe5 9 ♗xe5+ ♘xe5 10 ♙f4 ♙d6! the endgame holds no dangers for Black.



3...exd4

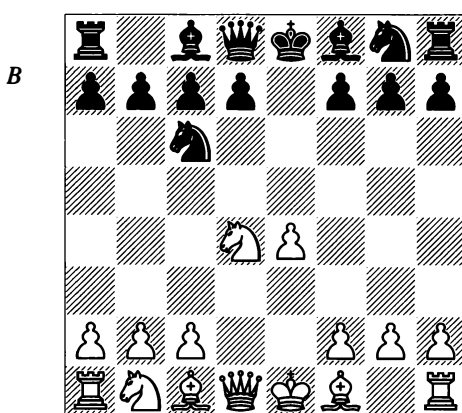
Black is really obliged to capture White’s pawn.

3...d6 gives a bad Philidor, with the knight committed to c6.

4 ♘xd4 (D)

4 c3, the Göring Gambit, is less exciting than it looks. Black can claim immediate equality with 4...d5, or accept the challenge with 4...dxc3 5 ♘xc3 ♙b4 6 ♙c4 d6 7 ♗b3 ♗e7 when White has enough for the pawn, but no more than that.

4...♙f6



This targets the e4-pawn, and so forces some sort of concession.

4...♙c5 5 ♙e3 ♗f6 6 c3 (6 ♘b5 has been played by Ponomarev, but for anyone who hasn’t been a world champion recently the move carries a health warning – after 6...♙xe3 7 fxex3 the doubled e-pawns control a lot of squares but are still extremely ugly, and after 7...♗h4+ 8 g3 Black can drop back to d8 or play 8...♗xe4 9 ♘xc7+ ♙d8 10 ♘xa8 ♗xh1 with an utterly unclear game) 6...♘ge7 is another main line, rapidly developing and preparing ...d5. After 7 ♙c4 ♘e5! (7...b6 8 0-0 ♙b7, preparing to castle queenside, is an excellent alternative) 8 ♙e2 ♗g6 White sacrifices the e4-pawn; for instance, 9 0-0 d6 10 f4 ♗xe4 11 ♙f2 ♙xd4 12 cxd4 ♘5g6 13 g3 ♙h3 14 ♙f3 ♗f5 15 ♙e1 d5 16 ♗b3 0-0 17 ♘c3 c6 18 ♗xb7 ♙fb8 19 ♗c7 ♗f6 with equality.

4...♙b4+!? 5 c3 ♙c5 is also popular at top level – Black provokes c3 to prevent the white knight from developing naturally on this square, without having to resort to ...♗f6.

4...♗h4?! is extremely risky. White can play 5 ♘b5 immediately, but 5 ♘c3 ♙b4 6 ♘b5 looks even better, when 6...♗xe4+ 7

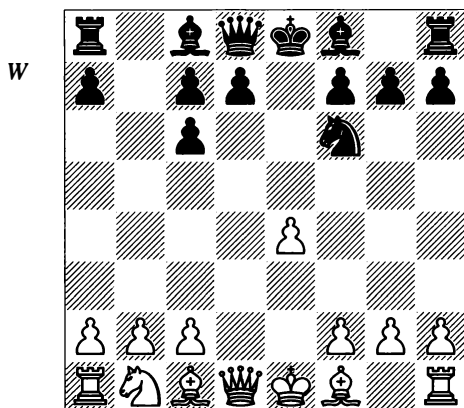
♙e2 gives White a truckload of compensation.

5 ♘xc6

5 ♘c3 ♙b4 transposes to the Scotch Four Knights.

5...bxc6 (D)

Not, of course, 5...dxc6? 6 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8, when Black has no compensation for his crippled pawn-majority in the endgame.



Black's trumps, as will become apparent, are that he can develop all of his pieces quickly to good squares. On the other hand, White holds a structural advantage. Thus Black's job is to generate some relevant play in the next few moves, while White needs just to get out of the opening alive to claim a long-term edge.

6 e5

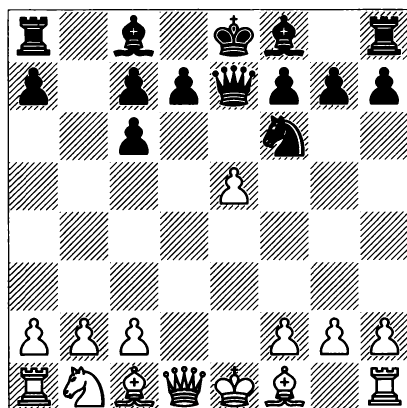
Now the knight is threatened without any stable squares available, so Black must be accurate to avoid falling into passivity.

6...♖e7! (D)

7 ♖e2

Taking the comment at move 5 into account, it should be clear that if both sides fully develop then White will be better. Accordingly, Black undertakes this disruptive manoeuvre in order to hinder White's development. It's true that his own development is similarly hindered, but (after ...♘d5) his queen will have a greater range of options

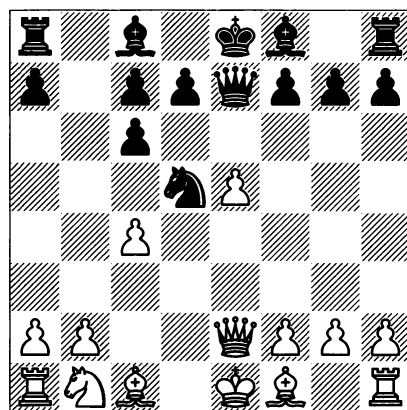
W



than the white queen, which will be tied to the e5-pawn. I've tried to present this as if ...♖e7 "conforms to the demands of the position", but in fact any such statements in the context of opening theory are at worst incorrect and at best *post hoc* – players started playing 6...♖e7 because Black was getting creamed after 6...♘d5 and needed to look for alternatives, found this one and discovered it worked.

7...♘d5 8 c4 (D)

B



Kicking the knight immediately makes sense and forces a concession – Black can misplace either his knight or his bishop.

8...♙a6

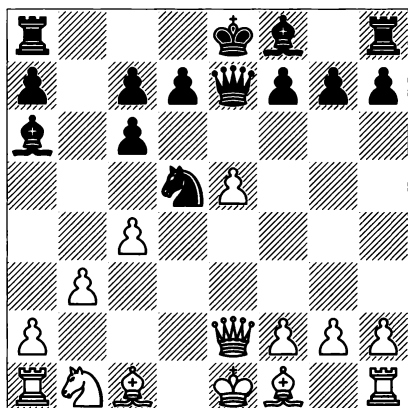
8...♘b6 is the alternative, when Black aims for play down the a-file (...a5-a4) or rapid

development (by means of ...♙a6, ...♚e6 and ...♙b4).

9 b3 (D)

White can also play 9 g3, but I think it's more flexible to defend the c-pawn at once.

B



9...g5!

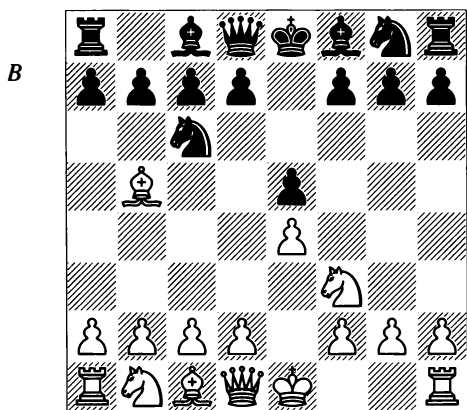
This is a perfect example of how good opening moves are found. The reason Black plays this is because the alternative way to develop the bishop, 9...g6, runs into 10 f4! when White is prepared to play ♗f2 and ♙a3 with unpleasant consequences. Accordingly Black realized he needed some more control over f4, while still facilitating his own development, and came up with this gem. Play typically now runs:

10 g3 ♙g7 11 ♙b2 0-0 12 ♙g2 ♖ae8 13 0-0 ♙xe5!? 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♙xe5 ♖xe5 16 cxd5 ♙xf1 17 ♙xf1 cxd5

The endgame is dynamically balanced – if White can keep the rooks in check he will be much better, but if they become active White could be routed.

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♜c6 3 ♙b5 (D)



This opening, known as the Ruy Lopez (or Spanish) is the most popular Open Game. It has been regarded as sound for several centuries, and now is firmly established as White's best attempt for an advantage after 1...e5. As Nunn points out, it is misleading to regard the Ruy Lopez as a single opening – in reality it is a collection of numerous different systems.

White's third move has quite a simple idea – by threatening the exchange of the c6-knight, White pressurizes the e5-pawn. As it happens, the immediate ♙xc6 isn't a threat, but it soon will be and White hopes that, while Black is stabilizing his centre, there will be time for completing development and building a menacing centre with c3 and d4.

With such a huge opening as this, there are numerous ways of splitting up the reader's work, but I think a logical way follows this pattern:

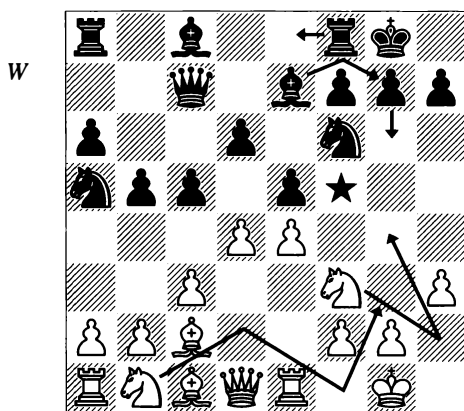
1) Systems without 3...a6. This little pawn move, pioneered by the great American Paul Morphy, is easily Black's most popular defence and marks the beginning of the main lines. First we look at Black's less popular

(though still playable) alternatives, such as 3...d6, 3...♞d4, 3...♙c5, 3...g6 and the increasingly popular 3...♞f6.

2) Systems with 3...a6 (excluding the Closed Lopez). These lines revolve around early activity for Black, generally involving an active development of the dark-squared bishop (to c5) or a capture of the e4-pawn (the Open Lopez). Here we'll also deal with White's early deviations, such as the Exchange Variation (4 ♙xc6), the Deferred Exchange, and lines with d3, ♖e2 or an early d4.

3) The Closed Lopez (and the Marshall). These lines are the backbone of Lopez theory.

Kingside Manoeuvres



Some typical Ruy Lopez manoeuvres are indicated in the diagram.

For White, ♞bd2-f1-g3 (or e3 sometimes) is almost mandatory, taking aim at the f5-square and moving some more wood to the kingside where his chances generally lie. He can further increase the pressure with ♞f3-h2-g4, and if Black takes then recapture with the h-pawn and attack down the h-file.

For Black, the indicated kingside reorganization is often an excellent plan – on g7 the bishop defends the king and pressurizes the centre, while the g6-pawn covers f5.

Ruy Lopez Part 1

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5

As previously mentioned, ♗xc6 isn't a real threat right now – for instance 3...a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 ♘e5? (5 0-0! is the standard move in the Exchange Variation) 5...♙d4, winning back the pawn with a slight advantage for Black, who owns the two bishops for insufficient compensation. Thus Black has a move's grace, so to speak, and here we'll look at his attempts to make use of this without playing 3...a6.

First, we'll examine the systems where Black immediately attacks the e4-pawn – these are the Berlin Defence (3...♘f6) and the Schliemann (3...f5).

Next we'll look at lines where Black aims for an early ...d6 – these include the Steinitz Defence (3...d6) and some lines of the Classical Defence (3...♗c5).

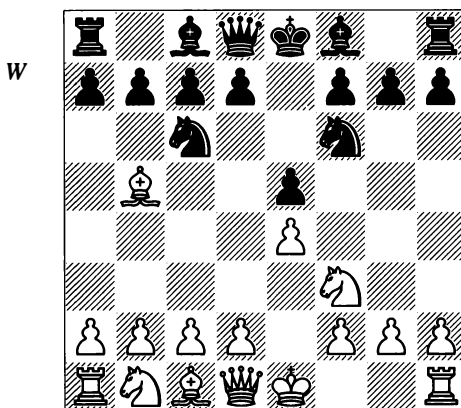
Then we'll look at one of Black's more radical attempts to unbalance the game, the interesting Bird Defence (3...♘d4).

Finally we'll examine the early fianchetto systems – 3...g6 and 3...♘ge7 followed by ...g6.

Berlin

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 (D)

This is the Berlin Defence. While it was always regarded as a playable move, the line was used infrequently until Vladimir Kramnik used it repeatedly to neutralize Garry Kasparov in their 2000 BGN world championship match. This was followed by a wave of top-level activity in the line, during which several new and promising continuations for White were discovered. Now its popularity has faded somewhat, but it's still a perfectly viable continuation for Black, especially if he's willing to defend a slightly inferior



endgame with a view to outplaying his opponent later.

4 0-0

This is critical – other moves leave White with nothing.

4 d3 can be met perfectly well with 4...d6, but 4...♗c5!? is also possible, followed by ...d6, since 5 ♗xc6? dxc6 6 ♘e5?? ♙d4 wins for Black due to the twin threats on e5 and f2.

4 ♘c3 transposes to the Four Knights Opening.

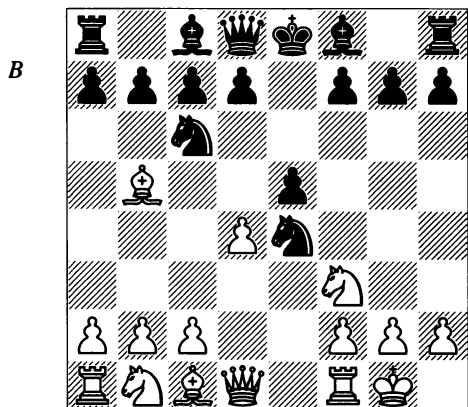
4...♗xe4

Note that it's already too late for 4...a6?, since 5 ♗xc6 dxc6 6 ♘e5 wins a safe pawn: 6...♙d4? (6...♗xe4 7 ♖e1 is equally devastating) 7 ♘f3 ♙xe4?? 8 ♖e1 and White wins the queen.

5 d4 (D)

5 ♖e1 is simpler, aiming for a wide-open centre. After 5...♗d6 6 ♘e5, 6...♗e7 is probably the most accurate (6...♗xe5 7 ♖xe5+ ♗e7 8 ♘c3 should transpose after 8...0-0, but certainly not 8...♗xb5? 9 ♘d5! 0-0 10 ♘e7+ ♗h8 11 ♙h5 {threatening mate in two by 12 ♙xh7+ ♗xh7 13 ♖h5#} 11...g6 12 ♙h6 d6 13 ♖h5! with mate next move). Following 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 ♘c3 ♗xe5 9 ♖xe5 I like the

classical choice (and Shaw's recommendation) of 9...c6!, keeping the white knight out of d5 and preparing ...d6! and ...d5 with equality.



5...d6

This is the modern preference, steering play into an interesting and unbalanced endgame.

5...d6 has a classical pedigree, having been recommended by Lasker in his 1895 lectures. After 6 ♖e2 d6 7 ♙xc6 bxc6 8 dxe5 d6 9 ♙b7 the 2nd World Champion stated "I do not believe that White has any advantage, and am rather inclined to attribute the greater viability to the party that has kept its forces a little farther back", but modern GMs seem to be agreed that White has an edge here due to his space advantage and easier development. After 9 d3 0-0 10 ♙e1 d5 11 ♙e3 d6 12 ♙ad1 Black still has problems to solve.

5...a6!? is a sneaky move-order for those who like the Open Ruy Lopez but are unwilling to face White's early alternatives, especially the Exchange Variation. Since 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 gives nothing, White's best is 6 ♙a4 b5 7 ♙b3 d5 transposing into the Open Lopez.

6 ♙xc6

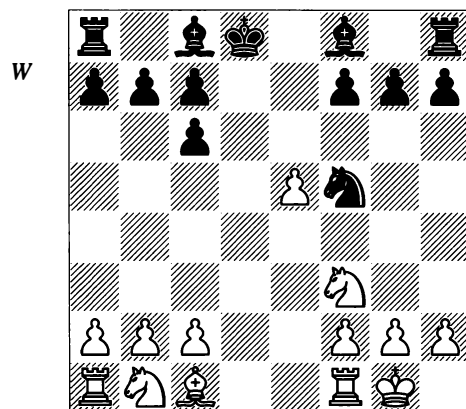
6 dxe5 dxb5 7 a4 is an amusing way to avoid the main lines, but objectively it gives White nothing. 7...d6 8 e6!? gives White good

play for the pawn, but as Shaw points out "The move which takes all the fun out of 6 dxe5 is 7...d6d4!", when 8 dxd4 dxd4 9 ♙xd4 d5 leads to equality.

6...dxc6 7 dxe5 d5

7...d4 tries to keep the queens on. 8 ♙xd8+?! is a definite mistake here, since the knight is much better placed on e4 than f5 (it can easily drop back to e6, for instance, and isn't liable to be harassed by a space-gaining g4). Thus 8 ♙e2 is the move, when 8...d5 9 ♙d1 ♙c8 is nice for White. 10 d4 d5!? leads to interesting complications, but simple development should suffice for an edge; for instance, Shaw's recommended 10 ♙d4 d5 11 ♙e3 d6 12 ♙d2.

8 ♙xd8+ ♙xd8 (D)



9 d3

This is the most popular and certainly the most flexible move here. The endgame is a little better for White as Black still has some problems with his king and development.

9 ♙d1+ is tempting but after 9...d8 it isn't clear what White has achieved.

9...d7

Black has lots of alternatives; for instance, 9...h6, 9...d8, and 9...a5.

10 h3

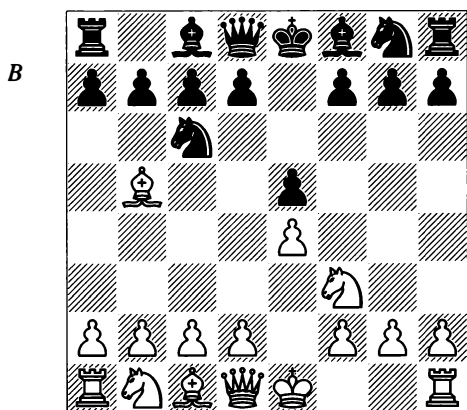
Followed by d4 and g4 with an edge, since White's mobile kingside pawns are dangerous and his knights have good squares,

while the black king still has to find a good square.

Third-Move Alternatives

Here we'll look at some less popular third-move alternatives.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 (D)



3...f5

This is the Schliemann Defence. Always regarded as too dubious for regular top-level practice (the weakening of the a2-g8 and h5-e8 diagonals can lead to big problems), it has been the darling of correspondence players who seem to devote years of analysis to junk lines. The Schliemann hasn't quite been refuted yet, but White has a pleasant choice of lines all of which maintain at least an edge.

3...d6 4 d4 ♙d7 5 ♘c3 exd4 6 ♘xd4 g6 (6...♘f6 7 0-0 ♙e7 is a more classical way of handling the system, which gives White an effortless edge; after 8 ♚e1 0-0 9 ♙xc6 bxc6 10 ♚d3 ♚e8 11 b3, followed by ♙b2 and ♚ad1, White is very comfortable) 7 ♙e3 ♙g7 8 ♚d2 ♘f6 9 ♙xc6 bxc6 10 ♙h6 0-0 11 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 leaves Black passive.

Such a move as 3...♙c5 can hardly be called illogical, but it is safe to say that the early bishop development has never really caught on as a defence to the Ruy Lopez.

Compared to the Giuoco Piano, here Black has much more cause to be worried about his e5-pawn, while the stock plan of c3 and d4 is still on the cards. 4 0-0 (White can try to exploit the position of the black bishop with 4 c3, but after 4...♘f6! 5 d4 exd4 6 e5 ♘e4 7 cxd4 ♙b4+ 8 ♘bd2 0-0 9 0-0 d5! Black is well placed and shouldn't be worse) and now:

a) 4...♘d4 aims to get an improved version of the Bird Defence (3...♘d4), but White has little trouble maintaining an advantage: 5 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 6 c3 ♙b6 7 d4 c6 8 ♙c4 d6 leaves White a little better, while 5 b4!? is quite a promising gambit.

b) I'm not wild about 4...d6 when 5 c3!, intending d4, poses major problems for Black.

c) 4...♘f6 is, of course, a position that can also be reached via a Berlin move-order. 5 ♘xe5!? (White has a pleasant choice here between this move and 5 c3 0-0 6 d4 ♙b6 7 ♙g5, where he also holds a nice advantage) 5...♘xe5 6 d4 a6 7 ♙e2 ♙e7 8 dxe5 ♘xe4 9 c4! 0-0 10 ♚c2 and White has the better chances.

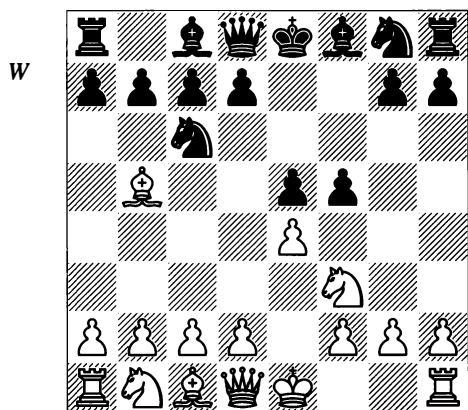
3...♘d4. One of the more interesting alternatives to the main line, the Bird has been used as a surprise weapon by some top players, most recently by Khalifman against Kasparov (successfully in their first game, but disastrously in the rematch). Now 4 ♙c4 is possible, when 4...♙c5 5 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 6 c3 ♙b6 7 d4 leaves White better but 4...♚f6 and 4...♘f6 are interesting. However, 4 ♘xd4 is obviously critical – the black pawns are doubled, and the e5-pawn is dragged away, allowing White to march his f-pawn in some lines. 4...exd4 5 0-0 ♙c5 (5...c6 6 ♙c4 d5 was Khalifman's choice – after 7 exd5 cxd5 8 ♙b5+ ♙d7 9 ♚e1+ ♘e7 White is slightly better following both 10 a4 and 10 c4) 6 d3 c6 7 ♙a4! (the most testing line) 7...♘e7 8 f4! f5 9 ♙b3 is just nasty for Black – I think his fifth-move alternative is worth a look.

3...g6 was used several times by former World Champion Vasily Smyslov, who had quite a knack for inventing novel systems of

development. In all Open Games, systems with an early ...g6 deserve to be treated with respect, since in many main lines Black plays ...♗e7, ...0-0, ...♞e8, ...♜f8, ...g6 and ...♟g7 anyway. Thus White must react energetically to obtain any advantage. 4 d4! exd4 5 ♟g5 ♟e7 6 ♟xe7 ♞xe7. The exchange of Black's dark-squared bishop has already neutralized the fianchetto. Now 7 ♟xc6!? dxc6 8 ♞xd4 ♟f6 9 ♟c3 gives White a pleasant edge – normally Black needs two bishops to compensate for this shoddy pawn-structure.

3...♟g7 4 0-0 g6 is a closely related variation. After 5 c3 ♟g7 6 d4 exd4 7 cxd4 d5!? 8 exd5 ♟xd5 9 ♟g5 ♞d6 10 ♞e1+ ♟e6 Black is structurally better, but that will be of little consequence if he gets mated in the next 10 moves.

Now we return to the position after 3...f5 (D):



4 ♟c3

This is theoretically critical, but White needs to know his stuff here in order to maintain the advantage. I suspect that what puts a lot of players off the Schliemann is that, while the main line is dubious enough, White has a few fourth-move alternatives which maintain a risk-free edge.

4 d3, simply holding the centre, is sensible – it looks like d3 has helped White more than ...f5 has helped Black.

4 ♞e2!? is quite a venomous move, with the idea that after 4...fxe4 5 ♟xc6! White wins material.

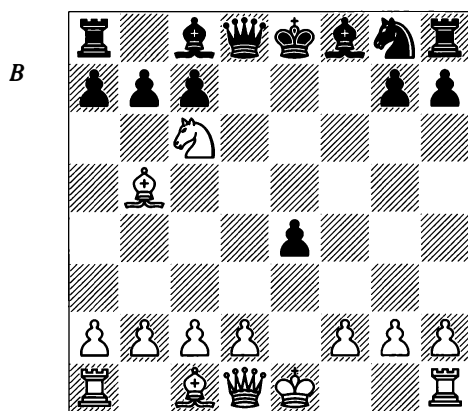
4 d4 is logical, striking in the centre, but the position after 4...fxe4 5 ♟xc6 dxc6 6 ♟xe5 is far from clear.

4 ♟xc6!? is better than its reputation: 4...dxc6 5 ♟c3 ♟f6 6 ♞e2 and Black will have difficulty holding his centre.

4...fxe4

Initiating enormous complications. 4...♟f6 5 exf5 is good for White, since 5...e4 6 ♟h4! holds the important pawn on f5, which blocks both Black's light-squared bishop and his f-file counterplay.

5 ♟xe4 d5 6 ♟xe5 dxe4 7 ♟xc6 (D)



7...♞g5!

7...♞d5 is also played sometimes, but I don't like the idea of letting White defend his loose bishop for free with 8 c4.

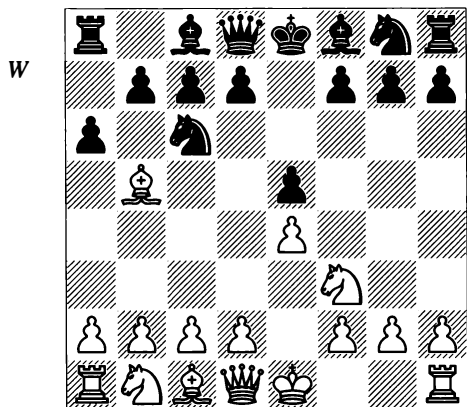
7...bxc6? 8 ♟xc6+ ♟d7 9 ♞h5+ is horrendous for Black.

8 ♞e2 ♟f6 9 f4!

Defending the g2-pawn while maintaining all of White's advantages. Black has been having trouble holding this together; for instance: 9...♞xf4 (9...♞h4+ 10 g3 ♞h3 is junk) 10 ♟e5+ c6 11 d4! ♞h4+ 12 g3 ♞h3 13 ♟c4, when White will castle queenside while controlling most of the squares in the black camp.

Ruy Lopez Part 2

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 (D)



This is called the ‘Morphy Defence’, but most people simply know it as the main line. Black immediately puts the question to the white bishop (he must do so now – note that 3...♘f6 4 0-0 a6? is bad due to 5 ♙xc6 dxc6 6 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 7 ♖e1) before the threat to the e-pawn becomes real. White can now take on c6, which is interesting but probably not advantageous, or drop the bishop back, after which we enter the heart of Ruy Lopez theory.

Exchange Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙xc6

Chess nomenclature is a strange beast. Variations have been called by silly names, often after obscure players who made little or no contribution to their theory. The summit of idiocy in this field, however, is occupied by the variation 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♙xc6 dxc6: the Delayed Exchange Ruy Lopez Deferred. Such an inelegant title should be sufficient to shame anyone who wants to play this opening. It turns out that Black is fully equal

too. 7 d3 (7 ♖e1 is also played sometimes, when Black can continue with 7...♘d7 or more actively with 7...c5 since 8 ♘xe5 ♖d4 is no problem) 7...♘d7 8 ♘bd2 0-0 9 ♘c4 f6, and White has nothing.

4...dxc6

Black has two bishops, while White has a better pawn-structure. After d4, exchanging the black e-pawn, the white kingside majority is healthy (meaning it can create a passed pawn) while the black queenside majority isn’t.

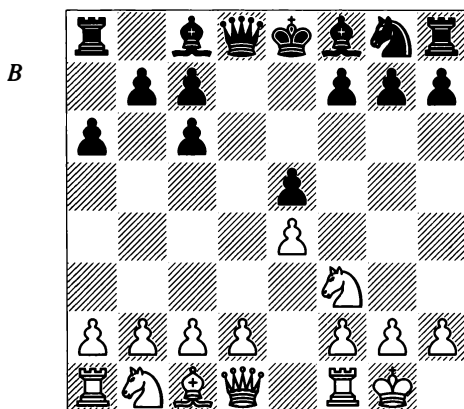
No one plays 4...bxc6?, since after 5 0-0 d6 6 d4 White is a whole tempo up on the Steinitz Deferred.

5 0-0! (D)

This was Fischer’s way of reinvigorating the Exchange Variation.

Many classic games were played after 5 d4 exd4 6 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 7 ♘xd4, but objectively Black should be fine – he has an improved version of the main line since he hasn’t had to spend time on ...f6.

Of course 5 ♘xe5? is useless in view of 5...♖d4, when White is struggling to equalize.



5...f6

5...♔g4 6 h3 h5! and White doesn't win a piece in view of mate down the h-file, but with 7 d3 ♖f6 8 ♜bd2 ♜e7 9 ♜c4!? (intending 10 hxg4 and 11 ♔g5! – White can also play 9 ♜e1) 9...♔xf3 10 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 11 gxf3 White is a fraction better in the endgame.

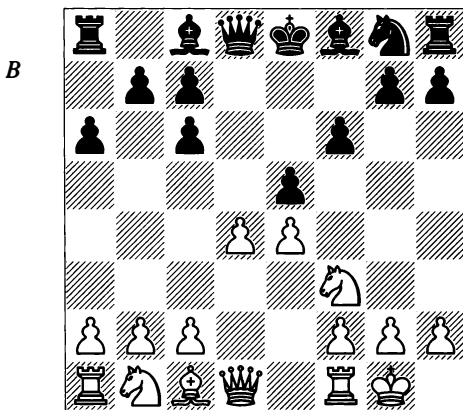
5...♞d6!? is one of Black's best options – after 6 ♜a3! b5 (6...♔e6 7 ♞e2 f6 is also possible) 7 c3 c5 8 ♜c2 White plans both a4 and d4, and so has a tiny edge.

Black can also defend the pawn indirectly by 5...♔e7 6 ♜xe5 (6 d3 ♔f6 gives White an edge) 6...♞d4 7 ♞h5 g6 8 ♜f3 ♞xe4.

After 5...♜e7 6 ♜xe5 ♞d4 7 ♞h5 g6 8 ♞g5 ♔g7 9 ♜d3! (preventing ...♞b4 after ...♞xe4 ♜e1) Black's compensation isn't too convincing.

5...♔d6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♞xd4 leaves White actively placed.

6 d4 (D)



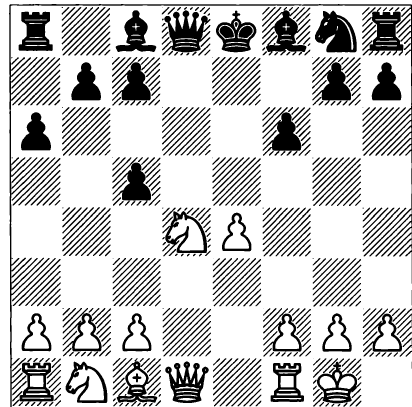
6...exd4

6...♔g4 is also possible: 7 dxe5 (7 c3 keeps the tension; with Black I'd solidify the centre with 7...♔d6, since accepting the gambit with 7...exd4 8 cxd4 ♔xf3 9 ♖xf3 ♞xd4 10 ♜d1 ♞c4 11 ♔f4 gives White a truckload of compensation) 7...♞xd1 8 ♜xd1 fxe5 with near equality after either 9 ♜bd2 0-0-0 or 9 ♜d3.

7 ♜xd4 c5 (D)

8 ♜b3

W



This is the traditional main line – the knight attacks the c-pawn, while ♜a5 can be a useful resource.

8 ♜e2!? could be more promising: after 8...♞xd1 9 ♜xd1 ♔d7 10 ♜bc3 0-0-0 11 ♔e3 White will double on the d-file.

8...♞xd1 9 ♜xd1 ♔d7

Black will castle queenside. While objectively the position is balanced, if forced to take a side I'd pick Black – the two bishops are hard to contain.

Steinitz Deferred

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♔b5 a6 4 ♔a4

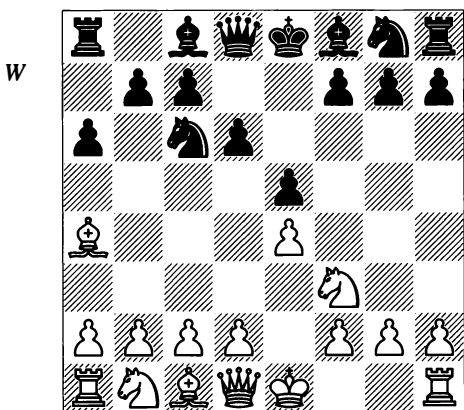
The main move here is 4...♜f6, but Black still has considerable flexibility to go into some of the sidelines we examined previously, in which the inclusion of ...a6 ♔a4 can improve his prospects.

4...d6 (D)

4...b5 5 ♔b3 ♜a5 gains the two bishops, but after 6 0-0 and 7 d4 White's lead in development is pretty scary. Such lines require excellent defensive technique from Black.

5 0-0

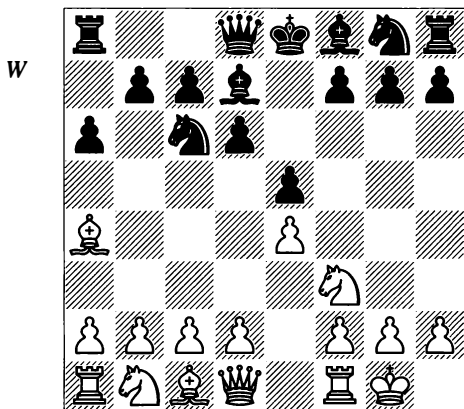
5 ♔xc6+ is also promising: after 5...bxc6 6 d4 f6! White will have most of the fun in the early middlegame, but if Black can uncurl then his two bishops could prove important.



5 c3 is similar, though White must be prepared for the sharp Siesta Variation after 5...f5!?

5...d7 (D)

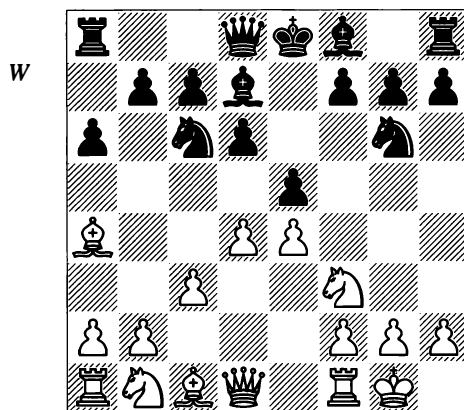
5...d7 is playable for Black, but White retains a risk-free edge) is a sharper option, utilizing a theme known from the Exchange Variation – the idea is that if 7 hxg4 hxg4 White can't move the knight due to mate down the h-file. After 7 d4 b5 8 d5 c3 d6 8 d4 d7 is playable for Black, but White retains a risk-free edge) is a sharper option, utilizing a theme known from the Exchange Variation – the idea is that if 7 hxg4 hxg4 White can't move the knight due to mate down the h-file. After 7 d4 b5 8 d5 c3 d6 8 d4 d7 is playable for Black, but White retains a risk-free edge) is a sharper option, utilizing a theme known from the Exchange Variation – the idea is that if 7 hxg4 hxg4 White can't move the knight due to mate down the h-file.



6 c3 d7

6...g6 is also possible and could be an improvement on the Smyslov Variation since Black has avoided the early d4 systems. After 7 d4 d7 8 e1 White is a little better.

7 d4 d7 (D)



Now the simplest is 8 d5 d6 9 d7+ d7 10 c4 with a big space advantage.

Open Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 b5 a6 4 a4 f6 5 0-0

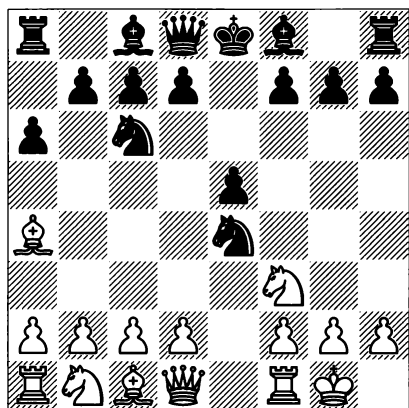
5 e2 is the Worrall Attack, and avoids the Open Variation (sometimes it also arises via 5 0-0 e7 6 e2), but the queen isn't too happily placed here. Following 5...b5 6 b3 c5, it is hard for White to arrange c3 and d4, so he can't really establish himself in the centre. I don't see why Black should be worse.

5...xe4 (D)

5...e7 6 e2 is also possible, but if he plays this move-order White needs to be prepared for the Open Variation. After 6...b5 7 b3 0-0 Black is fine.

As in the Queen's Gambit Accepted, Black's aim is not so much to win a pawn as to win time for piece development. The Open Variation has never been as popular as the lines after 5...e7, though White has never found a clear route to an advantage here.

W



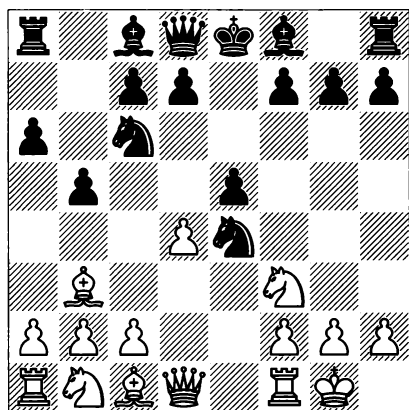
6 d4 b5

A necessary preparation for Black's next move.

The Riga Variation, 6...exd4, is playable but not too popular, since after 7 ♖e1 d5 8 ♜xd4 ♙d6 9 ♜xc6 ♙xh2+! Black must be prepared for a draw after 10 ♙xh2 ♖h4+ 11 ♙g1 ♖xf2+ 12 ♙h2 ♖h4+ while 10 ♙h1 ♖h4 11 ♙xe4+ dxe4 12 ♙d8+! ♙xd8 13 ♜xd8+ ♙xd8 14 ♙xh2 is nice for White.

7 ♙b3 (D)

B



7...d5!

By solidly entrenching the knight, Black gets a reasonable game.

7...exd4 is dubious: 8 ♖e1 d5 9 ♜c3! ♙e6 (after 9...dxc3 10 ♙xd5 ♙b7 11 ♙xe4 ♙e7 {11...♖xd1 12 ♙xc6+}) 12 ♖e2 Black cannot

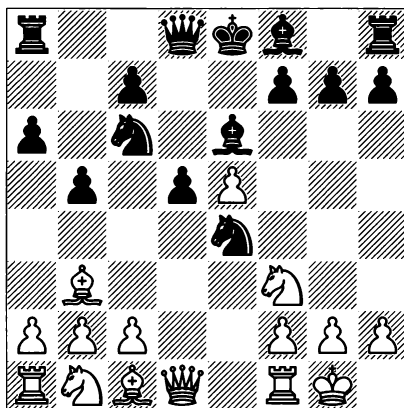
castle) 10 ♜xe4 dxe4 11 ♙xe4 ♙e7 12 ♙xe6 fxe6 13 ♜xd4 and the black pawns are shattered. Note that 13...e5 doesn't win a piece in view of 14 ♖h5+ g6 15 ♜xc6.

8 dxe5

8 ♜xe5 is a much less ambitious move – by exchanging the c6-knight White frees the black c-pawn, and 8...♜xe5 9 dxe5 c6 is just level.

8...♙e6 (D)

W



9 ♜bd2

This is probably the 'main line' of late.

9 c3 can be met by 9...♙e7 with a solid position, but White must also be ready for 9...♙c5 10 ♜bd2 0-0! 11 ♙c2 when Black can choose between 11...♙f5, 11...f5 and the Dilworth Attack: 11...♜xf2!? 12 ♙xf2 f6 with an initiative and an unusual material balance.

Meanwhile both 9 ♙e3 (stopping ...♙c5) and 9 ♖e2 (intending 10 ♙d1) are less popular attempts but should maintain a white advantage.

9...♜c5

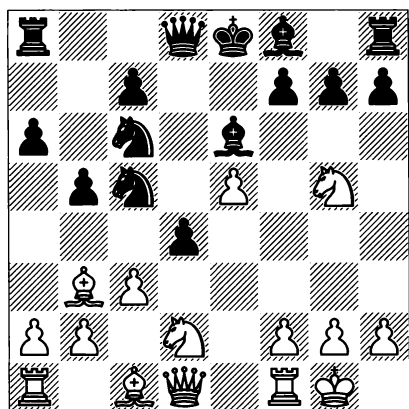
9...♙e7 is also possible, when 10 c3 0-0 11 ♙c2 transposes to 9 c3 lines.

10 c3 d4 11 ♜g5! (D)

11 ♙xe6 ♜xe6 12 cxd4 ♜cxd4 has a lot of theory, but I can't believe that Black is worse with such easy development.

11...♖xg5

B

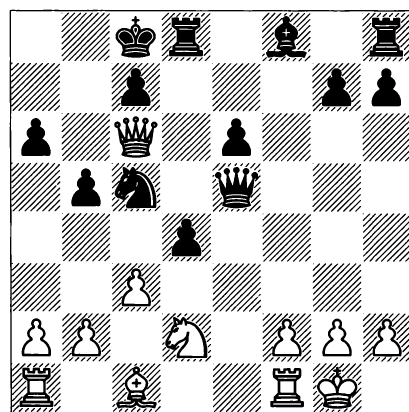


11...dxc3?! seems unreliable after Kasparov's brilliant win against Anand in their 1995 PCA world championship match: after 12 ♖xe6 fxe6 13 bxc3 ♜d3 14 ♙c2!! ♜xc3 15 ♜b3!! White sacrificed a rook for an irresistible attack.

11...♙d5 is interesting, but Black must be ready for 12 ♜xf7! ♙xf7 13 ♜f3+ ♙e6 with horrendous complications.

12 ♜f3 0-0-0! 13 ♙xe6+ fxe6 14 ♜xc6 ♜xe5 (D)

W

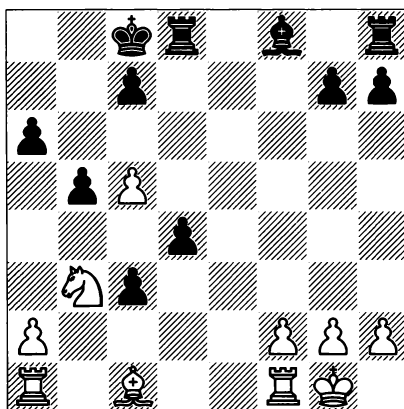


15 b4!

Definitely the critical response. 15 ♜f3 "probably just leads to a draw" according to Shirov.

15...♜d5 16 ♜xd5 exd5 17 bxc5 dxc3 18 ♜b3 d4 (D)

W



In this utterly unique endgame, White has the better chances. While the c3- and d4-pawns look, and are, dangerous, White will keep them in check by putting his bishop on b4 and then try to generate play with his rooks. Black should put his bishop on the long diagonal and centralize his rooks so as to be able to exploit any errors.

Møller

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♜f6 5 0-0 b5

The immediate 5...♙c5 is also possible.

6 ♙b3 ♙c5 (D)

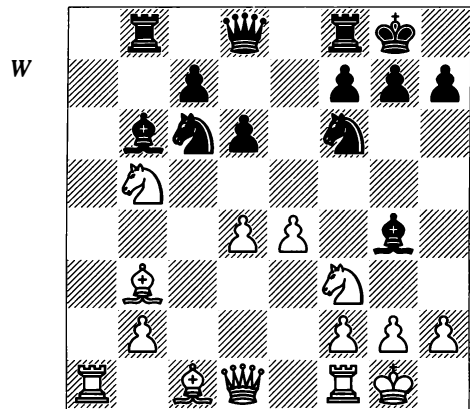
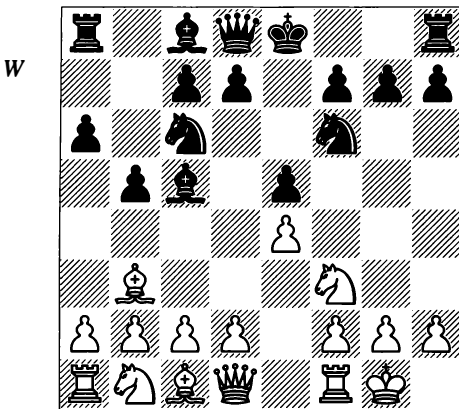
This is the Møller Defence, while 6...♙b7 is the Archangel. Often they transpose into one another, since Black's aim in both is to place his bishops actively on c5 and b7. Over the past few years these variations have really exploded in popularity.

6...♙b7 7 ♜e1 ♙c5 8 c3 d6 9 d4 ♙b6 gives White a perfect centre, but Black has good pressure and easy development.

7 a4

Probably the main line – White wants to play c3 and d4 but softens up the b5-pawn first.

7 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 8 d4 ♙xd4 9 ♜xd4 d6 is also OK, as long as White remembers to watch out for the threatened ...c5-c4 winning the bishop.



7...Bb8 8 c3 d6 9 d4 Bb6

A logical sequence has resulted in a very tense position.

10 Bxa3 0-0! 11 axb5 axb5 12 Bxb5 exd4

12...Bg4 13 d5! gives White fewer problems containing the black counterplay.

13 cxd4 Bg4 (D)

This position has arisen frequently, with such luminaries as Anand, Leko and Svidler extensively testing one or other side. Black is a pawn down but has considerable pressure

on the white centre. It's unclear what is really going on. For instance:

14 Bxa4

14 Bc2 d5 15 e5 Bxe4 16 Be3?! allows Black to equalize with the typical tactic 16...Bxe5! 17 dxe5 Bxe3 18 fxe3 Bxb5.

14...Be8!?

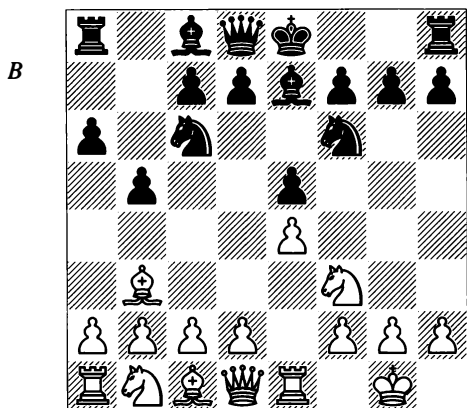
14...Bxe4? loses to 15 Bd5 Be8 16 Bc2 Bxe7 17 Bxe4 Bxb5 18 Bxh7+ Kh8 19 Be4.

15 Bb3

with enormous complications.

Ruy Lopez Part 3

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♚e1 b5 7 ♙b3 (D)



Finally, we get to the real reason why the Lopez is played. This position is the strategically richest of all Open Games. Basically, White intends c3 and d4 to win control of the centre, followed by ♘bd2-f1-g3 with good chances of kingside pressure, as well as a handy a4 advance to soften up the black queenside. In response, Black has several options.

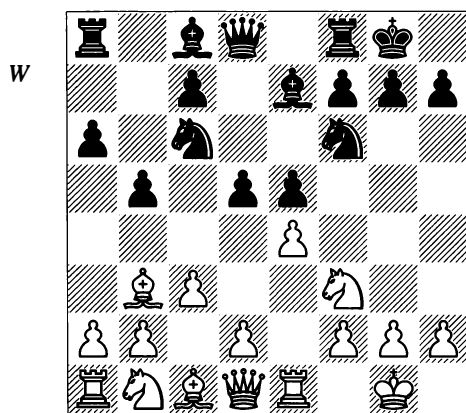
The first line we'll look at is the radical Marshall Attack, 7...0-0 8 c3 d5!?, where Black sacrifices an important pawn in return for an intimidating attack. Many players don't like conceding the initiative at so early a stage as White, and so a slew of 'Anti-Marshall' systems have been developed, in which White avoids the gambit and seeks a quieter life.

Next, and crucial, is the early d4 system: 7...d6 (or 7...0-0 8 d4 d6 9 c3) 8 c3 0-0 9 d4, when Black's only real move is 9...♙g4!, putting immediate pressure on the d4-pawn. It used to be assumed that Black had full equality here, but White has recently been finding an edge in several lines.

Finally, we come to the Closed Lopez, 7...d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3. Even here Black has a broad range of options – whether to play ...c5, what to do with the c6-knight, and how to arrange his pieces and pawns defensively on the kingside.

Marshall Attack

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♚e1 b5 7 ♙b3 0-0 8 c3 d5!? (D)



First played in the famous game Capablanca-Marshall, New York 1918, this opening has survived its initial thrashing to become one of the most respected defences to the Ruy Lopez. Indeed, it's notable that Garry Kasparov has never allowed the gambit proper, always preferring one of the side-variations.

9 exd5

Having come this far, White might as well take the pawn.

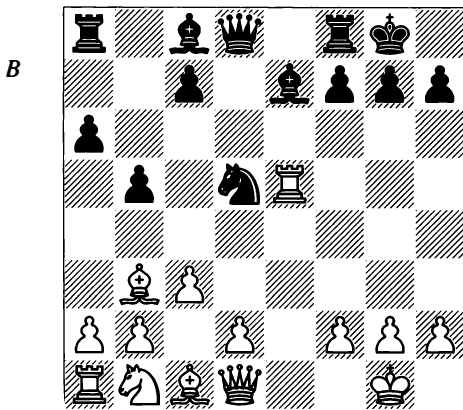
9 d4!? has gained some popularity recently, but isn't of major concern to Black: after 9...exd4 10 e5 ♘e4 he is well placed after either 11 cxd4 ♙g4 or 11 ♘xd4 ♘xe5!.

9 d3 is utterly tame, but probably suffices for equality.

9...♘xd5

The Steiner Variation, 9...e4 10 dxc6 exf3, leads to very interesting play after 11 ♖xf3 ♙g4 12 ♖g3 ♙d6 and 13...♞e8 but unfortunately comes unstuck against 11 d4!, when no route to equality has been found for Black.

10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♞xe5 (D)



11...c6

Of the alternatives, 11...♙b7 is the most notable. Black no longer has the option of ...♙d6 but instead will try to achieve positional compensation with ...♙f6 and ...c5. After 12 d4 ♙f6 13 ♞e1 c5!? 14 dxc5 ♞e8 the position is unclear.

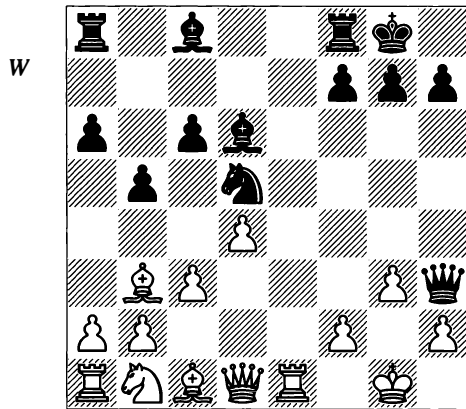
11...♘f6 12 d4 ♙d6 13 ♞e1 ♘g4 can give Black a very strong attack in the case of 14 g3?! ♘xh2! 15 ♙xh2?! ♖h4+, but unfortunately White has 14 h3 ♖h4 15 ♖f3 when Black has no clear route to equality; for instance, 15...♘xf2 16 ♞e2!.

12 d4

12 d3 is also an important move, with the point that after 12...♙d6 13 ♞e1 ♖h4 14 g3 ♖h3 15 ♞e4, 15...g5? allows 16 ♙xg5! when Black just loses the g5-pawn as the e4-rook is protected, but simply 15...♖f5 gives Black adequate compensation.

12 g3 was tried by Fischer, but these days this move seems to be largely forgotten.

12...♙d6 13 ♞e1 ♖h4 14 g3 ♖h3 (D)



Now White has a few moves, but the most critical is:

15 ♞e4

15 ♙e3 was the traditional main line, developing a piece and blocking the e-file. Black's development isn't interfered with, however, which could put some players off the move (at the time of writing, 15 ♞e4 is more popular). After the natural 15...♙g4 16 ♖d3 ♞ae8 17 ♘d2 ♞e6! (with possible ideas of ...♘xe3 and ...♖h6) 18 a4 bxa4 19 ♞xa4 f5 Black has strong pressure for the pawn, and a number of high-level games have indicated that his compensation is fully adequate.

By threatening to play ♖h4, kicking away the black queen, White poses real questions about the quality of Black's compensation.

15...g5!

This ingenious move is the most dynamic response. The pawn is immune in view of ...♖f5, forking e4 and g5. The position is very unclear, and anyone who wants to enter this line with either colour needs to come prepared. One horror story:

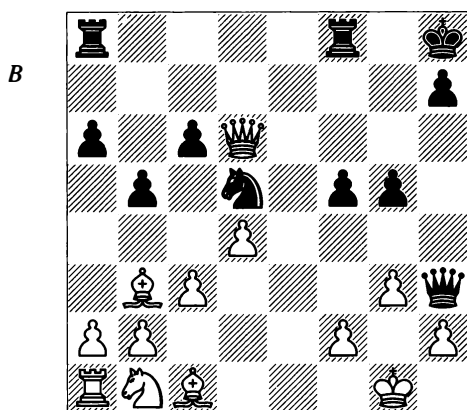
16 ♖e2 f5 17 ♞e6??

17 ♙xd5+ cxd5 18 ♞e6 is theory's recommendation.

17...♙xe6 18 ♖xe6+ ♙h8 19 ♖xd6 (D)

The problem is that after 19 ♙xd5 Black needn't immediately recapture but instead

can interpose 19...♖ae8! with unpleasantness on White's back rank.

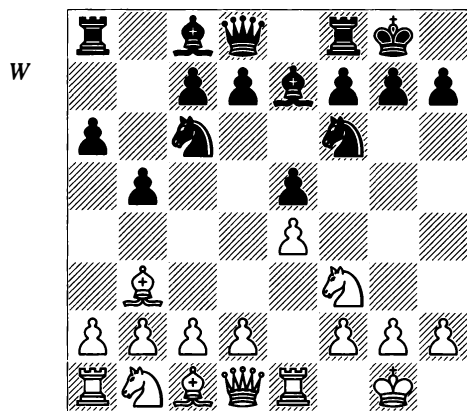


19...♖ae8 20 ♖d2 f4! 21 ♖xd5 cxd5 22 f3 g4!

White (a 2700 player!) stopped the clock here.

Anti-Marshall

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♖b5 a6 4 ♖a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♖e7 6 ♚e1 b5 7 ♖b3 0-0 (D)



Considering the attacking chances Black generates in the Marshall itself, it's understandable that White has sought to limit Black's counterplay by declining the gambit.

8 a4

This is probably the critical test, other than taking the pawn. Note that, had Black used the 7...d6 move-order (obviously foregoing his chances of the Marshall, but aiming instead for a Closed defence), 8 a4 wouldn't be as effective since the e5-pawn is solidly defended: 8...♖b7 9 c3 ♘a5 10 ♖c2 c5 with equality.

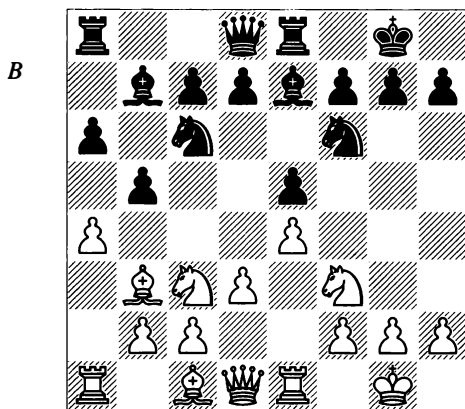
8 h3 ♖b7 (8...d6 9 c3 leads to the regular stuff) 9 d3 d6 10 a3 is also played sometimes, but I really can't see how White could claim an advantage here. By leaving the c3-square free he aims for ♘c3-d5, but this can't be too scary. I would suggest something like 10...♘b8!? (10...♘a5 11 ♖a2 c5 with Chigorin-style play is also popular, but White can play to occupy d5 after 12 ♘c3) 11 ♘c3 ♘bd7 with excellent control over d5 and a Breyer-type set-up.

8 d4 can cause problems if Black doesn't know what he's doing, but with 8...♘xd4! 9 ♘xd4 exd4 10 e5 ♘e8 11 ♚xd4 ♖b7 followed by ...d5, the game is equal.

8...♖b7

8...b4 is also completely fine: 9 a5 d6 10 d3 ♖e6! 11 ♘bd2 ♖xb3 12 ♘xb3 d5! and White has nothing.

9 d3 ♚e8 10 ♘c3 (D)



White has an edge, though after 10...♘a5 11 ♖a2 b4 he's best advised not to occupy d5

immediately but rather play 12 ♖e2 with a slightly better position – the knight is headed for the kingside, while Black should arrange central play.

Early d4

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♙c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0

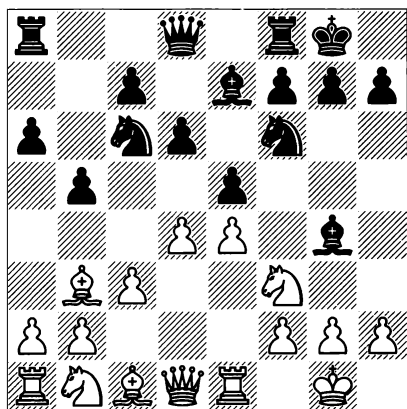
The immediate 5 d4 brings no advantage after 5...exd4 6 0-0 ♙e7 7 e5 ♙e4 8 ♘xd4 0-0 (or 8...♙c5 9 ♘f5 when Black can't take the bishop in view of ♘xg7+ and ♙h6, but 9...0-0 10 ♖g4 g6 11 ♙xc6 dxc6 12 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 13 ♖g3 ♙e8 14 f4 ♙f5 gives him full equality – more perhaps) 9 ♘f5 d5 10 ♙xc6 bxc6 11 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 with a balanced position.

5...♙e7 6 ♙e1 b5 7 ♙b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4

Normally White prefaces this with 9 h3...

9...♙g4! (D)

W



...and this is why. Black creates immediate pressure on the white centre. However, matters are far from clear and many young GMs have adopted the white side of this position, notably Grishchuk and Fressinet. White can try to hold the centre with:

10 ♙e3

After 10 d5 ♙a5 11 ♙c2, challenging the pawn-centre by 11...c6 is Black's best option.

Now 12 h3 ♙xf3 13 ♖xf3 cxd5 14 exd5 ♙c4 15 ♘d2 ♙c8 leaves a balanced position.

Bronstein once beat Keres with 10 h3!? ♙xf3 11 ♖xf3 exd4 12 ♖d1! dxc3 13 ♘xc3, when White's compensation is sufficient for the pawn.

10...exd4

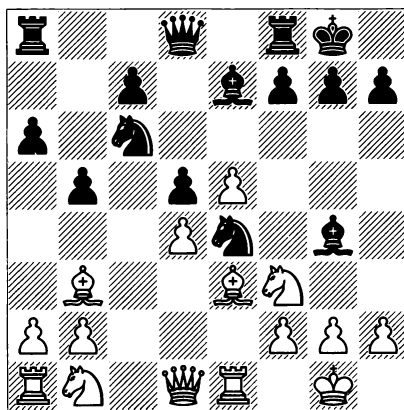
Gligorić's 10...d5 is interesting. However, 10...♙xe4? 11 ♙d5 ♖d7 12 ♙xe4 d5 is met by 13 ♙xh7+! ♙xh7 14 dxe5 with a fairly solid extra pawn.

11 cxd4 d5

Hitting the centre immediately can't be wrong. Black can also play on the queenside with 11...♙a5 12 ♙c2 c5; for instance, 13 ♙bd2 cxd4 14 ♙xd4 ♙c6 15 ♙e3 d5 16 exd5 ♙b4 with equality.

12 e5 ♙e4 (D)

W



Black is well placed.

13 ♙c3 ♙xc3 14 bxc3

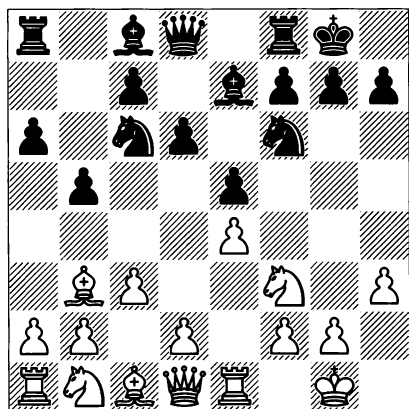
Black will exchange the e5-pawn for the f7-pawn, with approximate equality.

Chigorin

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♙c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♙e1 b5 7 ♙b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 (D)

This has been one of the main battlegrounds in chess over the past hundred years.

B



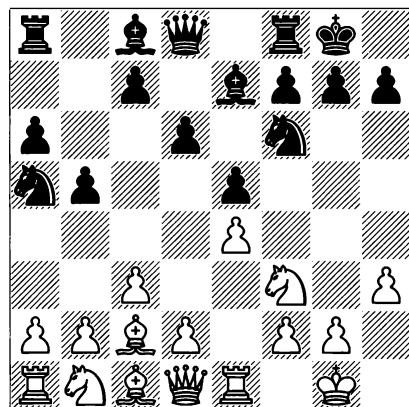
World championships have been won and lost on both sides of this position, and it is still being played regularly at all levels of competition. White's next move will most likely be 10 d4, and Black can select his defensive formation from a number of good options.

9...a5

This was the choice of Mikhail Chigorin, and has remained a sound and popular option since his time. The knight, with tempo, frees the c-pawn to fight for d4.

10 ♖c2 (D)

B



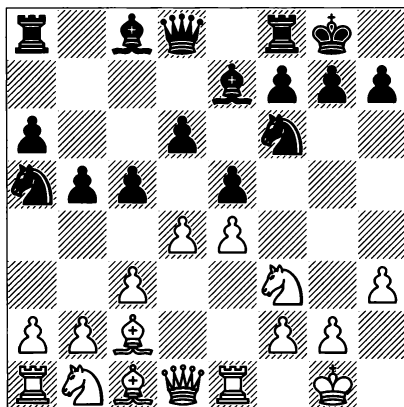
10...c5

10...c6 is a playable move too, with the benefit of not weakening the d5-square, but I feel that 10...c5 is the most thematic.

11 d4 (D)

As throughout the Ruy Lopez, White can play 11 d3, but this leaves Black with no real problems.

B



11...♙c7

11...♘d7 12 ♘bd2 (Fischer preferred to open the game with 12 dxc5 dxc5 13 ♘bd2, aiming for d5; for instance, 13...♙c7 {13...f6 might be more solid} 14 ♘f1 ♘b6 15 ♘e3 ♙d8 16 ♙e2 ♙e6 17 ♘d5! blasting open the centre to take advantage of his superior development) 12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♘c6!? 14 d5 ♘ce5, a suggestion of GM Graf, has recently become popular. White will try to play f4 (either after exchanging knights or after 15 ♘h2!?) while Black can attack on the king-side. Following 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 f4 ♘g6 17 ♘f3 ♙h4! (threatening ...♙g3 with control over e5) the position is balanced.

11...♘c6 12 ♘bd2 ♙b6 is a less popular line, but forces an immediate resolution in the centre. After 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 ♘f1 ♙e6 15 ♘e3 ♙ad8 16 ♙e2 g6 17 ♘g5 c4!, White shouldn't take on e6, since then Black would have a half-open f-file plus control of d5, while the doubled e-pawns are tough to attack. Instead he should play on the queenside with 18 a4 and an edge.

12 ♘bd2

Black now has a wide choice, including 12...♙b7, 12...♙d7, 12...♙d8 and 12...♘c6. An illustrative variation is:

12...cxd4

12...♙d7 13 ♖f1 ♜fe8 14 ♘e3 g6 is the Yugoslav System, in which Black awaits developments. White can play on the queenside with 15 ♙d2 and ♜c1 or 15 b4!?, while the great Bobby Fischer preferred 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 ♘h2 ♜ad8 17 ♜f3 ♙e6 18 ♘hg4 ♘xg4 19 hxg4 ♜c6 20 g5!, a pawn sacrifice leading to a strong attack after 20...♙xg5 21 ♘d5 ♙xc1 22 ♘f6+ ♙h8 23 ♜axc1.

Keres's old approach of 12...♜d8 13 ♖f1 d5 had to be abandoned in view of 14 dxe5! dxe4 15 ♘ld2! exf3 16 exf6 ♙xf6 17 ♜xf3 followed by 18 ♘e4 with a "winning attack" according to Fischer.

12...♘c6 can be met in a variety of ways – Karpov enjoyed seizing space by playing d5, while Fischer preferred playing against the d5 outpost with 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 ♖f1 ♙e6 15 ♘e3 ♜ad8 16 ♜e2 g6 when White is a little better.

12...♙b7 13 d5! (hurting both the a5-knight and the b7-bishop) 13...♙c8 14 ♖f1 ♙d7 isn't too common any more, but after 15 b3 Karpov made a tremendously instructive comment which is worth quoting in full: "With the idea of restraining the black knight. In many openings, Black generally has some difficulty developing a particular piece; for example, Black's 'problem' bishop in the French Defence or the Benoni. In our game we have the 'disgraced Spanish knight', looking for a place to go. This move deprives him of c4, and if Black advances his c-pawn, then b4 drives the knight back to b7, where it also has no good prospects (a similar idea associated with the queen's knight is found in the Yugoslav Variation of the King's Indian Defence – it is not a new idea)."

13 cxd4 ♙d7

13...♙b7 14 ♖f1 (or 14 d5 and, as Shirov comments, "the knight on a5 and the bishop on b7 are not the best pieces on the board") 14...♜ac8 prevents ♘e3 in view of the pressure on the e-pawn, but doesn't entirely solve Black's problems: 15 ♙d3 ♘c6 16 ♘e3!

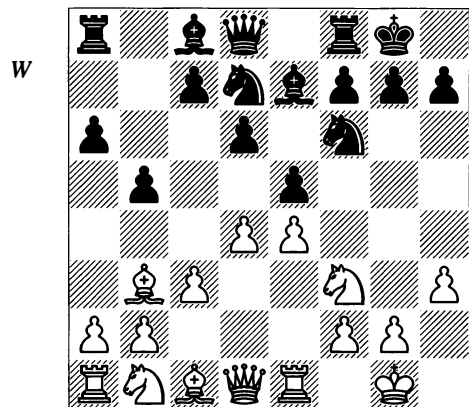
(White isn't worried about the capture on d4, since after ♘f5 there is no way that Black can hold the pawn in the long term) 16...♜fe8 17 d5 ♘b4 18 ♙b1 a5 when White can expel the knight by a3, ♙d2 and b4 with a queenside bind.

14 ♖f1 ♜ac8 15 ♘e3

White has an edge, in view of his access to d5 and f5.

Breyer

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♖f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♙e1 b5 7 ♙b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8 10 d4 ♘bd7 (D)



This was an invention of Breyer, who argued that the improved position of the knight (which isn't vulnerable to d5 any more, allows the bishop a free hand on the a8-h1 diagonal and leaves the c-pawn free to move) is worth two tempi. The line is still highly topical.

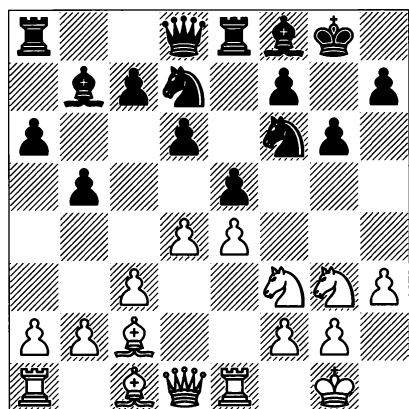
11 ♘bd2

Tal's idea of 11 c4 c6 12 c5! is a good alternative.

11...♙b7 12 ♙c2 ♜e8 13 ♖f1 ♙f8 14 ♘g3 g6 (D)

This has been the opening sequence of hundreds of games. White has several ideas to improve his chances – ♘h2-g4 on the

W



kingside, while a4 is often used to try to soften up the queenside. For his part, Black will hit the white d-pawn with ...c5, and if White pushes to d5 (since capturing reduces his central advantage, while ignoring the threat could leave his centre under a lot of strain after ...g7 and ...exd4), then ...c4 will secure the c5-square for the knight.

Zaitsev

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 b5 a6 4 a4 f6 5 0-0 e7 6 e1 b5 7 b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 b7

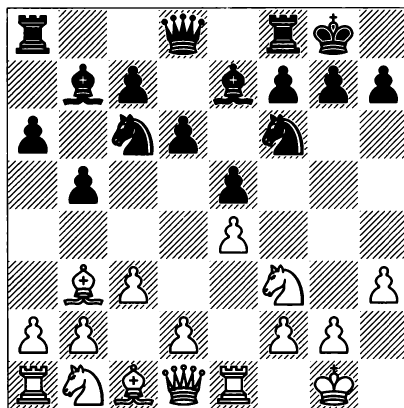
Zaitsev's Variation is perhaps the most logical defence available to the Ruy Lopez and was the scene of several titanic battles between Kasparov and Karpov. The move used to be prefaced by 9...h6, but now players realize that it is simpler to develop immediately.

9...h6 was Smyslov's choice before Zaitsev's refinement. The idea is to stop g5 after ...e8. However, as will be seen in the main line, this g5 idea isn't a threat to Black. Far more significant is the fact that, by being granted an extra tempo, White has time to complete his standard kingside regrouping without having to offer extra protection to his e-pawn: 10 d4 e8 11 bd2 f8 12 f1! d7 (not 12...exd4 13 cxd4 xe4 14 d5)

13 g3 a5 14 c2 c4 15 b3 b6 when White is close to his ideal Lopez set-up while Black has made no real gains.

We now return to 9...b7 (D):

W

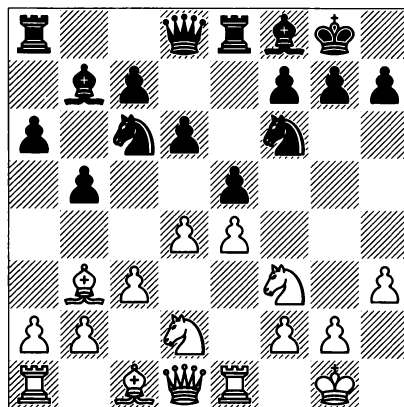


10 d4 e8 11 bd2

11 g5 f8 leaves White with nothing better than to drop the knight back to f3 since after 12 f4 Black gains a good game by both 12...exf4 and 12...exd4! 13 cxd4 d5 14 e5 de4! 15 xe4 dxe4 16 xe4 a5 with excellent light-square compensation for the pawn.

11...f8 (D)

W



Now the difference from the Smyslov line becomes clear – 12 f1? really does drop the e-pawn because the c6-knight is protected.

12 a4

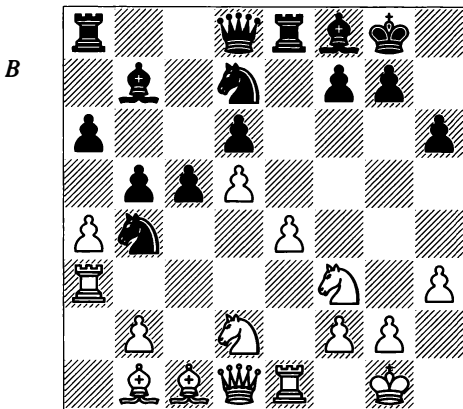
12 d5 is a good alternative, when Black should strike at the white pawn-chain with ...c6 and a battle will be fought for control of the d5-square.

12 a3 is also played sometimes, when Black can continue his kingside regrouping with 12...h6 or 12...g6.

12...h6 13 ♖c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♜b4 15 ♖b1 c5

Black's queenside play comes at the cost of central and kingside vulnerability – which side one prefers is a matter of taste.

16 d5 ♜d7 17 ♖a3! (D)

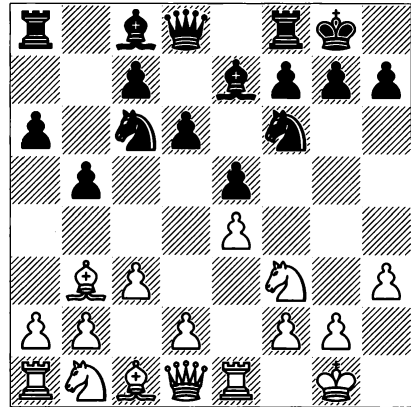


White prepares to swing the rook across to the kingside to attack the black king. Black can now play the relatively solid 17...c4 or the riskier 17...f5, in both cases with a very unclear game in prospect.

Closed Lopez: Other Systems

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♖b5 a6 4 ♖a4 ♜f6 5 0-0 ♖e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♖b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 (D)

B



We've already examined a number of lines from this position. Black has a couple of alternatives which are worth mentioning but have never caught on.

9...♜d7

This has two ideas – to reinforce e5 with ...♖f6 and to attack on the queenside with ...♜b6. Both are well-founded, but Black must be careful about moving such a good defender away from his kingside.

9...a5 tries to start some early queenside activity. White can simply respond with 10 d4 when the point of Black's play isn't clear since trying to exchange the Lopez bishop with 10...exd4 11 cxd4 a4 12 ♖c2 ♜b4 leaves the b-pawn untenable after 13 d5!.

10 d4 ♖f6

The e5-pawn is now rock-solid.

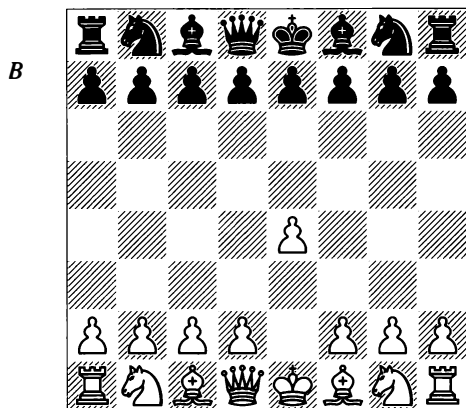
10...♜b6 11 ♖e3 threatens to gain the d5-square by taking on e5 and b6, and so is best met by 11...exd4 12 cxd4 ♜a5 13 ♖c2 c5, although White should still be a little better.

11 a4 ♖b7 12 d5

This closes out both black bishops and leaves White with a typical edge.

Section 2: Semi-Open Games

1 e4 (D)



While 1...e5 is a good move, many players grew tired of trying to neutralize White's initiative in the Ruy Lopez, and fortunately there are lots of other good options. The common feature amongst these lines is an attempt to inject some imbalance into the game.

The first of these, the Sicilian, controls d4 directly – Black's idea is that when White plays d4, he will exchange and get an extra

centre pawn. Of course there are risks here too, since 1...c5 does nothing to assist development and is generally accompanied by further non-developing moves. So he can go down to a vicious attack, but if he survives the early stages then his extra centre pawn should give him better long-term chances.

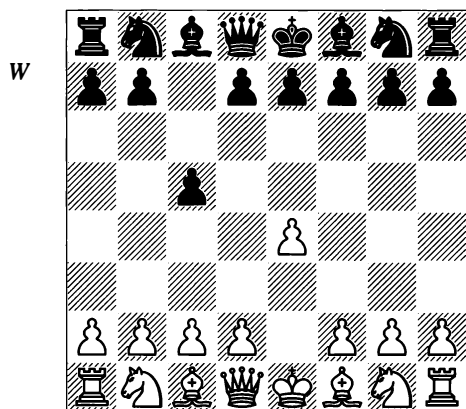
Black can also try to prepare a quick ...d5 to equalize the central chances, as is seen in both the French (1...e6) and the Caro-Kann (1...c6).

The e4-pawn can be directly attacked with either 1...d5 (the Scandinavian) or 1...♟f6 (the Alekhine), though both of these cost Black some time, in the former case by having to recapture after 2 exd5, while the knight gets hit by 2 e5 in the latter.

Finally, Black can leave the centre in White's hands altogether, preparing to attack with pawns later – this is the Pirc/Modern complex, started with 1...d6 or 1...g6. These are often viewed as different openings, the Pirc starting 1...d6 2 d4 ♟f6 and the Modern 1...g6 2 d4 ♟g7, though we shall look at them together, as the basic ideas are very similar.

Sicilian

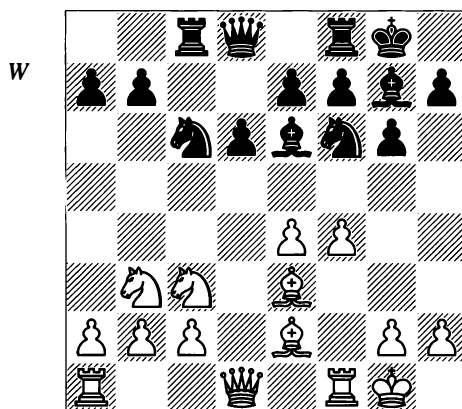
1 e4 c5 (D)



To think of the Sicilian as a defence is to make two errors. First, it is an attack, despite being played by Black – straight from the first move Black seeks to unbalance the position, and there are a higher proportion of decisive games here than in most other openings. Second, the Sicilian isn't a single entity – it's a sprawling metropolis of variations marked as much by difference as by community. My own modest library has over fifteen specialist volumes on the various branches of this opening, and many of these deal not with variations but sub-variations – Sapi and Schneider's *The Sicilian Dragon: Yugoslav Attack 9 ♗c4* deals only with the position after White's ninth move and still runs to over two hundred pages.

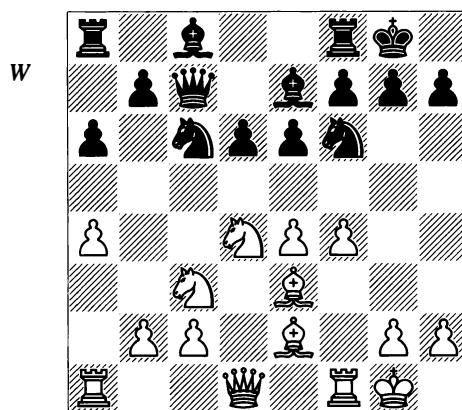
While the above could be read as a warning against entering such theoretical waters, instead I'd prefer the reader to notice that there's something for everyone in the Sicilian due to its enormous depth and the richness and variety of Black's counterplay. It is also the forum for some of the best and most intricate attacking chess played in modern tournaments.

Dragon Set-up



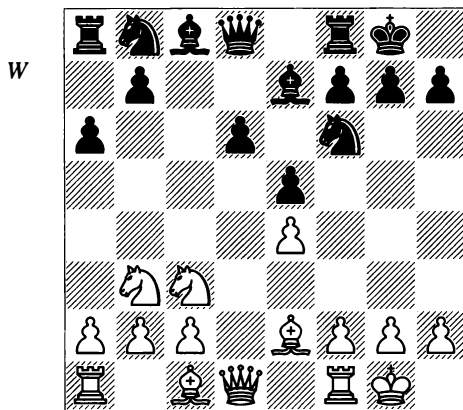
Black has no structural weaknesses and all of his minor pieces are well placed. Once the f6-knight moves, the dark-squared bishop will breathe fire down the long diagonal, and can support a minority attack by the a- and b-pawns. Note that, as in all Sicilians, Black is always thinking about the ...d5 break which, if it can't be met by e5 blocking out the bishop, could open the position and leave his pieces better placed.

Scheveningen Set-up



Black has set up a wall of pawns which control his fourth rank. White will try to get in e5 or f5, while Black would love to play ...d5 if he could do so without creating any weaknesses. A more common strategy is, through ...e5 and ...exf4, to create an e5 out-post for a black knight or bishop from where it can protect the kingside. Black's main chances lie on the queenside and particularly down the half-open c-file.

Najdorf Set-up

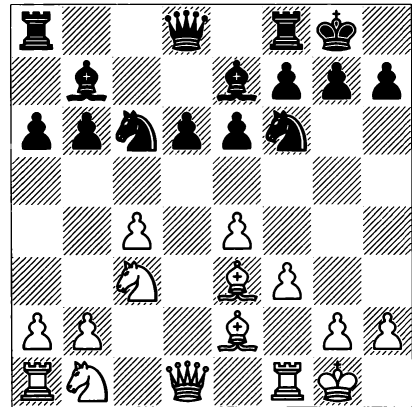


Black has a backward d-pawn and a weak square on d5, though it is difficult for White to exploit either – the d-pawn is well guarded, while occupation of d5 often simply results in exchanges. All of White's necessary pawn-play entails problems as well as prospects – a4 weakens the b4-square, while f4 leaves the e-pawn vulnerable. Black will normally play ...b5 and ...♗b7 to increase the pressure on e4, which can be further augmented with ...♞bd7-c5 (an exchange sacrifice on c3, as indicated in a later diagram, is also common). A very tense game is in prospect.

Maroczy Bind Set-up

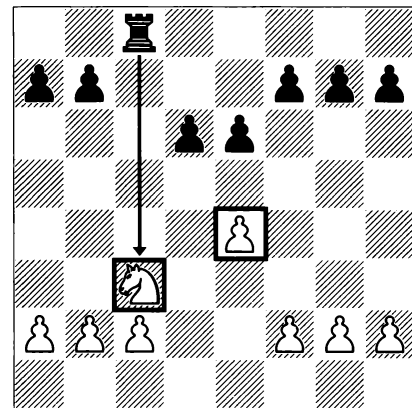
The structure in the following diagram arose from a Taimanov, but it can also come from Kan positions or Accelerated Dragons (where the pawn would be on e7 and the bishop on

W



g7). Note how both Black's natural breaks, ...b5 and ...d5, are restrained by the c4-pawn. White must remain attentive, since if Black manages one of these breaks he normally achieves equality at the least. Note again that the c6-knight would be happier on d7, from where it has a reasonable square on c5 and wouldn't block the b7-bishop or a c8-rook.

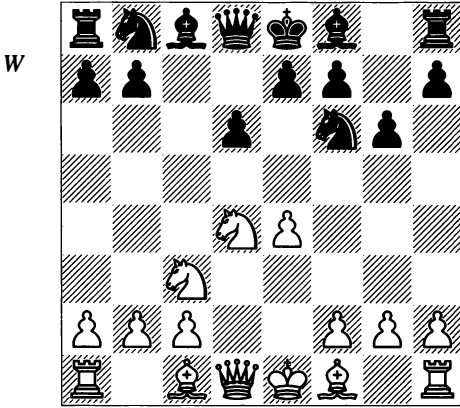
c-File



Black has a structural advantage in the Sicilian, namely an extra centre pawn. This also affords him a half-open c-file to work on, which is important in almost every Sicilian line. An exchange sacrifice for a knight on c3 is very common, either to win the e4-pawn or to shatter the white queenside.

Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 (D)



The Dragon Variation (so called because of the shape of the black pawn-structure) is one of the most easily comprehensible of Sicilians, and represents a truly critical test to the viability of 1 e4. Black seeks excellent and rapid development with no structural weakness (in fact, with his extra centre pawn, he holds an edge in this department), and if he succeeds his game will obviously be superb. The logical nature of Black's formation should be enough to show that aggressive measures are required of White to secure an advantage, and this intuition has been borne out by practice – the most popular formation for White involves queenside castling with a kingside pawn-storm, coupled with exchanging Black's fianchettoed bishop (which otherwise performs sterling work both offensively and defensively).

6 ♗e3 (D)

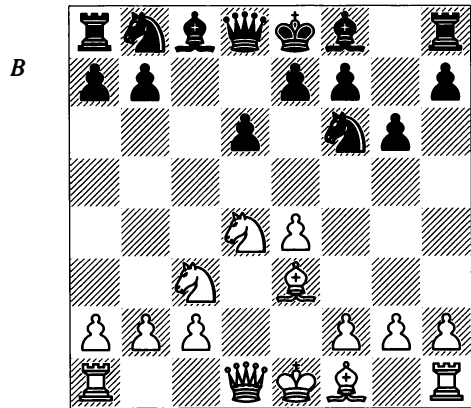
6 f4, Levenfish's idea, is tricky but rather innocuous. After 6...♘c6 (6...♘bd7 is solid and excellent; 6...♗g7 should probably be avoided though, since after 7 e5! Black is in some trouble; for instance, 7...dxe5 8 fxe5 ♘g4? 9 ♗b5+ collecting material) 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5 ♘d7 9 exd6 exd6 is an interesting

position – Black is a little tangled but the white f-pawn has uncomfortably preceded its army. After 10 ♖d4 ♘f6 11 ♗e3 ♗e7! (keeping an eye on d6) Black is no worse.

The fianchetto option with 6 g3 promises a quieter life. After 6...♘c6 7 ♘de2 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 Black can castle kingside and play ...♖b8 and ...b5, though 8...♗d7!? and ...♗c8 is also possible, trying to exchange the white bishop.

6 ♗e2, the Classical Variation, leaves Black very comfortable after 6...♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♗e3 ♘c6 9 ♘b3 (9 f4 ♖b6! is good for Black) 9...♗e6 10 f4 ♖c8!, particularly since the sharp attempt 11 f5 ♗d7 12 g4 backfires after 12...♘e5 13 g5 ♖xc3! 14 bxc3 (14 gxf6 ♖xe3) 14...♘xe4 when White is badly over-extended.

Following 6 ♗c4 ♗g7 7 h3 0-0 8 0-0 White is well developed, but so is Black. After 8...♘c6 9 ♗e3, 9...♗d7 10 ♗b3 ♖c8 leaves Black with no worries, but 9...♘xe4! is even stronger: 10 ♗xf7+ (10 ♘xe4 d5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♗d3 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 is equal) 10...♗xf7! (10...♖xf7 11 ♘xe4 ♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 e5 13 ♗c5! is good for White) 11 ♘xe4 ♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 e5! with excellent play.



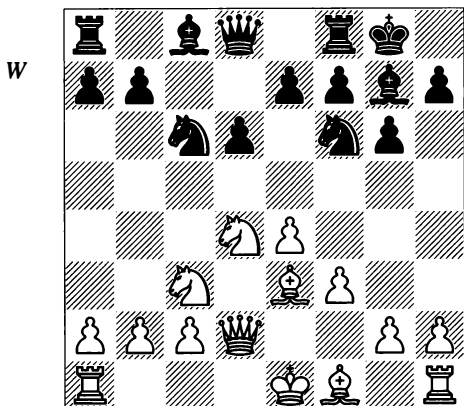
6...♗g7

Now ...♘g4 is a threat. The immediate 6...♘g4?? drops a piece to 7 ♗b5+.

7 f3

7 ♟c4 ♞g4! 8 ♟b5+ ♚f8 is good for Black, since he exchanges the vital dark-squared bishop.

7... ♞c6 8 ♚d2 0-0 (D)



Black's threat is now 9...d5!, when his pieces will be better placed in the resulting open centre. White has three methods of dealing with this while advancing his own plans.

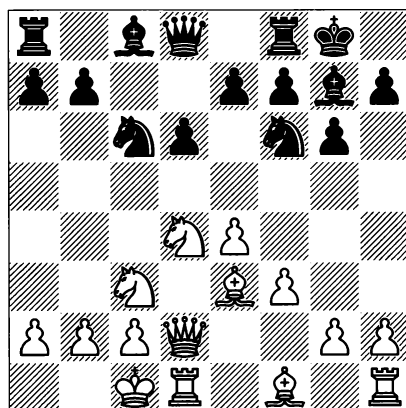
9 ♟c4

Very, very dangerous. The move clearly stops ...d5, but also, and more subtly, pins the f7-pawn. The reason this is important is that after h4-h5xg6, Black often wants to keep the h-file closed with ...fxg6, but now this is impossible. However, it isn't all one-way traffic – the c4-bishop gives Black a target for his queenside counterplay.

9 0-0-0 (D) is more solid – White allows ...d5 but only on his terms:

a) After 9...d5 10 exd5 (10 ♚e1 was popular for a while, but after 10...e5!? 11 ♞xc6 bxc6 Black's position looks very healthy to me; 10 ♟b1 also caused Black some problems after 10... ♞xd4 11 e5 ♞f5 12 exf6 ♟xf6 13 ♞xd5 until Golubev discovered the magnificent idea 13... ♚xd5!! 14 ♚xd5 ♞xe3 15 ♚d2 ♞xd1 16 ♚xd1 ♟e6 with full compensation for the queen) 10... ♞xd5 11 ♞xc6 bxc6 White has a choice. 12 ♞xd5 is critical, but gives Black enormous counterplay: 12...cxd5

B



13 ♚xd5 ♚c7 and now 14 ♚xa8 ♟f5 is scary stuff for White, while the jury is still out on 14 ♚c5 ♚b8! . 12 ♟d4! has always been my preference – White rarely gets to contest this diagonal. Now 12...e5 13 ♟c5 ♟e6! 14 ♞e4 (14 ♟xf8 ♚xf8 gives Black reasonable compensation for the exchange, especially in view of the threatened ... ♟h6) 14... ♚e8 15 g4 ♚c7 16 h4 leaves White with a very pleasant position.

b) 9... ♞xd4 10 ♟xd4 ♟e6 is also possible, when 11 ♟b1! ♚c7 (necessary since 11... ♚a5? runs into 12 ♞d5! with advantage) 12 g4 ♚fc8 13 h4 ♚a5 14 ♚g5!? ♚xg5 (14...b5 15 ♚xb5 ♚c7! , sacrificing a pawn in return for an open b-file, could be a better chance) 15 hxg5 ♞d7 16 ♟xg7 ♟xg7 is a nice endgame for White.

c) 9... ♟d7 has been tried by many Dragon die-hards who want to play the traditional attack, but after 10 g4 ♚c8 11 h4 Black is struggling – after his most natural course (... ♞e5-c4) White can play ♟xc4 and use the two tempi he's saved by not moving his bishop to play for checkmate on the king-side.

9 g4 stops ...d5 in view of the impending attack on the f6-knight, but Black can play the excellent 9... ♟e6! with good chances. The point is that 10 ♞xe6 fxe6 not only gives Black good control over d5, but also exposes the f-pawn, while 10 0-0-0 ♞xd4 11 ♟xd4

♖a5 leaves Black a whole tempo up on the 9 0-0-0 ♜xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♙e6 11 ♜b1 line.

9...♙d7

This simple development is by far Black's best option. He generates insufficient play with 9...a5, while after 9...♜xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♙e6 11 ♙b3 ♖a5 12 0-0-0 ♙xb3 13 cxb3! White plays ♜b1 and ♜c1 with a rock-solid king position before attacking Black with the typical g4, h4-h5 and so on.

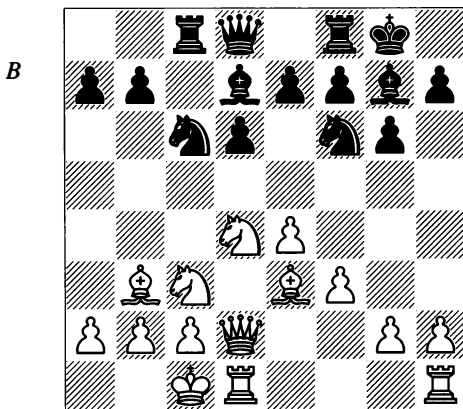
10 0-0-0 ♜c8

10...♖a5 followed by ...♜fc8 is an alternative development, which has the benefit of chucking more pieces at the queenside but the problem of taking an extra move to do so. It's unclear which of these two continuations is better – really it's a matter of taste.

10...♜b8 is an alternative treatment, known as the Chinese Dragon. Despite my utter disdain for the move during a marathon blitz session with Messrs Kafka, Berry, Robertson and Rigg, it could be just about playable. The idea is a logical one – Black intends ...♜e5, ...b5 and ...♜c4, meeting ♙xc4 with ...bxc4, opening the b-file. The main question mark must concern whether Black can afford the time spent on this manoeuvre.

11 ♙b3 (D)

11 h4?? drops a piece after 11...♜xd4 12 ♖xd4 ♜g4.



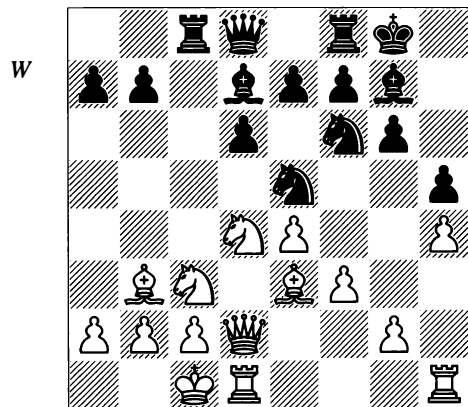
11...♜e5

11...♜xd4!? 12 ♙xd4 b5! is an invention of the industrious Bulgarian super-GM Veselin Topalov. White's most popular response is to steer the game into quieter channels with 13 ♜d5 ♜xd5 14 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 15 exd5 a5 16 a3 ♖b6 17 ♜he1, when Black has no profitable way to open the queenside (...b4 is met by a4) and so is slightly worse in view of his e7 weakness.

12 h4

The immediate 12 g4 allows 12...b5! (a typical pawn sacrifice when f3 has been weakened) when Black has good counterplay after 13 g5 ♜h5 14 ♜cxb5 ♜c4 15 ♙xc4 ♜xc4, but 12 ♜b1 gives an improved version. It's worth noting that, throughout the Sicilian, this move is often a critical test of Black's position when White castles queenside. After 12...♜c4 13 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 14 g4, 14...b5 can be met by 15 b3, pushing the rook away, while 14...♖a5 (or 14...♖c7) 15 g5 ♜h5 16 ♜d5 ♖d8 (16...♖xd2? just loses to 17 ♜xe7+) 17 ♜e2 is nice for White.

12...h5 (D)



This has been causing the most problems recently, since omitting this move gives White the dangerous option of h5 (either prefaced by g4 or as a pawn sacrifice) when the black king hangs on by a thread, or else simply hangs.

13 ♙g5 ♜c5!

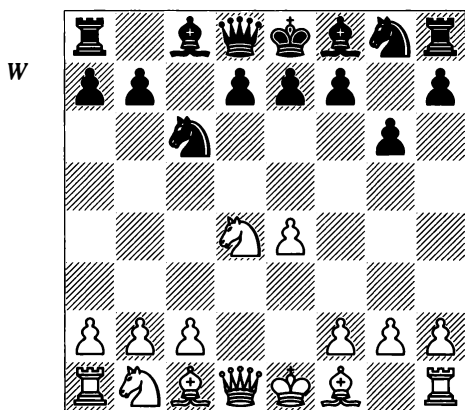
Complex stuff. Someone is getting mated, but theory hasn't quite decided who. Black will play ... dxc4 (possibly preceded by ...b5, so he can open the b-file after dxc4 bxc4) and try to attack on the queenside, while White has a choice of plans – positional play in the centre with dxe1 and f4, or the vicious double pawn sacrifice g4!? hxg4 h5 with a raging attack.

Accelerated Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 dxf3 dxc6

2...g6 is also played sometimes. White can bring the game back into Maroczy territory with 3 c4, while 3 c3 d5 4 exd5 wxd5 transposes to a line of the c3 Sicilian. 3 d4 is natural and critical.

3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 g6 (D)



5 c4

5 dxc3 g7 6 e3 dxf6 will very likely transpose to a normal Dragon, but Black has a few extra options. It should be noted that players who enjoy the Yugoslav Attack need to be very careful with their move-order here: 7 dxc4 0-0 8 b3 is a good idea (Black can still mix things up with 8...a5), but 7 f3?! 0-0 8 wxd2 allows the 'cheating' 8...d5!, when Black already has an edge.

5... g7

5... dxf6 6 dxc3 dxd4 is a slight twist, but I've never been wild about these positions for Black. After 7 wxd4 g7 8 g5 ! and dropping the queen back to d2 or e3, White is more actively placed than in the main lines.

5... dxc6 ! is a more radical idea which has recently been played by Accelerated Dragon expert Sergei Tiviakov. Black raises the stakes – he trades White's good bishop, but at the cost of weakening his kingside defence and misplacing his knight. After 6 dxc6 dxc6 7 dxc3 0-0 8 e2 Black has a few reasonable ways to play this virtually unexplored position – ...f6 and ... dxf7 is very solid, while a set-up with ...d6 and ...f5!? can be tried if he's feeling frisky.

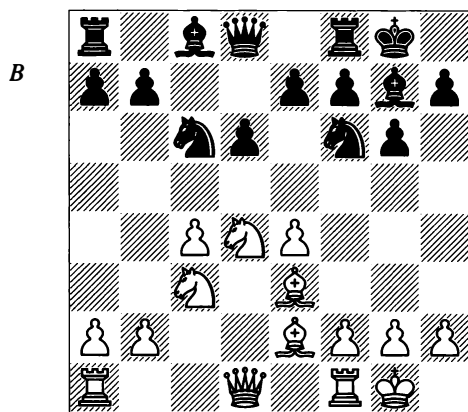
6 dxc6

Keeping as many pieces on as possible with 6 dxc2 ! is an excellent alternative.

6... dxf6 7 dxc3 0-0

7... dxc4 ! mixes things up a little: 8 wxc4 dxd4 9 wd1 ! de6 ! and White still has good prospects, but at least Black's g7-bishop is happy.

8 e2 d6 9 0-0 (D)



9... d7

The bishop aims at the other pawn after 9... dxd4 10 dxd4 e6 , when White can play aggressively with 11 f4!?

10 wxd2 dxd4 11 dxd4 c6 12 f3

This is solid and good.

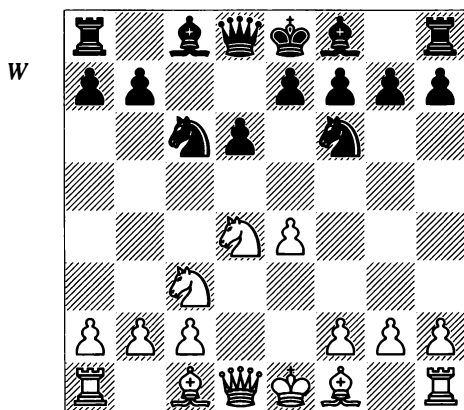
White does have a more aggressive option here: 12 ♟d3! ? a5 13 ♞ae1 when 13... ♞d7 (13... a4! is better, when 14 ♞e3 drops the d4-bishop while 14 ♞d5 ♞d7 15 ♟xg7 ♞xg7 16 ♞e3 e5 17 ♞h3 h5! 18 ♞e3 ♞c5 is fine for Black) 14 ♟xg7 ♞xg7 15 ♞e3! gives White a pretty dangerous attack.

12...a5 13 b3 ♞d7

White is better, of course, but Black has no weaknesses and can look forward to equality if he is accurate. This accuracy generally resides in ... ♞c5 and ... ♞b6 , restraining White on the queenside.

Classical (and Richter-Rauzer)

1 e4 c5 2 ♞f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♞xd4 ♞f6 5 ♞c3 ♞c6 (D)



This used to be played when Black intended a Dragon formation. However, White's two main attempts frustrate Black's intention to play ... g6 . The opening is still fully playable though.

6 ♟g5

Definitely the critical test, known as the Richter-Rauzer Attack. 6 ♟e2 is relatively innocuous here after 6... e5 , an invention of Boleslavsky's. 7 ♞f3 h6! (otherwise ♟g5 would hit a defender of the critical d5-square)

8 0-0 ♟e7 9 ♞e1 0-0 10 h3 ♟e6 11 ♟f1 ♞a5 leaves White unable to occupy d5, while 12 ♟d2 ♞d8 13 ♟c1 ♞a5 14 ♟d2 is an option for anyone who doesn't particularly like playing chess.

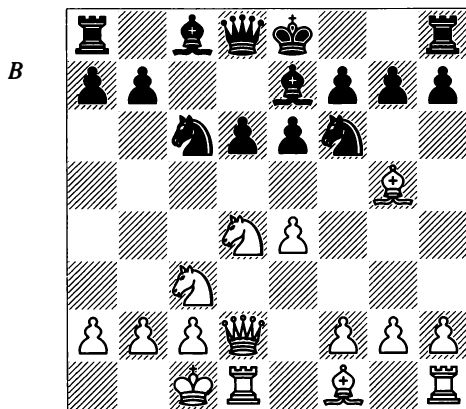
6...e6

6... g6? 7 ♟xf6 exf6 8 ♟c4 is obviously bad for Black, so he can't play a Dragon formation.

7 ♞d2 ♟e7

7... a6 8 0-0-0 is another major continuation. 8... ♟d7 (8... h6 gives White a choice of retreats – after the typical 9 ♟e3 ♟d7 10 f4 b5 11 ♟d3 ♟e7 12 ♞b1 0-0 we have a normal Sicilian punch-up with a couple of twists – Black's h6-pawn could enable White to open the kingside much more quickly than normal, but White has lost control of the g4-square {he'd rather have his pawn on f3} so his pawn-storm will take some time to prepare) 9 f4 b5 10 ♟xf6 gxf6 11 ♞b1 ♞b6 12 ♞xc6 ♟xc6 13 ♞e1 followed by f5 gives White appetizing pressure on the black position, but the longer the game runs the better are Black's chances in view of his two bishops.

8 0-0-0 (D)



Note that the early development of the knight to c6 stops a pawn-storm by ... a6 and ... b5 (Black would have to exchange on d4 first, leaving the white queen dominant), so

the white king is quite safe on the queenside, at least for the moment.

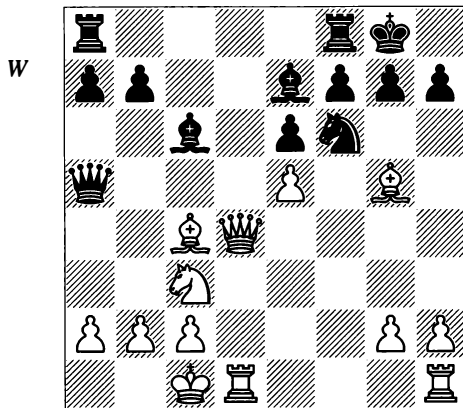
8...0-0 9 f4

9 ♖b3 was Tal's idea. The knight is quite well placed for defence on b3. After 9...♙b6 (9...a5 10 a4 d5 11 ♙b5! is in White's favour) 10 f3 ♜d8 11 ♙b1 both sides will launch pawn-storms.

9...♜xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♙a5 11 ♙c4

Bringing the final minor piece into the game can't be wrong.

11...♙d7 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♙c6! (D)



A crucial tactic, exploiting the bishop on g5.

14 ♙d2 ♜d7 15 ♜d5 ♙c5 16 ♜xe7+ ♙xe7 17 ♜he1

With excellent centralization and two bishops, White must have the more comfortable game.

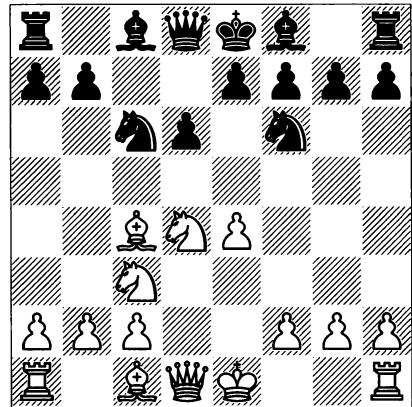
Sozin

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 6 ♙c4 (D)

This was an invention of the Soviet master Sozin, though the move was really popularized by Bobby Fischer, who made ♙c4 systems the cornerstone of his repertoire against the Sicilian.

6...e6

B



Blunting the c4-bishop and preparing to castle kingside is so obviously good that this move doesn't require much comment. The Sozin was one of the main catalysts behind the modern Dragon move-order. Players used to play the Classical and then transpose to Dragon positions with ...g6, but here this approach doesn't work: 6...g6?! 7 ♜xc6! bxc6 8 e5 is very uncomfortable for Black, though if he wishes he can end his misery with 8...dxe5?? 9 ♙xf7+ ♙xf7 10 ♙xd8.

6...♙b6 is a respectable alternative to the main lines – Black tries to push the central white knight away from its aggressive post, so that central breakthroughs (for instance, via a sacrifice on e6) are much less likely to work.

7 ♙e3 a6 8 ♙e2

White can also castle kingside, with quieter play: 8 ♙b3 ♙e7 9 0-0 is the Sozin proper. After 9...0-0 10 f4 ♜xd4 11 ♙xd4 b5 12 e5! dxe5 13 fxe5 ♜d7 14 ♜e4 ♙b7 15 ♜d6 ♙xd6 16 exd6 ♙g5 17 ♜f2, Black holds the balance with 17...♜ad8 when the status of the d-pawn (strength or weakness) is still ambiguous.

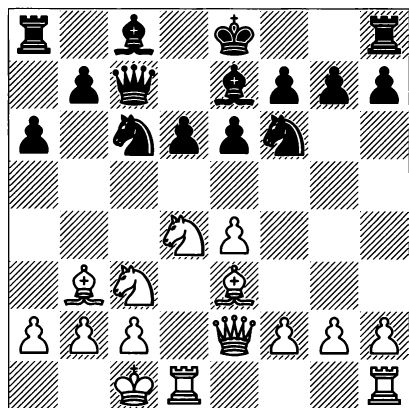
8...♙c7 9 ♙b3 ♙e7 10 0-0-0 (D)

This is known as the Velimirović Attack, characterized by huge mutual attacks and sacrifices. A typical continuation is:

10...0-0

Black can get his own play going with 10...♜a5, but leaving his king in the centre

B



exposes it to different dangers; for instance, 11 g4 b5 12 g5 Qxb3+ 13 axb3 Qd7 14 Qf5!? (a very typical idea in this line) 14...exf5 15 Qd5 Qd8 16 exf5 with a huge initiative for the piece.

11 **Qhg1 Qd7!**

Both getting out of the way of the white g-pawn, and bringing an attacker to the queen-side.

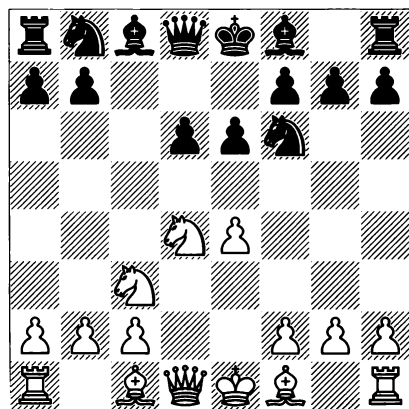
12 g4 Qc5

with mutual chances.

Scheveningen (and Keres Attack)

1 e4 c5 2 Qf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qf6 5 Qc3 e6 (D)

W



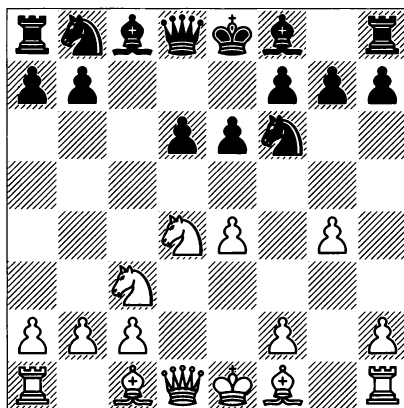
While the Scheveningen formation itself is one of the most popular Sicilian systems, the pure Scheveningen move-order is rarely used nowadays since it gives White the option of the aggressive Keres Attack:

6 g4! (D)

6 Qc4 isn't so effective here, since after 6...Qe7 7 Qb3 0-0 8 0-0 Black can play the very efficient 8...Qa6! 9 f4 Qc5; for instance, 10 Qf3 e5! 11 Qde2 b5 with full equality.

After 6 Qe3, 6...Qc6 7 f4!? followed by 8 Qf3 and 9 0-0-0 is a good sharp line without too much theory – 6...a6 is much more theoretical and is dealt with in the Najdorf section.

B



6...h6

This seems best – while moving the h-pawn ultimately weakens the kingside, the time which White must spend preparing g5 can be used by Black to develop his game.

The 'classical' move 6...d5 was refuted by Fischer: 7 exd5 Qxd5 8 Qb5+ Qd7 9 Qxd5 exd5 10 Qe2+ Qe7 11 Qe3 and White is clearly better.

6...Qc6 is also logical, but after 7 g5 Qd7 8 h4 White's set-up already looks imposing.

6...e5 is very dubious since White can exchange the light-squared bishops: 7 Qb5+ Qd7 8 Qxd7+ Qxd7 9 Qf5 with a bind.

6...a6 7 g5 Qfd7 8 Qe3 Qc6 is a position which can also be reached from the 6...Qc6

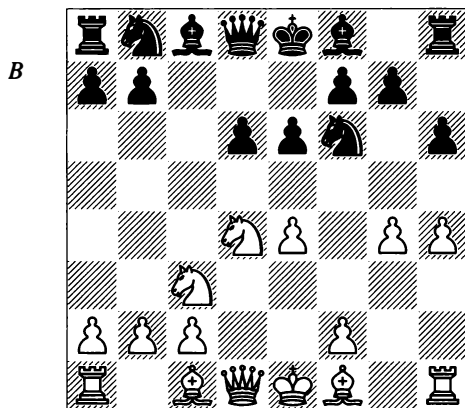
move-order. After 9 h4 ♖c7 10 ♗e2 b5 11 ♜xc6 ♗xc6 12 ♔d4 ♙b7?! (Nunn suggested 12...b4! 13 ♜d5 a5) 13 0-0-0 ♝c8 White can swing his rook into the game (more than can be said for its opposite number on h8) with 14 ♜h3!, when I don't like Black very much, though some would disagree.

7 h4 (D)

White plans ♜g1, g5 and (if allowed) g6, breaking up the kingside. Black's most natural reaction is to aim for central counterplay with ...d5.

7 h3 is also very interesting, trying to gain a tempo on conventional fianchetto systems.

7 g5 hxg5 8 ♙xg5 ♜c6 leaves White aggressively placed but structurally weak, so both players have reasons to be happy!



7...♙e7

Clearing f8 for the king so that ♙b5+ needn't cause confusion in the black ranks.

7...a6 is a more direct method. White often puts the g5 plan on ice for the moment and develops some pieces instead, since 8 ♜g1 d5 9 exd5 ♜xd5 10 ♜xd5 ♗xd5 11 ♙g2 ♗c4 is quite comfortable for Black.

7...♜c6 8 ♜g1 h5!? is an alternative approach. After 9 g5 ♜xh5 10 ♙g5 ♜h8 11 ♗d2 ♗b6 12 ♜b3 ♗c7 (a typical manoeuvre – the queen pushes the knight back and then withdraws so the b-pawn can move) both sides will castle queenside.

8 ♗f3

Preparing g5 by defending the h1-rook.

8 ♜g1 d5 is fine for Black, since 9 ♙b5+ ♜f8! isn't a problem.

8...♜c6

8...h5 9 gxh5 ♜xh5 is also logical.

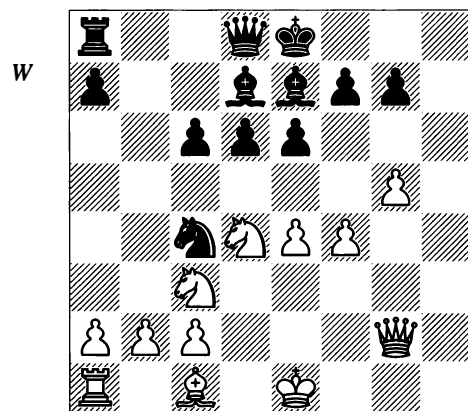
9 ♙b5 ♙d7 10 ♙xc6 bxc6

This type of structural change is in Black's favour, since he gets more central control and a half-open b-file, but in return White gets time to prosecute his kingside attack.

11 g5 hxg5 12 hxg5 ♜xh1+ 13 ♗xh1 ♜g4!

There's no need for 13...♜g8?.

14 ♗g2 ♜e5 15 f4 ♜c4 (D)

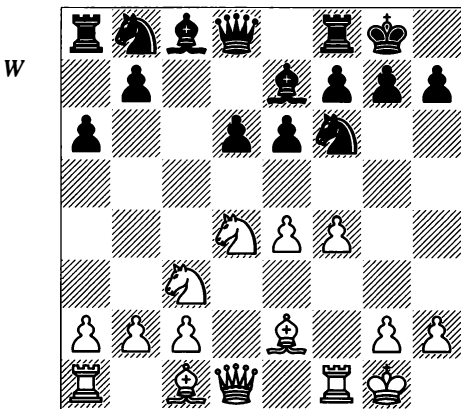


The position is balanced – White will continue playing on the kingside, and needs to judge if an f5 advance is worthwhile (pressure is placed on the e6-pawn, but the black knight is gifted a monster square on e5), while for Black, play on the b-file is natural, coupled with ...♗b6 or ...♗a5.

Classical Scheveningen

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 e6 6 ♙e2 ♙e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 f4 a6 (D)

8...♜c6 9 ♙e3 ♙d7 is an alternative plan, trying to exchange on d4 and play ...♙c6, but the problem is that after 10 ♜b3! the black pieces are in each other's way.



This (8...a6) is the most common approach, and can also be reached via a Najdorf move-order. This opening is extraordinarily rich and complex, so please accept the following variations as mere illustrations of the position's possibilities.

9 ♖e3 ♜c6

9...♞c7 is a very provocative move-order, since with 10 g4! White whips up a menacing attack. For instance, after 10...♞e8 11 f5, Black has to play 11...h6 (12 h4?! d5!) since the natural 11...♙f8 loses: 12 g5 ♜fd7 13 ♜xe6!! fxe6 14 ♙h5 with an unstoppable attack.

10 a4

Restraining Black's ...b5 is the most popular way to handle the position. Once the b-pawn gets to this square, it's generally necessary to spend a tempo on a3 anyway to prevent ...b4 (kicking a crucial defender of the e4-pawn), so this can hardly be seen as a waste of time. After the logical 10 ♞e1, swinging the queen to g3, play becomes sharper; for instance, 10...♜xd4 11 ♙xd4 b5 12 ♞d1 (White can also put this rook on e1: 12 a3 ♙b7 13 ♞g3 ♞c7 14 ♙h1 ♙c6 15 ♞ae1 ♞b7 16 ♙d3 b4! with balanced chances) 12...♙b7 13 ♙f3 ♞c7 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♜d7 16 ♙xb7 ♞xb7 17 ♜e4 ♞c7 18 ♞g3 ♙h8 when 19 ♜d6 ♙g8 20 ♞xf7 ♞xf7 21 ♜xf7 ♞xc2! 22 ♞f1 ♞f8 leads to a position where White should perhaps force perpetual check.

10...♞c7

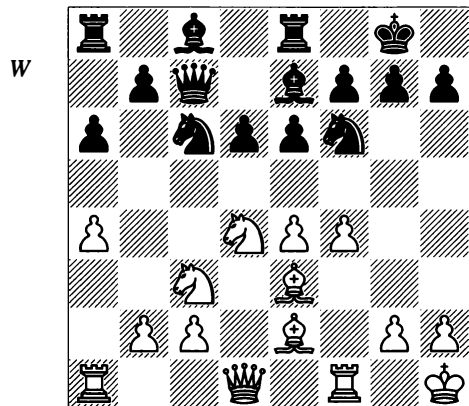
This is the perfect nest for the queen in most Sicilian positions – it is immune from attack while strengthening control over crucial squares like e5 and c6.

11 ♙h1

Moving the king off the sensitive g1-a7 diagonal is generally considered good practice. We often see a similar tidying operation when White castles queenside in the Sicilian, playing ♙b1 to shore up his defences. Such moves can't be made automatically though – both ♙h1 and ♙b1 cost a move and take the king away from the centre (a bad idea if the endgame is imminent).

11 ♞e1 is still possible: 11...♜xd4 12 ♙xd4 e5 13 ♙e3 exf4 14 ♙xf4 ♙e6 15 ♞g3 ♜d7 16 ♙h6 ♞c5+ when 17 ♙h1 ♞e5 is drawn if White perpetually attacks the queen with his bishop, and otherwise looks equal.

11...♞e8 (D)



The efficacy of this move may not be immediately apparent, but in fact ...♞e8 is a crucial prophylactic resource throughout the Classical Scheveningen. Now the bishop is free to drop back to f8 (and, if necessary, to g7 after ...g6), while White is discouraged from advancing with f5 since this would open up the e-file. Indeed, in one of his world championship matches against Karpov, Kasparov famously doubled behind the e6-pawn

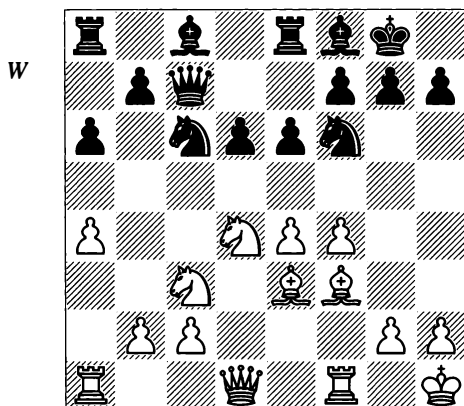
by putting his rooks on e7 and e8, thus completely neutralizing the white attack.

12 ♖f3

Improving the bishop and preparing g4, but also preventing 12...b6? in view of 13 ♖xc6 and 14 e5.

12 a5!? is a pawn sacrifice which has recently risen to the fore. White threatens a bind with ♖b3 (if 12 ♖b3, 12...♙a5! is fine for Black), so Black is obliged to take the material: 12...♙xa5 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♖xe5 15 ♙f4 ♖c5 16 ♙a4 ♖a7 17 ♙c7 ♖c6 18 ♖b6 ♖xd4 19 ♖xd4 ♙d7 with a roughly equal position.

12...♙f8 (D)



White can shove his g-pawn up the board to dislodge the f6-knight, but Black has a good defensive set-up in ...g6, ...♙g7 and ...♙d7-f8.

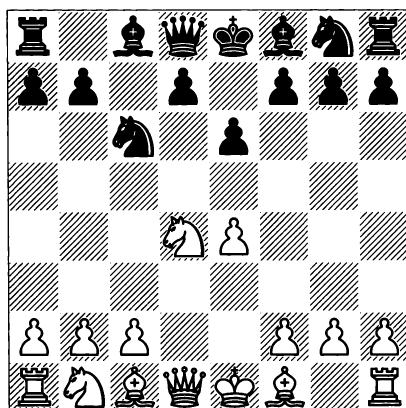
Taimanov

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖c6 (D)

The invention of Mark Taimanov. His original idea was that a black knight on f6 is often harassed by e4-e5, so why not put it on e7 from where it can go to c6 or g6? However, more often the line is used to transpose to Scheveningen-type positions.

5 ♖c3

W



5 ♖b5 is also well established, when after 5...d6 White can choose between a Maroczy Bind with 6 c4 or playing for an outpost with 6 ♙f4!? e5 7 ♙e3 ♖f6 8 ♙g5!.

5...♖c7

5...a6 can lead to similar play, though White can also exchange on c6: 6 ♖xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 when he will castle and play f4, while Black should make use of his central pawns by striking with ...d5. Instead, standard moves such as 6 ♙e2 give Black a choice between reverting to ...♖c7 lines or playing Taimanov's original interpretation with 6...♙ge7!?. Although Taimanov hasn't found many supporters for this approach, it still hasn't been refuted.

5...d6 is one of the best ways of reaching the Scheveningen, though even here many grandmasters have tried 6 g4!?, leading to chaos.

6 ♙e3

This sharp option has recently become more popular.

6 ♙e2 is good, here as everywhere else in the Sicilian. After 6...a6 7 ♙e3 ♖f6 (not 7...♙ge7? 8 ♖db5!) 8 0-0 Black can transpose into Classical Scheveningen territory with 8...d6 or opt for 8...♙b4, when 9 ♙a4! (planning 10 ♖xc6 and 11 ♖b6) is a little better for White.

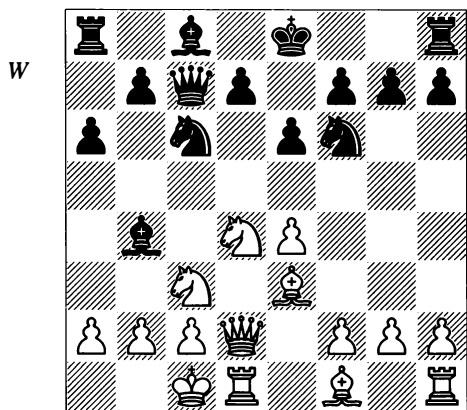
6 g3 is solid. Note that Black should play 6...a6, since 6...♙f6? 7 ♖db5! ♖b8 8 ♙f4

♖e5 9 ♖e2!, with a clear advantage, is a trap which gave Fischer his first win against Tal.

6...a6 7 ♖d2

7 ♖d3 is also a very logical option, creating as solid a centre as the Sicilian permits. White plans to castle kingside and play f4.

7...♗f6 8 0-0-0 ♖b4 (D)



One of the advantages of the Taimanov is that this move is possible since Black hasn't committed his pawn to d6 yet.

9 f3 ♗e5

9...♗a5 has recently been used by Anand. Of course the lines can transpose if this knight ends up on c4, but there are some independent possibilities like 10 ♖b3 d5 11 e5 ♗d7 (after 11...♖xe5? 12 ♖f4 the black queen will run out of squares) 12 f4 with a French-type structure.

10 ♖b3

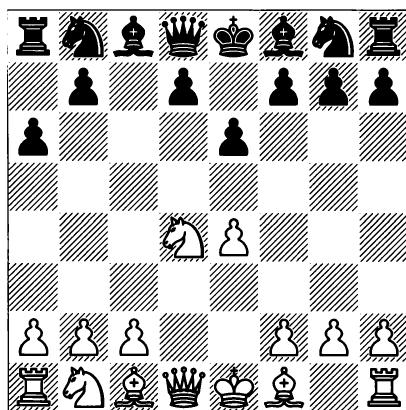
White should follow up with ♖d4, protecting the c3-knight and preparing ♖f2 and ♖b6! to dislodge the black queen. Black should continue his queenside play with ...b5 and ...♗c4.

Kan

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 a6 (D)

The very fact that this line doesn't lose on the spot is testimony to the complexity of

W



chess. Black hasn't touched a piece in his first four moves, plans to play 5...♖c7 and yet has a fully playable position. The merit of such a system is flexibility – Black gives away very little about his piece deployment, because he hasn't deployed any pieces! I see the problems as twofold – chesswise, White also has a wide choice about how to position his forces (as compared to, say, the Sveshnikov), but on a practical note, Black's set-up is rather subtle and requires accurate handling in deciding when and where to get some pieces out. I thus wouldn't recommend this line to an inexperienced player, but for more advanced Sicilian exponents it can provide a welcome change.

5 c4

5 ♖d3 is also a good move, placing the bishop more actively than it would be on e2. Black can play 5...♖c7 and enter a Scheveningen structure, or try 5...♖c5!? 6 ♖b3 ♖a7 when the bishop doesn't stand badly – recently the retreat 6...♖e7!? has become popular, with the idea of playing ...d6 when the knight isn't spectacular on b3.

5 ♗c3 can transpose into Scheveningen or Taimanov lines, but there is one beautiful possibility which you must be aware of: 5...b5 6 ♖d3 ♖b6 7 ♖e3 ♖c5 and American GM Larry Christiansen introduced the stunning 8 ♖g4!! ♖xd4 9 e5!!, aiming to break through on g7. At present it seems that Black's best

response is to steer towards a balanced ending after 9...♖c6 10 ♖xg7 ♗xe5 11 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 12 ♗xb6 ♗b7.

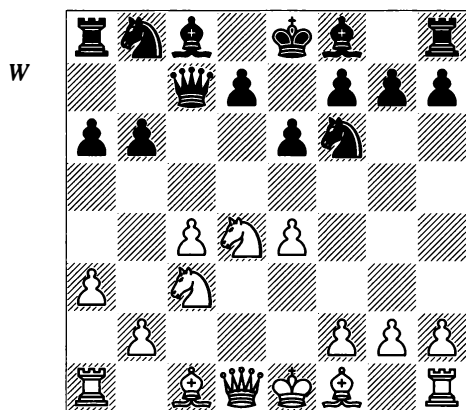
5...♖c7

The immediate 5...♗f6 is also interesting. Since 6 e5? ♖a5+ isn't an option, White needs to defend his e-pawn. 6 ♗d3 is probably the simplest, while the adventurous amongst you can consider 6 ♘c3!? ♗b4 7 ♗d3, allowing significant structural damage after ...♗xc3 in exchange for good play on the dark squares.

6 a3!

An important move if White doesn't want to allow ...♗b4 after ♘c3, though as indicated above this pin isn't the end of the world.

6...♗f6 7 ♘c3 b6 (D)



It makes sense to hit the e-pawn as early as possible in order to reduce White's options – if Black delayed (e.g. with ...d6, ...♗e7, ...0-0 and ...♗bd7) White could consider a more aggressive set-up with ♗e2, 0-0, f4!? and ♗f3, followed by g4-g5 with an attack.

8 ♗e3

This is the right spot for the bishop in these structures – White will soon have to play f3 to defend his e-pawn and blunt the b7-bishop, and it's better to cover any draughts down the g1-a7 diagonal before they become problematic.

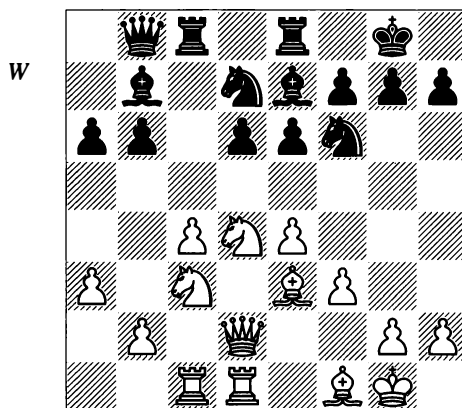
8...♗b7 9 f3 d6

Note that 9...♗d6?!, a move known from several lines of the Taimanov, just loses here to 10 ♘db5 axb5 11 ♘xb5.

10 ♗e2 ♗e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖d2 ♘bd7!

By far the best square for the knight, since it doesn't get in the way of any of the black pieces.

13 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 14 ♖fd1 ♖b8 15 ♗f1 ♖fe8 (D)



We have a standard Maroczy Bind position (see the Symmetrical English section for another example of this).

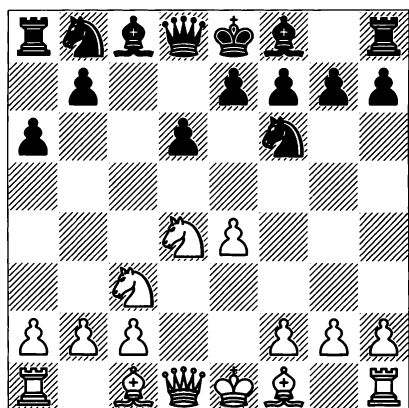
Najdorf (and English Attack)

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 a6 (D)

This is the Armani of chess openings – played religiously by Garry Kasparov and at least sometimes by everyone else, the opening has taken its thematic birth from Miguel Najdorf and development by Fischer to become one of the most respected variations around. While ...a6 is always a useful move in Sicilian positions, here it has the specific point of preparing ...e5, which can't be played immediately since 5...e5?! 6 ♗b5+, soon to be followed by ♘f5, will leave White in full control of the central light squares.

6 ♗e3

W



This is the English Attack – popularized by English GMs Nunn, Short and Chandler as a good alternative to theory, it has since skyrocketed in popularity and now represents one of the best studied lines in the Sicilian.

6 f3 is a popular move-order, designed to avoid the 6...♘g4 line. Black can agree to standard lines with 6...e6 7 ♖e3 or 6...e5 7 ♘b3 followed by 8 ♖e3, but he has a promising independent option in 6...♙b6, preventing ♖e3. 7 g4 (7 ♘b3 gives Black more flexibility, and after 7...e6 8 ♙e2 ♙c7 9 g4 b5 10 ♖e3 b4 11 ♘a4 ♘bd7! {threatening ...♙c6} 12 ♙c4 ♙xc4 13 ♖xc4 d5 14 exd5 ♘e5 15 ♖e2 ♘xd5 he has a good endgame) 7...♘c6 8 ♘b3 e6 9 ♙e2 ♙c7 10 ♖e3 b5 11 0-0-0 ♖b7 12 h4 ♙c8 leads to a balanced, dynamic position.

6 ♙g1 is an interesting twist – of course Black can still continue 6...e5 and 7...♖e6, while he also has the radical option 6...h6!? 7 g4 g5, aiming to set up a dark-square blockade, which White should immediately try to break with 8 h4!?

6 h3 is best met by 6...e6 and ...d5 (the Dragon approach with 6...g6 is also perfectly fine), since continuing in Najdorf style with 6...e5 7 ♘de2 ♖e7 gives White an excellent position after 8 g4! and 9 ♘g3.

6...e5

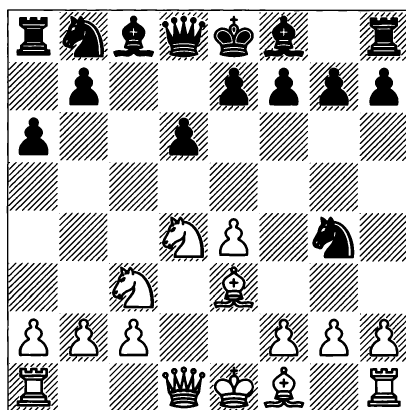
This is one of Black's best responses. There are only a few situations in the Najdorf

where 6...e5 isn't a good idea, and these generally occur when White has tried to seize control over d5 (with 6 ♖c4 or 6 ♖g5, for instance). 6 ♖e3 does nothing to control d5 and so the move is safe.

However, there are alternatives.

6...♘g4!? (D) was popularized by Garry Kasparov, and is well suited to his dynamic style.

W



Black hits the bishop and tries to tempt it to the kingside, where it will be chased by the black pawns with unclear consequences. After 7 ♖g5 (7 ♖c1 has been tried a few times – it actually isn't so bad, since White can gain time on the knight with 8 f3 or 8 ♖e2, though of course after 7...♘f6 White has to play something else or allow a repetition) 7...h6 8 ♖h4 g5 9 ♖g3 ♖g7 Black has a very active position, and seems to be doing OK. Some sample lines: 10 ♖e2 (10 ♙d2 ♘c6 11 ♘b3 ♘ge5 12 f3 b5 13 ♖f2 ♙b8 14 ♘d4 b4 15 ♘d1 ♘xd4 16 ♖xd4 d5 17 exd5 ♙xd5 leaves Black well placed; 10 h3 ♘e5 11 f3 ♘bc6 12 ♖f2 ♖e6 13 ♙d2 ♘xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♙a5 15 a3 ♙g8 16 h4 ♙c8 17 hxg5 hxg5 18 0-0-0 is balanced) 10...h5 11 ♖xg4 hxg4 12 0-0 ♘c6 13 ♘f5 ♖xc3 14 bxc3 ♙a5 15 ♙xg4 f6 16 ♙ab1 ♙xc3 17 ♙fd1 ♘e5 18 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 19 g3 b5 20 c4! gives White just enough compensation.

6...e6 7 g4 introduces huge complications in a line called the Perenyi Attack: 7...e5 8

♟f5 g6 9 g5 gxf5 10 exf5! (this is the whole idea – Black has nothing to worry about after 10 gxf6, which sucks all of the quality from the white position) 10...d5 (retreating the knight leaves White with a huge initiative) 11 ♖f3!? with an entirely unclear position.

6...e6 7 f3 b5 (Black can also exchange a pair of knights first: 7...♞c6 8 g4 ♙e7 9 ♖d2 0-0 10 0-0-0 ♞xd4 and 11...b5) 8 g4 h6 9 ♖d2 ♙b7 10 0-0-0 ♞bd7 11 h4 b4 is a more conventional English Attack with big complications; for instance, 12 ♞a4 ♖a5 13 b3 ♞c5 14 a3! ♞xa4 15 axb4 ♖c7 16 bxa4 d5 when Black has some compensation for his pawn.

7 ♞b3

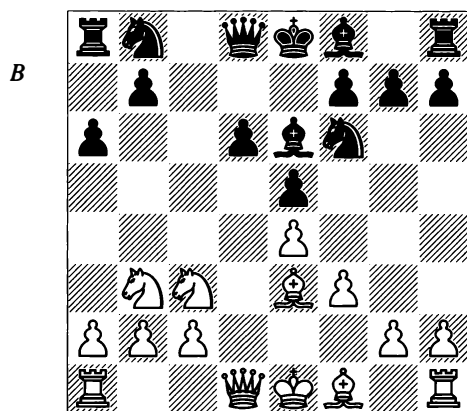
The knight is badly placed here, but White wants to leave the f3-square free for a pawn so that he can launch a kingside attack.

7 ♞f3 ♙e7 8 ♙c4 0-0 9 0-0 ♙e6! leaves Black with good control over d5.

7...♙e6

While the position of this bishop is often open to dispute – e6 and b7 are both excellent squares – in these positions e6 is the right choice, since on b7 the bishop would block Black's queenside play while staring at a solidly-guarded e4-pawn.

8 f3 (D)



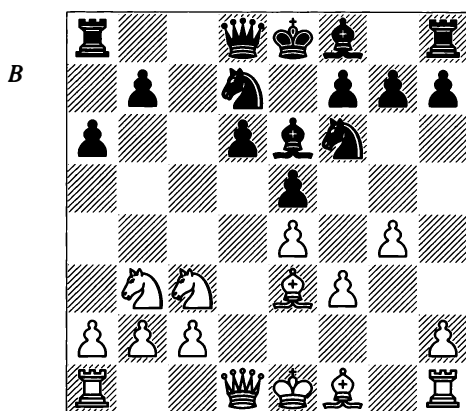
8...♞bd7

8...♙e7 9 ♖d2 0-0 (Black must always be on the lookout for the chance to equalize immediately with 9...d5, but here it doesn't work – 10 exd5 ♞xd5 11 ♞xd5 ♖xd5 12 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 13 0-0-0 ♙e6 14 ♞a5! and Black will suffer in the endgame) 10 g4 ♖c7 11 0-0-0 ♖c8 has recently become more popular – Black usefully develops his kingside pieces, remaining flexible with his queenside projects – he can play ...b5 or ...a5.

9 g4 (D)

This is the sharpest way to handle the position – having the option of g5, kicking the f6-knight, is very useful. On the other hand, such a move creates obvious long-term weaknesses which could prove costly, and White has some quieter options which you might prefer.

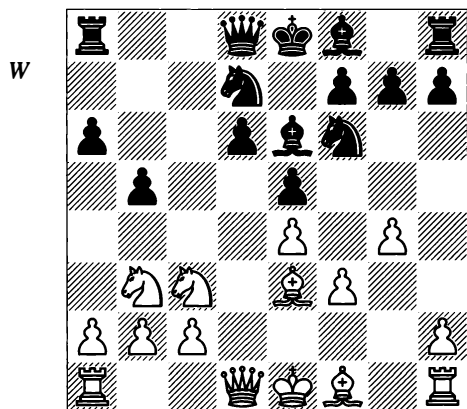
White can also start with 9 ♖d2, which denies him the prospect of a very fast g4-g5 but gives him some more positional continuations, such as 9...b5 10 a4 b4 11 ♞d5 ♙xd5 12 exd5 ♞b6 13 ♙xb6 ♖xb6 14 a5 ♖b7 15 ♙c4 g6! (Black used to put his bishop on e7 before he discovered this more active deployment) 16 ♖a4 ♖b8 when White can repeat moves with 17 ♖d3 ♖a8 18 ♖d2 ♖b8, or go for a pawn by 17 ♞c1 h5 18 ♞d3 ♙h6 19 ♖e2 0-0 20 ♞xb4 ♖d7 21 ♞c6 ♖xb2, when Black is fine.



9...b5 (D)

Good points: Black increases his aggressive options on the queenside (he can now launch a pawn-storm or, after playing ... b6-c4 , recapture on c4 with the b-pawn and exert pressure down the b-file). Bad points: Black weakens the c6-square which could be exploited by a white knight hopping to a5 and c6, and of course playing ...b5 costs a move which could also be used on an immediate ... b6 . Saying one of these moves is 'better' than the other is ridiculous – both are logical and which to prefer is a matter of taste.

9... b6 focuses on queenside piece-play. After 10 g5 h5! (this is the point – Black blocks the white h-pawn and so makes a quick kingside attack more difficult) 11 Wd2 e7 12 0-0-0 c8 13 b1 0-0 14 g1 Wc7 15 Wf2 c4 16 xc4 Wxc4 17 h4 g6 Black is fine.



10 Wd2

Probably the most flexible, since the queen rarely goes to any other square, but the g5 advance can be delayed (for instance, if White plays h4-h5 first, then after g5 a black knight can't nestle on h5).

The immediate 10 g5 leads to different play. If Black moves the knight immediately then he loses control of d5, but with 10...b4! he forces White to make a decision: 11 d5 (11 e2 h5 12 Wd2 a5 13 g3 gxg3 14 hxg3 a4 15 c1 Wa5 16 d3 d5 17 exd5

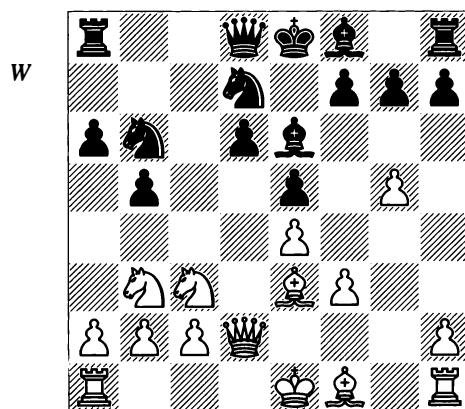
Wxd5 18 g2 Wb5 seems to give Black enough queenside counterplay to hold the balance) 11... dxd5 12 exd5 e5 13 d3 xd3 14 Wxd3 should be a little more comfortable for White in view of his active pieces, but Black has a slightly better pawn-structure and a very solid position.

10... b6 11 g5

11 0-0-0? d4 is already better for Black in my opinion – allowing the e3-bishop to be traded for a knight would be a huge concession, but 12 xc4 bxc4 gives Black a very useful half-open b-file while pushing the white knight into the corner.

11... fd7 (D)

11... d5 isn't too popular here for some reason – I think that Black decides to attack as hard as possible on the queenside after 9...b5, and so chooses to use this knight offensively instead of as a blocker on the kingside.



12 d5 c8! 13 xb6 xb6

Black should be fine.

Najdorf e5

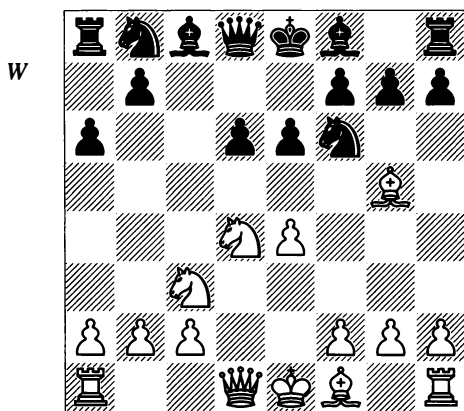
1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 xd4 f6 5 c3 a6 6 e5

This used to be clearly the main line – when Nunn and Gallagher published a two-volume work on the Najdorf a few years ago, an

entire book was devoted to 6 ♖g5 alone. It's fair to say that, while there is a huge amount of theory here, it isn't particularly popular any more since Black seems to have several ways to equalize and White is in sore need of a novelty in a few key variations. It remains an exceptionally dangerous playground for both sides.

6...e6 (D)

I've used 6...♘c6 7 ♖d2 ♗b6 once or twice, but I don't really believe it after 8 ♘b3. 6...♘bd7 is sometimes seen.



7 f4

The f3 and g4 plan we saw in the last section makes no sense here, since the g5-bishop is in the way. So White plays to exploit the pressure on the f6-knight by threatening e5, in addition to which f5 can give some needed pressure on the e6-pawn.

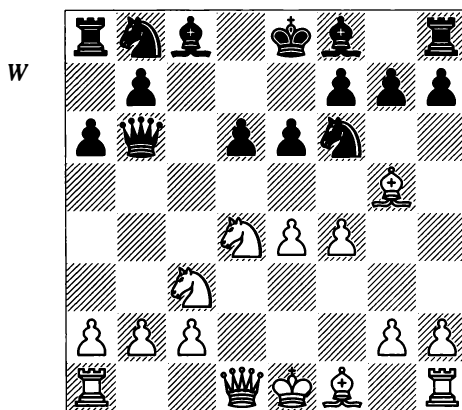
7 ♗f3 is no longer popular, but this move allows me to introduce an important concept. After 7...♘bd7 8 0-0-0 ♗c7 9 ♗g3 b5?! (9...♙e7 is perfectly fine for Black), White gains the advantage with 10 ♙xb5! axb5 11 ♘dxb5 ♗b8 12 ♘xd6+ ♙xd6 13 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 14 ♙xd6 since his three connected passed pawns should outweigh Black's extra knight, which has no real targets to aim at.

7...♙e7

Breaking the pin, developing a piece and preparing to castle kingside is obviously a

smart way to handle the position, but there are alternatives.

Now 7...♗b6!? (D) leads to one of the sharpest variations in the entire openings calendar.



8 ♗d2 (White can bail out with 8 ♘b3, but this doesn't lead to a real advantage; 8 ♗d3!? is less studied than the main line but doesn't appear to be any worse) 8...♗xb2 is known as the Poisoned Pawn Variation. Black's queen sortie looks suicidal, but he has been holding his own after 9 ♙b1 (9 ♘b3 threatens to win the queen with the cute 10 a3 and 11 ♙a2; after 9...♗a3 10 ♙xf6 gxf6 11 ♙e2 White has an imposing lead in development but Black has retained his extra pawn) 9...♗a3 10 f5 (10 e5 looks crushing, but after 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘fd7 12 ♙c4 ♙b4! 13 ♙b3 ♗a5 14 0-0 0-0 White has found no way to land the knockout punch) 10...♘c6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♙xf6 gxf6 15 ♘e4 ♗xa2 16 ♙d1 ♙e7 17 ♙e2 0-0 18 0-0 ♙a7 19 ♙f3 and White has enough for a draw, but no more than that.

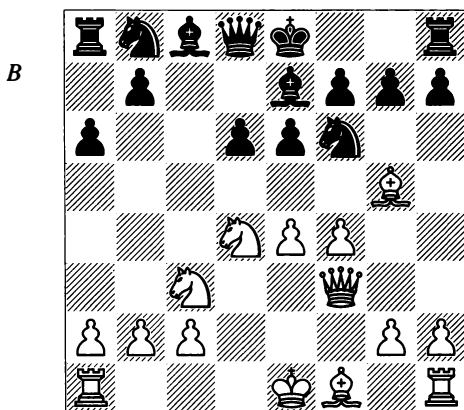
7...b5 was the pet line of Lev Polugaevsky, but looks distinctly dodgy: 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♗c7 10 exf6 ♗e5+ 11 ♙e2 ♗xg5 12 0-0 and Black is dangerously under-developed.

Of the alternatives, I can recommend for Black 7...♘bd7 8 ♙c4 (8 ♗f3 gives Black the option of accelerating his queenside play

with 8...♚c7 9 0-0-0 b5, though the position after 10 ♖d3 ♖b7 11 ♜he1 is fascinating; for instance, 11...♚b6 12 ♘d5!? ♚xd4 13 ♖xf6 gxf6 14 ♖xb5 ♚c5 15 b4 ♚xb5 16 ♘c7+ ♖e7 17 ♘xb5 axb5 with three pieces for a queen and a pawn) 8...♚b6 (not 8...b5? 9 ♖xe6! fxe6 10 ♘xe6 ♚a5 11 ♘xf8 and 12 ♚xd6 with an attack).

7...♘c6!? is another very ambitious move, whose status is very borderline between 'playable' and 'suicidal'! Black won't lose his pinned knight, since e5 is always met by ...h6 and ...g5, but his position is distinctly ropy. In one of my games, after 8 e5 (8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 e5 h6 10 ♖h4 g5 11 fxg5 ♘d5! is also very sharp) 8...h6 9 ♖h4 ♘xd4 (9...g5 could be Black's best bet) 10 ♚xd4 dxe5 11 ♚xd8+ ♖xd8 12 fxe5 g5 13 ♖g3 ♘d7 White had a strong initiative but Black managed to hold the balance with ...♖g7 and ...♖e7.

8 ♚f3 (D)



Not just preparing to castle queenside, but aggressively placing the queen and stopping ...b5 in view of e5!.

8...♚c7

This is probably the most accurate, covering both e5 and c4 while preparing ...b5 (since e5 can now be met by ...♖b7).

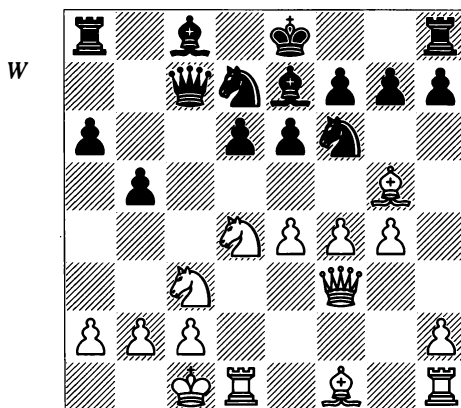
8...♘bd7 9 ♖c4! is a very dangerous new source of pressure for Black to deal with.

9 0-0-0 ♘bd7 10 g4

10 ♖d3 is also logical – I'll confine most of my analysis to the main line after 10 g4, but for this move we can say that the gain is in solidity of the e4-pawn, while the loss is in solidity of the d4-knight.

Keres introduced 10 ♖e2 against Fischer, with a queen sacrifice in mind: 10...b5 11 ♖xf6 ♘xf6 12 e5 ♖b7 13 exf6!? ♖xf3 14 ♖xf3 ♖xf6 15 ♖xa8 d5 16 ♖xd5 ♖xd4 (not 16...♚xf4+ 17 ♖b1 ♖xd4 18 ♖c6+ ♖e7 19 ♘e2) 17 ♚xd4 exd5 18 ♘xd5 ♚c5 19 ♚e1+ ♖f8 20 c3, but after 20...h5! intending to swing the rook into play along the third rank, Black had good prospects.

10...b5 (D)



11 ♖xf6

This move is necessary in order to facilitate the advance of the white pawns. This realization may have been what prompted Nigel Short, John Nunn, Murray Chandler and other English GMs to investigate a similar g-pawn advance with the bishop on e3 – and so the English Attack was born. Of course, that's just a guess.

White can also try keeping the tension; for instance, 11 ♖g2 ♖b7 12 ♜he1 b4 13 ♘d5!? exd5 14 exd5 with compensation for the piece.

11...♘xf6

11...♖xf6 walks into a 12 ♖xb5! shot – a recent game continued 12...♚b8 (12...axb5

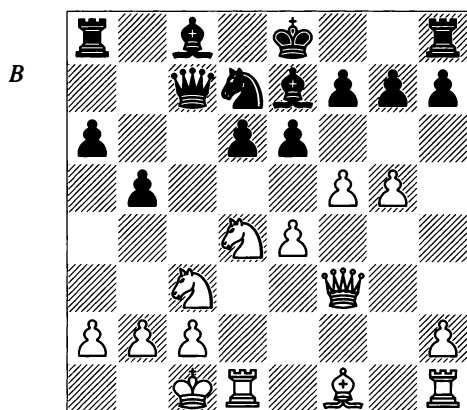
13 dxb5 followed by dxd6+ and e5 looks very promising for White) 13 exd7+ exd7 14 g5! exd4 15 fxd4 b6 16 wd3 wxb2+ 17 cd2 ab5 18 we3 0-0 19 wb1 wa3 20 dxb5 wa5+ 21 wc3 wxb5 22 wxa5 wxa5 23 fxd6 wxa2 24 wb7 with an excellent rook and pawn endgame for White.

11... gxf6! ? makes a lot of sense, bringing extra cover to the e5- and g5-squares . After 12 f5 de5 13 wh3 0-0! 14 ag1 ch8 and ... ag8 the black king is reasonably happy.

12 g5

White has scored very well here in recent grandmaster games, which goes some way to explain why Black tends to opt for one of the early alternatives.

12... d7 13 f5! (D)



Black now has a tough choice.

13... exg5+

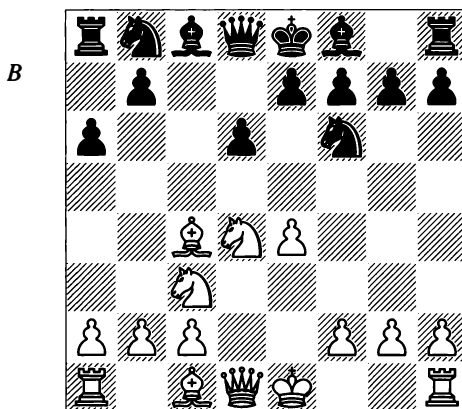
He can also decline the pawn with 13... d7 14 f6 gxf6 15 gxf6 ef8 16 ag1 h5 (a typical move, weaving in possibilities of ... ah6+ or ... wh6), but after 17 ag7! (of course Black can't take this) the rook is a little too close to Black's throat.

14 ab1 de5 15 wh5 we7 16 dxe6! ex6 17 fxe6 g6 18 exf7+ exf7 19 wh3 ag7 20 d5

I like White, since he has full control over d5 (it's true that the black knight has e5 , but this doesn't threaten the white king).

Najdorf ec4

1 e4 c5 2 d4 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 df6 5 dc3 a6 6 ec4 (D)



While this move had been established against the Classical for quite a while, it was really with Fischer that the system took off against the Najdorf. Black can always transpose back into Classical lines with ... d6 but he has some promising alternatives – early queenside play with ... b5 , or bringing his queen's knight to the excellent c5-square . The line is still important but isn't played as often as, say, 6 e3 – it's ironic that Fischer himself severely dented 6 ec4 's reputation by winning a great game with Black in the system.

6... e6

Putting some granite on the a2-g8 diagonal is very worthwhile, since now the c4-bishop is in danger of becoming irrelevant.

6... e5? , on the other hand, can be rejected on sight – White has far too much control over the d5-square for the black position to be remotely respectable.

7 eb3

A good prophylactic move – the bishop steps away from ... b5 and ... d5 advances, and White waits to see how Black will develop his pieces.

7 0-0 will probably transpose.

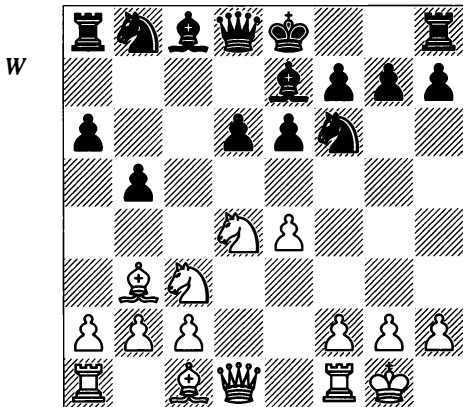
7 a3 is a little tame, preparing a retreat for the bishop on a2.

7 a4!? (restraining ...b5) is a good alternative though, when Black should probably play 7...dxc6 in view of the weakened b4-square.

7...b5

7...dxc6! 8 f4 (8 g5!?, dubbed “the natural move” by GM Alexander Morozevich, could be the future of this variation – White forgets about pawn advances and just puts all of his pieces on good squares; Kasparov’s response is interesting: 8...h6 9 g4 a5 10 0-0 a5!, trading queens with a level-looking endgame) 8...dxc5 is an excellent alternative. The knight is perfectly placed on c5, hitting both the bishop and the e4-pawn while defending the e6-pawn.

8 0-0 g7 (D)



9 f3

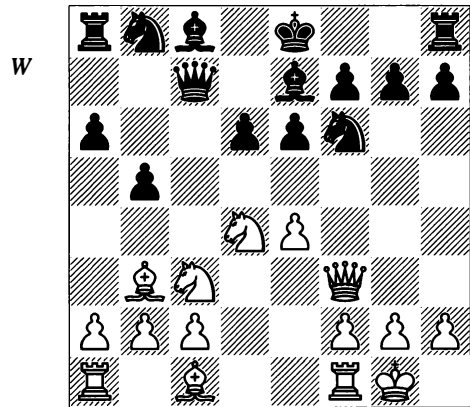
This is enormously dangerous – White immediately threatens e5 and increases his lead in development.

9 f4 is how they used to play it but this method has lost support: 9...g7 (taking on e4 is too dangerous) 10 f5 e5 11 dxc6 dxc6 and Black has a perfect set-up with full equality. The aforementioned Fischer game continued 12 g3 c8 13 g5, when 13...h5!! cracked the white position.

9...g7 (D)

The most solid move.

9...g7 is also played, intending to drop the queen back to b7 after g3, but I’ve never been too fond of it since White can ignore the attack on his d4-knight with 10 g5!, when 10...gxd4?! 11 e5 is good for him.

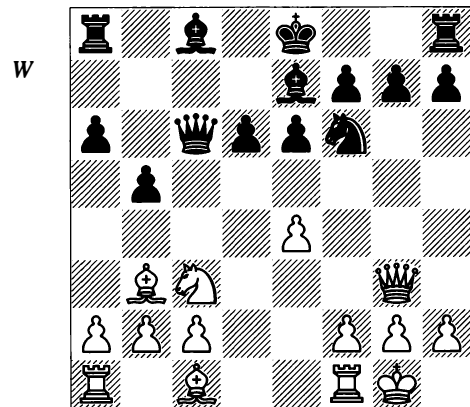


10 g3 dxc6!

Black can ignore the threat to the g7-pawn for a moment, and in the meantime exchange off White’s most effective attackers.

10...0-0 is also playable: after 11 g6 dxc6 Black will untangle with ...g8. White has an edge.

11 dxc6 gxc6 (D)



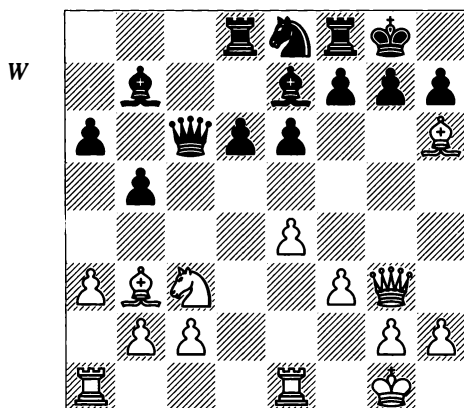
12 e1

The greedy 12 ♖xg7? fully deserves its question mark: 12...♙g8 13 ♖h6 ♜xe4 14 ♜xe4 ♖xe4 15 f3 and Black can choose between a draw with 15...♗e2 16 ♜f2 ♖e1+ or an edge with 15...♖g6.

12...♙b7 13 a3

13 ♖xg7 is critical here, although after 13...♙g8 14 ♖h6 0-0-0! I'd prefer Black's chances in a practical game.

13...♜d8 14 f3 0-0 15 ♙h6 ♜e8 (D)



Compared to the note to Black's tenth, this seems good for him. After 16 ♜ad1 ♙h8 17 ♙g5 ♙xg5 18 ♖xg5 ♜f6 White might have a tiny edge because of the tender d6-pawn, but it's not enough for anything real.

Najdorf ♙e2 (and Other Moves)

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 a6 6 ♙e2

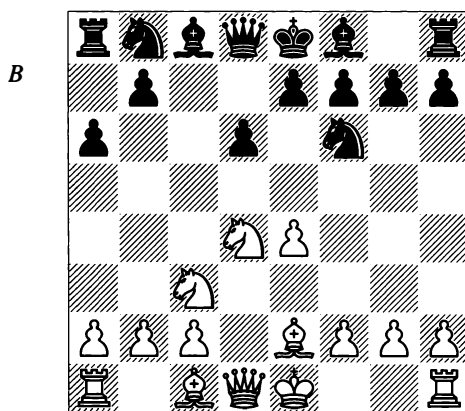
6 f4 is also a reasonable move, weakening the e-pawn in return for an aggressive kingside stance: Black can pick Dragon (6...g6) or Scheveningen (6...e6) formations, while a good way to keep matters strictly Najdorf is 6...e5 7 ♜f3 ♜bd7 followed by ...♙e7 and ...0-0.

6 g3 is perhaps less effective here than against other Sicilians, since after the reply

6...e5 the white e-pawn will restrict its own bishop.

6 ♙d3 may seem like a better square than e2, since the bishop defends the e-pawn and will attack the kingside after an e5 advance. However, the move has two defects – the d4-knight is no longer protected, and the bishop can be hit by a ...♜d7-c5 manoeuvre. This probably explains the move's unpopularity, and I think the best response is 6...♜c6 7 ♜xc6 bxc6 (a very favourable exchange for Black – the exchange of a pair of minor pieces renders White's space advantage less important, while the extra control over d5 and the half-open b-file is useful) 8 0-0 e5 9 f4 ♙e7 10 a4 0-0 and Black should have no real problems.

We now return to 6 ♙e2 (D):



6 ♙e2 is simple and classical. On a scale of aggression, with ♙g5 Open Sicilians being at one end and the c3 Sicilian at the other, this is somewhere near the middle. White puts less immediate pressure on the black formation, but the game still has the capacity to erupt.

6...e5 7 ♜b3

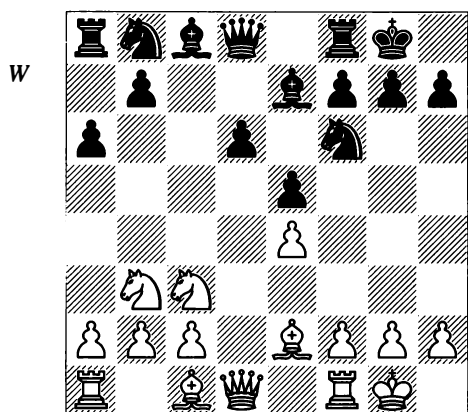
7 ♜f3 is less popular since White will probably want to advance his f-pawn later. Black has several good plans, but perhaps the most annoying is 7...h6! when ♙g5 is no longer possible and Black is very comfortable.

7 ♖f5 d5! equalizes instantly – after 8 ♗g5 d4 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♖d5 ♗d8 White has a couple of pretty impressive knights, but the black position has greater potential with the two bishops.

7...♗e7

7...♗e6 was how they used to play it: 8 0-0 ♖bd7 9 f4 ♗c7! 10 f5 ♗c4 11 a4 ♗e7 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 a5 b5! 14 axb6 ♖xb6 with good queenside counterplay. Black must be prepared for 8 f4 ♗c7 9 g4!? though, which looks pretty dangerous.

8 0-0-0 (D)



9 ♖h1

9 ♗e3 is also a good move; for instance, 9...♗e6 10 ♖d5 ♖xd5 11 exd5 ♗f5 12 ♗d2 ♖d7 13 ♖a5! ♗c7 14 c4 followed by b4 with some initiative on the queenside.

The waiting text-move has recently become fashionable, as 9 f4 weakens the e-pawn, while 9 a4 leaves the b4-square open to a black knight (which can still go to c6).

9...b6!?

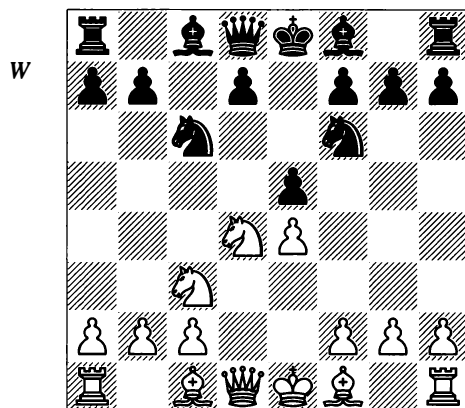
Instead, 9...♖c6 10 ♗e3 ♗e6 11 ♗d2 leaves White with a workable edge, since the endgame after 11...d5 12 exd5 ♖xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♗fd1 ♗xb3 15 axb3 ♗xd2 16 ♗xd2 is no picnic for Black.

The text-move, an idea of Gelfand's, is holding the balance. For instance, 10 ♗g5 ♖bd7 11 ♖d5 ♖xd5 12 ♗xd5 ♗b8 13 ♗xe7

♗xe7 14 ♗ad1 ♖f6 15 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 16 ♗xd6 ♖xe4 with a good endgame.

Sveshnikov

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 e5 (D)



This line was extensively developed and popularized by Evgeny Sveshnikov. This move takes the concepts demonstrated by Boleslavsky in the Classical and developed through the Najdorf, and raises them a level. Black is willing to accept massive structural damage in return for activity and (often) the two bishops. The huge popularity of this system shows that, for many modern players, the Sveshnikov is seen as a paradigm for how chess should be played.

6 ♖db5

The only move, really.

6 ♖f5 d5! 7 exd5 ♗xf5 8 dxc6 bxc6 is perfectly fine for Black, while on other moves such as 6 ♖b3, 6...♗b4! gives Black a ridiculously good version of the Najdorf with his bishop outside the pawn-chain.

6...d6 7 ♗g5

This is the only way to cause any problems – if Black's opening has a defect, it's the d5-square, so White rushes to seize control.

Black has no problems after 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 exd5 b8 (8... d7 is clumsier after 9 c4 , especially in view of 9... a6 ?? 10 Wa4 , when White wins) 9 c4 (9 Wf3 a6 10 Wa3 is tricky, but Black should have no problems after 10... e7 11 g5 f6 ! – just don't take the bishop; it loses) 9... e7 10 e3 a6 11 c3 0-0 12 e2 f5 , when Black has a great position, I think.

7 a4 a6 8 a3 restrains the ... b5 break, but delaying g5 means that the black position isn't under immediate strain (there's no way to force a doubling of his f-pawns, for instance), and after 8... g4 ! 9 f3 e6 10 g5 e7 11 c4 0-0 12 xf6 xf6 13 d5 h4+ 14 g3 g5 15 0-0 h8 16 g2 f5 Black has a good position.

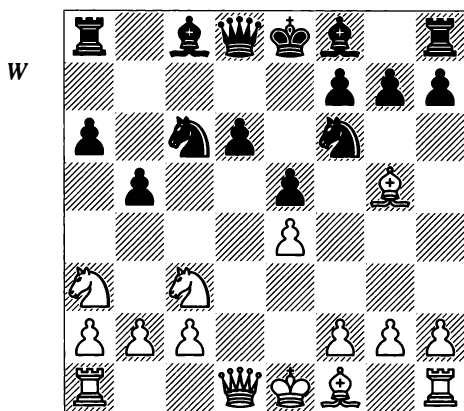
7... a6 8 a3

8 xf6 gxf6 9 a3 gives Black an additional option: 9... f5 ! with good equalizing chances.

8... b5 ! (D)

This move, threatening an immediate fork, is the most forcing.

Black can also try 8... e6 , but after 9 c4 c8 10 xf6 ! gxf6 (10... Wxf6 11 b6 and 12 cd5 gives White a monopoly over the crucial d5-square) 11 d3 e7 12 e3 White has good chances of establishing a bind.



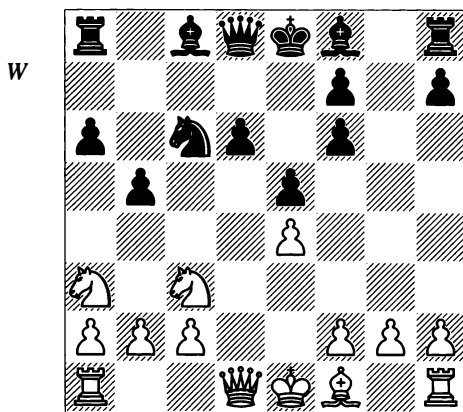
9 xf6

This is the sharpest – as the next note shows, Black can't recapture with the queen, so his structure becomes unfeasibly ugly. On the other hand, he'll now have not one but two f-pawns with which to strike at the centre, and a half-open g-file which could prove either a gift or a curse.

9 cxd5 e7 10 xf6 xf6 11 c3 is a more positional continuation. Black's pawn-structure isn't shattered, but he will need more time to prepare ... f5 . After 11...0-0 12 c2 g5 (12... b8 , putting the brakes on an a4 advance, is a good alternative; after 13 g3 g5 14 h4 h6 15 h3 e6 16 xe6 fxe6 17 de3 xe3 18 xe3 a5 19 0-0 c4 20 e2 c7 21 ad1 b6 22 d3 c5 Black is active enough to justify any structural defects) 13 a4 bxa4 14 xa4 a5 15 c4 b8 16 b3 h8 17 0-0 we have a balanced position where Black can play 17... f5 immediately or prepare it with 17... g6 .

9... gxf6 (D)

9... Wxf6 is simply too slow: 10 cxd5 Wd8 11 c4 ! and if 11... b4 then 12 Wa4 with a clear advantage.

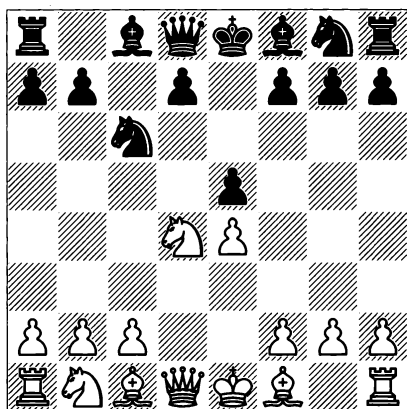


10 cxd5 f5

This is Black's most aggressive line, immediately striking at the white centre with his 'weak' f-pawn.

10... g7 is equally logical, planning to challenge the d5-knight with 11... d7 (this

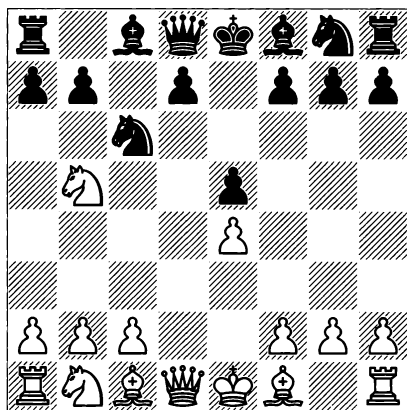
W



development of his king's knight, notably the chance to exchange his bad bishop with ... e7-g5! , and develop his knight to e7 instead of f6 (which can make sense if he's aiming for a rapid ...f5). White also has his pluses compared to the Sveshnikov though, the main one being the availability of a Maroczy Bind with c4, which substantially impedes Black's ability to break with ...b5 or ...d5.

5 d6 (D)

B



5...d6

5...a6 is the Löwenthal Variation, which has never been popular since after 6 d6+ exd6 7 exd6 xf6 White has a choice of promising queen moves. My preference would be 8 d1 g6 9 c3 ge7 10 h4! h5 11 g5 d5

12 exd5 b4 13 xe7 xe7 14 d3 xd3+ 15 xd3 xd3 16 cxd3 with the better end-game.

6 c4

Clamping on d5, but note that d4 is now an outpost for a black horse.

6 c3 leads back to the Sveshnikov after 6... f6 , but Black can also try 6...a6 7 a3 b5 8 d5 ce7 with reasonable chances.

6... e7

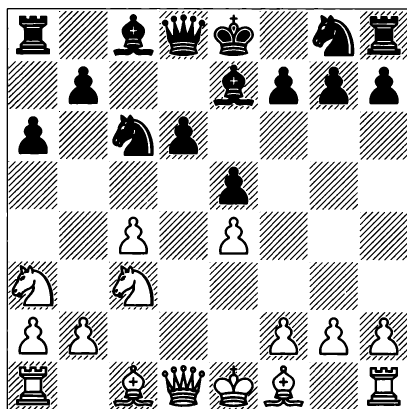
By delaying ... f6 , Black generates the option of ...a6 and ... g5 , exchanging off his bad bishop.

7 c3

7 b3 is a flexible alternative – White protects the c4-pawn, but also prepares a quick a3 . I like the ambitious 7...f5!? for Black, trying to dismantle the white centre.

7...a6 8 a3 (D)

B



8... e6

Covering d5 is the natural approach.

8...f5!? is more aggressive, when 9 d3 f4! is quite promising for Black, while 9 exf5 xf5 10 d3 e6 11 0-0 f6 12 c2 0-0 looks OK for him too.

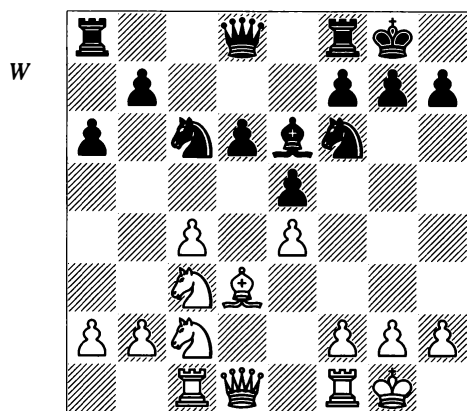
9 d3

This could be the best square for White's bishop, defending the e4-pawn and hindering ...f5. Blocking the d-file is no big deal since White can very rarely take on d6 anyway.

9 ♖c2 ♗g5 10 ♗e2 ♗xc1 11 ♖xc1 ♜f6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♖d2 ♖b6! and 14...♗fd8 is rather equal.

9 ♗e2 ♗g5 10 0-0 ♗xc1 11 ♖xc1 ♜f6 12 ♖d2 0-0 13 ♗fd1 ♜d4 14 ♜c2 ♜xc2 15 ♖xc2 ♖c8 16 b3 ♖c6 doesn't leave Black with any problems either.

9...♗g5 10 0-0 ♗xc1 11 ♖xc1 ♜f6 12 ♜c2 0-0 (D)



Now, with 13 ♜d5 and 14 b4 White gains the more active position – it's difficult for Black to arrange a capture on d5, while d4 is still covered by the c2-knight.

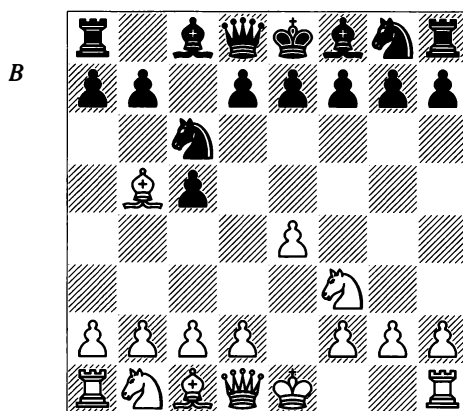
Moscow & Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6

After 2...d6, 3 ♗b5+ is still possible, and is called the Moscow Variation. 3...♗d7 (after 3...♜d7 4 d4 ♜f6 5 0-0 cxd4 6 ♖xd4 White is well placed) 4 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 5 c4! sets up a Maroczy Bind, but with a pair of bishops off the board Black won't be stung too badly by his space disadvantage. After 5...♗xc6 6 ♜c3 ♜f6 (6...g6 7 d4 ♗g7!? 8 d5 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♜a5, with play similar to a Nimzo-Indian, is an excellent alternative) 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4 g6 9 ♜de2, Black can play a regular Bind position with 9...♗g7 or change the game by 9...♖e6!? 10 ♜d5 ♖xe4 11

♜c7+ ♜d7 12 ♜xa8 ♖xc4 with an unclear position.

3 ♗b5 (D)



This system (the Rossolimo) has grown in popularity, and play is much slower than in Open Sicilians. White basically plans to trade on c6 and damage the black pawn-structure, when Black will have to work to activate his two bishops in view of the resulting closed formation.

3...g6

As White isn't aiming for an immediate knockout, Black has time to play his pieces to their best squares, and hence the bishop fianchetto has consistently been the most popular response.

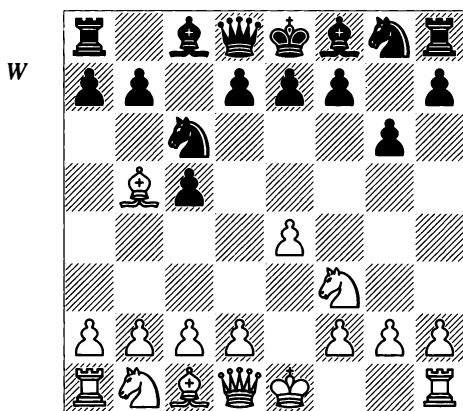
3...e6 4 ♗xc6 (the capture is the most thematic, but 4 0-0 ♜ge7 5 ♗e1 is also popular, when White can retain the bishop-pair and try to build a centre or play for a lead in development with 5...a6 6 ♗xc6 ♜xc6) 4...bxc6 is different, when 5 d3 ♜e7 6 ♖e2 f6!? 7 ♜h4 g6 8 f4 sets up another battle between space and two bishops.

3...d6 can also arise from the 2...d6 move-order – it's the riskiest response, since Black self-pins his knight and slightly exposes his king, whose flight from the centre is delayed. It seems that 4 0-0 ♗d7 5 ♗e1 ♜f6 6 c3 a6 7 ♗f1 ♗g4 8 d3 ♗xf3 (otherwise 9 ♜bd2 and 10 h3 will enable White to recapture with the

knight) 9 ♖xf3 g6 is a little better for White in view of his two bishops.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the eccentric 3...♘a5!?, which would be easy to criticize if so many strong GMs weren't fond of it. The move does look a little dodgy, but it isn't completely without merit – Black plans to drive the bishop back with ...a6, when the knight can either stay on the rim or come back to c6 without fear of structural damage. I think White's best move is 4 d4 – while the bishop on b5 is misplaced, at least it's developed, and if White can't open the position then Black's temporal investment is likely to go unpunished. After 4...a6 5 ♖e2 cxd4 6 ♘xd4 ♗c7 7 0-0 e6, White can set up a Maroczy Bind with 8 c4!?, since 8...♘xc4 (Black doesn't have to do this) 9 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 10 ♘c3 ♘f6 11 ♖f4, intending ♖c1 and ♘a4, gives promising compensation for the pawn, and Bosch analyses 11...♖c5 12 ♖e5 d6 13 ♖xf6 gxf6 14 ♘b3 ♖b4 15 ♗f3 ♖xc3 16 ♖ac1! as very good for White.

Now we return to 3...g6 (D):



4 ♖xc6

Of course, this isn't forced, though there is some logic to the argument that this capture is what White's last move threatened.

4 0-0 ♖g7 5 ♖e1 also leaves White a little better after 5...♘f6 6 e5, while after 5...e5 6 b4!? Black's best approach is probably to

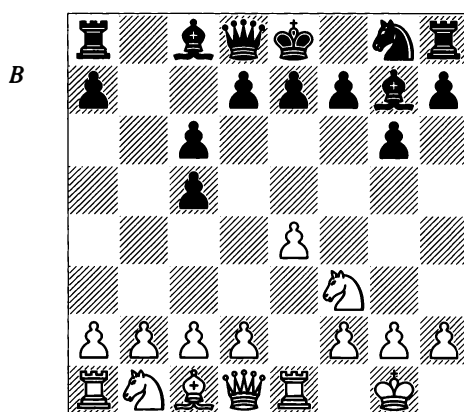
play 6...cxb4 7 a3 b3!, giving the pawn back with approximate equality.

4...bxc6

The most critical response since it gives so much central control and a half-open b-file.

4...dxc6 is also very popular – 5 h3 ♖g7 6 d3 followed by ♘c3, ♖e3 and ♗d2 is a little better for White, and since the position is relatively closed (Black often plays ...e5, shutting things further) the two bishops aren't so important right now, though of course they can come into their own later.

5 0-0 ♖g7 6 ♖e1 (D)



6...♘f6?!

6...f6!? keeps things solid, when ...♘h6-f7 makes it tough for White to break through. After 7 c3 ♘h6 8 d4 you have to like that centre though.

7 e5 ♘d5 8 c4 ♘c7 9 d4 cxd4 10 ♗xd4

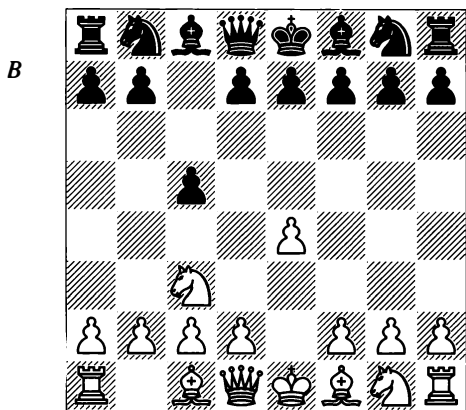
Although Black has the two bishops here, this is more than outweighed by White's substantial initiative. Therefore attention has recently been focusing on 6...f6 or the earlier 4...dxc6.

Grand Prix Attack

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 (D)

White's move-order has crucial implications. 2 f4 was how they used to play it; for

instance, 2...♘c6 3 ♘f3 g6 4 ♖b5 ♙g7 5 ♙xc6 with a nice advantage. However, the problem is 2...d5! 3 exd5 ♘f6!, a very dangerous pawn sacrifice. 4 ♖b5+ ♙d7 (4...♘bd7 5 c4 a6 6 ♙a4?! b5! is also good for Black) 5 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 6 c4 e6 7 ♖e2 ♙d6 8 dxe6 ♖xe6 9 ♖xe6+ fxe6 and Black will follow up with ...♘c6 and ...0-0-0, with more than enough for the pawn.



2...d6

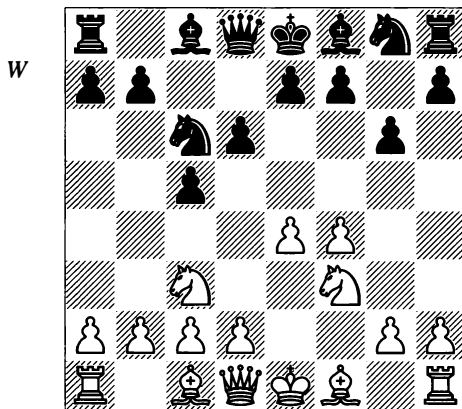
This is the most natural move-order for Najdorf players, but also the most favourable move-order from White's point of view if he wishes to play a Grand Prix Attack, since the pawn will take more time to reach d5.

2...♘c6 3 f4 (White can revert to an Open Sicilian by, for example, 3 ♘ge2 followed by 4 d4, which is why Black must give careful thought to his choice of second move) 3...g6 4 ♘f3 ♙g7 gives White nothing. 5 ♖b5 ♘d4! is fine for Black, while 5 ♙c4 e6 6 f5 ♘ge7! 7 fxe6 fxe6 8 d3 d5 9 ♖b3 b5! places White on the back foot. After 10 exd5 (10 a3 saves the piece, but hardly gets the blood pumping) 10...exd5 11 0-0 c4 12 dxc4 dxc4 13 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 14 ♘xb5 cxb3 15 ♘c7+ ♙d7 16 ♘xa8 bxc2 Black will capture the knight in the corner, when his two pieces should prove more effective than the rook and pawn.

3 f4

Aggressive and weakening in equal measure.

3...♘c6 4 ♘f3 g6 (D)



5 ♙c4

5 ♖b5 ♙d7 keeps the black structure intact.

5...♙g7 6 0-0 e6 7 d3 ♘f6 8 ♖e1

White will follow up with ♖h4, f5, ♙h6 and ♘g5 with an automatic attack. Black should play ...♘a5 and ...b6, developing his pieces with reasonable chances.

Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3

White would prefer to start with the flexible 2 g3, but the problem is 2...d5! 3 exd5 ♖xd5 4 ♘f3 ♙g4 when he must either misplace his bishop on e2 or forfeit castling rights after 5 ♙g2 ♖e6+ 6 ♙f1.

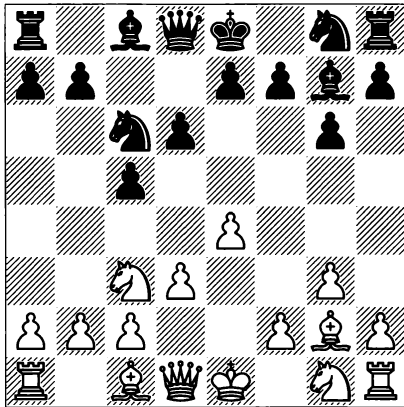
2...♘c6 3 g3

The Closed Sicilian was used by Spassky and (for a while) Adams, but it has never genuinely threatened the Sicilian. Black should fianchetto his king's bishop and aim to develop queenside play with ...♖b8 and ...b5, after which he'll get his full share of the chances.

3...g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7 5 d3 d6 (D)

6 f4

W



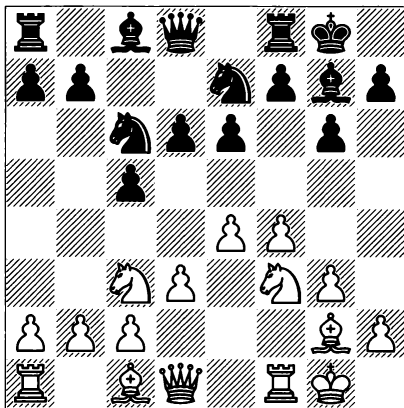
6 ♙e3 e5! 7 ♚d2 ♜ge7 8 ♙h6 0-0 9 h4 looks dangerous, but Black can defuse the attack with 9... ♙xh6 10 ♚xh6 f6! when 11 h5 g5 keeps the kingside closed and otherwise ... ♜d4 is coming.

6...e6

6... ♜f6 is also possible, but I don't like exposing the knight to e5 and g5 advances while blocking the dark-squared bishop. Developing it to e7 instead avoids all of these defects, plus it controls the crucial f5-square.

7 ♜f3 ♜ge7 8 0-0 0-0 (D)

W



White has no advantage. His whole plan is based on g4, but Black will meet this with an immediate ...f5!, equalizing chances on the kingside. White's attack can't be profitably prosecuted; for instance: 9 g4 f5! 10 gxf5

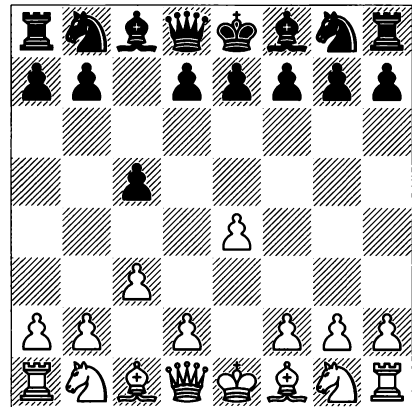
exf5 11 ♙e3 ♜h8 12 ♜h1 ♙e6 13 ♚d2 ♚d7 14 ♚a1 b6 15 ♜g5 ♙g8 16 ♜d5 h6 17 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 18 ♜f3 ♚ad8 19 ♙f2 fxe4 20 dxe4 d5! and the central payback leaves Black on top.

c3 Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 c3 (D)

2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 is the Morra Gambit. Black can transpose into c3 Sicilian waters with 3... ♜f6 , while 3... dxc3 4 ♜xc3 ♜c6 5 ♜f3 d6 6 ♙c4 e6 7 0-0 ♜f6 8 ♚e2 and 9 ♚d1 offers White some compensation for his pawn.

B



With 2 c3, White's aim is simple – he wants to recapture with a pawn after d4 cxd4. Black can't really stop this, but his two main responses concentrate on robbing the white centre of its flexibility by hitting the e-pawn and forcing it to declare its intentions (especially now that it can't be defended by a knight on c3).

2... ♜f6

This is one of the main moves here – Black exploits the fact that, after e5 ♜d5 , the white c-pawn will be reluctant to move to c4, and so the centralized black steed will be sitting on something of an outpost.

2...d5 3 exd5 ♚xd5 also takes advantage of the white formation, this time that the

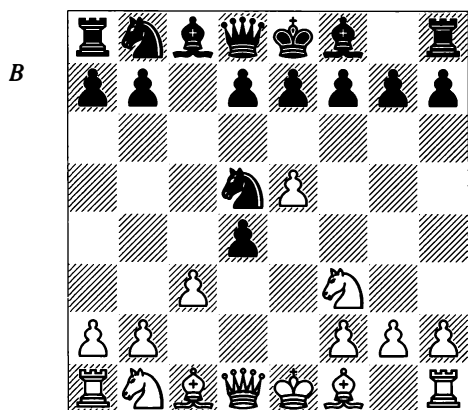
c3-square is unavailable for a knight. After 4 d4 ♖f6 5 ♗f3 ♙g4 Black has reasonable prospects – White can play 6 ♙e2 when he will probably end up with an IQP after ...cxd4 cxd4, while 6 dxc5!? is a more critical idea, aiming to hang on to the pawn after 6...♗xd1+ 7 ♙xd1 and 8 b4 or harass the black queen after 6...♗xc5 7 ♖a3!.

2...e6 3 d4 d5 4 e5 transposes into the Advance French.

3 e5 ♖d5 4 d4

Sveshnikov has started avoiding this move in favour of 4 ♗f3, intending ♙c4, but this isn't enough for an advantage.

4...cxd4 5 ♗f3 (D)



5...♗c6

Or 5...e6 6 cxd4, when 6...d6 has become quite popular recently, setting up a solid central formation. 6...b6 is also logical, intending ...♙b7 or ...♙a6 to exchange White's good bishop.

6 ♙c4

Immediately placing the bishop on its best diagonal has become the most popular option in the position, though this doesn't mean it's necessarily best.

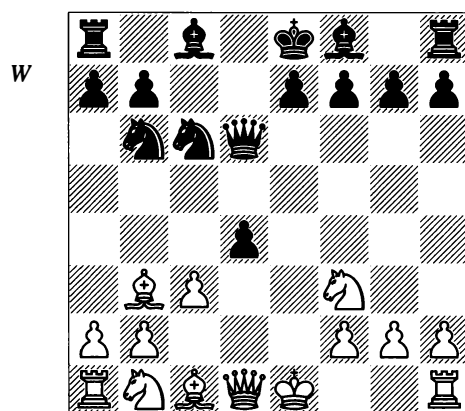
6 cxd4 is also possible, and after 6...d6 7 ♙c4 ♖b6, 8 ♙b5 is boring while 8 ♙b3!? dxe5 9 d5 represents an interesting pawn sacrifice.

6...♖b6 7 ♙b3 d5!

7...g6 is an excellent alternative – Black can't be hurt by 8 cxd4 ♙g7, so White should go for 8 ♖g5 d5 9 exd6 e6 10 ♗f3 when 10...♖e5 leads to unclear positions where White generally gets an IQP in return for activity, as usual.

7...dxc3? redefines greed – Black is far too underdeveloped (two pieces out, but five more moves required for the rest) to get away with such cheekiness.

8 exd6 ♗xd6 (D)



9 0-0

9 ♖a3 is probably a more testing continuation, offering material in order to play the knight to b5.

9...♙e6! 10 ♙xe6 ♗xe6 11 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 12 ♗xd4 ♖d8 13 ♗h4 ♗e2

Black is fine.

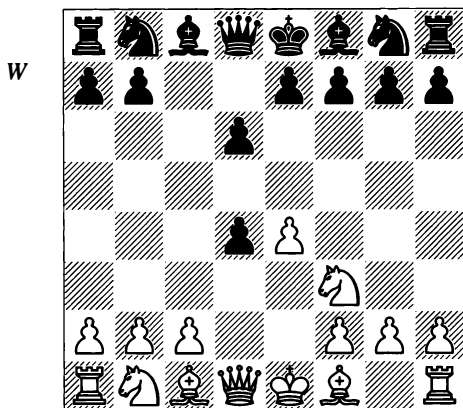
4 ♗xd4 and Other Sidelines

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4

3 c3 ♖f6 4 ♙e2 is another sideline, when Black shouldn't fall for 4...♖xe4?? 5 ♗a4+ but 4...♗c6 (4...♙d7 5 ♗c2 ♙c6 6 d3 ♖bd7 and 7...♗c8 is an excellent alternative) 5 d4 cxd4 6 cxd4 ♖xe4 7 d5 ♗a5+ 8 ♖c3 ♖xc3 9 bxc3 ♖e5 10 0-0 grants White an initiative for the pawn.

3...cxd4 (D)

3...♟f6!? 4 ♞c3 (4 dxc5 ♞xe4 is nothing for White) 4...cxd4 is a cunning suggestion by Mihai Suba here, since if now 5 ♞xd4 then 5...a6! followed by ...♞c6, and White can't set up a Maroczy Bind any more.



4 ♞xd4

This sideline has two main ideas – developing the queen prepares rapid queenside castling, while protecting the e-pawn gives time to set up a Maroczy Bind with c4 before ♞c3.

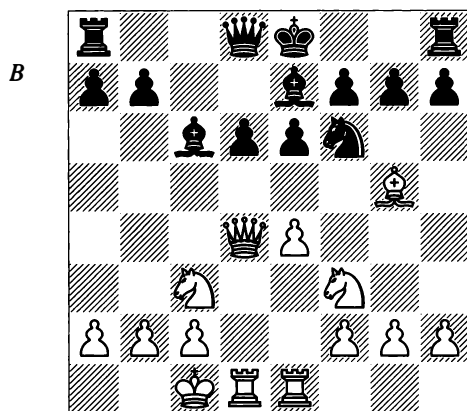
An alternative method of trying to set up the same bind is with 4 ♞xd4 ♞f6 5 f3. Compared to 5 ♞c3, White has lost some control over d5, and Black's best responses try to exploit this: 5...e5! 6 ♞b3 (or 6 ♞b5+ ♞bd7 7 ♞f5 d5! 8 exd5 a6 9 ♞xd7+ ♞xd7 10 ♞e3 ♞c5 11 c4 b5 with equality) 6...d5 7 ♞g5 ♞e6 8 ♞xf6 gxf6 9 exd5 ♞xd5 10 ♞c3 ♞b4 appears to be a clean equalizer.

4...♞c6

Gaining the two bishops, since retreating the queen would signal the defeat of White's plan.

4...a6 5 c4 gives White more space, and an edge. After 5...♞c6 6 ♞d2 g6 7 ♞c3 ♞h6 8 ♞c2 ♞g7 9 ♞e3 ♞f6 10 ♞e2 0-0 11 0-0 we have reached a regular Maroczy-Bind position.

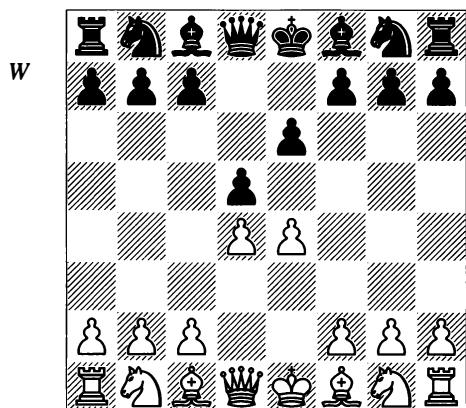
5 ♞b5 ♞d7 6 ♞xc6 ♞xc6 7 ♞c3 ♞f6 8 ♞g5 e6 9 0-0-0 ♞e7 10 ♞he1 (D)



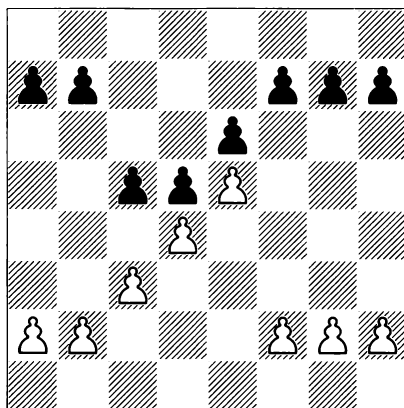
White is well centralized but Black has the two bishops, so the position is roughly level. For instance, 10...0-0 11 ♞b1 ♞a5 12 ♞d2 (threatening 13 ♞d5) 12...♞a6 13 ♞d4 ♞fc8 14 f4 h6 15 h4!? and Black can accept the piece at some point over the next few moves, in each case opening the h-file with unclear consequences.

French

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 (D)



Pawn-Chain



The French has been the trusted weapon of numerous GMs with a broad range of styles, from the strategically direct Botvinnik to the counterpunching Korchnoi to the classical Short, a fact that illustrates the different positions which the opening permits.

White has three attempts for an advantage (as opposed to 3 exd5, which is an attempt for an early handshake):

1) The Advance Variation (3 e5) makes immediate spatial gains in the centre and on the kingside at the cost of fixing the white pawns and so making them more vulnerable to ...c5 and ...f6 breaks.

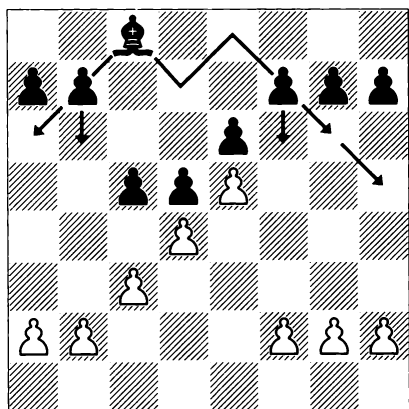
2) The Tarrasch (3 d2) is a more flexible line, which allows ...b4 to be met by c3 and so is the safest way of defending the centre. Black can hit e4 with 3...f6, d4 with 3...c5 or 3...c6, or wait with 3...e7.

3) The main continuation is 3 c3, which gives rise to the most complex and unbalanced lines in the French. It can be met either by the Winawer (3...b4) or the Classical (3...f6), both of which hit the e-pawn. The Classical gives White a choice between 4 e5 and 4 g5.

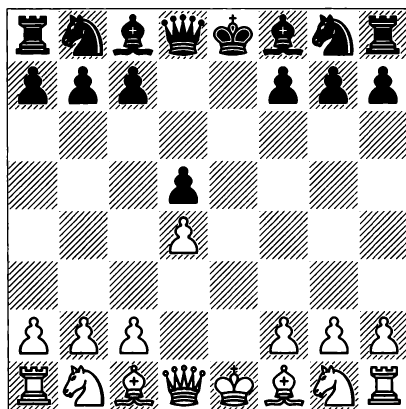
The typical pawn-structure from the French is indicated here. White has more space, and a great deal depends on whether Black can destroy the white centre. Black has several options – attacking the chain with ...c5 is almost mandatory, after which he can attack the head with ...f6 if he wishes. Normally he exchanges pawns on d4 and then attacks d4 with as many pieces as possible, but he can also (after a3) play ...c4, a move which targets the queenside at the cost of giving White a free hand in the centre.

Bad Bishop

In most openings Black has a ‘problem piece’, and in the French this is undoubtedly his light-squared bishop (*see diagram overleaf*). By committing his central pawns to light squares, Black impedes the mobility of this piece, and he must seek to improve or exchange it during the game. A common plan is ...b6 and ...a6 (or sometimes the similar idea ...b6 and ...d7-b5), whereby the bishop tries to exchange itself for its white counterpart. Another idea is to hit the centre with ...f6 and try ...d7-e8-g6/h5. Finally,



W



Black can exchange the white pawn before it gets to e5, and then manoeuvre his bishop to the long diagonal (...b6 and ...♗b7, or ...♗d7-c6). All of these ideas are positionally sound, but the problem is that they take time to implement. Judging when to improve the light-squared bishop and when to devote time to other projects instead is one of the marks of a good French player.

Exchange French

1 e4 e6 2 d4

2 d3 d5 3 ♘d2, the King's Indian Attack, is a line which is dull and solid despite being a favourite of the young Fischer (it can also be reached via a Sicilian move-order: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d3 d5 4 ♘bd2). With Black, my favourite response is 3...c5 4 ♘gf3 ♘c6 5 g3 ♗d6 6 ♗g2 ♘ge7 7 0-0 0-0 with excellent central control.

2...d5 3 exd5 exd5 (D)

White gives away his advantage in exchange for excellent drawing chances – hardly the way chess was meant to be played. Despite a few outings by Kasparov as a surprise weapon, the Exchange Variation is really nothing more than a tacit draw offer and Black should be constantly on the lookout for ways to unbalance the position.

4 ♘f3

4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 is a more interesting alternative, when White will probably end up with an isolated queen's pawn but active pieces.

4...♘f6

The symmetrical response leaves White with very little, but if Black wants to play for a win he might want to take more risk:

4...♗g4 is more provocative – 5 h3 ♗h5 6 ♖e2+! ♗e7 7 ♗e3 ♘c6 8 ♘c3 0-0-0 9 g4! ♗g6 10 0-0-0 leaves White slightly more active.

4...♗d6 5 c4! is an improved version of the 4 c4 line, since the black bishop is committed to the d6-square.

5 ♗d3

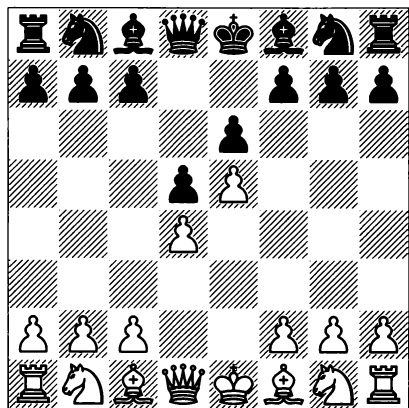
Now Black can maintain the symmetry with 5...♗d6, but I prefer 5...c5!? 6 0-0 c4 7 ♖e1+ ♗e7 8 ♗f1 0-0 followed by 9...♘c6 with equality and an unbalanced position.

Advance French

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 (D)

This is perhaps the most critical response to the French, though Black has found several routes to full counterplay. White immediately seizes space in the centre – now the c8-bishop will struggle to find a good square, while the f6-knight is denied its most natural development. The disadvantage, of course, is

B



that the centre loses a great deal of its flexibility, meaning it is more brittle and susceptible to attack. Black must hit the white centre as hard as he can, with pawns (...c5 and sometimes ...f6) and pieces.

3...c5 4 c3

The best move – allowing Black to get rid of the d4-pawn would considerably weaken e5.

4...dxc3

Note that it is best for Black to refrain from ...cxd4 for the moment, since after cxd4 White would have the c3-square available for his knight.

The immediate 4...b6 5 dxf3 d7!? is a good alternative, intending to trade his bad bishop with ...b5. White has several options – one of the more popular is to sacrifice a pawn with 6 e2 b5 7 c4!? followed by dxc3.

5 dxf3

5 e3!? is an invention of GM Viktor Kupreichik. After 5...b6 6 d2 d7 and 7...c8 Black should have few problems.

5...b6

This is the modern way of handling this variation, putting pressure on both d4 and b2.

5...d7 6 e2 dge7 is a more classical development, when 7 a3! cxd4 8 cxd4 dxf5 9 dxc2 keeps d4 well defended, with an edge for White.

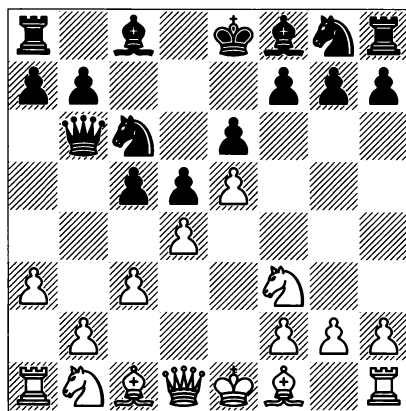
6 a3!? (D)

White wants to play b4, not so much to gain space on the queenside (his pawns will in fact be vulnerable to an ...a5 break) but to relieve the pressure on b2 and d4.

6 e2 doesn't give anything: 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 d6 8 dxc3 dxf5 9 d4 a4 a5+ 10 d2 b4 11 c3 b5 12 a3 dxc3+ 13 dxc3 b4 14 axb4 bxb4 15 b5 d7 with equality.

6 d3 leads to the Milner-Barry Gambit after 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 d7 8 0-0 dxd4 9 dxd4 dxd4 10 dxc3, though White has a hard time proving he has enough for the material.

B



6...d6

This is a major decision.

Black can also close the position with 6...c4 7 d6d2 a5, intending queenside play.

6...a5 stops b4 while keeping Black's options open. White should probably try 7 b3.

6...d7 is a promising option – after 7 b4 cxd4 8 cxd4 c8 he has accelerated his queenside play so that White can't play dxc3. Following 9 b2 a5 10 d6d2 and c1 White maintains an edge.

7 b4 cxd4 8 cxd4

8 ex6 g6 9 cxd4 d7 gives Black two bishops and a half-open g-file in compensation for his damaged structure.

8...d5 9 b2

This is the most critical – White has g4 in mind, which would dislodge the knight from its strong post.

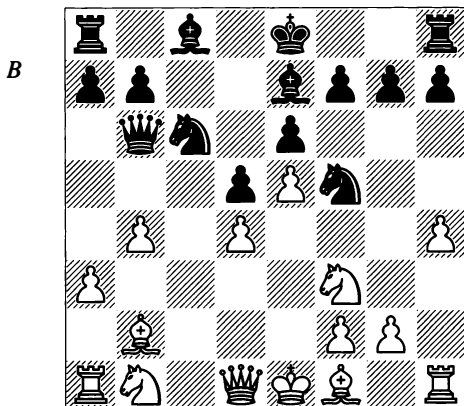
9 ♖e3 gives Black the option of a later ...♗xe3, and so is easier for him to play than the text.

9...♙e7

Aiming to meet 10 g4 with 10...♗h4.

9...♙d7 10 g4 ♗fe7 11 ♗c3 ♗a5 is slightly better for White.

10 h4! (D)



White takes away the ...♗h4 option in a rather crude fashion. Meanwhile, the pawn threatens to advance to h5 and (if allowed) h6, trying to weaken the black kingside.

10...h5

Stopping any advance of the h- and g-pawns in a single move is a pretty good deal, and in practice this has been played quite exclusively. However, White now has a useful square on g5 to work with.

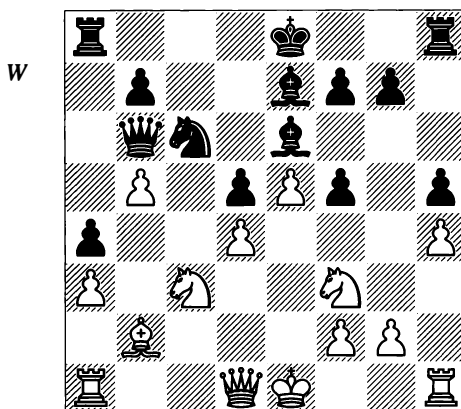
11 ♙d3

This is the only way to make sense of the position – the kingside pawns can't advance, and any development of the queen's knight will lose the d-pawn. Hence White plans ♙xf5 and ♗c3, putting pressure on the d-pawn, and planning queenside pressure with ♗a4 and ♙c1.

11...a5!

Black has to generate queenside counterplay, and this is the way to do it – the undefended bishop on b2 allows some tactical tricks, as will be seen on move 14.

12 ♙xf5 exf5 13 ♗c3 ♙e6 14 b5 a4! (D)

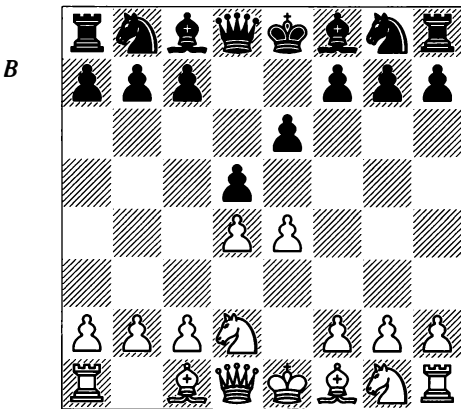


Had the knight retreated, White would have played 15 a4 with an overwhelming space advantage all over the board, but this accurate move holds the balance. The b5-pawn is now doomed, but this isn't the end of the story. After 15 ♗d3 ♗a7 16 0-0 ♙c8, White can generate considerable compensation with 17 ♙c1! ♙c4 18 ♗e2 ♗xb5 19 ♙g5! followed by ♗f4 and play on the b- and c-files. A complete examination of this position is somewhat beyond the scope of this book, but my personal preference is for White, since Black has several weaknesses, a major problem with his h8-rook and his extra pawn has a lot of work to do before threatening to queen. If you like grabbing pawns and hanging on to win endgames, by all means take Black!

Tarrasch

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗d2 (D)

Introduced by Siegbert Tarrasch in 1890, this conservative knight move is the positionally soundest way of meeting the French. White keeps his centre flexible, but at the same time is prepared to meet ...c5 with c3, maintaining a pawn on d4. Interestingly, Tarrasch himself turned against the variation when he saw that Black could obtain an



isolated queen's pawn, which Tarrasch believed was an exceptionally favourable structure for the possessor (see the note to Black's fourth move), an example of the dogmatism which characterized early chess thought.

3...c5

The most active and thematic, immediately taking a swipe at the d4-pawn, whose defence has been blocked by the knight on d2.

3...d6 is another main line, which tries to force the e5 advance – Black's argument is that his knight (once it retreats to d7) will be well placed to attack e5 and support an ...f6 break. After 4 e5 (4 d3 c5 5 c3 cxd4 6 cxd4 dxe4 7 dxe4 leads to a position where White holds an IQP – note that 7...Wxd4?? loses the queen to the typical 8 b5+!, but after any sensible seventh move by Black, the position is perfectly playable for both sides, with White having space and activity and Black having a superior structure) 4...fd7 5 c3 c5 6 d3 (6 f4 is a much more ambitious move, but it seems that White doesn't have quite enough time to consolidate his clamp – 6...c6 7 d3! {otherwise defence of the d-pawn will be awkward after ...Wb6} 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 Wb6 9 g3 b4+ 10 f2 {again, necessary to hold the d-pawn} 10...g5! very successfully chips away at the white pawn-front in view of 11 fxg5 dxe5) 6...c6 7 e2! (keeping the f3-square free for the other

knight) 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 f6! (typically French, trying to destroy the centre) 9 exf6 dxf6 (9...Wxf6 is a useful alternative, playing for ...e5) 10 d3 d6 11 0-0 we reach an interesting position – White will try to exchange dark-squared bishops and occupy the e5 outpost, while Black will play on the f-file and may look to an ...e5 break.

3...e7!? was brought back into fashion, as were many ideas in the French, by GM Alexander Morozevich. The idea is to wait and see what White's next developing move is before playing ...c5 or ...d6.

3...c6 is an offbeat try, with the disadvantage that Black makes ...c5 more difficult to arrange. After 4 d3 d6 5 e5 d7 both 6 b5 and 6 b3 suffice for a comfortable white edge.

3...dxe4 4 dxe4 transposes into the Rubinstein, considered next.

3...h6 is a move I don't want to cover, but I have to because GMs Liogky and Eingorn have used it frequently after both 3 d2 and 3 d3. Well, a certain creative licence is available in most openings, but that doesn't mean it should be exercised. Black's game is playable but inferior to the main lines; for instance, 4 d3 d6 5 e5 d7 and he is almost a full tempo down on the 3...d6 line.

4 exd5

This is the most popular move (it also arises after 4 d3 and 5 exd5) – White notices that Black's natural recapture (with the pawn) will leave him with an IQP after an eventual dxc5, while recapturing with the queen runs into e4.

4...Wxd5

4...exd5 is a very sound alternative. White normally proceeds 5 d3 and then 5...d6 (5...c6 6 b5 is also a little better for White; 5...a6!? prepares to gain queenside space with ...c4 and ...b5, but White can avoid this via 6 dxc5 with an edge) 6 b5+ d7 7 d7+ bxd7 8 0-0 e7 9 dxc5 dxc5 10 e1 0-0 is a typical IQP position, where

Black has excellent development at the cost of a structural weakness.

5 ♖gf3

The most ambitious move – White wants to harass the queen with ♗c4 but first must shield his g2-pawn. Taking on c5 allows Black easy development with no real problems – Kasparov famously lost (with White) against Anand here. English GM Michael Adams has made a huge score on the white side of those positions, but White's edge is so tiny as to be imperceptible to most.

5...cxd4

A good option – White will have to spend time regaining the pawn, allowing Black to start catching up in development.

6 ♗c4 ♜d6

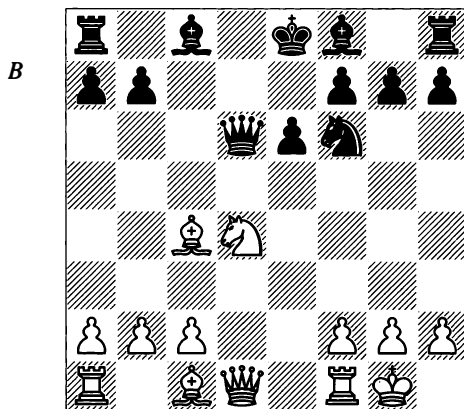
6...♜d8 has some supporters too, though most prefer leaving at least one piece developed.

7 0-0 ♖f6 8 ♖b3

8 ♗e1 has caught on recently, planning ♖e4 and recapturing with the rook. White shouldn't necessarily be in a rush to regain the d-pawn here.

8...♖c6 9 ♖bxd4 ♖xd4 10 ♖xd4 (D)

10 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 11 ♖xd4 is level.



White has slightly better chances. For more examples of this structure, see the Caro-Kann section.

10...a6

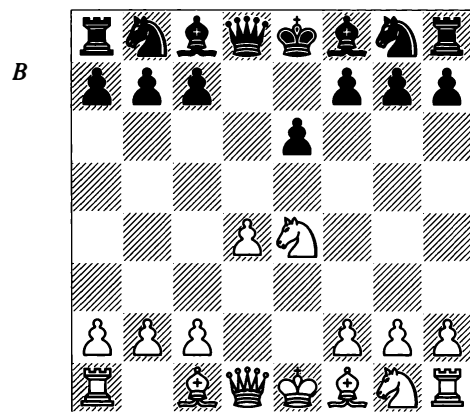
Control of b5 tends to be crucial in these positions, since ♖b5 is too valuable a resource otherwise. Black also prepares ...♜c7, which will allow his dark-squared bishop a better choice of squares.

11 ♗b3 ♜c7 12 ♜f3 ♗d6 13 ♖h1!

White maintains an edge due to his more active pieces.

Rubinstein

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 dxe4 4 ♖xe4 (D)



These early ...dxe4 systems have been gaining popularity in the French (especially since they can also be reached via a Tarrasch move-order). Basically, Black concedes an opening advantage to White (who has more space and a small lead in development) in exchange for a very solid position. These positions were well summarised by French expert GM Nigel Short, when he said “White hardly need take any risks and, if the opportunity presents itself, he can push for more.”

4...♖d7

The most reliable system – Black prepares ...♖gf6.

4...♗d7 is known as the ‘Fort Knox’ because of its solidity. Black takes his problem bishop and develops it to c6, from where it can exchange itself for a white knight. The

problem with this plan is that it is quite time-consuming and often relinquishes the two bishops. After a natural continuation like 5 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{a}c6$ 6 $\text{a}d3$ $\text{d}d7$ 7 0-0 $\text{d}gf6$ 8 $\text{d}g3$ White stands better.

4... $\text{a}e7$ is another slight twist: 5 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}f6$ 6 $\text{d}xf6+$ $\text{a}xf6$ 7 $c3$ and White maintains his edge.

5 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}gf6$ 6 $\text{d}xf6+$

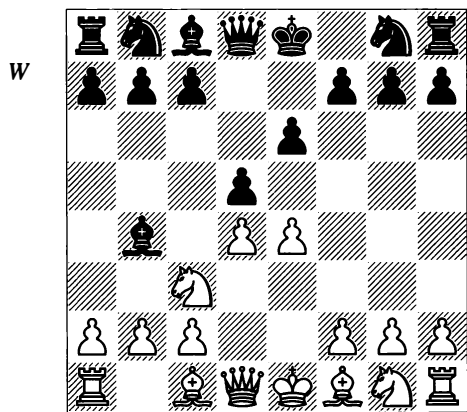
6 $\text{a}g5$ is also a big line: 6... $\text{h}6$ 7 $\text{d}xf6+$ $\text{d}xf6$ 8 $\text{a}h4$ $c5$ and White has a wide choice – 9 $\text{a}c4$ is his most logical, with a continuing slight initiative.

6... $\text{d}xf6$ 7 $\text{a}d3$ $c5$ 8 $dx5$ $\text{a}xc5$ 9 $\text{w}e2$ 0-0 10 0-0

Black is close to equality, but needs precision to attain it. I've never liked these positions for Black – a lot can go wrong if you play badly, while White can play almost whatever he wants and still draw.

Winawer

1 $e4$ $e6$ 2 $d4$ $d5$ 3 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{a}b4$ (D)



Making both players very happy – Black will have a weakened white queenside to play against, while White knows that without a dark-squared bishop the black position is strategically unhealthy.

4 $e5$ $c5$

4... $\text{d}e7$ 5 $a3$ $\text{a}xc3+$ 6 $bxc3$ usually transposes, but Black also has an independent option in 6... $\text{b}6$, planning to exchange bishops with ... $\text{a}a6$. White retains a pull by 7 $\text{w}g4$ $\text{d}g6$ 8 $\text{h}4$ $\text{h}5$ 9 $\text{w}d1!$. The eccentric 4... $\text{b}6$ 5 $a3$ $\text{a}f8!?$ has also been tried, but White has no problem retaining an edge.

5 $a3$

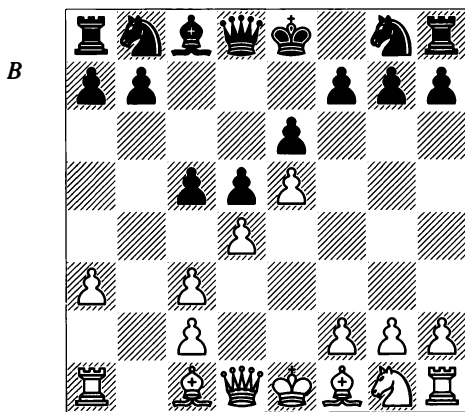
5 $dx5$!?, a favourite of GM Joe Gallagher, is worth a punt, as after 5... $\text{d}c6$ 6 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}ge7$ 7 $\text{a}d3$ $d4$ 8 $a3$ $\text{a}a5$ 9 $\text{b}4$ $\text{d}xb4$ 10 $axb4$ $\text{a}xb4$ 11 0-0 $\text{a}xc3$ 12 $\text{w}b1$ White has definite compensation.

5... $\text{a}xc3+$

5... $\text{a}a5$, the Armenian Variation, is a good alternative. After 6 $\text{b}4$ $cx4$ White can play for the dark squares with 7 $\text{d}b5$ or go for 7 $\text{w}g4$ $\text{d}e7$ (7... $\text{c}f8$ 8 $\text{b}xa5$ $dx3$ is dubious in view of Lilienthal's suggested 9 $a4!$ and 10 $\text{a}a3+$) 8 $\text{b}xa5$ $dx3$ 9 $\text{w}xg7$ $\text{a}g8$ 10 $\text{w}xh7$ $\text{d}bc6$ with unclear complications.

5... $cx4$ has never been too popular: 6 $axb4$ $dx3$ 7 $\text{d}f3!$ with excellent dark-square compensation.

6 $bxc3$ (D)



6... $\text{d}e7$

6... $\text{w}a5$ 7 $\text{a}d2$ $\text{w}a4$ is an interesting alternative; 6... $\text{w}c7$ aims to meet 7 $\text{w}g4$ with 7... $\text{f}5$, though after 8 $\text{w}g3$ $cx4$ 9 $cx4$ $\text{d}e7$ 10 $\text{a}d2$ 0-0 11 $\text{a}d3$ $\text{b}6$ 12 $\text{d}e2$ $\text{a}a6$ 13 $\text{d}f4$ White is better.

7 ♖g4

This is the sharpest move, but of course there is a lot to learn in such lines.

7 ♜f3 is a more positional continuation. Black has a wide choice of lines; for instance, 7...b6 (intending ...♙a6) 8 ♙b5+ ♙d7 9 ♙d3 c4!? 10 ♙f1 ♙a4 11 h4 when White is winning on the kingside and Black is winning on the queenside!

7 h4!? is a good alternative though – the pawn plans to advance and weaken the black kingside.

7...0-0

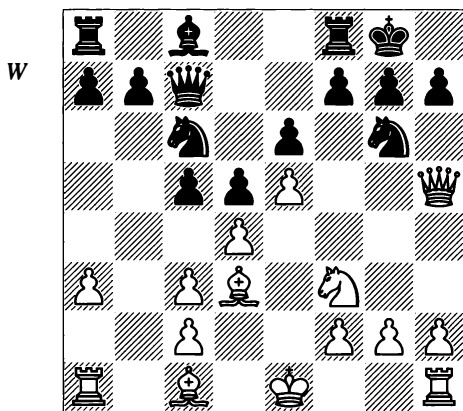
7...♖c7 leads to unfathomable complications after 8 ♖xg7 (Geller's 8 ♙d3!? is also very dangerous) 8...♜g8 9 ♖xh7 cxd4 10 ♜e2 ♜bc6 11 f4 ♙d7 12 ♖d3 dxc3.

8 ♙d3

White has good pressure on the kingside, but Black can gain considerable counterplay with ...♜bc6 and ...♖c7 (or ...♖a5). A typical continuation runs:

8...♜bc6

8...♖a5 has been coming under pressure recently after 9 ♙d2 ♜bc6 10 ♜f3 f5 11 exf6 ♜xf6 12 ♖h5 ♜f5 13 g4!?

9 ♖h5 ♜g6 10 ♜f3 ♖c7 (D)**11 h4**

This is Morozevich's idea.

11 ♙e3 is better established, but after 11...♜ce7! Black is quite solid.

11...cxd4 12 ♙d1!

12 cxd4? ♜xd4 leaves White in the lurch.

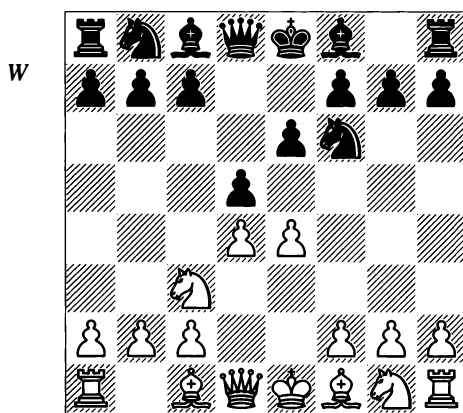
12...dxc3 13 ♜h3

with a good kingside initiative.

Classical

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 (D)

This has been the scene for most of the recent French developments.

**4 ♙g5**

Developing, dealing with the threat to the e-pawn and intending e5.

White can avoid the exchange of minor pieces with 4 e5 ♜fd7 5 f4 (5 ♜ce2 is also possible, planning to reinforce d4 with c3; 5 ♜f3 c5 6 dxc5 ♜c6 7 ♙f4 ♙xc5 8 ♙d3 f6 9 exf6 ♜xf6 10 0-0 0-0 should be fine for Black – better than fine if he manages to mobilize his centre) 5...c5 6 ♜f3 ♜c6 7 ♙e3, and now a line like 7...a6 (Black can also focus on rapid development with 7...cxd4 8 ♜xd4 ♙c5 9 ♖d2 0-0 10 0-0-0 when he is looking to equalize) 8 ♖d2 b5 9 dxc5 ♙xc5 10 ♙xc5 ♜xc5 11 ♖f2 ♖b6 12 ♙d3 and 13 0-0 is a little better for White.

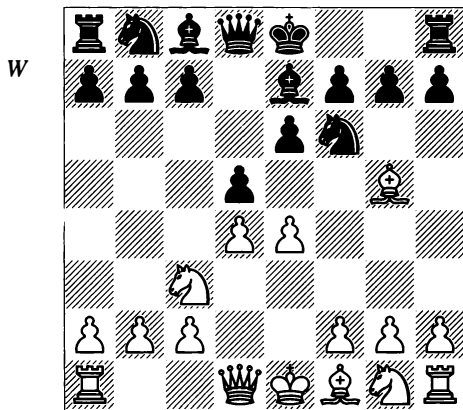
4...♙e7 (D)

The most solid line.

4...♙b4 is the MacCutcheon – after 5 e5 h6 6 ♙d2 (6 ♙e3!? ♜e4 7 ♖g4 is a good

alternative, keeping the dark-squared bishop at the cost of a pawn; after 7...♖f8 8 a3 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 White will have reasonable compensation for his material deficit) 6...♗xc3 7 bxc3 (White can't avoid this weakening: after 7 ♗xc3 ♖e4 the bishop has nowhere to go; e.g., 8 ♗b4 c5! 9 dxc5 ♖xf2! 10 ♖xf2 ♗h4+) 7...♖e4 8 ♗g4 ♖f8 (French specialist GM Igor Glek prefers 8...g6, when his king still has prospects of castling queenside, though the slight loosening of the kingside should also help White's prospects there) 9 ♗d3 ♖xd2 10 ♖xd2 both kings are slightly vulnerable.

4...dxe4 5 ♖xe4 ♗e7 6 ♗xf6 gives Black the option of playing solidly with 6...♗xf6 or going for more with 6...gxf6!? followed by ...a6, ...b5 and ...♗b7.



5 e5 ♖fd7 6 ♗xe7

6 h4!? is a good alternative: White has some compensation after 6...♗xg5 7 hxg5 ♗xg5 8 ♗d3 or 8 ♖h3.

6...♗xe7 7 f4

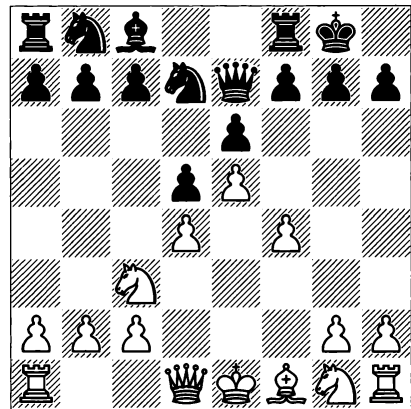
White's centre is going to be hit by ...c5 so it's useful to shore up the e-pawn.

7...0-0 (D)

7...c5 is dubious in view of 8 ♖b5.

7...a6 8 ♖f3 c5 9 dxc5 ♖xc5 (9...♗xc5!?, threatening 10...♗e3+, is best met by 10 ♗d2 ♖c6 11 0-0-0) 10 ♗d3 and 11 0-0 is also nice for White.

W



8 ♖f3 c5!

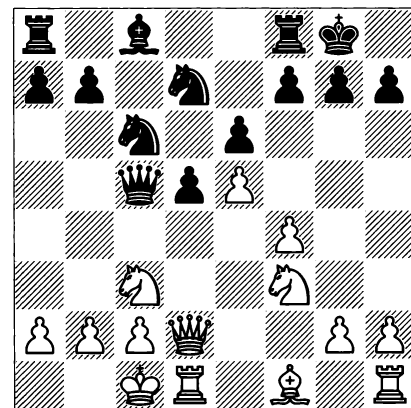
As dismantling the white centre is the main aim of the French, there are no prizes for any other moves here. Note that, with the knight on c3, White can't ensure the maintenance of a pawn on d4.

9 dxc5

9 ♗d2 ♖c6 10 0-0-0 gives Black the option of 10...c4 with good chances of a queenside pawn-storm.

9...♗xc5 10 ♗d2 ♖c6 11 0-0-0 (D)

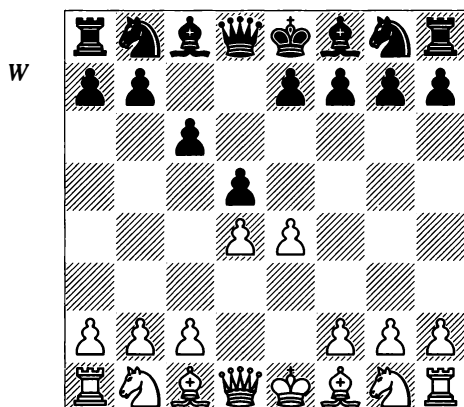
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With a dynamic position. After 11...♖b6 12 ♖b1! ♗d7 13 h4 ♗fc8 14 ♗h3! (both defending and attacking) White has slightly better chances in both the middlegame and the endgame, but the black position is fully playable.

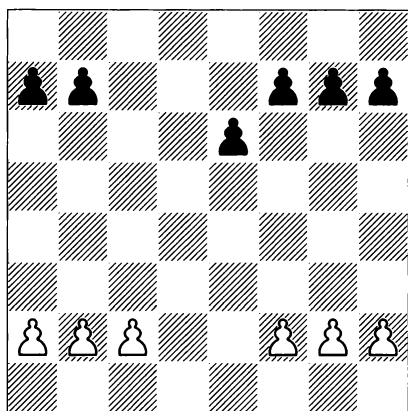
Caro-Kann

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 (D)



In this defence Black wishes to establish a pawn on d5, but without blocking his queen's bishop (as in the French) while still allowing a convenient recapture (unlike the Scandinavian). The opening has always been renowned for its solidity, especially when it was used by Anatoly Karpov in his heyday, but now at the top level it can just as quickly lead to wild complications, especially in the modern handling of the Advance Variation.

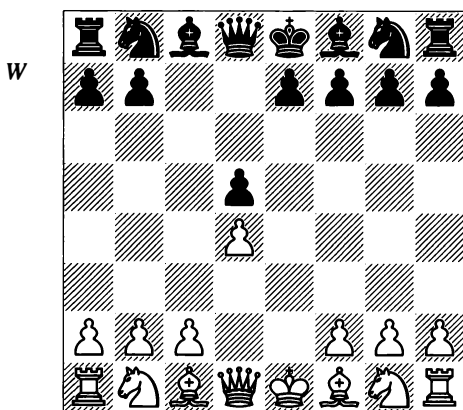
Open Centre



This structure arises very often in the Caro-Kann when Black exchanges pawns on e4 and then plays ...c5, exchanging the white d-pawn (it also comes up in the Rubinstein French). The black pawn-structure is basically better – he has an extra centre pawn which can either advance or stay back to defend his king. In exchange for this, White normally has more active pieces. The point is that White is compelled to play actively in these positions, since if Black is given time to catch up in development and piece activity his structure should provide him with an edge.

Exchange & Panov-Botvinnik

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 (D)

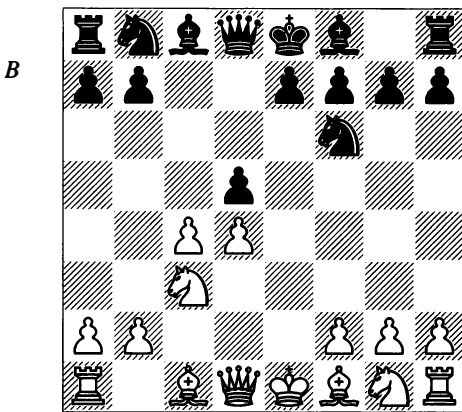


4 c4

This, the Panov-Botvinnik Attack, is my usual choice when confronted with the Caro, though its modern popularity lags behind both 3 ♘c3 and 3 e5. White's idea is to take on an isolated queen's pawn in exchange for substantial activity, and direct transpositions to positions from the Nimzo-Indian and Queen's Gambit Accepted are not hard to find.

4 ♟d3 is White's alternative development, known as the Exchange Variation. This was used by Fischer on a few occasions and leads to easily understandable positions, but Black doesn't have any real difficulties and indeed, with his extra centre pawn, could have some chances of a long-term advantage if White is inaccurate. After 4... ♞c6 5 c3 g6 6 ♟f4 ♟g7 7 ♞f3 ♞f6 8 ♞bd2 $\text{♞h5}!$? 9 ♟e3 ♞d6 , intending ... ♞f4 , White has no advantage.

4... ♞f6 5 ♞c3 (D)



Now it's decision time for Black.

5... e6

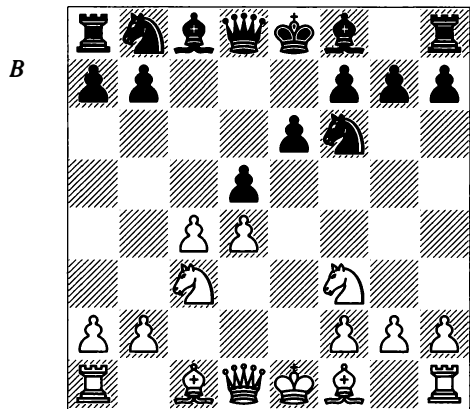
This is the most popular move, and Karpov's favourite.

5... ♞c6 can transpose into ... e6 stuff but normally has independent significance; for instance, 6 ♞f3 (6 ♟g5 is a sharper move) 6... ♟g4 7 cxd5 ♞xd5 8 $\text{♞b3}!$ (a very typical response to the early development of the c8-bishop in lots of openings, since b7 is always weakened and the white queen wants to break the pin) 8... ♟xf3 9 gxf3 e6 (9... ♞b6 keeps matters in the middlegame, but after 10 ♟e3 e6 11 $\text{0-0-0}!$ intending d5 I quite like White's position) 10 ♞xb7 ♞xd4 11 ♟b5+ ♞xb5 12 ♞c6+! ♟e7 13 ♞xb5 ♞d7 14 ♞xd5+ ♞xd5 15 ♟g5+ f6 16 ♞xd5 exd5 17 ♟e3 is an endgame with a little edge for White – the black d-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength (at least for the moment, after 0-0-0) while

any king and pawn endgames will be winning for White in view of his queenside majority, but of course the black position is fully playable.

5... g6 is a completely different type of position: after 6 ♞b3 ♟g7 (6... dxc4 7 ♟xc4 and it is awkward for Black to defend f7 – normally the moves ... e6 and ... g6 don't sit well together since the dark squares are significantly weakened) 7 cxd5 0-0 and White has an extra pawn for the moment but Black intends to put pressure on d5. After 8 ♟g5 ♞bd7 9 ♟e2 ♞b6 10 ♟f3 ♟f5 the position is balanced.

6 ♞f3 (D)



6... ♟b4

6... ♟e7 7 cxd5 ♞xd5 (7... exd5 is a solid option) 8 ♟c4 0-0 9 0-0 ♞c6 10 ♞e1 leaves Black with a broad choice: one of the more interesting options is 10... ♟f6 11 ♞e4 ♞ce7 12 ♞xf6+ ♞xf6 13 ♟g5 $\text{b6}!$? with excellent control over d5 – White doesn't gain too much from exchanging on f6.

7 ♟d3

7 cxd5 ♞xd5 8 ♞c2 (8 ♟d2 followed by ♟d3 and 0-0 is also good) introduces an interesting pawn sacrifice: 8... ♞c6 (8... ♞c7 9 ♟d2 ♞d7 10 ♟d3 ♟xc3 11 bxc3 b6 is more solid) 9 a3 ♟a5 10 ♟d3 ♞xc3 11 bxc3 ♞xd4 12 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 13 ♟b5+ ♟d7 14 0-0! , when after 14... ♞d5 15 c4 ♞f5 16

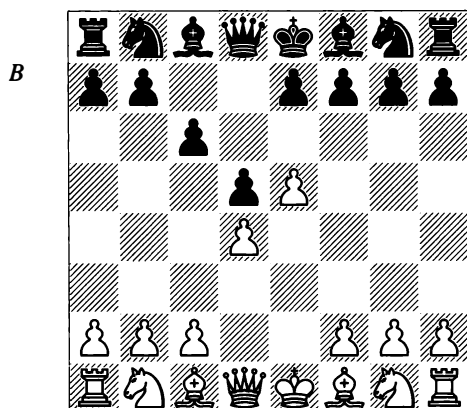
♙xd7+ ♖xd7 17 ♜b2! White has enough compensation.

7...dxc4 8 ♙xc4 0-0 9 0-0

Now after 9...b6 10 ♙g5 ♙b7 followed by 11...♞bd7 a typical IQP position arises.

Advance Caro-Kann

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 (D)



This variation achieved some popularity after it was used by Tal against Botvinnik, but older theory suggested that Black should have no problems after this advance since (compared to the French) he could still develop his bishop with ...♙f5 and ...e6 before striking at the centre with ...c5. However, White has at least two promising methods of developing his game, and in recent years the Advance Caro has become extremely topical.

3...♙f5

The main move.

3...c5 is an alternative, though Black must be prepared for 4 dxc5 when 4...e6 (4...♞c6 5 ♙b5 e6 6 ♙e3 ♞ge7 7 c3 ♞f5 8 ♙d4 ♙d7 9 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 10 ♞f3 ♞xd4 11 ♜xd4 ♜a5 12 b4 ♜a6 gives Black reasonable compensation when he follows up with ...b6) 5 ♞f3 ♙xc5 6 ♙d3 ♞c6 7 0-0 ♞ge7 8 ♞bd2 ♞g6 9 ♞b3 ♙e7 10 ♜e2 ♜c7 11 ♙e1 gives White a comfortable edge.

4 ♞c3

The sharpest way, planning a kingside pawn-storm. This can be seen as a refinement of Tal's original idea of 4 h4. After most of White's other fourth moves, Black does best to prepare ...c5 as quickly as possible. He can delay with moves like ...♞d7 and ...♞e7, but at some point he must strike at the white centre, and I think it's a good idea to do this immediately.

GM Nigel Short pioneered 4 c3 e6 5 ♙e2 c5 6 ♞f3 ♞c6 7 0-0, with reasonable chances for an advantage; for instance, 7...h6 (7...cxd4 8 cxd4 ♞ge7 9 a3 ♙e4 10 ♞bd2 ♞f5 11 b4 is also better for White, since the d-pawn is too hot to handle) 8 ♙e3! cxd4 9 cxd4 ♞ge7 10 ♞c3 when the f5-bishop is taking a good square away from the knight.

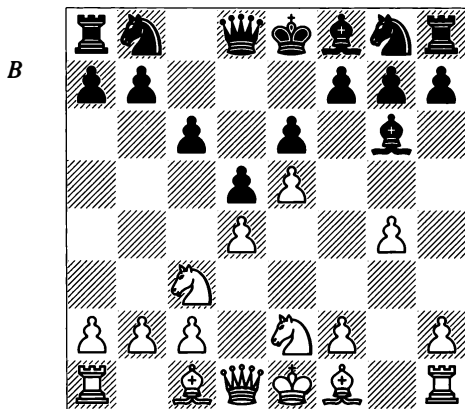
4 ♙e3 is another idea which has been used by Kasparov and Svidler – after 4...♜b6 5 ♜c1! White is prepared to play c4. The stem game ran 5...e6 6 c4 ♞e7?! (6...dxc4 is necessary at some point, in order to use the d5-square) 7 c5! ♜a5+ 8 ♙d2 ♜c7 9 ♞c3 ♞d7 10 ♙e2 h6 11 b4 g5 12 g4 ♙g6 13 h4 with a huge advantage.

4 ♞f3 e6 5 ♙e2 c5 can transpose to the 4 c3 line mentioned earlier, but White has a much sharper possibility in 6 ♙e3!?, accelerating his development and pressurizing c5 at the cost of losing some central stability (if Black exchanges on d4 now, the e5-pawn will be defended by pieces only) and weakening the b2-pawn. Black has to respond to the threat of 7 dxc5, and can play solidly with 6...cxd4 7 ♞xd4 ♞e7 (when White fights for the advantage with 8 c4 or the annoying 8 ♙g5!?) or enter complications with 6...♜b6 7 c4 ♜xb2 8 ♞bd2 when White has rather pleasant compensation for his pawn deficit.

4 f4 e6 5 ♞f3 c5 6 ♙e3 cxd4 7 ♞xd4 ♞e7 is similar to a position analysed above, but with White having the move f4 instead of ♙e2. The differences between these positions were instructively analysed by Ivanchuk in a wonderful insight into how a top-level player

looks at positions: "Instead of ♖e2, in the game White has played f4. Whom does this favour? It is hard to give a straightforward answer to this question. On the one hand, White's e5-pawn is better defended and after the retreat of the bishop from f5 to g6 Black constantly has to reckon with the possibility of f5. In addition, the f1-bishop can be developed on a more active square than e2. On the other hand, now White does not have the bishop sortie to g5, in some variations the e3-bishop may be hanging, and the slight weakening of the g1-a7 diagonal may tell after he has castled kingside, which in addition still has to be prepared..."

4...e6 5 g4! ♖g6 6 ♜ge2 (D)



To say this position is sharp is an understatement. Due to White's enormous ambitions, Black needs to be precise just to stay in the game, but has every chance of proving that his opponent's kingside expansion is premature. My favourite idea runs like this:

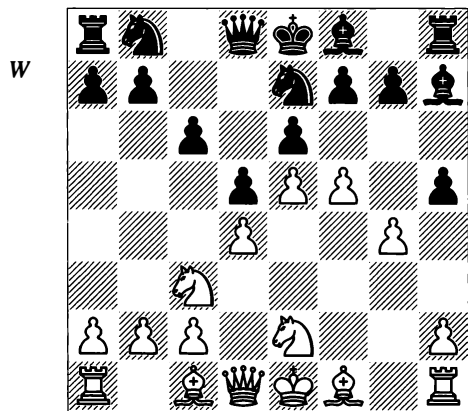
6...♜e7

6...c5 7 ♖e3 ♜c6 8 dxc5 ♜xe5 9 ♜d4 (threatening f4 and f5) 9...♜d7 10 b4 looks good for White.

7 f4 h5

7...c5 8 ♜g3 cxd4 9 ♜b5 ♜ec6 10 f5 ♖c5 11 ♜d6+! ♖xd6 12 exd6 ♜xd6 13 ♖g2 f6 14 fxg6 hxg6 15 0-0 doesn't give Black quite enough for the piece.

8 f5 ♖h7!! (D)



Black is planning ...♖g8 in some lines! The game is utterly unclear; for instance: 9 ♜f4 (9 ♖g5!? hxg4 10 fxe6 fxe6 11 ♜f4 ♖f5 12 ♖d3 could be the way to play it) 9...♜xf5! 10 gxf5 ♜h4+ 11 ♜e2 ♖xf5 12 h3 c5 with good compensation for the piece.

Main Line: 4...♖f5 (and Deviations)

1 e4 c6 2 d4

2 ♜c3 d5 3 ♜f3 is a different approach. After 3...♖g4 (proceeding in typical Caro-Kann fashion with 3...dxe4 4 ♜xe4 ♖f5 is dubious: 5 ♜g3 ♖g6 6 h4 h6 7 ♜e5 ♖h7 8 ♜h5 g6 9 ♖c4! e6 10 ♜e2 {threatening 11 ♜xf7} and Black's position is rubbish) 4 h3 ♖xf3 5 ♜xf3 ♜f6 6 d3 e6 Black is very solid, and the two bishops count for little in such a closed structure.

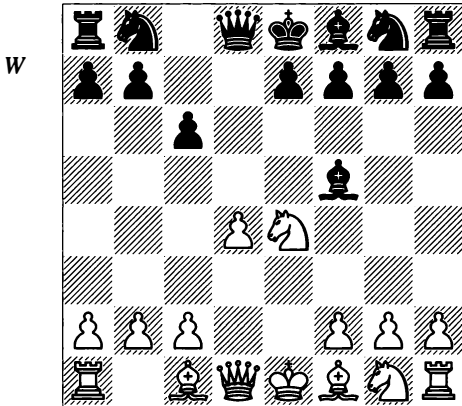
2...d5 3 ♜c3

White can also keep the centre supported with 3 f3, the 'Fantasy Variation' (who comes up with these names?). Black can do what he likes, of course, but my preference would be for 3...dxe4 4 fxe4 e5 when taking loses to ...♜h4+ and 5 ♜f3 ♖e6! 6 c3 ♜f6 7 ♜xe5 ♜xe4 looks fine for Black.

3...dxe4

3...g6 is a hybrid between the Caro-Kann and the Modern (many players prefer 3 ♘d2, so that this system can be met by putting a pawn on c3 to blunt the g7-bishop). White's best option is to keep the centre flexible with 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 h3 ♘f6 6 ♗d3 with some advantage after 6...dxe4 7 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 8 ♗xe4.

4 ♘xe4 ♗f5 (D)



Developing with gain of time simply can't be bad, which explains this line's perpetual popularity.

5 ♘g3

5 ♘c5 has been tried, though after 5...b6 6 ♘b3 the knight is somewhat misplaced.

5...♗g6 6 h4!

Trying to gain some time on the g6-bishop – we also saw such an idea in the Advance Variation. 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♘le2 is the alternative, when White plans ♘f4 or f4!?. After 7...♗d6 (7...♘f6 8 0-0 ♘bd7 9 f4 ♗d6 10 f5 ♗xf5 11 ♘xf5 exf5 12 ♗xf5 leaves White with the two bishops in a relatively open position) 8 h4 h6 9 ♘f4 ♗xf4 10 ♗xf4 ♘f6 11 h5 ♗h7 12 0-0 ♘bd7 13 ♗b3 0-0 Black is solid.

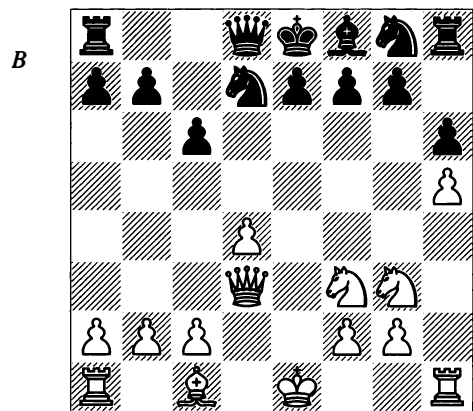
The immediate 6 ♘le2 was tried by the young Ukrainian grandmaster Andrei Volokitin, whose opening choices are always worth examining. After 6...e6 (Black can also try 6...♘f6 7 ♘f4 e5! 8 dxe5 ♗a5+ 9 c3 ♗xe5+ 10 ♗e2 ♘bd7 11 0-0 0-0-0 with an unclear position) 7 h4 h6 8 ♘f4 ♗h7 9 ♗d3!?,

Black can take the bait: 9...♗xd4 10 ♗e3 ♗d6 11 ♘xe6! ♗xe6! 12 ♗xh7 ♗xh7 13 ♗d3 ♘f6 14 0-0-0 when his best approach is to return the material: 14...♘bd7 15 ♗d4 0-0-0 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♗xh7 g6! and Volokitin indicates a repetition by 18 ♘e4 ♗f4+ 19 ♘d2 ♗f6! as a fair result.

6...h6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7

This was the main line for a long time because ♘e5 was considered a threat, but many modern players prefer 7...♘f6. After 8 ♘e5 ♗h7 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♗xd3 e6 Black is preparing to hit the e5-knight with either ...♗d6 or ...♘bd7, in both cases with a playable position.

8 h5 ♗h7 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♗xd3 (D)



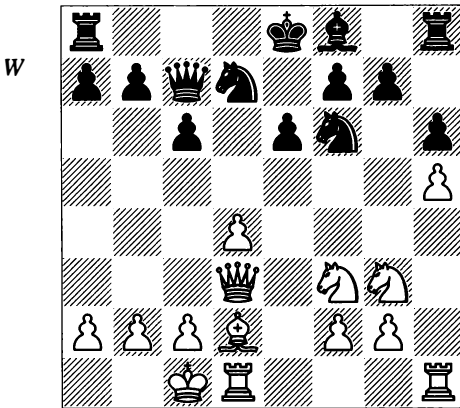
A lack of flexibility in the black kingside and the possibility of bringing a rook into play via the h-file are modest gains, but are worth taking.

10...♗c7

This serves two aims – preventing ♗f4 and preparing queenside castling.

Black can also go kingside after 10...e6 11 ♗f4 ♘gf6 12 0-0-0 ♗e7 but this is riskier; for instance, 13 ♘e4 ♗a5 14 ♗b1 0-0 15 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16 ♘e5 ♗ad8 17 ♗e2 when the natural 17...c5 (17...♗b6! is better) is met by 18 ♘g6!! fxg6? 19 ♗xe6+ with a devastating attack.

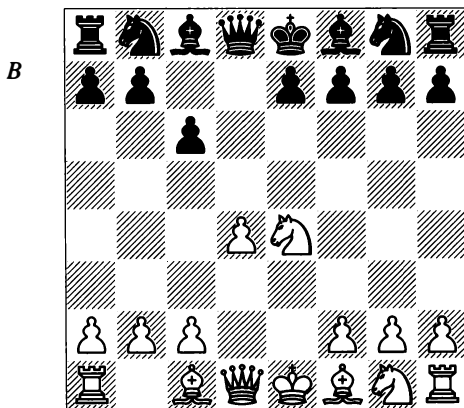
11 ♖d2 ♜gf6 12 0-0-0 e6 (D)



White has a little more space and more active pieces, so his position deserves preference, but Black is very solid. After something like 13 ♜e4 ♖e7 14 ♜xf6+ ♖xf6 15 ♜e4 0-0-0 16 ♖f4 ♜a5 17 ♜b1 ♜he8 18 g4 ♜d5 19 ♜e2 ♜b6 20 ♜e5 ♖xe5 21 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 22 ♖xe5 White has a nice endgame.

Main Line: 4...♜d7 (and 4...♜f6)

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3 dxe4 4 ♜xe4 (D)



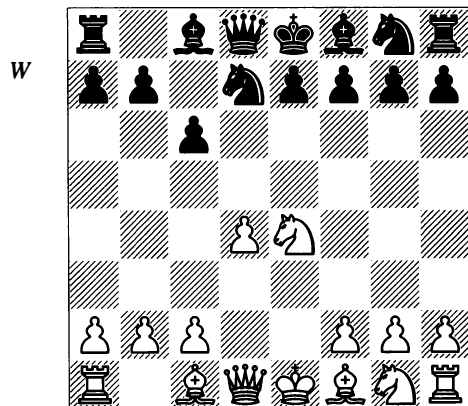
4...♜d7 (D)

Perhaps the most popular choice here.

4...♜f6 is a more primitive version. This line weakens the black structure in return for security (5...exf6) or activity (5...gxf6). High-level adherents such as Larsen, Bronstein and Korchnoi have been successful with Black here, but that's more to do with the strength of the players than the value of the opening as White retains an enduring plus after 5 ♜xf6+:

a) 5...exf6 has been used by Korchnoi on a few occasions. The doubled f-pawns will render the black king very secure on the kingside, and also cover the e5-square. The problem is that no damage is inflicted on the white position, and the healthy queenside/central majority can prove very significant. After 6 c3 ♖d6 7 ♖d3 0-0 8 ♜e2 Black is very solid, but White retains the better structure and a useful space advantage.

b) The more dynamic 5...gxf6 seriously weakens the h-pawn in exchange for play on the g-file. After 6 c3 (6 ♜f3 ♖g4 promises White less) 6...♖f5 7 ♜f3 e6 8 g3! h5 9 ♖g2 White is comfortably better.



5 ♜g5!?

This idea (Tal's, I believe) is the critical test of 4...♜d7.

5 ♖c4 is a slightly less effective execution of the same idea – 5...♜gf6 6 ♜g5 (White can also exchange on f6, with approximate equality) 6...e6 7 ♜e2 ♜b6 8 ♖d3 h6 9 ♜f3 c5! leaves Black well placed.

5 ♖e2 contains a little trap – the idea can be seen after 5...♟g6?? 6 ♜d6#, but 5...♟df6 gives White nothing.

5...♟g6

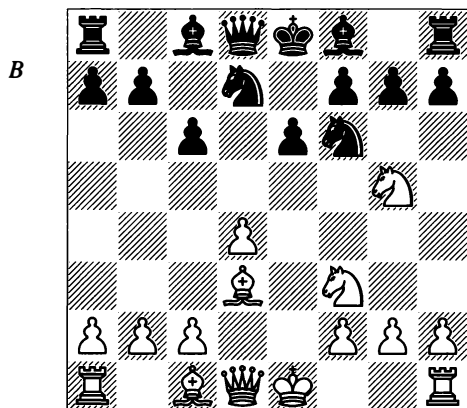
5...h6? fails to 6 ♜e6!. One grandmaster game continued 6...♞a5+ 7 ♙d2 ♞b6 8 ♙d3 fxe6?? 9 ♞h5+ ♟d8 10 ♙a5! and Black lost his queen.

5...♟df6 6 ♜1f3 ♙g4 (6...e6? 7 ♜e5! is much better for White) 7 ♙e2 ♙xf3 8 ♜xf3 e6 9 0-0 is solid for Black, but White is better.

6 ♙d3 e6

6...h6 is again strongly answered by 7 ♜e6.

7 ♜1f3 (D)



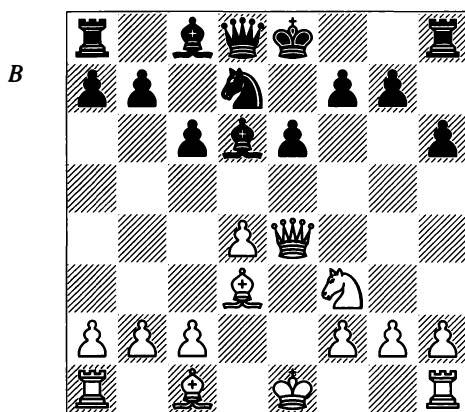
7...♙d6

This time 7...h6 allows a very strong attack after 8 ♜xe6; for instance, 8...♞e7 9 0-0 fxe6 10 ♙g6+ ♟d8 11 ♙f4.

8 ♞e2 h6

Now's the right time to kick the knight.

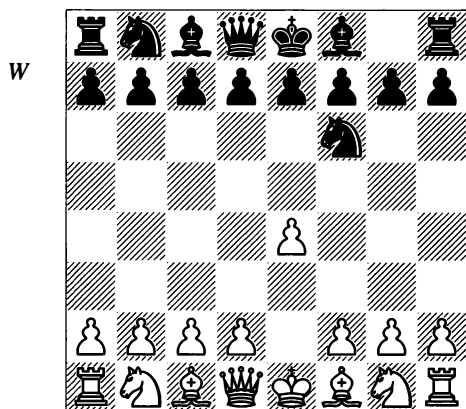
9 ♜e4 ♜xe4 10 ♞xe4 (D)



White is a little better in view of his space advantage. Black's aim is to hit the d-pawn with ...c5. After 10...♜f6 11 ♞e2, White generally castles queenside, while many recent games have continued 10...♞c7 11 0-0 b6 when 12 ♞g4 ♟f8 13 b3 gives White a useful advantage in activity.

Alekhine

1 e4 ♞f6 (D)



Provoking White to expand, with the idea that once he does, his centre will be vulnerable to attack. The modern treatment for White is to expand a little bit, then consolidate. I have to be a little careful in my comments on this, since my compatriot GM Alex Baburin has played it for his whole life, and certainly used it to rough me up on more than one occasion. Indeed, it's possible to be too dogmatic about the line – I remember GM Nigel Short being absolutely contemptuous about it in the early 1990s, then telling Alex “Of course it's not that bad, but you should really graduate to the French!”, and finally using it to draw from a position of strength, as Black, against Kasparov! So this stuff is playable.

One final note: Alex told me that he started playing the line because, as a 1 e4 player, it was the only defence he knew absolutely nothing about! Of course it's possible to take this approach to extremes (1 e4 g5 and so on), but at least you're guaranteed to expand your knowledge.

2 e5

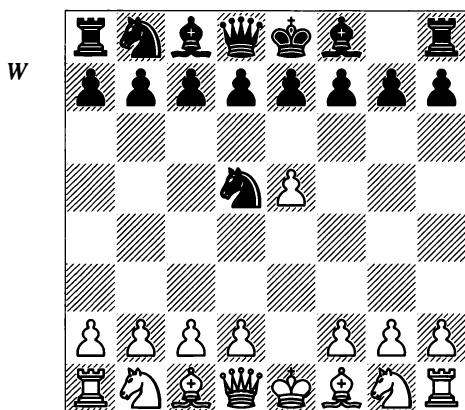
This has to be right.

2 ♞c3 is a nothing move. As well as transposing into the Vienna with 2...e5, Black can try 2...d5 with a good position. After 3 e5, 3...♞e4 is possible, while 3...♞fd7 4 d4 e6 5 f4 c5 is a French.

2...♞d5 (D)

Going to e4 isn't a viable option.

GM Joel Benjamin has made a huge score with 2...♞g8 on the US tournament circuit, but I wouldn't recommend it myself!



3 d4

3 c4 ♞b6 4 c5 ♞d5 5 ♟c4, 'the Chase Variation', gives Black no problems after 5...e6.

3 ♞c3 ♞xc3 4 dxc3 is nothing for White. Black can try 4...d6 5 ♞f3 dxe5!? 6 ♟xd8+ ♟xd8 7 ♞xe5 ♟e8 when White will struggle to contain the bishops (and the healthy king-side majority) in the endgame.

3...d6

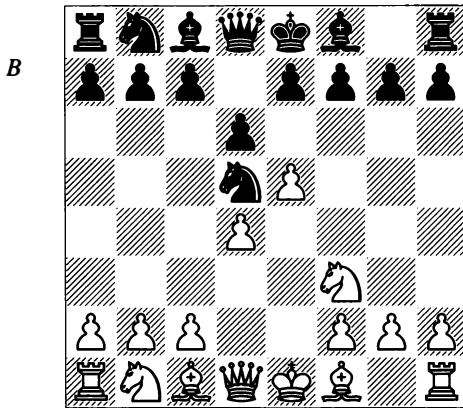
Hitting the centre like this is the universal choice.

4 ♞f3 (D)

This is the main line.

4 c4 ♞b6 leaves White with a choice – his most aggressive option is the Four Pawns Attack: 5 f4 (5 exd6 exd6 {or 5...cxd6}) is a less

ambitious choice from White) 5...dxe5 6 fxe5 7 c6 8 e3 (avoiding 7 d3 g4) 7...e5 8 d3 e6 9 d3 e7 (or 9...g4!?, intending ...d7 and ...0-0-0 to pressurize d4) when Black has a reasonable position.



4...g4

Simple development has always been a popular choice here, but there are alternatives.

4...g6 5 e4 c4 d6 6 b3 g7 leaves White with a choice: 7 e2 is solid while 7 d5 is more aggressive.

4...dxe5 5 dxe5 and now 5...c6 is solid, while 5...d7 invites the fun 6 dxf7!? (6

d3, with an edge, is more sedate) 6...xf7 7 h5+ e6 with mild chaos.

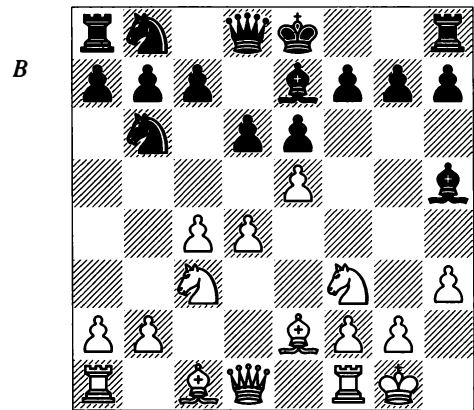
5 e2 e6

5...c6 6 c4 b6 7 d2! is also better for White.

6 h3 e5 7 0-0

White has a good alternative based on delaying castling: 7 c4 b6 8 d3 e7 and now 9 exd6 cxd6 10 d5!? e5 11 g4! g6 12 h4 with some initiative.

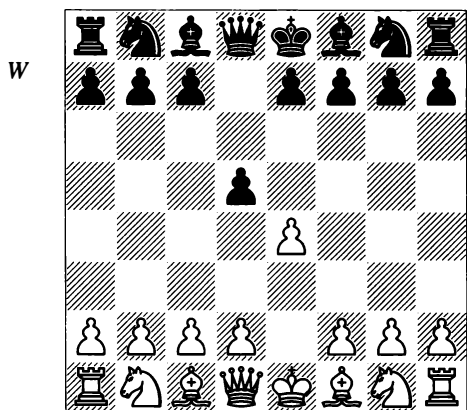
7...e7 8 c4 b6 9 d3 (D)



White's space advantage gives him the edge.

Scandinavian

1 e4 d5 (D)



This opening has always had some high-level support – Larsen used it a lot, while Ian Rogers was also a fan. It has gradually been gaining respectability – Anand even used it against Kasparov in their 1995 match. While there can be no doubt about the opening’s playability, it seems unlikely to become as popular as the main defences to 1 e4 since White has a relatively easy time getting an edge.

2 exd5

2 ♖c3 is possible, but allows Black to seize some useful central space after 2...d4 3 ♖ce2 e5 when White will follow up with d3, f4 and ♖f3 to try to dismantle the imposing black structure. 2 e5? gives Black a favourable version of the Advance variations of the French and Caro-Kann, since he can play his pawn to c5 in one go while his light-squared bishop isn’t blocked in by the pawn-chain.

2...♙xd5

Black is ahead in development for an instant, but he’ll lose time with the queen.

2...♞f6 is also possible, when 3 d4 (after 3 c4, 3...c6 4 d4 cxd5 5 ♖c3 transposes to the Panov-Botvinnik Attack, while 3...e6 is the

dubious but dangerous Icelandic Gambit) 3...♞xd5 (3...♙g4!? is a worthwhile alternative – White can bail out by 4 ♙e2 or 4 ♞f3 with an edge, or get embroiled in the craziness of 4 f3 ♙f5 5 c4 e6 6 dxe6 ♞c6!, when Black’s lead in development seems to compensate fully for the pawns) 4 c4 ♞b6 gives similar play to the Alekhine.

3 ♞c3

This is by far the most popular move, but it does take away the option of c4, which means that Black can set up a formation with ...c6 and ...e6 that is difficult to break.

3 d4 is an attractive move, leaving open options of c4. The problem is 3...e5!, a promising pawn sacrifice: 4 dxe5 ♙xd1+! 5 ♙xd1 ♞c6 6 f4 ♙f5 7 c3 0-0-0+ 8 ♙e1 f6 with a substantial initiative. It’s important to understand that the absence of queens doesn’t mean that White needn’t worry about king safety – while he isn’t so likely to be mated, his king can be harassed with gain of time (see Black’s 7th move) which will make full development very difficult.

3 ♞f3 also leaves the c-pawn free, but Black can develop quite quickly since he no longer has to waste time moving his queen. After 3...♙g4 4 ♙e2 ♞c6 5 d4 0-0-0 6 ♙e3 e5! White needs to be accurate – with 7 c4 ♙a5+ 8 ♙d2 ♙b4 9 d5 he maintains a nice space advantage.

3...♙a5

This looks like a silly square at first, but given that White will be moving his d-pawn at some point, it’s useful to set up a pin on the c3-knight. The queen also has options of dropping back to b6 to hit the b-pawn, while returning to d8 (after ...c6) is also possible.

As someone who tends to make rather categorical assumptions, I’ve always viewed most of the alternative queen moves as rather dubious, but they’re worth examining a little.

3...♖d8 is a useful sideline. After 4 d4 ♖f6 5 ♗f3 c6 6 ♕c4 White has an edge.

3...♗d6 has developed a body of theory – as Black, I always feel such positions are more difficult to handle than main lines. After 4 d4 ♖f6 White has a couple of good options – 5 ♗f3 and 6 ♕g5, intending to castle queenside, is sharp and good, while I've played 5 ♕c4! intending 6 ♗ge2 and 7 ♕f4 with tempo.

3...♗e5+ is the last move worthy of any real consideration – after 4 ♕e2 c6 5 d4 ♗c7 I like White in view of his extra space and easier development, but the black position can be played.

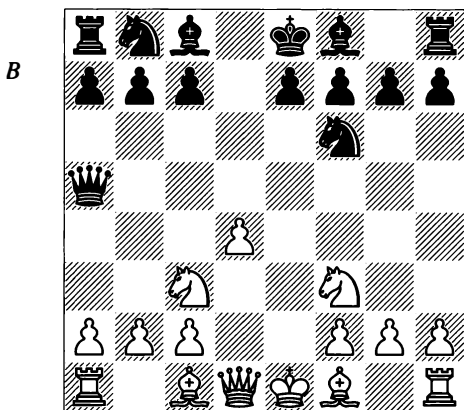
4 d4

Pinning the c3-knight, but gaining some useful central control.

4 ♗f3 ♖f6 5 ♕c4 followed by d3 and ♕d2 is also possible, but I think the aggressive approach is best.

4...♗f6 5 ♗f3 (D)

5 ♕c4 c6 6 ♕d2 tries to exploit the black queen's position, and should be enough for a pull after 6...♕f5 7 ♗d5 ♗d8 8 ♗xf6+ exf6 when Black, though solid, has no compensation for his slightly compromised structure.



5...c6!

This seems to be the most reliable way to handle the Scandinavian – Black will complete his small centre (after developing his queen's bishop) with ...e6, while his queen now has retreat-squares on c7 and d8.

5...♗c6 creates problems for the queen after 6 ♕d2!, when 6...♕g4 7 ♗b5 ♗b6 8 c4 (threatening c5 and ♗xc7+) 8...♕xf3 9 ♗xf3 ♗xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 11 ♗xb7 ♗e4+ 12 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 leaves White with a clear end-game advantage through his better structure and two bishops.

5...♕g4 is playable, but provocative: 6 h3 ♕h5 7 g4 ♕g6 8 ♗e5 e6 9 ♕g2 c6 10 h4 with a considerable initiative.

6 ♕c4

This is my preferred approach, bringing another piece into play with immediate aggressive designs.

6 ♗e5 has ideas of ♗c4 and ♕c4, but Black can counter these rather neatly with 6...♕e6! when 7 ♗c4 ♕xc4 8 ♕xc4 e6 leaves him rock solid, though I'd prefer White in view of his two bishops.

6...♕f5 7 ♗e5

This is the really aggressive move – 7 ♕d2, intending ♗e4 or ♗d5 is a more solid option.

7...e6 8 g4!?

If Black is given time to play ...♗bd7, ...♕b4 and castle there will be no reason for him to stand worse, so I like this aggressive approach.

8...♕g6

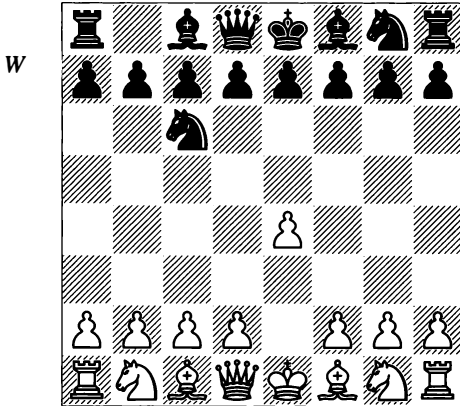
8...♕e4 9 0-0! leaves White with a rather menacing lead in development.

9 h4

White has a good initiative after 9...♗bd7 10 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 11 h5 ♕e4 12 ♗h3!. Both sides will castle queenside, when White will hold a positional advantage on the kingside.

Nimzowitsch

1 e4 ♖c6 (D)



One of Nimzowitsch's less successful opening experiments, this can lead Black into a rather passive position if he insists on keeping the game in independent channels, but if he's willing to transpose into regular Open Games then the move can act as a valuable transpositional tool.

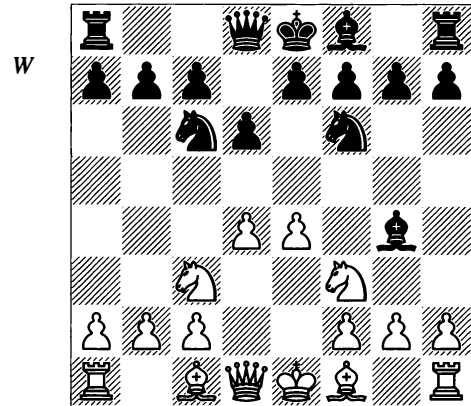
2 ♗f3

This is probably the best move, but of course Black can now play 2...e5 and transpose into regular continuations while avoiding the King's Gambit, Vienna, etc.

2 d4 allows 2...e5 (2...d5 3 e5 ♕f5 4 ♗f3 e6 is better for White, since the c6-knight gets in the way of Black's vital ...c5 break),

when 3 d5 ♗ce7 is OK for Black, since with the centre fixed he's well-placed to play ...f5.

2...d6 3 d4 ♗f6 4 ♗c3 ♕g4 (D)



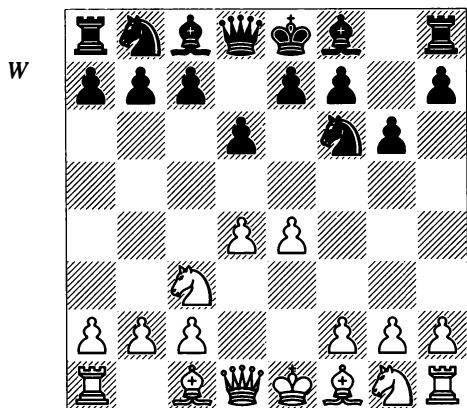
Sometimes piece-play alone can be very effective in breaking down a pawn-centre, but not here, since White has played nothing but first-rate developing moves and his centre is compact.

5 ♕e3 e6 6 h3 ♕h5 7 d5!

This is now comfortably better for White, especially since 7...♗e5 fails to 8 g4 and now 8...♕g6 (8...♗xf3+ is no improvement: 9 ♖xf3 ♕g6 10 dxe6 fxe6 11 0-0-0) 9 ♗xe5 dxe5 10 ♕b5+ ♗d7 11 dxe6 fxe6 with much the better game for White.

Pirc/Modern

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 (D)



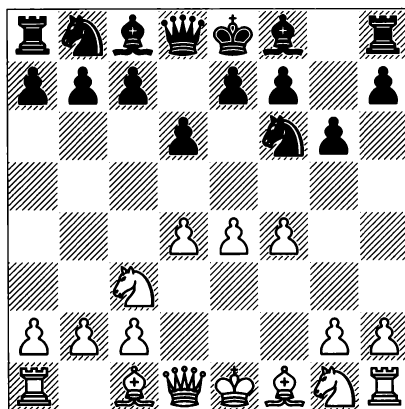
This system (and the closely-related Modern Defence, 1...g6) represents a different approach to the centre – Black holds back his central pawns until White has displayed his structure, with the idea of hitting with the c-, d- or e-pawns when the moment is ‘ripe’. Ripeness tends to be a difficult quality to identify, which means that Pirc positions require a certain degree of skill to handle – if Black waits too long before committing his central pawns then he can be crushed.

Although there are some subtle differences between the Pirc and the Modern, we shall discuss them together, since the basic ideas are the same, and so are White’s main systems against these openings. There are two sections here that deal with lines that are specific to one or the other (the Přibyl Pirc and the Gurgénidze Modern), but bear in mind that the detailed theory of the main lines is affected by Black’s precise move-order.

Austrian

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 f4 (D)

B



Perhaps the critical response to the Pirc – White makes the e5 advance into a real threat. Black must act energetically in the centre.

4...♗g7 5 ♘f3 0-0

An early 5...c5 is also very interesting. 6 dxc5 ♖a5! causes Black no problems, while 6 ♗b5+ ♗d7 7 e5 ♘g4 8 e6 (8 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 9 d5 dxe5 10 h3 would be very strong were it not for the excellent response 10...e4!, when Black is fine after 11 ♘e4 ♘f6) 8...fxe6 9 ♘g5 ♗xb5 10 ♘xb5 (10 ♘xe6 ♗xd4!! 11 ♘xd8 ♗f2+ 12 ♗d2 ♗e3+ with perpetual check was Seirawan’s discovery) 10...♖a5+ 11 c3 ♖xb5 12 ♖xg4 cxd4 13 ♘xe6 ♖c4! is thoroughly unclear.

6 ♗d3

This is the best square for the bishop, defending the e-pawn and supporting e5 and f5 breaks. On c4 it would prove vulnerable to a ...d5 break.

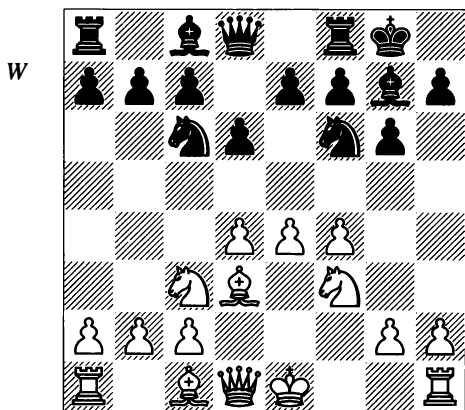
6 ♗e3 is an alternative, but after 6...b6 7 e5 (7 ♖d2 ♗b7 is also fine for Black) 7...♘g4 8 ♗g1 c5! the white centre is under huge pressure.

6...♘c6 (D)

Black wants to play ...e5.

6...♗a6 is also possible, preparing ...c5. After 7 0-0 c5 8 d5 ♗b8 Black has promising

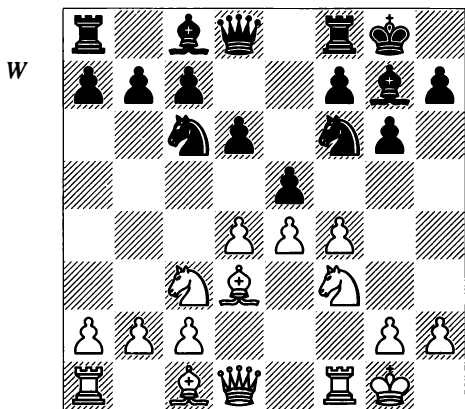
play on the queenside, while White must prosecute his kingside initiative – recent attention has focused on the pawn sacrifice 9 f5 ♖c7 10 ♔e1 gxf5 11 ♔h4 with good attacking chances.



7 0-0

Probably the most popular, but there is a good alternative: White can cut across Black's idea by 7 e5 dxe5 8 dxe5 (8 fxe5 ♖h5! followed by ...♗g4 and ...f6 places the white centre under huge strain) 8...♖d5 9 ♗d2, with an edge.

7...e5! (D)



Striking in the centre is the best option – while it may seem that Black wants to keep the a1-h8 diagonal open for his bishop, the reality

is that he must establish a little pawn control in the centre; otherwise he'll be squashed by e5. Now White has no clear route to an advantage:

8 fxe5

8 dxe5 dxe5 9 f5 gxf5 10 exf5 and now 10...♖b4 11 ♖g5! is good for White, but Black has 10...e4 followed by capturing on f5, after which the game is equal.

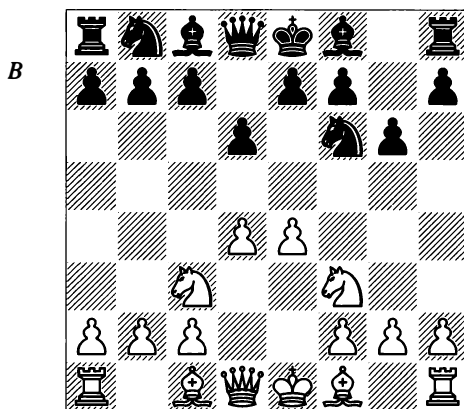
8 d5 ♖b4 9 fxe5 dxe5 leaves Black well placed, with ...♖e8-d6 on the cards.

8...dxe5 9 d5 ♖d4

Black is fully OK; for instance, 10 ♖xe5 ♖xe4!.

Classical

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 g6 4 ♖f3 (D)



This is quieter than the Austrian – White just wants to develop his pieces and maintain better central control. Black's best plan is to play for ...e5 and (after dxe5 dxe5) try to equalize, an attempt which has every chance of success.

4...♗g7 5 ♗e2

5 h3!? is a clever way to play. It can be useful to control the g4-square. White delays the development of his king's bishop, since it could be well placed on c4 or e2. For instance, after 5...0-0 6 ♗e3 c6 7 a4 ♖bd7 8 a5,

8...e5?! 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♖c4! is a touch better for White.

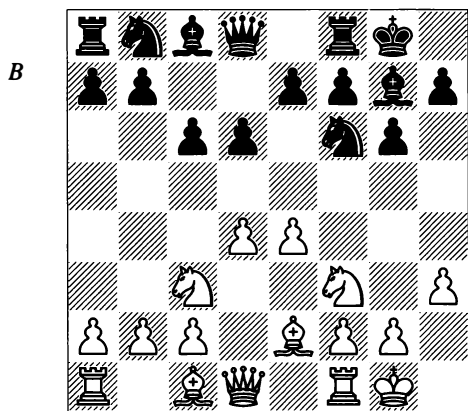
5...0-0 6 0-0 c6

This is a standard Pirc move – in some lines he can play ...b5.

6...♘c6 really pushes the boat out: 7 d5 ♘b8 8 h3 e5 and White should probably take *en passant*, since other moves will leave him in a type of King's Indian where he has blocked his c-pawn and his h-pawn invites a kingside pawn-storm.

6...♙g4 is a solid line, but after 7 ♙e3 ♘c6 8 d5 ♙xf3 9 ♙xf3 ♘e5 10 ♙e2 c6 11 f4 ♘ed7 12 dxc6 bxc6 White is obviously better.

7 h3 (D)



7...♘bd7

The immediate 7...b5 is premature due to 8 e5! with an advantage.

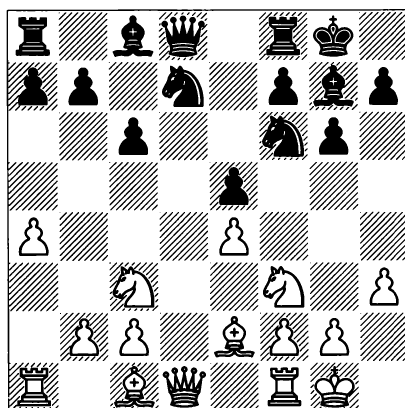
8 a4

8 e5 is the alternative approach: 8...♘e8 9 ♙f4 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♘c7 11 ♙g3 ♘e6 12 ♖d3 ♖c7 13 ♖e4 b6 14 ♖fe1 ♙b7 15 ♙f1 ♖ad8 16 ♖h4 ♖fe8 17 ♘e4 gives White some initiative, but if Black manages to trade some pieces without getting scratched, then the e-pawn could prove to be out on a limb.

8...e5! 9 dxe5 dxe5 (D)

While the g7-bishop is temporarily frustrated by this pawn, it can always relocate via f8 and c5, and more importantly Black has

W



now equalized the central chances and can play ...♗e7 and ...♞d8.

10 ♙e3 ♗e7

If White has an edge, I can't see it.

150 Attack

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 ♙e3 (D)

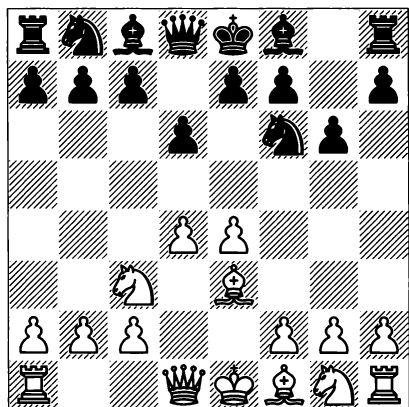
Known as the 150 Attack from the British circuit (apparently because 'even a 150-rated player could handle the white side' – my apologies to any 150s out there), this variation has exploded in popularity at all levels and even been given Kasparov's seal of approval. White's plan has everything – aggression (sometimes he castles queenside and throws some kingside pawns forward), solidity (sometimes he doesn't!), and simplicity (♖d2 and ♙h6 will exchange the star black bishop).

4 ♙g5!? is a slight twist – White still has the plan of ♖d2 and ♙h6, but in the meantime his bishop exerts more influence. It's not clear that Black can exploit the position of the g5-bishop; for instance, 4...c6 5 ♘f3 h6 6 ♙h4 g5 7 ♙g3 ♘h5 8 e5! is good for White.

4...c6

Delaying the development of the f8-bishop makes a lot of sense – given that White plans ♖d2 and ♙h6, Black could save a whole tempo by playing ...♙xh6 in one go.

B



4...♙g7 allows White a clearer plan after 5 ♖d2 c6 6 ♙h6 ♙xh6 7 ♖xh6, though with 7...♖a5!? Black generates play of his own.

5 ♖d2 b5 6 ♙d3

Changing tack – now instead of a raging kingside pawn-storm, White will castle kingside himself and try to exploit his central space advantage and the black queenside ‘weaknesses’.

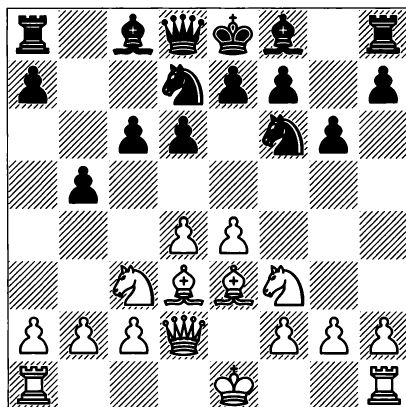
The pawn can also be defended with 6 f3 but this is a little more clumsy – the g1-knight is looking for a square, and while a massive kingside advance with g4, h4 and 0-0-0 looks menacing, the white king won’t be safe on the queenside in front of the stampeding black pawns. After 6...♗bd7 7 g4 ♗b6 8 h4 h5! 9 g5 ♗fd7 10 d5 ♗e5!? 11 dxc6 ♗bc4 12 ♙xc4 ♗xc4 13 ♖d3 ♙g7 Black is doing well.

6...♗bd7 7 ♗f3 (D)

7...e5

White might make this move himself unless Black beats him to it. It’s worth noting that 7...b4?! isn’t such a clever idea – after 8 ♗e2 the b-pawn is already attacked, while the white knight can move to an excellent square on g3 from where it defends the e-pawn and supports an eventual advance of the h-pawn. While this variation is pretty elementary, it shows that, in the Pirc, the black queenside pawns are often less mobile than they appear, so there is rarely much need for White to play defensive moves like a3.

B



8 dxe5 dxe5 9 h3

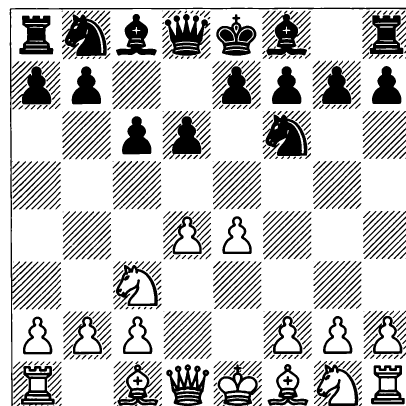
White will castle kingside, play a4 and put something heavy on the d-file – he maintains a normal opening advantage.

Příbyl Pirc

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 c6 (D)

3...e5 offers to transpose to the Philidor. White can agree with 4 ♗f3, or play 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 6 ♙c4 ♙e6 7 ♙xe6 fxe6 where he holds an endgame edge in view of the slightly weakened black structure.

W



4 f4 ♖a5

4...g6 wouldn’t be a good idea – as you saw in the Austrian Attack, both ...c5 and

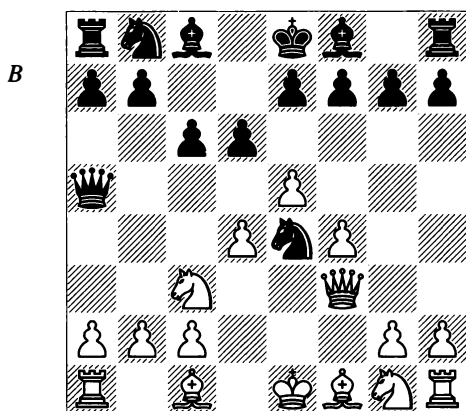
...♘c6 are vital sources of black counterplay against the big centre and here he has frustrated both.

5 e5

I think this is best; at least it's what I always choose.

5 ♖d3 is also played but after 5...e5 Black has good central influence; for instance, 6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 ♖e3 ♘bd7 8 ♖d2 ♖e7 with no real problems.

5...♗e4 6 ♖f3 (D)



6...♗xc3

Black can also reinforce the knight with 6...d5, when 7 ♖d3 ♗a6! (7...♗xc3 8 ♖d2 is in White's favour) introduces a very dangerous pawn sacrifice. White does best to avoid 8 ♖xe4? dxe4 9 ♖xe4 g6! (intending 10...♗f5) and instead develop with 8 ♗e2 ♗b4 9 0-0 (not 9 ♖xe4? dxe4 10 ♖xe4, which loses to 10...f5! 11 exf6 ♗f5) with the better prospects.

7 ♖d2 ♗f5 8 ♖d3!

An idea of GM Edwin Kengis. 8 ♖xc3 ♖d5 is fine for Black.

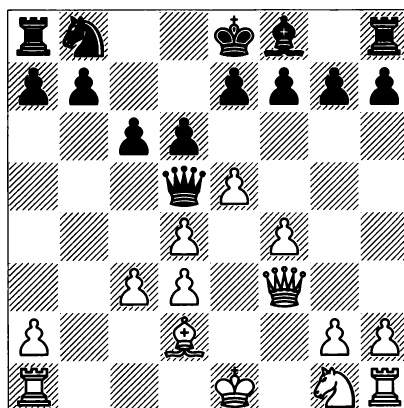
8...♗xd3 9 cxd3!

9 ♖xd3? is poor in view of 9...♖d5, when the g2-pawn is a problem.

9...♖d5 10 bxc3! (D)

This makes strategic sense as White may later have the option of rolling forward with his pawn-mass by c4 and then d5.

B



10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♖xf3 12 ♗xf3 e6 13 ♗e2!

White is much better, in view of his two half-open files on which to work. This position is a good illustration of the difference between static and dynamic considerations – statically, the black structure is far better than the white one (which is plagued with three pawn-islands, doubled pawns and an isolated a-pawn), but dynamically White's pawns cramp the black pieces and allow the rooks to function. The only rule worth remembering in this context is that pawns should always serve pieces, not vice versa – an isolated or doubled pawn may generally demand more defence than its colleagues, but be sure to check whether a structure is actually weak before rejecting it.

Gurgenidze

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♗c3

The Modern gives both sides some additional possibilities. Here White has a major alternative in 3 c4, which leads to formations akin to the King's Indian, and indeed direct transpositions are possible. He can also play 3 c3, solidly supporting the d4-pawn and generally leading to very quiet play.

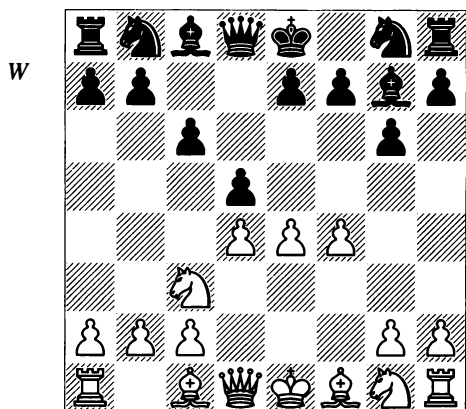
3...c6

This is designed to avoid the masses of theory in the Austrian Attack.

4 f4

4 ♖f3 can lead back to normal channels after 4...d6. Instead, 4...d5 transposes to a position discussed in the Caro-Kann section – 5 h3 ♖f6 6 ♗d3 leaves White comfortably better.

4...d5!? (D)



5 e5 h5

This is Black's somewhat outlandish idea – he plans to establish a blockade on the light squares.

6 ♖f3 ♖h6 7 ♗e3 ♗g4

7...♜b6 doesn't achieve much after 8 ♖a4.

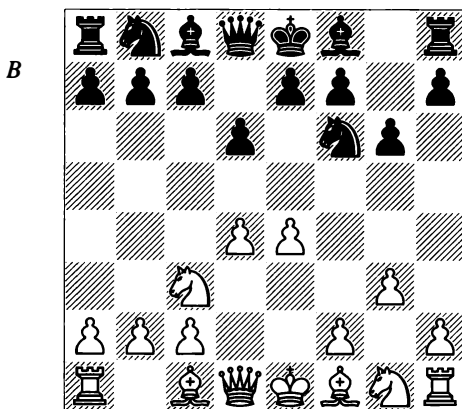
8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♜xf3 h4

Black has reasonable chances of setting up a blockade, but with the two bishops I prefer White.

An irony of these lines is that the g7-bishop, after Black completes his blockade with ...e6, would rather be on f8! This insight has led Modern specialist GM David Norwood to champion the move-order 1 e4 g6 2 d4 d6 3 ♖c3 c6 4 f4 d5!? 5 e5 h5, with the same position as the text except that the black bishop is already on its 'optimal' square. Of course this is still playable for White, while he can always opt for 4 ♖f3 and a regular Pirc/Modern.

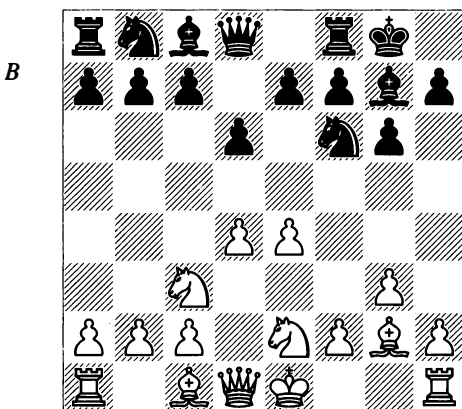
Fianchetto

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 g6 4 g3 (D)



White intends to defend his e-pawn with a bishop on g2. While this idea is logical, to a large extent the only way to make a dent against the Pirc is to accept the invitation to build a centre – here Black can play ...e5 and more or less equalize.

4...♗g7 5 ♗g2 0-0 6 ♖ge2 (D)



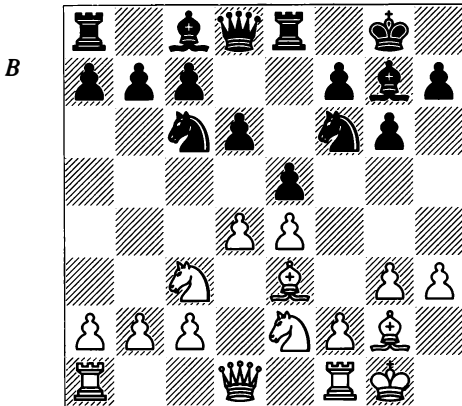
Not to f3 – now the e4-pawn is solidly defended, plus the knight can find itself (after h3 and g4) on the tasty g3-square, from which it supports a slow but dangerous kingside attack.

6...e5 7 h3

This way White can play ♖e3 without fear of harassment via ...♗g4, and so he holds the centre.

7 0-0 ♘c6 8 dxe5 dxe5 is equal.

7...♘c6 8 ♖e3 ♜e8 9 0-0 (D)



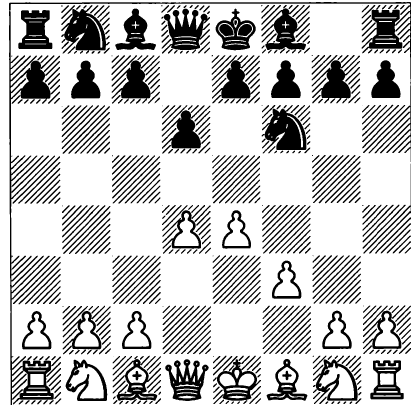
Black will probably exchange pawns on d4, with full restraint of the e4-pawn. His piece activity provides good chances of equality.

Anti-Pirc

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 f3 (D)

3 ♗d3 is another line which avoids putting the knight on c3. The idea is, after 3...g6 4 ♗f3 ♗g7, to blunt the g7-bishop with 5 c3 – Black can certainly go in for this, but the line is rather dull. 3...e5 is more popular – this is similar to the Philidor, but in a favourable version where White has committed his bishop to d3. 4 c3 d5! (4...♘c6 5 ♗f3 ♗e7 6 d5 ♗b8 7 c4 is much better for White) 5 dxe5 ♗xe4 6 ♗f3 ♗c6 7 ♗bd2 ♗c5 and Black has a nice position.

B



3 f3 is a tricky move. If Black follows a normal Pirc pattern with 3...g6, then White can steer the game into a Sämisch King's Indian with 4 c4, or play an immediate ♖e3 and ♜d2 set-up.

3...e5

Central action is the natural response to an anti-developing move such as 3 f3.

3...d5 is an interesting alternative, when 4 e5 (I like 4 ♘c3!?) 4...♗fd7 5 f4 generally ends up as a Classical French after ...c5, ...♘c6 and ...e6.

4 ♗e2

4 d5 ♗e7 5 ♖e3 0-0 6 c4 c6 7 ♗c3 cxd5 8 cxd5 is a little better for White – Black should aim for ...♗h5 and ...♗g5 to exchange his restricted bishop, while the long-term goal is still ...f5.

4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 6 ♖c4 ♜e8 gives White nothing in the endgame.

4...♗e7

Releasing the tension with 4...exd4 5 ♗xd4 ♗e7 6 c4 0-0 7 ♗c3 c6 8 ♗e2 ♜e8 9 ♗c2! is also nice for White.

5 c4 0-0 6 ♗bc3 c6 7 ♖e3 a6 8 d5

White has more space for very little.

Owen's Defence

1 e4 b6

This is much less popular than 1...b6 against the English, since White can create a smaller centre on which Black is unable to generate pressure.

2 d4 ♖b7 (D)

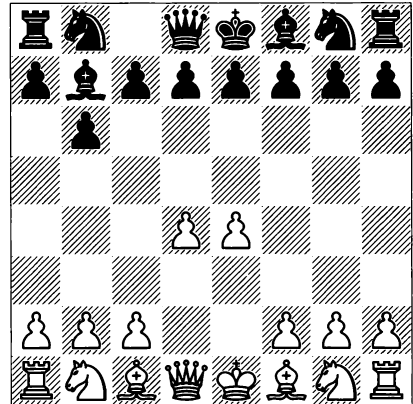
3 ♙d3

3 ♘c3 allows ...♙b4, which I think is a slight let-off for Black.

3...e6

3...f5 used to be a move, apparently, though what appeals to Black about 4 exf5 ♙xg2 5 ♖h5+ g6 6 fxg6 is beyond me: 6...♙g7 (not 6...♘f6? 7 gxh7+ ♘xh5 8 ♙g6#) 7 gxh7+ ♙f8 8 hxg8 ♖+ gives White a huge attack for the exchange.

W



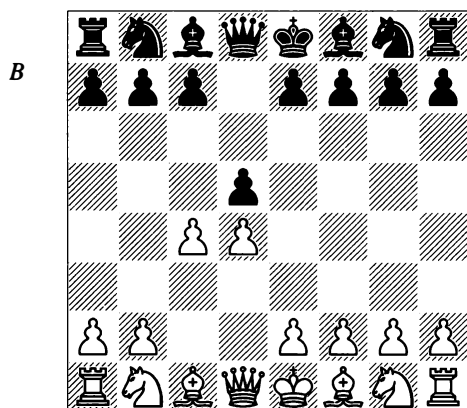
4 ♘f3

White is just better.

Section 3: Queen's Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4! (D)

The Queen's Gambit is the only attempt for an advantage after 1 d4 d5. As we will later see, the opening isn't really a gambit at all, since Black can't hold on to the c4-pawn, but the extra pressure exerted on the black d-pawn is immediately uncomfortable. If White had continued 2 ♖c3, then 2...♟f6! would leave him with no way of generating play in the centre – the e4-square is covered.



The threat is 3 cxd5, when Black has no convenient recapture – for instance, 2...♟f6? 3 cxd5 ♟xd5 4 e4! and White dominates the centre. So Black must do something about it.

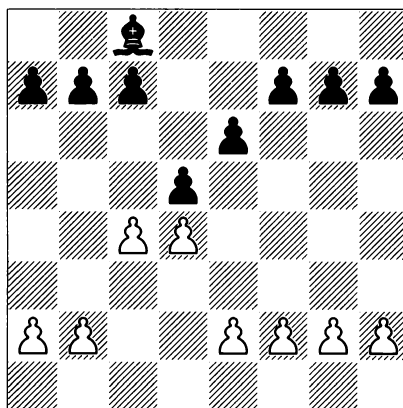
First we'll examine the most natural response to any gambit, namely chopping off the pawn – the Queen's Gambit Accepted (QGA) starts with 2...dxc4.

Then we'll look at the thoroughly logical and rock-solid 2...e6, known as the Queen's Gambit Declined or QGD.

Players who grew tired of ceding the centre with the QGA or blocking in the queen's bishop with ...e6 soon looked to other methods of central support, and 2...c6 (the Slav Defence) was the fruit of their efforts.

Finally we'll analyse more radical counterattacking methods, such as the Chigorin Defence (2...♟c6) and the Albin Counter-Gambit (2...e5).

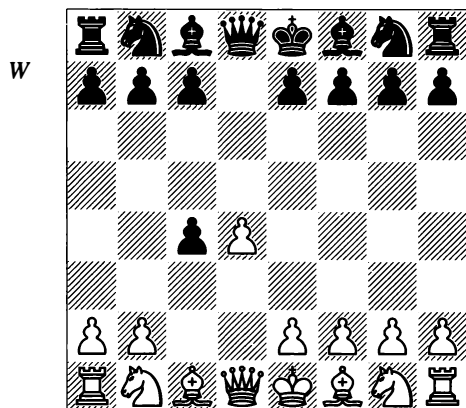
Light-Squared Bishop



Throughout the material, I'd like you to keep an eye on Black's light-squared bishop, which is handled differently in all of the setups. In the Slav, Black delays ...e6 until he can develop this bishop outside the pawn-chain. In the QGA, he exchanges on c4 and then, with ...a6, ...b5 and ...♟b7, occupies the long diagonal (a similar plan is seen in the Semi-Slav). In the QGD, the bishop is clearly a problem for Black, and his best way to try to solve it is to play ...b6 and ...♟b7.

Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 (D)



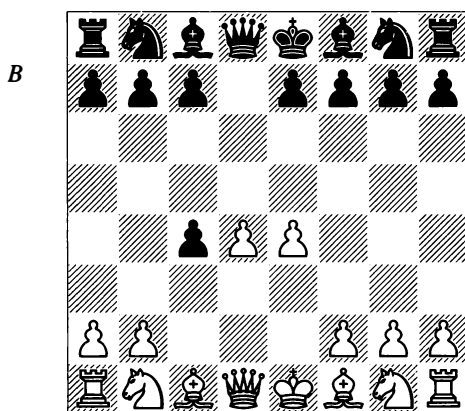
“You know, everyone says ‘Of course, Black doesn’t want to hold on to this pawn’, but I’ll tell you a secret: he really does! It’s just that normally he isn’t allowed to!” So GM Alex Baburin explained the secret of his favourite opening to me.

The first point to understand is that White can get the pawn back – for instance, after 3 ♘f3 ♙f6 4 e3 b5?! 5 a4 c6 6 axb5 cxb5 7 b3 he regains the material immediately. So why would Black give up his central stronghold? The reason is well explained (albeit in relation to a different position) by Emanuel Lasker in one of his London lectures, reproduced in the classic *Common Sense in Chess*: “When you are conscious not to have violated [opening principles], you should accept the sacrifice of an important pawn, such as the e-, d-, c- or f-pawn. If you do not, as a rule, the pawn which you have rejected will become very troublesome to you. Do not accept the sacrifice, however, with the idea of maintaining your material advantage at the expense of development. Such a policy never pays in the end. By far the better plan is to give up the pawn after your opponent has made some

exertions to gain it. By the same process, through which your opponent has achieved greater scope for his pieces, you will then always be able to recoup yourself, and, as a rule, be a gainer in the bargain.” Thus Black hopes that the time spent by White in regaining the pawn will be enough to allow a smooth development of the black minor pieces.

3 e4

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 (D)



GM Chris Ward summarised matters nicely when he wrote “If the QGA is to be refuted, then 3 e4 is probably the place for White to look.” Another way of stating matters is that 3 e4 is the critical test of the QGA. Given that this ‘critical’ notion has been repeatedly used throughout the book, it’s probably worth addressing two issues at this point:

- 1) How can we tell that a move is critical?
- 2) Are there any reasons for not playing a critical move?

There are several ways to answer 1, but I’d say that the main quality of a critical move/variation is ambition. Critical moves

make big positional demands, and so if the opponent doesn't respond vigorously then he can easily end up in a prospectless situation. Merely looking at the position after 2...dxc4 is enough to see that 3 e4 must be the critical move – White claims a central monopoly, maximum space, and prepares to capture the c-pawn.

Question 2 is slightly trickier. The main reason not to play critical lines is that the alternatives tend to be safer. In this context, I find a remark by GM Jon Speelman about GM Bent Larsen quite instructive: "I see Larsen as above all a master of provocation: of the destabilization of the opponent's position – both on the board and in his head – through an intense positional assault, often carried out, particularly as Black, in the face of extremely dangerous tactical (counter)play. Larsen, through his outrageous positional demands, forces the opponent to punish him tactically for his strategic presumptuousness: unless the opponent is totally ruthless and accurate – for false action is at least as damaging as passivity – Larsen will triumph."

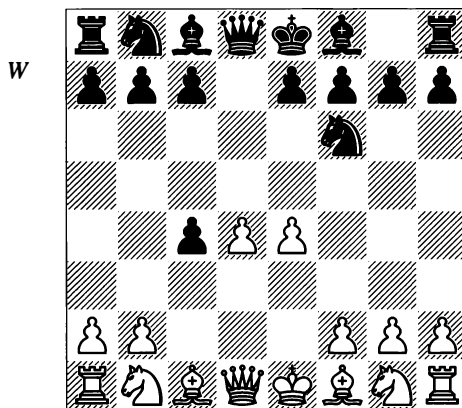
3...dxf6 (D)

3...e5 is one of the most logical responses – capturing on e5 leaves White with a useless endgame, so he normally proceeds 4 f3, when 4...exd4 (4...b4+ 5 dxc3 exd4 6 dxd4 also gives White an edge) 5 dxc4 dxc6 6 0-0 e6 7 exex6 fxe6 8 b3 regains the pawn with a slight advantage, since 8...c8 is too risky.

3...c5 is much sharper: 4 d5 f6 5 dxc3 b5! with a reasonable position; for instance, 6 e5 (6 f4 xa5 is rather messy) 6...b4 7 exf6 bxc3 8 bxc3 d7! with a full share of the chances.

3...dxc6 4 e3 f6 (4...e5 5 d5 dce7 6 dxc4 dg6 is dubious: 7 b3! d6 {otherwise 8 d6} 8 b5+ xf8 9 d2 d8e7 10 dbc3 with a very good game for White) and now White should probably try 5 f3 with a solid centre since 5 dxc3 e5 6 d5 da5 7 df3 dd6 8 a4+ runs into Matthew Sadler's

phenomenal idea of 8...d7! 9 xa5 a6!!, when the white queen is in immense trouble.



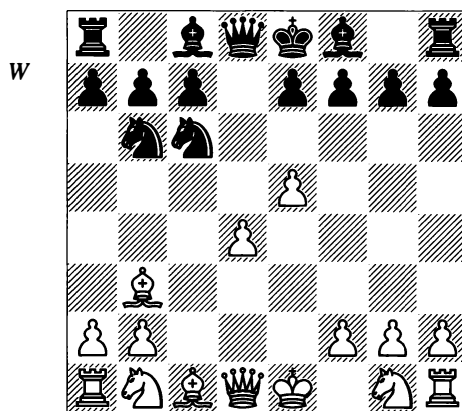
4 e5 d5 5 dxc4 db6

The white bishop now has a choice of retreats.

6 d3

6 d3 is equally good, when 6...dxc6 7 e3 maintains the advantage.

6...dxc6 (D)



7 d2!

7 d3? is a rookie error: 7...g4 with too much pressure on d4.

7...df5

Since developing to g4 runs into f3, Black has to settle for this, second-place, square.

8 e3

8 e6!? is a good pawn sacrifice – Black's development is held up and his structure compromised.

8...e6

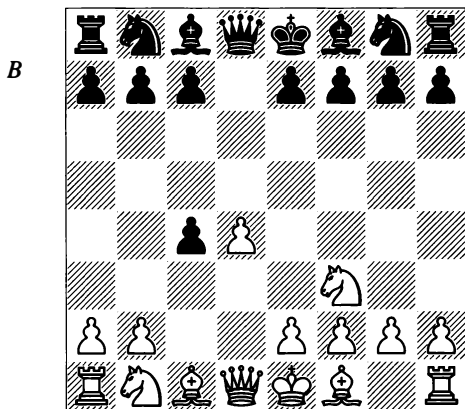
Black's position is similar to some lines of the Alekhine, and while White has an edge in view of his extra space, the black set-up is rock solid. Black should aim for ...♖d7 and ...♘a5 to force the exchange of White's light-squared bishop, and then play on the light squares, while for White, play on the half-open c-file is natural.

3 ♘f3 with 4 e3

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 (D)

This flexible move prepares 4 e3.

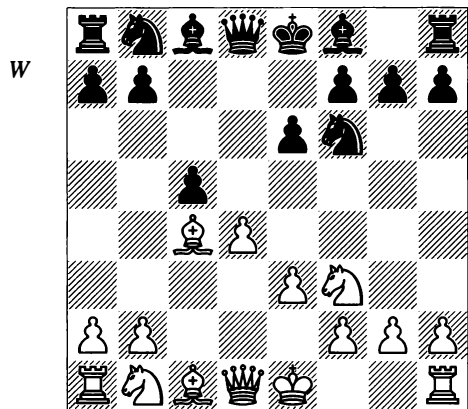
The immediate 3 e3 'allows' 3...e5, which was originally thought to equalize fully, but in recent years he has had some problems to solve in the IQP position after 4 ♙xc4 exd4 5 exd4. It's a matter of taste for both sides whether they want to go into this line.



3...♘f6 4 e3 e6

4...♙g4 5 ♙xc4 e6 is another offbeat line – Black gets his bishop outside the pawn-chain, but surprisingly this doesn't improve his position. After 6 h3 ♙h5 7 ♘c3 followed by 0-0 and e4 White gets control of the centre.

5 ♙xc4 c5! (D)



When Black has given up his central stronghold it's especially important that he gets this advance in – note how the pressure on d4 makes an e4 advance both more difficult and less attractive for White, though his main plans still centre around this push.

6 0-0

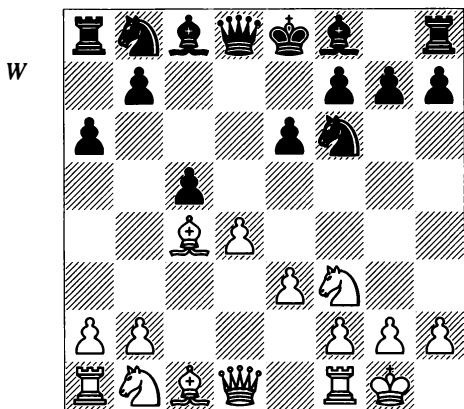
Exchanging immediately on c5 is highly unambitious (indeed, if one is seeking a loss it tends to be a good idea to go into such dull endgames and then get outplayed), but there is a major 6th-move alternative in 6 ♖e2 a6 (6...cxd4 7 exd4, with standard IQP stuff, is also possible) 7 dxc5 ♙xc5 and now:

a) 8 0-0 leaves Black with a wide choice; for instance, 8...♘c6 9 e4 b5 10 ♙b3 ♘d4! 11 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 12 ♙e3! (12 ♘c3 ♖e5! 13 ♙e3 ♙xe3 14 ♖xe3 ♘g4 15 ♖g3 ♖xg3 16 hxg3 ♙e7! is a touch better for Black – his king is better placed than its white counterpart) 12...♖e5 (12...♖xe4 is too hot: 13 ♘d2 ♖f5 14 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 15 ♖f3 with an imposing lead in development) 13 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 14 ♘c3 ♙b7 15 ♖ac1 ♖c8 16 ♖d2 ♖b4 17 ♖fd1 0-0 with a level game.

b) 8 e4!? has some independent significance. After 8...♘c6 9 e5 ♘g4 10 0-0 ♘d4 11 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 12 ♘d2 ♘xe5 13 ♘b3 ♖xc4 14 ♖xe5 ♙f8 15 ♖d1 ♖b5 16 ♖g3! White has good compensation for the pawn since it

will be difficult for Black to develop his kingside.

6...a6 (D)



The order of Black's last few moves can be changed around, but each of them plays a vital part. With ...c5 Black gains some much-needed central influence, while ...a6 is like a classy waiting move with the added bonus of preparing ...b5 to allow ...♙b7.

7 ♖e2

This idea, putting some wood on the e-file and vacating d1 for a rook, is a very common and elegant formation in a wide range of queen's pawn openings.

7 ♙b3 is Kramnik's favourite move (7 ♙d3 is similar) – by stepping out of the way of ...b5, White prepares ♗c3. After 7...♗c6 8 ♗c3 cxd4 9 exd4 we have a standard IQP position with all the trimmings.

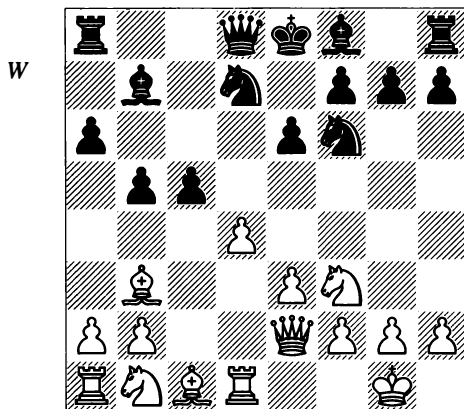
7 a4 restrains ...b5, but given that it costs a tempo, weakens b4 and doesn't stop a fianchetto anyway, it probably isn't the best attempt at a substantial edge. Black can simply play 7...♗c6 8 ♖e2 ♗c7 9 ♗c3 ♙d6 10 ♙d1 0-0 followed by ...b6, with easy development.

7 dxc5 is a dull alternative which has been played by some good players – White's edge is imperceptible after 7...♗xd1 8 ♙xd1 ♙xc5 9 b3 b5 10 ♙e2 ♙b7.

7...b5 8 ♙b3

8 ♙d3 followed by a4 is also good – Black is gaining a lot of queenside space, but whether his pawns will prove weak is open to question.

8...♙b7 9 ♙d1 ♗bd7! (D)



White will try to break through in the centre, but provided Black is attentive he should be able to castle, with equality; for instance, 10 ♗c3 ♗b8! (stepping off the d-file so that the knight can recapture after dxc5 – the queen can also go to b6 but this takes away the knight's most natural square) 11 d5 exd5 12 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 13 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 14 ♙xd5 ♙e7 15 e4 ♗b6 16 ♙d1 (16 ♙h5!? might be more promising) 16...0-0 and Black still has some work to do in order to mobilize fully, but White is bereft of threatening ideas.

Two Knights (4 ♗c3)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♗f3 ♗f6 4 ♗c3 (D)

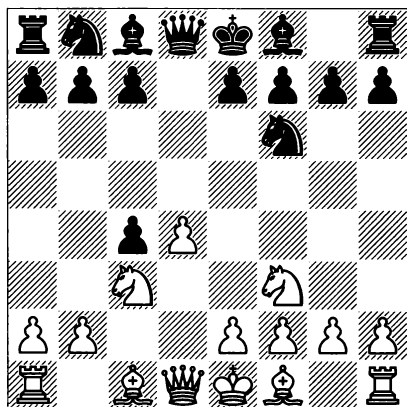
4...a6

Of course, 4...c6 is a Slav.

4...c5 is a sharp try, but White comes out on top after 5 d5 e6 6 e4 exd5 7 e5!; for instance, 7...♗fd7 (7...♗e4 8 ♗xd5 ♗xc3 9 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 10 bxc3 leaves White with a useful endgame initiative) 8 ♙g5 ♙e7 9 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 10 ♗xd5 and 11 ♙xc4.

5 e4 b5

B



Both defending the c4-pawn and threatening ...b4, which explains the following sequence.

6 e5 ♖d5 **7 a4** ♖xc3

7...♗b7?! allows **8 e6!**.

Some good players have tried **7...e6** **8 axb5** ♖b6, but I don't like returning the pawn when Black can have the same queenside bind with extra material.

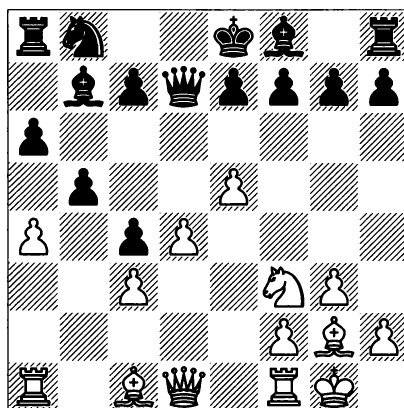
8 bxc3 ♗d5 **9 g3!**

The c-pawn kills the bishop's prospects on the f1-a6 diagonal, but fortunately a greener pasture is available.

9...♗b7 **10 ♗g2** ♖d7 **11 0-0** (D)

11 ♗a3 g6! is fine for Black.

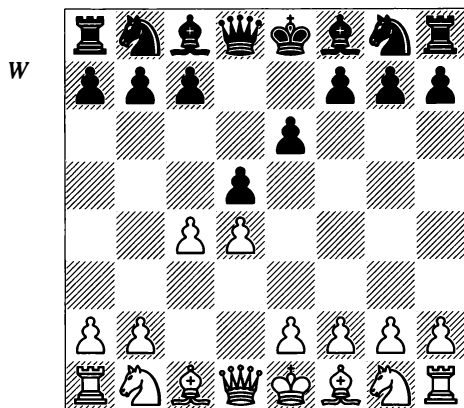
B



White has some compensation, since it will be several moves before Black can develop his remaining pieces and export his king from the centre.

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 (D)

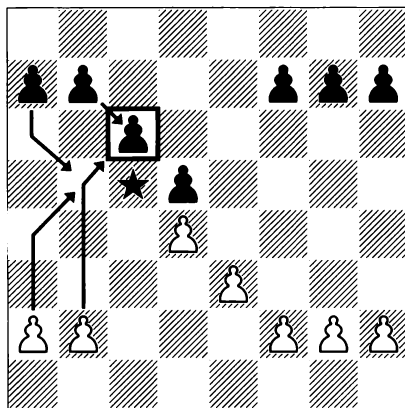


The Queen's Gambit Declined has something for everyone. For the bores amongst you, consider trying the Orthodox and Lasker Defences – you may lose some games through overly passive play, but in others you'll manage to exchange enough pieces to draw. The Tartakower and Cambridge Springs Defences are more interesting and complex, while Black can try a Tarrasch formation if he's prepared to weaken his structure for some play.

Black isn't the only one with some choice – White can try a Qf4 or Qxf6 system to vary the play, go into the Exchange Variation with cxd5 , or fianchetto in a Catalan. In short, even in this one branch of the Queen's Gambit, there's enough variety and potential for great chess to satisfy anyone.

Carlsbad Structure

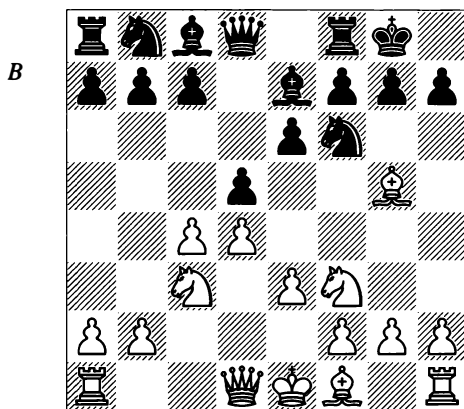
The 'Carlsbad' structure (*see following diagram*) often arises in the Queen's Gambit, especially in the Exchange Variation. In pure structural terms, the pawns are placed exceptionally favourably from White's point of view, since he has an extra centre pawn and



can launch a minority attack as illustrated, while Black can hardly launch a similar attack by $\dots f5-f4$ since he would expose his own king too much. This means that Black should aim for active piece-play on the kingside, through which he can hold the balance.

Orthodox & Lasker

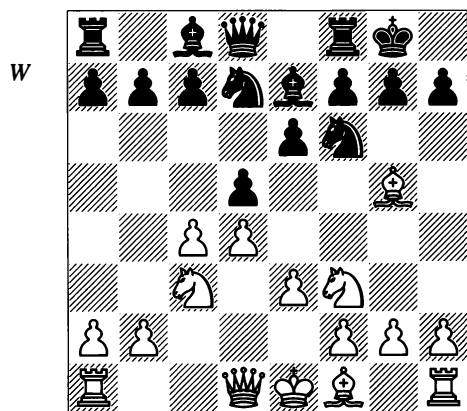
1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Qc3 Qf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 0-0 6 Qf3 (D)



6... Qbd7 (D)

Black's intention in this line is to delay capturing on c4 until White has developed his bishop, thereby gaining a tempo. This explains why White's main move is Bc1 . Note also that Black retains the possibility of $\text{...}\text{N}e4$, but it's more common to exchange a pair of knights via ...dxc4 and $\text{...}\text{N}d5$.

$6...h6$ $7 \text{ g}h4 \text{ N}e4$, the Lasker Variation, is a closely related system. This is an unashamed attempt at a draw. Black aims for a position which, though undoubtedly better for White, he hopes to be tenable. Such openings have largely fallen out of fashion these days, especially since the predominance of open tournaments means that wins with Black against weaker players are often essential, so players have been forced to learn interesting lines which offer more dynamic chances. 8 Bxe7 Wxe7 9 Bc1 (keeping the tension is one good option; 9 cxd5 Nxc3 10 bxc3 exd5 is also possible however; after 11 Wb3 Nd8 12 c4 dxc4 13 Bxc4 Nc6 14 Wc3 White holds the advantage) $9...c6$ 10 Bd3 Nxc3 11 Bxc3 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nd7 13 0-0 . This position is uncomfortable for Black. His natural break is $13...e5$, but Karpov has demonstrated that 14 Bb3 exd4 15 exd4! is then good for White, who can generate an initiative on the e-file and the kingside while Black needs a few moves to involve his queenside pieces in the game.



7 Bc1

If White wants a more interesting game (and he probably should), he can take a look at 7 Wc2! . The weakening of d4 makes $7...c5$ a good move, but after 8 0-0-0! (the same move can be played against $7...c6$) Black has been tricked into playing a position which doesn't put both players into an immediate coma.

7...c6

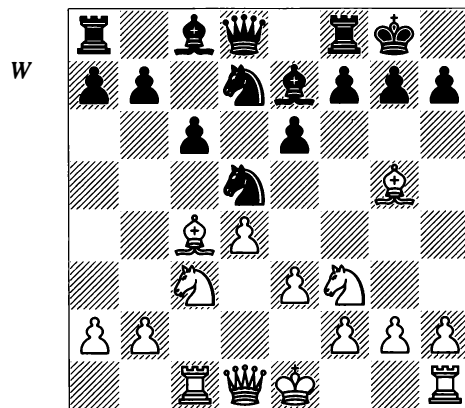
$7...a6$ tries to work in themes from the QGA by planning ...dxc4 , ...b5 and ...Bb7 , but White can cut across these ideas by 8 c5! with a large queenside advantage.

8 Bd3

This has developed a considerable body of theory, but there's no denying that White has just lost the battle for tempi.

8 Wc2 would be my preference – White can mess around with semi-useful moves like $a3$ and $h3$ if Black doesn't capture on c4, but there are also more interesting possibilities like $8...N}h5$ (he can't come to e4 any more) 9 Bxe7 Wxe7 10 g4! Nhf6 11 g5 and 12 h4 with a kingside initiative. I can't stress enough how appealing such ideas are in the Orthodox QGD, compared to the normal equal drudgery.

8...dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nd5 (D)



This is the reason that Black doesn't insert ...h6 gh4 in this line, since now an exchange of bishops is forced whereas on h4 it could

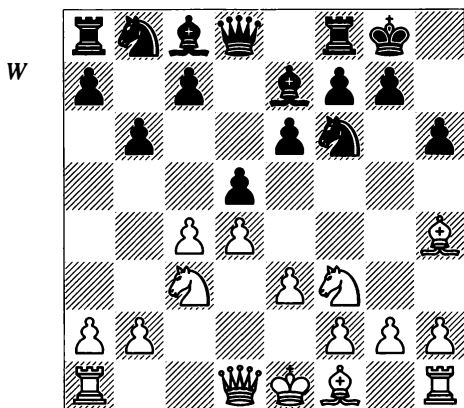
drop back to g3. Keeping an extra pair of minor pieces on the board normally helps the side with the space advantage (that's White here, in case you were wondering).

10 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 11 0-0 ♜xc3 12 ♝xc3

This is the same position as in the note to Black's sixth move (except the black h-pawn is still at home), with much the same assessment.

Tartakower

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 4 ♖g5 ♖e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♜f3 h6 7 ♖h4 b6 (D)



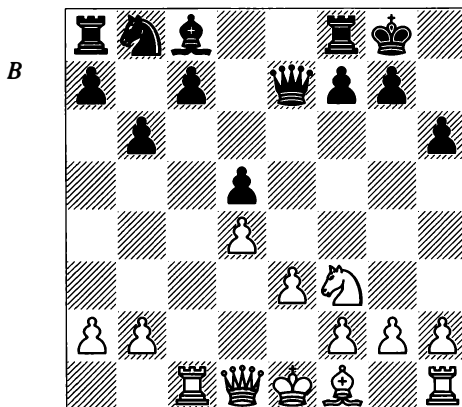
Now this is actually quite a good opening. Rather than aim for piece exchanges, Black wants to play some proper chess: he aims to solve the problem of his poor bishop by putting it on the long diagonal. Note also that the b6-pawn prepares a ...c5 advance, since dxc5 can be met by the centralizing ...bxc5!.

White has three ways to deal with this system. He can take on d5 immediately [Option 1]; he can wait for the bishop to commit itself to b7 and then close the diagonal by taking on f6 and d5 [Option 2]; or he can keep the tension [Option 3].

8 ♖e2

Starting the main manifestation of Option 2, for which 8 ♜c1 is also a good preparation.

8 cxd5 ♜xd5 (8...exd5 9 ♖d3 ♖b7 10 ♜e5! followed by f4 and a march of the g-pawn gives White good chances against the weakened black kingside) 9 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 10 ♜xd5 exd5 11 ♜c1 (D) is the starting position of White's first approach.



Now Black plays 11...♖e6!. 'But what about the long diagonal?' Well, it isn't long any more. The d5-pawn will remain fixed there for a long time, and since Black plans to play ...c5 (and meet dxc5 with ...bxc5) he doesn't want his bishop on b7 blocking play down the b-file. This doesn't mean that Black's seventh move was a mistake, since it still helps prepare ...c5 and has provoked White into a cxd5 exchange which he is normally reluctant to make. One of the secrets to a proper understanding of the Tartakower is the realization that the proper place for the black bishop is e6 – it's just that in most lines he can't place it there because the square is occupied by a pawn. Now after 12 ♜a4 c5 13 ♜a3 ♜c8 Black will follow up with either 14...♜f8 or 14...♜b7, respectively protecting and activating the queen, with good prospects.

8 ♖d3, while White can still take on d5, is normally a preface to keeping the tension: **8...♖b7 9 0-0 ♜bd7 10 ♜e2 c5** and we have Option 3 in all its glory. Black will probably end up with an isolated queen's pawn or a set

of hanging pawns, and as GM Nigel Short says, Black is looking to equalize here. Still, at least his pieces can move to proper squares, which is more than can be said of a lot of QGD variations when the biggest ambition of the black army is to be put back in the box.

8...♙b7

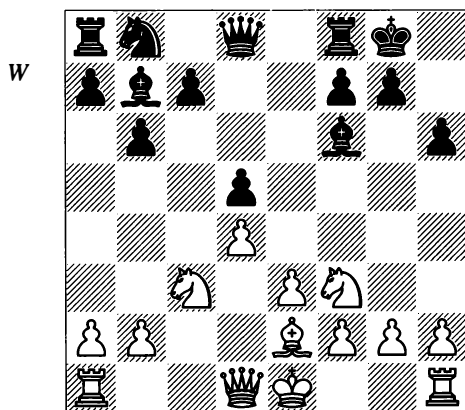
Black can try a very different approach with 8...dxc4 9 ♙xc4 ♙b7, a plan whose benefits and burdens can be seen at a glance – Black keeps the long diagonal open for his light-squared bishop, but exchanges off an important pawn and so gives White a shot at playing e4 while leaving him with an extra centre pawn. After 10 0-0 ♖bd7 11 ♖e2 ♘e4 12 ♙g3 ♙d6! 13 ♘xe4 (I wonder if 13 ♙d3 ♘df6 14 ♙h4!? is worth a go, trying to get control of e4) 13...♙xe4 14 ♖fd1 ♙xg3 15 hxg3 ♖e7 16 ♖ac1 ♖fd8 17 ♙b5 c5 the game is equal.

8...♘bd7!? tries to avoid the disruptive exchange on f6 – after 9 cxd5! exd5 10 0-0 ♙b7 11 ♖c1 c5 12 ♖a4 White has an edge.

9 ♙xf6

Otherwise the black knight can recapture on d5 and keep the long diagonal open, but note that this move is also a concession – Black now has the two bishops.

9...♙xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 (D)



While the structure is now similar to the Exchange Variation, the pieces are not – Black

has two bishops which are dying for the removal of both d-pawns. This explains some of the following play.

11 b4

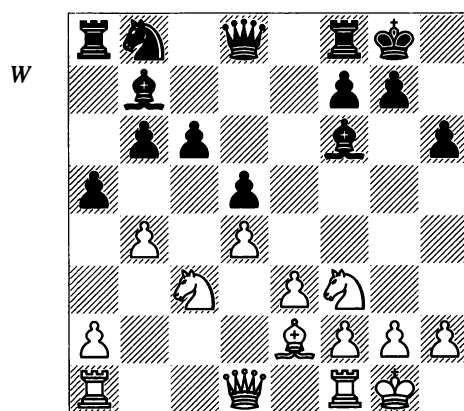
Probably the most accurate, since otherwise the move will require extra preparation after 11...♚d6.

11...c6

Keeping the tension in this way has been a preference of Kramnik, who seems to have a knack for selecting excellent and sound opening variations. Note that this stops White's idea of b5!, when the black d-pawn is looking distinctly troubled.

11...c5 is obviously thematic, and has been played by Kasparov, but after 12 bxc5 bxc5 13 ♖b1 ♙c6 14 ♙b5 one of the bishops is exchanged and Black's winning chances are reduced.

12 0-0 a5! (D)



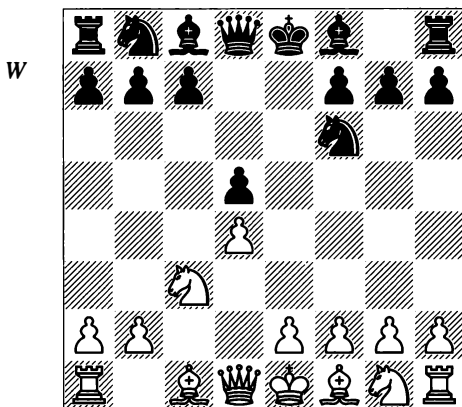
Now 13 b5 can be met by 13...c5!, and otherwise Black makes a favourable pawn exchange on the queenside. White is a little better (since he's always more likely to win a queenside battle), but Black has a fully pleasant position.

Exchange

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6

3...♙e7 allows a slightly different form of exchange variation: 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♙f4 ♘f6 (5...c6 immediately threatens ...♙f5 and leads to interesting play; for instance, 6 ♖c2 g6 7 f3!? ♘f6 8 ♙h6 ♙f5 when 9 ♖d2 ♘bd7 is balanced, while 9 e4? loses to 9...dxe4 10 fxe4 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♙b4+ 12 ♙d2 {or 12 ♙e2 ♖h4} 12...♖h4+ 13 g3 ♖xe4+) 6 e3 ♙f5!? (6...0-0 7 ♙d3 is similar to regular Exchange lines if Black plays with ...c6, while 7...c5! is a good alternative) 7 ♖b3 ♘c6 offers an enterprising pawn sacrifice – I'd probably opt for 8 a3, since 8 ♖xb7 ♘b4 9 ♙b5+ ♙f8 gives Black good compensation.

4 cxd5 exd5 (D)



5 ♙g5

5 ♘f3 ♙e7 6 ♙g5 c6 7 ♖c2 g6! threatens ...♙f5. White's best could be to mix things up with 8 ♙xf6!? ♙xf6 9 e4!.

5...♙e7 6 e3 c6

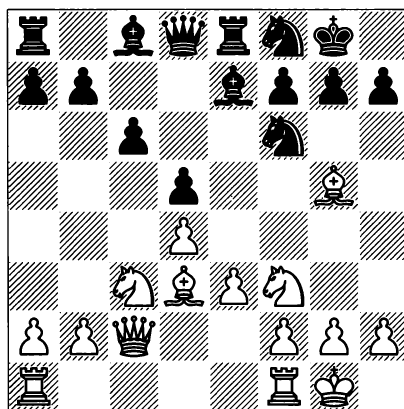
By nullifying the idea of ♙xf6 and ♖b3, Black prepares to play ...♙f5. The immediate 6...♙f5? is unfortunate: 7 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 8 ♖b3 and White collects material by attacking b7 and d5.

7 ♖c2 ♘bd7 8 ♙d3 0-0 9 ♘f3

9 ♘ge2 is also possible, planning 0-0, f3 and e4, while 9...♙e8 10 0-0-0!? ♘f8 11 ♙b1 a5 12 f3 b5 leads to a much more interesting position.

9...♙e8 10 0-0 ♘f8 (D)

W



White now has a broad range of moves, most of which involve the minority attack. The most straightforward is 11 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 12 b4 preparing to play against the black queenside with a minority attack as indicated before.

5 ♙f4

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙e7 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♙f4 (D)

It seems like everyone is playing this line at the moment, probably because they're bored with the better-studied variations after 5 ♙g5. However, even then White has some ♙xf6 ideas that are worth mentioning:

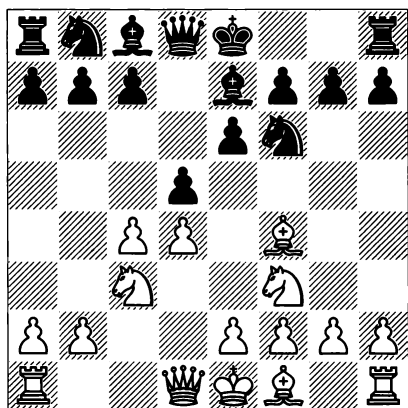
a) After 5...0-0 6 ♖c2 h6, White has the option of 7 ♙xf6! ♙xf6 8 ♖d1 when his pieces coordinate well and he has an edge.

b) 5...h6 6 ♙xf6 is another alternative to the main lines. 6...♙xf6 7 e3 0-0 8 ♖d2 (essentially White is playing for tempi – he wants Black to play ...dxc4 so he can develop his bishop in one go) 8...♘c6 (Black can still play the immediate 8...dxc4, when 9 ♙xc4 ♘d7 10 0-0-0!? leads to a sharp fight) 9 ♖c1 a6 10 ♙e2 dxc4 11 ♙xc4 e5 and Black has no problems.

5...0-0

Crouch's idea of 5...dxc4!? 6 e4 b5 7 ♘xb5 ♙b4+ 8 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 9 ♘xd2 a6 10 ♘c3

B



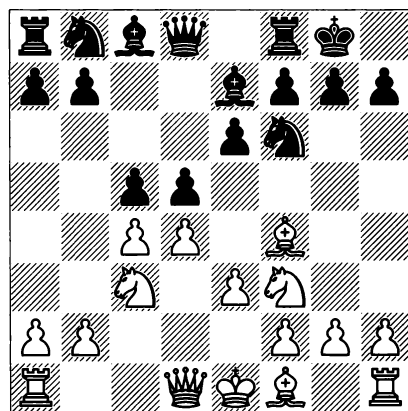
11...dxc4 12...xd1 leaves White with an edge in the endgame.

6 e3 c5! (D)

One problem with the white system is that, without a bishop on g5 hitting the f6-knight, he exerts less pressure on d5, thus enabling Black to play his standard liberating advance.

6...dxd7 is a good alternative, planning to play ...c5 and recapture with the knight, while 7 c5 c6 and 8...b6 is fine for Black.

W



7 dxc5

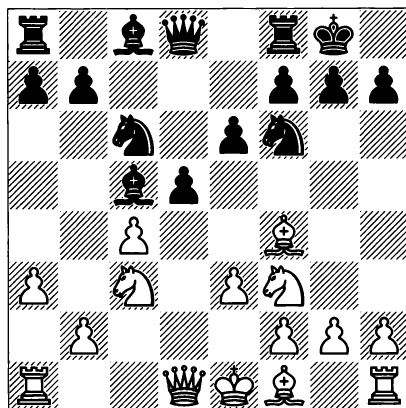
7 cxd5 dxd5 8 dxd5 exd5 is quieter, when White will have an edge due to the IQP.

7...dxc5 8 a3

The game now revolves around White's attempts to advance with b4.

8...dxc6 (D)

W



9 dxc6

9 b4 dxb4! 10 axb4 dxb4 11 b3 a5 is a very dangerous piece sacrifice.

9...dxc6 10 0-0-0

The outlandish 10 a2!? has even been tried here, with the idea of threatening b4. Black normally drops back by 10...dxc4 11 dxc4 e7 with an OK position.

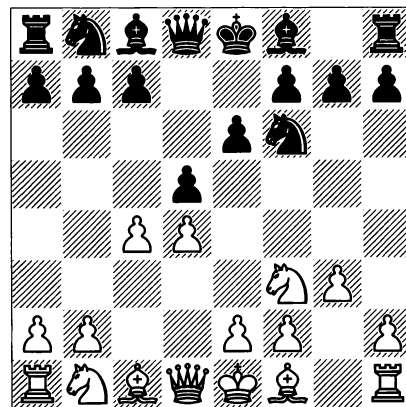
10...dxc4 11 dxc4 e7 12 g4 e5!

Black is fine.

Catalan

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 dxf3 dxf6 4 g3 (D)

B



The Catalan is a very viable alternative to the main lines of the Queen's Gambit. The

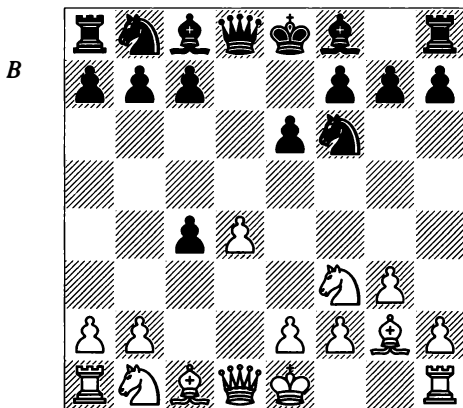
combination of sacrificing the c4-pawn and moving a bishop to the freshly-opened diagonal is a very logical one and can be found in many Slav positions too.

4...dxc4

4...♙e7 5 ♙g2 0-0 6 0-0 is a very common move-order, when Black must choose between an Open Catalan by taking on c4 (as he could have done from move 4 onwards) or keeping things closed with 6...♘bd7. After 7 ♖c2 c6 8 ♘bd2 b6 9 b3 ♙b7 10 e4 ♙c8 11 ♙b2 ♖c7 12 ♙ad1 ♙fd8 White has more space and so deserves preference, but Black is very solid and can often equalize with a well-timed ...b5 or ...c5.

5 ♙g2 (D)

5 ♖a4+ was popular during the Catalan's infancy, but before the opening had reached its youth the early queen check had been rendered innocuous. One example is 5...♙d7 6 ♖xc4 ♙c6 7 ♙g2 ♙d5! 8 ♖d3 ♙e4!, when White must agree to a repetition, or equality after 9 ♖d1 c5! 10 ♘c3 ♙c6.



5...♙e7

This indicates that Black wants to develop as quickly as possible and not worry about hanging on to the c4-pawn. However, there are several other lines where the Catalan becomes a genuine gambit.

After 5...♘c6 for instance, White can choose between regaining the pawn with 6

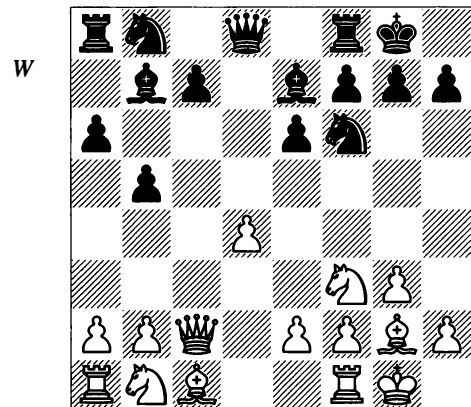
♖a4 or playing for compensation: 6 0-0 ♙b8 7 ♘c3 b5 and now 8 e4 or 8 ♘e5 with activity.

5...♙b4+ can also lead to gambit play: 6 ♘bd2 0-0 7 0-0 c3 8 ♘c4 ♘c6 9 ♖d3 cxb2 10 ♙xb2 with menacing bishops.

6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖c2 a6

This aims to neutralize the g2-bishop and so must be considered the most logical defence.

8 ♖xc4 b5 9 ♖c2 ♙b7 (D)



White has potential pressure on the c-file, but if Black can arrange ...c5 he'll equalize comfortably.

Tarrasch & Semi-Tarrasch

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3

If White knows that his opponent is a Tarrasch player, it could be worth playing 3 ♘f3 here. It's slightly more flexible to leave the queen's knight at home for the moment: 3...c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 g3 ♘c6 6 ♙g2 ♘f6 7 0-0 ♙e7 and, instead of transposing with 8 ♘c3, White can play a double fianchetto with 8 b3!? as Larsen did on several occasions, or use Korchnoi's favourite 8 ♙e3 c4 9 b3 cxb3 10 ♖xb3 with a nice edge.

3...c5 (D)

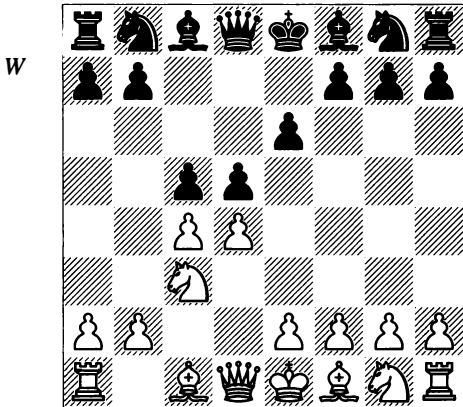
3...♘f6 4 ♘f3 c5 is known as the Semi-Tarrasch. 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 (the other recapture

5...exd5 can transpose to the regular Tarrasch, though White has the extra option of 6 ♖g5 here) and now:

a) 6 e3 will lead to IQP positions of the type also seen in the Nimzo-Indian and Caro-Kann (indeed, transpositions to the Panov-Botvinnik are likely).

b) 6 g3 ♘c6 7 ♖g2 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 can lead to similar positions to the Tarrasch after 9 ♘xd5 exd5, while 9 e4 pits White's pawn-centre against Black's piece-play.

c) 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♙b4+ 9 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 10 ♖xd2 0-0 11 ♙c4 is comfortably better for White, who dominates the centre. An old Polugaevsky-Tal game continued 11...♘c6 12 0-0 b6 13 ♖ad1 ♙b7 14 ♖fe1 ♘a5 15 ♙d3 ♖c8 16 d5 exd5 17 e5 ♘c4 18 ♖f4 ♘b2 19 ♙xh7+ ♙xh7 20 ♘g5+ ♙g6 21 h4!! and the attack proved insufferable.



This initiates the Tarrasch, in which Black takes on an IQP in return for comfortable development. Despite Tarrasch's love for this structure, most players believe that Black has an uphill struggle to equality in these lines. The opening had two real boosts – the first when Boris Spassky used it successfully, the second when Garry Kasparov adopted it during his rampage through the Candidates series – indeed, it was only when Karpov's technique in the World Championship proved too much that he turned to other defences. I

don't know if the opening will ever be as popular again, but it is certainly playable.

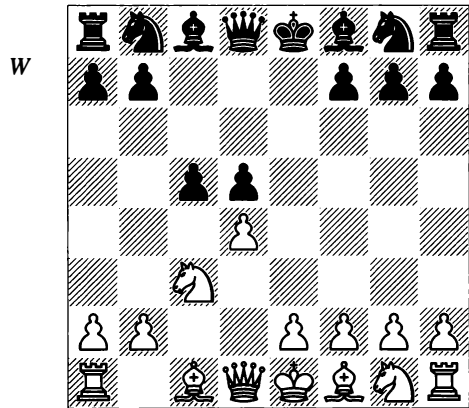
4 cxd5

By far the most popular and critical option, effectively isolating the black d-pawn at the cost of allowing his light-squared bishop into the game.

4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 (5...cxd4 6 exd4 ♙b4 transposes to the Panov-Botvinnik Attack in the Caro-Kann) is the Symmetrical Tarrasch, where it's unclear how White is to use his extra move. I'd opt for 6 a3!?, when 6...cxd4 7 exd4 ♙e7 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 leaves White nice and active.

4...exd5 (D)

4...cxd4 is a dubious gambit: 5 ♖a4+! ♙d7 6 ♖xd4 exd5 7 ♖xd5 and Black doesn't have enough for the pawn.



5 ♘f3

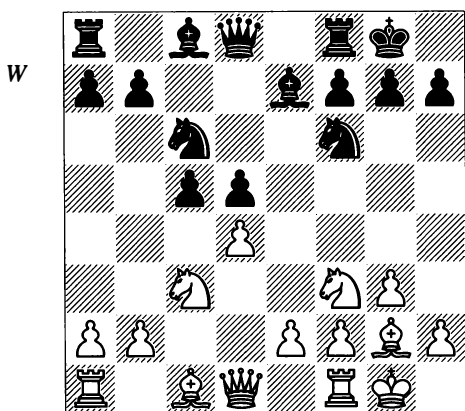
Marshall's 5 e4?! is one of his less successful ideas: 5...dxe4 6 d5 leaves Black with a pleasant choice between 6...♘f6 and 6...f5, in either case with a pretty healthy extra pawn.

5...♘c6 6 g3

One of the timeless inventions of Akiba Rubinstein, who demonstrated that the fianchetto is exceptionally useful both to pressurize the d5-pawn and to fend off any kingside threats.

6 e3 is innocuous.

6...♘f6 7 ♖g2 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 (D)



Now we reach a major fork.

9 ♙g5

The most direct way, immediately threatening 10 dxc5 with insufferable pressure on the black centre.

9 dxc5 leaves the black d-pawn with an easier time: 9...♙xc5 10 ♙g5 d4! 11 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 12 ♘d5 ♖d8 13 ♘d2 and White has chances, but Black can play with ...♞e8 and ...♙g4 and his d-pawn is strong for the moment.

9...cxd4

9...c4 is a much sharper move, championed recently by Grishchuk. In such lines theory changes weekly, but for the moment 10 ♘e5 ♖a5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♖d2! (threatening 13 ♘xd5) has been causing big problems for Black.

9...♙e6 is passive, and 10 ♞c1 looks sensible.

10 ♘d4 h6

It makes sense to kick the bishop before ♙xf6 becomes a real threat.

11 ♙e3

Seirawan's idea of 11 ♙xf6 hasn't caught on, as Black is well placed after 11...♙xf6 12 ♘b3 d4 13 ♘e4 ♙e7 14 ♞c1 ♖b6 15 ♘ec5 ♞d8.

11 ♙f4 ♙g4 12 h3 is an interesting twist – the idea is that, by not blocking the e-pawn, White gains the upper hand in the case of

12...♙e6 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 e4!. However, after 12...♙d7!? matters aren't so clear.

11...♞e8

This is a standard position. White now has several tempting options; Black is surviving in most of them!

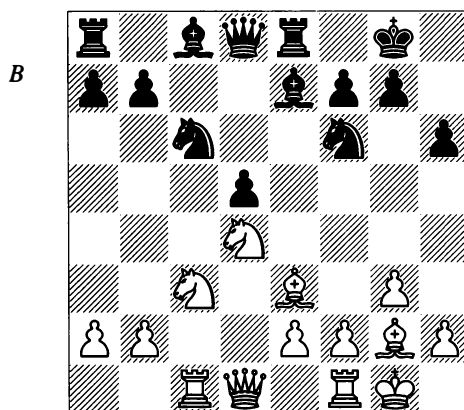
12 ♞c1! (D)

Probably best.

12 ♖b3 was Karpov's preference which caused Kasparov so much discomfort – after 12...♘a5 13 ♖c2 ♙g4 14 ♘f5!? White's position is preferable.

12 ♖a4 ♙d7 13 ♞ad1 ♘b4! 14 ♖b3 a5 leaves Black active on the queenside.

12 a3 ♙e6 invites a structural change: 13 ♖b3 ♖d7 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♞ad1 ♙d6 and Black is solid.



12...♙f8 13 ♘a4 ♙d7 14 ♘c5

White's position is more pleasant, since his structure is better and his pieces are well placed. Of course Black has only one real weakness and so his position is fully playable, but many players find his defensive task unappetizing.

Cambridge Springs

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♙g5 ♘bd7

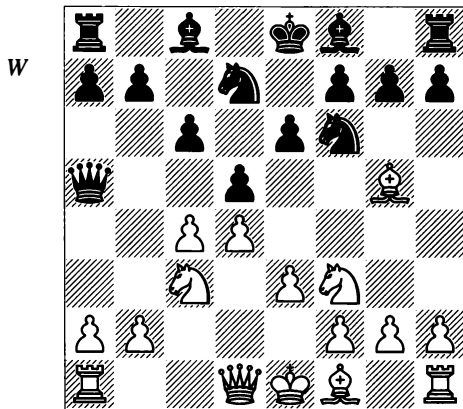
This is the starting move of the Cambridge Springs variation – Black plans to develop

his bishop actively on b4 and so doesn't commit it to e7 at this point.

5 e3

Avoiding a trap: 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♖xd5?? is a rookie mistake: 6...♗xd5! 7 ♕xd8 ♖b4+ 8 ♔d2 ♕xd2+ 9 ♖xd2 ♖xd8 and Black is a piece up.

5...c6 6 ♗f3 ♔a5 (D)



This is the key move – by breaking the pin, Black plans to play ...♗e4 and ...♖b4 with pressure on the c3-knight.

7 ♗d2

This is a good way to keep the tension. White breaks the pin and prepares ♗b3 in some lines. 7 ♕d3?? goes down to 7...dxc4, since 8 ♕xc4 ♗e4 is terminal.

7 cxd5 shouldn't leave Black with too many problems. 7...♗xd5 8 ♔d2 ♖b4 9 ♖c1 0-0 10 ♕d3 h6 11 ♕h4 e5! with good play in the centre and against the c3-knight.

7...♖b4

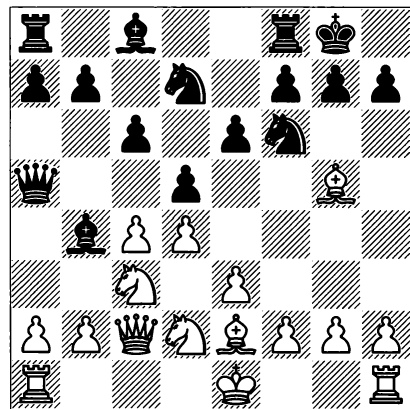
Threatening the knight is the most consistent follow-up.

Black can secure the two bishops with 7...dxc4, but 8 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 9 ♗xc4 ♔c7 10 ♖c1 ♕e7 11 g3 is also a little better for White – all of his c-file pieces are beautifully placed, while his light-squared bishop is unimpeded by the white pawn-chain.

8 ♔c2 0-0 9 ♕e2 (D)

Not, of course, 9 ♕d3?? losing material.

B



Black has now exhausted his piece-play and should look for a pawn-break – fortunately, he has two playable options available.

9...e5!

9...c5 is another good way to hit the centre.

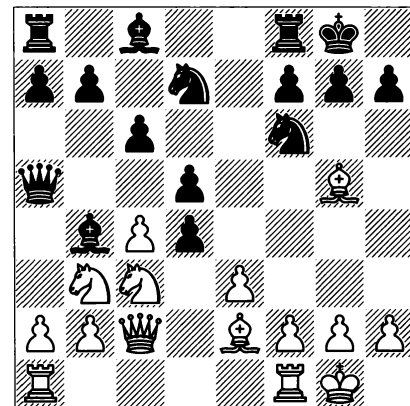
10 0-0

There's no need to panic – now after ♗b3, ...♕xc3 won't be with check.

10 dxe5 starts a crazy line: 10...♗e4 11 ♗dxe4 dxe4 12 0-0 ♕xc3 13 bxc3 ♕e8 14 ♕f4 ♗xe5 15 ♔xe4!? ♕f5 16 ♔d4 ♖ad8 17 ♕xe5 ♖xd4 18 cxd4 is aberrational but probably balanced.

10...exd4 11 ♗b3 (D)

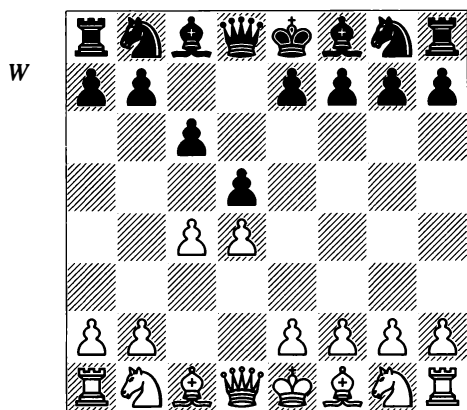
B



After 12 ♗xd4 White will retain a normal opening advantage in view of his superior activity.

Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 (D)



In the preceding sections we saw the difficulty Black often has with his queen's bishop after ...e6. The Slav is an attempt to avoid these difficulties, while still holding the centre. At its most basic, the Slav plan is to play ...♗f5 and then ...e6 – White can either allow this or frustrate it.

Main Line with 6...e6 (and Early Deviations)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♖f3

This is the safest way to the main line – White develops his knight without creating any targets. 3 ♘c3 leads to a different type of game after 3...dxc4 (3...♘f6 can go back into the main variations but see also the section 'Early e3') 4 e4 b5 5 a4 b4 6 ♘a2 ♘f6 7 f3 e5 8 dxe5 ♗xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♘fd7 10 e6 fxe6 11 ♗xc4, when White has the better structure but his king is tender.

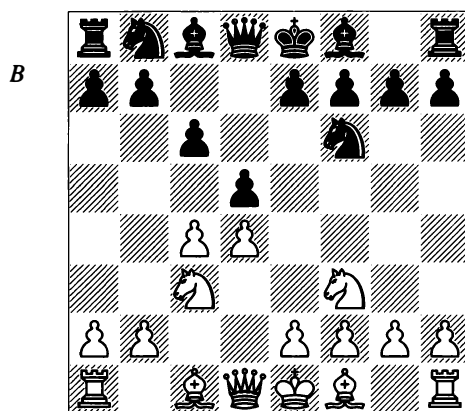
3...♘f6

The most flexible move.

Both 3...dxc4 and 3...♗f5 are undesirable: 3...dxc4 4 e3 b5 5 a4 and after b3, White will

regain his pawn with the advantage, as Black has prematurely opened up the queenside and holds no central influence; 3...♗f5 doesn't lose a pawn, but after 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♗b3 ♗c7 6 ♘c3 e6 7 ♗f4! White holds the advantage, since the bishop is invulnerable due to the weakness of b7.

4 ♘c3 (D)



4...dxc4! (D)

Black has a couple of other respectable options here, but if he wishes to play his bishop to f5 then this is the most accurate.

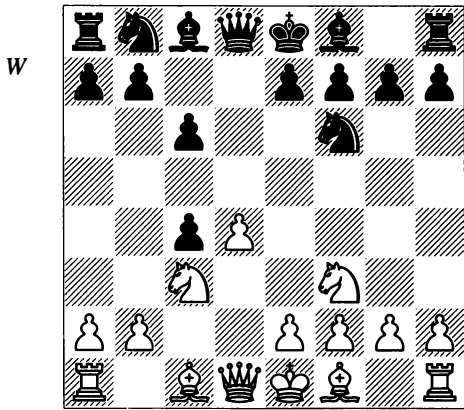
4...♗f5? is a definite mistake: 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♗b3! and Black is in trouble since 6...♗c7 loses a pawn to 7 ♘xd5, and Sadler gives 6...b6 7 e4 dxe4 8 ♘e5 e6 9 ♗b5+ ♘fd7 10 g4 ♗g6 11 h4! (threatening h5, trapping the bishop) as too good for White.

4...g6 is a form of the Schlechter Slav (if the Grünfeld and the Slav ever have a child, it'll probably look like this). But as with many hybrid systems it takes the deficiencies of both without time to implement the strengths – it's a bad Slav because the light-squared bishop won't be comfy on the kingside with that g6-pawn in the way, while as a Grünfeld it falls short because the c-pawn is meant to

attack the centre, not defend it. After a simple continuation like 5 ♖f4 ♗g7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♜c1 White is comfortably better. Normally Black only opts for the Schlechter set-up if White has already played e3.

4...a6 is an important alternative, and is discussed in its own section below.

4...e6 is the Semi-Slav – see the next chapter.



5 a4

This is the only safe way to regain the pawn that also poses Black any problems.

The difficulty with 5 e3 can be seen after 5...b5 6 a4 b4!. The attack on the c3-knight gives Black time to stabilize his queenside. After 7 ♖a2 (7 ♖b1 ♗a6 is fine for Black) 7...a5 8 ♗xc4 White has no advantage in view of his terribly placed knight on a2.

5 e4 is the Slav Gambit. The theme of sacrificing the c4-pawn arises in several Slav positions, but this is one of the more comfortable for Black. One of the main problems is that, after ...b5, the f1-bishop will be locked out of play by the c4-pawn. 5...b5 (no prizes for any other moves; if White is allowed to recapture on c4 with his pawn standing proudly on e4, he will stand better) 6 e5 (6...b4 was threatened, so this move is virtually always played) 6...♞d5 7 a4 e6 (Black's most solid response, and theory's favourite) 8 axb5 ♞xc3 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 ♞g5 ♗b7 and

Black is better – he still holds his extra pawn, is not behind in development and has a very dangerous queenside majority.

5...♗f5

5...♞a6 is Smyslov's variation, a very solid and logical option. The b4-square is an outpost for a black knight, so it is immediately targeted. After 6 e4 ♗g4 7 ♗xc4 e6 White is a little better in view of his central space, but Black has very comfortable development.

5...♗g4 was popularized by Bronstein. Very sharp play arises after 6 ♞e5 ♗h5 and now 7 f3 (planning e4 with a very strong centre) or 7 h3 (planning g4).

6 ♞e5

This is the modern move.

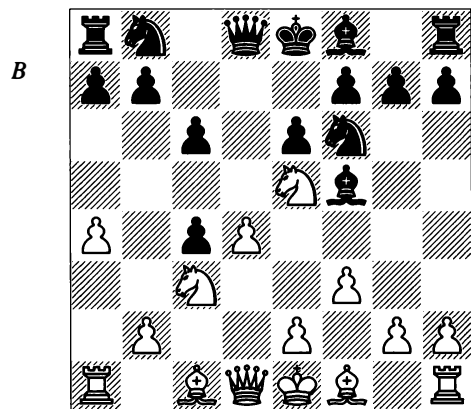
6 e3 is safer but a little tame – after 6...e6 7 ♗xc4 ♗b4 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖e2 ♗g6 I don't see why Black should be worse.

6...e6

This commits Black to an exciting piece sacrifice.

6...♞bd7 is the main alternative and the most popular line these days. It is examined in the next section.

7 f3 (D)



This was the whole point of 6 ♞e5 – White wants to build an imposing centre with gain of time after e4. If Black simply allows this then he will stand much worse, so drastic action is called for.

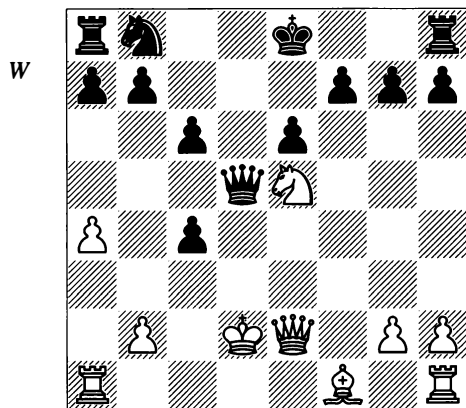
7...♙b4! 8 e4 ♙xe4!

8...♜xe4?! 9 fxe4 ♖h4+ 10 ♜e2 ♙xe4 11 g3! ♗h5+ 12 g4 ♙d3+ 13 ♜f3 doesn't give Black enough compensation.

9 fxe4 ♜xe4 10 ♙d2 ♗xd4 11 ♜xe4 ♗xe4+ 12 ♗e2 ♙xd2+

12...♗h4+?! 13 g3 ♙xd2+ 14 ♜xd2 ♗e7 leaves White in full control after 15 ♗e3!.

13 ♜xd2 ♗d5+ (D)



A very complex situation has arisen. Black currently has four pawns for the piece, but he will lose the one on c4. It will take great skill for White to develop his remaining pieces while looking out for his king, but if he can do so, then his piece may outweigh the pawns.

Main Line with 6...♞bd7

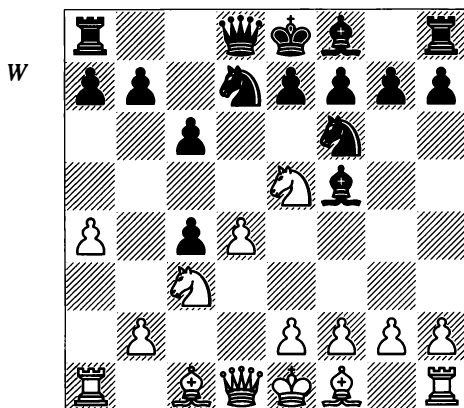
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♙f5 6 ♜e5 ♞bd7 (D)

This is how the big guys play it nowadays. Russian GM Alexander Morozevich has been the main protagonist of the 6...♞bd7 line at top level in recent years, and his games and analyses have put the variation firmly back on the map.

7 ♜xc4 ♗c7

Black wants to play ...e5.

7...♞b6 is a more solid continuation. After 8 ♜e5 a5 (not 8...♞bd7? 9 ♗b3) 9 g3 e6



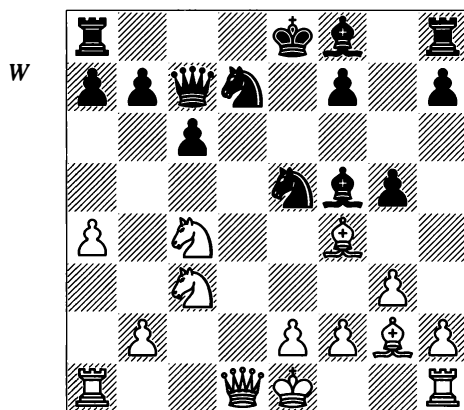
10 ♙g2 ♙b4 11 0-0 0-0 White has a stable edge.

8 g3

Preparing the development of both white bishops to their best diagonals.

8...e5 9 dxe5 ♜xe5 10 ♙f4 ♜fd7 11 ♙g2 g5! (D)

Morozevich's stunning idea has completely overtaken all of Black's other ideas such as 11...f6. Black exploits the fact that the bishop is tied to f4.



12 ♜xe5

This is critical.

12 ♜e3 is a quieter alternative: 12...gxf4 13 ♜xf5 0-0-0 14 ♗c2 ♜c5 15 0-0 ♜e6 16 ♗e4 fxe3 17 hxe3 with a balanced game.

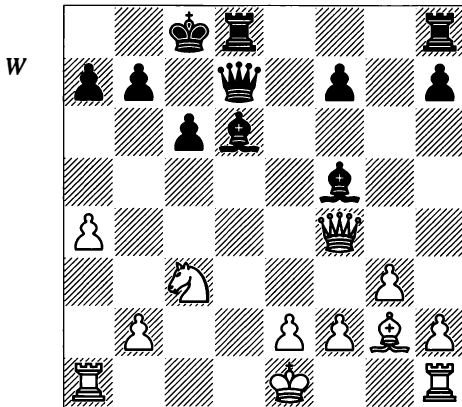
12...gxf4 13 ♜xd7 0-0-0!

This is the trick on which Black was placing his hopes.

14 ♖d4

White might as well grab a pawn.

14... ♜xd7 15 ♜xf4 ♙d6 (D)



Black clearly has compensation for the pawn in the form of a lead in development, two bishops and good prospects for his rooks.

Early e3

It's worth seeing how various white move-orders limit the type of Slav formation Black can adopt.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3

3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 allows 4... ♙f5!, when 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♜b3 ♜c7! 7 ♘c3 (7 ♙d2!? is a recent idea, trying to exchange dark-squared bishops) 7...e6 is equal. 4...g6 is also sound.

3 e3 ♘f6 can transpose after 4 ♘c3 or 4 ♘f3, while 4 ♙d3 runs into 4...e5! since 5 dxe5 dxc4 is excellent for Black.

3... ♘f6 4 e3

Again, ...a6 Slav and Semi-Slav players have few problems here, but what about those who prefer the main-line Slav?

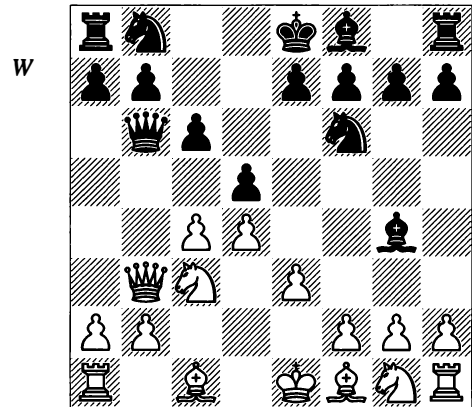
4... ♙g4

The point is that 4... ♙f5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♜b3! is good for White, since Black doesn't have ... ♜c7 with tempo and so needs to try

something like 6... ♙c8 to hang on to his pawns.

4...g6 is again a respectable alternative, now that White has played the slow move e3.

5 ♜b3 ♜b6 (D)



The position is equal. The benefits of capturing/being captured on b3 or b6 are unclear – one side gets a half-open a-file at the cost of a slight structural weakening. It's difficult to explain the position in thematic terms, so I'll just give a typical variation so you can see how play might pan out: 6 ♜xb6 axb6 7 f3 ♙f5 8 g4 ♙e6 9 g5 ♘fd7 10 cxd5 ♙xd5 11 ♙d3 ♘a6 12 ♘xd5 cxd5 13 ♙d2 e6 14 ♘e2 ♘b4 15 ♙xb4 ♙xb4+ 16 ♙f2 with balanced chances.

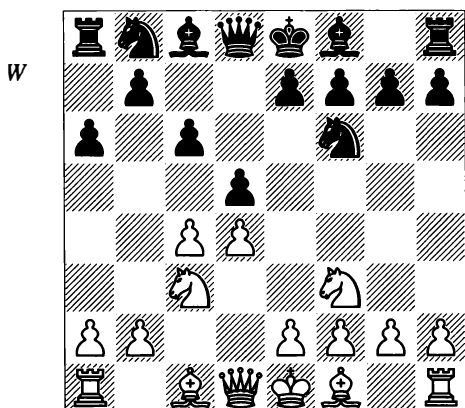
...a6 Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 a6 (D)

As stupid as the move 4...a6 looks, in many ways it represents the truest interpretation of the Slav, which aims to hold the centre (4...dxc4 relinquishes it) and leave the light-squared bishop free (4...e6 blocks it). Plus the c4-pawn is genuinely vulnerable now.

5 c5

In many ways, the critical continuation, not only highlighting the b6-square but also gaining some serious space.



5 e3 is a logical move. After an immediate 5...♗f5 or 5...♗g4, 6 ♖b3! is unpleasant, so generally Black proceeds 5...b5 6 b3 (6 cxd5 has been played by some good guys including Karpov, but I don't believe it – the black queenside isn't too weak and the c1-bishop is normally outside the pawn-chain in Exchange Slav structures) 6...♗g4 7 ♖e2 ♖bd7, when Black is very solid. The latest trend has been 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 gxf3!?, aiming for a bind with f4 and c5.

5 a4 makes ...b5 more difficult for Black. I think he is best advised to adopt a QGD set-up with 5...e6, and after 6 ♗g5, Bacrot's 6...a5! 7 e3 ♗e7 plans ...♖a6-b4, with a comfortable position.

5 g3 is an idea borrowed from the Catalan – White sacrifices his c4-pawn to open the long diagonal for his light-squared bishop and gain the centre. Black can accept the gambit, while declining with 5...♗f5 6 ♗g2 e6 7 0-0 h6 leaves him with few complaints.

5 cxd5 cxd5 transposes to the Exchange Slav, though with Black committed to an ...a6 formation.

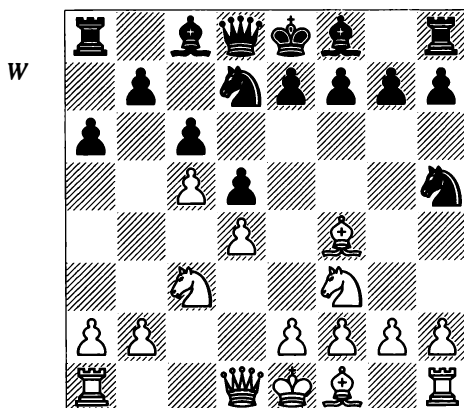
5...♖bd7

5...♗f5 6 ♖b3 ♖c8 is also very sound.

6 ♗f4 ♖h5! (D)

6...g6 7 h3 ♗g7 8 e3 0-0 is also very sensible.

Hitting the f4-bishop makes possible both ...♖c7 and, more radically, ...e5. Here is a



good example of Black's chances, with Kasparov wielding the black bits:

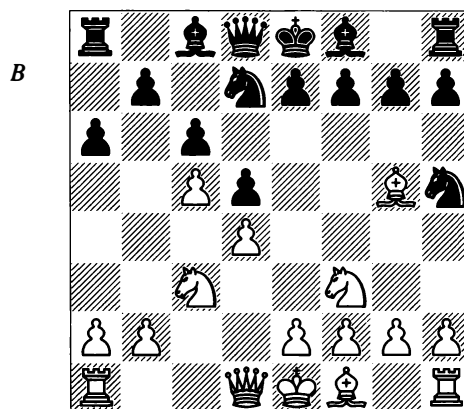
7 ♗g5 (D)

After 7 e3 Black isn't compelled to take, but it looks like a pretty good idea: 7...♖xf4 8 exf4 ♖c7 9 ♖d2 g6 10 ♗d3 ♗h6 11 g3 f6 12 ♖e2 b6 with good pressure.

7 ♗d2 g6 8 e4 dxe4 9 ♖xe4 ♖df6! and, while the position is balanced, I think White needs to play very precisely to avoid being worse (if need be, the h5-knight can go to g7 and e6).

7 ♗e3 ♖c7 8 g3 e5 looks fine for Black.

7 g3 is a relatively new idea, employed to great effect (against me!) in the 2004 Calvia Olympiad. I think Black should strike on the queenside with 7...b6 8 cxb6 ♖xb6 with balanced chances.



7...h6 8 ♖d2 ♜c7

The immediate 8...e5 9 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 10 dxe5 ♖xc5 11 e4 gives White a slight plus.

9 e4

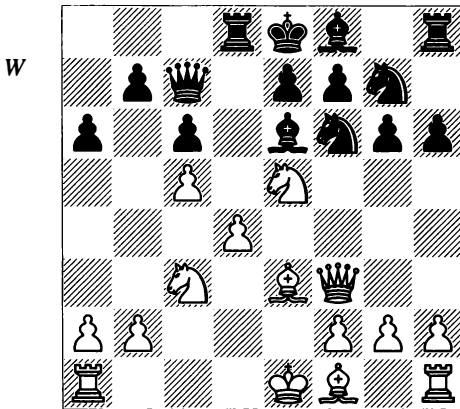
White must play this in order to get anything, but note how Black now has a very useful d5-square.

9...dxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♘df6!

The h5-knight is quite safe and can be dragged back into play via g7, while Black needs to develop his light-squared bishop.

11 ♘c3 ♖e6 12 ♘e5 g6 13 ♜f3 ♞d8 14 ♖e3 ♘g7 (D)

14...♘d5 15 ♖c4 ♘hf6 16 0-0 ♖g7 17 ♞ac1 0-0 also tidies up nicely.



15 ♖c4 ♖xc4 16 ♘xc4 ♘e6

Black has a great position.

Exchange Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5

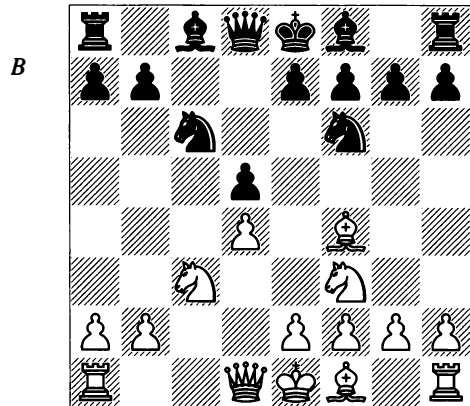
Dull stuff! White has some hope for an advantage, but it seems less than in the main lines.

4 ♘f3

4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 ♖f4 is a tricky move-order. The idea can be seen after 5...♘f6 6 e3 e6 7

♖d3 ♖d6 8 ♖xd6 ♜xd6 9 f4!, where by delaying the development of his king's knight White has managed to bolster his control of the centre. This is all very good, but Black has a more enterprising alternative: 5...e5! 6 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 7 dxe5 d4 8 ♘e4 ♜b6 with full compensation for the pawn.

4...♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♖f4 (D)



6...♖f5

6...♘e4 is a good alternative – after 7 e3 ♘xc3 8 bxc3 g6 Black has a Grünfeld-type set-up. After 9 ♖e2 ♖g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 c4 dxc4 12 ♖xc4 ♖f5 13 ♞c1 White has a small edge.

6...a6 often arises from the ...a6 Slav. The point is that 7 e3 ♖g4 is now comfortable for Black since the knight is pinned to the queen. After 7 ♞c1 ♘e4 8 ♘e5 ♘xc3 9 ♞xc3 Black can play the conservative 9...♖d7 or try 9...e6 10 ♘xc6 bxc6, when 11 ♞xc6 ♜a5+ is unclear.

7 e3 e6 8 ♖b5

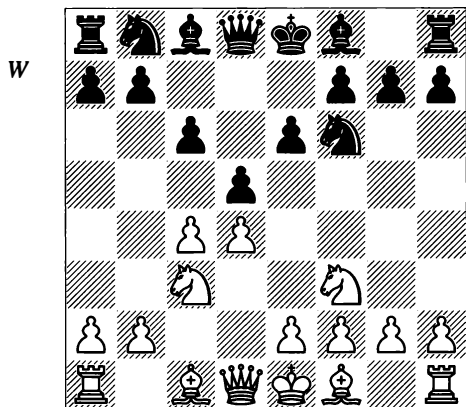
8 ♖d3 ♖xd3 9 ♜xd3 ♖d6 10 ♖xd6 ♜xd6 really is equal.

8...♘d7!

White has a tiny edge, but Black intends to continue ...♞c8 and ...♖e7 and should equalize shortly.

Semi-Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 (D)



After my lengthy justifications for the Slav and not blocking one's bishop in, the reader can be forgiven for thinking this move gives Black the worst of both worlds – his c8-bishop has no prospects while his c-pawn stands passively at c6 instead of attacking the centre from c5. In fact Black has a creative idea to activate the bishop and cunningly use his c6-pawn, as you will see from the main lines given below.

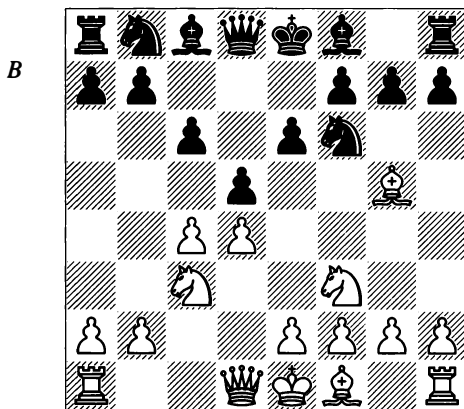
I think the best way of understanding the Semi-Slav, however, is as a tactical threat against c4 (Black intends 5...dxc4 6 e3 b5 7 a4 ♙b4!, hanging on to his pawn). If you look at the position for a moment it becomes clear that White has no convenient way to deal with this threat – exchanging with 5 cxd5 exd5! transposes into a harmless variation of the QGD Exchange Variation, advancing with 5 c5 gives Black easy play with ...b6, while defending with 5 b3 allows ...♙b4, ...♘e4 and ...♝a5, hopping on the dark squares.

In fact White has two main tries: 5 ♙g5 is the most aggressive line in the whole Queen's Gambit – White intends to meet 5...dxc4 with 6 e4!, threatening e5. This line is hugely

complex and will be considered next. 5 e3, generally leading to the Meran Variation, is an equally well regarded line – White blocks in his c1-bishop, but comfortably defends the pawn. He plans ♙d3 and e4.

5 ♙g5

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♙g5 (D)



5...dxc4

This is the consistent move. Black has a couple of alternatives, but passive play with ...♙e7 and ...0-0 is not one of them – he'll simply be left with a QGD where he has prematurely committed himself to ...c6.

5...h6 is known as the Moscow Variation. White can now choose between a quiet positional line and a true pawn sacrifice: 6 ♙h4!? (6 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 leaves Black very solid, though White still has an edge) 6...dxc4 7 e4 g5! 8 ♙g3 b5. This position is thoroughly unclear, and which side you prefer depends on your chess style. If you like trying to exploit superior development, then play White, while if hanging on with an extra pawn to win an

endgame is more your scene, then choose Black!

5...♘bd7 transposes to the Cambridge Springs.

6 e4

There's no value in 6 e3.

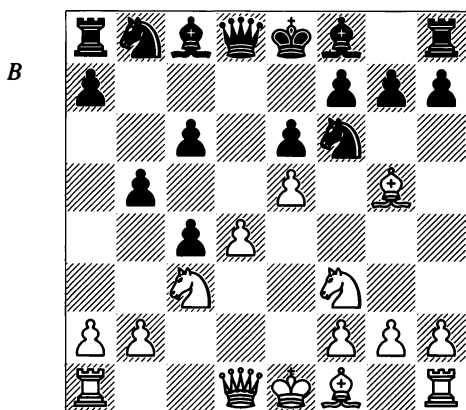
6...b5

Absolutely forced – if White were allowed to play ♖xc4 Black would have no prospects.

7 e5 (D)

The pin on the knight will cost Black most of his kingside.

7 a4 tries to break up the black queenside. After 7...♖b7 8 axb5 cxb5 9 ♖xb5 ♖xe4 10 ♖xc4 ♖b4+ 11 ♘c3 ♘c6 Black looks at least equal.



7...h6 8 ♖h4 g5 9 ♘xg5

9 exf6 gxh4 10 ♘e5 ♗xf6 11 a4 is an aggressive idea, but appears insufficient after 11...♖b7 12 ♖e2 ♘d7!, when Black challenges the knight and remains two pawns up.

9...hxg5 10 ♖xg5

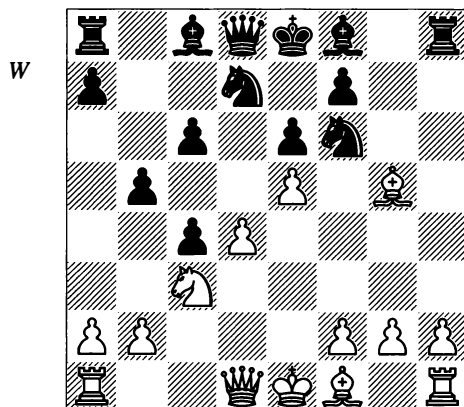
White now threatens ♖xf6, forking the queen and rook.

10...♘bd7 (D)

By far the best way to meet the threat.

10...♖e7 11 exf6 ♖xf6 looks suspicious, since with all of his dark-square weaknesses Black really doesn't want to trade this bishop, but it turns out that 12 ♖e3!, intending to gain a tempo with ♘e4, is even stronger than

12 ♖xf6. Black is really struggling after 12...♖b7 13 ♗f3!; for instance, 13...♖xd4 14 0-0-0 ♖xe3+ 15 fxe3 ♗e7 16 ♘e4 ♖f8 17 ♘c5! with an irresistible attack.



11 exf6

11 g3 often transposes to the text after 11...♖b7, but one fascinating independent option is 11...♗g8 12 h4 (12 ♖h4 has been tried a few times, but the inclusion of ...♗g8 ♖h4 must be favourable for Black – the h4-bishop is on a limited diagonal and blocks the h-pawn) 12...♗xg5 13 hxg5 ♘d5 14 g6 fxg6 15 ♗g4 ♗e7, when both sides have their pluses.

11...♖b7!

Black sets up the break ...c5, which would both unleash his light-squared bishop down the long diagonal and strike at the white d-pawn.

12 g3

Even though this allows the immediate implementation of Black's idea, it's the best way to develop the bishop, which would otherwise be stuck looking at the c4-pawn.

12...c5 13 d5 ♗b6

13...b4 14 ♖xc4 bxc3 15 dxe6! is ferociously strong, since exf7# is threatened while 15...fxe6 loses the queen to 16 f7+.

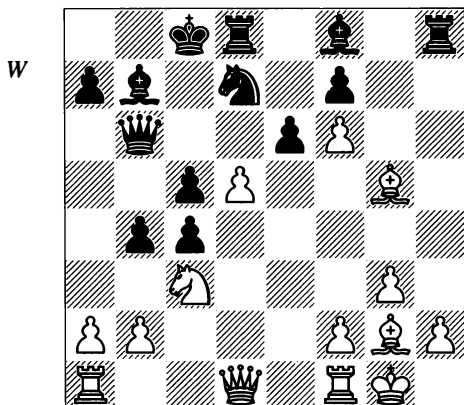
Black can snap off White's f6-pawn with 13...♖h6 14 ♖xh6 ♗xh6, but at the considerable positional cost of trading the guardian of

his dark squares. After 15 ♖d2 and 16 0-0-0 White has a promising initiative.

14 ♖g2 0-0-0

This move does an incredible number of things – the king is brought to safety, the b7-bishop is protected, and pressure is brought to bear on the d-pawn.

15 0-0 b4 (D)



The position is a complete mess. White's two main moves are 16 ♖a4 and 16 ♖b1!?, in both cases with incomprehensible complications. As an example of the kind of ideas which are found here, have a look at 16 ♖a4 ♖b5 17 a3 exd5 18 axb4 cxb4 19 ♙e3 ♘c5 20 ♖g4+ ♗d7 21 ♖g7!! ♙xg7 22 fxg7 ♖g8 23 ♘xc5 with substantial compensation for the queen!

5 e3 and the Meran

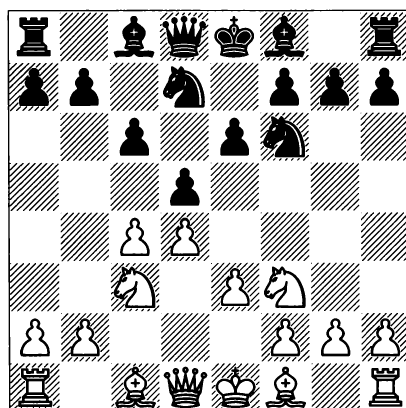
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 e3 ♘bd7 (D)

The most flexible move – it is not yet clear where the f8-bishop needs to move, but it is obvious that this is the best square for the knight.

6 ♙d3

6 ♖c2 is a tricky alternative. Now 6...dxc4 would leave Black a whole tempo down on the main lines, and after 6...♙d6, 7 g4!? has

W



recently been in vogue, though we should note that when Kasparov first faced it (and demolished it with Black in a little over twenty moves) he was clearly highly sceptical of 7 g4's merits. However, the line has been embraced by many GMs, including Kasparov himself some years later. White gains space on the kingside (7...♘xg4 is very double-edged: after 8 ♖g1 the white rook will break through to g7) and leaves Black with a choice of ways to defend against the threatened 8 g5 – 7...♙b4 is very logical, preparing the e4-square for his knight (White answers 8 ♙d2), while 7...dxc4 is sharper, opening the d5-square and with it the whole position. After 8 ♙xc4 b6 9 e4! Black needs some tactics to stay alive – recently White has gained the upper hand after 9...♙b7!? 10 e5 c5 11 exf6 ♙xf3 12 fxg7 ♖g8 13 ♖xh7 ♘f6 14 ♙b5+ ♗e7 15 ♙g5! with huge complications.

6...dxc4 7 ♙xc4 b5!

Gaining queenside space and preparing to fianchetto the light-squared bishop. This is the thematic way to generate counterplay.

8 ♙d3

Control of e4 is crucial here as throughout the Queen's Gambit, so it's no surprise that this is the most popular move.

8 ♙e2 is an alternative with some subtle differences – for instance, ...c5-c4 won't gain a tempo on the bishop, but of course White's control over e4 is reduced. There are some

crazy lines too, my favourite being 8...a6 9 e4 b4 10 e5 bxc3 11 exf6 cxb2?! (Kramnik's move, 11...dxf6, avoids most of the madness) 12 fxg7 bxa1 ♖ 13 gxh8 ♖ with a remarkable position with four queens on the board in the middlegame.

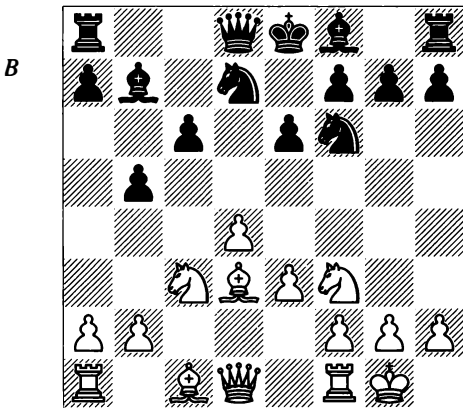
8...♗b7

Now after ...c5 this bishop will be the best minor piece on the board.

8...a6 defends b5 and thus immediately threatens ...c5. After 9 e4 c5, things can transpose to 8...♗b7 after 10 d5 ♖c7 11 0-0 ♗b7, but Black must also be ready for 10 e5 with fascinating play; for instance, 10...cxd4 11 ♖xb5! ♖xe5! (11...axb5 12 exf6 gxf6 is also possible) 12 ♖xe5 axb5 13 0-0 ♖d5 14 ♖e2 ♗a6 15 ♗g5 followed by f4 and ♖f3 with compensation.

An early 8...b4 gives White an easier time: 9 ♖e4 ♖e4 (or 9...c5 10 ♖xf6+ gxf6!?) 10 ♗xe4 with an edge.

9 0-0 (D)



9...a6

9...b4 10 ♖e4 ♗e7 was more popular during the early 1990s, and fell out of fashion for no real reason. It's definitely a safer way to play, since the white knight blocks the e-pawn's advance.

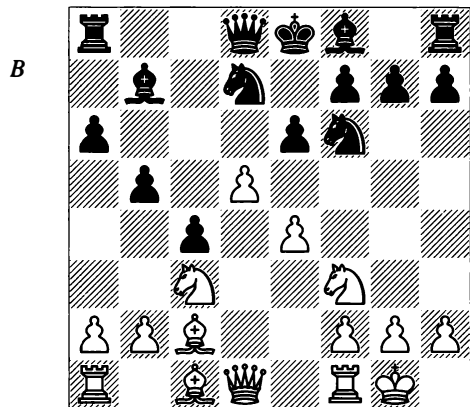
10 e4 c5 11 d5

The white centre will soon be largely dissolved, but the question is whether Black can handle the burst of energy granted to the white pieces by this advance.

11...c4

11...exd5? 12 exd5 followed by ♖e1+ is nasty.

12 ♗c2 (D)

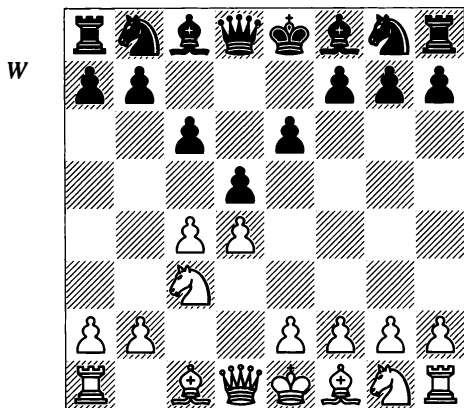


12...♖c7!

This move both covers e5 and prepares queenside castling. White seems to have an edge here. For instance, after 13 ♖d4 ♖c5 14 ♗e3 White has comfortable development, but Black's position is very playable.

Wedge Variation

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 c6 (D)



This can't really be called a Semi-Slav, though it has obvious similarities. Obviously 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 would directly transpose into that opening, though both sides have alternatives. One of the main reasons Black plays this move-order is to avoid the Exchange Slav which, as has been seen, is a very boring opening. If White now captures on d5 then Black recaptures with the e-pawn, maintaining some imbalance and (more importantly) equalizing immediately: 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘f3 ♘f6 6 ♗g5 ♗e7 7 ♜c2 (or else ...♗f5 is played) 7...g6! with equal chances, as shown in the Exchange QGD section.

4 e4!

Introducing a gambit which, I think, gives excellent compensation.

4 ♘f3 dxc4 is the Noteboom/Abrahams Variation: 5 a4 ♗b4 6 e3 b5 7 ♗d2 a5! 8 axb5 ♗xc3 9 ♗xc3 cxb5 10 b3 ♗b7 11 bxc4 b4 with a very sharp position, where each side's

pawn-majority has the potential to become overwhelming.

4 e3 is highly likely to transpose to Semi-Slav lines, but Black also has the option of playing ...f5, with a kind of Stonewall Dutch where White has foregone the option of the standard set-up with g3.

4...dxe4

4...♗b4 is also playable, though 5 exd5 exd5 6 cxd5 ♜xd5 7 ♘f3 followed by ♗d3 and 0-0 gives White a pretty good IQP position.

5 ♘xe4 ♗b4+

Forcing White to block the defence of his d-pawn.

6 ♗d2 ♜xd4

6...♗xd2+ 7 ♜xd2 gives White an easier route to an edge.

7 ♗xb4 ♜xe4+ 8 ♗e2 ♘a6

It's unclear how Black should spend his 'free' move.

8...♘d7 9 ♘f3 b6 10 ♜d6 ♗b7 11 ♘d2 ♜e5 12 ♜xe5! ♘xe5 13 ♗c3 f6 14 ♗xe5 fxe5 15 ♘e4 is a little better for White, who will follow up with c5, but this still must be playable.

8...♘e7 9 ♜d2 ♘g6 is logical, covering both e7 and f8 which can be vulnerable to a white queen.

9 ♗a5

Weakening c6 but also accelerating Black's queenside development – the immediate 9 ♗c3 also makes sense.

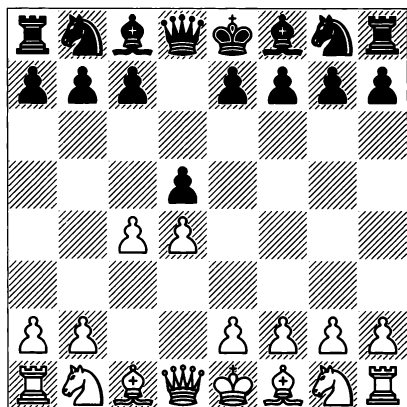
9...b6 10 ♗c3

Black is being subjected to immense pressure. 10 ♜d6!? is also possible, with a huge attack after 10...bxa5 11 ♜d1.

Chigorin and Unusual Lines

1 d4 d5 2 c4 (D)

B



2...♟c6 (D)

This was invented by Mikhail Chigorin, and used by Alexander Morozevich in his rise to the top. Black is generally ill-advised to block his c-pawn like this, since it cuts out his natural counterplay with ...c5, and so the Chigorin has never been really popular.

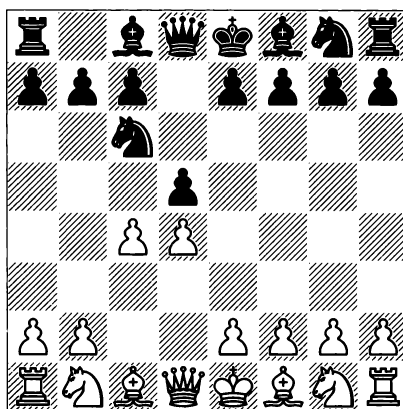
2...♟f5, the Baltic Defence, is also played sometimes. White's best is 3 cxd5 (this was the threat, after all – other moves allow Black to play ...e6 which, I think, improves his chances; 3 ♟f3 e6 4 ♟c3 c6 5 ♟b3 is also a little better for White, since ...♟c7, either immediately or following ...♟b6 c5, can be met by ♟f4! when the queen can't desert the b-pawn for fear of losing the a8-rook) 3...♟xb1 4 ♟a4+ c6 5 ♟xb1! ♟xd5 when 6 f3 followed by 7 e4 will give him control of the centre.

The immediate 2...e5, the Albin Counter-Gambit, is an aggressive approach, probably better than its reputation. 3 dxe5 d4 4 ♟f3 (the direct 4 e3? fails to 4...♟b4+ 5 ♟d2 dxe3!, and if 6 ♟xb4? then 6...exf2+ 7 ♟e2 fxg1 ♟+) 4...♟c6 5 g3 ♟g4 (5...♟ge7!? is an alternative approach, planning a quick ...♟g6

to win back the e5-pawn) 6 ♟g2 ♟d7 7 0-0 0-0-0 and Black has some compensation.

2...c5 doesn't lose a pawn, but Black seems unprepared for so much central tension. After 3 cxd5 ♟f6 (3...♟xd5 4 ♟f3 cxd4 5 ♟c3! gives White too many extra tempi) 4 ♟f3 cxd4 5 ♟xd4 ♟xd5 6 e4 ♟b4 7 ♟a4+ ♟8c6 8 ♟xc6 ♟xc6 9 ♟c3 e6 10 ♟e3 White is better.

W



3 ♟c3

It's not clear which move offers White the best chances of an advantage at this point.

3 ♟f3 ♟g4 4 cxd5 (4 ♟c3 e6 followed by ...♟b4 gives Black very easy development, though White should still have an edge) 4...♟xf3 5 dxc6 ♟xc6 6 ♟c3 e6 7 e4 is also promising for White.

3 cxd5 ♟xd5 4 e3 e5 5 ♟c3 ♟b4 6 ♟d2 ♟xc3 7 ♟xc3 (7 bxc3 ♟f6 8 f3 0-0 9 e4 ♟d6 10 d5 ♟e7 11 c4 requires energetic play from Black to generate enough pressure against the white pawns; he should probably start with 11...♟d7, planning ...♟c5 and ...f5) 7...exd4 8 ♟e2! ♟ge7 9 ♟xd4 ♟xd4 (9...0-0!? 10 ♟b5 ♟g5 is a more enterprising option, when taking on c7 gives Black a dangerous lead in development) 10 ♟xd4 ♟xd4 11 ♟xd4 gives White a better endgame.

3...dxc4 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 e4

After 5 d5 ♘a5 6 ♖a4+ c6 7 b4 White wins the knight, but 7...b5! 8 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 9 bxa5 b4 and ...cxd5 will give Black enough compensation.

5 e3 leads to a different type of game after 5...e5! 6 ♙xc4 exd4 7 exd4.

5...♙g4

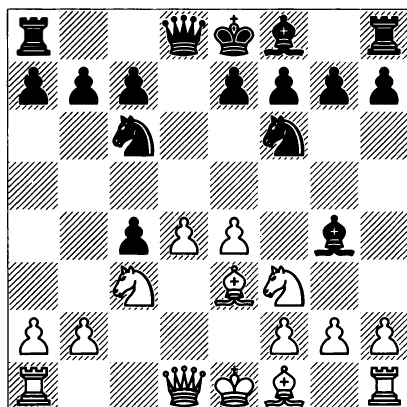
5...♘a5 6 ♙xc4! ♘xc4 7 ♖a4+ and 8 ♖xc4 leaves White with absolute central domination.

6 ♙e3 (D)

6...e6

6...♙xf3 7 gxf3 e5 creates squares for the black knights but after 8 d5 ♘b8 9 ♙xc4 ♘bd7 10 ♖b3 ♙c5 11 ♖xb7 Black is struggling.

B

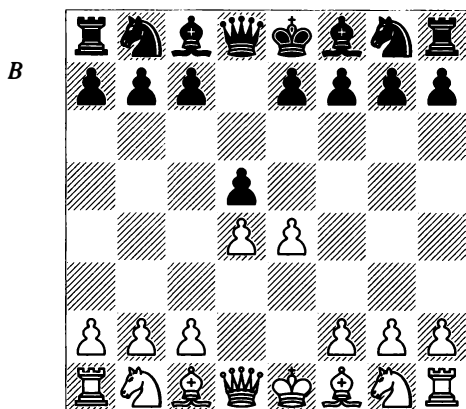


7 ♙xc4 ♙b4 8 ♖c2 0-0 9 ♚d1

With his strong centre, White's position is preferable.

Blackmar-Diemer Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 e4 (D)



While this isn't really a Queen's Gambit, I had to stick the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit in somewhere. I've seen more promising players lured into incompetence by this opening than I care to remember. The basic pattern is this – player learns BDG, tries to get it in every game, thus limiting his chess experience (and, since the opening isn't good, he loses too many games, meaning that his rating stays low and he can't get games against better players). **Nobody who plays good chess plays this line, and nobody who plays good chess ever will.**

2...dxe4 3 ♖c3 ♜f6

3...e5 equalizes straight away.

4 f3

This is the point of the opening, and is necessary for White to complete his development. He hopes that the half-open e- and f-files will provide promising avenues of play against the black position, but it seems that these hopes are over-optimistic. The black e- and f-pawns, one of which is an extra pawn, perform an excellent defensive job and Black

isn't too far behind in development. One of the flaws of White's concept is that he is relying exclusively on piece-play without pawn-breaks, and this makes his life much harder.

4...exf3

4...e3 is a concept known from similar positions – by returning the pawn Black hopes to make the white development look silly (in particular, the position of the f3-pawn makes no sense). This is fully sufficient to equalize, but I still feel it constitutes a let-off for White, who is struggling to hold the balance in the main lines.

5 ♜xf3

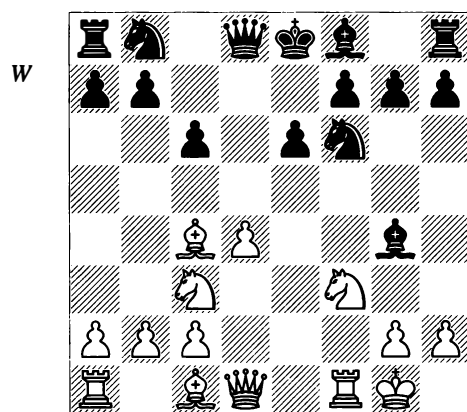
Now Black has a choice of several good set-ups.

5...♙g4

5...e6 6 ♙g5 ♙e7 looks pretty solid too.

5...g6 6 ♙c4 ♙g7 7 0-0 0-0 is fully playable, though to a certain extent White's opening is vindicated since Black can't block the c4-bishop with ...e6.

6 ♙c4 e6 7 0-0 c6 (D)

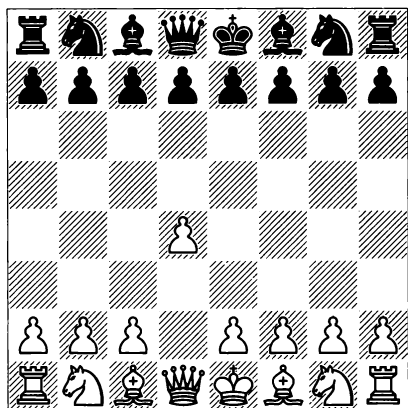


And after ...♙e7, ...♜bd7, and ...0-0, where did the pawn go?

Section 4: Indian Defences

1 d4 (D)

B



Much like the move away from the symmetrical 1 e4 e5, Black found alternatives to the sometimes tedious defence against the

Queen's Gambit. Most of these start 1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4, and now:

1) Black can try to prevent e4, but without resorting to ...d5. This can be achieved by 2...e6 3 ♞c3 ♠b4 (the Nimzo-Indian Defence), which is accompanied by (after 3 ♟f3) the Queen's Indian Defence (3...b6) and the Bogo-Indian Defence (3...♠b4+).

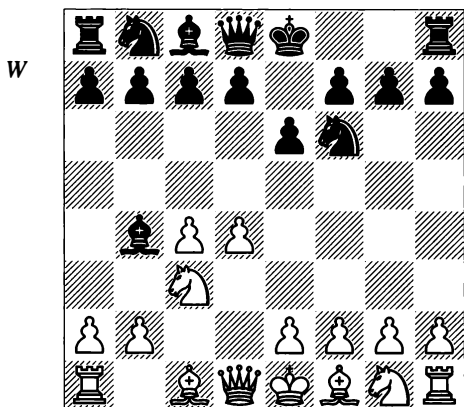
2) Black can allow e4 and try to play against the centre. This philosophy is at the heart of two defences after 2...g6 3 ♞c3, the King's Indian (3...♠g7) and the Grünfeld (3...d5).

3) Black can hit the centre with 2...c5. After 3 d5 he has two main options, the Benko Gambit (3...b5!?) and the Modern Benoni (beginning with 3...e6).

Black can also frustrate e4 in a more radical fashion with 1...f5, the Dutch Defence.

Nimzo-Indian

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 (D)



In view of White's intended 4 e4, occupying the centre completely, for generations the only acceptable move for Black was 3...d5. Then Aron Nimzowitsch demonstrated that the e4-square could be indirectly controlled by this developing bishop move, and thus was born the most durable and popular of the closed defences, the Nimzo-Indian. The e4-square is of crucial importance to both sides in this opening, and Black often must 'concede the minor exchange' (give up a bishop for a knight) to maintain level chances in an unbalanced position.

The comments of GM Bent Larsen, the most faithful of Nimzowitsch's disciples and a lifelong adherent of the Nimzo-Indian, should be instructive for anyone trying to decide which defence to select against 1 d4: "If Black is not to leave the initiative to White during the first part of the game, he must take a certain risk. He may sacrifice a pawn (like the Volga or Benko Gambit 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5!? 4 cxb5 a6) or accept a pawn weakness; for instance, the isolated d-pawn in the Tarrasch Defence 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5!? 4 cxd5 exd5. The lack of space on one side of

the board which Black accepts in, for instance, many variations of the King's Indian may also be considered such a risk, and in many openings Black gives up the bishop-pair. If I have a choice between these possibilities, I rather prefer the latter, while I want very good compensation for taking on an isolated pawn!"

One point which must be made is that the Nimzo-Indian has the capacity to walk all over passive play from White. White simply must try to open the position for his two bishops and put pressure on Black, since otherwise he will find himself in a horrible bind.

The most straightforward attempt is 4 a3, the Sämisch variation, which forces Black to part with his dark-squared bishop. After 4...♙xc3+ 5 bxc3, White aims to build an imposing centre with e4 while Black will play on the queenside.

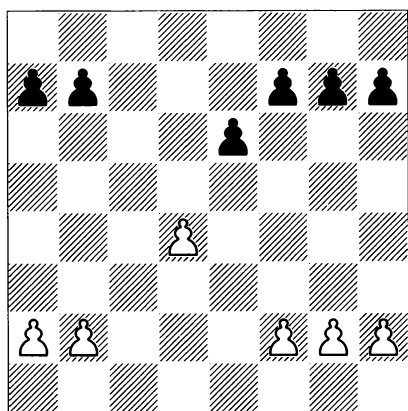
The Rubinstein variation, 4 e3, prepares rapid development (normally with ♙d3, ♘f3 and 0-0), after which White will return to his plan of playing for e4.

The Leningrad variation, 4 ♙g5, isn't too popular at GM level these days but is still very dangerous for the unprepared player.

Kasparov patronized 4 ♘f3 in a couple of world championship matches against Karpov – such endorsements generally bode well for the popularity of a variation, and this line has developed a substantial body of theory.

Our final section concerns the Classical variation, 4 ♗c2, which has recently been more popular than all of White's other options combined. White intends to continue 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 ♗xc3, gaining the bishop-pair without compromising his pawn-structure. The drawback is obviously a substantial time investment – the queen on c3 is also subject to harassment. Accordingly play gets sharp, critical and messy.

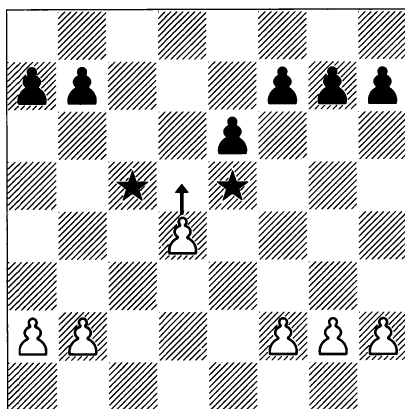
The Isolated Queen's Pawn



A very common structure arising from the Nimzo-Indian is the Isolated Queen's Pawn (IQP for short). Other examples include the Caro-Kann (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♖c3 e6 6 ♗f3 ♙e7 7 ♙d3 dxc4 8 ♙xc4), the c3 Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 ♗xd5 4 d4 ♗f6 5 ♙e3 e6 6 ♗f3 cxd4 7 cxd4) and the Queen's Gambit Accepted (1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♗f3 ♗f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♙xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 ♙b3 cxd4 8 exd4). It can also arise with a black pawn on the c-file rather than the e-file; for instance, in the Exchange French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 ♗f3 ♙d6 5 c4 dxc4 6 ♙xc4) and the Giuoco Piano (1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♙c4 ♙c5 4 c3 ♗f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♙b4+ 7 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 8 ♗bxd2 d5 9 exd5 ♗xd5). And Black can get an IQP himself in many variations, such as the Tarrasch Defence (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f3 ♗f6 6 g3 ♗c6 7 ♙g2 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♙g5 cxd4 10 ♗xd4) and the French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♗gf3 ♗c6 6 ♙b5 ♙d6 7 dxc5 ♙xc5).

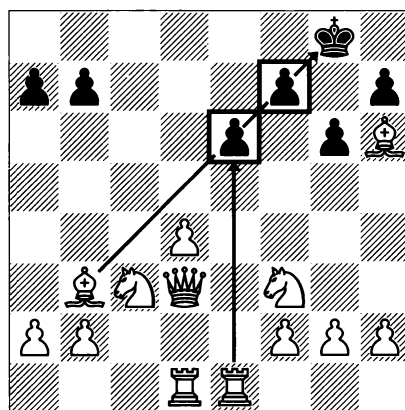
Idea for White No. 1: d4-d5 Advance

First we'll talk about the advantages of the IQP and discuss the main plan to increase these advantages, the **d4-d5 advance**. We can see that, in the following diagram, White has a space advantage since he has a central



pawn on the fourth rank while Black only has one on the third. This makes it easier for White to develop his pieces actively. The d4-pawn also offers White control of the c5- and e5-squares. The primary plan in these positions is the d4-d5 advance. After ...exd5 and White recapturing on d5 with a piece, we have a position where there are no pawns in the centre, i.e. a very open position. These positions favour the more active side, which in general is the side with the IQP (for the reasons given above). So White should always look out for the opportunity to play d5.

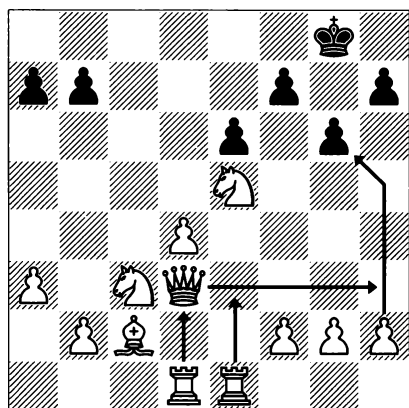
Idea for White No. 2: Central Attack



White can also use his superior piece activity to launch a **central attack**. This involves

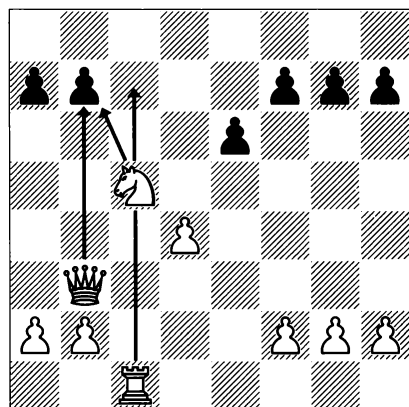
sacrificing pieces on f7 and e6 to try to checkmate the black king. Obviously, precise calculation is required, but in the right circumstances this plan can be lethal.

Idea for White No. 3: Kingside Attack



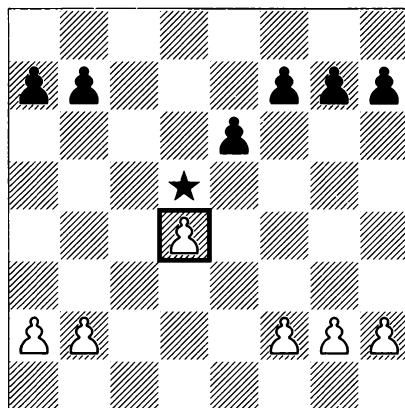
It's also common for White to launch a **kingside attack**. There are several ways to increase the pressure on the kingside. One idea is the rook lift ♖e1-e3-h3 (or ♖d1-d3-h3), which can be very effective. Another possibility is to push the h-pawn, which gives control over g5 and allows a further advance, weakening the black kingside.

Idea for White No. 4: Queenside Play



White can also engage in **queenside play**. This involves occupying the c-file with a rook and sometimes putting a knight on c5.

Idea for Black: Simplification



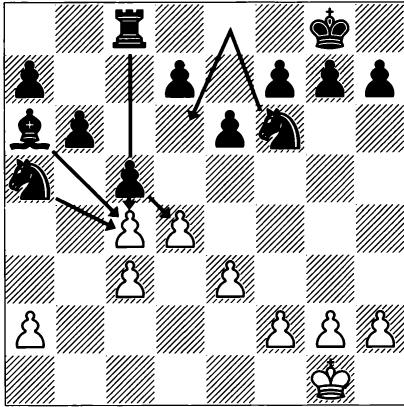
We've seen lots of promising ideas for the possessor of the IQP. Now we're going to talk about what to do when facing such a pawn.

The IQP has two weaknesses: the pawn itself and the square in front of the pawn. The pawn can become weak because, being isolated, it cannot be protected by another pawn, but instead must rely on pieces. These pieces can end up occupying passive, defensive positions. The square in front of the pawn is another weakness: it can't be controlled by a pawn and hence is a **central outpost**, and a very nice square for a knight.

The way to exploit these advantages is **simplification**. The IQP tends to get weaker as more pieces are exchanged, because the space advantage it offers is no longer so significant and the defender can organize his pieces to attack the pawn. Also kingside attacking ideas aren't as promising without lots of pieces. So, when facing the IQP, exchange pieces and try to win an endgame!

Working on the Queenside Weaknesses

White often obtains doubled c-pawns in the Nimzo-Indian. The following diagram shows



a model way of attacking them – the bishop is brought to a6, and the knight to c6 and a5. The c-pawn is pushed to c5 so that the c-file can be opened for a rook at an appropriate moment. A subtle point is that it often helps Black if his d-pawn hasn't moved, since this allows the extravagant ...d8-d6 to bring further pressure to bear. Of course, this involves a lot of pieces which may be needed for the defence of the kingside if White plays well, but against passive play this plan works like a dream.

Sämisch & 4 f3

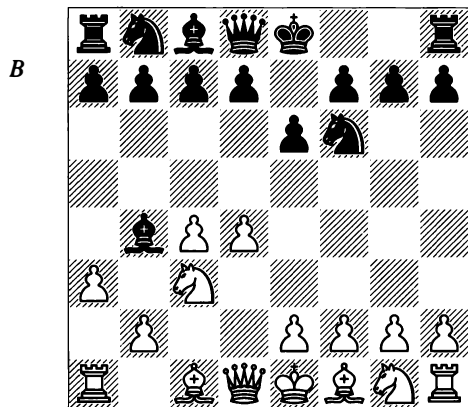
1 d4 f6 2 c4 e6 3 d3 b4 4 a3

The Sämisch variation is in many ways White's most natural response to the Nimzo-Indian. As retreating to a5 drops a bishop and retreating elsewhere renders Black's third move useless, the bishop must capture the knight, compromising the white structure after 4...dxc3+ 5 bxc3. Having the two bishops, White would like to open the position, while Black will try to keep things closed, and can consider an attack on the c4-pawn (now denied pawn support) with moves such as ...c5 (pressurizing the centre and keeping the option of later opening the c-file for a rook), ...b6, ...a6, ...d6 and ...a5. Grimly hanging on to his queenside pawns isn't an

inspiring prospect for White, so he'll try to attack on the kingside to distract Black from the queenside mess.

4 f3 often transposes, and was a big favourite of the then Latvian GM Alexei Shirov when he burst onto the scene. In view of the threatened 5 e4 Black really must play 4...d5 now. It's important to understand that, although Black chose not to play this very pawn advance one move ago, circumstances are now different – the white pawn now sits somewhat uncomfortably on f3 ("ask the g1-knight what he thinks about the move f3!" was the late GM Eduard Gufeld's way of describing the very similar Sämisch variation of the King's Indian), so Black has some reason to be happy with this interposition. After 5 a3, 5...dxc3+ will transpose to positions considered in the main variation, but Black can also consider 5...dxe7 (arguing that White's a3 and f3 are less useful than Black's ...dxe7), leading to some interesting play after 6 e4; for instance, 6...dxe4 (6...c5 7 cxd5 exd5 8 e5 is another important line) 7 fxe4 e5!? 8 d5 (8 dxe5? is completely mistaken – after the exchange of queens Black will easily regain the e5-pawn in the long run, while the white pawn-structure is ruined) 8...dxc5 9 dxf3 d6! when White has a spatial advantage but his king will have to float around the centre of the board. 10 d4 e2+ 11 e2 b5!? leads to extreme complications.

We now return to 4 a3 (D):

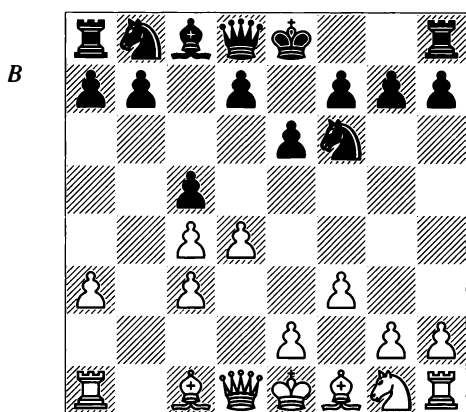


4...♙xc3+ 5 bxc3

Now Black can't just sit back and allow White to dominate the centre with f3 and e4. Fortunately he has a range of promising counterattacking options, all of which seem to promise equality.

5...c5

5...♞e4 6 ♖c2 f5 is another dynamic and fully adequate try – after 7 ♞h3 (7 f3? ♖h4+ is a typical tactic) Black will follow up with ...0-0 and ...b6, with reasonable chances of maintaining the blockade.

6 f3 (D)**6...d5!**

The best move – although the straggler on c4 is liquidated, White's pawn-structure is still far from ideal, and preventing e4 is a vital concern here as in almost all queen's pawn openings.

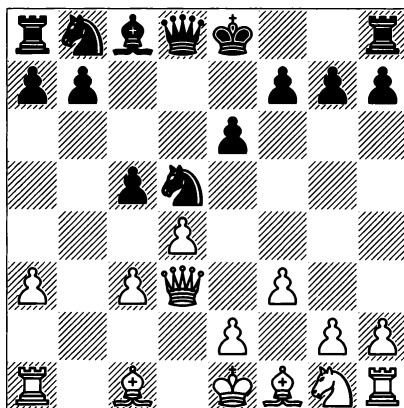
7 cxd5 ♞xd5 8 ♖d3 (D)

8 dxc5 is currently more popular, abandoning the idea of setting up a broad centre, but looking to put White's bishop-pair to use in an open position.

No prizes for guessing White's next move! If Black lets White get in 9 e4 'for free' then he would be clearly worse. Thus he must try to gain something from what's about to happen, and manages to do so by robbing White of the bishop-pair:

8...b6! 9 e4 ♙a6!

B



This is a method of developing the bishop known from several variations of the French Defence – there, as here, the object is merely to exchange light-squared bishops. In the French this exchange benefits Black because his bishop is 'bad' (i.e. restricted by its own central pawns), and here it benefits Black because the two bishops would otherwise prove more effective than the black bishop and knight.

10 ♖d2 ♙xf1 11 ♙xf1 ♞e7

Black intends ...♞bc6 with comfortable development for all his pieces, while White hopes after ♞e2, a4 and ♙a3 to utilize his space advantage. The position is balanced.

Rubinstein

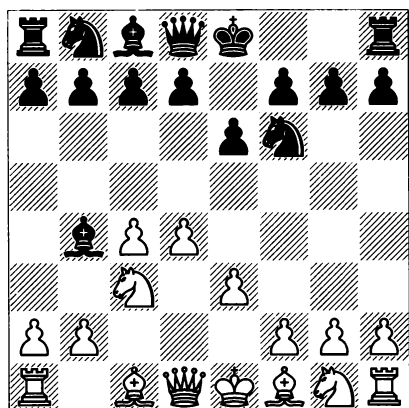
1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♞c3 ♙b4 4 e3 (D)

It seems like White has given up all hope of playing for e4, but this couldn't be further from the truth – White intends to develop his pieces and then play for e4 at a more opportune moment. The number of possibilities in this variation is huge, and here we'll focus on two of the traditional main lines – the IQP structure, and what I've opted to call the 'Classical Main Line'.

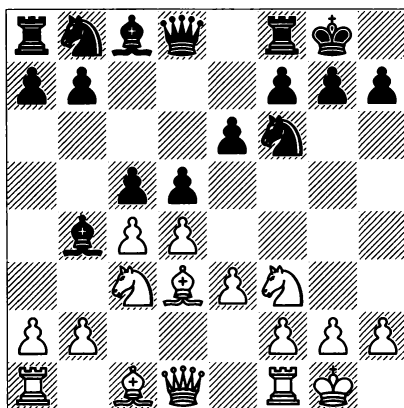
4...0-0

4...b6 is another interesting approach – combining development with control of e4

B



B



can't be wrong. After 5 ♙d3 (5 ♜e2 ♜e4 6 ♜c2 ♙b7 7 a3 ♙xc3 + 8 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 9 ♜xc3 is another position where the two bishops have a lot of work to do in order to prove their value) 5... ♙b7 6 ♜f3 ♜e4 7 ♜c2 f5 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 Black is well placed.

The immediate 4...c5 5 ♙d3 ♜c6 leads to two interesting variations:

a) 6 ♜e2 ? cxd4 7 exd4 d5 8 cxd5 ♜xd5 9 0-0 is a slight twist on conventional IQP positions, with balanced chances.

b) 6 ♜f3 ♙xc3 +! 7 bxc3 d6! is a system named after the German GM Robert Hübner, who developed this line into a fully viable system. Black plans to shut things down with ...e5, when White's dark-squared bishop isn't a happy piece.

5 ♜f3

5 ♜e2 is a good alternative, planning to recapture on c3 with the knight. Black's best approach is thus to avoid the exchange; for instance, 5...d5 (5... ♞e8 , preparing f8 for the bishop, also makes sense) 6 a3 ♙d6 ? when after 7 c5 ♙e7 Black plans ...c6, ... ♜bd7 and ...e5.

5...d5! 6 ♙d3 c5!

Both of these moves serve to make the e4 advance more difficult to achieve – the d-pawn is directly controlling the square, while the c-pawn attacks d4 and so makes White reluctant to remove its support.

7 0-0 (D)

7...cxd4

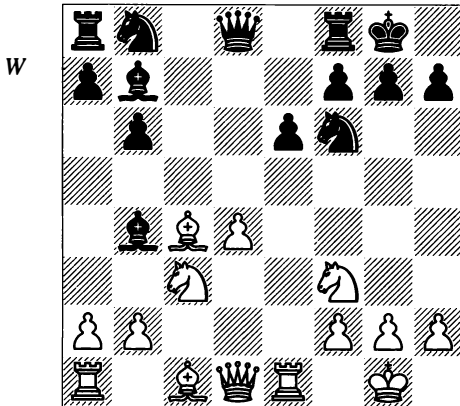
Keeping the tension with 7... ♜c6 results in an important position after 8 a3 ♙xc3 (8... ♙a5 , keeping the bishop and the tension, is a sharper alternative) 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 ♙xc4 ♜c7 . For an understanding of this position, I can't improve on the comments by GM David Bronstein in his classic book *Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953*, which readers should definitely try to get their hands on: "The placement of White's pieces radiates a great deal of potential energy, which ought to be converted into kinetic – White must set his centre pawns in motion, activating both his rooks and his deeply-buried dark-squared bishop. The most logical plan would seem to be the advance of the e-pawn, first to e4, and then to e5, to drive Black's knight from f6 and lay the groundwork for a kingside attack. Black in turn must either prevent the e-pawn's advance or counterattack the white pawn-centre, which will lose some of its solidity the moment the pawn advances from e3 to e4." Black's typical treatment is to play ...e5!, freeing his c8-bishop and planning ...e4 to block in the c1-bishop. For instance, 11 ♙a2 e5! 12 h3 e4! with a dynamic game in prospect.

8 exd4 dxc4 9 ♙xc4

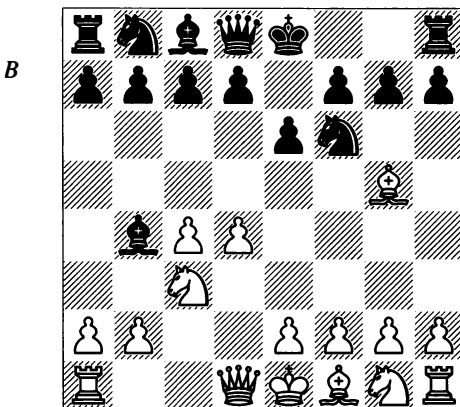
The pawn exchanges have served two purposes for Black – weakening White's d-pawn, and...

9...b6!

...allowing the bishop to develop smoothly on the h1-a8 diagonal.

10 ♖e1 ♜b7 (D)

This is a very standard Isolated Queen's Pawn position, where White has some activity to compensate for his weakness.

Leningrad**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♜b4 4 ♜g5 (D)**

This move was a long-time favourite of former world champion Boris Spassky. Having seen the difficulties in activating the dark-squared bishop after 4 e3, it is logical to try to

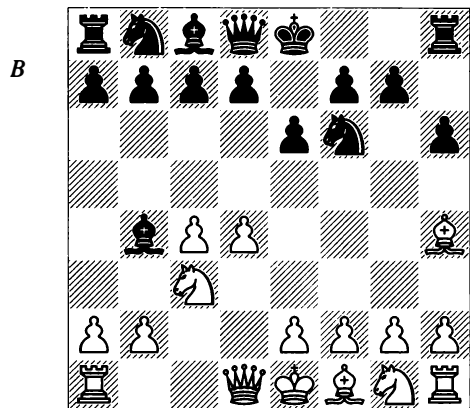
develop it outside the pawn-chain, much as in the Queen's Gambit Declined.

The Leningrad Variation has fallen out of favour today – the bishop often ends up sidelined on g3, while Black can block the position enough for his knights to feel comfortable.

4...h6!

Immediately putting the question to the bishop is the right idea 9 times out of 10 – notice that Black is risking no structural damage here, so 5 ♜xf6? ♙xf6 leaves White struggling to maintain the balance.

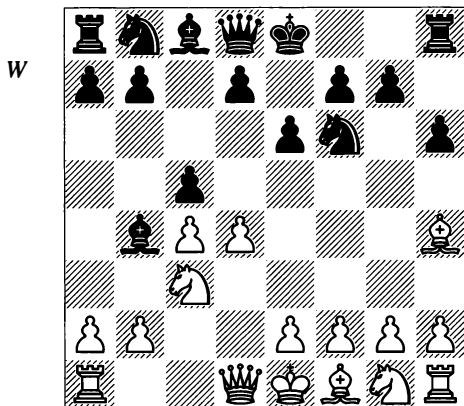
4...d5 is a position also reached from the QGD. After 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♘f3 h6, White can retreat, but 7 ♜xf6 is enough for an edge.

5 ♜h4 (D)**5...c5! (D)**

Black must put some more pressure on the white centre and this is the most logical way to do it – note that the queen can now rush to a5 which, coupled with ...♘e4, could put the c3-knight under intolerable pressure.

5...d5 again gives Black a version of the Queen's Gambit Declined. While the bishop seems to be more active on b4 than on e7, it actually sits less harmoniously with the black set-up – now the f6-knight is pinned, which could lead to more pressure on the black centre, and the bishop on b4 will soon be challenged and either have to retreat with loss of

time or exchange on c3, when compared to a normal Nimzo-Indian White benefits from his dark-squared bishop being outside the pawn-chain.



6 d5

6 e3?! ♖a5! is very comfortable for Black. Note that the opening rule of “don’t move your queen in the opening” only applies in two cases:

1) You are falling behind in development.

2) The queen is exposed to attack. This second point is really an extension of the first, since the opponent can develop his pieces with gain of time; for instance, 1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 ♖xd4 ♘c6! when Black is already ahead in development.

Here neither is the case – Black is actually ahead in development, and is gaining time with his attack on the c3-knight, while the queen can’t be attacked by any of the white pieces. The moral from this is that opening rules and opening theory shouldn’t be blindly followed – you should know not only the rules and the theory but their rationales, and be prepared to play your own move when it’s better!

6...d6!

Since Black will be left with a light-squared bishop, he wants to place his pawns on dark squares. This concept was well explained by GM Tony Kosten: “Systematically moving

your pawns onto the squares of opposite colour to your bishop is a very good habit to get into. If your bishop controls squares of one colour and your pawns the other, they will be working together in a harmonious manner and this can only benefit your position. Otherwise, you may find that your pawns will impede your bishop, which will become ‘bad’.”

Note also that Black doesn’t rush to exchange on c3 – he may still want to play ...g5, ...♘e4 and ...♚a5 depending on White’s set-up. So he makes a good necessary move instead, and thereby retains maximum flexibility.

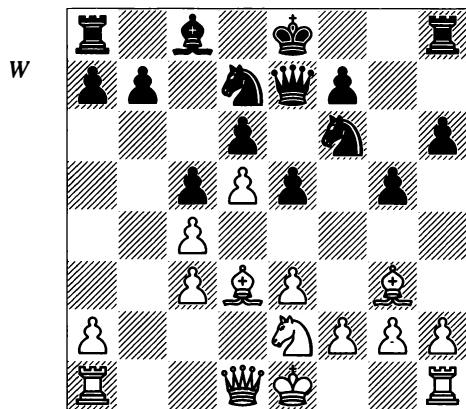
7 e3

Now White might play ♘e2, a3 and get the bishop-for-knight exchange without damaging his pawn-structure, so it’s a good time to chop on c3.

7...♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 e5!

Bishops need open diagonals while knights like blocked centres, so this move is self-explanatory.

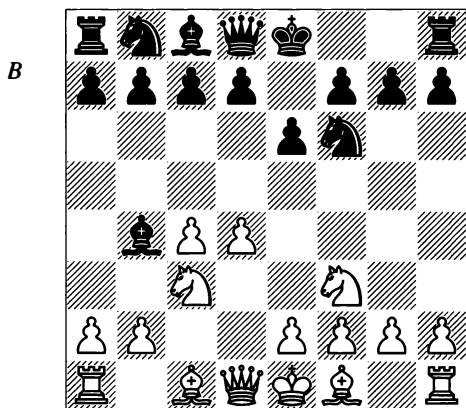
9 ♙d3 ♚e7 10 ♘e2 g5!? 11 ♙g3 ♘bd7 (D)



This position is absolutely fine for Black – the blocked centre gives him something of a bind, and provided he is vigilant, the two bishops shouldn’t outperform his knights any time soon.

Kasparov Variation

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♘f3 (D)



This was Garry Kasparov's choice in his 1985 world championship match against Anatoly Karpov – he used it six times, achieving the fantastic score of three wins and three draws. While the system is still used at a high level, Black's defences have been improved since Karpov's first attempts and now Kasparov himself prefers 4 ♖c2.

4...c5

4...0-0 5 ♗g5! shows one of the points of 4 ♘f3 – by waiting for the black king to castle, the g5-bishop now can't be driven away without weakening the black kingside. After 5...h6 6 ♗h4 c5 7 e3 White is a little better.

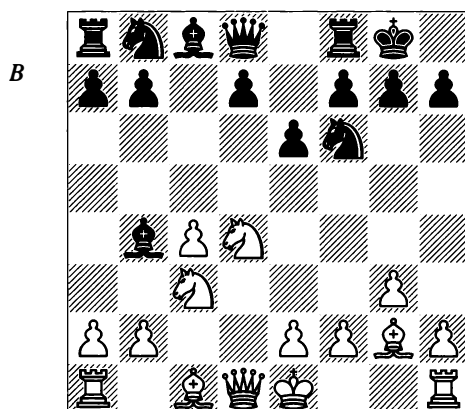
The position after 4...b6 can arise from either a Nimzo or a Queen's Indian. 5 ♗g5 ♗b7 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 g5 8 ♗g3 ♘e4 9 ♖c2 ♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 leads to another position where control of e4 is key – White will bring more pressure to bear with ♗d3 while Black can try ...d6 and ...f5 to hold the blockading knight in place, or else trade on g3.

5 g3 cxd4!

The first game of the 1985 match continued more aggressively with 5...♘e4, but after 6 ♖d3! ♖a5 7 ♖xe4! ♗xc3+ 8 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9 ♘xd2 Kasparov was well centralized and held the advantage.

5...♘c6! is another good response, increasing the pressure in the centre while developing a piece. After 6 ♗g2 ♘e4 7 ♗d2 ♘xd2 8 ♖xd2 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 0-0 the position is balanced.

6 ♘xd4 0-0 7 ♗g2 (D)

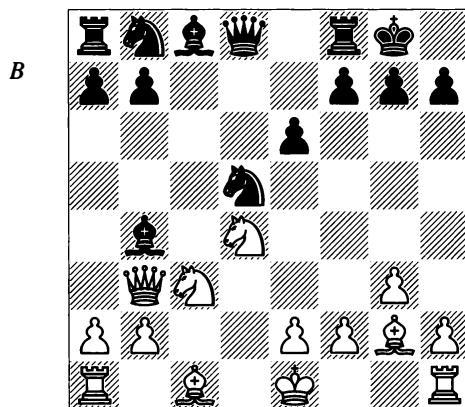


7...d5!

Black must act energetically before White castles.

7...♘c6 is like the last note except with an extra pair of minor pieces on the board, which favours the side with the space advantage (White, in case you were wondering!).

8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♖b3 (D)



This is the most energetic response, both defending and attacking crucial queenside

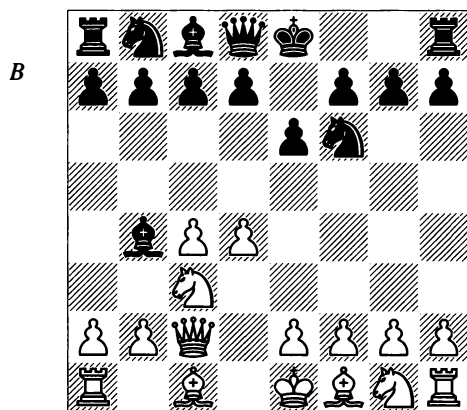
pieces. The position is very interesting – Black can isolate the white queenside pawns at the cost of the two bishops (... $\text{xc3}+$) or letting the g2-bishop rule the board (... xc3), but my own preference would be for 9... xc6 ! 10 xc6 bxc6 when Black is the one with the split pawns but his d5-knight is doing sterling work.

Classical (4 c2) & Others

1 d4 f6 2 c4 e6 3 c3 b4 4 c2 (D)

4 b3 was initially very popular – it seems to maintain all the advantages of 4 c2 while also attacking the b4-bishop. However, by taking his eye off the crucial e4-square, White loses control, and Black gains a good position with 4...c5! 5 dxc5 xc6 ! 6 f3 de4 !

4 d2 is a common beginner's response to the Nimzo, but causes Black no problems. After 4...0-0 5 a3 xc3 6 xc3 de4 ! White can't hang on to his two bishops.

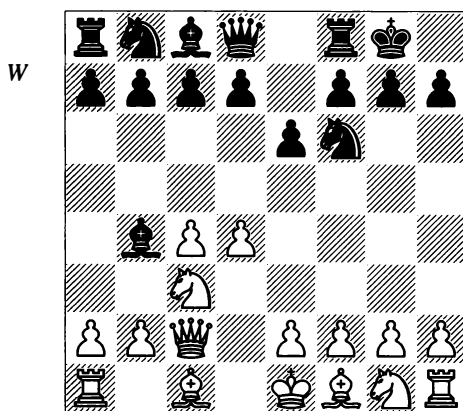


Here White would like to play a3 netting the bishop but without compromising his pawn-structure. As White is spending time (and bringing his queen out) in return for long-term gains, Black can and must play sharply, and some of the most interesting tussles occur in this line.

4...0-0 (D)

4...d5 is very logical: after 5 a3 (5 cxd5 exd5 6 g5 h6 7 h4 c5 had been thought good for Black ever since Botvinnik won a great game against Keres here, but Kasparov later showed that 8 dxc5! gives good chances of an advantage – at the moment Short's response 8...g5 9 g3 de4 10 e3 a5 looks critical, when 11 de2 f5 12 e5 ! maintains better prospects for White) 5... $\text{xc3}+$ 6 xc3 de4 7 c2 c5!? (7...e5!? is another sharp gambit; 7... xc6 8 e3 e5 9 cxd5 xd5 10 c4 $\text{a5}+$ 11 b4 xb4 12 xe4 $\text{c2}++$ 13 e2 $\text{e1}+$ 14 f3 xa1 15 b2 gives White a raging attack for his enormous material deficit) 8 dxc5 xc6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 f3 the position is razor sharp.

4...c5 5 dxc5 a6 6 a3 $\text{xc3}+$ 7 xc3 xc5 8 f3 is crunch time for Black – he must generate some play before his pieces are strangled with b4 and e4. Thus 8...d5! 9 cxd5 b6! is the best response, when 10 b4 (accepting the gambit with 10 dxe6? xe6 is far too dangerous – White has only developed his queen, while all of Black's pieces are ready to come into play) 10... a4 leads to an unbalanced position.

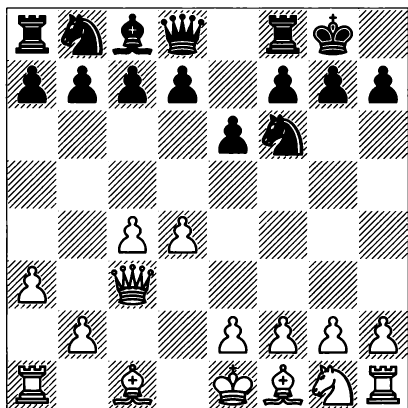


5 a3

5 e4!? has recently been tried by some strong grandmasters – this way of playing is viable, but after 5...d5! 6 e5 de4 ! (through the centre) Black has no problems.

5... ♖xc3+ 6 ♖xc3 (D)

B



6...b6

6... ♖e4!? 7 ♖c2 f5 is a favourite of one of the modern Nimzo experts, top British GM Michael Adams. His explanation was typically pragmatic – “It isn’t very good, but my results are reasonable and I keep playing it” – thus showing that even the world’s very best grandmasters sometimes aim for openings they enjoy and understand rather than merely those which are ‘objectively best’. Having said that, I’m not sure why Mickey considers the opening objectively suspect – Black is well placed in the centre, and of course 8 f3? ♖h4+ doesn’t bother him.

7 ♖g5 ♖b7 8 f3

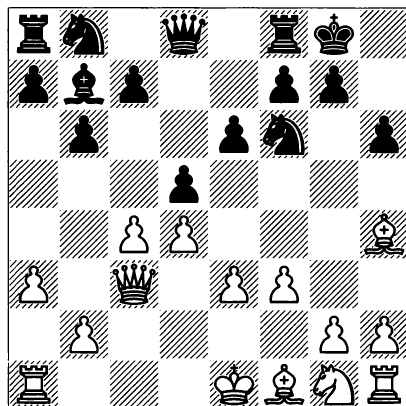
This is critical – White takes some control over the e4-square.

8 e3 d6 9 f3 ♖bd7 is similar – Black will strike at the centre with ...c5.

8 ♖h3 is a good alternative, which will often transpose to 8 f3 lines.

8...h6 9 ♖h4 d5 10 e3 (D)

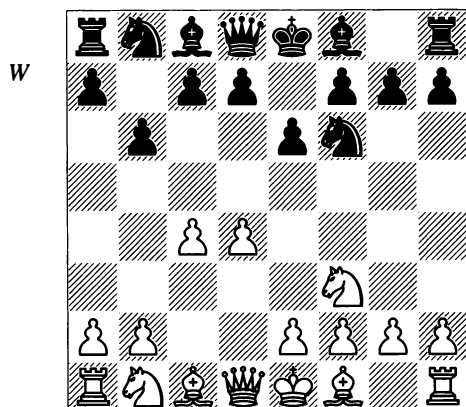
B



This position is one of the main battlegrounds of modern GMs in the Nimzo-Indian. White, as always, is hoping that his two bishops will give him a lasting edge, while Black enjoys better development. Often (after cxd5, ♖xd8 ♖xc3) a dynamically balanced endgame is reached.

Queen's Indian

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 (D)



As White isn't threatening an immediate e4, Black has slightly more flexibility in his development than he did after 3 ♘c3. The Queen's Indian aims to develop the c8-bishop (the piece with the clearest future – the b8-knight isn't well placed anywhere yet, and the dark-squared bishop could go to either e7 or b4) while increasing control over the crucial e4-square. Note also that, with natural development, White has given up the possibility of f3 and e4, so a bishop on b7 is likely to have a bright future.

White has several options:

4 g3 is the most popular, fianchettoing the king's bishop;

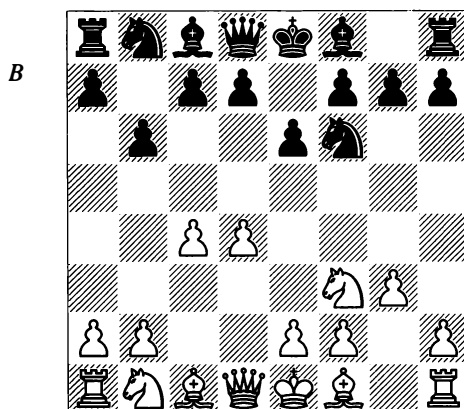
4 a3 is also interesting, preparing ♘c3 without allowing the pin ...♙b4 (note that the immediate 4 ♘c3 ♙b4 takes us back into Nimzo-Indian territory);

4 e3 is a natural approach with a fair amount of sting – White wants to develop naturally with ♙d3 and try to gain control of e4.

In the next chapter we'll have a look at 3...♙b4+, the Bogó Indian, which transposes back into Nimzo waters after 4 ♘c3 but can also be met by 4 ♙d2 or 4 ♘bd2.

4 g3

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 (D)



4...♙a6!?

This is the modern choice.

4...♙b7 is a more classical development, and after 5 ♙g2 ♙e7 6 ♘c3 (6 0-0 0-0 7 d5!? is an interesting pawn sacrifice; after 7...exd5 8 ♘h4! {an invention of GM Lev Polugaevsky} 8...c6 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘f5 White has reasonable compensation for his pawn deficit in view of his excellent g2-bishop and king-side pressure; on the other hand, Black is very solid and his position is certainly playable) 6...♘e4! (otherwise ♖c2 would gain control of the crucial e4-square) Black is quite comfortable.

5 b3

5 ♖b3!? is an alternative which has recently come into fashion. After 5...♘c6 6 ♘bd2 play can become very sharp; for instance, 6...d5 (6...♘a5 is also very logical, hitting the queen and the white c-pawn while preparing ...c5; after 7 ♖a4 ♙b7 8 ♙g2 c5 9 dxc5 bxc5 10 0-0 ♖c7 Black can look forward to good play down the b-file) 7 ♖a4

♙b7 8 ♙g2 ♙d6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♘c4!? dxc4 11 ♘e5 with huge complications.

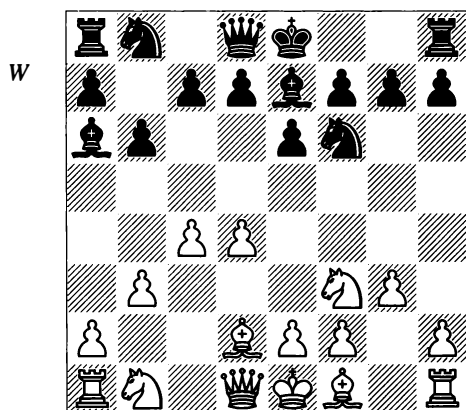
5 ♖a4 is another annoying move. Black should continue trying to attack the c4-pawn, and often sacrifices a pawn of his own to achieve this, as in Bronstein's suggestion of 5...c6 (if Black wants to hang on to his material, then 5...♙b7 6 ♙g2 c5 is sensible) 6 ♘c3 b5!? 7 cxb5 cxb5 8 ♘xb5 ♖b6 with compensation.

Finally, 5 ♘bd2 puts White's knight on a slightly awkward square, and Black has no problems after 5...d5 (5...♙b4 6 ♖c2 ♙b7! 7 ♙g2 ♙e4! could be even better, since Black gets full ownership of the crucial e4-square – after 8 ♖b3 ♙xd2+ 9 ♙xd2 0-0 10 0-0 d6 11 ♚fd1 ♘bd7 his position is rock solid) 6 ♙g2 ♙e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♘e5 ♙b7 9 b3 c5.

5...♙b4+

5...♙b7 6 ♙g2 ♙b4+ 7 ♙d2 a5 is a good alternative, using the a-pawn to stake a more active claim on the queenside.

6 ♙d2 ♙e7 (D)



Why does Black play ...♙b4+ followed by ...♙e7, giving White the extra move ♙d2? I leave it to GM Artur Yusupov to explain: "The point is that after b3, the natural square for White's bishop would have been b2. Later, perhaps, White will try to put this bishop on the long diagonal all the same, but on c3 it is less securely placed than on b2 and

also deprives the knight of its natural development square. On the other hand if White brings his knight out to c3, he will still have to remove his bishop from d2. So it turns out that Black's manoeuvre doesn't lose a tempo at all."

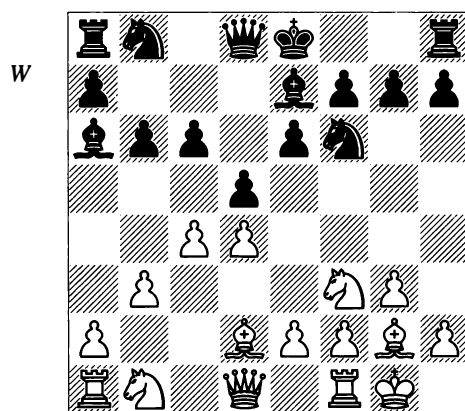
7 ♙g2 c6

Preparing ...d5. This illustrates another aspect of the a6-bishop's work – the c4-pawn will be under pressure.

8 0-0

White can try to sort out his queenside pieces immediately: 8 ♙c3 d5 9 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 10 ♖c2 preparing e4. Black can strike immediately with 10...c5 or keep things solid with 10...0-0 11 e4 ♙b7 12 0-0 ♚c8, when White has no clear way to make progress.

8...d5 (D)



Unless Black hits the c4-pawn, it is difficult to make sense of the bishop on a6.

9 ♘e5!

9 ♖c2 ♘bd7 gives Black easier development.

9...♘fd7!

The only way to challenge the knight, but a perfectly good one.

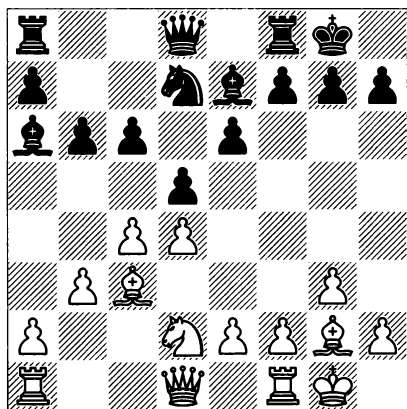
10 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 11 ♙c3 0-0 12 ♘d2 (D)

Now White is preparing the e4 advance.

12...♚c8

This is one of Black's best-established responses.

B



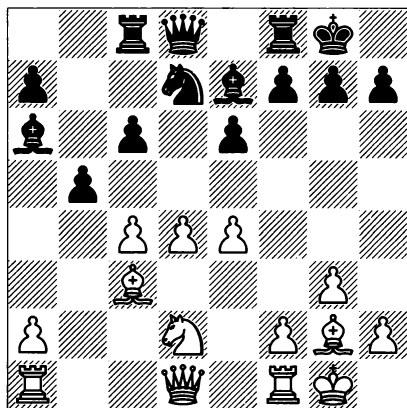
Queen's Indian expert GM Michael Adams prefers 12...d6 13 e4 b5, remaining flexible with the rook.

13 e4 dxc4

13...c5!? is a much sharper line – after 14 exd5 exd5 15 dxc5 dxc4 16 c6 cxb3 17 ♖e1 b2 18 ♙xb2 ♖c5 the position revolves around whether the c6-pawn is strong or weak.

14 bxc4 b5!? (D)

W

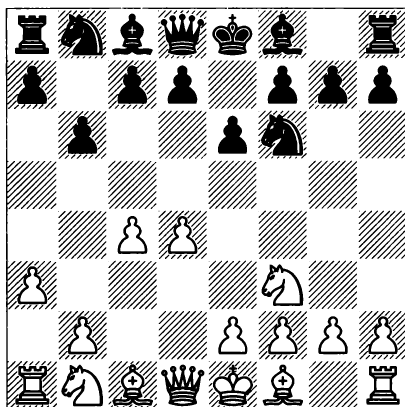


Black chips away at the edge, with good chances of eventually equalizing, since as long as he restrains the white centre the chances are that he's restraining the white bishops too. On no account must he allow White a central breakthrough; e.g., 15 ♖e1 bxc4 16 ♗c2 c5? 17 d5 exd5 18 exd5 is excellent for White despite the minus pawn.

4 a3

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 b6 4 a3 (D)

B



This is the Petrosian System, another line blessed with the Kasparov seal of approval – he made an outrageous score here in the early 1980s. It looks eccentric to spend a whole move protecting b4, but White argues that after ♖c3 he has good chances of getting control of e4, since ...d5 doesn't harmonize well with a fianchettoed black bishop. While not the most popular system nowadays, it still deserves respect.

4...♙b7

In a rare appearance for the black side, Kasparov chose 4...c5!? 5 d5 ♙a6 6 ♗c2 exd5 7 cxd5 g6 with a Benoni-type position, where White maintains slightly better chances once he fianchettoes his king's bishop.

4...♙a6 5 ♗c2 ♙b7! is another good continuation, deflecting the queen from the defence of the d-pawn. After 6 ♖c3 c5 7 e4 cxd4 8 ♖xd4 ♖c6 (8...♙c5 is also fine) 9 ♖xc6 ♙xc6 Black has a solid position.

5 ♖c3 d5!

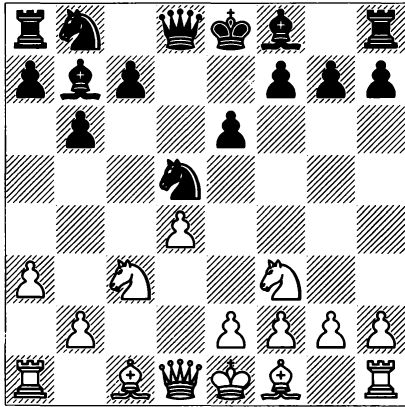
Otherwise 6 d5! will win the centre.

6 cxd5 ♖xd5 (D)

This looks like the most harmonious – with the bishop already on b7, Black wants to keep the long diagonal open.

7 ♗c2

W

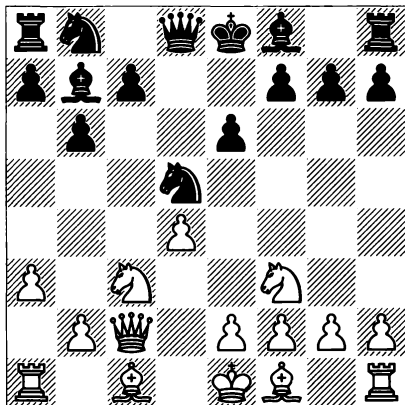


This prepares e4, which would have lost a pawn if played immediately.

7 ♞d2 is a conservative alternative, preparing to recapture on c3 with the bishop. It also has elements of a waiting move, since after Black's most natural response 7... ♞d7 his queen can no longer recapture on d5, which means that after 8 ♞xd5! ♞xd5 9 ♞c2 c5 10 e4 he has lost control of the centre. While this looks a little better for White, Black has some earlier alternatives – 8...exd5, when the b7-bishop is blocked but the white pieces aren't tremendously active; and 7... $\text{♞f6!?$, maintaining control of the central light squares and leaving the d2-bishop looking stupid.

Now we return to 7 ♞c2 (D):

B



7...c5

Prefacing this with 7... ♞xc3 8 bxc3 before playing 8...c5 9 e4 ♞c6 (9... ♞d7 10 $\text{♞d3 ♞c7!?$, intending to exchange on d4 and trade queens, is a good alternative) 10 ♞b2 ♞c8 11 ♞d1 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♞d6 (immediate knight hops lead nowhere) 13 ♞b1 leaves White with a perfect centre and the better game (despite Black's excellent development).

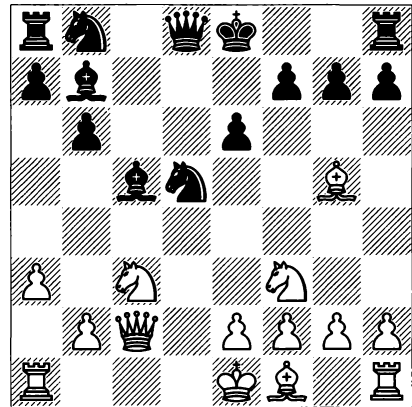
8 dxc5

By making such an anti-positional move, White is stating that he feels his pieces will be better placed in the resulting open position.

8 e4 ♞xc3 9 bxc3 is the last note.

8... ♞xc5 9 ♞g5 (D)

B



White is more active.

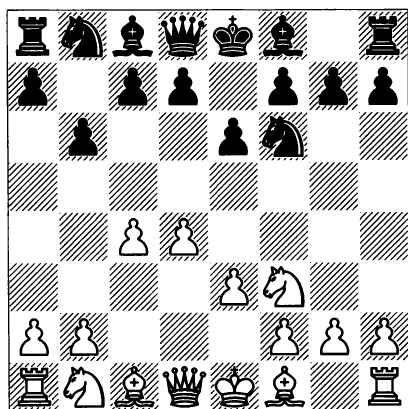
4 e3 & 4 ♞f4

1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♞f3 b6 4 e3 (D)

This has recently appeared in some high-level games, but Black should be fine as long as he remembers to strike at the centre and keep control of e4.

4 ♞f4 ♞b7 5 e3 tries to get the same thing with the bishop outside the pawn-chain, and was championed by the late English GM Tony Miles, but Black has the disruptive 5... ♞b4+ available. Now 6 ♞fd2 0-0 7 a3 ♞e7 8 ♞c3 d5! 9 cxd5 ♞xd5 10 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 11 ♞c2 c5 is equal.

B



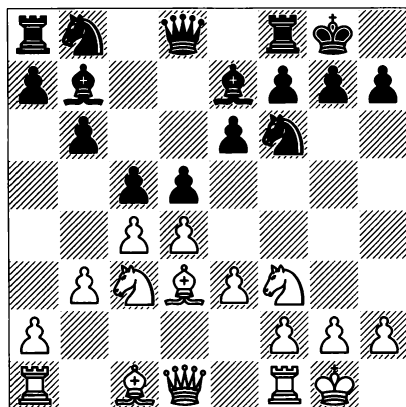
4...♙b7 5 ♙d3 d5!

The double fianchetto with 5...c5 6 0-0 g6 7 ♘c3 ♙g7 appears less sound: 8 d5! exd5 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘xd5 ♙xd5 11 ♙xg6 hxg6 12 ♚xd5 ♘c6 13 e4 ♚f6 14 ♘g5 ♖d8 15

♙d2 0-0 16 ♙c3 with a good position for White.

6 0-0 ♙e7 7 b3 0-0 8 ♘c3 c5 (D)

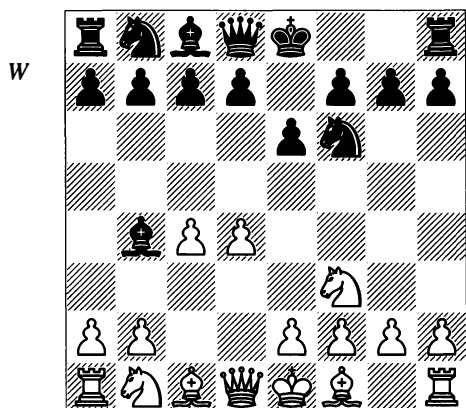
W



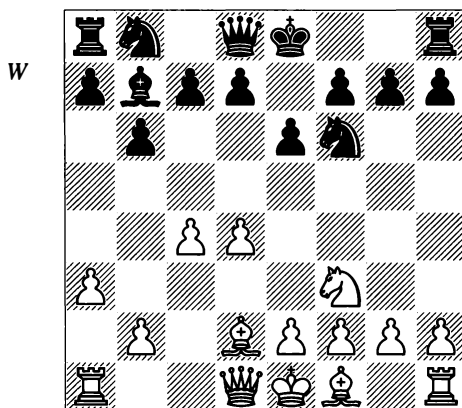
Black is no worse.

Bogo-Indian

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♙b4+ (D)



5 a3 ♙xd2+ 6 ♙xd2 ♙b7 (D)



4 ♘bd2

As mentioned earlier, 4 ♘c3 transposes to the Kasparov line of the Nimzo-Indian.

4 ♙d2 is the other main independent move, and can be met in several ways:

a) It's not clear that White has any real advantage after 4...♙xd2+ 5 ♖xd2 0-0 6 g3 d5; for instance, 7 ♙g2 ♘bd7 8 ♖c2 b6 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 0-0 c5!.

b) 4...c5 (an odd-looking way to reinforce the bishop) 5 ♙xb4 cxb4 6 g3 0-0 7 ♙g2 d6 and Black will hit in the centre with ...♘c6 and ...e5, with good chances of equalizing.

c) 4...a5 5 ♘c3 is a little better for White.

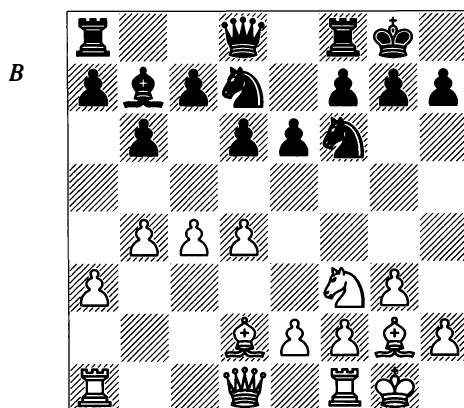
d) 4...♖e7 5 g3 ♘c6 6 ♘c3 ♙xc3 7 ♙xc3 ♘e4 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 ♙g2 and the fianchettoed bishop will be the best minor piece on the board.

4...b6

Considering the slightly clumsy nature of White's development, Black can consider hanging on to his dark-squared bishop by 4...0-0 5 a3 ♙e7, but this allows White to seize the centre with 6 e4 and the advantage after 6...d5 7 e5 ♘fd7 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♙d3 c5 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♖e1!.

7 ♙g5

7 g3 d6 8 ♙g2 ♘bd7 9 0-0 0-0 10 b4 (D) is an important position which was explained with unusual clarity by GM Evgeny Bareev, who pointed out that Black has three reasonable plans:



- 1) ...♖e7 and ...e5;
- 2) ...c5;
- 3) ...a6 and ...b5.

In all of these cases, he recommends immediately putting the bishop on e4, which is a

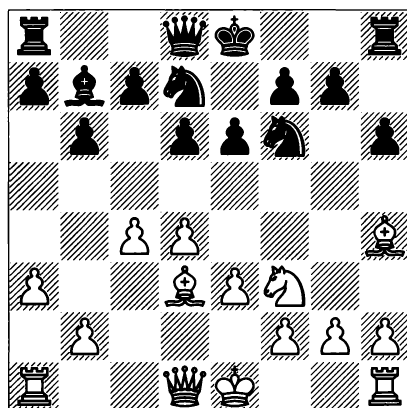
typical stratagem: this means that White will find it very hard to arrange an e4 push without exchanging bishops, and the more pieces that come off the board, the less Black's lack of space matters.

7 e3 ♘e4 8 ♙d3 0-0 9 0-0 ♘xd2 (Black isn't forced to make this exchange) 10 ♘xd2 f5 11 ♖e2 ♘c6 12 ♜ac1 ♖f6 13 c5 ♜ae8 14 b4 ♘h8 leads to an interesting position – White has a clear queenside advantage, but Black is preparing to play on the kingside supported by his b7-bishop.

7...d6 8 e3 ♘bd7 9 ♙d3 h6 10 ♙h4 (D)

Black is very solid, but with the two bishops White must have an edge. Now 10...0-0 is playable, while 10...g5 11 ♙g3 h5!? is a

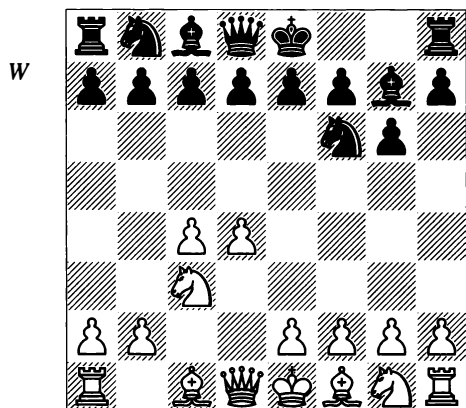
B



more ambitious attempt to seize the initiative.

King's Indian

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 (D)



The King's Indian has one of the richest histories of any chess opening. Pioneered by Soviet grandmasters in the early 1950s, most notably David Bronstein and Isaak Boleslavsky, it was successfully adopted by Efim Geller and Svetozar Gligorić. The opening owes its modern popularity to Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov, both of whom adored the opening and enriched it with numerous theoretical contributions and beautiful victories. White has a wide choice of systems against this opening, and all of them have high-level adherents.

With the exception of the Fianchetto Variation, all the main systems begin by occupying the centre (4 e4 d6) and now:

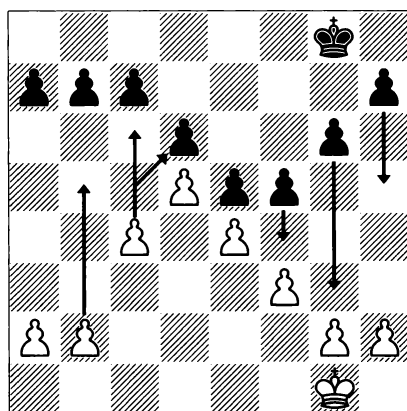
The Classical Variation, based on ♘f3, ♙e2 and 0-0, remains the critical test. White develops rapidly and doesn't make his centre too huge, and Black can get crushed on the queenside unless he's accurate with his counterplay, which should be based on ...f5 and a kingside pawn-storm. White also has some Classical offshoots like the Petrosian and the related Averbakh, each of which present Black with unique problems.

In the Sämisch White tries to solidify the centre with f3. While this is obviously an attractive idea, it makes the development of the white minor pieces more problematic, and by committing so many pawns to light squares, allows Black extra options on the dark squares.

The Four Pawns Attack launches forward with f4. If this worked then no one could play the King's Indian any more, but at present Black is holding his own in the complications.

One final note before we get started. In the forthcoming sections, you'll see that Black often needs to sacrifice material in order to maintain an acceptable position, or take on horrible positional weaknesses to activate his pieces. I think that the opening is sound, and these concessions lead to good compensation, but if you disagree then there's nothing wrong with your chess judgement – you simply should play something else. Even some grandmasters are very sceptical about the merits of the King's Indian (Korchnoi being a prime example), so you'll be in good company!

Pawn-Storms



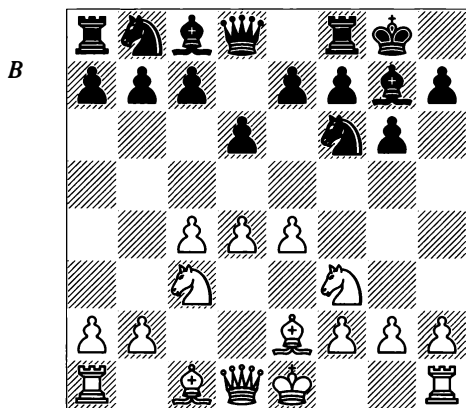
The broad pattern of play in the most critical King's Indian lines is depicted in the diagram. Both sides launch their pawns forward on the wings where they hold a space advantage – White wants to create a queenside weakness with *cx*d6 or *c*6, while Black wants either to open lines or to cramp the white king to such an extent that he can develop an irresistible attack.

Classical: Introduction

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6

After 4...0-0 White shouldn't try to exploit Black's omission of ...d6 with 5 *e*5?! in view of 5...♘e8 6 *f*4 d6 7 ♘f3 (7 ♙e3 *c*5!) 7...dxe5 8 *f*xe5?! ♙g4 and ...c5, when the white centre is getting dismantled.

5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♙e2 (D)



6...e5!

6...c5 leads to Accelerated Dragon positions after ...cxd4 or Benoni positions after 7 d5 *e*6. In general, the idea of the King's Indian is to play ...e5, so Black only reverts to the ...c5 advance when forced or when getting a favourable line of the Benoni.

6...♙g4 is a good alternative to the main lines, aiming to hit the dark squares with ...♘f3 and either ...♘c6 and ...e5, or else ...c5. After 7 ♙e3 ♘f3 8 ♙c1 *c*5 9 d5 ♘a6 10

0-0 ♘c7 11 *h*3 ♙xf3 12 ♙xf3 *a*6 13 *a*4 ♙e8 14 ♙e2 *e*6! 15 ♙d2 (15 dxe6 ♘xe6 16 ♙xd6 is a typical King's Indian pawn sacrifice: after 16...♘d4 17 ♙fd1 ♙e5 18 ♙d5 ♙c7! Black has too much for the pawn) 15...exd5 16 exd5 ♙h4! Black looks fine.

7 0-0

7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♙xd8 ♙xd8 isn't dangerous for Black, though it is always tedious when one plays such a fighting opening only to encounter such a wet response. However, such positions are largely unavoidable and Black must content himself with two thoughts:

1) White has absolutely no advantage. In some ways, therefore, this line is at least as risky for White as the sharper main lines, since Black can already start thinking about gaining the advantage. Bobby Fischer once famously commented that "You've got to equalize with Black before you start looking for something" – well, here Black has fully equalized, so start looking!

2) Many players mentally 'switch off' when they go into a quiet endgame, thinking that any move will suffice for a draw. Even without such a mindset, endgames are one of the richest and most complex areas of chess, and there is really as much scope to outplay one's opponent here as in any other position.

After 9 ♙g5 (9 ♘xe5? ♘xe4! 10 ♘xe4 ♙xe5 is pleasant for Black – the d4-square is inviting) 9...♙e8 10 ♘d5 ♘xd5 11 cxd5 *c*6! 12 ♙c4 cxd5 13 ♙xd5 ♘d7! (13...♘a6 14 ♙e2 ♘c7 15 ♙b3 ♙e6 16 ♙hd1! ♙xb3 17 axb3 gives Black a tough time containing both white rooks) 14 ♘d2! (so that Black doesn't gain the two bishops after ...♘f6) is equal, but that's a long way from being dead drawn.

7 d5 was Petrosian's pet line, and rose in popularity when a teenage Kramnik used it to beat everyone, Kasparov included. It stops Black's more aggressive ...♘c6 formations, but leaves a hole on c5. Now:

a) 7...a5! targets the aforementioned hole since White can't play *b*4 any more. 8 ♙g5

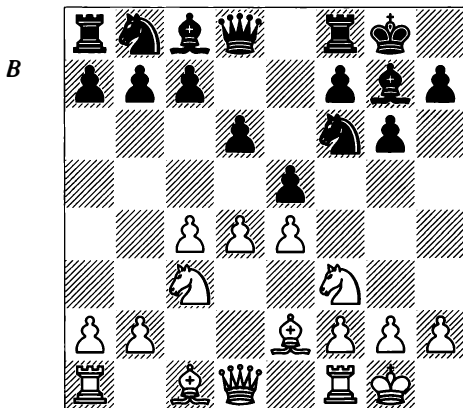
h6 9 ♖h4 ♘a6 10 ♘d2 ♚e8 11 0-0 ♘h7! 12 a3 ♗d7 13 b3 h5! 14 f3 (otherwise 14...♗f6 forces a favourable exchange of dark-squared bishops) 14...♗h6 and Black is well placed, restraining all White's play.

Black has some decent alternatives:

b) 7...♘bd7 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 is more typical King's Indian fare, and also seems enough for equality after 11 h4 g4 12 ♘h2 ♘xg3 13 fxg3 h5 14 0-0 f5 15 ♚xf5 ♚xf5 16 exf5 ♘c5 17 ♚d2 ♗xf5 (rather than NCO's 17...♗f6 18 ♚f1) 18 ♚f1 ♗g6.

c) Tal recommended 7...♘a6 8 ♗g5 (this runs into a trick, and so many players prefer 8 0-0 or even the bizarre 8 ♘d2) 8...h6 9 ♗h4 ♚e8 (9...g5 10 ♗g3 ♘xe4!? 11 ♘xe4 f5 is a handy trick which regains the piece with a comfortable game) 10 ♘d2 ♘h7, when "White must either allow Black to advance ...f5 without great loss of time, or else play g4, which at least gives Black some compensation".

We now return to 7 0-0 (D):

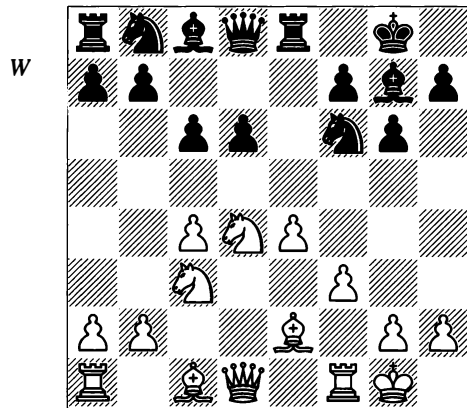


Now 7...♘c6 is the main move and will be considered in the next section. Here we look at alternatives, all very playable but slightly less popular since they don't put as much pressure on White.

7...♘a6

7...♘bd7 8 ♗e3 c6 is solid. After 9 ♚c2 ♚e7 10 d5 c5 Black is looking to equalize.

7...exd4 8 ♘xd4 ♚e8 9 f3 c6!? (D) typifies a key King's Indian concept.



According to classical theory, playing ...c6 is a big positional mistake, creating a backward pawn on the d-file. However, a pawn is only weak if it can be effectively attacked, and here this isn't the case. Bronstein wrote about a similar King's Indian position: "Here it seems high time to reveal to the reader the secret of Black's d-pawn in the King's Indian. Although the pawn stands on an open file and is subject to constant pressure it proves to be a tough nut to crack. This is because it is not easy to get at the pawn. It would appear that there is nothing simpler than to move the knight away from d4 so as to press on the pawn, but the point is that the knight is badly needed on d4 where it has the task of observing the squares b5, c6, e6 and f5, as well as neutralizing Black's fianchettoed bishop. The knight can really only move away when White has safeguarded himself from such attacks as ...a5-a4-a3, ...♗e6 and ...f5. Meanwhile, however, Black too has fully organized his position. Therefore the weakness of the black d-pawn is illusory." To be honest, opening knowledge doesn't get much more advanced than this. If you can understand the reasons behind the moves that you play, you're half-way there. A recent game continued 10 ♗h1 ♘bd7 11 ♗g5 ♚b6 12 ♘b3 a5 13 ♚c1 a4 14

♙e3 ♖d8 15 ♘d4 ♘c5 16 ♗d2 ♘fd7 17 ♗ad1 ♗a5 18 ♙f4 and the players agreed a draw.

7...♗e8 was introduced by Yuneev, and poses novel problems for White. 8 dxe5 (8 d5 a5 9 ♘e1 ♘a6 10 ♘d3 b6 is fine for Black) 8...dxe5 9 ♙e3 ♘a6 with similar play to the text variation.

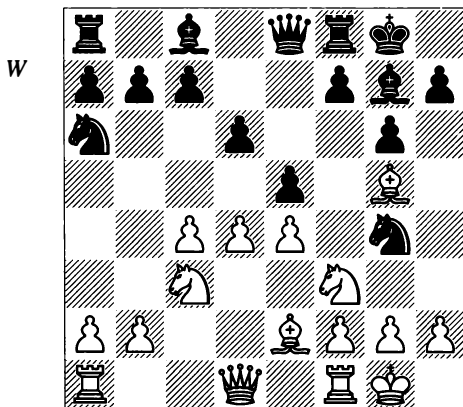
8 ♙e3

This is one of White's best moves, developing his last minor piece.

8 d5 allows Black to entrench his knight with 8...♘c5 9 ♗c2 a5 (because 10 a3?! a4 is pleasant for Black), though this must be weighed against White's gain of space. An interesting battle with chances for both sides lies ahead.

8 ♗e1 followed by 9 ♙f1 is very logical.

8...♘g4!? 9 ♙g5 ♗e8! (D)



10 dxe5

Stabilizing the centre is considered best here.

After 10 h3 h6 11 ♙c1 exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘f6 13 ♙f3 Black has the annoying 13...♘h7!, preparing ...♘g5.

10...dxe5 11 h3 h6! 12 ♙d2

Snatching a pawn with 12 hxc4 hxc5 13 ♘xc5 ♗e7 14 ♘h3 gives Black excellent dark-square compensation after 14...♙h6!, as pointed out by Gallagher.

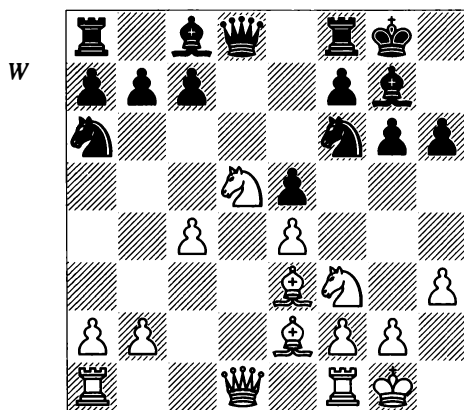
12...♘f6 13 ♙e3 ♗e7!?

The point of this provocative move is to stop c5.

13...♘h5 14 c5 ♘f4 15 ♙b5 ♗e6 16 ♗e1! is good for White – the sacrifice 16...♘xg2 doesn't give Black quite sufficient for the piece.

14 ♘d5 ♗d8! (D)

Note that 14...♘xd5 15 cxd5 gives White a natural target in the c7-pawn.



White has an edge.

Classical Main Line

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♙e2 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5

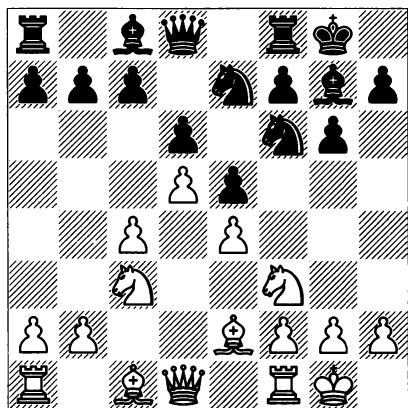
8 ♙e3 doesn't amount to much: 8...♗e8! 9 dxe5 (9 d5 ♘d4 is fine for Black) 9...dxe5 10 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 11 ♙g5 ♗f8! and Black has no difficulties.

8...♘e7 (D)

9 ♘e1

I have chosen this line as our main focus, partially because it is such a logical move and gives rise to the most typical King's Indian positions, but also because it is the staple choice of both GM Viktor Korchnoi (who is one of the most deadly King's Indian killers around) and IM Brian Kelly, who has repeatedly crushed my King's Indian in numerous blitz games.

W



9 d2 aims for b4, c5 and d4, with huge pressure on d6 and against the black queenside. The soundest plan is to change tack with 9...c5 (9...a5 10 a3 d7 11 b1 f5 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 h8 14 c2 f6 15 f3 is quite nice for White, whose queenside play is well advanced) 10 b1 (10 dxc6!? bxc6 11 b4 d5 has scored well for White in practice, since it is difficult for Black to use his centre constructively; I like Fedorov's plan of ...a6 {restraining b5} and ...a7-d7!, which seems to equalize quite comfortably) 10...e8 11 b4 b6 and White is slightly better, since the queenside clash has already begun while Black is yet to start rolling with ...f5.

9 b4 was used extensively by Kramnik during his rise to the summit, and is one of the most popular lines now. Initially it was considered to be comfortably met by 9...d5 (normally Black's knight doesn't get to this square), but Ivan Sokolov's discovery of 10 e1! (10 c5 d4 is fine for Black – don't let the pawn-structure fool you into thinking that the e2-bishop is 'bad'; in fact it's a very useful defensive piece since, on f1, it can cover both g2 and h3, where nasty accidents tend to happen in the King's Indian), vacating the f1-square for the bishop, really put the variation on the map. Most games now proceed 10...f5 11 d5 d6 (11...d4 12 xf4 exf4 13 c1 is also a little better for White) 12 f3 (12 f3 c6 13 e3 h6 14 h4! is a good

alternative) 12...c6 13 e3 h6 14 e6 xe6 15 dxe6 fxe4 16 dxe4 dxe4 17 e4 d5 18 cxd5 cxd5 and the question is whether the black centre will prove to be a strength or a weakness.

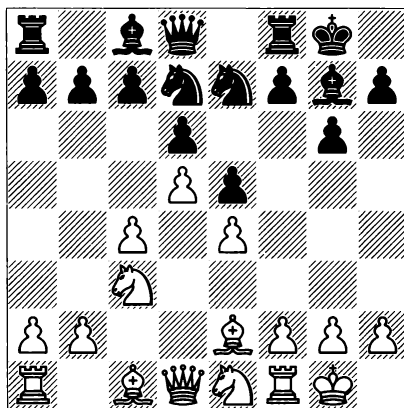
9 d2 has fallen out of fashion – after 9...d5 10 c1 h6! 11 e1 d4 12 f1 g5! Black is aggressively placed.

Now (after 9 d1) Black has to make way for his f-pawn.

9...d7 (D)

9...e8 is a tricky move – the idea is that the knight is well placed defensively on e8, covering d6 and c7. After the kingside pawn-storm, Black can complete the set-up with ...g6, ...f7 and ...f8, when everything's covered and his pieces are ready for kingside action. White's best response is to change tack with 10 d3 f5 11 f4! with some advantage, since the position is about to open up and the white pieces are more active.

W



10 e3

The main line, and one of the critical King's Indian battlegrounds.

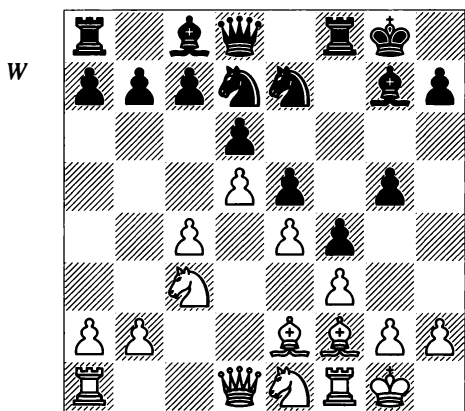
10 d3 f5 11 d2 d6 12 f3 doesn't let Black gain time on the bishop, but with less pressure on a7 it's tougher to effect a queenside breakthrough. 12...h8 13 b4 h5! (avoiding 13...f4 14 g4!, when if Black takes *en passant*, White is well placed on the kingside, and if he doesn't then his natural attacking

arena has just been blocked) 14 exf5 (otherwise Black does push his f-pawn) 14...♖xf5! with a good position.

10...f5 11 f3 f4 12 ♖f2

The white bishop has spent a lot of time getting to this square, but it seems that it was worth the trip. The bishop performs sterling work, both offensively (♖b5xa7 is a real possibility) and defensively (for the moment, monitoring g3 and h4 – it can also be redeployed after ♖h1 and ♖g1).

12...g5 (D)



Beginning a very slow and very dangerous attack. While at grandmaster level White scores very well here, at lower levels I'd have to put my money on Black since he'll always have attacking chances and White needs a high level of skill to pick the right defensive set-up.

13 ♖c1

Pushing the c-pawn is a vital source of play for White, so this move gets full marks. Plus (once the c-file is opened) the possibility of ♖b5-c7 can cause Black a huge headache.

13 a4 tries to open another avenue of attack – the a-pawn is going to walk as far as it's allowed. While the move scored very heavily in its first outings, of late Black has been scoring well with 13...a5! 14 ♖d3 b6!, setting up some queenside barriers. After 15 b4 axb4 16 ♖xb4 it's hard for White to make

further progress, while his kingside debts are about to be called in.

13 ♖h1 is a useful waiting move, when Black should probably prosecute his attack with 13...♖f6!? intending ...♖h6.

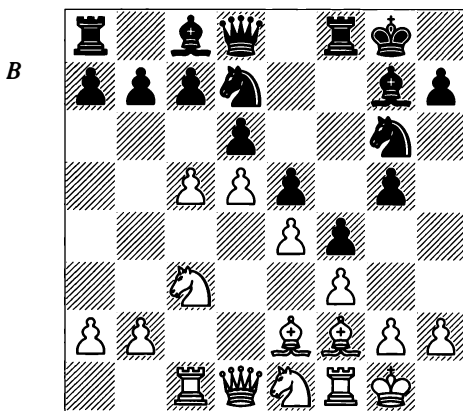
13...♖g6

It's normal to leave the knight on d7 so as to discourage c5.

13...a5 14 ♖d3 b6 isn't effective here since with 15 a3 White retains all of his queenside pawn-breaks.

13...♖f6!? is a very direct move – no prizes for guessing where this rook is headed. After 14 b4 ♖h6 15 ♖d3 ♖e8 Black has nice kingside play.

14 c5! (D)



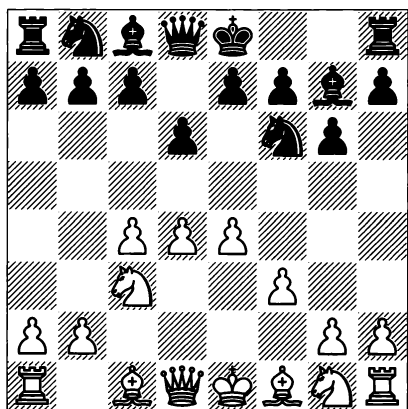
Anyway! This is very much in the spirit of the position – White frequently uses a pawn sacrifice to get his queenside play going. Now 14...♖xc5 15 b4 ♖a6 16 ♖d3 ♖f7 17 ♖b5 ♖d7 18 a4 is a typical continuation – White has more than enough for the pawn.

Sämisch

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 (D)

This is the starting point of the Sämisch Variation. Like its namesake in the Nimzo-Indian, the idea is to create a big, rock-solid centre. The drawback is that it takes away the

B



f3-square from the knight and commits yet another pawn to a light square, so Black can hit back hard on the dark squares. The main lines involve either ...c5 or ...e5, doing just this.

5...0-0

The immediate 5...c5 is less popular since it displaces the black king: 6 dxc5 dxc5 7 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8. White can now build up with 8 ♗e3 and 9 0-0-0+, or try to lock out the g7-bishop with 8 e5!? ♕fd7 9 f4.

6 ♗e3

This has declined in popularity due to the gambit introduced by Black's next move.

6 ♗g5 aims for an improved version of the note to White's seventh move, but Black shouldn't really have any problems. After 6...c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♖d2 exd5 9 cxd5 a6 10 a4 h6! White's development is problematic and Black has his full share of the chances.

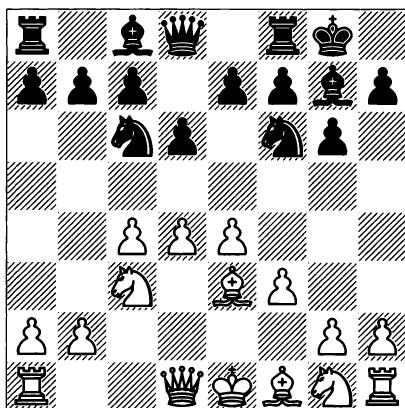
6 ♖ge2 is an interesting move-order, keeping the dark-squared bishop flexible – it can go to e3 or g5 depending on Black's response. After 6...c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♖g3 exd5 9 cxd5 Black can try dislodging the wandering knight with 9...h5!?, when 10 ♗g5 is probably the best response.

6...c5!

Yes, this chucks away a pawn, but such trifles rarely matter to a red-blooded King's Indian player. The weakening of White's dark squares is a much more important prize.

6...♖c6 (D) is a logical choice in many King's Indian lines.

W



Some subtle points need to be appreciated here (after ...e5 d5) – while in the Classical this knight is headed for e7, and in the Fianchetto it often ends up on a5, in the Sämisch the square for the horse is d4. This often entails a pawn sacrifice, which is especially sound when White has to give up his dark-squared bishop to bag the material, since with all his pawns on light squares he really needs this prelate to cover the gaps. Black has an alternative strategy to a quick ...e5 though – he can exploit the vacant b8-square by playing ...a6, ...♖b8 and ...b5 to chip away at the white pawn-wall, a strategy which is especially natural when White castles queenside. Now 7 ♖ge2 a6 8 ♖d2 ♖b8 (with ideas of ...b5 and/or ...e5) 9 ♖c1 (this puts the brakes on ...b5; 9 h4 h5 10 0-0-0 is the major alternative, with a scrap after 10...b5) 9...e5! 10 d5 ♖d4! begins a beautifully thematic King's Indian sequence: 11 ♖le2 c5 12 dxc6 bxc6! 13 ♖xd4 exd4 14 ♗xd4 ♖a5 15 ♖d1 ♗e6 16 b3 c5 17 ♗e3 ♖g4! 18 ♖d5 ♖xd2+ 19 ♗xd2 ♗xd5 20 cxd5 ♖e5 21 ♔f2 f5 22 exf5 ♖xf5 with good play for the pawn.

6...e5, despite Kasparov's patronage, isn't as popular. White can continue with 7 ♖ge2 or 7 d5 c6 8 ♖ge2 cxd5 9 cxd5, when Black's position is rather passive.

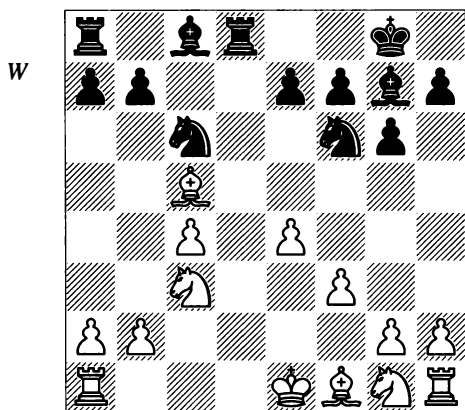
6...b6 used to be played to prepare ...c5, but this became redundant when Black discovered that the immediate 6...c5 was playable. In fact, after 7 ♙d3 , the immediate 7...c5? (7...a6 is better) loses to 8 e5! soon followed by ♙e4 , so I don't recommend this line for Black.

7 dxc5

7 d5 e6 followed by ...exd5 gives Black a good Benoni.

7 ♜ge2 is also important: 7... ♞c6 8 ♞d2 e6 9 0-0-0 b6 with a very tense position.

7...dxc5 8 ♞xd8 ♞xd8 9 ♙xc5 ♞c6 (D)



Black has enough for the pawn, though he often needs to sacrifice a second pawn to prove this.

10 ♙a3

10 ♞d5 ♞d7! was a crucial discovery. After 11 ♙xe7 (11 ♞xe7+ ♞xe7 12 ♙xe7 ♙xb2 and the white c-pawn will fall to ... ♞e5 and ... ♙e6) 11... ♞xe7 12 ♞xe7+ ♞f8 13 ♞d5 (13 ♞xc8?! ♙xb2 14 ♞b1 ♙c3+ 15 ♞f2 ♙d4+ 16 ♞e1 ♞axc8 leaves Black fully mobilized and clearly better) 13... ♙xb2 14 ♞b1 ♙g7! Black has enough for the pawn, as long as he remembers to stay active: 15 h4 ♞b6! 16 h5 (16 ♞xb6? axb6 and the black rooks will break through) 16... ♙e6 17 ♞h3 ♞ac8 .

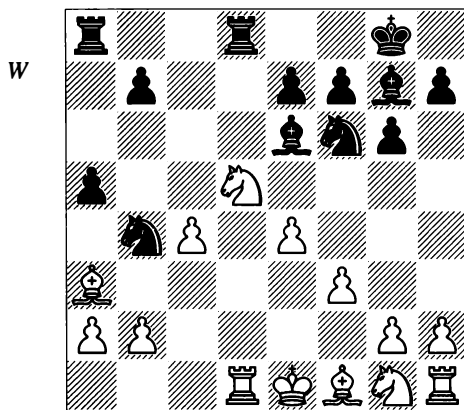
10...a5!

It's important to gain control of the b4-square.

11 ♞d1 ♙e6 12 ♞d5 ♞b4! (D)

Illustrating my comment from move 9.

The old line, 12... ♙xd5 13 cxd5 ♞b4 14 ♙b5 ♞c2+ 15 ♞f2 ♞xa3 16 bxa3 e6 17 d6 e5 18 ♞e2 ♙f8 19 d7 ♙xa3 , is insufficient after Shirov's 20 g4!, when the d-pawn is monstrous.



13 ♞xe7+

13 ♙xb4? axb4 14 ♞xb4 ♞d7! is superb for Black.

13...♞h8 14 ♞xd8+

14 ♞d5 can be met by 14... ♞c2+ , but it's probably even better to continue 14...b5! with ample compensation.

14...♞xd8 15 ♞d5 ♞c2+ 16 ♞f2 ♞xa3 17 bxa3 b5!

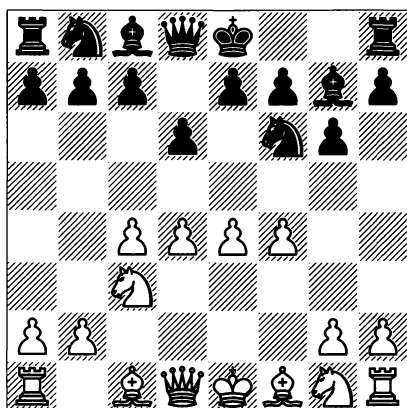
with equality.

Four Pawns

1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♞c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 (D)

Getting a very big centre, which can prove to be a very big target. Of course Black must be careful not to get hit by an e5 break, but as White I don't like making my centre this huge, since if I lose control of the game then my lack of pawn-cover (e4, d4, e3 and d3 can't be controlled by pawns any more) will provide too many juicy squares to the black pieces.

B



Black needs to hit the centre with a pawn, and he needs to do so quickly. The choice is between ...c5 (which can be played immediately) and ...e5 (which needs a little preparation), and as with virtually every opening choice, it's a matter of taste as to which you prefer.

5...0-0 6 Qf3 c5

This leads the game into Benoni-type positions.

Black can play for the alternative break with 6...Qa6 7 Qe2 e5!, since he gets good compensation after 8 dxe5 (8 fxe5 dxe5 9 d5 locks out the g7-bishop, but gives the black knight a juicy square on c5; after 9...Qc5 10 Qg5 h6 11 Qxf6 Qxf6 12 b4 Qa6 13 a3 c5! 14 Qb1 Qd7 Black has no problems) 8...dxe5 9 Qxe5 Qc5 10 Qf3 Qxd1+ 11 Qxd1 Qd8+.

7 d5

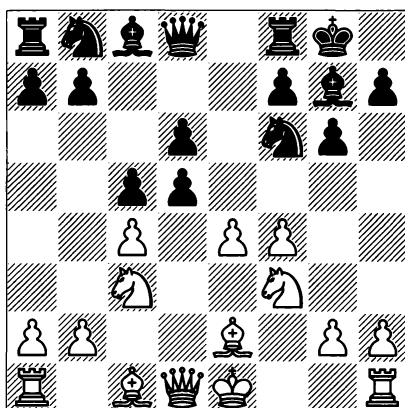
7 dxc5 would be very nice for White after 7...dxc5 8 Qxd8 Qxd8 9 e5, but Black has 7...Qa5! (remember this from the Pirc?) when 8 Qd3 (8 cxd6?? Qxe4 snaps White in two) 8...Qxc5 9 Qe2 Qc6 10 Qe3 Qa5 followed by 11...Qg4 leaves him well developed and with plenty of control over e5.

7...e6 8 Qe2 exd5 (D)

9 cxd5

9 exd5 is much less ambitious – White has no pawn-breaks and hence no advantage; in fact he'd prefer for his f-pawn to be back on f2.

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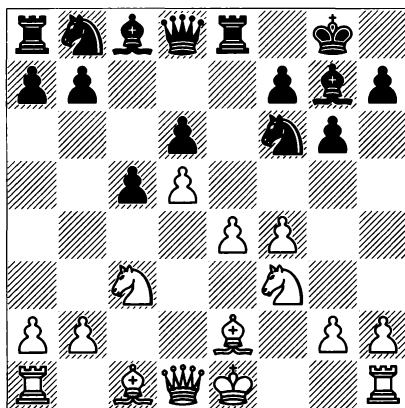


9...Qe8 (D)

9...Qg4 is solid: after 10 0-0 Qbd7 11 Qe1 Qe8 12 h3 Qxf3 13 Qxf3 White has more space and two bishops, but in the absence of an e5 break his position lacks purpose, and Black's compact formation should easily hold the balance.

9...b5 might be playable, but I wouldn't risk it with Black, since after 10 e5 (10 Qxb5? Qxe4! is a typical tactic which really is good for Black) 10...dxe5 (10...Qfd7!? could be a better attempt) 11 fxe5 Qg4 12 Qg5 the white d-pawn is very dangerous.

W



10 Qd2

10 e5 is critical, but after 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 Qg4 Black is better placed than in the 9...b5 line. After 12 Qg5 Qb6 13 0-0 Qxe5 14

♖xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗c4 White has compensation for the pawn, in view of the mobility of his passed d-pawn, his lead in development and the f7 weakness.

10...♖a6

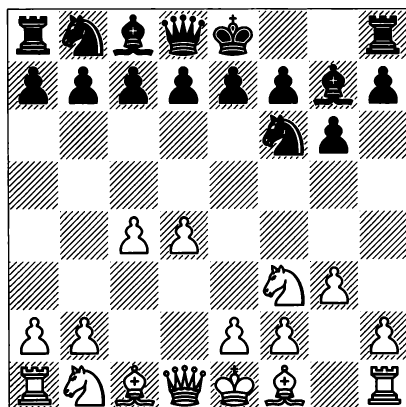
A good square for the knight, from where it can drop back to c7 and prepare the ...b5 break while pressurizing the d5-pawn.

11 0-0 ♜b8 12 ♖h1 ♘c7 13 a4 a6 14 a5

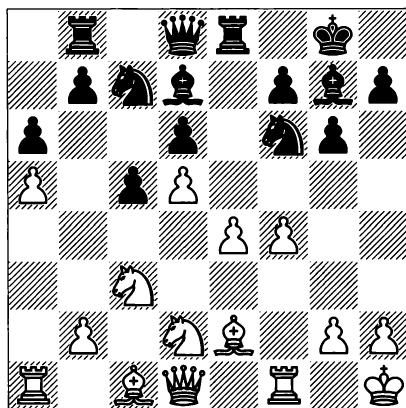
Otherwise Black gets ...b5 in.

14...♗d7 (D)

B



W



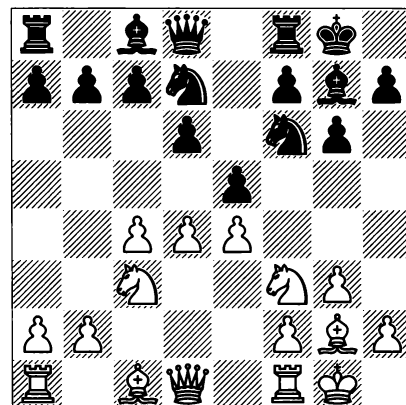
Black is planning ...♖b5!, which should equalize.

c4 then White will be hamstrung; if not, then it is 'dim on the rim'. After 9 ♘d2 c5 10 ♜c2 ♜b8 11 b3 b5 12 ♗b2 ♗h6! 13 f4 bxc4 14 bxc4 e5! White hasn't fully suppressed the black counterplay, and while Black is a little worse his position is fully playable.

6...c5 is a worthy alternative. One practical drawback is that White can exchange on c5 with a completely symmetrical position, but after 7 d5 Black has 7...b5!? 8 cxb5 a6 9 bxa6 ♗f5!, as successfully tried by Israeli GM Boris Avrukh. Black has good Benko-style pressure for the pawn. Instead, 7 ♘c3 ♘c6 8 d5 ♗a5 9 ♘d2 a6 is the same line that we saw after 6...♘c6.

7 ♘c3 e5 8 e4 (D)

B



8...c6

Fianchetto

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 g3 (D)

A relatively unambitious move – the main defect of the King's Indian is that it allows White to occupy the centre, so it's hardly surprising that when White declines this invitation he has few chances of an advantage.

4...0-0 5 ♗g2 d6

5...d5 (or 5...c6 and 6...d5) transposes into Fianchetto Grünfeld lines, and which to choose is purely a matter of taste.

6 0-0 ♖bd7

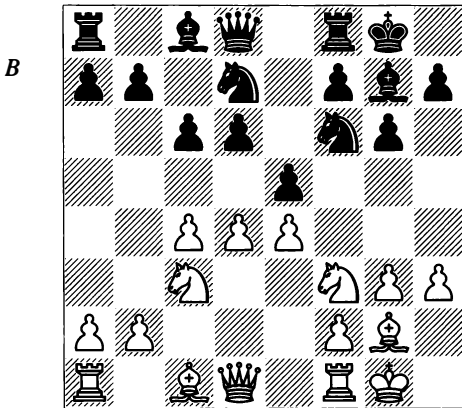
6...♘c6 is the Panno Variation. After 7 ♘c3 a6 8 d5 ♗a5 it's all about the a5-knight – if Black can generate enough pressure on

8...exd4 is a dynamic choice: 9 ♖xd4 ♖e8 10 h3 and the classical 10...c6 has led to some great games, but Gallagher's idea of 10...a6!? to be followed by ...♖b8, ...c5 and ...b5 is active, easy to play and, most importantly, good!

9 h3 (D)

This move is more useful than it looks – ...♗g4 is a very useful resource for Black and it's worth taking care of it now. Plus, Black now has to make a move, and it's unclear how he should improve his position.

9 ♖e3 is a little careless: 9...♗g4 10 ♖g5 ♖b6 11 h3 exd4! 12 ♖a4 ♖a6 13 hxg4 b5 14 ♖xd4 bxa4 15 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 16 e5 ♖xc4 17 ♖xa8 ♖xe5 and Black has huge compensation for the exchange.



9...♖b6

Black normally moves his queen somewhere. 9...♖a5 is also quite popular, but hits fewer pressure points. After 10 ♖e1 exd4 11 ♖xd4 ♖e5 12 ♖f1 ♖e8 13 ♖b1 ♖e6 14 b4! ♖c7 15 f4! ♖ed7 (not 15...♖xc4?? 16 ♖xe6) 16 ♖e3 White has a useful space advantage.

9...exd4 10 ♖xd4 ♖b6 11 ♖c2 ♖e8 is slightly offbeat, but by no means bad – Black will follow up with ...♖e5 and ...♖e6.

The text-move was used by both Fischer and Kasparov, but White has a dangerous resource:

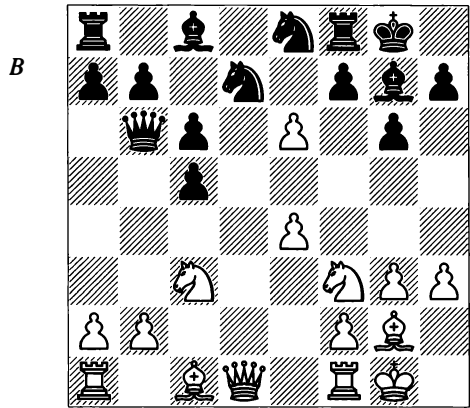
10 c5!?

Putting Black into a passive position, something which King's Indian players find particularly nasty.

10 ♖e1 exd4 11 ♖xd4 ♖e8 followed by ...♖c5 and ...a5-a4 gives Black good counterplay, though White should retain an edge.

10 d5 cxd5 11 cxd5 ♖c5 leaves Black very comfortable.

10...dxc5 11 dxe5 ♖e8 12 e6 (D)



Sacrificing a pawn to break up the black kingside.

12...fxe6 13 ♖g5 ♖e5 14 f4 ♖f7 15 ♖xf7 ♖d4+

This is to avoid a suffocation of the bishop after 15...♖xf7 16 e5.

16 ♖h2 ♖xf7 17 e5

The white knight is coming to e4, with good compensation.

Averbakh and Unusual Lines

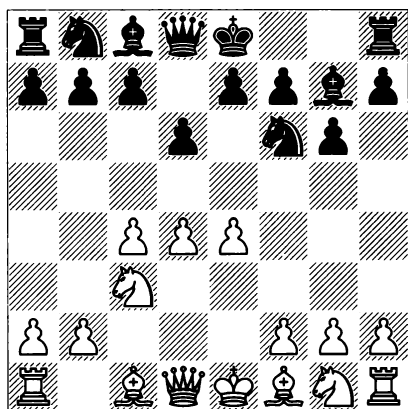
1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 (D)

5 ♖e2

5 h3 0-0 6 ♖g5 is similar. One of Black's best responses runs 6...♖a6 (protecting c7, and so preparing ...e5) 7 ♖d3 e5 8 d5 c6 9 ♖ge2 cxd5 10 cxd5 ♖c5 11 ♖c2 a5!, when his pieces have reasonable squares and he is ready for play on the queenside.

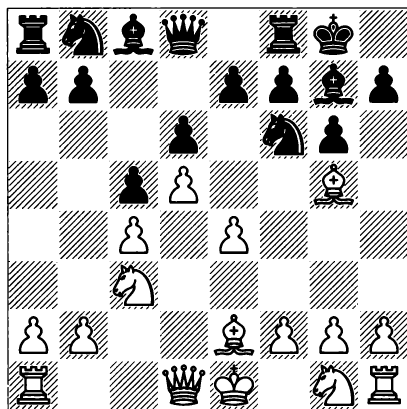
5...0-0 6 ♖g5

W



7 d5 (D)

B



This system is based on restraint – a bishop on g5 doesn't do a lot for the white position *per se*, but it makes it more difficult for Black to generate his typical counterplay with ...e5 and ...f5.

6...c5

Black steers the game into Benoni waters. Opening the long diagonal is a logical choice, since the g5-bishop is unlikely to drop back and hold the b2- or d4-pawns.

6...e5?? just loses material after 7 dxe5 8 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 9 ♘d5.

However, 6...♘a6 (defending the c7-pawn) followed by ...e5 is a good alternative.

Black has a choice here, but the bishop on g5 would make me edgy about self-pinning the f6-knight with ...e6. This, coupled with the weakness on b2, leads me to recommend:

7...b5!?

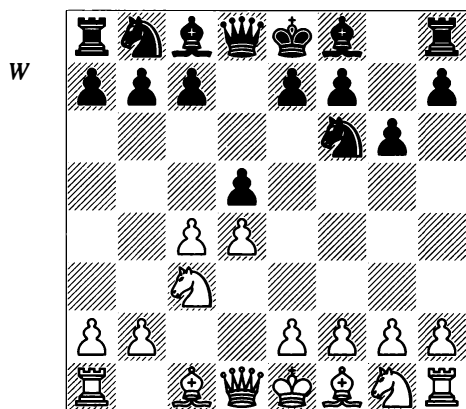
7...e6 (preceded by ...a6 a4, or ...h6 ♘f4, or both) is the Benoni option.

8 cxb5 a6

Black has a Benko-type position, with reasonable chances. White normally holds b5 with 9 a4, when 9...♖a5 10 ♘d2 ♖b4! gets into the white queenside.

Grünfeld

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♙c3 d5 (D)



Don't let the apparent similarity with the King's Indian fool you – this opening is totally different. While Black appears to be staking a central claim with his d-pawn, it only takes a little analysis to see that White can set up a big pawn-centre with 4 cxd5 ♙xd5 5 e4 ♙xc3 6 bxc3. Black's idea is to hit the centre as hard as he can with pieces – ...♙g7, ...c5 and ...♙c6. White has a few responses he can try.

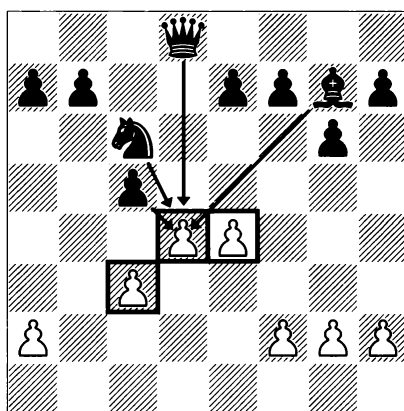
The most natural and critical is to set up the big pawn-centre as indicated above – this is the Exchange Variation and is the subject of the first two sections.

Alternatively (normally with 4 ♙f3 ♙g7 included, but these moves can be delayed), White can try to force ...dxc4, either with direct pressure on d5 (5 ♖b3, the Russian System) or through attacking a defender (5 ♙g5) or overworking another defender (5 ♙f4, hitting the c7-pawn and so trying to tie up the black queen) – the latter systems are covered under 'Early Bishop Moves'.

Finally, throughout queen's pawn openings White has a fianchetto option, and the Grünfeld is no exception. White normally

delays ♙c3 for this one (preferring 3 ♙f3 or 3 g3) – we already saw several good ...d6 systems against this in the King's Indian section, and now we'll see what happens when Black tries ...d5 (with or without ...c6).

Grünfeld Centre



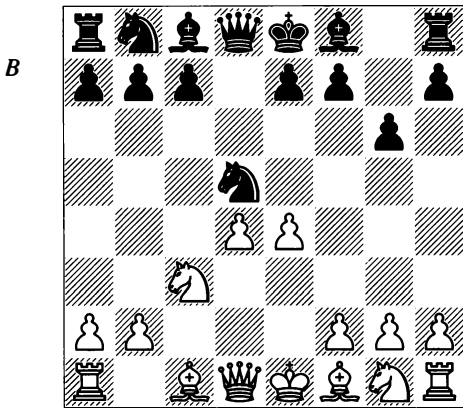
This centre is characteristic of the Exchange Grünfeld. White occupies, Black pressurizes. If White can maintain his centre as is, then he will hold the advantage, since his pawns grant his pieces extra room to operate and cramp the black minor pieces. Black must put as much pressure as possible on d4, as illustrated, and try to get White to move either his d-pawn (opening up the long diagonal) or e-pawn (weakening d5).

Exchange: Introduction & Classical

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♙c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♙xd5 5 e4 (D)

The most natural and critical response – White immediately constructs a big pawn-centre.

I should mention 5 ♖a4!?, a paradoxical move through which White hopes to play e4 without allowing Black to exchange knights on c3. Black can play solidly with 5...♟f6!? (when 6 ♟c3 ♟d5 equals an early bath) or try something more ambitious such as 5...e5! 6 dxe5 ♟b4+ 7 ♟d2 ♟e3!! 8 fxe3 ♟xd2+ 9 ♖xd2 ♖h4+ 10 g3 ♖xa4 with good play for the pawn.



5...♟xc3

This is effectively forced. 5...♟b6 is a known mistake. After 6 h3! (stopping ...♟g4 after ♟f3) followed by ♟f3 and ♟e3, Black has no good way to generate pressure on the centre.

6 bxc3 ♟g7 7 ♟c4

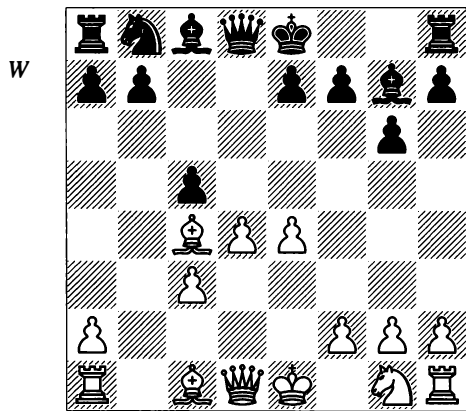
This is one of the most logical systems available to White, and remains a critical test of the Grünfeld. White's thinking is basically this: "I want to develop my knight, but ♟f3 can be met by ...♟g4 when Black increases his pressure on the centre. So I want to play ♟e2 (to meet ...♟g4 with f3), but first I have to move my bishop."

7 ♟b5+ is also a respectable line. After 7...c6 8 ♟a4 0-0 9 ♟e2 c5 10 0-0 ♟c6 11 ♟e3 ♟a5!? (targeting the c4-square) 12 ♖b1 Dutch GM Jan Timman had a highly instructive comment to make about the move 12...b6!: "The normal move every experienced Grünfeld player would play without

much thought. The fact that White can win a pawn with 13 dxc5 should not worry Black. It is one of the strategic characteristics of the Grünfeld that Black can allow captures on c5 and b6, as this gives White weak a- and c-pawns, which will find themselves under considerable pressure, because Black controls these two open lines."

7...c5! (D)

7...0-0 8 ♟e2 b6 is a less popular alternative because, crucially, it fails to put sufficient pressure on the centre; for instance, 9 0-0 ♟b7 10 f3 c5 11 ♟e3 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♟c6 13 ♖c1 and White is comfortably better.



8 ♟e2 ♟c6! 9 ♟e3 0-0 10 0-0

10 ♖c1 is an important alternative for White: 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♖a5+ 12 ♟f1! and now Black's best is 12...♖a3!, freeing a5 for the knight and stopping the f-pawn from moving.

10...♟g4

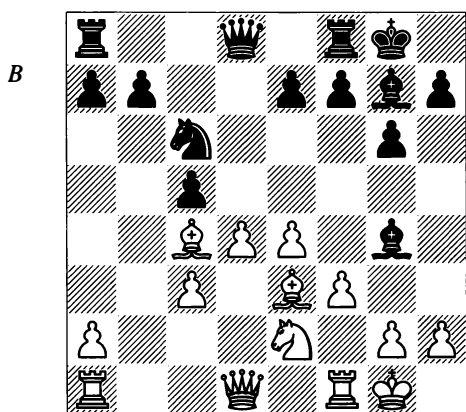
10...♖c7 11 ♖c1 ♖d8 is a very reasonable alternative – in some cases Black can follow up with ...♖a5, ...b6 and ...♟a6.

In the line beginning 10...♟a5 11 ♟d3 cxd4 12 cxd4 b6 13 ♖c1 e6, Gligorić introduced the crucial concept of 14 e5!. Normally White is reluctant to make this advance since, though it blocks the g7-bishop, it also concedes the d5-square. Here the argument is that, with the black knight three moves away

from occupation of the outpost and ♖f4 on the cards, White is the one more likely to control this point – he'll follow up by ♖f4, ♗g4 and h4, with a strong kingside initiative.

10...♗d7 is a favourite of one of the world's top Grünfeld experts, GM Peter Svidler. After 11 ♖b1 a6! 12 dxc5 (generally White would rather not dismantle his own centre like this, but otherwise Black plays ...b5 with an active queenside set-up) 12...♖a5 13 ♗d3 ♗c7 Black has reasonable compensation for his sacrificed pawn.

11 f3 (D)



11...♖a5

Black wants the e6-square for his bishop and this is the only way to get it.

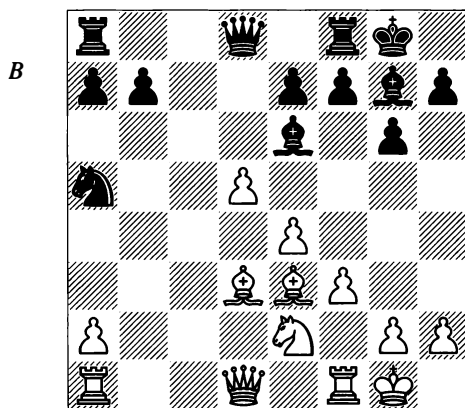
12 ♗d3

12 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 13 fxg4 wins a pawn, but Black gets considerable compensation. After being tested in a bunch of Karpov-Kasparov games, this line is believed to be fine for Black – his most reliable method is 13...♖xf1+ 14 ♖xf1 cxd4 15 cxd4 e5! 16 d5 ♖c4 17 ♗d3 ♖xe3+ 18 ♗xe3 followed by ...♗h4, ...♖f8 and ...♗h6 with full compensation.

12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗e6 14 d5!? (D)

This is an old exchange sacrifice which has recently come back into vogue. Theory had dismissed it, but at the moment it is one of the toughest lines for a Grünfeld player to face.

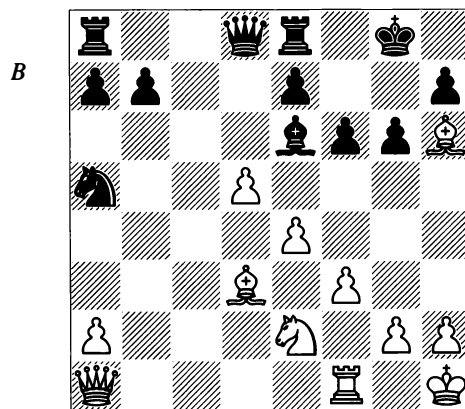
The pawn sacrifice 14 ♖c1 is another main line, but after 14...♗xa2! 15 ♗a4 ♗b3! Black is holding his own. 16 ♗b4 b6 17 ♗g5 f6 18 ♗h4 ♗d6! 19 ♗xd6 exd6 20 d5 is a typical continuation, when after 21 ♖d4 White generally gets his pawn back, but doesn't have enough for a real advantage.



14...♗xa2 15 ♗xa2 f6 16 ♗h6 ♖e8

Black can return the exchange by playing 16...♗d7 17 ♗xf8 ♗b6+ 18 ♗d4 ♗xd4+ 19 ♖xd4 ♖xf8 20 ♖c1 ♖c8 21 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8, but White has an undeniably better endgame after 22 f4.

17 ♖h1 (D)



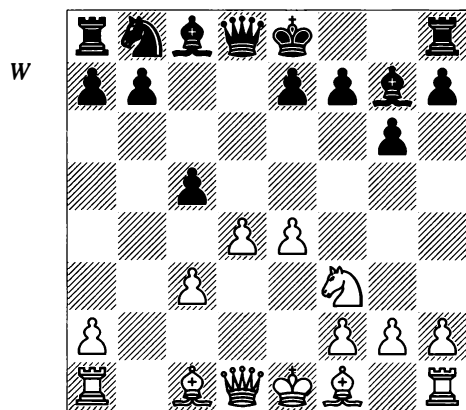
White has full compensation – the young English GM Luke McShane, playing Black,

recently lost to a couple of Danes here. Whatever the objective verdict, in practical terms Black's task is unenviable, since White can develop his attack by marching the e- and f-pawns and moving the knight to f4 or d4, while the 'extra' rook (on e8) is hardly functioning at full capacity.

Modern Exchange

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♗xd5 5 e4 ♗xc3 6 bxc3 ♙g7 7 ♗f3 c5 (D)

7...0-0 is an inaccurate move-order – after 8 ♙e2 c5 9 0-0 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♗c6 11 ♙e3 ♙g4 12 d5! White holds the advantage; for instance, 12...♗e5 13 ♗xe5 ♙xe2 14 ♖xe2 ♙xe5 15 ♖ad1.

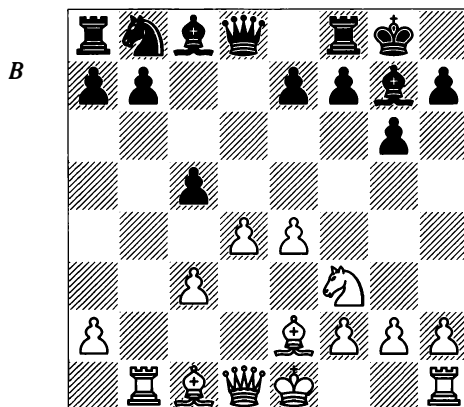


8 ♖b1!

This move rejuvenated the whole 7 ♗f3 line. While the move obviously has some good points (the rook is moved to a half-open file, hitting b7 and preventing the smooth development of Black's light-squared bishop), the reason why White must tidy up his position in this way can only be learned from examining 8 ♙e2 ♗c6!, when there is no good way to defend the centre: 9 d5 (9 ♙e3 ♙g4 forces 10 e5, when Black is very comfortable) 9...♙xc3+ 10 ♙d2 ♙xa1 11 ♖xa1 ♗d4 and White doesn't have enough for the exchange.

8 ♙e3 is possible though. After 8...♖a5 9 ♖d2 ♗c6 White can play 10 ♖b1 but I prefer 10 ♖c1 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♖xd2+ 12 ♗xd2 0-0 13 d5 ♖d8 14 ♗e1!, when Black needs accurate play to hold in the endgame.

8...0-0 9 ♙e2 (D)



9...cxd4

9...♗c6 is a major alternative, when 10 d5 ♗e5 11 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 12 ♖d2! is best, defending c3 and preparing f4. After 12...e6 13 f4 Black can choose 13...♙g7, allowing 14 c4 with a very imposing centre, or try 13...♙c7!? 14 0-0 (14 c4?? ♙a5) 14...exd5 15 exd5 when the white structure is less picturesque but the black king misses its best defender.

9...b6 is a playable alternative. After 10 0-0 ♙b7 11 ♖d3 e6 12 ♙g5 ♖d6 13 ♖e3 followed by 14 ♖fd1, White has an edge.

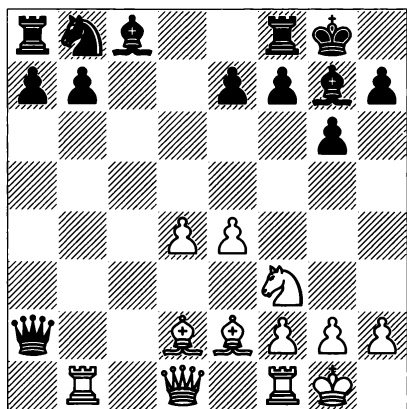
9...♖a5 10 0-0 ♖xa2 is very similar to the main line, though most players prefer to exchange on d4 at some point in order to weaken White's d-pawn. Black has some problems; for instance, 11 ♙g5 ♖e6 12 ♖d3 b6 13 d5 ♖d6 14 e5!? (Shirov's idea) 14...♙xe5 15 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 16 ♖d2, when Black is two pawns up but White has tons of play on the central files, backed up by his two bishops, to compensate.

10 cxd4 ♖a5+ 11 ♙d2

11 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 12 ♙xd2 b6 is a fairly level endgame.

11...♖xa2 12 0-0 (D)

B



This position is one of the game's richest. Black is a pawn up, in return for which White has a lead in development. This time advantage is nourished by Black's difficulty in developing his remaining pieces – a knight on c6 would be attacked by the d-pawn, while the c8-bishop will have to abandon the b7-pawn in order to move to g4. There are alternative ways to develop these pieces (the knight can go to b6 or the bishop to b7) but these take longer to implement. In addition, the black queen is open to harassment – one of the drawbacks of this variation for Black is that, in many of his best lines, his queen can be subject to a perpetual attack, with a three-fold repetition and draw. Moving on to the pawns, at first glance it seems the connected black passed pawns on the queenside are extremely dangerous (especially since one of them is extra), but in fact the one to watch is the white d-pawn. White generally hits the e7-pawn with ♕g5 (though he needs to defend his own e4-pawn before he genuinely threatens to capture), and once this is gone the white d-pawn can march up the board, gaining space and collecting squares as well as threatening to queen.

12...♕g4

12...b6 13 ♖c1 ♕b7 is very logical. After 14 ♕c4 ♖a4 15 ♕b5 ♖a2 White can force a

draw or try 16 ♖e1 ♖c8 17 ♖d1 ♖c2 18 ♖e2 with good compensation.

12...a5 13 ♕g5 a4 is undeniably logical, but I think that these two moves could have been put to better use. After 14 ♖e1 White is threatening to capture on e7 and Black still has to link the a-pawn with the rest of his pieces.

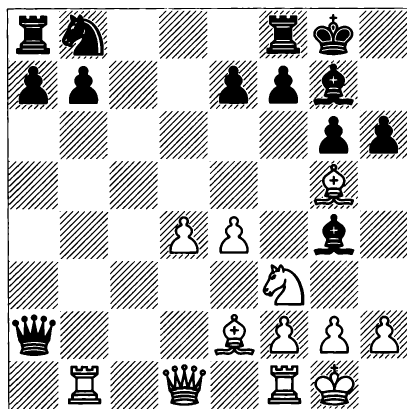
12...♖d7 is one of the main moves here, and has been a favourite of GM Peter Leko. The idea is to put the knight on b6, where it shields the b7-pawn and can't be hit by a d5 advance. After 13 ♕b4 ♖b6 14 ♖a1 ♖e6 15 ♖b1 ♕d7 Khalifman introduced 16 ♖a5!, controlling lots of juicy squares, with slightly better chances for White.

13 ♕g5

The immediate 13 ♕e3 has been tried by several big names, most notably Kramnik. After 13...♖c6 14 d5 ♖a5 White can exploit the omission (compared to 13 ♕g5 h6 14 ♕e3) of ...h6 with 15 ♕g5, when 15...♖a3 16 ♕d2 ♕c3 17 ♕c1 ♖d6 18 e5! ♖d7 (18...♕xe5? 19 ♕d2 ♖xe5 leaves White a piece up) 19 ♕d2 ♖fc8 20 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 21 ♖d4 gives White more than enough compensation for his pawn.

13...h6! (D)

W



14 ♕h4

14 ♕e3 is another big line – White argues that the weakness of h6 is more important than Black's control of the important g5-square.

14...♟c6 15 d5 ♙xf3 16 ♙xf3 ♞e5 17 ♜xb7 a5 18 ♜xe7 a4 19 ♙d4 ♞xf3+ 20 gxf3 ♙xd4 21 ♜xd4 a3 is a good illustration, when the advanced a-pawn is enough to hold the balance.

14 ♙xe7 ♞e8 15 ♜xb7 ♟c6 is fine for Black.

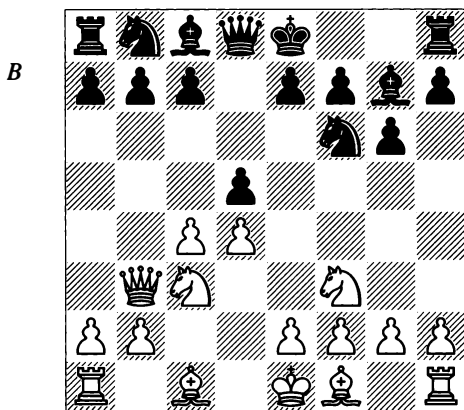
Now Black has a good, centrally-oriented response:

14...g5 15 ♙g3 ♟c6 16 d5 ♞ad8

For instance, after 17 ♜xb7 f5! the white centre is getting dismantled.

Russian System

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♟c3 d5 4 ♟f3 ♙g7 5 ♜b3 (D)

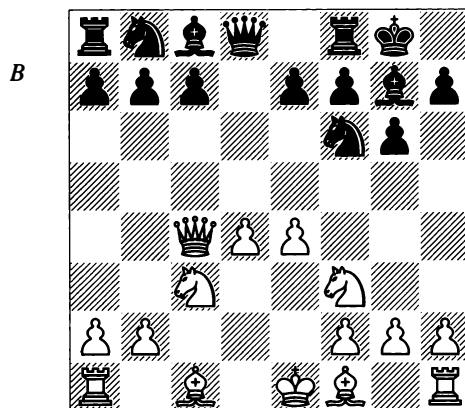


This line is known as the Russian System because of the players involved in its early development, especially Botvinnik. By developing his queen, White generates more pressure on d5, and gets a perfect pawn-centre and a space advantage with all the pieces still on the board. The drawback? White still has to prove that the queen's position in the centre is a strength, not a target for the black minor pieces, and White is a long way from finishing development, which gives Black good opportunities for counterplay.

5...dxc4

The most combative. Instead, 5...c6 commits Black to a passive central stance, which is generally a recipe for disaster in the Grünfeld.

6 ♜xc4 0-0 7 e4 (D)



7...♙g4

This is the brainchild of Vasily Smyslov, and has long been regarded as Black's soundest response (not surprising really, since Black develops while attacking d4).

7...♟a6 is the Prins Variation, and has been a career favourite of Garry Kasparov. Black aims to hit d4 with ...c5. Play becomes very sharp; for instance, 8 ♙e2 c5 9 d5 e6 10 0-0 exd5 11 exd5 ♙f5 when Black certainly has his trumps but will need to bring the a6-knight into play while keeping an eye on the passed d-pawn.

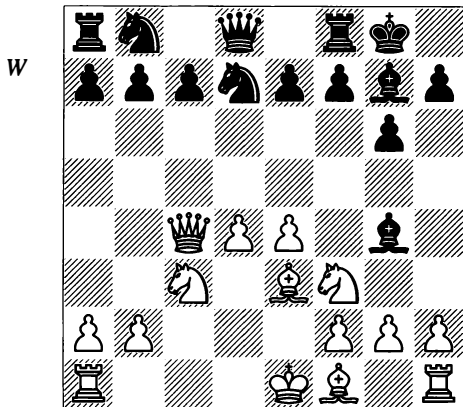
7...a6, known as the Hungarian Variation, aims for different queenside pawn-play with ...b5, after which ...♙b7 is possible and ...c5 is still on the cards. The problem is that such a plan is rather time-consuming, so White can use his momentary stability in the centre to launch an attack: 8 e5 b5 9 ♜b3 ♟fd7 10 h4 c5 with very unclear play.

7...♟c6 is one of the most logical moves at Black's disposal. It often transposes into the Smyslov variation, but can have some independent twists; for instance, 8 ♙e2 ♟d7!? 9 ♙e3 ♟b6 10 ♜c5 ♟d7!?, when White can

either repeat moves or allow 11 ♖d5 e5! with good play.

I don't trust the remaining alternatives. For instance, after 7...c6 8 ♖b3! Black has prematurely committed his c-pawn, and now must face the problem of developing his queenside minor pieces.

8 ♙e3 ♜fd7! (D)



This is the real insight – the Smyslov is all about attacking the d-pawn, so unleashing the g7-bishop and preparing ...♜b6, attacking the white queen, makes sense of the black position.

9 ♖b3 ♜b6

9...c5!? 10 d5 (10 ♖xb7? ♜b6 threatens both ...cxd4 and ...♙c8) 10...♜a6 is a relatively recent idea, working in concepts from the Prins Variation in a pretty favourable setting. After 11 ♙e2 (11 ♖xb7? ♜b4 12 ♜c1 ♙xf3 13 gxf3 ♜e5 is much better for Black) 11...♜b8 12 0-0 b5 13 ♖d1 ♜c7 14 ♜c1 a6 Black has some useful queenside activity.

10 ♜d1 ♜c6

Black can also prepare this move: 10...e6 11 ♙e2 ♜c6 and White maintains an edge with 12 ♜g1! ♙xe2 13 ♜gxe2.

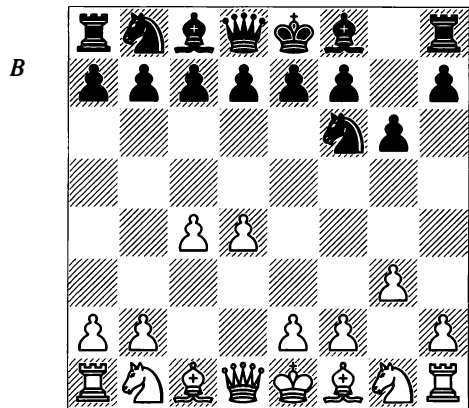
11 d5 ♜e5 12 ♙e2 ♜xf3+ 13 gxf3

This is a little better for White. Here's a typical continuation: 13...♙h5 14 f4 ♙xe2 15 ♜xe2 ♖d7 16 ♙d4 c6 17 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 18 ♖c3+ ♜g8 19 dxc6 ♖xc6 20 ♖xc6 bxc6 21

♜c1 ♜ac8 and White maintains an edge in the endgame.

Fianchetto

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 (D)



This is perhaps the most flexible way of reaching the fianchetto variations. Black can, of course, use a King's Indian set-up with ...♙g7, ...0-0 and ...d6, but here we examine the ways he can keep a Grünfeld-type position.

3...♙g7

3...c6 4 ♙g2 (4 d5 b5! dismantles the white centre) 4...d5 is more solid: 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♜c3 ♙g7 7 ♜f3 0-0 8 ♜e5 and now 8...♜c6 leaves White with an initiative, but after 8...e6 9 0-0 ♜fd7! 10 f4 f6 11 ♜f3 ♜c6 Black has a fully playable position – it is hard for White to play e4 with any great effect.

4 ♙g2 d5 5 cxd5 ♜xd5 6 e4

Taking the centre is obviously sharpest and probably best.

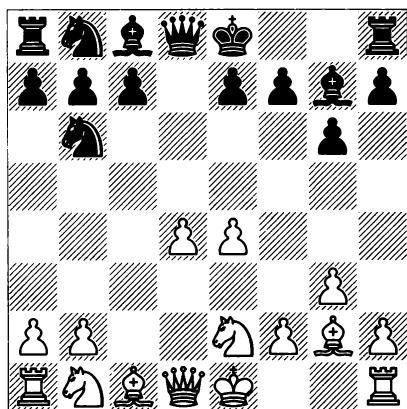
6 ♜f3 ♜b6 7 ♜c3 ♜c6 8 e3 0-0 9 0-0 ♜e8 is fine for Black, who can liberate both rooks with a- and e-pawn pushes.

6...♜b6 7 ♜e2 (D)

Not to f3, where it would run into a ...♙g4 pin.

7...e5

B



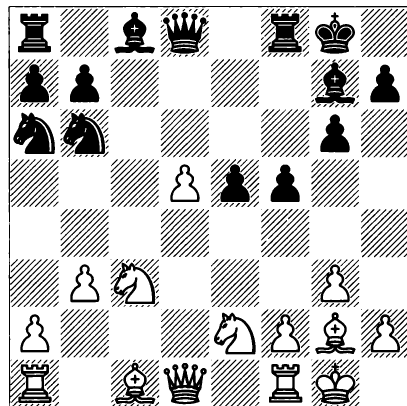
I think this is the easiest, though Black's score here has been pretty bad.

The alternative way of hitting the centre, 7...0-0 8 0-0 9 c6, leaves the knight sidelined after 9 d5 10 a5 11 bc3 c6 11 b3 cxd5 12 exd5, and though Black will hit the d-pawn with ...e6, I prefer White.

7...c5 8 d5 e6 9 bc3 exd5 10 exd5 leads to a similar structure to the text-move – whether the black pawn is on the c- or e-file isn't important; it's all about trying to blockade White's passed d-pawn.

8 d5 c6 9 0-0-0 10 bc3 cxd5 11 exd5 a6 12 b3 f5 (D)

W



The position is interesting, unbalanced and probably fully equal. If Black can neutralize the d-pawn (getting a knight to d6, for

instance, would greatly improve his chances) then he will have a more than comfortable position with his mobile kingside majority ... but that's a big 'if'.

Early Bishop Moves (and Minor Lines)

1 d4 2 f6 3 c4 4 g6 5 c3 6 d5 7 f4

This move makes a lot of sense, since Black can no longer hit the bishop with ...d6 and ...e5.

4 h4 was an idea I couldn't fit in anywhere else. It has been played by some good GMs – the idea is that the black knight has to stay defending the d-pawn, and so 5 h5 is a real threat. It's enough to know that 4...c6! equalizes immediately – now h5 can't be played without the loss of a pawn and the white h-pawn looks a bit silly.

4 f3 g7 and now:

a) The quiet 5 e3 isn't a serious attempt at an advantage; for instance, 5...0-0 6 e2 c5 7 0-0 cxd4 8 exd4 c6 9 g5 dxc4 10 xc4 g4 with good pressure for Black.

b) 5 g5 is a very logical system, putting immediate pressure on d5. Then:

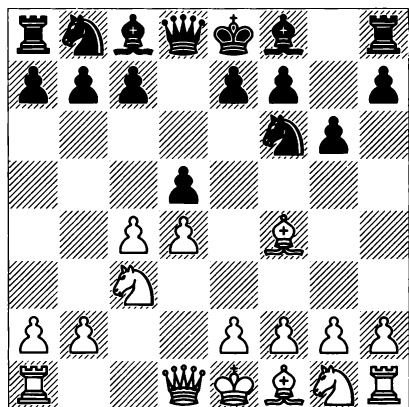
b1) 5...dxc4 leads to unclear complications; for instance, 6 e4 c5 7 d5 b5 8 e5 b4 9 exf6 exf6!.

b2) 5...c5 6 dxc5 a5 can transpose to a position from the 4 f4 variation that is considered somewhat awkward for Black: 7 cxd5 xd5 8 xd5 xc3+ 9 d2.

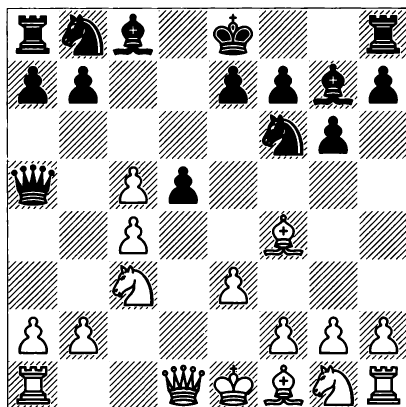
b3) 5...e4 is the most solid response. White can't take the knight since his f3-knight would be hit, and after 6 cxd5 xg5 7 xg5 e6 Black recoups the sacrificed pawn: 8 d2 (White can also drop the knight back with 8 f3, when 8...exd5 9 e3 0-0 10 b4 c6 gives roughly equal chances) 8...exd5 9 e3+ f8 10 f4 f6 11 h4 h6 12 f3 g7 and White is a little better in view of his active pieces and kingside potential.

We now return to 4 f4 (D):

B



W



4...g7 5 e3

5 dxf3 0-0 6 Bc1 (since e3 hasn't been played, snatching a pawn with 6 cxd5? dxd5 7 dxd5 Bxd5 8 exd7 is inadvisable: Black generates a huge initiative with 8...dxc6 9 e3 ef5 and ...Bac8) discourages ...c5, but Black has an interesting alternative in 6...dxc4 7 e4 g4 8 exd4 h5! 9 e3 exf3 10 gxf3 e5! with good play.

5...c5!

5...0-0 gives White the option of taking the c7-pawn: 6 cxd5 dxd5 7 dxd5 Bxd5 8 exd7. Now Black has several possibilities, one of the better ones being 8...a6 9 exa6 Bxg2 10 Bf3 Bxf3 11 dxf3 bxa6 with a level endgame.

6 dxc5 Ba5 (D)

7 dxf3

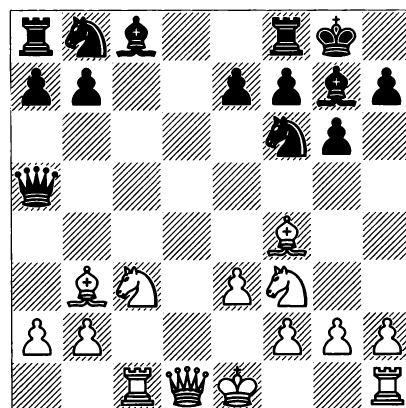
7 cxd5 dxd5! 8 Bxd5 exd3+ 9 bxc3 Bxc3+ 10 e2 Bxa1 11 e5 Bc1 12 exh8 e6 13 Bxb7 Bc2+ is perpetual check.

By messing around with the move-order White can put his knight on e2 instead of f3: 7 Bc1 dxc4 8 exd4 0-0 9 de2. This doesn't

seem enough for an advantage, since after 9...Bxc5 10 Bb3 dxc6 11 dxb5 Bh5 12 dg3 Bh4 13 dxc7 Black has the excellent 13...e5! with the idea 14 exd5 dxe5 15 dxa8 ed7 16 dxc7 ec6 17 dxd5 gh8!! and White has trouble hanging on to his extra material.

7...0-0 8 Bc1 dxc4 9 exd4 Bxc5 10 dxb3 Ba5 (D)

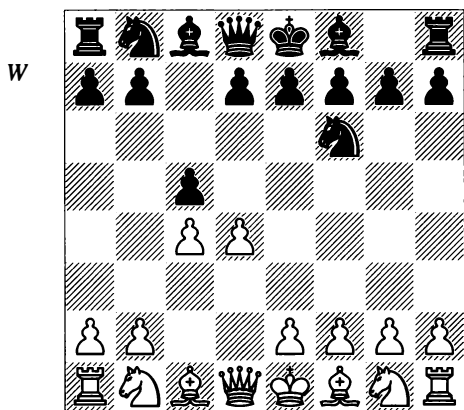
W



White is more active, and so has an edge.

Benoni Systems

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 c5 (D)



This move introduces a very ambitious concept. Black stakes a claim on the dark squares, which is good, but gives White a big space advantage, which is bad. Thus the position is unbalanced from move 2, which makes these systems perfect playgrounds for players who want to win with Black and are willing to take some risks in order to do so.

3 d5

Black will now put his bishop on g7, where it isn't impeded by the c5-pawn, but he has a wide choice of how to set up his pawns.

The most dynamic option is to play ...e6 and (by ...exd5 cxd5) exchange his e-pawn for the white c-pawn (the Modern Benoni). This gives White a very dangerous central majority and Black a very dangerous queenside majority, so both sides must be very precise.

Alternatively, Black can sacrifice his a- and b-pawns for the white c-pawn and use the two queenside files for sustained counterplay. This is known as the Benko Gambit.

Finally, Black can block the position with ...e5. This option (the Czech Benoni) isn't as challenging as the other two.

White can also play more quietly with 3 ♟f3, but after 3...cxd4 4 ♟xd4 the structural change is in Black's favour and he has a choice of favourable transpositions into Sicilian, Nimzo-Indian, English and Grünfeld positions.

Modern Benoni

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4

One of the problems with playing Benoni structures is that White can avoid most of your preparation with 2 ♟f3 c5 3 d5. Now Black has to make a choice. 3...g6 (3...b5 gives White the interesting option of 4 ♟g5; a Kasparov-Miles game continued 4...♟e4 5 ♟h4 ♞a5+ 6 ♟bd2 ♟b7 7 a4 ♟xd5 8 axb5 ♞c7 9 ♞a4! with advantage) 4 ♟c3 ♟g7 5 e4 0-0 (probably best, but this gives White the chance for a hack; the problem with 5...d6 is 6 ♟b5+ ♟d7 {6...♟bd7 gets in the way of both ...e6 and developing the light-squared bishop} 7 a4 0-0 8 0-0 ♟g4 9 ♞e1 ♟bd7 10 h3 ♟xf3 11 ♞xf3 ♟e8 12 ♟f1 with a comfortable edge) 6 e5 ♟e8 (the natural 6...♟g4 is powerfully met by the surprising 7 ♟g5!) 7 h4 d6 8 e6 fxe6 9 h5 and Black should be OK, but he'll certainly be on the back foot for a while.

2...c5

2...e6 is an equally popular move-order. After 3 ♟c3 Black can remain in Benoni waters with 3...c5 or try a Nimzo-Indian with 3...♟b4, but the real idea is illustrated after 3 ♟f3 (necessary if White wishes to avoid the Nimzo) when 3...c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♟c3 g6 7 e4 has robbed White of his most threatening systems.

3 d5 e6

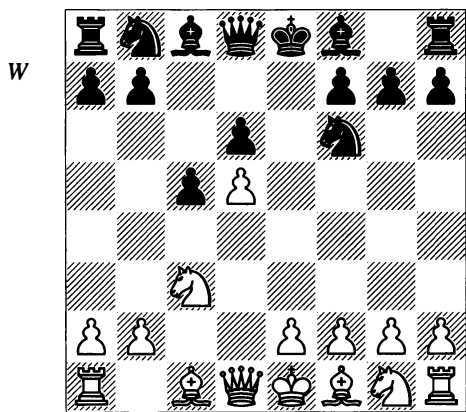
3...e5 is the Czech Benoni. As Black, I don't like throwing away my pawn-breaks

like this. It's true that an e5 advance from White is eliminated from the position, but the absence of an ...e6 break to challenge the white pawns is a major defect. Moreover, Black's dark-squared bishop will be dead wood for the foreseeable future. 4 ♖c3 d6 5 e4 g6 (5...♗e7 is of about equal value: 6 ♗e2 0-0 7 ♖f3 ♖bd7 8 0-0 ♖e8 9 a3! and White will be very fast on the queenside). Now 6 ♖f3 is enough for a comfortable edge, but I'd slightly prefer 6 ♗d3 ♗g7 7 ♖ge2 when a3 and b4 is going to be very healthy for White.

4 ♖c3 exd5

This move-order forces White to recapture with the c-pawn rather than the e-pawn, but it also allows a very scary system and so the alternative 4...d6 5 e4 g6 has been recommended by some Benoni specialists. When Black flicks in ...exd5 at a later point, then cxd5 leads us back to main-line positions; ♖xd5 allows good play after ...♖c6 and a future ...♖d4; while exd5 leaves White with a tiny edge but without any pawn-breaks, so Black is comfortable.

5 cxd5 d6 (D)

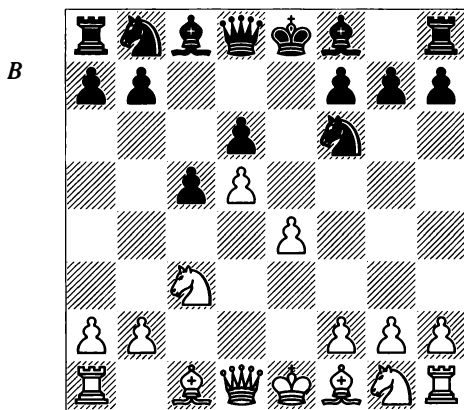


This line was made extremely popular by the savage attacking efforts of two world champions, Mikhail Tal and Garry Kasparov. Black immediately gets a very big trump, namely a mobile queenside majority which will be supported by a monster bishop on g7.

The price which he has to pay for this privilege is not so much a lack of central space (this is common to most openings) but a lack of central stability – White's extra e-pawn threatens to run to e5 and cause havoc. I remember a Modern Benoni specialist, GM John Emms, writing of the black set-up as a 'bag of tricks', which seems a good way to read these positions – Black has lots of tactical chances, but his position is always on a knife edge.

6 e4 (D)

White has a quieter option in 6 ♖f3 g6 7 g3. This has always made less sense to me than the fianchetto against the King's Indian and the Grünfeld, since here the white pawn is fixed on d5 and so the bishop's scope is limited. After 7...♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖bd7 10 a4 a6 we arrive at a typical Benoni structure – Black will play on the queenside with ...b5, while White will transfer his knight to c4, put a pawn on a5 and try to get in the e4-e5 advance.



6...g6 7 f4

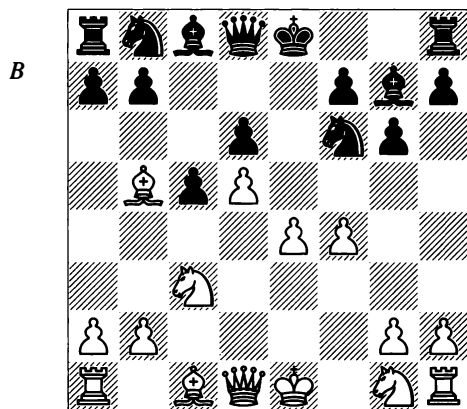
This, coupled with 8 ♗b5+, is the Taimanov Attack. Garry Kasparov has never been shy about destroying the systems he popularizes, and it was he who moulded this line into the biggest threat to the Modern Benoni.

7 ♖f3 ♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 is one of the main variations in the Benoni these days, in

particular since it can be reached through the 2...e6 3 ♖f3 c5 move-order. White plans to castle and develop in straightforward fashion (probably including the restraining a4), while Black is denied the possibility of relieving the pressure through ...♗g4. Black's main response is the ferociously sharp 9...b5!? when 10 ♖xb5 (10 ♗xb5 ♖xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♖a5+ 12 ♖fd2 ♖xb5 13 ♖xd6 ♖a6! 14 ♖2c4 ♖d7 15 0-0 ♖b6 16 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 17 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 seems to give Black full compensation for his pawn, in so far as he is likely to regain the material – however, he needs to be very well prepared here, and this line offers close to zero winning chances for Black, so many players will be reluctant to enter such a line) 10...♖e8 (10...♖xe4 runs into some problems after 11 ♗xe4 ♖e8 12 ♖g5) leads to huge complications; for instance, 11 ♖d2 ♖xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♗a6 13 a4 ♖a5 14 ♖xd6 ♖d7 15 ♖c2 f5 16 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 17 ♖d1 fxe4 with a big mess.

7 ♖f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8 (9...♗g4 is also logical; 9...a6 10 a4 is the traditional main line, when Black's soundest approach is to try a dark-squared bind with 10...♗g4 followed by ...♗xf3, ...♖bd7 and ...♖e7) 10 ♖d2, intending ♖c4, is solid and good.

7...♗g7 8 ♗b5+ (D)



This is the move which gives the system its bite, since Black is left with an awkward choice of how to block the check. Have a look at the Austrian Attack in the Pirc for a similar concept.

8...♖fd7

8...♗d7 9 e5 is clearly better for White after 9...♖h5 10 ♖f3 0-0 11 0-0 in view of his tremendous centre.

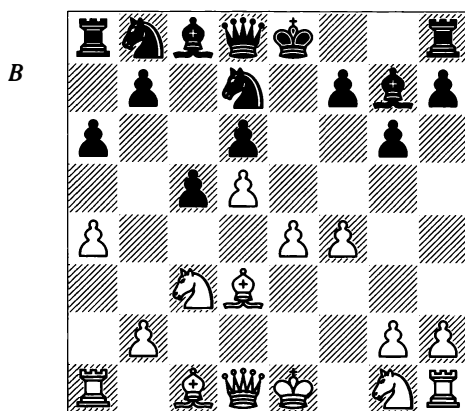
8...♖bd7 is less clear-cut, but is best met by the same response: 9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 ♖h5 11 e6, when Black has tricks but not much else. After 11...♖h4+ 12 g3 ♖xg3 13 hxg3 ♖xh1 14 ♗e3! White is much better.

9 a4 a6

This is the natural move, but perhaps not the best.

9...♖a6 10 ♖f3 ♖b4 11 0-0 and at this point 11...a6 was absolutely destroyed by Kasparov after 12 ♗xd7+! ♗xd7 13 f5!, but 11...0-0 is better; for instance, 12 h3 a6 13 ♗c4 f5! with excellent counterplay against the white centre.

10 ♗d3 (D)



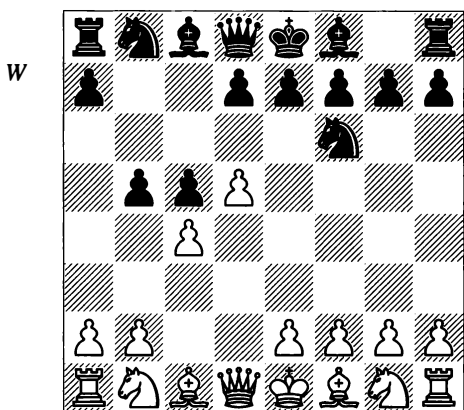
Now after the typical 10...0-0 11 ♖f3 ♖f6 12 h3! Black has major problems with his development.

Benko Gambit

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 c5

2...e6 3 ♟f3 c5 4 d5 b5?! is the Blumenfeld Counter-Gambit. The similarities with the Benko are obvious, but this version has generally been rejected in view of 5 ♟g5!; for instance, 5...bxc4 6 e4 ♟a5+ 7 ♟d2 ♟b6 8 ♟c3 ♟a6 9 ♟e5 with a clear plus.

3 d5 b5!? (D)



As ridiculous as this move must have seemed when it was first played, the Benko Gambit is now a regular guest at all levels of competition. Black (after 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 ♟xa6) sacrifices a pawn in return for two open files on the queenside (down which his major pieces can harass the white pawns), a glorious diagonal for his king's bishop on g7, and easy development.

4 cxb5

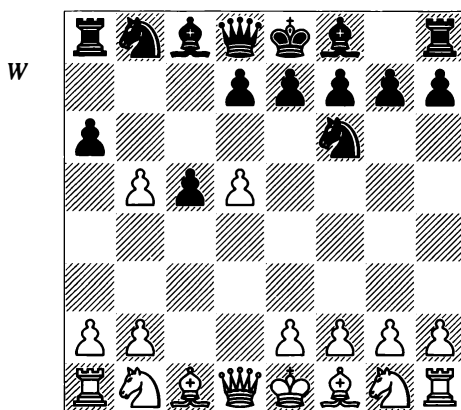
The best move – just look at it! None of the alternatives really inspire:

4 a4 is interesting in many variations, except for 4...b4 when one half of the board is dead and White has few chances of achieving an advantage.

4 ♟f3 g6 5 cxb5 a6 6 ♟c2 has been used several times by GM Alex Yermolinsky, but Khalifman found Black's best reply: 6...♟g7!

7 ♟xc5 0-0; for instance, 8 ♟c3 d6 9 ♟c4 axb5 10 ♟xb5 ♟bd7 11 e3 ♟b7 12 ♟c2 ♟xd5 13 ♟d2 ♟b6 14 ♟e2 ♟fc8 15 ♟b1 ♟c5 with a lot of play.

4...a6 (D)



5 bxa6

5 b6 was used by an up-and-coming Alexei Shirov during the early 1990s. The idea is to cramp Black on the queenside – often White resorts to an a4–a5 advance to gain space. After 5...d6 6 ♟c3 ♟bd7 7 a4 a5! 8 e4 g6 Black soon recaptures with the knight on b6, with no real difficulties.

Dlugy championed the move 5 f3. Black can respond in Benko fashion with 5...g6 or take the pawn with 5...axb5, but 5...e6 is critical: 6 e4 exd5 7 e5 ♟e7 8 ♟e2 ♟g8 9 ♟c3 ♟b7 10 ♟h3 c4 11 ♟e3 axb5 12 0-0-0 ♟b4! with unfathomable complications.

5 e3 g6 6 ♟c3 ♟g7 7 a4 is an interesting side-variation, but Black has adequate play with 7...♟b7 followed by breaking up the centre with ...e6.

5...g6

This is a subtle move-order designed to limit White's options. Specifically, the double fianchetto outlined in the next paragraph

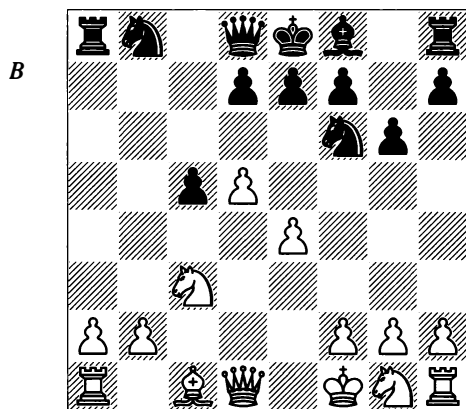
becomes less attractive when Black can recapture on a6 with the knight.

After the automatic 5...♙xa6, as well as transposing into the main line with 6 ♘c3, White can play a double fianchetto with 6 b3!? g6 7 ♙b2 ♙g7 8 g3 d6 9 ♙g2, when theory says that Black is fine, but his g7-bishop is neutralized by its counterpart on b2 and so he must seek different forms of counterplay from the main line.

6 ♘c3

White can instead fianchetto and maintain his castling rights with 6 ♘f3 ♙xa6 7 g3 d6 8 ♙g2 ♙g7 9 0-0, when Black should immediately target the d5-pawn with 9...♘bd7 10 ♘c3 ♘b6! (threatening 11...♙c4!) 11 ♖e1 0-0 and the long-term pressure on the queen-side is enough to compensate for the pawn.

6...♙xa6 7 e4 ♙xf1 8 ♙xf1 (D)



This is a concession not of king safety but of time – White must now play g3 and ♙g2 to connect his rooks.

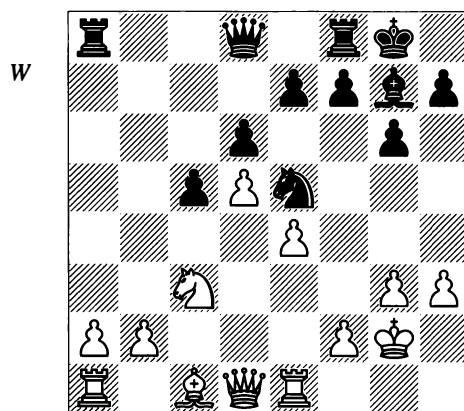
8...d6 9 ♘f3 ♙g7 10 g3

10 h3!? is an alternative way, planning to play ♙g1-h2 followed by ♖e1-e2. This takes one more move than the text continuation, but has some logic since by covering g4 it stops the regrouping Black tries on the 12th move.

10...♘bd7 11 ♙g2 0-0 12 ♖e1

12 h3 is also interesting, trying to keep an extra pair of knights on the board.

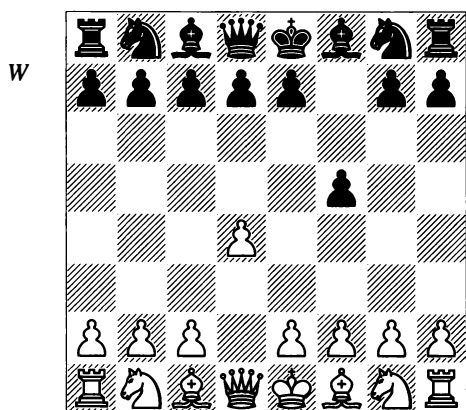
12...♘g4 13 h3 ♘ge5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 (D)



Black will follow up with queen to somewhere (probably a5) and ...♖fb8, when he has full compensation for his pawn deficit. For White, the solidifying manoeuvre ♖e2-c2! is a good idea, while targeting the e7-pawn with ♙g5 can be useful. It's a position where clear plans for either side are hard to come by – Black has an ideal queenside set-up which he shouldn't mess around with, while White's options are restricted by the pressure on his a- and b-pawns.

Dutch

1 d4 f5 (D)



This has never really been popular, though its patronage by Botvinnik has to be noted. Even though no complete refutation has been found, I think that most GMs are reluctant to weaken their e5-square and a2-g8 diagonal so early in the proceedings. I've spent less space on the Dutch than on most openings, since it leaves White with relatively few problems gaining an advantage.

The Dutch is three systems bundled into one. The first, the Stonewall, is marked by black pawns on c6, d5, e6 and f5, a structure not without defects but which also offers unusual advantages, like solidity, restriction of the white e4 break (an important tool in the Dutch) and a central space advantage.

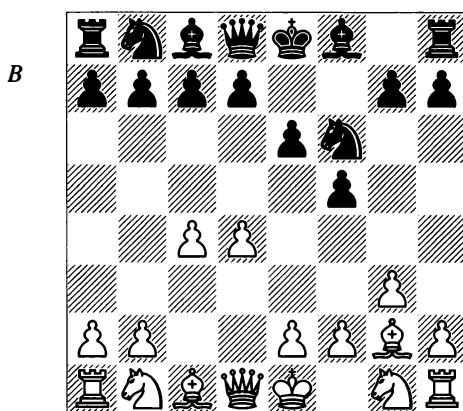
The Leningrad sees the fianchetto of the black dark-squared bishop, coupled with ...d6. Black aims for the ...e5 break, which could equalize instantly, but in the meantime creates a nasty hole on e6.

The final system, the Classical, creates fewer weaknesses (a bishop on e7 behind e6- and d6-pawns) but confers correspondingly fewer benefits – the black plan of attack with ...♖e8-h5 and a rook-lift to the h-file looks a

little primitive against precise play, so the modern interpretation relies more on restraint (...a5) and exchange (...♗e4).

Stonewall

1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♙g2 e6 4 c4 (D)



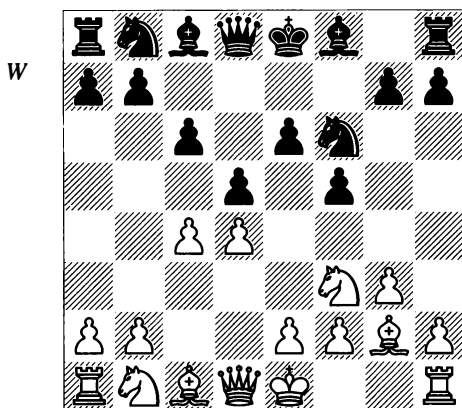
4...c6

This is probably the most accurate move-order. Now 5 ♗h3 can be met by 5...d6!, when ...e5 is hard to stop.

4...d5 5 ♗h3! is a little better for White: 5...♙e7 (5...♙d6 is interesting: 6 0-0 c6 7 ♙f4 ♙e7! {of course Black doesn't allow the exchange of dark-squared bishops – now he hopes that the bishop will prove misplaced on f4} 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 ♖c2 h6 {preparing ...g5} and now White should play 10 ♙xb8! ♙xb8 11 ♗f4 with a bind) 6 0-0 0-0 7 b3 c6 (Short's idea of 7...♗c6 8 ♙b2 a5 is interesting – the pressure on d4 forces 9 e3 before White can develop his queen's knight) 8 ♙b2 (Khenkin points out that the normally advantageous exchange 8 ♙a3 ♙xa3 9 ♗xa3 isn't so good here, since due to the knight's absence from f3 Black can prepare ...dxc4 and ...e5 with

equality) 8...♖e4 (8...♖bd7? 9 ♖f4 pushes the knight back again) 9 ♖d2 when White looks good – for instance after 9...♙f6 Khenkin recommends 10 ♖xe4! dxe4 11 ♖c2 followed by ♙ad1 and f3 when Black's position looks unhealthy.

5 ♖f3 d5 (D)



Black has conceded White an outpost on e5 that would make most of the classical writers turn in their graves, but Botvinnik was marked by his willingness to investigate such abandoned structures and demonstrate their hidden potential. The e5-square isn't so easy to exploit, since occupation will often result in simple exchanges. Another point is that, while the c8-bishop is 'bad', in fact the g2-bishop is hardly any better, since it is also restricted by the black pawns.

6 0-0 ♙d6

Botvinnik used to play the Stonewall with his bishop on e7, but soon players realized that the bishop is much more active on d6 (plus the e7-square can be used by the queen).

7 b3

Intending ♙a3 (if allowed), and otherwise simply fortifying c4 and preparing to develop with ♙b2.

7 ♙f4 is now much more double-edged: 7...♙xf4! 8 gxf4 0-0 and White has something of a bind but at the cost of a weakened kingside.

7...♖e7!

Black makes a useful move while frustrating the strategic threat of ♙a3.

8 ♖e5

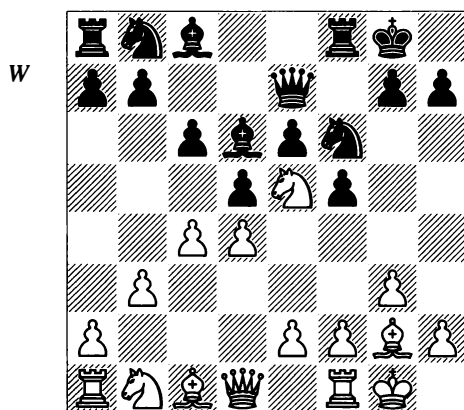
Probably the most testing move, trying to stop ...b6.

8 ♙b2 b6 followed by ...♙b7 is like a Catalan where Black has played ...f5, which leaves him more active on the kingside.

8 a4 forces the exchange of dark-squared bishops but Black has time to develop his remaining pieces comfortably. Kramnik analyses 8...a5 9 ♙a3 ♙xa3 10 ♖xa3 0-0 11 ♖e5 b6 12 ♖c2 ♙b7 13 ♖e1 ♖a6 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♖1d3 c5 followed by ...♙ac8 and ...♖e4 with full equality for Black.

8...0-0 (D)

8...b6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♙b2 is also a little better for White.



9 ♙b2

Black can bring his bishop into play with the manoeuvre ...♙d7-e8-h5, but White is better placed.

9...♙d7 10 ♖d2!

On c3 the knight would block the b2-bishop, and have few prospects of its own.

10...♙e8 11 ♖df3 ♖bd7 12 ♖d3! h6 13 ♖fe5!

This is a typical continuation. White will now prepare (and Black must prepare to meet) f3 and e4.

Leningrad

1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♙g2 g6 4 c4

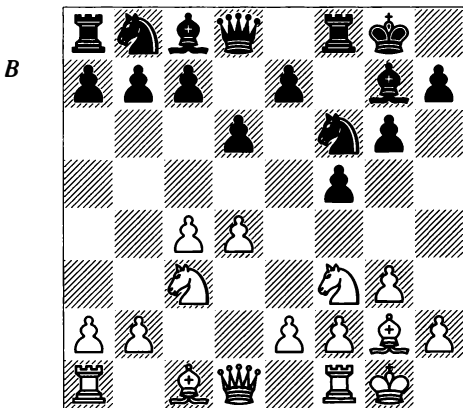
White has a promising independent option: 4 ♘f3 ♙g7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b4!? as popularized by Sadler a few years ago. In one of his games, after 6...♘e4 7 ♙b2 ♘c6 8 ♖d3 d5 9 a3 ♙e6 10 ♘bd2 g5 11 ♙ad1 ♖e8 12 c4 he was clearly better.

Gavrikov's idea of 4 c3 ♙g7 5 ♖b3!? is dangerous – 5...d5 looks strange with the bishop already committed to g7. GM Stuart Conquest demonstrated the best response: 5...♘a6! 6 ♘d2 c5 7 d5 ♘c7 8 ♘h3 d6 9 ♘f4 0-0, when Black has an improved Benoni.

4...♙g7 5 ♘c3

5 ♘h3 is also playable against this set-up, though after 5...0-0 6 0-0 Black has an interesting option in 6...♘c6, combining with the g7-bishop to pressurize d4.

5...d6 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 0-0 (D)



7...♖e8!

If Black wants to play ...e5, this is the best way to do it, since ...♘bd7 invites ♘g5 and ...♘c6 runs into d5.

7...c6 is a good alternative which has been favoured by a lot of Dutch advocates, Dolmatov and Malaniuk in particular. After 8 b3 Black can curl up with ...♘a6, ...♙d7 and ...♖e8 or play more ambitiously with 8...♖a5 9 ♙b2 e5, when 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 e4 f4! is

nice for Black while 10 ♖d2 (preventing 10...e4 in view of 11 ♘xe4!) 10...♖c7 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 e4 ♘a6! leads to an unclear position.

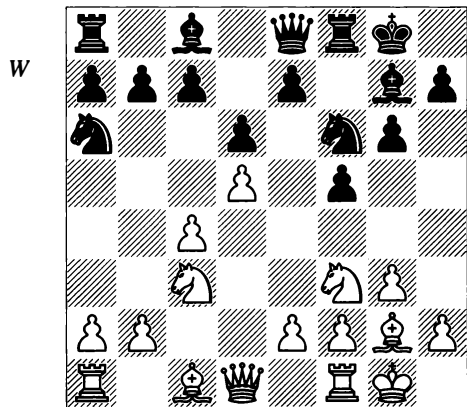
Black now threatens 8...e5 and White has to do something about it.

8 d5

Perhaps the main line – now any ...e5 will be met by dxe6.

8 b3!? is a very good alternative for White – 8...e5 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 e4 ♘c6 11 ♘d5! is good for White and so Pedersen recommends the immediate 8...♘c6, when 9 d5? runs into 9...♘e4!. Therefore White generally prefers 9 ♘b5 ♖d8 10 d5 ♘e5 11 ♙b2, with an edge.

8...♘a6 (D)



9 ♘d4

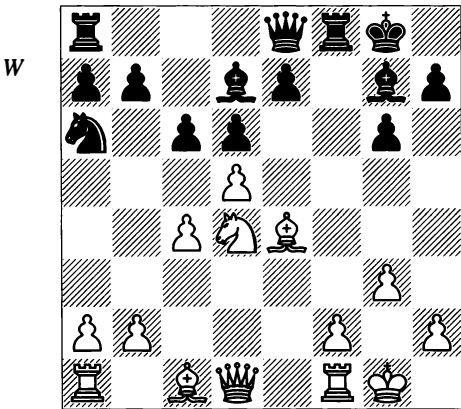
Not just targeting e6, but also making e4 possible.

9 ♙b1, aiming for b4, doesn't achieve much after 9...♘c5!; for instance, 10 b4 ♘ce4 11 ♙b2 e5 with good chances.

9...♙d7 10 e4

10 b3 c6 11 ♙b2 ♘c7 is a typical Leningrad Dutch position – White has more space and some nice bishops but Black is applying pressure to the head of the pawn-chain. I don't know of any clear route to an advantage; for instance, 12 ♙c1 ♙b8 13 ♖d2 c5 14 ♘f3 b5! looks fine for Black.

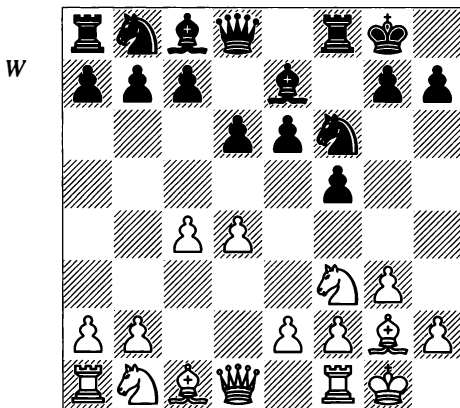
10...fxe4 11 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12 ♙xe4 c6 (D)



White has a slightly more active position. He should probably continue 13 h4 with the preferable position, though Black's game is entirely reasonable.

Classical

1 d4 f5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 g3 e6 4 ♙g2 ♙e7 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 (D)



This is known as the 'Classical Dutch', though most Classical systems were popular at some point and this one has generally lagged behind the Stonewall. Black doesn't create many weaknesses, but White should have few problems getting a workable edge.

7 ♘c3

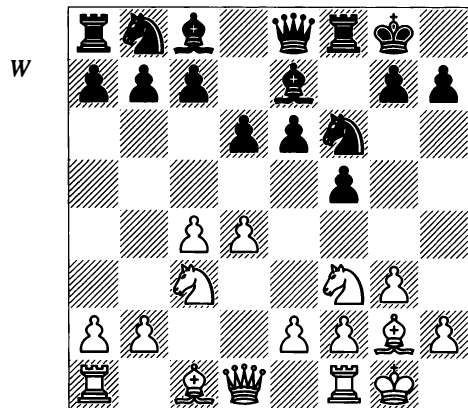
7 b4!? is an idea which has been gaining ground in both the Classical and Leningrad variations – White immediately seizes some useful queenside space. Black's best is to strike at the white pawn-front with 7...♘e4 8 ♙b2 a5!?

7...♙e8 (D)

This is the old-school way of handling the Dutch, and represents its most natural implementation – the queen is going to h5, followed by a knight to g4, pawn to g5, rook to h6 and however many other pieces Black can fit on the kingside. The problem is that these pieces have more mundane central commitments which can't be left to the other pieces. The main reason I don't like this variation of the Dutch for Black is that it tends to take him a long time to get his queenside developed, and before he does I can't see any substantial initiative emerging on the kingside.

7...♘e4 is more solid, but after 8 ♙c2 ♘xc3 9 ♙xc3 ♙f6 10 b4! White's queenside play is likely to bear fruit.

7...c6 8 b3 a5 9 ♙b2 ♘a6 10 ♙e1 and e4 will also leave White better.



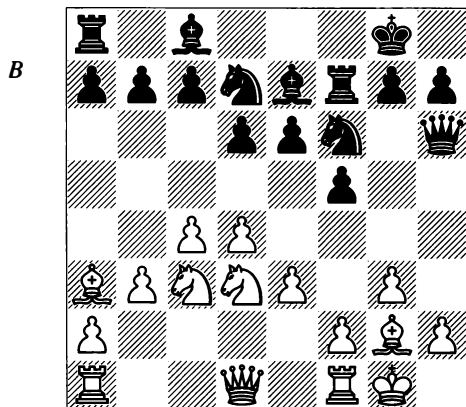
8 b3

White can also play more directly with 8 ♙e1 ♘c6 9 e4 fxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♙xe4 ♙g6 12 ♙e2 ♙f6 13 ♙d2, though after 13...e5 Black must be very close to equality.

8...♙h5 9 ♙a3!

Threatening d5, when ...e5 could be met by $\text{c} \times \text{e}5$.

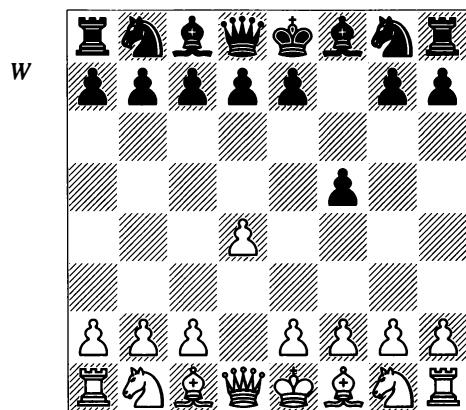
9... $\text{f}7$ 10 e3 $\text{b} \times \text{d}7$ 11 $\text{c} \times \text{e}1!$ $\text{h}6$ 12 $\text{d}3$ (D)



White is rock solid and perfectly placed, which sounds like a clear advantage to me.

Odds & Ends

1 d4 f5 (D)



2 $\text{c}3$

White intends 3 e4.

2 e4, the Staunton Gambit, was once so feared that Botvinnik thought Black had to play 1...e6 and only then 2...f5 to avoid it, but

these days players are more sceptical. After 2...fxe4 3 $\text{c}3$ (3 f3 e5! is strong) 3... $\text{d} \times \text{f}6$ 4 f3 d5 5 $\text{g}5$ $\text{f}5$ 6 fxe4 dxe4 White is struggling to show enough for the pawn.

2 $\text{g}5$ doesn't lose the bishop to 2...h6 3 $\text{h}4$ g5 4 e3 gxh4?? in view of 5 $\text{h}5\#$, but with 2...g6 followed by ... $\text{g}7$ and ... $\text{d} \times \text{f}6$ Black enters a favourable Leningrad set-up.

2...d5

While we saw Black voluntarily entering this structure in the Stonewall section, here he is arguing that the c3-knight is misplaced since it blocks the white c-pawn. He could be right, which is why players have been exploring White's sharp third-move option below.

2... $\text{d} \times \text{f}6$ 3 $\text{g}5$ followed by $\text{g} \times \text{f}6$ and e3 gives White quite a pleasant set-up.

3 e4!?

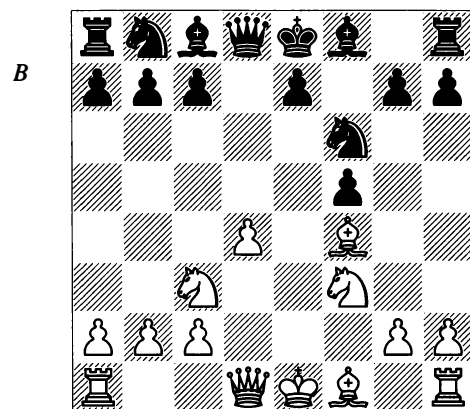
White has alternatives, of course, but this looks good.

3 $\text{g}5$ is still possible; after 3...g6 (3...c6! 4 e3 $\text{b} \times \text{b}6$ could be more logical) 4 e3 $\text{g}7$ 5 h4!? $\text{e}6$ 6 $\text{d} \times \text{f}3$ c6 the position is unclear.

3...dxe4

The fact that Black must make this unnatural capture is the main appeal behind White's third move. 3...fxe4? 4 $\text{h}5+$ and 5 $\text{h} \times \text{d}5$ is horrible for Black.

4 $\text{f}4$ $\text{d} \times \text{f}6$ 5 f3 exf3 6 $\text{d} \times \text{f}3$ (D)



White has pretty good compensation due to the black f-pawn's over-enthusiasm.

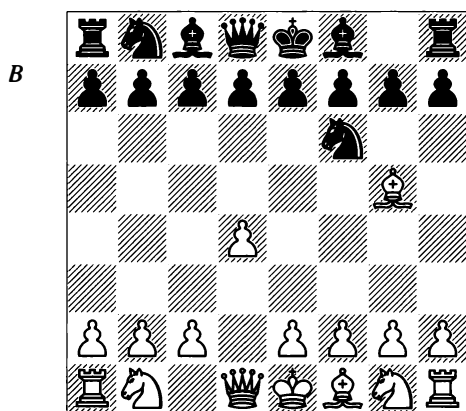
Trompowsky

1 d4 ♘f6

Against 1...d5, 2 ♖g5 isn't so effective. Black's most aggressive option is 2...f6!? and if 3 ♖h4, then 3...♘h6!, but the simplest is 2...h6 3 ♖h4 c6 when 4 e3 ♗b6 5 ♗c1 e5! fully equalizes, since 6 dxe5?? ♗b4+ reveals the point of 2...h6.

1...f5 2 ♖g5 is covered in the Dutch section.

2 ♖g5 (D)



English GM Julian Hodgson has made a living out of this move, which has the advantage of sidestepping huge chunks of queen's pawn theory.

2...♘e4

2...d5 is one of the best responses: after 3 ♖xf6 exf6 (3...gxf6!? is a more ambitious alternative, when Black will strike at the centre with ...c5) 4 e3 ♖d6 5 c4 dxc4 6 ♖xc4 0-0 7 ♘c3 Black should probably hit with 7...c5 and near-equality.

2...e6 is also good, when White can transpose into the Torre Attack with 3 ♘f3 or 3 ♘d2, or take the centre with 3 e4 h6 4 ♖xf6 ♗xf6, when the quiet 5 c3 has come into vogue, planning on building a broad centre with ♗d2 and f4.

3 ♖f4

Probably the best retreat. To view the wanderings of White's bishop as time-wasting is simplistic – the e4-knight is vulnerable to both f3 and ♖d3, and when it retreats to f6 White will actually have gained time!

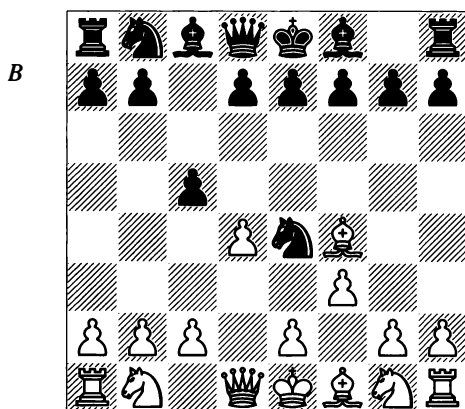
3 h4 is sharp but not objectively threatening. Black should probably strike at the centre with 3...c5.

3 ♖h4 is best met by 3...c5 4 f3 g5! 5 fxe4 gxh4 with a fully balanced position.

3...c5

3...d5 is more solid. White can play 4 e3 and 5 ♖d3 or liven things up with 4 f3 ♘f6 5 e4 dxe4 6 ♘c3.

4 f3 (D)



4...♗a5+

This disruptive check is the most accurate. 4...♘f6 5 dxc5 ♗a5+ 6 ♗d2 ♗xc5 7 e4 followed by ♘c3 and 0-0-0 leaves White aggressively placed.

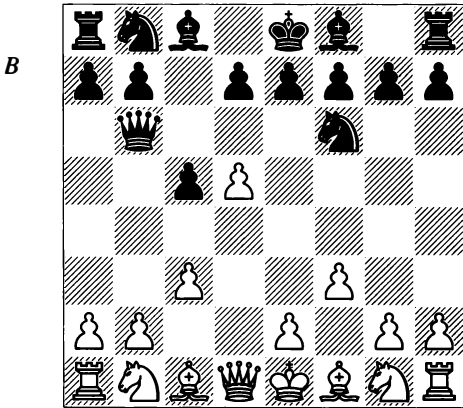
5 c3 ♘f6

Now 6...cxd4 is the threat so White must make a choice.

6 d5

Seizing central space is the most ambitious.

6 ♖d2 cxd4 7 ♖b3 ♜b6 8 ♜xd4 ♖c6! 9
 ♜xb6 axb6 leads to a balanced endgame.
 6... ♜b6 7 ♖c1! (D)



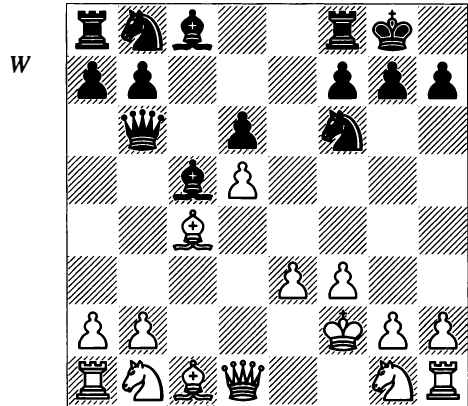
Counterintuitive? Sure. But practice has shown that this method of holding the b-pawn is preferable to the dark-square weakening entailed in 7 b3. Note also that, although 100% of the developed pieces are black, the queen and knight can't do much damage on their own. A couple more moves

(e4, c4) and Black will be condemned to passivity, so he must open things up.

7...e6 8 c4 exd5 9 cxd5

Now White intends ♖c3, e4 and so on, with a nice Benoni-type position. Black does have a good option to mix things up, however:

9...c4! 10 e3 ♖c5! 11 ♜f2 0-0 12 ♖xc4 d6
 (D)



Black has some compensation with a tender white king and extra development.

Torre, Barry and Colle

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6

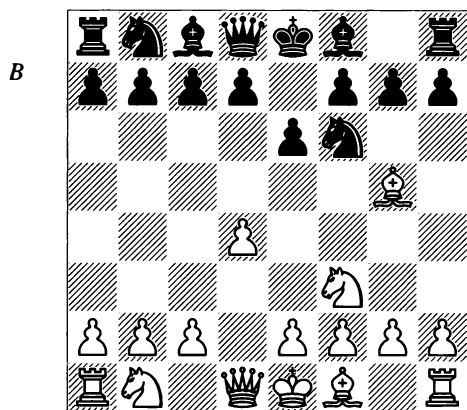
This allows the Torre Attack in its most effective form.

2...g6 3 ♘c3 (3 ♗g5 ♗g7 4 ♘bd2 0-0 5 c3 d6 6 e4 c5 7 dxc5 dxc5 followed by ...♘c6 and ...♞c7 is fine for Black) 3...d5 4 ♗f4 is called the Barry Attack. Its main (only?) exponent is GM Mark Hebden, but Black has several ways to equalize; for instance, 4...♗g7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♗e2 c5 7 ♘e5 ♘c6.

After 2...d5, 3 ♗g5?! isn't so hot because 3...♘e4 4 ♗f4 c5! gives Black excellent play.

3 ♗g5 (D)

3 e3 is the Colle System. Black has a good response based on delaying ...d5: 3...c5 4 ♗d3 b6 5 0-0 ♗b7 6 ♘bd2 ♗e7 7 c3 (7 b3!? 0-0 8 ♗b2 is a more enterprising idea, since it keeps more tension in the position) 7...♘c6 and now 8 e4 only leads to equality after 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♘b4 10 ♗b1 ♗a6.



3...c5!

This is appropriate, not only as Black's typical break in queen's pawn openings, but also as a response to the white bishop's dereliction of its defensive duties.

4 e3

4 c3 is fine for Black after 4...♞b6 5 ♞c2 cxd4 6 cxd4 ♘c6 7 e3 d5, to be followed by ...♗d7 and ...♞c8.

4...cxd4

4...♞b6 5 ♘bd2! ♞xb2 6 ♗d3 and 7 0-0 gives White full compensation.

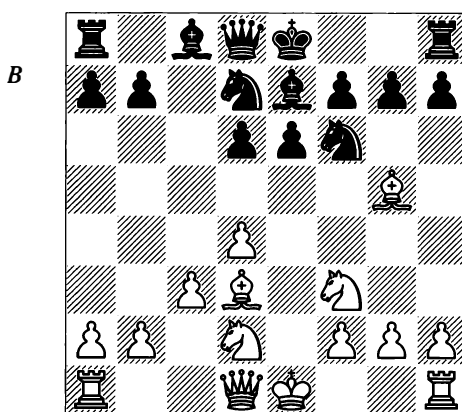
5 exd4 ♗e7 6 ♘bd2

This is a more flexible square than c3 for the knight, since now the c-pawn can do something useful...

6...d6 7 c3

...like this. White's set-up might appear insipid to you. It is.

7...♘bd7 8 ♗d3 (D)



White has a tiny edge.

Veresov

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♖c3

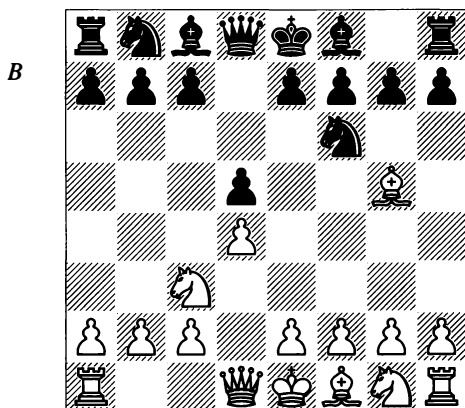
Throughout queen's pawn openings we saw the utility of the c-pawn – White's generally goes to c4, from where it can pressurize the black d-pawn or go to c5 to cramp the opponent, while the black c-pawn has both defensive (the Slav) and offensive (the Tarrasch) potential.

Basically, the blocking of the c-pawn is why 2 ♖c3 is played far less frequently than 2 c4, and Black has some well-established routes to equality. Depending on his normal repertoire, he can transpose into his favourite lines like the Classical French (2...e6 3 e4 d5), the Pirc (2...g6 3 e4 d6) or the Philidor (2...d6 3 e4 e5 4 ♘f3).

2...d5

However, this is overwhelmingly the most popular response, pinpointing the fact that White has no real pawn-breaks, while Black can still strike with ...c5.

3 ♙g5 (D)



3...♘bd7

Definitely tidiest.

3...c5 4 ♙xf6 gxf6 represents a more ambitious attempt. In view of Black's long-term advantages (two bishops, half-open c-file) and immediate threats of gaining central control with ...♘c6, ...cxd4 and ...e5, White is best advised to sharpen the play with 5 e4.

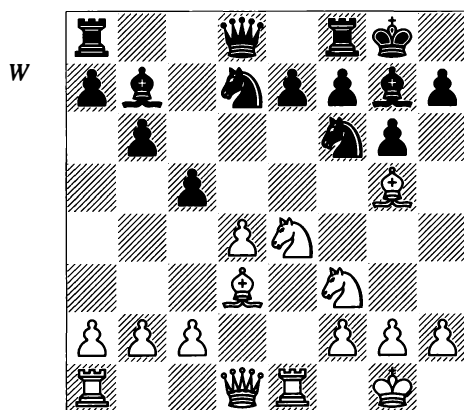
3...e6 4 e4 transposes into the French Defence.

3...♙f5 is a good alternative.

4 ♘f3

White gives up on ideas of a quick e4, but the alternative 4 f3 h6 5 ♙h4 c5 6 dxc5 e6 is fine for Black, since 7 b4 b6 8 c6? ♘e5 9 b5 d4! followed by ...♙b4 and ...♘c4 is too strong.

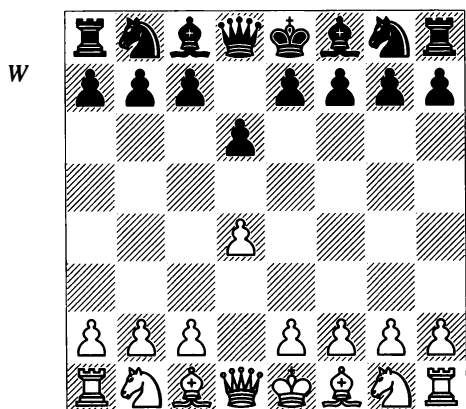
4...g6 5 e3 ♙g7 6 ♙d3 0-0 7 0-0 c5 8 ♚e1 b6 9 e4 dxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♙b7 (D)



The position is level.

...d6 System

1 d4 d6 (D)



This move-order is often used by Pirc players who want to get original positions against 1 d4. White can transpose into the Pirc with 2 e4, of course, but how can he keep the game in d-pawn channels?

2 ♘f3

This is the most popular option, hindering ...e5.

2 c4 e5 can transpose to English positions after 3 ♖c3 exd4 or 3 ♘f3 e4, while 3 d5 is also a good option in view of 3...f5 4 e4! when 4...fxe4 5 ♖c3 ♘f6 6 ♖ge2 ♙f5 7 ♖g3 ♙g6 8 ♙g5 ♖bd7 9 ♖cxe4 ♙e7 10 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 11 ♙d3 0-0 12 0-0 is a little better for White in view of his complete control over the e4-square.

2...♙g4

Of course Black can also enter King's Indian or Pirc territory with 2...♘f6 and 3...g6.

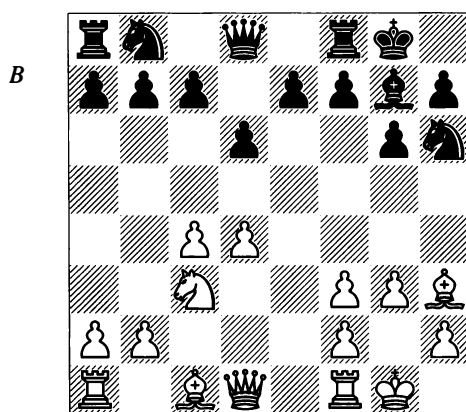
3 c4 ♙xf3

Hodgson used to play 3...♖d7, but after 4 ♙b3 ♙b8 5 ♙e3 g6 (maybe 5...♙xf3 is better) 6 ♘fd2! ♙g7 7 f3 ♙f5 8 ♖c3 c5 9 d5 ♘e5 10 h3 ♙c8 11 f4 ♖d7 12 ♙f2 a6 13 a4 ♖gf6 14 e4 Black is at a clear disadvantage – such cramped positions are particularly unpleasant when all the pieces are still on the board.

4 exf3

4 gxf3 has also been played. The move basically shifts play from the e-file to the g-file. After 4...♖d7 5 ♖c3 g6 6 f4 Black can set up a solid position with ...♙g7 and ...♖h6.

4...g6 5 ♖c3 ♙g7 6 g3 ♖h6 7 ♙h3! 0-0 8 0-0 (D)



White is a little better with space and two bishops, but must find a way to break through against the solid black set-up (which will be improved by ...e6 and ...♘f5).

Black Knights' Tango & Budapest

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 ♟c6!?

This is a tricky one. Invented by the Moldavian coach Chebanenko and introduced by his students, this has since been adopted with success by top-class GM Viktor Bologan. The usual warnings about blocking one's c-pawn in queen's pawn openings apply, of course, but here Black's basic idea is to play ...e5. White generally stops this, when the game (after 3 ♟f3 e6) can transpose to rare variations of the QGD after ...d5 or the Nimzo-Indian after ...♙b4. Accordingly the Black Knights' Tango is a very flexible system, and should be met with respect.

Black has another dynamic method of hitting the d-pawn, the Budapest Gambit, which begins 2...e5. The problem is that White has promising play whether he hangs on to or returns the pawn, so I wouldn't recommend the line. 3 dxe5 ♟g4 (3...♟e4 4 ♟f3 ♙b4+ 5 ♙d2 ♟xd2 6 ♟bxd2 ♟c6 7 a3 ♙xd2+ 8 ♟xd2 ♟e7 9 ♟c3 leaves Black a pawn down for less than nothing) 4 ♟f3 (4 ♟h3 is a useful alternative, returning the pawn but aiming to clamp down on the d5-square with ♟f4) 4...♟c6 5 ♙f4 ♙b4+ 6 ♟c3 ♟e7 7 ♟d5 and Black has no real compensation for his lost pawn.

We now return to the position after 2...♟c6 (D):

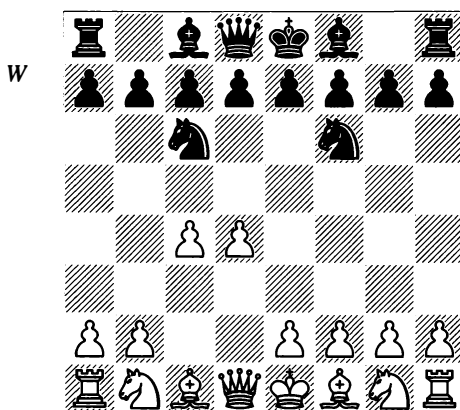
3 ♟f3

3 ♟c3 e5 4 d5 ♟e7 looks alright for Black.

3 d5 seems to gain less in time than it loses in flexibility: 3...♟e5 4 e4 e6 (not 4...♟xe4?? 5 ♟d4) 5 ♟d4 ♙b4+ 6 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 7 ♟xd2 d6 and Black can increase his dark-square control with ...c5.

3...e6

3...d6 is also possible. 4 ♟c3 e5 can transpose to a King's Indian after 5 d5 ♟e7 6 e4 g6, though with 4 d5 ♟e5 5 ♟xe5 dxe5 White secures a useful structural advantage.



4 ♟c3

4 a3 was Kasparov's choice when he faced the line. Then:

a) 4...d5 5 ♟c3 dxc4 6 e4 ♟a5 7 ♙xc4 ♟xc4 8 ♟a4+ and 9 ♟xc4 with an extremely strong centre.

b) Black sometimes also plays a 'Hippo' formation with 4...d6 5 ♟c3 g6 6 e4. The Hippo has never really been defined, but as far as I can see it involves fianchettoing both bishops while also playing ...d6 and ...e6 – Black sits back and provokes White into over-extending. Such openings are playable, but require a high level of skill to handle – GMs Tony Miles and Luke McShane did well here, but those without their talent will struggle with so little central control.

4 g3 is also very logical, with themes from the Catalan and Queen's Indian floating around.

4...♙b4

Now it's a Nimzo-Indian of sorts.

5 ♟c2

A knight on c6 is unusual in the Classical Nimzo, so this is a natural choice.

5 e3 would be a Rubinstein approach; for instance, 5...0-0 6 ♙d3 d6 7 0-0 ♙xc3!? 8 bxc3 e5 with a reasonable game for Black.

5...d6 6 ♖g5

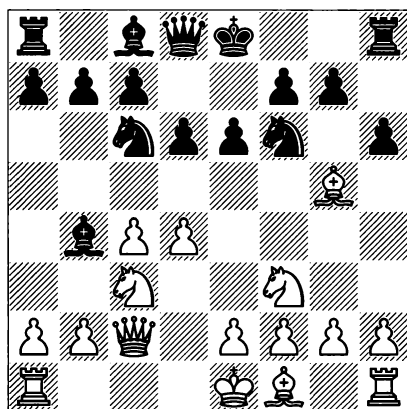
The immediate 6 ♖d2 is similar; for instance, 6...0-0 7 a3 ♙xc3 8 ♙xc3 ♚e7 9 e3 e5 10 ♙e2 ♙g4 11 0-0 e4 12 ♘e1 ♙xe2 13 ♚xe2 a6 14 ♘c2, when I guess White is a touch better but it's not much.

6...h6 (D)**7 ♙d2**

7 ♙h4?? g5 8 ♙g3 g4 and the d-pawn drops.

Now Black will establish a central presence with ...e5, when White will lock the centre with d5 and collect the two bishops with a3. He retains an edge in view of his space and potentially better minor pieces, but Black has excellent development and a fully

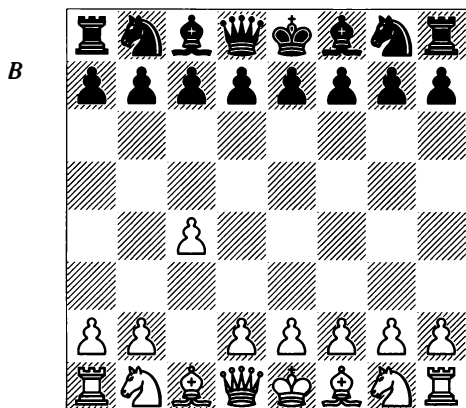
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playable position: 7...0-0 8 e3 e5 9 d5 ♘e7 10 a3 ♙xc3 11 ♙xc3.

Section 5: Flank Openings

1 c4 (D)



As central control and good development are so important during the opening, mankind would have been forgiven for thinking that 1 e4 and 1 d4 were the only worthwhile first moves. However, the games of Howard Staunton demonstrated another approach, beginning with 1 c4 – White doesn't immediately *occupy* the centre with his pawns but instead prefers to *control* the central squares (with a pawn on c4, knights on c3 and f3, and a bishop on g2), waiting for Black to reveal his development before committing the e- and d-pawns. This approach can begin with a wide variety of moves – 1 c4 is the

English, but 1 ♘f3 and 1 g3 are also often played, and generally transpose into English positions. This brings up the first point to appreciate about the English and the other flank openings – there are more transpositions here than in most other openings. This is because White's approach is normally predicated on avoiding an early central clash, and so there are few checks, captures or other forcing moves. His development is so self-contained, it's easy to implement against any black formation and gives Black a wide choice in how to respond. The key to studying such openings effectively is not to get too bogged down in whether White plays 1 c4, 2 ♘f3 and 3 g3 or these moves in any other order, but rather to understand a whole formation. Many games which begin as a flank opening transpose into 1 e4 and 1 d4 stuff – for instance, against Black's most popular response to 1 c4 (1...♘f6), 2 d4 brings us directly back into 1 d4 territory. If Black wants to avoid these transpositions, he has two main methods: 1...c5 and 1...e5. We'll look at all the important stuff after 1 c4, while 1 ♘f3 generally transposes but there is one major independent option which will be considered. Finally we'll look at some much rarer openings, which sometimes come up.

English

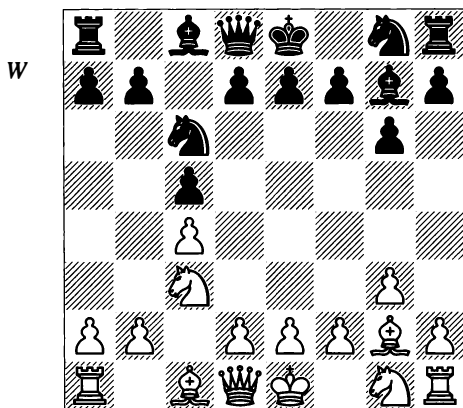
Symmetrical: Queenside Play

1 c4 c5 2 ♖c3

White has a wide choice on his second move – apart from this development, both 2 ♗f3 and 2 g3 are popular. All can transpose to the same positions, but there are subtle differences – if White wishes to have the option of the d4 advance, then 2 ♖f3 is the most accurate, while if he wants to emphasize his control over d5 then 2 ♖c3 or 2 g3 is best.

One unusual possibility results after 2 g3 d5!?, when following 3 cxd5 ♕xd5 4 ♗f3 ♗c6 5 ♗g2 Suba recommends ...e5 followed by ...♗d7, with a Rubinstein-type set-up (see the note to White's 3rd move in the next section).

2...♗c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 (D)

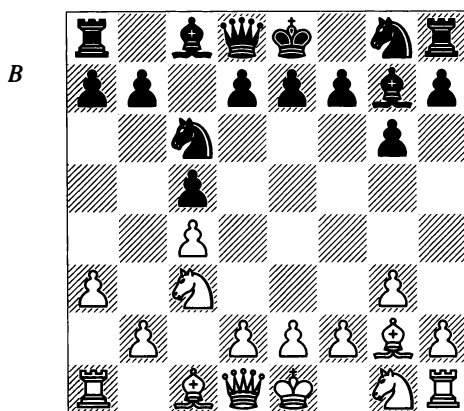


It's pretty easy to see what's going on here. Black copies the white formation, looking for a favourable moment to deviate. White, meanwhile, must judge correctly when he should break the symmetry with an aggressive move – in our main variation, he doesn't do this until move 13!

5 ♗f3

5 e3 e6 6 ♗ge2 ♗ge7 7 0-0 0-0 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 10 exd4 d5 11 cxd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗xd5 exd5 really is equal.

5 a3 (D) perhaps isn't the most theoretical, but this was how I learned to play the English and the idea is certainly logical.



White plans to expand on the queenside with ♖b1 and b4, harmonizing beautifully with the g2-bishop. Now:

a) My own preference here would be 5...d6 6 ♖b1 a5, forcefully restraining the b4 break at the cost of a weak b5-square. After 7 ♗f3 e5! 8 0-0 ♗ge7 Black has a Botvinnik-type formation (see the section on the Botvinnik System), with all the attendant ideas, and I think this should be enough for equality.

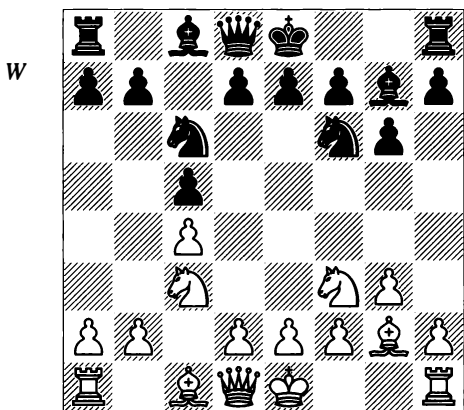
b) 5...e6 allows White an adventurous possibility: 6 b4!, when 6...♗xb4 (best, since 6...cxb4 7 axb4 ♗xb4 8 ♗a3 gives juicy compensation) 7 axb4 cxb4 8 d4 bxc3 9 e3 followed by ♗e2 gives White good Benko-style compensation for the pawn.

c) 5...a6 6 ♖b1 ♖b8 7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 b5! (this is important – White was threatening to play this move himself and extend the g2-bishop's lusty gaze) 9 cxb5 axb5 10 ♗f3 ♗f6

11 0-0 0-0 12 d4 d5 and now it really is time to do something: 13 ♖e5! breaks the symmetry, with an edge.

5...♟f6 (D)

5...e6 is an interesting approach – Black plans ...♟ge7 and ...0-0 with a very harmonious set-up. If he's allowed to achieve this then he'll equalize, so White is best advised to try to exploit the weakening of d6 with a pawn sacrifice: 6 d4! ♜xd4 7 ♜xd4 cxd4 8 ♜b5 ♞b6 9 ♞a4. Now simple development with 9...♟e7 fails to 10 ♙f4 e5 11 c5! ♞d8 (11...♞xc5? goes down to 12 ♞c1 and ♜c7+) 12 ♜d6+ ♙f8 13 ♞c4 with a lethal attack on f7, so Black is best advised to keep the position closed by 9...a6 10 e3 d3!, with an unclear position.



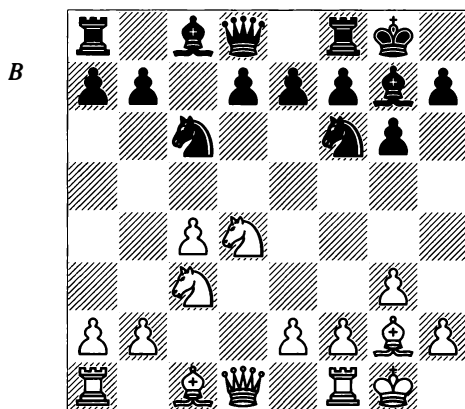
Now we'll examine the pushes of the d-pawn which add some flavour to the position – if both sides refrain from this advance, then the game will transpose into lines covered in the note to White's fifth move.

6 d4

If 6 0-0 then Black can try to take the central initiative himself with 6...d5 7 cxd5 ♜xd5 8 ♜xd5 ♞xd5, even though he is a tempo down on the white equivalent. 9 d3 0-0 10 ♙e3! creates the threat of 11 ♜d4, discovering an attack on the queen and shattering the black queenside. 10...♙d7 is solid (10...♙xb2 11 ♞b1 ♙g7 is also playable, since 12 ♜d4?!

♞xa2! 13 ♜xc6 bxc6 14 ♙xc6 ♙h3 15 ♙xa8 ♞xa8! looks good for Black) and after 11 ♜d4 ♞d6 12 ♜xc6 ♙xc6 13 ♙xc6 ♞xc6 14 ♞c1, Black holds the balance with 14...♞e6!, targeting the a2-pawn.

6...cxd4 7 ♜xd4 0-0 8 0-0 (D)



8...♜xd4

8...d6!? is quite a remarkable idea. After 9 ♜xc6 bxc6 10 ♙xc6 ♞b8 Black has full compensation for his pawn, since White can't profitably retain his material while developing his queen's bishop – obviously moving the bishop lets the b-pawn hang, while on b3 Black has ideas based around ...♜e4.

9 ♞xd4 d6 10 ♞d3

It's a good idea to step out of the g7-bishop's line of fire, and this is the queen's best square.

10...a6 11 ♙f4

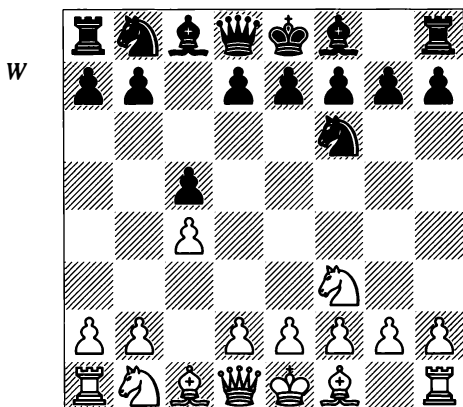
It looks very difficult for Black to mobilize, but he has 11...♙f5! 12 e4 ♙e6 (now the h1-a8 diagonal is blocked) 13 ♞ac1 ♜d7 14 b3 ♜c5 with a fully playable position.

Symmetrical: Central Play

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 (D)

2...♜c6 3 ♜c3 ♜d4!? is an offbeat idea which a young Vishy Anand used to beat both Karpov and Spassky. After 4 e3 ♜xf3+

5 ♖xf3 g6 quiet play with 6 b3 leaves Black very comfortable, so White should play more ambitiously with 6 d4 ♗g7 7 dxc5 ♗xc3+!? (7...♖a5 8 e4 ♖xc5 9 ♕d5! is nice for White) 8 bxc3 ♖a5 9 e4 ♖xc5 10 ♗d3 d6 when he has a shattered structure, but with two bishops and some useful open lines White will have a strong initiative.



3 d4

3 ♕c3 d5 is a good option for Black, though he must be prepared to transpose into the Grünfeld. 4 cxd5 ♕xd5 and now:

a) 5 e4 ♕b4 (5...♕xc3 leads to a Grünfeld after 6 bxc3, but White can also try 6 dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7 ♖xd1 with a pretty equal endgame) 6 ♗c4 ♕d3+ 7 ♖e2 ♕f4+ 8 ♖f1 ♕e6 9 b4 cxb4 10 ♕d5 clears the way for d4 and leaves White with a sizeable initiative.

b) After 5 d4, 5...♕xc3 6 bxc3 g6 is a Grünfeld, while 5...cxd4? 6 ♖xd4 ♕xc3 7 ♖xc3 has been tried by some strong players but I can't understand why – there's nothing good about the black position, while White has a clear lead in development.

c) 5 g3 ♕c6 6 ♗g2 ♕c7! 7 0-0 e5 is Rubinstein's contribution. Botvinnik, whose games and analyses are still the definitive authority on many English positions, wrote that "White proves unable to set up a pawn-centre. But even his piece development is not altogether satisfactory. His king's bishop can do

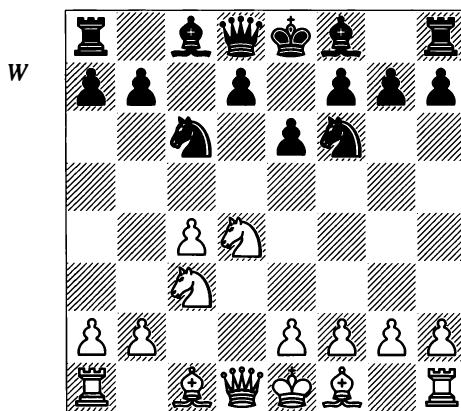
nothing alone, and if the queen's bishop is developed at b2 it will come up against the pawn outpost at e5." While White later discovered the idea of 0-0, ♕e1 and f4 to strike at the black centre, I don't feel he can hope for an advantage in this line. In particular, I think that 5 e4!? is a better try for an advantage.

3...cxd4 4 ♕xd4 e6

4...e5 is risky: after 5 ♕b5 White threatens a bind on d6, so Black's only real option is 5...d5! 6 cxd5 ♗c5 (capturing on d5 loses to an eventual fork on c7) when 7 ♕5c3 0-0 8 e3 e4 leaves him with some compensation for the pawn.

5 ♕c3 ♕c6 (D)

5...♗b4 transposes to a line of the Nimzo-Indian after 6 g3.



6 g3

6 ♕db5 is sharp, but probably not enough for an advantage – Black should strike with 6...d5!, when 7 cxd5 (7 ♗f4 e5 8 cxd5 exf4 9 dxc6 is just unclear) 7...♕xd5 8 ♕xd5 exd5 9 ♖xd5 ♗b4+ (not, of course, 9...♖xd5? 10 ♕c7+) 10 ♗d2 ♖e7 followed by 11...♗e6 gives him full compensation for the pawn.

6...♖b6

6...♗c5 is a less combative way to do it – after 7 ♕b3 ♗e7 Black will set up a typical hedgehog formation with ...d6.

7 ♕b3 ♕e5!?

By hitting c4, Black tries to coax a loosening of his opponent's position.

8 e4 ♖b4 9 ♛e2 d6

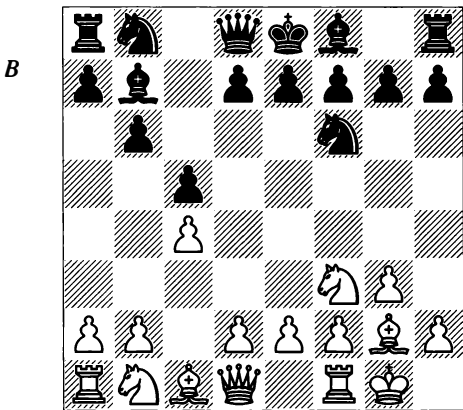
Black has a full share of the chances.

Symmetrical: Hedgehog

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 g3 b6

Really natural – Black decides to contest the long diagonal.

4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 (D)



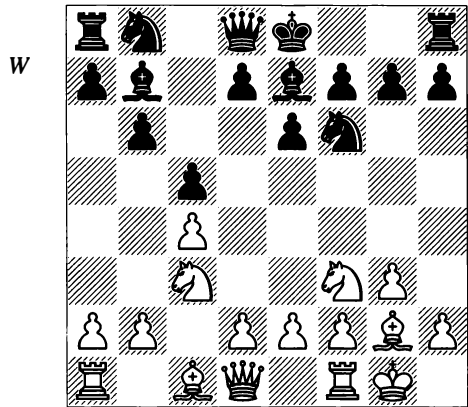
5...e6

This is the start of the Hedgehog, so called because it's small and passive but can puncture your tyres if you try to drive over it.

The Double Fianchetto system begins with 5...g6!?. Now if White continues as in the Hedgehog with 6 ♜c3 ♙g7 7 ♞e1, Black has 7...♞e4!, blocking the pawn-push, trading some pieces and basically equalizing on the spot. Preventing this with 7 d3 is rather tame. Thus most players prefer 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♛xd4 (7 ♜xd4? ♙xg2 8 ♙xg2 and White has nothing – moreover, his king could eventually regret the exchange of his main defender) 7...♙g7 8 ♜c3 d6 9 ♙e3! (9 e4 0-0 and White has to move the queen to an awkward square in view of the threatened ...♞xe4) 9...♜bd7 10 ♞ac1 ♞c8 11 b3 0-0. Now Black threatens ...♞e4, and GM Alex Wojtkiewicz recommends the

instructive 12 ♛h4! a6 13 ♞fd1 ♙c6 14 ♙h3! (so that the bishops won't be exchanged when White goes ♜g5) and White will continue ♙h6 and ♜g5 with natural chances on the kingside, though the black position remains playable.

6 ♜c3 ♙e7 (D)



7 ♞e1

This is the preferred method.

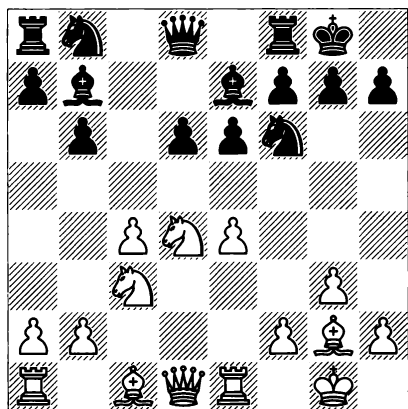
The problem with the immediate 7 d4 is that after 7...cxd4 White is obliged to recapture with the queen, since taking with the knight results in an exchange of light-squared bishops, both good news for Black (he has fewer pieces to accommodate in his limited space) and bad news for White (his king's position is loosened). After 8 ♛xd4 d6 9 b3 ♜bd7! (the right square for the knight – on c6 it would block the b7-bishop and have nowhere to go) 10 ♙b2 a6 11 e4 0-0 12 ♞ac1 and now Suba suggests 12...♛c7 followed by ...♞ac8 and ...♛b8.

7...0-0

As in the Double Fianchetto line above, 7...♞e4 is well worth considering. Black gets a pair of knights off the board, though after 8 ♜xe4 ♙xe4 9 d3 ♙b7 10 e4 0-0 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♜xd4 d6 his light-squared bishop is still restricted, which is enough to give White a small advantage.

8 e4 d6 9 d4 cxd4 10 ♜xd4 (D)

B



Now White threatens e5!. Black has tried a bunch of responses – 10...♖c8 for instance, but I like 10...♘fd7! 11 b3 ♘c6 12 ♙e3 ♘xd4 13 ♙xd4 a6 14 ♖e2 ♙c8 15 ♙ac1 ♖c7 followed by ...♙fe8 and ...♖b8, with the playable slight disadvantage so typical of the Hedgehog. White should seize some more space with f4, and then decide where he wants to extend his operations – kingside play with g4 and g5 is sharp, while trying to play on the queenside with a4 is more solid but also promises less.

Four Knights

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6

The immediate 2...♙b4!? has been tried by both Kramnik and Shirov, with the idea that after 3 ♘d5 ♙e7 Black can gain time on the d5-knight with ...♘f6. My preference would be for 4 d4 (4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 6 ♘e2 d5! is quite comfortable for Black) 4...d6 5 g3 ♘f6 6 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 7 ♙g2 exd4 8 ♖xd4 ♘c6 9 ♖c3 0-0 10 ♙g5 ♙e8 11 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 12 ♖xf6 gxf6 with a baby edge for White.

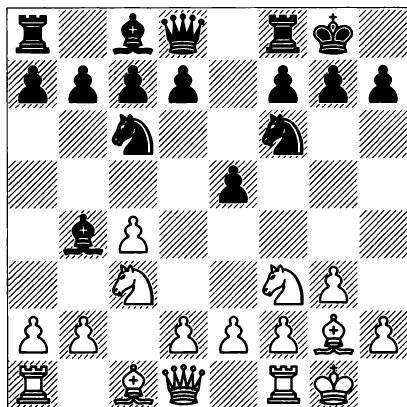
3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3

After 4 e3, 4...♙b4 is still possible. White should probably play 5 ♖c2 (when 5...♙xc3 is solid), since 5 ♘d5 e4 6 ♘g1 0-0 7 a3 ♙d6 8 ♖c2 ♙e8 9 ♘e2 b5 is fine for Black as 10

♘xf6+ ♖xf6 11 cxb5 ♘e5 starts hitting soft spots.

4...♙b4 5 ♙g2 0-0 6 0-0 (D)

B



6...e4

This move is certainly critical, but it requires precise handling to justify such an advance.

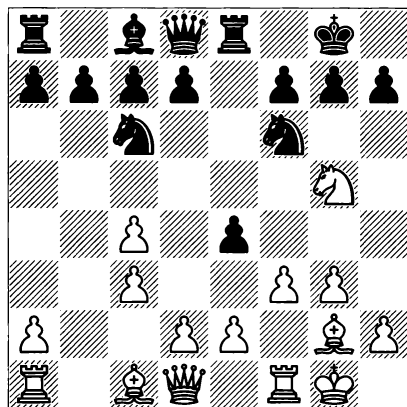
With Black, I like 6...♙e8 7 ♘d5 ♙f8!, which is both pleasingly compact and objectively good.

7 ♘g5 ♙xc3

Drawback number one: there goes the bishop. Drawback number two: the white rook gets a half-open b-file.

8 bxc3 ♙e8 9 f3 (D)

B



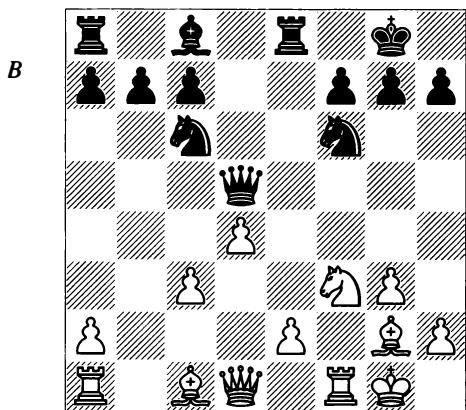
9...exf3

Karpov introduced the stunning 9...e3!? against Kasparov, but the latter got a good game after 10 d3 d5 11 ♖b3 despite later losing.

10 ♖xf3 d5 11 cxd5 ♖xd5

11...♖xd5 runs into the powerful 12 e4!.

12 d4 (D)



This is yet another Kasparov invention – I prefer White, who has several avenues of pressure to explore (the f-file and the h1-a8 diagonal in particular).

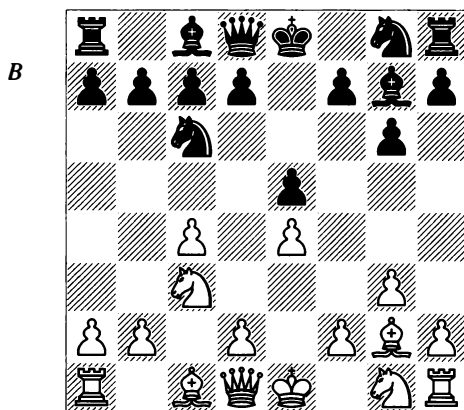
Botvinnik System

1 c4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♖c6

A related system begins 2...d6 3 g3 (3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 g3 ♖c6 6 ♖d2 ♖e6 is also OK for Black; 3 ♖f3 f5 4 d4!? e4 5 ♖g5 could be the best response, when the knight has some good kingside squares) 3...f5 4 ♖g2 ♖f6 5 e3 g6 6 ♖ge2 ♖g7 7 0-0 0-0 when Black has a nice aggressive set-up. After 8 d3 c6 9 b4 ♖e6 10 b5 d5! he's doing fine.

3 g3 g6 4 ♖g2 ♖g7 5 e4!? (D)

A favourite of Mikhail Botvinnik, who adopted this pawn-structure with both colours in a wide range of openings. White accepts a big hole on d4 in return for greater control over d5 and f5. This system is easy to play and has found many advocates over the years.

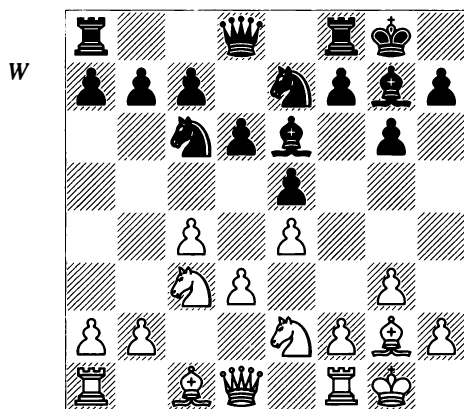


5...d6 6 ♖ge2 ♖ge7

The knights belong here, as the f-pawns are free to advance. Also, a knight on f3 or f6 would be vulnerable to a bishop pin, gaining control of the d-file outposts. For instance, 6...♖f6 7 d3 0-0 (7...h6! is an improvement, but the f-pawn is still stuck) 8 ♖g5 followed by ♖d5 with a comfortable edge.

7 d3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e6 (D)

8...f5 9 ♖d5 leads to a different type of position: 9...♖xd5 (9...h6!? followed by ...g5 might be better) 10 cxd5 ♖e7 11 d4! when everything's opening up.



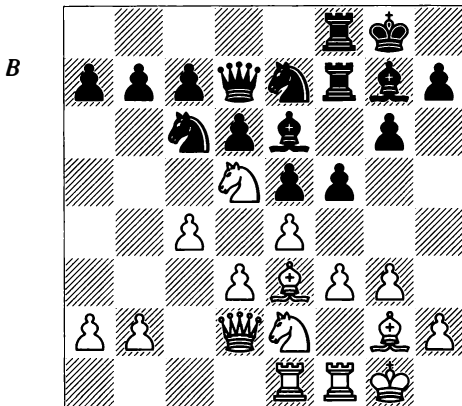
9 ♖d5!

It's best to wait for ...♖e6 before this insertion, since otherwise Black can take on d5 with the knight.

9...♖d7 10 ♖e3 f5 11 ♖d2 ♜f7 12 f3

A good prophylactic measure – it basically prepares for ...f4 by allowing the bishop retreat to f2 if necessary and taking a fork on f3 out of the position.

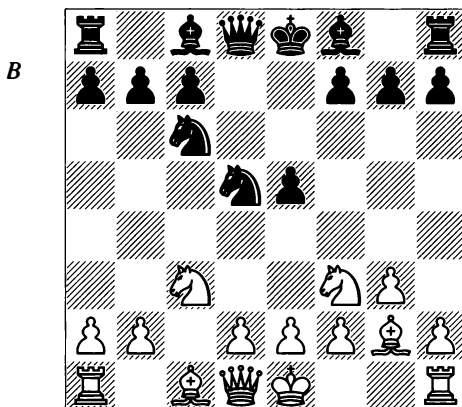
12...♜af8 13 ♜ae1 (D)



White is well placed, and while Black should hold the balance with precise play, in practice such positions are easier for White.

Reversed Dragon

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 ♖g2 (D)



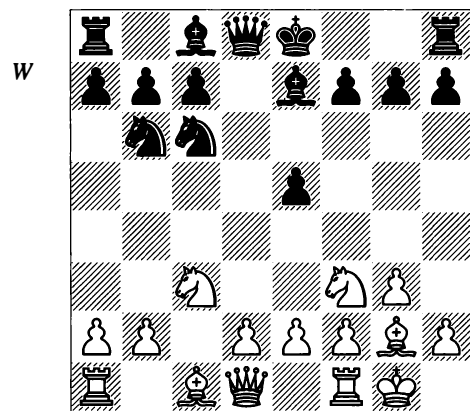
6...♘b6!

The best set-up.

6...♖e6 7 0-0 ♖e7 allows White to seize the initiative with 8 d4!.

6...♘xc3? 7 bxc3 is a simple improvement of White's structure, just as in the analogous Dragon positions – now he has a half-open b-file and a d4 advance on the cards. Some old Tal analysis runs 7...e4 8 ♘g1 f5 9 d3 exd3 10 exd3 ♖e6 11 ♘f3 ♖e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♜e1 ♘f7 14 ♜b1 with a clear advantage for White.

7 0-0 ♖e7 (D)



White's plan is to push on the queenside (normally with b4), to undermine the black knights. In the meantime, Black has to establish solid central outposts for his horses.

8 d3

This is probably not enough for a real advantage.

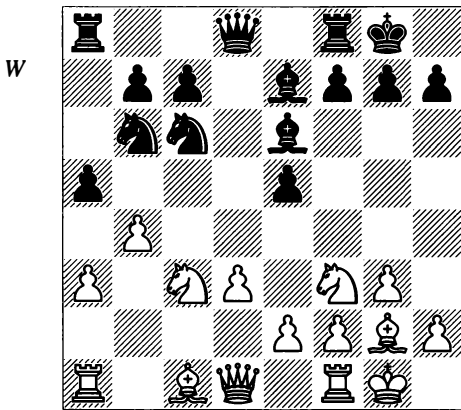
8 a3 0-0 9 b4 ♖e6 10 ♜b1 creates a real threat to the e5-pawn, but whether this is enough for the better position after 10...f6 11 d3 is unclear.

8 ♜b1!? 0-0 9 b4 could be White's best try – he plans to push with b5 and a4. A Kasparov-Timman game continued 9...♘xb4 10 ♘xe5 c6 11 a3 ♘4d5 12 ♘xd5 cxd5 13 a4 ♖f6 14 d4 with an edge for White.

8...0-0 9 a3 ♖e6

9...a5, restraining White on the queenside, is also sensible.

10 b4 a5! (D)



There's an old rule which says "don't play on the side where you're weaker". Certainly it makes sense to play where one's better, but such a dogmatic rule can only limit one's playing strength and this position is a good illustration of why this is the case. Though White is attacking on the queenside, Black's last move highlights a defect in the white advance – the pawns lack fully adequate support. The b-pawn can't be held in its current location, and since capturing on a5 leaves Black with a structural advantage, the only option is to push further.

11 b5 ♖d4

Threatening to come in on b3.

12 ♖d2

Now the white bishop eyes the undefended b7-pawn.

Note that 12 ♖xe5? loses material after 12...♗f6.

12...c6

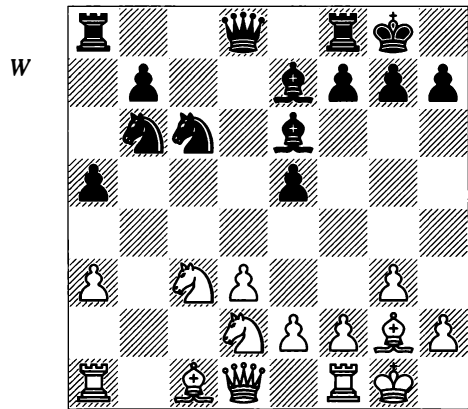
This is a solid move, but not the only option.

12...♖d5?? falls into a well-known trap – in my one game with White in this line, I was lucky that my opponent allowed this one: 13 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 14 e3 and White is winning a piece; for instance, 14...♖e6 15 e4.

12...♗d5!? is GM Paul Motwani's idea and looks very good. After 13 ♖xd5 ♖xd5

it's unclear whether White has anything better than taking on d5 with equality.

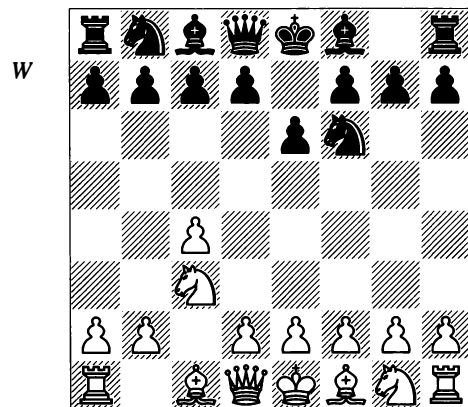
13 bxc6 ♖xc6 (D)



If anything, I prefer Black, since his pieces have access to some juicy squares on the d-file and White still has to take care of his a3 weakling.

Nimzo-English

1 c4 ♖f6 2 ♖c3 e6 (D)



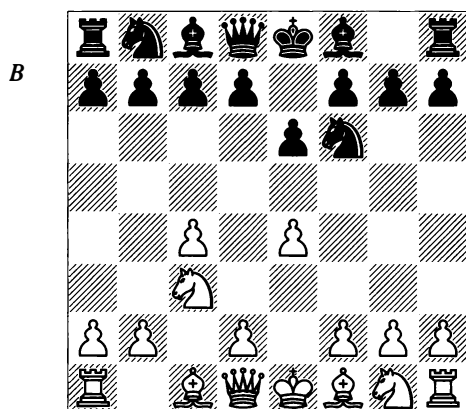
It's fair to say that this move-order is the exclusive preserve of Nimzo-Indian players. Defenders who prefer the Queen's Gambit Declined should choose the move-order 1 c4

e6! 2 ♖c3 d5, considerably limiting White's options. Of course White can now transpose directly into a Nimzo by playing 3 d4, but here we're concerned with his attempts to keep the game in English channels.

3 ♘f3

This is very logical – the fact that the pawn isn't yet on d4 means that the knight won't be pinned by a bishop on b4.

3 e4!?(D) is a much sharper attempt, called the Mikenas Attack. Then:



a) 3...d5 is solid, but seems to give White an edge after 4 e5 d4 (4...♗e4 sacrifices a pawn: 5 ♗xe4 dxe4 6 ♖g4! and Black can't play 6...♖d4? due to 7 ♗f3!) 5 exf6 dxc3 6 bxc3 ♖xf6 7 ♗f3 e5 8 d4!? (8 ♗d3 is another method) 8...exd4 9 ♗g5 (9 cxd4 ♗b4+ holds no dangers for Black) 9...♖e6+ 10 ♗e2, which is an enterprising pawn sacrifice.

b) Black's best seems to be 3...c5 4 e5 ♗g8 5 ♗f3 ♗c6 and now White's best is again to sacrifice a pawn: 6 d4!? cxd4 7 ♗xd4 ♗xe5 8 ♗db5 a6 9 ♗d6+ ♗xd6 10

♖xd6 with considerable dark-square compensation.

3...♗b4 4 ♖c2

This is probably the most harmonious move – the queen defends both the knight and the e4-square and doesn't get in the way of anything.

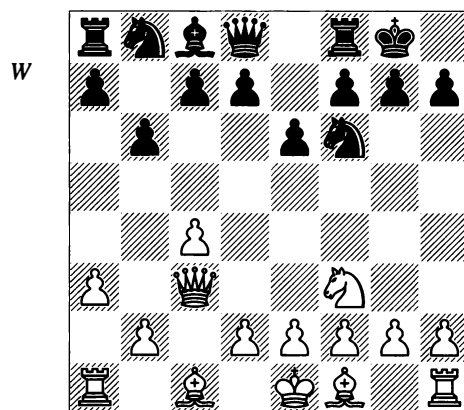
4 ♖b3 is more forcing, but puts the queen on a worse square. After 4...c5 5 g3 ♗c6 6 a3 ♗a5 7 ♗g2 0-0 White is a touch better.

4 g4!? is a much sharper idea. If Black takes, then 5 ♗g1 is going to do some damage on g7. One of his better ideas is to buy time for ...♗e4 with 4...h6: 5 ♗g1 b6 6 h4 ♗b7 7 g5 hxg5 8 hxg5 ♗e4 9 ♖c2 ♗xc3 10 dxc3 ♗d6 with approximate equality.

4...0-0

4...c5 5 a3 ♗a5 6 g3 0-0 7 ♗g2 ♗c6 8 0-0 is similar to the note to White's fourth.

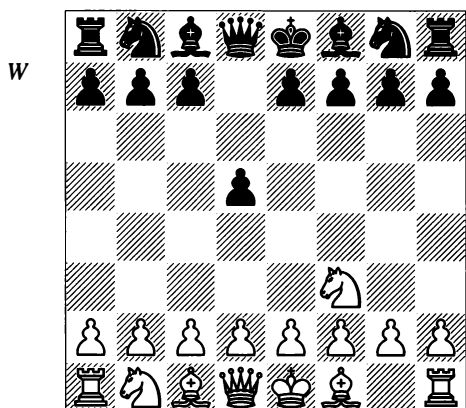
5 a3 ♗xc3 6 ♖xc3 b6 (D)



White will play g3 and b4 and fianchetto both bishops – Black must avoid nasty accidents on both long diagonals, instead setting up central play with ...c5 and ...d5.

Réti

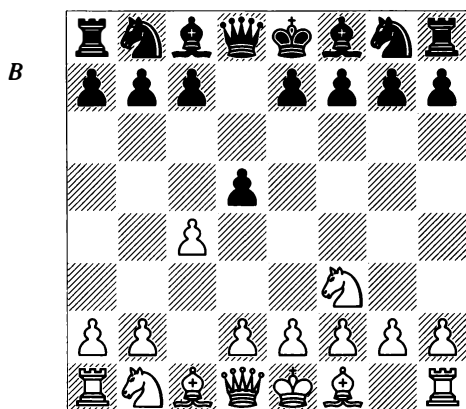
1 ♖f3 d5 (D)



2 c4 (D)

White can also transpose into the Queen's Gambit by playing 2 d4 first.

2 g3 is an example of the 'King's Indian Attack', where White goes ♖f3, g3, ♔g2, 0-0 and d3 against more or less anything. Black can play a huge range of set-ups against this, but some of the more logical begin 2...♗f6 3 ♔g2 and now 3...♔g4 (3...♔f5 is also good) 4 0-0 e6; for instance, 5 b3 c6 6 ♔b2 ♗bd7 7 d3 ♔d6 8 ♗bd2 0-0 9 h3 ♔h5 10 e4 dxe4 11 dxe4 ♔e5! 12 c3 ♔c7 with equality.



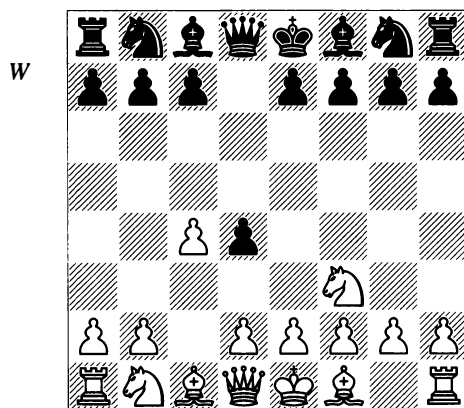
2...d4 (D)

Seirawan comments that "this particular move has always struck me as Black's best chance of equalizing the game. Black establishes a beach head in the middle of the board and dares White to do anything about it."

2...e6 3 g3 has obvious parallels to the Catalan – so many that it normally transposes.

2...c6 3 e3 ♗f6 4 ♗c3 gives Slav set-ups – depending on your repertoire you can opt for a Semi-Slav (4...e6) or ...a6 Slav (4...a6), but regular Slav players have a bit of a problem since 4...dxc4? 5 ♔xc4 is just good for White since he hasn't had to play a4, while moving the c8-bishop will leave the b-pawn vulnerable to ♗b3. Most seem to opt for 4...g6 with a Schlechter Slav where White has foregone his option of ♔f4.

2...dxc4 is also perfectly reasonable – after one of White's most popular moves, 3 ♗a3, Black can play 3...c5 4 ♗xc4 ♗c6 5 g3 f6!? intending ...e5 with the typical Rubinstein clamp against the English, examined in an earlier section.



3 b4!?

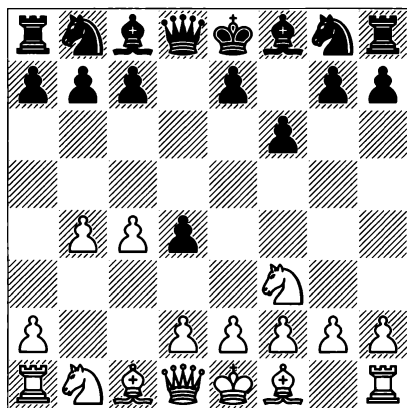
Taking control of c5 begins the process of encircling the d4-pawn.

Challenging the d-pawn doesn't lead to anything: 3 e3 ♘c6 4 exd4 ♘xd4 5 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 6 ♘c3 ♖g4 7 ♖e2 ♖xe2 8 ♙xe2 e6 9 d3 ♘e7 10 ♖e3 ♙d7 11 d4 ♘f5 is fully equal.

3...f6! (D)

The only way to support ...e5, since a knight on c6 would simply be a target for b5.

W

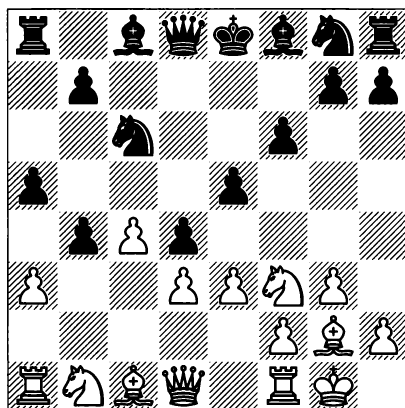


4 d3 e5 5 a3 c5

The black centre is incredibly solid – taking on c5 leaves White with nothing, but he has an interesting option like a reversed Benko:

6 g3! cxb4 7 ♖g2 ♘c6 8 0-0 a5 9 e3 (D)

B



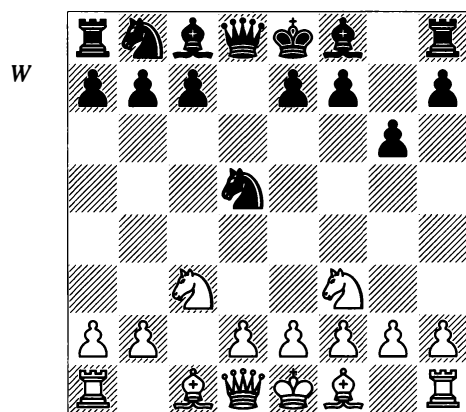
Now the game revolves around the d4-point: 9...♖g4 10 h3 ♖xf3 11 ♖xf3 ♖c5 12 ♖d5 ♘ge7 13 e4 with a balanced position.

Anti-Grünfelds

1 ♖f3 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 d5

With this move, Black is clearly aiming for a Grünfeld. He can also investigate 3...♗g7 4 e4, when he is not forced to transpose to a King's Indian by 4...d6 5 d4, as he can play 4...e5!? with a reasonable position.

4 cxd5 ♜xd5 (D)



Now 5 d4 gives Black what he wants.

5 e4

5 ♖a4+ and 5 ♖b3 are alternative anti-Grünfelds. A recent high-level encounter ran 5 ♖a4+ ♗d7 6 ♖h4 (6 ♖b3 is also dangerous) 6...♜xc3 7 dxc3 ♜c6 8 e4 e5 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♗c4 h5!? with approximate equality.

5...♜xc3 6 dxc3!?

Going for the endgame.

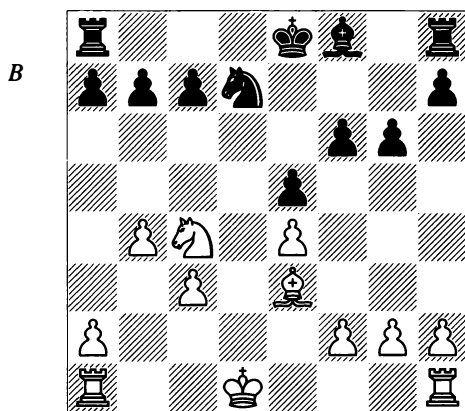
6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 d4 c5 is a regular Grünfeld.

6...♝xd1+ 7 ♜xd1 f6!

Playing for the right advance, ...e5.

7...c5 8 ♗e3 b6 just gives White more queenside play after 9 a4.

8 ♗e3 e5 9 ♜d2 ♗e6 10 ♗c4 ♗xc4 11 ♜xc4 ♜d7 12 b4 (D)



White has very little, if anything. However, instead of the normal Grünfeld counterplay, Black is obliged to maintain the balance in a rather dull position, and for this reason the line could be worth a go by White.

English Defence

1 c4 b6

This is the English Defence, which was a favourite playground of the late and great Tony Miles. It can also be played against 1 d4: 1...e6 2 c4 b6 (though Black needs to be ready for a transposition to the French in this case). The logic is simple – entice White to occupy a big part of the centre, then break down his construction.

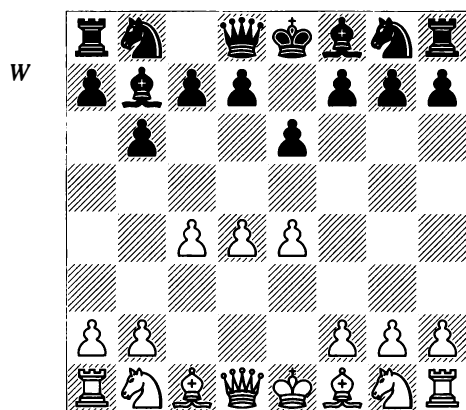
2 d4

2 ♘c3 ♗b7 3 e4 is an interesting idea – Black can point to the d4-square with 3...e5!? or keep matters more typically English with 3...e6 4 ♘f3 ♗b4 and 5...♞e7.

2...e6

2...♗b7 is also possible, but Black doesn't want to place any obstacles in the way of White's central occupation.

3 e4 ♗b7 (D)



Now White faces a choice.

4 ♗d3

The most solid move – everywhere else Black generates substantial counterplay.

4 d5?! is a move Black is praying for – for instance, 4...♘f6 5 ♗d3 b5! 6 cxb5 exd5 when White's position has lost all its shape.

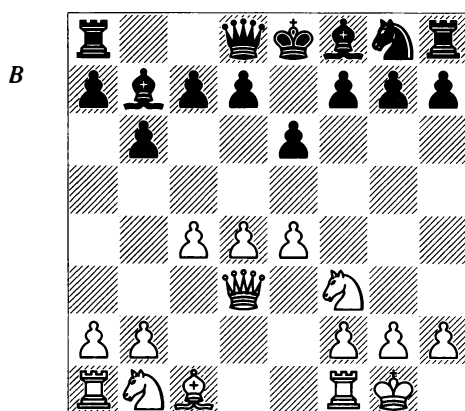
4 ♘c3 allows 4...♗b4, which I'd rather prevent. An old Miles game went 5 ♖c2 ♗h4! 6 ♗d3 f5! and White was already struggling to hold things together.

4 f3 is the kind of move I prefer to avoid when possible. Miles introduced the remarkable 4...f5! 5 exf5 ♘h6 6 fxe6 ♘f5!!, and won a number of remarkable games remarkably quickly too.

4...♘c6

4...f5 is still played by some die-hards, but really looks like too much: 5 exf5! ♗xg2 6 ♖h5+ g6 7 fxg6 ♗g7 and White gets to take some pot shots at the cost of a rook after 8 gxh7+ ♗f8 9 ♗g5 ♘f6 10 ♖h4 ♗xh1 11 ♘e2.

5 ♘f3 ♘b4 6 0-0 ♘xd3 7 ♖xd3 (D)

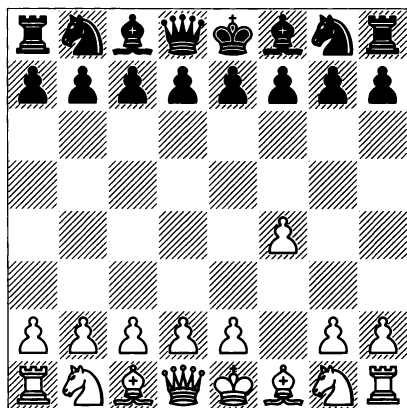


White is better, of course, but maybe those two bishops will make an appearance at some stage.

Bird's Opening

1 f4 (D)

B



1...d5

1...e5, From's Gambit, transposes into the King's Gambit if White plays 2 e4, but after 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6 ♖xd6 4 ♖f3 Black must demonstrate enough for the pawn. It's not clear

that he can – after all, he's traded two excellent pawns for one substandard one. Certainly his sharpest try 4...g5 5 g3 g4 6 ♖h4 ♖e7 doesn't give anything concrete after 7 d4.

1...d6 could be a better move though, preparing 2...e5 – it has always struck me as a little odd that the most popular response to 1 f4, which targets the e5-square, is 1...d5, conceding this very point.

2 ♖f3 ♖f6

2...c5 3 b3 ♖c6 4 ♗b2 ♖f6 5 e3 is liable to transpose to Fischer's recipe in the Larsen Opening – see the next section.

3 e3

3 g3 gives White a Leningrad Dutch with an extra tempo.

3...g6

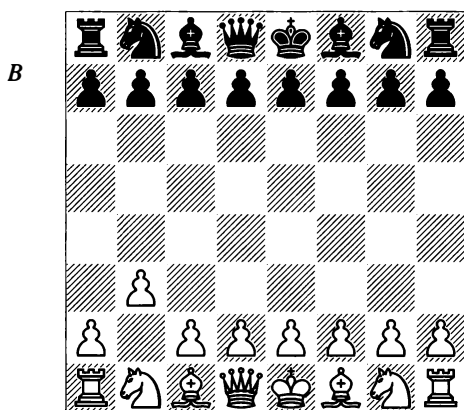
Now White has tried a few moves, but 4 b4 is surely the most thematic, going for a clamp on the dark squares. After 4...♗g7 5 ♗b2 0-0 6 ♗e2 the position is pretty random.

Larsen's Opening

1 b3 (D)

Larsen's Opening is one of White's more logical first moves, aiming to fianchetto the queen's bishop.

1 b4 (Sokolsky's Opening) is a kind of accelerated version of this idea, with the idea that after 1...e5 2 ♖b2 Black can't support the e-pawn with 2...♟c6. However, simply 2...♙xb4 (2...f6!? is more ambitious) 3 ♙xe5 ♟f6 and ...0-0 leaves Black with a slight development advantage to counter White's extra centre pawn.



1...e5

1...d5 2 ♖b2 c5 is possible, but I've never really trusted this line after seeing Fischer's response: 3 ♟f3 ♟c6?! (Fischer's own idea 3...f6!? looks better) 4 e3 ♟f6 5 ♖b5 ♙d7 6 0-0 e6 7 d3 ♙e7 8 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 9 ♟e5 ♜c8 10 ♟d2 0-0 11 f4! with a very natural attack.

2 ♖b2 ♟c6

2...d6 is a more conservative approach, seeking to impede the b2-bishop.

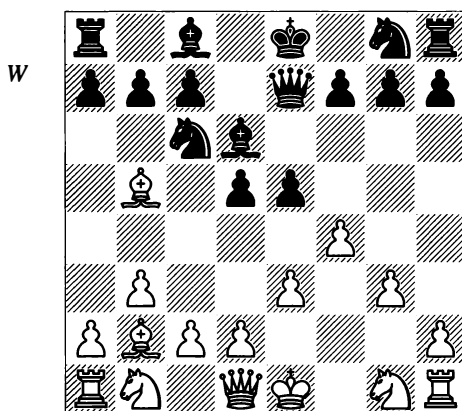
3 e3 d5

This is certainly the most thematic continuation, seizing the centre.

4 ♖b5 ♙d6 5 f4

If White doesn't try to break up Black's centre then the queen's bishop risks being locked out of the game.

5...♜h4+! 6 g3 ♜e7 (D)



Nunn's commentary on the preceding sequence is a paradigm of good opening thought: "Black should defend the e5-pawn by ...♜e7, but he has the option of playing ...♜h4+ first. The only difference between these two lines is that in one White's g-pawn is on g2 and in the other on g3. There is no question that the additional move g3 helps Black. If White exchanges his b5-bishop on c6, then he will have less control of the light squares in any case; the weaknesses created by playing g3 would then be quite serious. It may well happen that White will change his mind and play the bishop back from b5, but in this case Black has gained time."

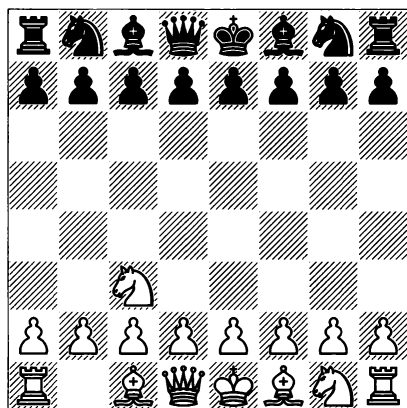
7 ♟f3 ♖g4 8 fxe5 ♙xe5 9 ♙xe5 ♙xf3 10 ♜xf3 ♜xe5 11 ♟c3 ♟f6

NCO assesses this position as slightly in White's favour, but in my opinion the game is fully equal.

Dunst Opening

1 ♖c3 (D)

B



The best response to this move really depends on your normal opening repertoire. 1...e5 2 e4 gives a Vienna, 1...c5 2 e4 a

Closed Sicilian, 1...♟f6 2 e4 d5 an Alekhine, 1...g6 a Pirc/Modern, etc.

1...d5 2 e4

2 d4 gives nothing much, as we have already seen in the Veresov section.

2...dxe4

2...d4 is also sufficient to equalize: 3 ♖ce2 e5 4 f4 ♟c6 5 ♖f3 ♟g4! 6 ♖xe5 ♟xe5 7 fxe5 ♜h4+ 8 g3 ♜e7 9 ♟g2 (otherwise ...♟f3 could prove disruptive) 9...♜xe5 10 d3 ♟d6 11 ♟f4 ♜c5 and Black has few complaints.

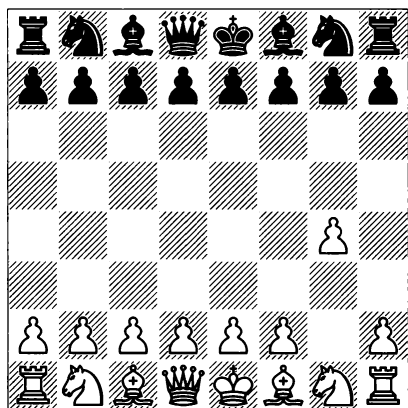
3 ♖xe4

While it looks like White is comfortably ahead in development, in fact the knight on e4 provides a target for Black's pieces to develop with gain of time. Assuming he doesn't want a Scandinavian (3...♜d5 4 ♖c3 ♜a5), Black has two good options in 3...♟f5 4 ♖g3 ♟g6 and 3...♟d7 intending 4...♟gf6.

Basman's Opening

1 g4 (D)

B



I feel this is a good point to end the book.
In most opening books this move wouldn't

even be mentioned, and the others use it as an example of how not to play, but as I hope I've demonstrated, players are using g4 advances all the time – in the Sicilian, the Semi-Slav, the English. Thus we can't just roundly condemn such an opening. Having said that, in this particular position g4 seems to miss the mark:

1...d5 2 ♗g2!

NCO just covers 2 h3 but this move isn't necessary immediately.

2...c6

After 2...♗xg4 3 c4 White regains the pawn with the better game.

3 h3

Black should proceed similarly after 3 g5.

3...e5

Black is doing well.

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2...♗f6 3 g3 d5 210) 3 ♗f3 (3 g3 g6 4 ♙g2

♙g7 5 e4!? 209) 3...♗f6 208 4 g3 (4 e3 208)

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b) 2...♗f6 and then: 3 ♖c3 d5 206 (3...♖c6 208); 3 d4 206; 3 g3 b6 207

2 ... ♖c6

3 g3 g6

4 ♙g2 ♙g7

5 ♗f3

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5 a3 204

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This major new work surveys all chess openings, providing a guide to every critical main line and featuring descriptions of the typical strategies for both sides. These commentaries will be welcomed by all club and tournament players, as they will help them to handle the middlegame positions arising from each opening better, and will equip them to find the best continuation when their opponents deviate from the standard paths.

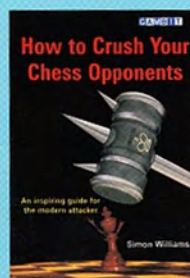
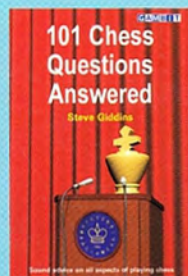
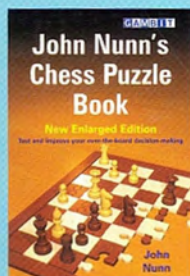
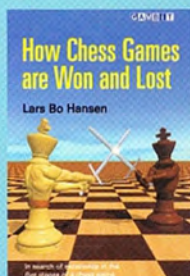
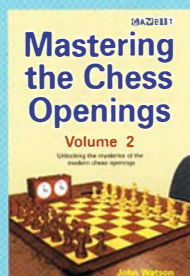
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Sam Collins is a young International Master from Ireland who won the Irish Championship in 2002. He competed in several World and European junior championships and has represented Ireland in three olympiads, winning a gold medal at Bled in 2002. He is also an experienced chess teacher who has lectured at the Berkeley Chess School in California.

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