

starting out:
the french

BYRON JACOBS



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Chapter One

The Winawer with Qg4

- Introduction
- Poisoned Pawn Variation
- Black keeps the g7-pawn
- Illustrative Games

Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of the Winawer. This variation is named after the Polish master Simon Winawer who developed the ideas in the variation in the latter part of the 19th century. It is a dynamic counterattacking system that was much favoured at the start of his career by the great Soviet World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik. Rather than carefully building up his position Black immediately takes the fight to his opponent by pinning the white knight. It can lead to a marvellous strategic and/or tactical battle, which isn't always appreciated by White players of a calm disposition. In fact it is the greatest compliment to the Winawer that White often plays 3 Nd2 (the Tarrasch variation), blocking in his own bishop on c1, because he is too afraid to play Nc3, precisely because of 3...Bb4.

White has three main philosophies against the Winawer:

- 1) Try for a big advantage with Qg4, when it might all go horribly wrong.
- 2) Settle for a small plus by leaving the queen at home and developing with moves like Nf3, as in Chapter Two.
- 3) Attempt to bamboozle Black with one of the offbeat systems described in the third chapter.

Poisoned Pawn Variation

We'll begin by looking at the bold and brash Qg4! main line, which is often referred to as the Poisoned Pawn Variation.

With 3...Bb4 Black breaks the rule that you should bring out your knights before your bishops. This provoked Bobby Fischer into making the famous and rather dogmatic pronouncement that the 'Winawer is anti-positional and weakens the kingside'.

In order to punish Black the American would usually play his queen swiftly to g4 where it aims at g7. This seems very logical, but ... just a minute ... isn't White also breaking a basic positional tenet: don't bring your queen out too early?

In fact both players are avoiding the normal rules in order to achieve positional ends. It is this which makes the variation so exciting and difficult to understand!

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4

Besides the general idea of ...Bxc3+ inflicting doubled pawns on White there is also the threat of 4...dxe4, winning a pawn.

4 e5

Already a major decision by White. He grabs a space advantage in the centre and deprives the black knight of its best square on f6. On the other hand he is in some danger of overextending himself as his centre is vulnerable to flanking blows.

Other moves are discussed in the third chapter.

4...c5!

This attack on d4 with ...c7-c5 is an essential strategical theme in all the main line French systems. Black immediately begins the fight for control of the centre by undermining the base of White's pawn structure. Compared to the Tarrasch Variation the attack looks particularly favourable for Black here as White cannot support his centre with c2-c3 as the knight is in the way.

5 a3!

A good moment to force the bishop to declare its intentions, to borrow a phrase from Nimzowitsch in his book *My System*.

5...Bxc3+

The alternative 5...Ba5, declining the chance to capture, is discussed in the Positional Main Lines section in Chapter Two.

6 bxc3

Now White has doubled c-pawns, but at least he has kept solid control of the d4-square.

6...Ne7

Black hurries to develop his kingside before he is hit by Qg4. Alternatives are the counterattacking 6...Qa5 in Chapter Two and 6...Qc7 one move earlier than usual, which is discussed below.

7 Qg4 (Diagram 1)



Diagram 1

The critical poisoned pawn



Diagram 2

A highly complex position

More restrained alternatives such as 7 Nf3 are examined in the second chapter. Black now has three methods of dealing with the threat to his kingside pawns:

- 1) Make a positional concession with 7...Kf8 (or maybe even 7...g6)
- 2) Take a deep breath and castle into it with 7...0-0. White should now get a good initiative on the kingside but Black retains his positional

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pluses.

3) Fight fire with fire ... jettison the kingside and go after White's weakened queenside with...

7...Qc7

The alternatives that hold onto the g7-pawn – 7...0-0 (Games 4 and 5) and 7...Kf8 (Game 6) – are discussed below.

8 Qxg7

The white queen decimates the black kingside. It is too late for normal development with 8 Ne3? as after 8...cxd4 the threat of Qxc3+ forking the king and rook means that White has to play the ugly 9 Qxd4 when 9...Nbc6 is deeply unpleasant.

8...Rg8 9 Qxh7 cxd4 10 Ne2

The knight defends c3 against the fork and stops Black taking on e5 with check. On the other hand the bishop on f1 is none too pleased at being shut in.

10...Nbc6 11 f4!

It is necessary to bolster e5 in this fashion as if 11 cxd4? Nxd4! 12 Nxd4 Qc3+ does not inspire confidence.



TIP: The e5-pawn is nearly always a crucial central foothold for White in the French. It should always be maintained unless there is a very good reason to give it up.

11...Bd7 12 Qd3 dxc3 (Diagram 2)

Now White has a variety of moves.



TIP: It is suggested that you play through games 1-3 quickly, without referring to the notes, in order to get a feel for the dynamic features of this variation. Then return to the discussion of the positional features here.

You will see that in Short-Kosten (Game 1) White took back on c3 immediately with 13 Qxc3. This move was a favourite of former World Champion Anatoly Karpov and so deserves respect. Short wins in convincing style, but you will see from the notes that Black had much better resources. In Game Two, 13 Be3 was well met with the sacrificial 13...d4, gaining time for an attack on the white king by attacking the bishop. In Game Three, Svidler plays the safer 13 Rb1, but once again a bit of carelessness allows Black to break in good style with ...d5-d4! and overwhelm his opponent.

So what conclusions can we draw from these games? The main one is that the position is full of contradictions and paradoxes.

White destroys Black's kingside, but...

Black's kingside is wrecked and White has a passed pawn on the h-file as well as the bishop pair. The dark-squared bishop looks particularly menacing: Black will surely regret having given his away.

All this is undoubtedly true, but there is a further important point to

remember: the point of a game of chess is to mate the opponent's king! Where exactly is the white king going to find shelter? Surely not on the queenside. The centre is also likely to become open. So the best bet is the kingside! Now we see that the white queen's greed in snaffling the pawns on g7 and h7 has been distinctly double edged – she has opened the g- and h-files for the black rooks to attack her king's future residence.

Black wants to open the position, but....

Here is another contradiction. Black wants to open the centre to get at the white king, or at least to dismantle White's pawn chain. But in opening the position he is breaking the rule:

If the opponent has the two bishops you should keep the position closed!

White's dark-squared bishop is delighted when the position opens up, as it has no rival in the enemy camp. So Black has to make sure when he blasts things open that the co-ordination of his pieces is so superior to White's that it outweighs factors such as the two bishops and the passed pawn on the h-file.

These contradictions explain why Black can have such mixed fortunes in this line. Thus Kosten suffers a complete disaster in Game 1 whereas Korchnoi has a convincing win over Spassky in Game 2. Here it should be mentioned that Black commits what many Winawer players regard as a cardinal sin in Game 1: namely, he plays ...Rc8 rather than castling queenside. It is highly tempting to put immediate pressure along the c-file, but Black is falling into the same strategic malaise as White: his rooks cannot be easily co-ordinated and his king remains stuck in the centre. It is much better for Black to delay action on the c-file in favour of ...0-0-0! when his rooks are joined and his king is reasonably safe. The attacking plans in Games 2 and 3 hinge on the prospect of a central breakthrough with ...d5-d4! which wouldn't have been possible if the black king had been in the centre.



NOTE: Normal positional considerations do not always apply when positions become as wild as they do in the Winawer Poisoned Pawn.

Black Holds on to the g7-pawn

Not everyone wants to see their kingside pawns massacred, even if it results in dangerous counterplay. Black has tried three main methods to keep the white queen out of g7. Playing through the opening moves again, after

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3

the first opportunity for Black not to play ball is 6...Qc7. The idea is that after 7 Qg4 Black can respond with 7...f5! uncovering a defence of g7 by the queen along the second rank. This was played by Nigel Short against Gary Kasparov in Game Seven. Short went the way of

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virtually all Kasparov's opponents as Black, but that had more to do with the workings of genius than any flaw in Black's set up. In fact, the World Number One wrote an analysis of the game in which he suggested that Black was at least equal after the opening.

TIP: Just because Kasparov crushes a variation it doesn't necessarily mean it is bad.

Another way to defend g7 is to play 6...Ne7 and after 7 Qg4 to give up castling rights with 7...Kf8 as in Game Six. Black decides that as the centre is closed his king won't have too much to fear on f8 – in fact less to fear than if he castles with 7...0-0, when White can launch a direct attack. There is a lot to be said for this reasoning and when White overpresses Black scores a crushing victory in the illustrative game. However, we should point out that there is one serious drawback: the rook on h8 becomes difficult to activate.



NOTE: A king marooned in the centre is not only a target for the opponent, it also interferes with the connection of the rooks and thus hinders development.

Why should connecting rooks be so important? Well, they are such commanding pieces that to leave one out of your plans will surely mean failure. Just think how powerful rooks become when they are doubled on the seventh rank. Irving Chernev once said that 'when you double rooks you double their power'.

Looking back, you will see that this drawback to 7...Kf8 applies equally to the situation of the white king in the Qxg7 Main Line. It isn't only a target in itself – it also stops the white rooks from coordinating and working together.

Finally we come to 7...0-0, which is the main way for Black to guard g7. At the same time it develops the kingside and prepares to attack White's centre with ...f7-f6 or, more typically, stabilise his position with ...f7-f5. The downside is that White's queen, two bishops and knight (after Nf3) are all poised to launch an immediate and massive assault. Has Black castled into a fatal attack? Certainly he needs to be extremely careful – look what happens to him in Game Four: just one inaccurate move and it all caves in. In Game Five, Black quickly utilises the ...f7-f5 idea.

This puts White into a quandary, as if he moves his queen away then the bishop on d3 finds its diagonal aiming at h7 blocked. So he usually plays 9 exf6 en passant, which maintains a promising attack but loses the spearhead of his pawn structure. If he isn't careful then Black might gain time with ...e6-e5 uncovering an attack on the queen. In the illustrative game, Timman made an inaccuracy which allowed Anand to apply continuous pressure, but overall there is nothing wrong with the plan of castling kingside.

Warning: The Winawer Poisoned Pawn is highly theoretical. One correspondence player has dedicated his life to unravelling the mysteries of this variation.

Illustrative Games

Game 1

□ Short ■ Kosten

Hastings 1988

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 Qc7

Black develops rapidly sacrificing the kingside. The alternative main line is 7...0-0 (Games 4 and 5), provocatively castling into the attack. Black can also defend the pawn with 7...Kf8!? (Game 6). Nobody wants to go 7...g6 – it's very weakening of the dark squares.

8 Qxg7 Rg8 9 Qxh7 cxd4 10 Ne2 Nbc6 11 f4

On 11 cxd4 Nxd4! 12 Nxd4 Qc3+ wins.

11...Bd7 12 Qd3

Back to the thick of things.

12...dxc3 (Diagram 3)



Diagram 3

A critical Winawer position



Diagram 4

White's kingside pawns march on

Almost a starting position for this opening. Black has lost most of his king's wing, but hopes to generate enough play on the other side and in the centre to make up for it. Broadly speaking, unless Black whips up counterplay swiftly, then the long term assets of White's kingside pawns should decide. That is a simplification, but it summarises the character of many 7 Qg4 Winawer middlegames.

13 Qxc3

White captures the pawn with the knight in Game 3, while 13 Be3 is seen in Game 2.

13...Rc8?!

Kosten deviates from his earlier game vs Balashov at Minsk 1986,

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which White won after 13...Nf5 14 Rb1 d4 15 Qd3 0-0-0 16 Rg1 f6 17 g4 Nh6? 18 exf6 Rxc4 19 Rxc4 Nxc4 20 f7 e5 21 Bg2 Be6 22 h3 Nf6 23 fxe5 Nxe5 24 Qxd4!. Black's play was later improved by 17...Nh4! 18 exf6 e5 19 f7 Rxc4 20 Rxc4 Bxc4 21 Bh3 Qd7 22 Bxc4 Qxc4 23 Qg3 Qh5 24 Rb3 e4 25 Qg7 d3 with rough equality in Hellers-Djurhuus, Gausdal 1992.

14 Rb1 Nf5 15 Bd2 a6 16 Rg1!

A strong move. After 16 g3 b5 17 Bh3 Qb6! 18 Qd3 Nce7 19 g4 Nh4 20 Rf1 Rc4! Black developed nifty counterchances in Tal-Farago, Wijk aan Zee 1987, and 21 Rb4 Rh8! 22 Ng3 Nc6 23 Rb2 Qd4! 24 Qxd4 Nxd4 25 Kd1 Nhf3 26 Nh5 Nxd2 27 Kxd2 Ra4 28 Ra1 Ke7 29 c3 led to a draw.

16...b5

This just does not seem immediate enough.

17 g4!

A simple and extremely powerful procedure. The pawns advance.

17...Nh4 18 Rg3 Qb6 19 Qd3 Rh8 20 Rh3

White rooks patrolling the third rank can be a feature of these middlegames.

20...Ne7 21 Nd4 Rc4 22 c3 Ra4

If Black can find no better ideas than this then he is already down the tubes. Short plays simple chess, and just pushes the h-pawn.

23 Qg3 Nhg6 24 Rxh8+ Nxh8 25 Bd3 Nhg6 26 h4 Rxa3 27 h5
(Diagram 4)

This rook's pawn is a tad more significant than the one that Black just took. The black game is beyond saving.

27...Nf8 28 h6 Neg6 29 f5 Ne7 30 Qh2 exf5 31 h7 Neg6 32 gxf5
Swamping him.

32...Nh8

The worst possible square.

33 Qh5 Qc7 34 Kf1 Rxc3 35 e6!

Accurately calculated. The counterplay that Black has come up with is quite insufficient.

35...Rxd3 36 exf7+ Kd8

Or 36...Nxf7 37 h8Q.

37 Qg5+ Kc8 38 Rc1 Rxd4 39 Rxc7+ Kxc7 40 Ba5+ Kb7 41 Qd8 Rf4+

Tony Kosten is notorious for disliking resigning, often carrying on to token resistance in hopeless positions. This policy once enabled him to save a game a whole queen down, when the Danish IM Iskov accidentally stalemated him.

42 Kg1 Rg4+ 43 Kh2 1-0

Game 2

□ Spassky ■ Korchnoi

Candidates final, Belgrade 1977

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4
 cxd4 8 Qxg7 Rg8 9 Qxh7 Qc7 10 Ne2 Nbc6 11 f4 Bd7 12 Qd3
 dxc3 13 Be3 d4!? (Diagram 5)



Diagram 5

A sacrifice for the initiative



Diagram 6

Black's pieces take control

A big novelty at the time. Black activates his men at the cost of a pawn.

14 Bf2

He could just have taken it immediately.

14...0-0-0 15 Nxd4 Nxd4 16 Qxd4 b6

Time out for this. He does not want to lose a7 and let the white queen and bishop in.

17 Bh4 Bb5!?

Discovering an attack on the white queen.

18 Qe4 Bxf1 19 Rxf1

19 Qa8+ Kd7 20 Rd1+ was a line leading to exchanges and after 20...Nd5 21 Rxd5+ exd5 22 Qxd5+ Kc8 23 Qa8+ Kd7 24 Bxd8? Rxd8 White stays a piece behind, e.g. 25 Qd5+ Ke8 and the checks run out. He has instead to take the draw with 24 Qd5+ etc.

19...Rd5!

Spassky may have underestimated the effect of this blocking move.

20 Bxe7 Qxe7 21 Rf3 Kb8

A very important little move. The contrast in the safety of the two kings is what decides this game.

22 Kf1

On 22 Rxc3 Qh4+ is annoying.

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22...Rd2 23 Rf2 Rgd8 24 Qf3 Rxf2+ 25 Kxf2 Rd2+ 26 Kg3 Qd8
(Diagram 6)

Korchnoi's major pieces now start bobbing and weaving around Spassky's king.

27 Qe4 Qg8+ 28 Kh3 Qh8+ 29 Kg3 Qg7+ 30 Kh3 Rd8

Threatening mate, and forcing White to loosen the pawn cover around his king.

31 g4 Rh8+ 32 Kg3 Qh6 33 Qg2 Qh4+ 34 Kf3 Rd8

The queen and the rook create penetration threats all over the place. Defence is very difficult, if not already impossible.

35 Qg3 Qe7 36 g5 Rd2 37 Kg4 Qb7 38 Qxc3

Finally the pawn falls, but here it doesn't matter.

38...Rg2+ 39 Kh3 Rf2 40 Kg4 Qe4 0-1

The white king's defences collapse.

Game 3

□ Svidler ■ Ivanchuk

Linares 1999

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 Qc7 8 Qxg7 Rg8 9 Qxh7 cxd4 10 Ne2 Nbc6 11 f4 Bd7 12 Qd3 dxc3 13 Rb1

Another line.

13...0-0-0 14 Nxc3 Na5!? 15 g3

An experiment which does not impress. A better try might be 15 Nb5!?, e.g. 15...Bxb5 16 Rxb5 Kb8. Other moves are not very dangerous for Black, for instance 15 Rg1 Kb8 16 g4 Ng6 17 Nb5 Bxb5 18 Qxb5 Nc4 or 15 h3 Kb8 16 Ne2 Nec6 17 g4 Nc4.

15...Kb8 16 Ne2 Ba4! 17 c3?!

17 Nd4 was better.

17...Nf5!

17...Bb3 was also interesting.

18 Bh3

This allows a central breakthrough. Maybe it was better to play 18 Rb4 Bb3!? with an unclear situation.

18...d4! (Diagram 7) 19 Bd2

What else? On 19 Bxf5 dxc3 20 Nd4 (or 20 Qxc3 Rd1+ 21 Kf2 Rxh1 22 Qxc7+ Kxc7) 20...exf5 Black stands excellently, e.g. 21 Rb4 Be6 22 0-0 Be4. On 19 Kf2 Be6! 20 Rg1 Rh8! 21 Bxf5 Rxh2+ and the roof caves in.

Maybe Svidler forgot that in case of 19 0-0 dxc3 20 Qxc3 Qxc3 21 Nxc3 he loses after the simple combination 21...Nxc3! 22 Nxa4 (22 hxg3 Rxg3+ 23 Kh2 Rxc3 wins) 22...Nxf1+ 23 Kxf1 Rd1+ 24 Ke2 Rgg1 25 Rb5 (the only counter hope) 25...Rxc1 26 Rxa5 Rc2+ 27 Ke3 Rxh2

and the bishop has nowhere to hide.

Taking on d4 leads to a problem with ...Bc2 at the end, winning the b1 rook.



Diagram 7

The thematic central thrust



Diagram 8

Black has a winning endgame

19...Nb3! 20 Bxf5 dxc3! 21 Qxc3 Nxd2 22 Qxc7+ Kxc7

Via a series of highly imaginative and active moves Ivanchuk has achieved a winning position, as soon becomes clear.

23 Rc1+ Bc6 24 Bh3 Kb6

and White must lose the exchange, either to the bishop or a knight fork at f3.

25 Rxc6+

Choosing to lose it this way.

25...bxc6!

Ivanchuk makes a new asset out of it: a nice mobile c-pawn.

26 Kf2 c5 27 Bg2 c4 28 h4

The h-pawn is his last hope.

28...Nb3 29 h5 Rd2 30 Ke3 Ra2 31 h6 Rxa3 32 h7 Rh8 (Diagram 8)

The activity of the other black units means that despite the indignity of deploying his rook so passively he can still win.

33 Nc3 Ka5! 34 Ne4 Nc5+ 35 Ke2

Unfortunately the king can't move into the centre – 35...Nxe4 36 Bxe4 Kb4 with the threat of 37...Rd8+

35...Nxe4?

An inaccuracy in a won position. 35...Ra2+! 36 Ke3 Rxc2 37 Nxc5 Rxc3+ 38 Kd4 Kb5 led to an easy victory.

36 Bxe4 Rxc3 37 Rb1 Rh3 38 Kd2?

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After 38 Rb7! Black must demonstrate good technique. After the text move the game is over.

38...Rd8+ 39 Kc2 Rd4 0-1

Such games indicate why Short and Adams acclaim Ivanchuk as a genius.

Game 4

□ Maus ■ Hübner

Lugano 1989

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 0-0 8 Bd3 Nbc6

Not 8...c4?! 9 Bh6! Ng6 10 Bxg6 fxe6 11 Be3 and White has a very strong attack with h2-h4-h5. The proactive thrust 8...f5 is played in the next game.

9 Qh5 h6?

On 9...Ng6 10 Nf3 is hard to meet, e.g. 10...c4 11 Ng5 h6 12 Nxf7! and wins. But Black can play 10...Qc7! so that if 11 Ng5 h6 12 Nxf7 Qxf7 13 Qxg6 Qxg6 14 Bxg6 cxd4 regains the pawn.

10 Bxh6! (Diagram 9)



Diagram 9
A winning sacrifice



Diagram 10
The black king will be mated

10...gxh6 11 Qxh6 Nf5

The only way to block mate. On 11...Ng6 something like 12 h4 Re8 13 h5 Nf8 14 Rh3 does him in.

12 Bxf5 exf5 13 0-0-0 f4 14 Nh3 Ne7

Of course on 14...Bxh3 comes 15 gxh3! and crush down the new g-line.

15 Ng5 Bf5 16 g4!

Bash! He carries on thumping.

16...Be4 17 Rhe1

Threatening to take the bishop and then mate on h7.

17...Qb6 18 e6 Bg6 19 Rd3 (Diagram 10) 1-0

Off to h3, and on 19...Bxd3 20 cxd3 it will be mate.

Simple chess from a mighty Maus.

Game 5

□ Anand ■ Timman

Dortmunder Schachtage 1999

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Ne7 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 Qg4
0-0 8 Bd3 f5!

Altogether a wiser choice.

9 exf6 Rxf6 10 Bg5

On 10 Qh5 both 10...g6 and 10...h6!? come into consideration.

10...Rf7 11 Qh5 g6

Regarded as best; 11...h6 creates more serious weaknesses.

12 Qd1

Having induced some damage in the black kingside, the queen returns home.

12...Nbc6 13 Nf3 c4

Black has also played the immediate 13...Qf8 here, or even 12...Qa5, e.g. 13 Bd2 (13 Qd2 c4!) 13...Nbc6 14 Nf3 Qc7! 15 0-0 e5 with an active game.

14 Be2 Qf8 15 Qc1!?

An interesting novelty. Anand defers castling and plans to try to dominate the kingside and the dark squares first. 15 0-0 h6 16 Bh4 Nf5 17 Bg3 g5 leaves Black comfortably placed.

15...Nf5 16 h4! h6

On 16...Nd6 White plays 17 h5, causing problems around Black's king.

17 Bf4 Bd7 18 Ne5 Nxe5 19 Bxe5 (Diagram 11)



Diagram 11

White controls the dark squares



Diagram 12

The battle for e6 rages

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A long term problem for Black is his inability to 'shield' his dark squares. In giving away the bishop at move 5 he cedes domination of those squares to White. This is particularly chronic here when the black pawns are fixed on light squares.

19...Ne7 20 Qe3 Nc6 21 Bg3 Re8 22 h5 g5 23 0-0

Late castling, but in blocked positions that is not always a problem. White has fixed the pawn structure, and now aims to advance with f2-f4 at the right moment to open up the game and the black kingside for his bishops and major pieces.

23...Ne7 24 Be5

And not the immediate 24 Be5 because of 24...Nf5.

24...Nc6 25 Bh2 Rg7

Now after 25...Ne7 26 g4 takes away the square f5.

26 Bg4 Qf6

Maybe Timman could have sacrificed a pawn with 26...e5!? 27 Bxd7 Rxd7 28 dxe5 (28 Bxe5 Qf5) 28...Qf5 29 Rae1 Re6 with compensation. I think that this would have been a better practical chance than just sitting there and waiting for it.

27 Rae1 Qe7 28 a4! b6 29 Qh3 Nd8 30 Re2 Bxa4

When White plays the line of the Winawer with 7 a4 or 8 a4 then his a-pawn may actually be won by force. Often it does not matter much as Black loses time and has to misplace pieces to get at it. Here's another instance where White just ploughs on regardless. Instead of saying 'Black wins the a-pawn', one might say 'Black acknowledges that action on the kingside is about to stuff him so helps himself to the a-pawn anyway, arguing that he might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb.'

31 f4

After due preparation, here we go.

31...Bd7 32 f5 Rf7 33 Rfe1 Rf6 (Diagram 12)

34 Be5 Rxf5

Ceding material, but on 34...Rf7 35 Bc7!? maintains the pressure.

35 Bxf5 exf5 36 Bc7

This is good enough, but 36 Bf6! Qxf6 37 Rxe8+ Bxe8 38 Rxe8+ Kf7 39 Re5 wins immediately.

36...Ne6

Forced. After 36...Qxe2 37 Rxe2 Rxe2 the knight at d8 hangs, as it would after 36...Qf8 37 Rxe8 Bxe8.

37 Qxf5 Qf7

On 37...Nxc7 38 Rxe7 Bxf5 39 Rxe8+ Nxe8 40 Rxe8+ Kf7 41 Rh8 Kg7 42 Rd8 White wins the ending.

38 Qxf7+ Kxf7 39 Bd6

Black's material inferiority is slight but, notwithstanding the queen exchange, the activity of White's pieces is still great.

39...a5 40 Rf1+ Kg7 41 Re5 Nf4 42 Rxe8 Bxe8 43 Be5+!

Forcing the king to a more passive square.

43...Kg8 44 Bxf4 gxf4 45 Rxf4 Kg7 46 g4 a4 47 Kh2 1-0

The ending is lost, e.g. 47...a3 48 Rf1 Ba4 49 Ra1 Kf6 (49...Bxc2 50 Kg3) 50 Rxa3 Bxc2 51 Kg3 Kg5 52 Ra8.

Game 6

□ Hracek ■ M.Socko

MK Cafe Cup, Koszalin 1999

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 Kf8!? (Diagram 13)



Diagram 13

The king calmly defends g7



Diagram 14

White has compensation for the pawn

A risky, but interesting move that became very popular at the end of 80s. It is still not clear how White can get a real advantage, and Black could be satisfied with results in practical games.

8 h4

The most direct and dangerous move. The alternative is 8 a4 which prevents Black's following queen manoeuvre.

8...Qa5

8...Qc7!? 9 Qd1 b6 10 h5 h6 11 Rh3 Ba6 12 Bxa6 Nxa6 13 Qd3 Nb8 14 a4 was Saulin-Mkrtchian, Moscow 1996, where White went on to win.

9 Bd2 Qa4!

A most irritating move for White to cope with, as it pressures c2 and d4. Note also that the queen is not unknown to go back to e8 from here, to sometimes assist in defence.

10 Rh3!?

10 h5 h6 11 Kd1 b6! 12 Nf3 Ba6 13 Bxa6 Nxa6 14 Qf4 Rc8 15 g4 Ke8

Starting Out: The French

16 g5 cxd4 17 gxf6 gxf6 18 Nxd4 Nc5 19 Qf6 Rg8 led to a Black win in Drei-Lputian, Reggio Emilia 1998.

10...Nbc6

The problem with Black ever grabbing on c2, as we shall see in the game, is that White plays the powerful developing move Bd3 with tempo.

11 h5 h6 12 Qf4 Bd7!?

White kept some initiative after 12...b6 13 Rf3 Nd8 14 dxc5 Qxf4 15 Rxf4 bxc5 16 Be3 c4 17 Rb1 Ndc6 18 Nf3 g5! 19 hxg6 Nxg6 20 Rg4 Kg7 21 Nh4! in Atlas-Psakhis, Geneva 1992.

13 Rf3 Be8 14 Rb1

This was a new move. 14 g4 cxd4 15 Bd3 b5 16 cxd4 Nxd4 17 Rg3 a5! 18 Ne2 Nxc2+ 19 Bxc2 Qxc2 20 Re3 Nc6 21 Qf3 Qc5 22 and now 22 Rc1! would have given White play. Instead, in Bobarykin-Nikitin, Novosibirsk 1998, he chose 22 Nf4? and lost after 22...Nd4 23 Qd1 Nc2+.

14...b6 15 g4?!

Hracek believes in White's attacking chances and declines to exchange queens. But this was a bit optimistic. 15 dxc5 Qxf4 16 Bxf4 bxc5 left an unclear position.

15...Qxc2

Yes please. Black has three pieces near her king and reasons that she can withstand the onslaught.

16 Bd3 Qa4 17 g5

After 17 Bg6? Nxg6 18 hxg6 the black queen returns with 18...Qc2 winning.

17...c4 18 Be2 Qc2

Black could take a second pawn, and 18...Qxa3!? deserves serious attention, as did 18...Nf5!?

19 Rc1 hxg5 20 Qxg5

20 Qxf7+ Bxf7 21 Rxc2 g4! 22 Rf4 Kg8 23 Bxg4 Nd8 24 h6 Bg6! leads to a clear advantage for Black.

20...Qh7

Dropping back to help the threatened sector.

21 Rh3 Ng8

On 21...Nf5 22 Bd1! reroutes effectively.

22 Nf3 (Diagram 14)**22...f6**

Hereabouts Socko decides to relieve her cramp, but White's pieces now gain activity.

23 exf6 gxf6 24 Qf4 Ke7 25 Qc7+ Kf8

On 25...Bd7 26 Nh4 is annoying.

26 Qf4 Ke7 27 Nh4

It looks like repetition with 27 Qc7+ was the best solution.

27...Kd7 28 Bg4 Nge7

She could have tried 28...Nh6!? when 29 Ng6? fails to 29...Bxg6 30 hxg6 Qxg6 31 Rxh6 Rxh6 32 Qxh6 Qxg4 etc.

29 Qxf6??

After 29 h6!? or 29 Ng2!? the result of the game was unclear, but Hracek makes a terrible blunder.

29...Qe4+ 30 Re3

What else? 30 Be2 Bxh5 31 Re3 (31 f3 Bxf3! 32 Qxf3 Rxh4) 31...Raf8!? (31...Qh1+ 32 Bf1 Bg4) 32 Qg5 Qh7! would lose as well.

30...Qxg4 31 f3

On 31 Qxh8 Bxh5! 32 Qxa8 Qg1 mate, may have been what White overlooked.

31...Qg8!? 32 Kf2 Rxh5 33 Qf4 Ng6 34 Nxg6 Bxg6 35 Rg1 Qf7 36 Reel Qxf4 37 Bxf4 Rg8 38 Rg4 Ne7 0-1

Game 7

□ Kasparov ■ Short

Novgorod 1997

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Qc7 7 Qg4 f5

Avoiding the mayhem of 7...Ne7 8 Qxg7 Rg8 9 Qxh7 cxd4 (Games 1-3), but weakening the kingside.

8 Qg3 cxd4 9 cxd4 Ne7 10 Bd2 0-0 11 Bd3 b6

As so often in the French Defence, Black hastens to exchange off the light-squared bishops when he can.

12 Ne2 Ba6 13 Nf4 Qd7 14 h4 (Diagram 15)



Diagram 15

White begins a kingside attack



Diagram 16

Can White break into Black's fortress?

Staking out territory.

Starting Out: The French

14...Bxd3 15 Qxd3 Nbc6 16 Rh3!?

No sense in castling. The rook pops out here.

16...Rac8 17 Rg3 Rf7 18 h5 Nd8 19 c3 Rf8 20 Kf1 Rc4 21 Kg1

Castled by hand.

21...Nf7 22 a4!?

A very interesting move. It is not out of the question that his bishop will yet pop up on the excellent a3-f8 diagonal. Meantime, this pawn has a certain 'bait' factor.

22...Rfc8 23 Qb1 Nc6 24 Qd1 Ne7

Nothing to do.

25 h6 g6 26 Qh5

The rook, the knight, the h-pawn and now the queen get in on the attacking act.

26...Rxa4 27 Rxa4 Qxa4 (Diagram 16) 28 Nxe6

After 28 Qh4 Black defends by 28...Qd1+ 29 Kh2 g5! 30 Rxc5+ Nxc5 31 Qxc5+ Kf7 32 Nh5 (or 32 Be3 Qg4) 32...Rg8 33 Ng7 Rxc7 34 Qxc7+ Ke8 35 Bg5 Qh5+ with perpetual check.

28...Qc2?

The losing move. Black could have defended with 28...Rc6 29 Nf4 Kf8.

29 Qh4 f4 30 Bxf4 Nf5 31 Rxc6+! 1-0

The roof caves in, and yet another Kasparov attack crashes through against a world class grandmaster.

Chapter Two

The Winawer: Positional Main Lines

- Introduction
- Black Captures on c3
- Black Plays 5...Ba5
- Illustrative Games

Introduction

In this section White avoids the crazy positions of Chapter One in favour of the relatively sedate lines that begin after 7 a4 or 7 Nf3. Play becomes much more strategic and long-term. Here we also consider 5...Ba5 – a radical treatment of the position by Black who declines to give White doubled pawns.

Black Captures on c3

It is recommended that you play through games 8-12 in this section, without paying much attention to the notes, to get a feel for the set up before reading the comments that follow. Then you should play through the games again and look at the analysis in more detail. The games break down as follows:

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 In game 12 Black tries 6...Qa5!?. 7 Nf3 (Diagram 1) Fischer preferred 7 a4 in Game 8.



Diagram 1
A positional approach

7...b6 Or **7...Qc7 8 h4**, as in Game 9. **8 Bb5+ Bd7 9 Bd3 Ba4** This is seen in Games 10 and 11.

Games with 5...Ba5 are summarised below under the heading discussing this move.

The play in these variations revolves strongly around planning, rather than theoretical knowledge, so we will now consider various ideas for both sides to get a feel for the positions that arise.

White's Doubled c-pawns

It is another paradox in the Winawer that White's central pawn complex can be weak and strong at the same time.



The pawn on c3 is part of a doubled pawn complex and cannot be supported by any other pawn; the c4-square also cannot be defended by a pawn and so is an ideal *outpost* for a black piece.

NOTE: An outpost is a square in the other half of the board from which a piece cannot be evicted by a pawn.

If the outpost square is in the centre then it can become of enormous strategic importance. Knights in particular like centre square where they are safe from pawn attack, as they work best at short range and cannot influence things like a bishop can from a distance. So, if you can bed a knight down on a central outpost, it will generally be rather happy.

Note however that if Black were to put a knight on c4 it would unwittingly shield the c3-pawn from frontal attack. So Black has to decide carefully whether it is advantageous to put the knight there (normally the answer is yes).

The doubled pawns have also presented Black with an outpost square on a4, which can be used by the bishop or queen to attack the vulnerable c2-pawn whilst simultaneously blocking the queenside.

Thus from a static point of view the c3-pawn is undoubtedly weak, but compare the overall central situation with that in the Classical after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5. Already you will see that White is going to have to give up his pawn chain on d4: the capture ...c5xd4 cannot be stopped, and he will have to recapture Nxd4. In contrast, in the Winawer, White has the pawn on c3 ready to recapture on d4 and keep a firm pawn centre.

White Plays a3-a4

Despite his contention in Chapter One that the Winawer is anti-positional, Fischer never had much luck with a direct attempt at refutation with the brutal Qg4 treatment. By 1971, when he was at his peak, he had switched to more positional means. After 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 he played 7 a4 against Larsen – see Game 8.

There are three ideas behind this move. The first, which is seen to perfection in this game, is to clear a3 for the dark-squared bishop so that it can put intense pressure on the black centre.

Secondly, if Black castles queenside, the a-pawn might also become useful as a battering ram to weaken the defences on the b-file.

And thirdly – and highly significantly – by playing a3-a4 White takes the a4-square away from Black's light-squared bishop. Let's see why the bishop is so strong on a4.

Black Plays ...Ba4

Of course this move assumes that White has played 7 Nf3 or another positional approach that avoids a3-a4. On a4 the black bishop attacks

Starting Out: The French



the c2-pawn and ties a white piece – perhaps the queen's rook or more likely the queen – to its defence. Now it is highly ignominious for a rook or queen to be tied down by a mere bishop. The plan of ...Ba4 to put pressure on c2 is seen in its most startling form in Game 10.

TIP: Good strategy depends as much on stopping your opponent playing good moves as playing good moves yourself!

In fact I recommend a close study of Game 10 as it shows a refreshing avoidance of 'natural' and planless moves. Have a close look at the above diagram. Black has avoided the usual development of the queen with ...Qc7? in favour of the idea of ...h7-h6, ...Kd7, ...Qg8 and ...Qh7 (see Diagram 2), when the white queen adds to the attack on c2. Such a scheme exhibits the difference between moving pieces around and really *playing chess*!



Diagram 2
Avoiding stereotyped play

Open and Closed Positions



NOTE: Black could afford to play a move like ...Kd7 because the centre is blocked. In an open position, e.g. a main line Sicilian, such a plan would almost always be suicidal.

In a closed position more thoughtful, strategic play is possible. Also noteworthy about Game 10 is that from the above diagram Black avoided the normal and typical 15...Nbc6 in favour of 15...Na6! He has seen that this knight has a much more useful career on the kingside via e8 and f6 and it eventually arrives at g3! In some scenarios after ...Nc7 it would be good to play ...Nb5, when the knight attacks the c3-pawn and ties down White even further. There was no need to hurry because White had no open lines with which to exploit this slow manoeuvre.

White is sometimes prepared to accept a disgusting pawn structure if it means that the position becomes more open and he can exploit his

dark-squared bishop or some other advantage in firepower. You couldn't imagine a more ugly move as far as the central pawn structure is concerned than d4xc5 by White. But in Games 9 and 11 White plays it voluntarily. If you look at Game 9 (Short-Ivanchuk), you will see that d4xc5 cleared the way for the imaginative manoeuvre Rh4 and later Rbb4, when the White rooks became powerfully co-ordinated.

Remember what was said about doubling the rooks doubles their power in Chapter One? This is a very odd scenario but not even Ivanchuk could survive the pressure! Note also that White has won the battle for the a4-square here: the black bishop has had to retreat to c6.

Black Plays ...b7-b6

For all the talk about the usefulness of a black bishop on a4, White would much rather tolerate the bishop there than have the light-squared bishops exchanged. Thus if Black plays 7...b6 (Diagram 3) as in Games 10 and 11, with the positional threat of 8...Ba6:



Diagram 3
White wants to keep bishops on



Diagram 4
Another poisoned pawn variation!

White usually replies 8 Bb5+!. This check is highly disruptive as after 8...Bd7 (if 9...Nbc6 then the plan of ...Ba6 has been sidelined) 9 Bd3! White has succeeded in developing his bishop whilst ruling out ...Ba6. Nevertheless White hasn't nullified all of Black's weapons this trick as, with the feint at playing ...Ba6, Black has gained the time to arrange ...Ba4.

Black puts the Queen on a4

It is curious how many of the ideas in this section involve the a4-square. In fact, one of the chief weaknesses of White's doubled pawns is that he can no longer play b2-b3 to cover the 'soft underbelly' of his

Starting Out: The French

position – the pawn on c2. In Game 12 Black puts his queen on a4 as soon as possible. Although relatively little known, this method of play has a good track record for Black.



TIP: The a4-square is a useful one for Black to pressurise the white c2-pawn!

Black Plays 5...Ba5

This has been dubbed the 'Winawer Declined' as Black refuses the offer to capture on c3.

The key move after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Ba5 is 6 b4!

This temporarily breaks the pin on the knight and so wins time for aggressive play after 6...cxd4 with 7 Nb5 or 7 Qg4. It has been known for a long time that if 6...cxb4?! 7 Nb5! is very strong – 7...bxa3+ 8 c3! and White is ready to launch a big attack involving Bxa3 and Nd6+. In that case the knight would wreak a wonderful revenge on the bishop that dared to pin it!

The Aggressive 7 Qg4

Here there are features akin to the Poisoned Pawn Variation in Chapter One as White often goes hunting with Qg4 and Qxg7. He smashes up the black kingside, but on the other hand his centre comes under intense pressure after the standard ...c7-c5 etc. Note that now the white centre is no longer supported by that apparently feeble pawn on c3. Often Black ends up trading his dark-squared bishop for the knight on c3 (though not directly with Bxc3+).

It is worth comparing the position reached in Game 13 after 7 Qg4 Ne7 8 bxa5 dxc3 9 Qxg7 Rg8 10 Qxh7 Nbc6 11 Nf3 (Diagram 4), with that in the Poisoned Pawn Variation.

White doesn't have any serious problems down the c-file, which is blocked after ...d4xc3. Because of this he hasn't been obliged to play Ne2, so that the knight has gone to the more natural square f3, where it defends e5 or can be used aggressively with Ng5. The drawback to this is that the e5-pawn isn't as secure as it would be after f2-f4. And in fact in Game 14 Anand does prefer 11 f4 to bolster e5 before developing his knight to f3.

As the knight isn't on e2, the bishop on f1 has freedom to be developed to d3 or possibly b5. On the other hand this too remains problematical as it would leave the g2-pawn hanging to a potential ...Rxg2.

The Positional 7 Nb5

White decides he doesn't want to get involved in the excesses of a queen foray on the kingside, at least not for the time being, and who can blame him? Instead he takes the chance to free his knight while

he has the chance. Black's reply 7...Bc7 is practically forced as allowing a knight check on d6 would be painful. It is ironic that these two pieces are still involved in their own personal war, though this time the knight is in the ascendancy as it can decide whether they are exchanged by Nxc7+. In this variation White is more interested in establishing a positional plus in the centre by getting firm control of d4 than in blowing Black's brains out.

The theory in the 7 Qg4 variation runs 6 b4 cxd4 7 Qg4 Ne7 8 bxa5 In Game 15, White played 8 Nb5 dxc3 9 Qxg7 Rg8 10 Qxh7 Nbc6. Now 11 Nf3 is Game 13 and 11 f4 Game 14.

In the 7 Nb5 line, it goes 7 Nb5 Bc7 8 f4 when 8...a5 is Game 16 and 8...Bd7 Game 17.

These lines are much less critical than the Qxg7 line of Chapter One though, as will be seen in the games, there are some sharp tactical variations involving pawn sacrifices. If you play this line as White, unless Black chooses the double edged 5...Ba5, it is pretty much 'theory proof'.

Illustrative Games

Game 8

□ Fischer ■ Larsen

Candidates match, Denver 1971

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Ne7 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 a4

Preventing a black piece arriving on a4 (as occurred in Game 6) and preparing to develop the queen's bishop at a3. The less committal 7 Nf3 (Games 9-11) is more usual. Also, Black can insist on ...Qa4 by playing straightaway 6...Qa5 as in Game 12.

7...Nbc6 8 Nf3 Bd7 9 Bd3 Qc7 10 0-0 c4 11 Be2 f6 12 Re1 Ng6 13 Ba3 (Diagram 5)



Diagram 5

White sacrifices the centre



Diagram 6

How should Black defend?

Starting Out : The French

This is a fairly typical theme. White gambits a pawn in the interests of opening the position, acquiring the bishop pair and pinning down the black king – pretty good value for a measly pawn.

13...fxe5 14 dxe5 Ncxe5 15 Nxe5 Nxe5 16 Qd4 Ng6 17 Bh5 Kf7

A very brave decision from Larsen. 17...0-0-0 was possible as 18 Qxa7 b6 gets the queens off and keeps White's advantage to a minimum, although also possible is 18 a5, keeping the initiative.

18 f4 Rhe8 19 f5 exf5 20 Qxd5+ Kf6

This unpalatable move is more or less forced as 20...Be6? allows 21 Rxe6! Rxe6 22 Qxf5+ Rf6 23 Qd5+ Re6 24 Rf1+ winning.

21 Bf3 Ne5 22 Qd4 Kg6 23 Rxe5 Qxe5 24 Qxd7 Rad8 25 Qxb7 (Diagram 6)

Black has achieved an impressive centralisation of his forces, but the most relevant feature of the position, unsurprisingly, is his shaky king.

25...Qe3+?

Black opts for a forcing continuation but Fischer handles the tactics brilliantly and emerges in a winning endgame. Black's best chance was the cold-blooded 25...Qxc3, daring White to do his worst after 26 Qc6+ Kg5. One possible line then is 27 h4+ Kxh4 28 Qc7 Qxa1+ 29 Bc1 Qxc1+ 30 Kh2 which appears decisive for White but now Black has the amazing defence 30...Rd6!! which wins.

It is not surprising that Larsen shied away from such variations.

26 Kf1 Rd2 27 Qc6+ Re6 28 Bc5

The bishop rushes to the defence and now Black has nothing better than the game continuation.

28...Rf2+ 29 Kg1 Rxf2 30 Kxf2 Qd2+ 31 Kh1 Rxc6 32 Bxc6 Qxc3

Giving up the a-pawn is hopeless. Black had to try 32...a5.

33 Rg1+ Kf6 34 Bxa7 g5 35 Bb6 Qxc2 36 a5 Qb2 37 Bd8+ Ke6 38 a6 Qa3 39 Bb7 Qc5 40 Rb1 c3 41 Bb6 1-0

Game 9

□ Short ■ Ivanchuk

Horgen 1995

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Ne7 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 Nf3 Qc7 8 h4

8 a4 Nbc6 9 Bd3 Bd7 would transpose to the previous game, but Black more often prefers 8...b6 planning to exchange light-squared bishops by ...Ba6.

8...Bd7 9 h5 h6 10 Bd3 Ba4 11 dxc5

An anti-positional move by which White seriously compromises his pawn structure but hopes to benefit from the active piece play that he

generates with the opening of the position.

11...Nd7 12 Rh4

An unusual but powerful way to develop the rook. This piece will find great activity along the third rank, especially from the g4-square.

12...Qa5 13 Be3 (Diagram 7)



Diagram 7

ignoring the attack on c3



Diagram 8

Active rooks!

13...Rc8 14 Rb1 Bc6 15 Qd2 Qxa3 16 Rg4 Kf8 17 Rbb4

The king's rook has been having a successful career along the fourth rank and so his colleague decides to join him. White's structure is horrible but his pieces are tremendously active and Black is struggling to coordinate his forces.

17...Nf5 18 Bxf5 exf5 19 Rgf4 Qa1+ 20 Qd1 Qxd1+

If 20...Qxc3+ then 21 Bd2 Qa3 22 Rxf5 and Rbf4 is coming.

21 Kxd1 Re8 22 Rxf5 Kg8 23 Rg4 (Diagram 8)

23...Re7

A curious variation here is 23...Nf8 24 Rf6! and suddenly Black cannot defend the h-pawn.

24 Rg3 Kh7 25 Bd4 Rhe8 26 Rf4 Nf8 27 Rfg4 g5 28 hxg6+ Nxg6 29 Rh3 Bd7 30 Ng5+ Kg8 31 e6

White has been angling to force open the kingside for some time and finally achieves it with this pawn advance.

31...Bxe6 32 Nxe6 Rxe6 33 Rxh6 Re1+ 34 Kd2 R8e2+ 35 Kd3 Kf8 36 Rh5 Re4 37 Rxe4 dxe4+ 38 Kd2 Rb1 39 c6 bxc6 40 Bxa7 Ke7 41 Bd4 Rb5 42 Rxb5 cxb5 43 c4

Now with a bishop against a knight and an extra pawn, White wins easily.

43...bxc4 44 Kc3 Nf4 45 g3 Ne6 46 Kxc4 Kd6 47 Bf6 Kc6 48 g4 Kd6 49 c3 Kc6 50 Be5 Nc5 51 Kd4 Nd3 52 Bg3 Nc5 53 Bf4 1-0

Starting Out: The French

Game 10

□ Kir.Georgiev ■ Yusupov

Las Palmas 1993

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Ne7 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 Nf3
b6 8 Bb5+ Bd7 9 Bd3 Ba4 10 h4

In the next game White tries 10 dxc5!? to lessen the following queen-side clamp.

10...h6 11 h5 c4

The previous game demonstrated how active the white pieces can become when the game is opened up and so here Black opts for a strategy of closing the position.

12 Be2 Kd7 (Diagram 9)



Diagram 9

Black has a queenside clamp

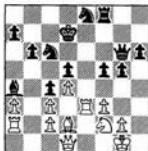


Diagram 10

The white rooks are impotent

It looks peculiar to send the king wandering off in the middle of the board, but the blocked nature of the position means that he is in no immediate danger.

13 Nh4 Qg8 14 Bg4 Qh7

This manoeuvre, relocating the queen on h7, is now well known in the Winawer but whoever thought of it first must be a very imaginative player.

15 Ra2 Na6 16 Rh3 Nc7 17 Kf1 Raf8 18 Kg1 g5 19 Nf3 Nc6 20
Nh2 f5 21 exf6 Rxf6 22 Re3 Rhf8 23 f3

Until this point the game is balanced but here White makes a serious mistake in taking away this square from his knight. Much better was 23 Re2, planning Nf3.

23...Qf7 24 Bd2 Ne8 25 Bh3 Qxh5 26 Ng4

Following his slip on move 23, White has now had to pay a price of one pawn to activate his knight.

26...Rf5 27 Nf2 Qg6 28 Bxf5 exf5 (Diagram 10)

It was perhaps not necessary for Black to give up the exchange here but the resulting position is very instructive. It demonstrates how placing simple numerical values on pieces, without considering all the features of the position, is unsatisfactory. White has a rook for a knight but the black knights are scarcely less active than the white rooks in this blocked position.

29 Re2 Nf6 30 Qe1 Nh5 31 Ra1 Ng3 32 Re5

White's rooks are so impotent that he is desperate to jettison one of them to free his position.

32...Qd6 33 Nh1 Nxh1 34 Kxh1 Nxe5 35 dxe5 Qe6 36 Be3 Qxe5 37 Qd2 Re8 38 Bf2 f4 39 Rd1 Kd6 40 Re1 Qf5 41 Rxe8 Bxe8 42 Bd4 Ba4 43 Qe1 Kd7 44 Qb1 h5 45 Qb4 Bc6 46 Qb1 g4 47 fxg4 hxg4 48 Qe1 Ba4 0-1

Game 11

□ Nunn ■ P.Nikolic

Belgrade 1991

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Nf3 b6 8 Bb5+ Bd7 9 Bd3 Ba4 10 dxc5

An antipositional move but White is prepared to wreck his pawn structure in the interests of active piece play.

10...bxc5 11 0-0 c4 12 Be2 Ng6 13 Ng5 (Diagram 11)**Diagram 11**

Again White sacrifices his centre

**Diagram 12**

A decisive block for a touchdown

13...Nxe5 14 f4 Nd3 15 Bxd3 cxd3 16 f5 e5 17 Qh5

White's attacking scheme is rather crude, but Black's lack of development makes it difficult for him to organise a defence.

17...Qe7 18 Ne6

White is anxious to prevent Black from playing ...0-0-0 but in fact he would do better to play 18 cxd3 as 18...Nc6 19 f6 gxf6 20 Nxh7 gives

Starting Out: The French

White a very good position.

18...Kd7 19 Bg5 f6 20 Be3 Na6 21 cxd3 g6 22 Qg4 Bc6 23 Nd4

A tremendous sacrifice from White that leaves Black with terrible long term problems on the dark squares.

23...exd4 24 Bxd4 h5 25 Qh3 g5 26 Rfe1 Qf8 27 Re6 Rh6 28 Qe3 Re8 29 Re1

White's pieces are so active that he is scarcely missing his knight.

29...Nc7 30 Bc5 Qf7 31 Be7 (Diagram 12)

Cleverly creating space on the queenside for the queen to infiltrate.

31...Rh7 32 Qc5 Bb7 33 Qxa7 Kc8 34 Rb1 Rxe7 35 Rxb7 1-0

Game 12

□ Nijboer ■ P.Nikolic

Dutch Championship, Rotterdam 1997

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Qa5!?

A rare move to play this so soon, but one gaining in popularity.

7 Bd2 Qa4 8 Qb1 c4 9 h4!?

White grabs some kingside space. 9 Nh3!? Is an interesting alternative, e.g. 9...Nc6 10 g3 Bd7 11 Nf4 0-0-0 12 Bh3 (12 h4!? is worth a try, too) 12...h5 13 Qd1 h4 14 g4 f6 15 0-0 Nge7 16 exf6 gxf6 17 g5 Rdg8 18 Nxe6 with unclear prospects in Krivoshey-Nikolaev 1995.

9...Nc6 10 h5 h6 11 Ne2 Nge7 12 Qc1 Bd7 13 g3?!

13 g4 was a more natural continuation.

13...0-0-0 14 Bh3 Kb8 15 Be3 Ka8 (Diagram 13)



Diagram 13
Black's king is very secure



Diagram 14
The black knight stands proud

Safely stowed. It's difficult for anybody to achieve much in such blocked middlegames.

16 Qd2 Rc8 17 g4 Nb8 18 Ng3

18 0-0 Rc6 19 Rfb1 planning Rb4 may have been a preferable choice.

18...Rc6 19 0-0 Rb6 20 f4 g6 21 Kh2 a6 22 Rf2 Nbc6 23 f5?

A dubious decision. It is very difficult for White to improve his position without this thematic advancement, but here it was much better to wait with active operations on the kingside. Now White gets an unpleasant position.

23...exf5 24 gxf5 Bxf5 25 Bxf5 Nxf5 26 Nxf5 gxf5 27 Rxf5 Nd8

Planning to transfer the knight to the blockading square e6 and opening the way for the queen.

28 Bf2 Qd7 29 Qf4 Ne6 30 Qg4 Qa4 31 Qd1 Ng5! 32 Be3 Ne4
(Diagram 14)

Now the consequences of White's unfortunate operation on move 23 are quite evident: His forces are totally uncoordinated, the black knight dominates over the white bishop, and White's queenside pawns are terribly weak.

33 Rxf7 Rb2 34 Rc1 Nxc3 35 Qf3 Ka7 36 e6 Re8 37 Rf8?

A mistake in a difficult situation. 37 e7 was better.

37...Rxe6 38 Qg3 Re8 39 Bxh6 Rxc2+ 40 Rxc2 Qxc2+ 0-1

Now 41 Rf2 Re2 is winning, as is 41 Kh3 Ne4.

Game 13

□ Shirov ■ Akopian

Merida 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Ba5

Another move entirely, and it retains its adherents amongst strong GMs. This sharp line became very popular in modern practice, mostly thanks to the efforts of Akopian and the other Armenian grandmasters, Lputian and Vaganian.

6 b4!?

A gambit for activity. 6 Bd2 and 6 Qg4 are the main alternatives. At Hastings 1986-87, Chandler tried 6 dxc5 vs Lputian, but after 6...Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 the experiment brought him nothing, and he was lucky to draw.

6...cxd4

On 6...cxb4 7 Nb5 White gets very good play for his pawn.

7 Qg4

The alternative main line, 7 Nb5, is seen in Games 16 and 17.

7...Ne7 8 bxa5

White can play Nb5 here too – see Game 15.

8...dxc3 9 Qxg7 Rg8 10 Qxh7

There is much similarity with the lines from the normal 5...Bxc3+ Winawer here, but some nuances too.

10...Nbc6 11 Nf3

Starting Out: The French

In the next game White defends the pawn with 11 f4.

11...Qc7 12 Bf4 Bd7 13 Bg3

Shielding the g-pawn and so allowing the other bishop out to play.

13...0-0-0 14 Bd3 Qxa5 15 0-0 Qc5

An attempt to improve on 15...Qa4 16 Rfe1 Ng6 17 Qh6 Rh8 18 Qe3 d4 19 Qe2 Nce7 20 Rab1 Bc6 21 Rb4 Qxa3 22 Rxd4 Bd5 23 Ng5 De Firmian-Lputian, Yerevan Olympiad 1996, when White had an edge.

16 Qxf7

A not very successful try for the advantage in this double-edged line. White wins a pawn, but invites a powerful exchange sacrifice down the new f-file. Alternatives are:

a) 16 Qh4 a6 17 Ng5 Be8 18 Qf4 Nd4 19 Rfe1 Nef5 was unclear in J.Polgar-Vaganian, Groningen 1993.

b) 16 Qh4 Rg7 17 Rfb1 a6 18 h3 Rdg8 19 Kh2 d4 20 Be4 Nd5 21 Bxd5 Qxd5 22 Rd1 Nxe5 23 Nxe5 Qxe5 24 Rxd4 Rxd4 25 fxd3 Bc6 26 Rad1 f6 27 Rg4 Re8 28 Rc4 Qe2 29 Rxc6+ bxc6 30 Qd4 was a White win in Lutz-Mueller, German Championship, Altenkirchen 1999.

c) 16 Rfe1 could be recommended; 16...Rh8 17 Qxf7 Rdf8 18 Qg7 Nf5 19 Bxf5 Rhg8 20 Qh6 Rxf5 21 Qe3 was Dolmatov-Lputian, Manila 1990. White won it.

16...Rdf8 17 Qh7 Rxf3! (Diagram 15)



Diagram 15

The French exchange sacrifice



Diagram 16

Black is punished for his mistake

18 gxf3 Nxe5 19 Be2

Black would be doing very well after 19 f4 Nxd3 20 cxd3 d4.

19...d4 20 Rfe1 Bc6

Akopian has great compensation for the exchange.

21 Kf1 Nxf3 22 Bxf3 Bxf3 23 Re5 Bd5 24 Kg1 Kd7 25 Rd1?

25 Qf7! was unclear.

25...Qxa3 26 Qh4 Qa4?

A terrible mistake, at the moment when Black could get a big advantage with the dynamic 26...d3!, e.g.

- a) 27 cxd3? c2 and the passed pawn is splendid;
- b) 27 Rxd3? Qc1+ with excellent play;
- c) 27 Qf4 dxc2 (or maybe 27...d2!?) 28 Rc1 Rg4!

27 Rxe6! (Diagram 16)

The spectacular refutation of Black's last move.

27...Rxb3+

On either 27...Bxe6 28 Rxd4+ or 27...Kxe6 28 Re1+ the new attack crunches through. So Black tries this defensive method instead.

28 hxg3 Nf5 29 Qh7+ Kxe6 30 Qg6+ Kd7

30...Ke5 31 f4+ Ke4 32 Re1+ Kf3 33 Qxf5 wins.

31 Qxf5+ Kc6 32 Qf6+ Kc5 33 Qe7+ Kc4 34 Qe5 Kc5 35 f4!

Black's queenside assets are frozen and White's mobile passed pawns quickly decide the game.

35...b5 36 f5 Kc6 37 Qf6+

37 Qxd4 Qxd4+ 38 Rxd4 allows some counterplay after 38...a5.

37...Kc5 38 Qe5 Kc6 39 Rxd4! Qa1+ 40 Kf2 Qh1 41 Rxd5!

On 41 Rd3 b4! Is tricky.

41...Qxd5 42 Qxc3+ Kd6 43 Qd3 a5

He also loses after the exchange of queens, 43...Qxd3 44 cxd3 a5 45 Ke3 a4 46 Kd2 Ke5 47 g4 a3 48 Kc2 b4 49 Kb3 Kf6 50 d4 etc.

44 Ke3 a4 45 Qxd5+ Kxd5 46 Kd2 b4 47 Kc1 1-0

and White will win after 47...Ke5 48 g4 Kf6 49 Kb2 Ke5 50 c3.

Game 14

□ Anand ■ Khalifman

Linares 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Ba5 6 b4 cxd4 7 Qg4 Ne7 8 bxa5 dxc3 9 Qxg7 Rg8 10 Qxh7 Nbc6 11 f4

The other way of hanging on to e5.

11...Qxa5

11...Bd7 is an option. 12 Rb1 Qc7 13 Ne2 0-0-0 14 Qd3 d4 15 Ng3 Ng6 16 Be2 Nh4 was the continuation in Sulskis-Ivanov, Pardubice open 1996, where Black won.

12 Nf3 Bd7 13 Rb1

The critical move. 13 Ng5 invites the dangerous exchange sacrifice 13...Rxb1 14 fxb1 0-0-0 15 Qxf7 Nf5 16 Bf4 Qa4 as in Martin Gonzalez-Comas Fabrego, Spanish Championship 1993, where Black won. The white queen is a bit out of it and Black's active pieces generate much play.

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13...0-0-0 14 Qd3 (Diagram 17)



Diagram 17

A similar position to Chapter One



Diagram 18

White consolidates his extra pawns

Back home, after having inflicted her damage.

14...Nf5 15 Rg1

And certainly not 15 Rb5? Qa4 16 Qxc3 Rxc2! 17 Bxc2 Qxb5 with a big advantage for Black.

15...d4

Bidding for active play before White gets his act together.

16 g4!

A natural and strong move.

16...Nfe7 17 Rg3 Be8 18 h4 Nf5

The bid for play with 18...f6 19 exf6 Bg6 fails to 20 fxe7! Bxd3 21 exd8Q+ Qxd8 22 Bxd3 and wins, and 18...Nd5 19 Ng5 is good for White too.

19 Rg1 Ne3

Otherwise from where is the black counterplay to come? The white pawns are already steaming away on the kingside.

20 Bxe3 dxe3 21 Qxe3 Ne7

Khalifman enjoys considerable activity, but it hardly looks like it is going to be quite sufficient for the pawns, but 21...Qxa3 22 Rb3 Qa1+ 23 Kf2 isn't good enough either.

22 Bc4 Bc6 23 Rb3 Kb8 24 Qxc3

Another one bites the dust. Note, again, the white major pieces all on the third rank.

24...Qc7

Nor does 24...Qc5 25 Be2 Qxc3+ 26 Rxc3 Nd5 27 Rc4 Ne3 28 Rc5 Nxc4 29 Ng5 promise Black too many chances to survival.

25 Be2

On the immediate 25 h5 Ba4! causes annoyance.

25...Nd5 26 Qc4 Qa5+ 27 Kf2 Ba4

Maybe 27...Rc8!? was slightly stronger.

28 Rb2 Rc8 29 Qd4 Rc3

In the case of 29...Rxc2 30 Rxc2 Bxc2 31 h5 it is difficult to believe that it will be possible to stop the strong white pawns on the kingside.

30 Bd3 Rgc8 31 Rc1 (Diagram 18)

31 h5 Bxc2 32 Rxc2 Rxc2+ 33 Bxc2 Rxc2+ also looks very nice for White after 34 Kg3.

31...Rd8 32 Rcb1 Bc6 33 Rb3 Rxb3 34 Rxb3 Nf6 35 Qb4 Nxc4+?!

A tougher defence was 35...Qd5! when White counters best with 36 Be2! Nxc4+ 37 Ke1! Rh8, still keeping a clear plus.

36 Kg3 Qd5 37 Bh7!

A nice move, quickly deciding the game in White's favour.

37...Qd1

37...Qd7 38 Rd3 Bd5 39 Kxc4 f5+ 40 Kh3 Qxc7 41 c4 Qh5 42 cxd5 Qg4+ 43 Kh2 Rg8 44 Qd2! tidies up and wins.

38 Kxc4 Rd2 39 Kg5! Bxf3 40 Bd3 Rg2+ 41 Kf6

Safe in the hills.

41...a6 42 Rb1 1-0

And now 42...Qd2 43 Qxd2 Rxd2 44 Kxf7 wins easily.

Game 15

□ Yermolinsky ■ Vaganian

Tilburg 1993

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Ba5 6 b4 cxd4 7 Qg4 Ne7 8 Nb5

Another line, blending elements of 7 Nb5 and 7 Qg4.

8...Bc7 9 Qxc7 Rg8 10 Qxc7 a6

10...Bxe5 11 Nf3 is fine for White.

11 Nxc7+ Qxc7 12 Ne2 Bd7??

12...Qxe5 is a major and obvious alternative. Then 13 Qd3 Nbc6 14 Bb2 Bd7 15 0-0-0 Qf6 16 Nxd4 Qxf2 17 Nf3 Nf5 was about equal in Chandler-Vaganian, Manila interzonal 1990.

After 13 Bb2 Qf6! leads to probably equal chances, as does 13...Qc7 14 f4 Nbc6 15 Qd3 Nf5 too.

13 Bb2

13 f4 fails to hold on to e5 because of 13...Ba4 14 Kd1 Rg6!, shutting the white queen out of the new action zone at c2.

13...a5!?! (Diagram 19)

Starting Out: The French



Diagram 19
Black initiates counterplay



Diagram 20
The black pieces dominate

A clever move, bringing the other rook into it.

14 Nxd4

If 14 f4 axb4 15 axb4 Rxa1+ 16 Bxa1 Qb6!? and things will turn Black's way after 17 c3 Qa7 18 Qb1 d3! 19 Nd4 Nbc6 20 g3 Nxd4 21 cxd4 Bb5.

14...Qxe5+ 15 Be2 Nbc6 16 Rd1

If 16 Qd3 Black may entertain the complexity of 16...axb4 (16...Rxc2 is also worth a go) 17 0-0 bxa3 18 Nb5 Qxb2 19 Nc7+ Kd8 20 Nxa8.

16...axb4 17 axb4 Ra2 18 Nxc6

Or 18 Bc3 Rxc2.

18...Qxb2 19 Nxe7 Rh8! 20 Qd3 Kxe7 (Diagram 20)

Taking stock, we see that White cannot hang on to his extra pawn whilst all of the black pieces are very well placed.

21 h4 Rc8

He could also have gone in for 21...Qxb4+ 22 c3 Qc5 23 h5.

22 Rd2 Qxb4 23 0-0 Ra3!

Shifting the white pieces away from defence of c2.

24 Qd4 Qxd4 25 Rxd4 Rxc2 26 Bf3 b5 27 h5 Rc4 28 Rd2 f5 29 Rb2 Rac3 30 Be2 Rc2 31 Rfb1 Rxb2 32 Rxb2 Rc8 33 f4

On 33 Bxb5 the pin 33...Rb8 wins.

33...Rb8 34 Kf2 b4 35 Ke3 b3 36 g3 Rb4 37 Bd3 Bb5 38 Bb1 d4+ 39 Kd2 Kf6 40 Kc1 Rc4+ 0-1

Game 16

□ Almasi ■ Korchnoi

European Cup Final, Budapest 1996

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Ba5 6 b4 cxd4 7 Nb5

Theory also respects this line. The character of the middlegames which stem from it is altogether more settled than those that arise after 7 Qg4.

7...Bc7 8 f4 a5

Chiselling. In the next game Black plays 8...Bd7.

9 Bd2 Nh6

A novelty. 9...Ne7 10 Nf3 Nf5 11 Bd3 0-0 12 Bxf5 exf5 13 Nfxd4 Nc6 14 Nxc6 bxc6 15 Nxc7 Qxc7 16 Be3 f6 was equal in Minasian-Lputian, World Open, Philadelphia 1994. Obviously there are similarities with developing the knight at e7, especially if it ends up at f5 anyway.

10 Bd3 Bd7 11 Nxc7+ Qxc7 12 Nf3 Nf5 13 b5! (Diagram 21)



Diagram 21
The b5-pawn stifles Black



Diagram 22
An unexpected sacrifice

An interesting way of shutting up the queenside. The d7 bishop is now gasping. If White had set his heart on it, he could have rounded up the d4-pawn. But instead he plays it like a gambit. The result is spectacular.

13...Qc5 14 Qe2 0-0 15 a4 f6 16 0-0 Ne3 17 Rfe1

17 exf6!? deserved consideration, e.g. 17...Nxf1 18 fxg7 Rf7 19 Rxf1 Rxg7 20 Ng5 with an attack and initiative.

17...Nc4 18 Bc1 b6 19 exf6 Rxf6 20 Ne5 Be8?

Definitely misguided. He ought to have taken on e5.

21 Ng4 Rf8 22 Qxe6+ Bf7 23 Nh6+! (Diagram 22)

An inspired sacrifice, but 23 Qf5! was also very strong, e.g. 23...Bg6 24 Qg5 Ra7 25 f5 Bf7 26 Nf6+ Kh8 27 Nxe7! with a stomping attack.

23...gxh6 24 Qxh6 Bg6 25 Bxg6 Ra7

An admission that he is busted, but 25...hxg6 26 Qxg6+ Kh8 27 Qh6+ Kg8 28 Re6 finishes the job.

26 Bd3 Rg7 27 f5 Nd7

Starting Out: The French

The knight's first move of the game!!

28 Qe6+ Rg7 29 Bh6 Rc8 30 f6 Nf8 31 Qg4+ Kh8 32 Re7 Rc7 33 Qg7+! 1-0

A nice finish to a beautiful game! Black resigned. The finale would be 33 Qg7+ Rxc7 34 fxg7+ Kg8 35 gxf8R mate.

Game 17

□ Hector ■ Barsov

Vikings GM, York 1999

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Ba5!? 6 b4 cxd4 7 Nb5 Bc7 8 f4 Bd7!?

8...Nh6 9 Nf3 Bd7 10 Nxc7+ Qxc7 11 Bd3 a6 12 a4 Nf5 13 Qd2 Nc6 14 Bb2 0-0 15 Bxf5 exf5 16 Bxd4 Nxd4 17 Nxd4 led to a classic good knight against bad bishop scenario in Almasi-Lputian, Pula 1997, and White won.

9 Nxd4

The character of these middlegames is determined by which bishops take/are taken by which knights. In Van den Doel-Lputian, Wijk aan Zee 1999, after 9 Nf3 Bxb5 10 Bxb5+ Nd7! 11 0-0 Ne7 12 g4 a6 13 Bd3 h5! 14 h3 hxg4 15 hxg4 Nb6 Black was very comfortable, and went on to win.

9 Nxc7+!? Qxc7 10 Nf3 would be another kettle of fish.

9...Nh6 10 Ngf3 Bb6

10...Nc6 11 Bb2 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 Nf5 13 Bf2 Bb6 14 Qd2 Bxf2+ 15 Qxf2 was better for White, with her nicer bishop in Arakhamia-Shaw, Edinburgh 1999.

11 Bd3 Nc6 12 c3 Bxd4!?

An interesting novelty in a well-known position. Barsov prefers to keep a knight on the board. 12...Nxd4 leads to a different balance of minor pieces, and after 13 cxd4 a6 14 a4 Nf5 15 Bb2 Ne3 16 Qe2 Nc4 17 0-0 Rc8 18 Bc1 Qe7 Black was doing fine in Minasian-Lputian, Lvov zonal 1990.

13 cxd4 Nf5 14 Bb2 Qb6 15 Be2

Black has nothing to worry about after 15 Bxf5 exf5.

15...Na5 16 Kf2?!?

16 bxa5!? was worthy of attention as 16...Qxb2 17 Qc1 Qxc1+ 18 Rxc1 Ke7 19 Kd2 and White keeps a small edge.

16...Nc4 17 Bc1 h5 (Diagram 23)

18 g3 0-0-0 19 Rb1

Preparing to shift the f5 knight with 19 h3 would permit it to lodge elsewhere after 19...h4!? 20 g4 Ng3.

19...f6

It is clear now that it is only Black who can claim an advantage.

20 a4 Kb8 21 Re1 Be8! 22 Bd3 Bg6

A standard re-routing and activation of the bishop, which lands outside the constricting pawn chain.



Diagram 23

The black knights are ideally placed



Diagram 24

Removing the bodyguard

23 a5 Qc6 24 b5 Qd7 25 Bd2 Rc8 26 Bb4 Ka8

26...Qf7!? was an option.

27 Bc5 Qf7 28 Qa4?!

It was much better to play 28 Bxc4!? dxc4 29 Rc1 Ne7 30 Rxc4 Nd5. Black has great compensation for the pawn, but White has something to suffer for at least.

28...h4!

Beginning of the crucial attack.

29 Bxc4

29 g4?! Nh6 leaves Black winning.

29...hxc3+ 30 hxc3 dxc4 31 Qxc4??

Final mistake. Good or bad White had to play 31 Rbc1! Rh3.

31...Nxc3! (Diagram 24)

32 Kxg3

On 32 Rb3 Ne4+ 33 Kg1 fxe5 34 fxe5 Rh3! and Black wins.

32...Bxb1 33 exf6

33 Rxb1? Qg6+ wins the rook.

33...gxf6 34 Qxe6 Rhg8+ 35 Kf2 Qg6 36 a6

Too little too late.

36...Qg2+ 37 Ke3 Rge8 0-1

Chapter Three

The Winawer: Other Lines

- **Black Plays an Early ...b7-b6**
- **White Plays 4 e5 Ne7 5 Nf3**
- **White Avoids e4-e5**
- **Illustrative Games**

This section contains an assortment of ideas for White and games with a quick ...b7-b6 by Black.

Black Plays an Early ...b7-b6

This fianchetto doesn't come any earlier in the Winawer than after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 b6. Black prepares the immediate development of his queen's bishop. This may well be a sign that he intends ...Ba6 to exchange off light-squared bishops, though the former World Champion Tigran Petrosian, the arch priest of manoeuvring in closed positions, was wont to play ...Qd7, ...Bb7, ...Nc6, etc. and then castle queenside. Only later would he think about clearing the way for the c7-c5 advance.



TIP: The black plan with ...Qd7, ...Bb7, ...Nc6 etc, can sometimes be viewed as a mirror image of the black strategy in the main lines of the King's Indian Defence.

One question that now arises is how Black intends to answer 5 Qg4. In the style of Petrosian, Timman comes up with the retrograde 5...Bf8 in his game with Shirov, which is Game 18. This looks faintly ludicrous, but Black is arguing that the white queen is worse placed on g4 than d1 and so the time Black spends undeveloping his kingside will be recouped later on when White is obliged to waste time re-positioning his queen. Timman scores a great success against Shirov, but the jury is still out on this idea, to say the least.



TIP: A loss of time is much less important in a closed position.

A refined version of Black's idea is seen in Game 19. Black begins with 4...Qd7, so that he can answer 5 Qg4 with 5...f5! when his queen defends g7. You may recall this defensive motif from the game Kasparov-Short given in Chapter One. As Black doesn't need to play ...Bf8, it makes Qg4 less attractive for White and he settles for the solid 5 Nf3, when 5...b6 was played. This looks okay for Black, but Karpov, in a rare outing with the French, didn't know what to do and quickly fell into a bind.

White Plays 4 e5 Ne7 5 Nf3

This was an old favourite of English GMs Hodgson and Gallagher. In fact Joe Gallagher recently annotated one of his wins with it in *New In Chess Magazine*, so it is still garnering points for him! Rather than 5 a3, White makes a nonchalant developing move which, in fact, commits him to a pawn sacrifice if he wants to keep the edge. Theory says it is okay for Black, but over-the-board it offers White attractive attacking options. It's all there in Game 20.

White Avoids e4-e5

A considerable number of players avoid 4 e5, either because the rigid

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nature of the pawn structure doesn't appeal to them or because they are frightened off by the huge amount of theory.

White's option range from extremely solid positional systems to violent attacking lines. None of these variations has ever achieved great popularity, though you should certainly know something about them if you intend playing the Winawer as Black.

White Plays 4 Ne2

This is the most popular of the 4th move alternatives. White overprotects c3 so that if Bxc3+ he can recapture with the knight and keep his queenside pawns intact. Hence in this variation queenside castling becomes an option for White – something very unlikely to be good after 5 e5. Because he can spirit his king away to the queenside, White can look for a direct attack on the kingside. This line will appeal to players who like a 'clean' pawn structure and keep their pieces in a nice formation.

However, you cannot expect a big attack from the first moves if you are blocking in your king's bishop with a knight on e2. There is also the downside that the e4-pawn is being left undefended. After 4...dxe4 White will regain his pawn sooner or later, unless Black defends it with the loosening ...f7-f5, but the fact remains that he can no longer cramp Black with e4-e5 as in the main lines. One very interesting idea for Black is 4...Nc6!? when if 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Nxc3 (the opening loses all point if White recaptures 6 bxc3) 6...dxe4 the d4-pawn is attacked, when White has to speculate with 7 d5!? There are three games with 4 Ne2: 4...dxe4 is Game 21, 4...b6 (highly unusual) Game 22, and 4...Nc6 in Game 25.

White Plays 4 Bd2 or 4 Bd3

Similar comments to those on 4 e5 c5 5 Nf3 apply to 4 Bd2, which commits White to a pawn sacrifice. You should tread carefully as Black in case you are meeting one of the specialists in this system! Check out Game 24.

In contrast 5 Bd3 is rather artificial looking and none too dangerous as long as Black is careful not to fall behind in development. This is the subject of Game 25.

WARNING: These variations are tricky. If you want to play the Winawer as Black you must have a look at these white options.



Illustrative Games

Game 18

□ Shirov ■ Timman

Groningen 1996

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 b6

A more restrained system for Black, with the idea of ...Ba6 to exchange light-squared bishops. 4...Qd7 (Game 19) leads to similar positions.

5 Qg4 Bf8

Looks daft when you first see it, but hanging on to the bishop has its points, just as does busting up the white queenside with...Bxc3. And 5...Bf8 is certainly not inferior to 5...g6 or 5...Kf8.

6 Bg5

As you might imagine, there are many different formations for White, and not much theoretical consensus as to which is the best.

6...Qd7

6...f6 was certainly an option.

7 Bb5 Nc6 8 Nce2 a6 9 Ba4

There have been some games where the white bishop has been manoeuvred around to c2 in this manner. This time it does not work out too well.

9...b5 10 Bb3 f6 11 exf6 Nxf6 12 Qh4 Ne7! (Diagram 1)



Diagram 1

An imaginative pawn sacrifice



Diagram 2

The white queen is in danger

An imaginative and excellent continuation, involving the sacrifice of a pawn. 12...Be7 was more staid.

13 Bxf6 Ng6 14 Qg5 gxf6 15 Qxf6 Bh6

Stopping castling and with the threat of 15...Rf8 trapping White's queen.

16 Qf3

Only way out.

16...Qg7 17 Qg3

A better way of getting organised here might have been the line 17 c3!? Bb7 18 Bc2 0-0-0 19 Qg4 Qf6 20 Nf3 Rhg8 21 Qh5!, when White

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would avoid a lot of the embarrassing congestion that came his way.

17...Bb7 18 Nf3 0-0-0 19 0-0 Rhg8 20 c3 Qf6 21 Qh3 Bf8

Rerouting to d6. Keeping the bishop does not seem so silly now, does it?

22 Bc2 Bd6 23 Rae1?!

A mistaken plan. e6 is not vulnerable enough to warrant White attempting to hit it. 23 a4! was more to the point.

23...Kb8

Black has tremendous play for his pawn, with Shirov in the unfamiliar situation of hardly having a decent move.

24 Ng3?

A more serious inaccuracy. He had to play 24 Qh6!.

24...Nf4 25 Qh4 Qf8 (Diagram 2)

Once again Timman hopes to trap Shirov's queen. This time the threat is 26...Be7 27 Qxh7 Rh8, and there is not much to be done about it.

26 Ng5

On 26 Ne5 h5 reinstates 27...Be7 as a threat.

26...Be7 27 Nxe6

This is insufficient, but taking three pawns for a piece was the best practical chance.

27...Bxh4 28 Nxf8 Rdx8 29 Bxh7 Rg7 30 Bc2 c5 31 Re3

31 dxc5 d4 32 Be4 might have been a better try.

31...cxd4 32 cxd4 Bd8 33 Re5 Bc8 34 Rd1 Bg4 35 f3 Bd7 36 Kf2 Rh8 37 Bf5 Rxh2 38 Bxd7 Rxd7 39 Ke3 Nxf2+ 40 Kd3 0-1

A splendid performance from Jan Timman.

Game 19

Geller Karpov

USSR Championship, Moscow 1976

1 e4 e6

A rare and quite unsuccessful outing with this defence for Karpov. He must have picked up the idea from his own experience in making little headway against it in his 1974 match with Korchnoi, from which he emerged as world champion.

2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Qd7

A sideline with the same idea as in Game 7 – to answer Qg4 with ...f5 defending g7 along the rank.

5 Nf3 b6 6 Bd2

6 Bd3 was an alternative.

6...Ba6

The standard bishop swap.

7 Bxa6 Nxa6 8 0-0 Nb8

Now might have been a good time to take on c3.

9 Ne2! Be7?!

Probably taking on d2 was better. Anatoly did not really know what he was doing.

10 Rc1! b5

Very weakening, but if c4 comes, White's initiative would be very hard to meet.

11 Nf4 h5

Another ugly move. 11...Nh6 12 Nh5 Nf5 13 g4 is hard to meet, so he prepares the way into the game for the knight. However, it is not to have much of a role in this game.

12 b3 Ba3

To discourage c4, but the bishop is offside here.

13 Rb1 a5? (Diagram 3)

Diagram 3
World champion at sea

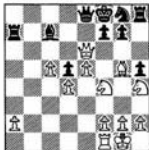


Diagram 4
Spectacular and decisive

Another inferior move. Better to have pulled the bishop back.

14 c4 c6 15 c5

Cutting off the bishop. Karpov hurries to rescue it, but it costs him a pawn. His game is already critical.

15...Bb4 16 Bc1 a4

A sad necessity before White traps the bishop.

17 Nd3 Ba5 18 bxa4 bxa4 19 Qxa4 Qa7 20 Bg5 Bc7 21 Rxb8+!

Correctly preferring the initiative to just being a pawn up.

21...Qxb8 22 Qxc6+ Kf8 23 Nf4

For the exchange White has two pawns and a big attack. The vulnerability of e6 and g6 makes the black position particularly bad.

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23...Ra7 24 Nh4 Qe8 25 Qxe6!! (Diagram 4)

Wow!

25...fxe6

25...Qxe6 26 Nxe6+ fxe6 27 Ng6+ does not help either.

26 Nhg6+ Qxg6

After 26...Kf7 27 Nxb8+ Kf8 28 Nfg6+ Black will have to give up his queen anyway.

27 Nxb8+ Ke8 28 Nxb8 Ra4 29 Rd1 Ne7 30 Bxe7 Kxe7 31 Ng6+ Kf7 32 Nf4 Bxe5 33 dxe5 Rxf4 34 Rc1

They say that Geller thought for a long time before sacrificing his queen on e6. He was thinking through the details of this rook ending.

35...Ke8 35 c6 Kd8 36 c7+ Kc8 37 g3 Ra4

What Geller most probably spent his time checking was the important line after 37...Rf5 38 f4 g5 39 a4! gxf4 40 a5! fxd3 41 a6! gxh2+ 42 Kh1 Rf2 43 Ra1 and White wins.

38 Rc6 Rxa2 39 Rxe6 g5 40 Rd6 Rd2 41 e6 Kxc7 42 e7 1-0

and as 42...Re2 43 Rxd5 Rxe7 44 Rxd5 leaves a trivially won ending, Karpov threw in the towel. One of the great games in chess literature.

Game 20

□ Hodgson ■ Kupreichik

German Bundesliga 1998

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Ne7 5 Nf3

A deviation from the usual 5 a3 in the first two chapters.

5...c5 6 dxc5 Nbc6 7 Bd3 d4 8 a3 Ba5 9 b4 Nxb4 10 axb4 Bxb4 11 0-0 Bxc3 12 Rb1

A speculative gambit from Hodgson.

12...Qc7 (Diagram 5)



Diagram 5
What now for White?



Diagram 6
The black king is doomed

What would you now play with White?

13 Ng5!

Probably not that.

13...Qxe5 14 Qh5 g6 15 Qh6

The c3 bishop is not in the thick of things, you see? That's one reason why Hodgson hoped he could have fun over on the other side.

15...Ng8

Not what you want to do, but 15...Nf5 is met by 16 Bxf5 gxf5 17 Nxb7 or 16...exf5 17 Nxb7 and if the c8 bishop moves Rxb7 will leave Black right in it.

16 Qh4 Kf8

So will castling by hand do the trick? Not really...

17 Bf4 Qd5 18 Bd6+ Kg7 19 Nxf7!!

Splat!

19...Kxf7 20 Qd8!

Thud! The queen lands and threatens mate at f8.

20...e5

Only move.

21 Qf8+ Ke6 22 f4! (Diagram 6)

Introducing the new attackers of f1 rook and the f-pawn itself.

22...e4 23 f5+ 1-0

A typical Hodgson game; wild, fantastical...and probably not 100% correct.

Game 21

□ Kharlov ■ Beliavsky

Novosibirsk 1995

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Ne2

This makes a change from 4 e5. Other ideas for White are 4 Bd2 (Game 24) and 4 Bd3 (Game 25).

4...dxe4

Black usually takes the pawn. More experimental options – 4...b6 and 4...Nc6 – are tried in the next two games.

5 a3 Be7

Grabbing the pawn with 5...Bxc3+ 6 Nxc3 f5 has a very bad reputation, ever since Nimzowitsch lost to Alekhine in 17 moves. But I would not be surprised if it turns out in reality to be one of Black's better lines. 5...Bxc3+ 6 Nxc3 Nc6 is well regarded as an equaliser.

6 Nxe4 b6?!

6...Nf6 was a simpler and superior move, similar to the Rubinstein variation (see Chapter 11) with White's king's knight slightly mis-

Starting Out: The French

placed on e2.

7 N2c3 Bb7 8 Qf3! (Diagram 7)



Diagram 7
The threat is Nf6+

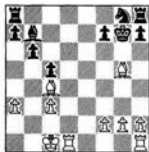


Diagram 8
Black's position is awful

8...Kf8

A very undesirable move to make. Forfeiting castling rights can hardly be right. He should have tried 8...Nd7?! 9 Nd6+!? cxd6 10 Qxb7.

9 Qg3! Nc6

9...Qxd4 10 Qxc7! Leaves White better after either 10...Qd7 11 Qg3 or 10...Bxe4 11 Be3! Qd8 12 Qxd8+ Bxd8 13 Nxe4.

10 Be3 Bh4

10...Nf6 11 Nxf6 Bxf6 12 0-0-0 is pleasant for White and 10...Nxd4? 11 Bxd4 Qxd4 12 Rd1 wins for him.

11 Qf4 g5

This way out is not adequate. White will have the bishop pair and the superior pawn structure. On 11...f5 12 0-0-0! Leaves White nicely placed.

12 Nxc6 Bxc6 13 Qxc6 Qxc6 14 Bxc6 Nxd4 15 0-0-0 c5 16 Nb5!

Offering the g2-pawn to activate his pieces. In particular White wants to get his rook to d7.

16...e5

White has massive compensation, in the form of initiative and development lead, after 16...Nxb5 17 Bxb5 Bxc2 18 Rhg1 Bf3 19 Rd7 a6 20 Bd3 Ke8 21 Rd6 b5 22 Bf4.

17 Nxd4 exd4

On 17...cxd4 White carries on opening up as quick as he can and stands clearly better after 18 f4! f6 (18...exf4 19 Bxf4 is nice) 19 Bh4 Kg7 20 fxe5 fxe5 21 Bc4.

18 c3! dxc3?!

Probably his last chance was 18...f6 and 19...Rd8. Now the white pieces enter.

19 bxc3 Kg7 20 Bc4 (Diagram 8)

20...b5

20...Bxg2 21 Rhg1 and 20...Nf6 21 Rd6 followed by 22 Rd7 both leave him in fearful trouble, but losing the b-pawn like this, to deflect the white bishop away from control of f7, is not a lot better.

21 Bxb5 1-0

A sickened Beliavsky here threw in the towel.

Game 22

□ Zelcic ■ Zaja

Croatian Championship, Pula 1998

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Ne2 b6

A rarity.

5 a3 Be7

5...Bxc3+!? 6 Nxc3 Ne7 7 Bd3 Ba6 8 Bxa6 Nxa6 9 Qe2 Nb8 10 Bg5 Nbc6 11 Bxe7 Nxe7 12 exd5 and here they agreed it drawn in J.Pedersen-J.Sorensen, Danish Championship 1996.

6 Nf4

6 e5?! led to no advantage for White after 6...Ba6 7 Be3 c5 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 Bxe2 10 Bxe2 c4 11 g4 Rb8 in Mach-Moravcik, Slovak Team Championship 1995.

6...dxe4 7 Nxe4 Bb7 8 Qf3! Be6?!

8...Qxd4? 9 Nd6+ Bxd6 10 Qxb7 Bxf4 11 Qxa8 wins for White, but 8...c6!? was worth a go, with interesting play after 9 Be3 Nf6 10 Bd3 Nbd7 11 Ng5?!

9 Be3 Nf6 10 Nxf6+ Bxf6 11 Bb5! (Diagram 9)



Diagram 9

The bishop is pinned both ways



Diagram 10

A rook goes

Starting Out : The French

A very important move, giving White the initiative.

11...Qd7

On 11...Bxb5?! 12 Qxa8 Bc6 13 Qxa7 0-0 14 Rd1 Qd6 15 0-0 White escapes to safety with a big material edge.

12 Bxc6 Qxc6 13 d5! Qb7

13...Qxc2 14 dxe6 exposes Black to a fierce initiative, and on 13...exd5?! 14 0-0-0 Qb5?! 15 Bd4! Bxd4 16 Rhe1+! wins.

14 0-0-0 e5 15 Nh5 Nd7 16 Bh6!

Now his other bishop offers itself in surprising manner too.

16...Rg8 17 h4 0-0-0 18 Nxf6 Nxf6?!

Losing by force. A more persistent defence was 18...gxf6 19 h5 Kb8 20 g3.

19 Bxg7! Rxc7 20 Qxf6 Rxc2 21 Qxf7 Qa6 22 Qe6+ Kb7

Or 22...Kb8 23 d6 cxd6 24 Rxd6 Rc8 25 Qxe5 winning.

23 Qc6+! Kc8 24 d6 Qb7 25 d7+ Kb8 26 Qf6 Rgg8 27 Rhg1 1-0
(Diagram 10)

Black loses a rook

Game 23

□ E.Berg ■ V.Potkin

World Under 18 Championship, Oropesa del Mar 1999

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Ne2 Nc6! 5 a3 Ba5! 6 Be3 Nge7

Raymond Keene drew attention to such an idea in his biography of Nimzowitsch.

7 e5 Nf5 8 Ng3

8 b4 Bb6 9 g3 f6 would have been an interesting line.

8...Nxe3 9 fxe3 Qg5 10 Qf3 f6 11 h4 Qh6 12 exf6 gxf6 13 b4 Bb6
(Diagram 11)



Diagram 11

The bishop on b6 never moves again



Diagram 12

A demolition sacrifice

14 Qh5+ Qg6

14...Qxh5 15 Nxh5 0-0 had to be okay.

15 Bd3 f5

The only consistent move, otherwise he has just lost a tempo on the line with capturing on h5 last move.

16 Nce2

White will argue that the bishop at b6 is really a bit out of it in the given situation.

16...Ke7 17 Qf3 Rg8 18 Rh3 Bd7 19 Nf4 Qh6 20 c4!

Definitely the right plan. He opens up the game for his bishop and the black king is insecure.

20...dxc4 21 Bxc4 Rg4 22 Nge2 Rxh4 23 Rxh4 Qxh4+ 24 g3 Qg5 25 0-0-0 Re8 26 Rh1 h6?

Too ambitious. Returning it with 26...Kd8 was safer.

27 Rh5 Qg7 28 Bxe6! (Diagram 12)

A spectacular refutation. The rook now constitutes an extra attacker, so White goes to work.

28...Bxe6 29 Nxe6 Kxe6 30 Qxf5+ Kd6 31 Qd5+ Ke7 32 Qe4+ Kd8 32...Kf7 loses to the same idea: 33 Rf5+.**33 Rd5+ 1-0**

Black suffers massive material loss.

Despite the result in this game, the black opening experiment was not shown to be defective.

Game 24

□ Grabarczyk ■ B.Socko

Polish Championship, Plock 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bd2

A quirky line, hardly ever seen at top levels.

4...dxe4 5 Qg4 Nf6

5...Qxd4 6 Nf3 h5!? is fun.

6 Qxg7 Rg8 7 Qh6 b6

7...Nc6!? 8 0-0-0 Bd7 9 f3 Nxd4 10 Nxe4 Rg6 11 Qe3 Bxd2+ 12 Rxd2 Nxe4 13 fxe4 e5 14 c3 Nc6 led to a swift draw in Yepez-Skalkotas, Nice Olympiad 1974.

8 0-0-0 Bb7 9 Nh3

A new idea, but it does not trouble Black much. 9 f3 Bxc3 10 Bxc3 Nbd7 11 Bb5 Qe7 12 d5!? 0-0-0!? 13 Bxd7+ Nxd7 14 fxe4 Rxc2 15 Qxh7 exd5 16 exd5 Qe3+ 17 Kb1 Bxd5! 18 Rxd5 Rxc1+ 19 Rd1 Rxh1 20 Rxh1 Qf3 21 Rc1 Nc5 22 Bb4 was equal in Leveille-Delisle, Quebec 1985.

Starting Out: The French

9...Qe7 10 Nb5 Bxd2+ 11 Rxd2 Rg6 12 Qf4 Na6 13 Rg1

This move is an indication that White's opening has not really worked.

13...Rg4 14 Qh6 Rg6 15 Qf4 Rg4 16 Qh6 Rd8!? (Diagram 13)



Diagram 13
Black declines the draw



Diagram 14
The pressure mounts

Bravely passing over the draw by repetition.

17 Be2 Rg6 18 Qe3 Nb4 19 Nf4

Here if 19 Nxa7? Ra8 20 Qa3 Nbd5 21 Qxe7+ Kxe7 and g2 falls.

19...Rg7 20 a3 Nbd5 21 Nxd5 exd5 22 f3

22 Nxa7? c6 traps it.

22...a6 23 Nc3 Kf8?

Overplaying it. He should have preferred 23...exf3! holding equality in case of either 24 Qxf3 Ne4 25 Nxe4 dxe4 or 24 Qxe7+ Kxe7 25 Bxf3 Kd6 26 Re2 Rgg8.

24 fxe4 dxe4 25 Rf1 Rd6 26 g3 b5 27 Bd1 Rg6 28 Rdf2 Kg8 29 Rf5 Qd8 30 h4 Nd5 31 Nxd5 Bxd5 32 h5 Rge6 33 Qf4 (Diagram 14) 33...Re8 34 h6 Kh8 35 Bh5 e3 36 Re5 Rg8

On 36...Bc4 37 Qxe3 Rxe5 38 dxe5 Rxh6 39 Qxb6 Bxf1 40 Bxf7 wins. 37 Qxe3 f6 38 Re7 Bc4 39 Rf4 f5? 40 Qe5+ 1-0

Game 25

□ Romanishin ■ Beliavsky

Belgrade 1993

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bd3

Oleg Romanishin is always springing new opening ideas on his opponents. This one does not look very bright at all.

4...dxe4 5 Bxe4 Nf6 6 Bg5 Nbd7 7 Nge2 h6 8 Bxf6 Nxf6 9 Bf3 0-0 10 0-0 c6

Perhaps White had hoped that his f3 bishop would be strong enough to give him good chances, but...c6 just puts it to sleep.

11 Ne4 Nxe4 12 Bxe4 Bd6

Romanishin's opening experiment just handed Beliavsky the bishop pair and rather more than equality.

13 Qd3 f5

'Threatening' the h7-pawn, but Black reacts healthily by just advancing on the kingside.

14 Bf3 e5 (Diagram 15)



Diagram 15
Black frees his position



Diagram 16
The infantry continue to advance

15 dxe5 Bxe5 16 Qc4+ Kh7 17 Rad1 Qf6 18 Nd4

On 18 c3 Be6 Black is doing great.

18...Bd7 19 c3 Rae8 20 Qa4 a6 21 Nb3 Bc8 22 Qb4 Re7 23 Na5 g5!

Starting a strong and entirely justified attack.

24 g3 g4 25 Bg2 f4 26 Rfe1 c5! 27 Qc4

On 27 Qxc5 b6 forks two pieces.

27...Kg7

Black need only to organise his forces carefully. Beliavsky does the job with accuracy.

28 Nb3 b6 29 Kh1 h5 30 Nd2 f3 31 Bf1 h4 (Diagram 16)

With his kingside overrun White has no hope of holding out for long.

32 Re4 hxg3 33 fxg3

If 33 hxg3 Rh8+ 34 Kg1 Qg6 with decisive attack.

33...Kh8 34 Bd3 f2! 35 Rxc4 Bxc4 36 Qxc4 Qh6 37 Nf1 Rg7 38 Qe4 Bxc3! 39 Nxc3 Rxc3 40 Qe5+ Rg7 41 Rf1 Qh4 42 Be2 Qh3 0-1

On 43 Qe4 Qxf1+! 44 Bxf1 Rg1 is mate, or 43 Qh5+ Qxh5 44 Bxh5 Rfg8 and termination at g1.

The game transposes here from a Rubinstein variation to the Burn line 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 dxe4 5 Nxe4 Nbd7 6 Nf3.

6...h6

In the next game Black breaks the pin with 6...Be7.

7 Nxf6+ Nxf6 8 Bd2?!

8 Bh4 is more usual and more active. Jonathan Speelman then sprang 8...g6!? on Nigel Short in the 2nd game of their 1988 Candidates match. The idea apparently came to him in the back of a car whilst waiting for tickets for an international soccer game in Oslo.

A decade later Speelman repeated the line against Plaskett, who went 9 Be4, castled queenside, blew his brains out with an attack, emerged two clean pawns up in a simple rook ending... and drew it. The failure to convert the advantage was described by IM Malcolm Pein as 'almost unforgivable'. Fair comment.

8...c5 9 Bd3 Qb6!

A rare chance for Black to initiate early complications in these quiet variations.

10 Qe2 Qxb2 (Diagram 13)



Diagram 13
Yum yum!



Diagram 14
Black trades advantages

Black calls his bluff and takes the pawn.

11 0-0 Qb6 12 Rab1 Qc7 13 c4 Be7 14 Rfe1 cxd4 15 Nxd4 0-0 16 Nb5 Qc6 17 Rb3

This is about as far as White's compensation gets ...and it's not enough.

17...Rd8 18 Bf4 b6 19 Bb1 Bb7 20 Rg3 Ne4! (Diagram 14)

Excellent defence! He gives back the pawn to enter a queenless mid-game with the advantage of the pair of bishops.

21 Bxe4 Qxe4 22 Qxe4 Bxe4 23 Bxh6 Bg6 24 Bf4 Rd7

Starting Out: The French

gorn. With 3...a6 Black prepares ...c7-c5 as in the 3...c5 Tarrasch, but first of all prevents the reply Bb5+. Whether he should spend a move to achieve this is a moot point. Have a look at Game 66.

3...Nc6 – The Guimard Variation

The Guimard variation, 3...Nc6, also has its adherents even though Black is breaking one of the fundamental rules in the French that you shouldn't obstruct the c-pawn from applying pressure on the opponent's centre (if you compare this to 1 d4 d5, the move 2 Nc3 has few fans as it blocks the c2-c4 advance). Having played ...Nc6, it is imperative that Black find counterplay somehow and this can be achieved with ...f7-f6. Still, attacking a pawn chain from the front isn't considered as strong as hitting its support, as with ...c7-c5, so generally Black's set up gets the thumbs down. Of course this doesn't stop it being a good surprise weapon. You can check out Game 67.

Illustrative Games

Game 63

□ Adams ■ Short

Sarajevo 1999

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Be7

A curio, used by Romanishin amongst others. IM Joksis observed 'After this move White is in zugzwang!' Not quite.

4 e5

A little unusual. The next year Plaskett beat Short with 4 Ngf3 Nf6 5 Bd3! c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 0-0 dxe4 8 Nxe4, although this had little to do with the position which arose from the opening. The most testing line is 4 Bd3 c5 5 dxc5, as played in Games 64 and 65.

4...c5 5 Qg4!? g6 6 dxc5!?

An interesting treatment by Adams, who straightaway tries to make something of the slightly weakened dark squares in the black camp.

6...f5

I do not like this move, and am confident that later Short disliked it too. It further aggravates the dark square weaknesses.

7 Qg3 Nd7 8 Bb5! (Diagram 1)

All out to weaken Black's dark squares.

8...Qa5 9 Bxd7+ Bxd7 10 c3 Qxc5 11 Ne2 Bd8 12 Nb3 Qe7 13 h4!

To weaken his pawns now.

13...Bc7 14 h5 gxh5 15 Bg5

The key to the weakening process: the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. The black game is already critical.

15...Qg7 16 f4 h6 17 Bh4 Rh7 18 Nc5 b6 19 Nxd7 Qxg3+ 20 Nxg3

Kxd7 21 Nxb5 b5 22 Rh3

Setting off towards the black pawns.

**Diagram 1**

Black is weak on the dark squares

**Diagram 2**

Black is horribly passive

22...Rf7 23 Rg3 Ne7 24 Bxe7 Rxe7 25 Rg6 Rh8 (Diagram 2)**26 Rd1 Bb6 27 Rd3 a5 28 Nf6+ Kc7 29 Rxd5! Be3 30 Rxb5 Bxf4
31 Rxa5 Kb7 32 Rb5+ Ka7 33 Nh5 Bg5 34 Rg7 Rhe8 35 Rxe7+
Rxe7 36 Rb4**

And the rest is just tidying up.

36...Rc7 37 Nf4 Rc5 38 Nd3 Rd5 39 Ke2 1-0

Game 64

□ Adams ■ Morozevich

Sarajevo 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Be7 4 Bd3 c5 5 dxc5 Nf6 6 Qe2

The inferior 6 exd5 is seen in the next game.

6...Nc6 7 Ngf3 Nb4?!

I do not think this quite works. Better just to have taken the pawn back.

8 Nb3 Nxd3+ 9 cxd3 a5 10 Bg5

Simple moves, very much in the style of Adams, secure White a big edge.

10...a4 11 Nbd2 h6 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 e5 Be7 14 Rc1 (Diagram 3)**14...Ra5 15 Qe3 0-0 16 0-0 Bd7**

Black has no compensation at all for his lost pawn.

**17 Rc2 Qa8 18 Rfc1 Rc8 19 Nf1 Qa7 20 d4 Qa6 21 Ng3 b6 22 c6
Be8 23 Nh5**

Adams switches his attentions to Moro's king. With Black still tied up dealing with the monster at c6, it does not last long.

Starting Out: The French

23...Qb5 24 g4!

Crude, but very effective.



Diagram 3

The bishops have no scope



Diagram 4

Black cannot defend the kingside

24...Ra7 25 g5 hxg5 26 Nxc5 Rac7 27 Kh1 (Diagram 4)

Clearing the way for the rooks to the new g-file.

27...Rxc6 28 Rxc6 Rxc6 29 Rg1 Qxb2 30 Nxc7!

Crash!

30...Qc3 31 Nxe8 1-0

Game 65

□ Kudrin ■ Short

Monarch Assurance, Port Erin 1999

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Be7 4 Bd3 c5 5 dxc5 Nf6 6 exd5

Probably not as good as 6 Qe2.

6...Qxd5 7 Ngf3 Nbd7 8 Nb3 a5!

Better than just taking the c-pawn. He aims to boot the knight from defence of c5, or provoke White into weakening himself in dealing with it.

9 c4 Qh5 10 Be2 e5! 11 0-0 a4 12 Nbd2

12 Nfd4 Qg6 13 f4!? might have been tried.

12...Nxc5 13 Re1 0-0 (Diagram 5)

14 Nf1 Rd8 15 Qc2 e4

The opening has worked out marvellously for Short.

16 Ng3 Qg4 17 Ng5 Qh4

Now just threatening 18...h6, stranding the knight. Kudrin is probably already lost.

18 Be3

To meet 18...h6 with 19 Bxc5 and e4 falls.

18...Nd3

A splendid outpost for the horse.



Diagram 5
A fine position for Black



Diagram 6
White loses material

19 Red1 Ng4 20 Bxg4 Bxg4 21 N5xe4

Giving up the exchange for a pawn to reduce the pressure, but it does not help much.

21...Bxd1 22 Rxd1 Nb4 23 Rxd8+ Rxd8 24 Qxa4 f5 25 Bc5?

A final blunder. 25 Nc3 was necessary.

25...Nd3 (Diagram 6) 0-1

White must lose material, since if 26 Bxe7 Qxe7 27 Nc3 Qe1+ 28 Nf1 Qxf2+ and mates.

Game 66

□ Dvoiryts ■ Dolmatov

USSR Championship, Odessa 1989

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 a6

One idea of this move is to play ...c5 and respond to dxc5 with ...Bxc5 and then slot the bishop back to a7. It also prevents the Bb5 ideas in the 3...c5 4 exd5 exd5 lines (Games 57-59). 3...a6 still retains a reasonable reputation.

4 e5 (Diagram 7)

It makes sense to take play into something akin to the Advance Variation, as ...a6 is not that functional. Other treatments include leaving the pawn at e4, e.g. 4 Ngf3 c5 5 c3!?

4...c5

Black might consider 4...Bd7!? followed by ..Bb5 to exchange light-squared bishops.

5 c3 Nc6 6 Ndf3 Nge7 7 Bd3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Ne2 Be7 10 0-0 Qb6 11 a3 Bd7

Starting Out: The French



Diagram 7

A sort of Advance variation



Diagram 8

A sacrifice to open lines

Now that the check on b5 is no longer there the d4-pawn really is en prise.

12 Bc2 Rc8

12...a5!? was worth a look.

13 b4 a5

He could have castled. Black's king is still in the middle. Ready for an attack? OK: here we go!

14 bxa5 Nxa5 15 Bxf5! exf5 16 Nf4 Qc6 17 e6!? (Diagram 8)

Opening him up for just the one pawn.

17...Bxe6 18 Ne5 Qa6 19 Nxe6 Qxe6

He would rather take back with the pawn, but that fails to 20 Qh5+.

20 Bd2 Qa6 21 Bb4! Nc6 22 Nxc6 Rxc6 23 Re1 Re6

A last desperate attempt to block the e-file, but his lag in development is too great.

24 Rc1 Kd7?

On 24...0-0 25 Bxe7 wins. Black had to try 24...Rxe1+ 25 Qxe1 Qe6 though White is clearly better in the endgame.

25 Rxe6 fxe6 26 Bxe7 Kxe7

The exchanges leave the king in the town square in his nightshirt.

27 Rc7+ Kd8 28 Qc1 1-0

He could not hope to have lasted out for long. Rare to see Dolmatov crushed like that. The moral of the story is: Castle Next Time!

Game 67

□ Khalifman ■ Timman

Reykjavik 1991

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nc6 4 Ngf3 Nf6 5 e5 Nd7 6 Be2 f6 (Diagram 9)



Diagram 9
Black targets e5



Diagram 10
The black rooks are spectators

7 exf6 Nxf6 8 0-0 Bd6 9 c4

This is typical play in the Guimard Variation. It is White who tries to break up the black centre with c2-c4 rather than Black trying to do it to White with ...c7-c5.

9...b6

White would consider c4-c5 if Black did not prevent it. However, this weakening of the light squares now allows White to mount an early initiative.

10 cxd5 exd5 11 Bb5 Bd7 12 Re1+ Ne7 13 Bxd7+ Qxd7 14 Ne5 Qf5 15 Qa4+ Kf8

This king move now makes it very difficult for Black to coordinate his position. In particular his king's rook remains a spectator to the end of the game.

16 Nf1 Bxe5

This is really asking for it. He had to try and play around the knight with a plan such as 16...Ng4 17 f4 h5.

17 dxe5 Ng4 18 Bf4 c5 19 Ng3 Qe6 20 Bg5 Nh6 21 f4 (Diagram 10)

Black has a temporary hold over f5 but this will soon be broken.

21...Nef5 22 Bxh6 gxh6 23 Nxf5 Qxf5 24 Qc6

Material is level but the draughty position of the black king renders his position hopeless.

24...Kg7 25 Qxd5 Qxf4 26 Re4 Qf5 27 Qb7+ Kg6 28 Rf1 1-0

Black never managed to move either rook.

NOTE: The problem with having to make an enforced early king move is often not the immediate danger to the king, but the consequent inability to coordinate the rooks.



Chapter Ten

The Advance Variation

- Introduction
- Plans and Themes in the Advance
- The Milner-Barry Gambit
- Illustrative Games

Introduction

In the Tarrasch and Classical White plays 4 e5, but it is with gain of time by attacking a black knight on f6. Meanwhile in the Winawer he plays 4 e5 as he hopes to prove the black bishop is misplaced on b4 and, besides, the pawn is threatened with capture by ...dxe4. In contrast, White plays 3 e5 voluntarily in the Advance and without gain of time. In some sense White isn't asking enough of the position: Black immediately knows how the pawn centre will look and can deploy his pieces accordingly.

For this reason the Advance, although a fully respectable opening line, has never enjoyed the popularity of the other variations above. As usual in the mainline French, the d4-square is one of the focal points of the strategic battle. A typical main line runs as follows:

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 Be2 Nge7 7 Na3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Nc2 Qb6 10 0-0 (Diagram 1)



Diagram 1
The d4-pawn is the focus



Diagram 2
White has a nasty trick

You will notice that White played the rather tortuous manoeuvre with his queen's knight from a3 to c2 to defend the d4-pawn. And this was just as well, as Black has been able to attack it with the queen and two knights. Because the centre is blocked, Black has been in no hurry to castle – indeed his bishop is still sitting on f8. Wisely he preferred to use the time to bring his knight to the active square on f5.

Plans and Themes in the Advance

The Advance Variation is another line where the key to the play is very much based on an understanding of the plans for both sides. Here we will discuss typical themes that arise from the diagram as these are characteristic of play in this line.

Starting Out: The French

With his pieces tied down to the defence of d4 you might think White has a poor position. In reality in the centre it is a 'draw' though the status quo favours White as it locks his space advantage in place. On the queenside Black has more chances of doing some attacking. For example he could play ...Rc8 seizing the open file (though there isn't much to do there at the moment) or he could play ...Na5 with the idea of ...Bb5 to exchange off his 'bad' bishop for White's good bishop as well as possibly playing ...Nc4 in some scenarios. Another plan is ...Nb4 to exchange off knights to weaken White's defences on the queenside, as well as preparing ...Bb5 as above. Finally, he could consider a pawn assault with 10...a5. Of course, he might combine various elements from these ideas.

Meanwhile White has to decide what he is going to do. He could try Bd3 and Bxf5, but despite doubling Black's pawns this seems ineffective; Black plays ...Be6 at some point with a very solid centre. It is worth mentioning that Bd3 does at least set a good trap. Say in the diagram position play went 10...Rc8 11 Bd3. Now it seems like Black can win a pawn with 11...Nfxd4? but this fails to 12 Nfxd4! (the correct way to capture, so that Black can't save himself next move by taking on f3 with check) 12...Nxd4 13 Be3 Bc5 (**Diagram 2**)

14 b4! and Black ends up in trouble however he plays, for example 14...Nxc2 15 Bxc5 Qc7. Now, not 16 Bxc2 b6 when Black survives, but instead 16 Bd6! Qc3 17 Qg4! which attacks the weakness on g7 and causes huge problems for Black. In fact Black always has to think twice before capturing the d4-pawn as traps like this abound in the Advance.

The classic trap in the French is 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Qb6 6 Bd3 cxd4 7 cxd4 Nxd4?? 8 Nxd4 Qxd4?? 9 Bb5+ and Black loses the queen.

That was a pleasant interlude for White, but returning to the diagram we still need to find a good plan for him. Rather remarkably, the best line involves g2-g4! Now when we first learn to play chess experience soon teaches us that advancing pawns in front of your king in this fashion is bound to lead to disaster. And this is perfectly true for open positions. But in semi-closed positions – for example in certain lines of the main line King's Indian or the Ruy Lopez – different rules apply. With g2-g4 White gains space on the kingside and ejects the black knight from f5, which takes some of the pressure off the d4-pawn.

The Milner-Barry Gambit

After 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 White's most natural development for his bishop is 6 Bd3 which leads to a pawn sacrifice after 6...Qb6 7 0-0 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nxd4 9 Nxd4 Qxd4 10 Nc3 (**Diagram 3**).



Diagram 3

A dangerous gambit

White has such a substantial lead in development that Black can be thankful that the opening is the French – he wouldn't last another ten moves after such extravagant play in the Open Sicilian! Now 10...Qxe5 grabs a second pawn, but gives White a useful initiative after 11 Re1 Qb8 12 Nxd5. Instead the preventive 10...a6! to rule out Nb5 looks good for Black. For example 11 Qe2 Ne7! 12 Kh1 (preparing f2-f4 to defend e5 before Nc6) 12...Nc6 13 f4 Bc5! and Black has a solid position and the upper hand.

After the moves 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 Be2 Nge7 7 Na3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Nc2 Black played the immediate 9...Nb4!? in Game 68. This should have been enough to equalise but he made an instructive error in the early middlegame. Games 69 and 70 feature 9...Qb6 when, according to how aggressive he feels, White can opt for 10 0-0 or 10 h4! In Game 71 the slower approach 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 a3 is made to look much worse than it is after the active 6...f6. In fact the idea of preparing the b2-b4 advance makes more sense when Black has played 5...Qb6 rather than 5...Bd7, as Black can't so easily switch play to a kingside attack. You can find examples of 5...Qb6 6 a3 in Games 72 and 73. Finally in Game 74. Black foregoes ...Bd7 in favour of a quick ...Nge7. The point is to get the queen to b6 and both knights attacking d4 a tempo sooner than usual before White has had time to organise his defence of the pawn. It is interesting to see how Timman meets this threat.

Illustrative Games

Game 68

□ Anand ■ M.Gurevich

Manila Interzonal 1990

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7

Starting Out: The French

This has been the most popular move recently. 5...Qb6 (Games 72 and 73) is the traditional main line, and 5...Nge7 (Game 74) is also played occasionally.

6 Be2

The alternative 6 a3 is seen in Game 71.

6...Nge7

6...f6 is another important line.

7 Na3

Going to c2 from where it supports d4.

7...cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Nc2 Nb4

Major alternatives are 9...Qb6 (as in the next two games) or 9...Be7.

10 Nxb4 Bxb4+ 11 Bd2 Qa5

A better way of handling it here might have been 11...Qb6! when after 12 a3 Bxd2+ 13 Qxd2 Black gets the chance to trade off, not the queens, but his 'bad' bishop with 13...Bb5 with equality.

12 a3! Bxd2+ 13 Qxd2 Qxd2+ 14 Kxd2 f6 15 Rac1 (Diagram 4)

**Diagram 4**

White has an endgame initiative

**Diagram 5**

Now the endgame is winning

Vishy Anand has the open c-file, a bit more space and the slightly superior bishop. But still, it is not all that much.

15...Ne7 16 b4 Kd8

On 16...Nc6 17 b5!? Na5 18 Kc3 a6 19 a4 leaves White slightly the more comfortable.

17 Bd3 Rc8 18 Rxc8+ Nxc8

18...Kxc8 was viable too.

19 g4 h6?!

19...Nb6! may have been better, when after 20 exf6 gxf6 21 g5 Nc4+ 22 Bxc4 dxc4 23 gxf6 Bc6 Black has active play, and 20 b5 Ke7 21 Rc1!? is not clear.

20 Nh4 Ne7 21 f4

White's space advantage on the kingside increases.

21...a6

On 21...fxe5 White would have 'broken the rules' with the recapture 22 dxe5!, thereby granting himself a nice pawn roller.

22 Rf1 Bb5 23 f5?

Anand proves a little too precipitate in making his advances. 23 Re1, just maintaining the superiority in space, was superior.

23...h5?!

It might have been better to seek immediate active counterplay with 23...Bxd3! 24 Kxd3 h5 25 Ng6 Rh6 26 Nf4 hxg4 (or even 26...exf5!?) 27 Nxe6+ Ke8 28 Nxf7+ Kf7.

24 Ng6?! Nxf6?

And here too there was the opportunity to go into the line given in the previous note with 24...Bxd3!.

25 exf6!

A neat zwischenzug.

25...gxf6 26 fxg6 Ke7?!

26...Bxd3 27 Kxd3 Ke7 (27...hxg4 28 Rxf6 Ke7 29 g7 Rg8 30 Rg6 is winning for White as the pawn ending following 30...Kf7 31 Rxf6 Rxf7 32 Rxf7+ Kxf7 33 Ke3 is lost because of the outside passed h-pawn.) 28 g5! fxg5 29 Rf7 and the rook's arrival at the seventh rank is terminal, or 28...f5 29 Ke3 like the actual game.

27 g5! f5

27...Bxd3 28 gxf6+.

28 Bxb5 axb5 29 Rc1! (Diagram 5)**29...Kd6 30 Ke3 Rg8 31 Kf4 b6 32 Rc3 Rxf6 33 Rh3**

Now the g- and h-pawns are just too strong.

33...Rg8 34 Rxh5 Rc8 35 g6 Rc4 36 Rg5! Rxd4+ 37 Ke3

Not 37 Kf3? Rg4! and after 38 Rxf6 fxg4+ 39 Kxf6 Ke7 the black king gets back in time.

37...Re4+ 38 Kf2 1-0

The g-pawn is going home.

Game 69

Grischuk Gulko

Esbjerg 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 Be2 Nge7 7 Na3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Nc2 Qb6 10 0-0

The ambitious 10 h4 is seen in the next game.

10...Rc8 (Diagram 6)

10...a5!? is a move here too.

Starting Out: The French

11 Kh1

This was a new move. 11 a3, 11 h4 h5 12 Bg5 and even 11 g4!? were all known, e.g. 11 g4 Nfe7 12 Nfe1 h5 13 gxh5 Nf5 14 Be3 Na5 15 b3 Bb5 and chances were equal in Grosar-Poldauf, Austria 2000.



Diagram 6

A standard Advance position

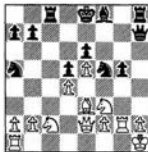


Diagram 7

Black's counterplay is insufficient

11...Na5

11...h5!? would prevent White's next.

12 g4

Typical in this line.

12...Ne7 13 Nfe1!? Bb5 14 Nd3!

Protecting the so important light-squared bishop from exchange.

14...h5!? 15 gxh5 Nf5 16 Be3 g6?!

It looks that the simple 16...Nc4 was stronger than this optimistic move. Black's anticipated play down the h-file proves insufficient.

17 hxg6 fxg6 18 Rg1 Qc7 19 Nde1

Now switching the knight back for defence. After the natural 19 Rc1?! Qh7 20 Rg2 Black could make a draw immediately with 20...Nh4 21 Rg3 (not 21 Rg4? Nf3!) 21...Nf5 and they repeat.

19...Bxe2 20 Qxe2 Qh7 21 Nf3 g5

With the sneaky intent of 21...Rxc2! 22 Qxc2 Ng3+ winning the queen.

22 Rg2! (Diagram 7)

22...Nh4

Now on 22...Rxc2? 23 Qxc2 Ng3+ 24 fxg3! protects the queen with the rook.

23 Nxh4?!

After the simple and strong 23 Qb5+ Nc6 24 Nxh4 (or even 24 Nxg5!?)

24...gxh4 25 Ne1 White could keep a solid advantage. The text gives Black a glimmer of hope in the unnecessary complications.

23...Rxc2! 24 Qb5+ Nc6 25 Nf3 Bh6! 26 Bxg5 a6?!

The final mistake in time trouble, but even after the best move, 26...Rg8, White's advantage is obvious, e.g. 27 Rg1 Qe4 28 Bxh6 Rxc2 (28...Qxf3 29 Qb3 Qe4 30 Qxc2! Qxc2 31 Rxc8+ Kd7 32 R1g7+ Ne7 33 Rf7! will win) 29 Kxg2 Qg4+ 30 Kf1 Qh3+ (on 30...Qxf3 31 Rg8+ Kf7 32 Qxb7+ wins) 31 Rg2 Qxh6 32 Ne1, etc.

27 Qb3 Bxg5 28 Nxc5 Qf5

If 28...Nxd4 29 Qa4+ wins.

29 Nxe6! Ke7 30 Ng7

30 Qxd5! did the trick too.

30...Qe4 31 Qxb7+ Kf8 32 Ne6+ Ke8 33 Qc8+ Ke7 34 Qxh8 Rxf2 35 Qg7+ 1-0

On 35...Kxe6 36 Qg6+ wins.

Game 70

□ **Movsesian** ■ **M.Gurevich**

Sarajevo 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 Be2 Nge7 7 Na3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Nc2 Qb6 10 h4

Ambitious.

10...f6!?

An interesting novelty in a well-known position. 10...Bb4+ 11 Kf1 h5 12 a3 Be7 13 b4 Rc8 14 g3 f6 15 Bd3 fxe5 16 Bxf5 exf5 17 dxe5 led to a White win in Topalov-Nikolic, Monte Carlo 1997.

I am not sure that after 10...Nb4 11 Nxb4 Qxb4+ 12 Kf1 Bb5 13 g4 Bxe2+ 14 Kxe2 Qc4+ Black has too many problems.

11 g4 Nfxd4!? (Diagram 8)



Diagram 8

A typical sacrifice for Black



Diagram 9

The white king is too exposed

Starting Out: The French

A typical and strong knight sacrifice. Black gets a few pawns and the initiative for his piece.

12 Nxd4

On 12 Nfxd4 Black gets his play in the event of 12...Nxd4 13 Qxd4 Bc5 14 Qf4 fxe5 15 Qxe5 Bxf2+ 16 Kd1 0-0, or 12...Nxe5!?, or 12...fxe5!?, or 12...Bb4+!? 13 Kf1 Nxe5. Mix it up the way you like it!
13 g5

If 13 Nxe5 fxe5 14 Nb3 Black has loads of play after 14...Bd6.

13...Bc5! 14 0-0

On 14 gxf6 gxf6 15 Nxe5 fxe5 16 Bh5+ Ke7 17 Bg5+ Kd6 the black king is snug and the compensation patent.

14...Nxf3+

14...0-0 is not so accurate as after 15 gxf6 gxf6 16 Bh6 Rf7 17 Nxe5 fxe5 18 Bh5 White develops excellent activity.

15 Nxf3 Qb4!?

Eyeing g4.

16 Ne1!?

Movsesian aims to shield his king with a knight on g2, and so offers a third pawn for the piece, but 16 Kh1 Qg4 (or even 16...Bc6!?) 17 Rg1 Qh3+ 18 Nh2 Qxh4, or 16 Be3 Qg4+ 17 Kh1 Bd6!?! look too dangerous for White.

16...Qxh4 17 Ng2 Qb4 18 Bd3 0-0-0 19 a3 Qb6 20 b4

Movsesian tries to organise a counter-attack against the black monarch.

20...Bd4 21 Be3 Kb8 22 Qf3

On 22 Qg4 Bxe3 23 fxe3 e5 24 Qh4 Rdf8 keeps the kettle boiling.

22...Bxe3 23 fxe3 Rhf8

23...Rdf8!?! planning 24...h6, was also to be considered.

24 Qg3+?!

If 24 Bxh7 Bb5!?! 25 Rf2 d4 with a steaming initiative.

24...e5 25 Bxh7 25...d4!

Gurevich plays the whole game with great energy.

26 Be4

On 26 exd4 Rh8!?! 27 g6 (or 27 Bf5? Bxf5 28 Rxf5 Qxd4+ wins) 27...Bb5 28 Rf2 Rxd4 with 29...Rhd8 to follow is splendid.

26...Rh8 27 gxf6

Opening all lines, but White is in a pickle. 27 exd4 Rh3 28 Qf2 Rdh8 29 Ne1 Qe6 doesn't look too good either.

27...gxf6 28 Qf3

On 28 exd4 Rh3 29 Qf2 Rdh8, or 28 Qg7 dxe3 29 Rae1 (29 Qxf6 e2+

30 Rf2 Qd4 wins) 29...e2+ 30 Rf2 Rh1+! 31 Kxh1 Qxf2 and Black breaks in.

28...Rdf8 29 exd4 Rh3 30 Qd1 f5 31 Qd2 Rfh8 (Diagram 9)

The finish of the game is very close.

32 Nf4!?

Desperation. None of 32 Bc2 Bc6 33 Bxf5 Rh2, or 32 Bxf5 Bxf5 33 Rxf5 Rh1+, or 32 Bd5 Qd6 33 Bc4! (33 dxe5 Qb6+ or 33 Nf4! Rg3+! 34 Bg2 Rg4) 33...Bc6 34 d5 Bb5 was any better.

32...fxe4! 33 Nxb3 Bxb3 34 Qh2

Or 34 Rf2 e3 35 Qxe3 Qg6+ wins.

34...Qxd4+ 35 Kh1 e3 0-1

A splendid victory from Mikhail Gurevich.

Game 71

□ Adams ■ Epishin

Ter Apel 1992

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 a3 f6

Epishin seeks immediate action.

7 Bd3

7 b4 fxe5 8 bxc5 e4 9 Ng5 Nf6 is a weirder line.

7...Qc7 8 0-0 0-0-0

8...fxe5 9 Nxe5 Nxe5 meets with 10 Bf4 Bd6 11 dxe5 and Black cannot capture again on e5 because of the check at h5.

9 Bf4?! c4!

And not 9...g5? 10 Bg3 g4 because of 11 exf6. Instead Epishin shuts things down on one wing and goes rapidly to work on the other.

10 Bc2 h6! (Diagram 10)



Diagram 10
Black prepares kingside action



Diagram 11
The thematic sacrifice again

Starting Out: The French

11 h4

Very weakening, but 11 Bg3 f5 12 h4 Be8! 13 Nbd2 Bh5 14 Bf4 Be7 15 Qb1 Rf8 leaves him facing a quick ...g5 anyway, possibly first prepared by ...Qd8. One is left with the impression that Mickey did not really know what he was doing in this variation.

11...Be8!

On 11...f5 Adams may have had the (necessary) cheek to play 12 h5. But now the bishop nips outside the pawn chain to join the attack.

12 b3 cxb3 13 Bxb3 Bh5 14 Nbd2 fxe5?!

Simply 14...g5! and then 15...f5 was tremendously strong. At the position's crossroads, Epishin elects to attack with the pieces and not with the pawns, but you ought always to provide yourself with a good reason should you not choose the obvious move in any position.

15 dxe5 Bc5 16 Qb1

16 Qe1 Nge7 17 Be3 looks stronger.

16...Nge7 17 c4 Rhf8 18 Bh2 Bxf3 19 Nxf3 Rxf3! (Diagram 11)

An obvious but very strong sacrifice.

20 gxf3 Nd4 21 Kg2

On 21 Bd1 dxc4 the black initiative is too powerful to be withstood.

21...Nef5 22 Bg3 Qf7! 23 f4

Neither 23 Bd1 Qg6 nor 23 cxd5 Nxh4+ 24 Bxh4 Qxf3+ 25 Kh2 Qh5 26 Qe4 Nxb3 is adequate either.

23...g5 24 cxd5 gxf4 25 dxe6

25 Bxf4 Nxh4+ wins.

25...Qh5 26 e7 Nxh4+ 0-1

Now 27 Bxh4 Qg4+ 28 Bg3 f3+ 29 Kh2 Qh5+ 30 Kg1 Ne2 is mate. Adams annihilated.

Game 72

□ L.Hansen ■ Antonsen

Farum 1993

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Qb6 6 a3

Not even interested in the Milner-Barry Gambit: 6 Bd3 cxd4 7 cxd4 Bd7 8 0-0?!

6...Nh6

If Black wants to prevent b2-b4 then 6...c4 should be played – see Game 73.

7 b4 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Be3

9 Bb2 is possible.

9...f6 (Diagram 12)**10 Bd3 Nxe3 11 fxe3**

This exchange is occasionally seen in the French. It looks as if it

ought to be good for Black, who has gained the bishop pair and doubled the white pawns. However, the f-file is now dangerously open and the pawn on e3 serves the useful function of bringing additional defence to the white e4-pawn. Who is most favoured by this transaction often revolves around whether Black can continue to undermine the position by getting rid of the white pawn at e5. This is the theme of the subsequent play here.

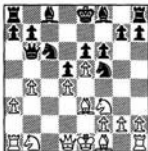


Diagram 12

Black attacks the centre

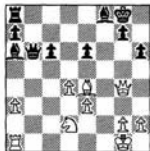


Diagram 13

Too many black weaknesses

11...fxe5 12 b5

White is fighting for e5.

12...e4 13 bxc6 Bd6 14 0-0 0-0 15 Ng5 h6 16 Rxf8+ Bxf8 17 Nxe4 dxe4 18 Bxe4 bxc6 19 Nd2 Ba6 20 Qg4 (Diagram 13)

The complications are at an end and White has emerged on top thanks to the numerous weaknesses in the black position.

20...Qb2 21 Rd1 Qxa3 22 Qxe6+ Kh8 23 Qg6 Kg8 24 Nf3 Bd6 25 Qe6+ Kh8 26 Nh4 Qxe3+ 27 Kh1 Be2 28 Ng6+ Kh7 29 Qf5 Kg8 30 Qe6+ Kh7 31 Ne7+ Kh8 32 Qg6 1-0

After 32...Qxe4 33 Qxe4 Bxd1 Black can wriggle but White eventually wins even more material, e.g. 34 Ng6+ Kh7 35 Ne5+ Kg8 36 Qxc6 Rd8 37 Qc4+ Kh7 38 Qd3+ Kg8 39 Qxd1 Bxe5 40 Qb3+ and wins.

Game 73

□ Grischuk ■ Korchnoi

Biel 2001

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Qb6 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 a3 c4 7 Nbd2 Na5 (Diagram 14)

8 g3

Another scheme of development is 8 Be2 Bd7 9 0-0.

8...Be7 9 h4 Bd7 10 Bh3 f5 11 exf6 gxf6 12 0-0 h5 13 Re1 Nh6 14 Nh2 0-0-0 15 Qxh5 Rdg8 16 Qe2 f5 (Diagram 15)

Starting Out: The French

Black has a clamp on the white queenside and useful open files on the opposite wing. All in all, good compensation for a pawn.



Diagram 14
Fighting for the b3-square



Diagram 15
Black has full compensation

17 Ndf3 Nb3 18 Bxb6 Rxb6

18...Nxa1 would be a bad mistake after 19 Bf4 with Qe5 coming.

19 Rad1 Bxb4 20 Nxb4 Rxb4

White has returned the pawn in the hope of making something out of his dark square control but he never really gets anywhere.

21 Bg2 Rh7 22 Nf3 Na5 23 Qd2 Qd6 24 Ne5 Ba4 25 Rb1 Nc6 26 Qf4 Kc7 27 Re2 Nxe5 28 Qxe5 Qxe5 29 Rxe5 Kd6 30 Rbe1 Rh6 31 R5e2 f4 ½-½

Game 74

□ Timman ■ Andersson

Sigeman & Co, Malmoe 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Nge7 6 Bd3 cxd4 7 cxd4 Nf5 8 Bc2

Alternatives here are:

a) 8 Bxf5 exf5 9 Nc3 Be6 10 Ne2 h6 doesn't promise an advantage to White – 11 h4 g6 12 Bd2 Qb6 13 Rb1 a5 14 Kf1 Be7 15 Kg1 Kd7 16 a3 Qa6 17 Be3 a4 was equal in Adams-Vaganian, Lucerne 1997.

b) 8 Be3 Be7 9 Nc3 Nxe3 10 fxe3 0-0 11 0-0 Bd7 12 a3 f5 13 exf6 Bxf6 14 Qc2 h6 15 Rad1 Rc8 and Black was very comfy in Jonkman-Glek, Vlissingen 1998.

8...Qb6 9 Bxf5 exf5 10 Nc3 Be6 11 0-0

After 11 Ne2 h6 12 h4 0-0-0 13 Kf1 Kb8 14 Kg1 Be7 15 Rb1 Black sacrificed a pawn to activate his bishop and gain interesting counterplay with 15...f4! 16 Nxf4 Bf5 17 Ra1 Be4 in Benjamin-Shaked, US Open 1998.

11...h6 (Diagram 16)



Diagram 16

Black is solid in the centre



Diagram 17

Now it's not as solid as it seems

12 Na4

A new move, exploiting Black's "extra" ...Qb6. Benjamin-Edelman, New York 1992, saw instead 12 h4 Be7 13 Ne2 0-0-0 14 Rb1 and Black did not get enough when he gambitted 14...g5 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 Bxg5 Bxg5 17 Nxg5 Rh5 18 f4 Rdh8 19 Nf3 Kb8 20 Kf2 and White consolidated his advantage.

12...Qb5 13 Ne1 Be7 14 Be3 Re8 15 Nd3 b6 16 Nc3 Qc4

Looks a little bit risky but after 16...Qa6 17 Nf4 the pawn on d5 is weak.

17 Rc1 g5!? 18 f4 g4

Black loses a piece after 18...Nxd4? 19 b3.

19 a4 Nb4?!

But now I do not see how White can get an advantage after 19...Nxd4?!, for example 20 Nb5 Nxb5 21 Rxc4 dxc4 22 axb5 Rd8 23 Qa4 Rxd3 24 Kf2 Rd7 with reasonable compensation for the queen.

20 Nf2 Qa6?!

Andersson might have tried 20...Na2!? 21 Nxa2 Qxa2 22 Rxc8+ Bxc8.

21 Nb5 Rxc1 22 Bxc1 Kd7? (Diagram 17)

The last mistake. 22...Qb7! was much stronger.

23 Nxg4!

The black queen is far away from the kingside, so it's logical for White to attack there.

23...fxg4 24 f5

With a winning initiative.

24...Rg8

Starting Out: The French

Or 24...h5 25 fxe6+ fxe6 26 Rf7 wins.

25 fxe6+ fxe6 26 Bd2!

26 Bxb6!? was also fun and worth a punt.

26...Nc6

On 26...h5 27 Bxb4 Bxb4 28 Qc2 is winning.

27 Bxb6 Qc8 28 Rf7 Rh8 29 Nd6 Qg8 30 Bg7 1-0

Now 30...Rh7 31 Qxg4 Nxd4 loses to 32 Rxe7+! Kxe7 33 Bf6+ Kf8 34 Qxd4.

Chapter Eleven

The Rubinstein Variation and Others

- The Rubinstein Variation
- The Exchange Variation
- The King's Indian Attack
- Illustrative Games

The Rubinstein Variation

The Rubinstein Variation opens **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3** (or **3 Nd2**) **3...dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7**.

This variation has much in common with the Burn variation of the Classical which runs **3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 dxe4 5 Nxe4**. However, the Rubinstein move order is more flexible for White as he hasn't committed his bishop to the g5-square. Therefore he has alternative schemes, including a quick g2-g3 to put pressure on the b7-square. On the other hand, by adopting the Rubinstein move order Black has avoided the Classical **4 e5** which, judging from recent games, is something to be pleased about!

In fact, one of the best things about the Rubinstein is its universality – you can play it against both **3 Nd2** and **3 Nc3**. Also there is relatively little theory to learn.



TIP: The Rubinstein is a good choice if you are in a solid mood and are facing a highly aggressive opponent.

Plans

With **4...Nd7** Black prepares to challenge White's excellently placed knight on e4 with **5...Ngf6**. Once the knight has been ousted or exchanged, Black will be ready to attack the white centre with **...c7-c5**. If he succeeds in dissolving the d4-pawn without incurring any weakness elsewhere or falling a long way behind in development, Black will have fully equalised. White for his part will try to prove that rather than freeing his game with **...c7-c5** Black is clearing the centre to his detriment as his opponent's pieces are better able to utilise the resulting open lines. White will try to saddle Black with a positional weakness somewhere, for example a doubled pawn on f6 or difficulties in developing his queen's bishop.

In an epic battle in Game 75, Kasparov tries a different method: he maintains a pawn on d4 with **c2-c3** and looks for an immediate attack. This proved good enough to bamboozle the surprised Ponomarev, but you can bet that theory soon began to draw its fangs. Instead of **8...Nd7?** the solid **8...a6!** was good enough. Game 76 is worth looking at if only for the marvellous trap that White sets at move eight.

The Fort Knox

Chess doesn't come much more solid than this! Without any more ado Black plays **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7** and then **5...Bc6**. The reasoning behind this is hard to argue with: Black often struggles for the whole game to find a decent diagonal for his queen's bishop, so why not put it on c6 at once? In combination with a knight on f6 the bishop either drives away or eliminates White's proud knight on e4. In such a quiet position Black can afford a slow but

strategically well motivated plan. The drawback to Black's bishop manoeuvre is that he is more or less compelled to give up the bishop for a knight and so grant White the bishop pair. However, Black remains very solid in his Caro-Kann like carapace of pawns after the bishop exchange and then ...c7-c6, etc. Note that as White has the two bishops Black shouldn't be so keen for the centre break with ...c7-c5 as he is in the Rubinstein – such a move becomes extremely double edged and has to be carefully considered.

In both Rubinstein games given here Black becomes too complacent inside his fortress with the result that he is both ground down (Game 77) and blown away (Game 78). The moral is clearly that no position, no matter how safe from attack by the opponent, can survive our own carelessness!



TIP: The Fort Knox is a good choice if you are in a very solid mood and are facing an extremely aggressive opponent.

The Exchange Variation

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5

When Mikhail Gurevich, the great French Defence expert, played a match against a computer some years ago the computer was instructed by its programmer to play in as 'Un-French' a manner as possible against 1...e6. The reasoning was that Gurevich was more likely to go wrong in unfamiliar territory. The Computer duly came up with the French Exchange. Indeed the position after 3...exd5 is more akin to that in a Queen's Pawn Opening. Black no longer has to worry about how he is going to develop his queen's bishop, and after 4 Nf3 he can play 4...Bg4 without even having to accept an isolated pawn in return for the privilege, as occurs in the Tarrasch 3 Nd2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 variation. Nor does the black king's knight find itself deprived of the f6-square by a pawn on e5. White's sole advantage is the extra tempo born of moving first. Yet for all this many French players don't like playing against the Exchange. I guess it is partly the 'Computer' factor above of being in unusual surroundings, but mainly it is because the positions reached are somewhat sterile. Indeed, Black often answers 4 Bd3 with 4...c5 willingly accepting an IQP to make it a more dynamic game. Note however that this is in response to the inferior position of the bishop at d3: much less appealing is 4 Nf3 c5?! when the bishop can be developed aggressively without loss of time with 5 Bb5+.

The computer's choice against Gurevich was also a shrewd psychological choice (not a characteristic normally associated with computer play), as the Russian GM had lost a heart breaking game as White against Nigel Short in the Exchange – have a look at Game 79. You will see that the black bishop really enjoyed its 'Un-French' freedom on g4!

The King's Indian Attack

In this line White avoids the main lines after 2 d4 with either 2 d3 or 2 Qe2. A structure is often reached similar to that in the Closed Sicilian.

Besides adding a lot of ideas to the French as Black, Alexander Morozevich has almost single-handedly transformed the King's Indian Attack into a dangerous attacking weapon. The Russian GM Kiriakov is one of the most difficult players to beat but he is wiped out in Game 80 by the supposedly innocuous 2 Qe2. Morozevich has shown that it pays for White to delay the development of his queen's knight rather than play the routine 3 Nd2. This worth of this idea is seen if Black adopts the following popular set up:

1 e4 e6 2 d3 d5 3 Qe2 Nf6 4 Nf3 c5 5 g3 Nc6 6 Bg2 Be7 7 0-0 b6 8 c3 Qc7 (Diagram 1)



Diagram 1

A typical King's Indian Attack

and here White has the option of 9 Na3!, planning either to embarrass the black queen with Nb5 or retreat back to c2 and support a b2-b4 advance to attack on the queenside. The knight would be far less effective on d2.

A Solid System Versus the King's Indian Attack

However, Black has a solid system against which Morozevich comes a cropper in Game 81. The pattern of black pieces is well worth remembering. On the queenside he plays ...c7-c5 and ...Nc6 and combines this with ...g7-g6 and a kingside fianchetto. And to avoid having his knight attacked by e4-e5 and shutting in the bishop Black develops his king's knight on e7. The upshot of all this is that Black exerts enormous pressure on the d4-square. This square is important because if White ever plans to gain space in the centre he needs to play

d3-d4, when the pawn comes into the killing zone of the black pieces. The pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal also makes a White pawn advance on the queenside problematical, and encourages Black to launch his own pawn storm against the target on c3.

Illustrative Games

Game 75

□ Kasparov ■ Ponomarev

Linares 2002

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Nf3 Ngf6 6 Nxf6+

6 Bd3 would transpose to the next game after 6...Be7 7 Qe2, though Black might prefer 6...Nxe4 7 Bxe4 Nf6 8 Bg5 Qd6!? 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 0-0 f5 as in Anand-Speelman, Linares 1991.

White can also play 6 Bg5 entering the Burn variation with 5...Nbd7 (Games 37 and 38).

6...Nxf6 7 c3

Certainly less popular than 7 Bd3.

7...c5 8 Ne5

Unusual. Garry hits upon a plan involving a sharp gambit.

8...Nd7 9 Bb5 Bd6 10 Qg4!

Very disruptive.

10...Kf8

Not what you want to do, but 10...0-0 loses the exchange to 11 Bxd7 Bxd7 12 Bh6.

11 0-0!?

Yet another Kasparov sacrifice. This gambit yields compensation in the form of Black's uncastled king and development lag. But it is still speculative.

11...Nxe5 12 dxe5 Bxe5 13 Bg5 Bf6

13...f6 14 Rad1 Qb6 15 Be3 yields real compensation too.

14 Rad1 Qc7 15 Qh4 Bxg5 16 Qxg5

Threatening mate.

16...f6 17 Qh5 g6 18 Qh6+ Kf7

Not 18...Qg7 because of 19 Rd8+ Kf7 20 Be8+! Rxe8 21 Qxg7+ Kxg7 22 Rxe8 winning. How to continue? Has White run out of steam?

19 Rd3!? a6 20 Rh3!?

No he has not. 20...axb5 is impossible because of 21 Qxh7+ Rxh7 22 Rxh7+ and 23 Rxc7.

20...Qe7 21 Bd3

Now attacking g6.

21...f5 22 g4 (Diagram 2)

Starting Out: The French



Diagram 2
Hack attack!



Diagram 3
Black's position finally crumbles

He keeps hacking away.

22...Qf6 23 Rd1 b5 24 Be2

Preventing Black from developing his bishop at b7 because of 25 Rd7+ winning it.

24...e5 25 Rhd3 Ra7 26 Rd6 Qg7 27 Qe3 Rc7 28 a4

Prising his way into Ponomarev's defences.

28...e4

28...bxa4 29 Bc4+ is dreadfully strong.

29 axb5 axb5 30 Bxb5 Qe5 31 Qg5

There are just too many white men swarming all over the black camp. Something will surely give.

31...Qe7 32 Qh6 Be6 33 Qf4 Bc8

White threatened 34 Rxe6! Kxe6 35 Bc4+ Kf6 36 Rd6+ Kg7 37 Re6 and 38 Qe5+ follows with a decisive penetration.

34 Qh6 Be6 35 gxf5 gxf5 36 Be2 (Diagram 3)

The final switch of direction.

36...Qf6 37 Bh5+ Ke7 38 Rxe6+! 1-0

Black resigned, as 38...Kxe6 loses to 39 Rd6+ and 38...Qxe6 to 39 Qg7+. An important win for Kasparov, teaching the teenage new World champion who's boss.

Game 76

□ Gross ■ Blatny

Czech Championship 1998

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Be7 5 Nf3 Nf6 6 Bd3 Nbd7 7 Qe2 Nxe4 8 Bxe4 (Diagram 4)



Diagram 4

Careful. There may be a trick!



Diagram 5

Black has equalised

8...a6!?

There are tactics even in quiet positions. Many players have fallen for the trick 8...Nf6? 9 Bxb7! and White wins a pawn after 9...Bxb7 10 Qb5+ and 11 Qxb7. Black's move 8...a6 prevents this.

8...c5! is more common when 9 Be3 0-0 10 0-0-0 Nf6 11 Bd3 Qc7 12 dxc5 Bxc5 13 Bg5 Be7 14 Kb1 left White more active in Keres-Pavey, USSR-USA 1954.

9 0-0 Nf6 10 Bd3

Of course 10 Bxb7 doesn't work now.

10...b6 11 Rd1

It's always a question where to put the rooks and in this case it seemed more suitable to place this rook on e1 and the second one on d1.

11...Bb7 12 c4 c5 13 dxc5 Bxc5 14 Bg5 Qe7

14...Qc7! was another development.

15 Nd2! Rd8 16 Be4 h6?!

It was probably more accurate here to have played 16...0-0 17 Bxf6 gxf6 18 Bxb7 Qxb7 19 Ne4 Be7 (19...Bd4? 20 Rxd4! Rxd4 21 Nxf6+ Kg7 22 Qe5) 20 Qf3 Kh8 when after 21 b4 White has at best only a slight pull.

17 Bxf6 gxf6 18 Qf3?!

A serious inaccuracy letting Black equalise. After 18 Bxb7! Qxb7 19 Nf3 Be7 20 Qe3 Kf8 21 Rxd8+ Bxd8 22 Rd1 Be7 23 Qf4 White's advantage is quite significant.

18...Bxe4 19 Nxe4 Bd4

It's now more or less equal.

20 Rd2 f5 21 Ng3 0-0 (Diagram 5)

Starting Out: The French

22 Rad1 Bc5 23 Qf4 Rxd2 24 Rxd2 Kh7 25 h3 Rd8 26 Nf1 a5 27 b3 Rxd2 28 Qxd2 Qf6 29 a4?!

Unnecessarily creating a weakness for himself at b3.

29...Qe5 30 g3 Qe4 31 Kh2?

Simply blundering a pawn! After the correct 31 Ne3 Kg6 32 Qe2 e5 33 g4! White still has good drawing chances.

31...Qb1

Winning.

32 Qe2 Qxb3 33 g4 Qxa4

33...fxg4!? 34 hxg4 Qxa4 35 Qe4+ Kg8 would also have done the trick.

34 gxf5 Qd7 35 fxe6 Qxe6

The rest is easy: White simply can't stop the a-pawn.

36 Qd3+ Qg6 37 Qf3 a4 38 Ng3 a3 39 Ne4 Bd4!?

39...a2 40 Nf6+ Kg7 41 Ne8+ Kf8 42 Qa8 a1Q was another way to finish him off.

40 h4 a2 0-1

Game 77

□ Adams ■ Rozentalis

Belgrade 1999

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7

The Fort Knox variation, so called as Black plans to erect an unambitious but super strong structure.

5 Nf3 Bc6 6 Bd3

The adventurous 6 Neg5!? is seen in the next game.

6...Nd7 7 c3 Ngf6 8 Nxf6+ Nxf6

8...gxf6!? 9 Bf4 Bd6 10 Bxd6 cxd6 11 Qe2 Qa5 12 0-0 Qh5 13 Be4 Bxe4 14 Qxe4 d5 led to equality in Schaefer-Dobosz, Cuxhaven 1993.

9 0-0

9 Qe2 Bxf3 – the swap of the Fort Knox variation – 10 Qxf3 Qd5 11 Qxd5 Nxd5 12 0-0 0-0-0 13 Rd1 Be7 14 Bd2 was then agreed drawn in Ivanov-McDonald, Maidstone 1994.

9 Ne5!? was well worth a go.

9...Bxf3

9...Bd6!? 10 Qe2 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 c6 12 Bg5 Be7 13 Rfe1 Nd5 14 Bxe7 Nxe7 was equal in Van de Velden-Beals, Soest 1996.

10 Qxf3 Qd5 11 Qe2 Be7

11...Qh5!? practically forces White to exchange the queens, and on 12 Qxh5 (after 12 Qc2?! Bd6 13 h3 0-0-0 Black is the one who fights for the opening advantage) 12...Nxb5 13 g3 Nf6 14 a4 Bd6 15 a5 any white advantage is symbolic.

12 Re1 0-0 13 Bf4 c6 14 a4 (Diagram 6)



Diagram 6

Black is solid but passive



Diagram 7

White intends a later Bxg6

This type of position is quite well-known in modern chess: it arises from different variations of the Caro-Kann defence and out of some variations of the French. The plans of the both sides are clear: White, who has some advantage in space and the pair of bishops, will try to attack the black king, while Black, who has a rock solid but passive position, will try to find his chances in a counter-attack or with some break in the centre.

14...Rfd8 15 Bc7!? Re8

15...Rd7?! is met by 16 Be5 and the black queen is in danger.

16 Be5 a5!? 17 Qc2 g6 18 Rad1 Qd8 19 Qb3 Qd7 20 h4!? Ng4?!

This logical move proves to be a serious inaccuracy: the knight plays a very important part in the defence of the kingside and without it White's attack pretty soon becomes decisive. It was better to defend with 20...h5 21 g3 Ng4 22 Bf4 Bf8 23 Be4 Bg7 24 Bf3 Nf6 with a solid position.

21 h5 Nxe5 22 dxe5

Opposite coloured bishops reduce winning chances in endings, but often enhance them in attacks.

22...Qc8

Sad necessity. On 22...Qc7? Adams could break in with 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 Bxg6! fxg6 25 Qxe6+ Kh8 26 Rd7 Qc8 27 Red1.

23 Re3 Bg5 24 Rh3 Qc7 25 Re1 Rad8

25...Bf4 26 Qc2 Bxe5 does not work because of 27 hxg6 hxg6 28 Bxg6! fxg6 29 Qxg6+ Qg7 30 Qh5 and the attack is too strong, e.g. 30...Bc7 (30...Bf4 31 Rh4 wins) 31 Rh4 (31 Re4 Rad8!) 31...Kf8 32 Rg4 Qf6 33 Rg6 and White is winning.

26 Qc2 (Diagram 7)

Threatening to take on g6.

Starting Out: The French

26...Re7 27 Re4!

Bringing the last piece to the attack.

27...Red7 28 Rg3 Bh6 29 hxg6 hxg6 30 Rh4! Bg7 31 f4!

White's play is very simple, logical and at the same time lethal! Now the situation in the centre is stable and he may prepare for the decisive blow.

31...Kf8 32 Kh2! Rd5 33 Rh7 R8d7 34 Bxg6!

All the white pieces take the ideal positions and it's time to decide the game with this sacrifice.

34...fxg6 35 Qxg6 Rf7 36 Qh5! Bxe5

36...Rxf4 37 Rg7 Qxg7 38 Rg7 Kxg7 39 Qg5+ or 36...Rd2 37 Rhxg7! Rg7 38 Qh8+ both win.

37 Qh6+ Rg7

37...Ke7 changes nothing: 38 Rxf7+ Kxf7 39 Qh7+ Kf6 40 fxe5+ Qxe5 41 Qg7+ Kf5 42 Qg6+ Kf4 43 Qg4 mate.

38 fxe5 Qxe5 39 Qxg7+ 1-0

Typically accurate play from Adams.

Game 78

□ Kotronias ■ Anastasian

Yerevan 2000

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7 5 Nf3 Bc6 6 Neg5!? Be7

6...Nd7 7 Nxf7?! Kxf7 8 Ng5+ Ke8 9 Bc4 Bxg2 10 Rg1 Bd5 11 Nxe6 gave a tremendous attack for the piece in Hector-Lyrberg, Geneva 1995.

7 Bd3 Nd7

Others:

a) 7...h6? was really asking for it and in Hübner-Komenda, Hesse-liga 1994, White won after 8 Nxf7! Kxf7 9 Ne5+ Kf8 10 Ng6+ Ke8 11 Nxh8.

b) White also had a strong attack with another kind of sacrifice after 7...Nf6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Nxe6 Bxf3 10 Nxc7+ Kf8 11 gxf3 Kxg7 12 Bd2 Nc6 13 c3 Qd7, Kartmann-Czech, Bruchkoebel 1993. The g-file is draughty.

8 Qe2 Ngf6?! (Diagram 8)

It's amazing that so strong a player as Anastasian didn't know that this variation leads to an almost lost position right after the opening. 8...Bxf3 was necessary.

9 Nxf7! Bb4+?!

If 9...Kxf7 10 Ng5+ Ke8 11 Nxe6 Qc8 12 Nxc7+ Kf8 13 Ne6+ Black is getting hammered. Or if 9...Bxf3 10 Qxe6 Bxg2 11 Rg1 Bd5 12 Nxd8 Kxd8 13 Qh3 Re8 14 Be3 g6 15 0-0-0 and White won in Namyslo-Rabl, Wuerttemberg 1997.



Diagram 8

What is the knight doing on g5?



Diagram 9

White is already winning

10 c3 Bxf3 11 Qxe6+! Qe7 12 Qxe7+ Bxe7

12...Kxe7 13 Nxh8 Bxg2 14 Rg1 and wins.

13 Nxh8 (Diagram 9)

White already has a rook and two pawns for the pair of minor pieces and if he wins one more he will have the material advantage. In the game Black experiences enormous problems in rounding up the 'dead' knight at h8.

13...Bd5 14 0-0 Bg8

On 14...0-0-0 15 Re1 Bf8 16 c4 Bg8 17 Bg5 g6 18 Bxg6 hxg6 19 Nxg6 White is winning.

15 Re1 Kf8 16 h3 Bd6 17 Bg5 Nb6

On 17...c5 18 dxc5 Nxc5 19 Bc2 Rd8 20 Rad1 Bxa2 21 Bxh7! wins.

18 b3 Nbd5 19 c4 Nb4 20 Bf5 Rd8 21 d5 a5 22 Re3!

Preparing the attack against black king. White's pawns restrict all the black pieces and in a couple of moves he creates strong threats on the kingside.

22...b6 23 g4 Na6 24 Rf3! Nc5 25 Bd2! 1-0

Game 79

□ M.Gurevich ■ Short

Manila Interzonal 1990

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5

Mikhail Gurevich had led the Interzonal all the way and now needed only to draw this game to qualify for the Candidates matches. Short needed a win.

3...exd5 4 Nf3 Bg4

An active continuation. More usually Black is happy to equalise with 4...Bd6 or 4...Nf6.

Starting Out: The French

5 h3 Bh5 6 Be2

6 Qe2+ Qe7 7 Be3 is more testing, planning Nc3 and 0-0-0.

6...Bd6

6...Nc6 7 0-0 Bd6 8 Nc3 Nge7 9 Be3 f6 10 Qd2 Bf7 11 Rae1 was Marshall-Capablanca, St. Petersburg 1914.

7 Ne5 (Diagram 10)



Diagram 10
White plays for a draw



Diagram 11
Black breaks in on the queenside

He exchanges as many pieces as possible.

7...Bxe2 8 Qxe2 Ne7 9 0-0

9 Qb5+?! does not win a pawn after 9...Nbc6 as d4 is attacked.

9...0-0 10 Bf4 Re8 11 Qg4 Bxe5 12 Bxe5 Ng6

With simple moves Short has brought about full equality. But he had to win...

13 Bg3 Nd7 14 Nd2 Nf6 15 Qf3 c6 16 Qb3 Qb6!? 17 Qxb6

Queens off. He must have been over the moon. But Short keeps trundling.

17...axb6 18 a3?!

18 a4! would have stopped any of the subsequent queenside shenanigans.

18...Ne4

18...Re2 19 Rfd1 Ne4 20 Nxe4 dxe4 21 Rac1 led to nothing. 18...Nh5 19 Bc7 Nhf4 20 Bxb6 Ra6 21 Bc5 b6 22 Bd6 Ne2+ 23 Kh1 Nxd4 24 c4!? with balanced chances was proposed as an odd sideline.

19 Nxe4 Rxe4 20 Rfd1 b5 21 Kf1 f6 22 f3 Re6 23 Re1 Kf7 24 Rxe6

Another exchange, but Short has not run out of steam yet.

24...Kxe6 25 Re1+

25 Be1!?, off to b4, was another set up.

25...Kd7 26 Ke2

26 Bh2!, meeting 26...h5 with 27 g4, might have led to a more desirable arrangement of the kingside pawns.

26...h5

Probing.

27 Kd3 h4 28 Bh2 Ne7 29 Bf4 Nf5 30 Bd2 b6 31 Re2

If 31 Bb4 Rc8 (intending ...c5) 32 Re2 c5 33 Bc3 Ra8.

31...c5 32 Be3 b4! (Diagram 11)**33 axb4 c4+ 34 Kc3 Nd6 35 Re1 Ra4 36 Kd2 Rxb4 37 Ra1 Rxb2 38 Ra7+ Ke6 39 Rxc7 b5 40 Bf2 b4 41 Kc1 c3 42 Bxb4 Nf5 0-1**

After 43 Rh7 Ne3 is terminal.

'Short played this right down the line!' – M.Chandler. Nigel regards this as his most memorable game.

Game 80

□ Morozevich ■ Kirilakov

St Petersburg 1997

1 e4 e6 2 Qe2 (Diagram 12)

Diagram 12
An unusual line for White



Diagram 13
White goes for the king

Chigorin's move, but not too critical an idea. If you have read somewhere about not developing the queen too early and not putting it in front of your king's bishop, then we may have read the same books.

2...d5

The Sicilianesque 2...c5 is the next game.

3 d3 dxe4!?

3...Ne7!?

4 dxe4 b6 5 Nf3 Bc5

5...Ba6!/? looks more logical, for example 6 c4 c5 7 Nc3 Ne7 8 Bf4 Ng6

Starting Out: The French

9 Rd1 Qc8 10 Bc1 Be7 11 h4 Nc6 with equality in Bakhtadze-Rabinovich, Tallinn 1997.

6 c3 a5

Kiriakov is determined to gain a tempo by developing his bishop on the white queen from a6. He also secures the position of his c5 bishop, but it does not look right there to me, and he soon shifts it.

7 Qc2 Nf6 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bh4 Be7 10 Na3!?

A cute move, but the normal 10 Nbd2 was good too. Moro lures the black king's bishop off to smash up the queenside pawns. But that costs an important potential defender.

10...Nfd7 11 Bg3 Bxa3

On 11...0-0 12 Nb5 Na6 13 0-0-0 White has a big advantage in space.

12 bxa3 Ba6 13 c4 Bb7 14 Rd1 Qc8 15 Be2 0-0 16 0-0 Nc6

Black's game looks comfy enough.

17 e5 Ne7 18 Nd4 Nc5 19 f3 Nf5 20 Bf2 Nxd4?!

It was stronger to play 20...Rd8! and Black has enough compensation for a pawn after 21 Nxf5 exf5 22 Rxd8+ Qxd8 23 Bxc5 bxc5 24 Qxf5 Qd2.

21 Rxd4!

A new attacker makes his appearance.

21...Rd8 22 Rg4 (Diagram 13)

22...Rd7

It would have been wiser to have supplied himself with another defender by 22...Nd7! when he is holding out after, e.g. 23 f4 Nf8 24 Bh4 Rd7 25 f5 exf5 26 Qxf5 Qe8.

23 Bh4 Kh8 24 Qc1 Qf8

On 24...Kh7 White may immediately do the business with 25 Bf6! gxf6 26 exf6 Qf8 27 Qf4 Rad8 28 Rg7+ Qxg7 29 fxf7 Kxg7 30 h4, etc.

25 Qe3 Na4

Hoping to trade queens, but now the knight's even further away from the scene of the action.

26 Kh1 Qc5 27 Qf4 Rg8 28 Rd1 Nc3

What else?

29 Rxd7

Four attackers now.

29...Nxe2 30 Qxh6+! 1-0

30...gxh6 31 Bf6+ Kh7 32 Rxf7+ Rg7 33 Rfxg7+ Kh8 34 Rg8+ mates.

Game 81

□ Morozevich ■ Dolmatov

Russian Cup 1997

1 e4 e6 2 Qe2 c5 3 g3 Nc6 4 c3 g6 5 Bg2 Bg7 6 f4 Nge7 7 Nf3 d6 8

0-0 0-0 9 d3 (Diagram 14)



Diagram 14

From the French to the Sicilian



Diagram 15

A critical moment in the game

Play has veered back into something like a Closed Sicilian.

9 Na3 Rb8 10 Kh1 d5 11 e5 Qa5 12 Nc2 b5 13 a3 d4? 14 cxd4 cxd4 15 Nfxd4 Nxd4 16 Nxd4 Bb7 17 b4 Bxg2+ 18 Qxg2 Qb6 led to chances for both sides in Fedorov-Zakharevich, Minsk 1997.

9...b5 10 Be3

On 10 a3 Black would keep on trundling with 10...a5.

10...b4

Dolmatov has already solved all openings problems.

11 Rc1

A new move, but neither did 11 Qc2 cause Black any problems after 11...Qa5 12 Nfd2 bxc3 13 bxc3 Ba6 14 Rd1 Rfc8 15 Ne4 Qc7 16 Bf2 d5 in Huseinov-Budnikov, Azov 1991.

11...bxc3 12 bxc3 Ba6 13 Nbd2 Rb8 14 Bf1 Qd7

He might have considered the line 14...f5! 15 e5 dxe5 16 fxe5 Qc7 17 Bxc5 Nxe5.

15 Nb3 e5 16 f5!

A correct and brave decision. If White plays passively, Dolmatov will get the initiative on both sides.

16...gxf5 17 Bh3 Qe8

Accurate defence. On 17...Qc7 18 exf5 e4 19 Ng5 Bxd3 20 Qh5 h6 21 f6 White develops a mighty initiative, e.g. 21...hxg5 22 Bxg5!, or 21...Bxf6 22 Ne6! Be2 23 Qxh6 fxe6 24 Bxe6+ Rf7 25 Qxf6 winning.

18 exf5 e4 19 Ng5 (Diagram 15) 19...Nd5!

19...exd3? would have been very dangerous, viz 20 Qh5 h6 21 Ne4 (21 f6 Nd5 holds out) 21...Nd5 22 Bxh6 Qxe4 (or 22...Bxh6 23 Qxh6 Qxe4 24 Re1) 23 Re1! Qe4 24 Bxg7 Kxg7 25 Qg5+ Kh8 26 f6 Nxf6 27 Qxf6+

Starting Out: The French

Kg8 28 Qg5+ Kh8 29 Qh6+ Kg8 30 Bf5 and White is winning. Instead Sergei Dolmatov gives a pawn for active play.

20 Nxe4

Not **20 Qh5?** as **20...Nf6** seals everything up in Black's favour.

20...Qxe4! 21 dxe4 Bxe2 22 exd5 Ne5 23 Bg2

23 Kf2 Bc4, or **23 Bf1 Bg4** or **23 Bf4 Rfe8** are all nice continuations for Black.

23...Rfe8 24 Bf4 Rb6! 25 Bg5 h6 26 Bh4 Nd7 27 h3 h5 28 Bf1?

A mistake in time trouble, but any case Black had more than enough compensation for the pawn.

28...Bxf1 29 Kxf1 Re5 30 Bd8

Or **30 g4 hxg4 31 hxg4 Re4**.

30...Rxf5+ 31 Kg2 Rb7 32 Rc2!? Nf6

Not falling into the trap. After **32...Rxd5?** the situation would be changed completely: **33 Na5! Rb5 34 a4 Rb4 35 Nc6 Re4?** (**35...Rd3**) **36 Ne7+** etc.

33 Na5?

White's last chance was **33 Bxf6 Bxf6 34 Rf1** and he is only slightly worse.

33...Nxd5!

White's pawns fall like leaves, and the final part of the game doesn't deserve any comment.

34 Re1 Rd7 35 Re8+ Kh7 36 Nc4 Nxc3 37 Ba5 Nb5 38 Rd2 Nd4 39 Bc3 d5 40 Ne3 Re5 41 Rxe5 Bxe5 42 Bxd4 Bxd4 43 Nf5 Bc3 44 Rd1 d4 45 Kf3 d3 46 Ne3 Kg6 47 Nc4 Kf5 48 Rc1 Bb4 49 a3 d2 50 Rd1 Bc3 51 Ne3+ Ke5 52 Ke2 Ke4 53 Rb1 Rd3 54 Nd1 Rxc3 55 Rb7 Rg2+ 56 Kf1 Rh2 57 Kg1 Re2 58 Nxc3+ Kd3 59 Kf1 Re1+ 0-1

Index of Variations

Winawer Variation

- 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5**
 4 Nge2 50; 4 Bd3 50; 4 Bd2 50
4...c5
 4...Ne7 5 Nf3 49
5 a3 Bxc3+
 5...Ba5 6 b4 cxd4
 7 Qg4 32; 7 Nb5 32
6 bxc3 Ne7
 6...Qc7 25; 6...Qa5 38
7 Qg4
 7 a4 33
 7 Nf3
 7...b6
 7...Qc7
 8 h4 34; 8 Bb5+ Bd7 9 Bd3 Ba4 28
7...Qc7
 7...0-0 20; 7...Kf8 23
8 Qxg7 12

Classical Variation

- 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5**
 4 e5 Nfd7
 5 Nce2 65
 5 f4 c5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Be3
 7...cxd4 65; 7...Qb6 69

Starting Out: The French**4...dxe4**

4...Bb4 5 e5 h6 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Ne4 91

4...Be7 5 e5 Nfd7

6 Bxe7 89; 6 h4 90

5 Nxe4 Be7

5...Nbd7 76

6 Bxf6 Bxf6 75

6...gxf6 76

Tarrasch Variation

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6

3...Be7 135

3...a6 135

3...Nc6 136

3...c5

4 Ngf3 133

4 exd5

4...Qxd5 121; 4...exd5 122

4 e5 Nfd7 5 Bd3

5 f4 110

5 Ngf3 c5

6 c3 114; 6 c4 118

5...c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ne2 cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 Nxf6 10 0-0 Bd6 11 Nf3 109**Advance Variation**

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7

5...Qb6 6 a3 152; 5...Nge7 154

6 Be2

6 Bd3 144; 6 a3 151

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10 h4 149

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