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Key to symbols used

+ White is slightly better
+- Black is slightly better
++ White is better
++ Black is better
+- White has a decisive advantage
-+ Black has a decisive advantage
= equality
+- with compensation
-+ with counterplay
# unclear
\rightarrow with an attack
\uparrow with an initiative

? a weak move
?? a blunder
! a good move
!! an excellent move
!? a move worth considering
?! a move of doubtful value
# mate
N novelty
For the last two years of my active career as a chess player my openings were decided in Skype conversations with Nikos – if I was not simply following the files he had sent. We studied the Tarrasch Defence extensively together and I had a fantastic plus five score until we published our book on it (*Grandmaster Repertoire 10 – The Tarrasch Defence*). At the 2011 Danish Championship I followed his recommendations in all the games and had about 40 minutes more on the clock on average when we guessed the right variations. I also had an advantage in almost all of the games.

At the Istanbul Olympiad where Nikos was working for the Danish team as a second we spent a lot of time looking at the French Defence together and discovered a lot of interesting ideas. It was quite natural that we would carry this work forward to a second collaboration.

The division of labour in this book has been quite similar to how we worked when we were player and second. Nikos sent me his drafts and ideas and I proofed them to the best of my ability. In the process I managed to make some theoretical contributions; especially the 12...h6?!-apparently-not-a-novelty on page 210, which seemed crucial to keep this key line alive. This was the result of iron determination after I had rejected all of Nikos’s other suggestions as being dubious-looking.

In the end 95% of the material in this book comes from Nikos. The same was the case with our previous book. At the same time I take 100% responsibility for the content. The direction of the material is mine, the evaluations of many key positions are mine and the verification of the lines is mine as well. We have worked as a team on this book and combined our strengths in the most effective way.

You will find that although this book has two authors, we have decided to let the book have one voice: Nikos’s. So wherever it says “I”, imagine a slight Greek accent, but know that the grandmaster is nodding in approval in the background.

I do not think that Nikos needed a co-author on this project; nor do I think I could have written this book on my own. Thus I hope the reader will divide praise and criticism fairly; all praise to Nikos and all criticism to me.

Jacob Aagaard
Glasgow, October 2013
In my 11 years of studying and collecting material on the French Defence, I have used countless sources to enrich my files. For many years, I had the bad habit (until recently!) not to reference the relevant sources in my notes, but in my defence the idea that I would write a book on the French Defence never crossed my mind! So I am sure the list below, though long, is incomplete. The sources listed are the main ones I re-checked during the process of writing this book. I feel lucky that I have in my library these books, articles, DVDs, databases and so on, and I’d like to thank the authors of each of them for broadening my horizons and help me to better understand chess and in particular the French Defence.

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Middlegame material from:

http://trainers.fide.com/surveys.html
Working on this project we set ourselves some immediate limitations and challenges. First of all we were aware that this book was likely to be one of the last in what seems like an avalanche of books on the French Defence published in the last few years, with books by Vitiugov, Watson, Moskalenko, Antic & Maksimovic and Emanuel Berg. Nikos is the chief researcher and he analysed everything he could get his hands on. If for some reason we have missed something important, please blame him! But at the same time, if we have improved on these other projects, know that he is responsible as well.

The first draft of this book was close to 700 pages, as we had checked virtually every possibility in every line, but we eventually managed to whittle the project down to the present version. For example, we had two perfectly playable lines against the Advance Variation, 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 □c6 5.□f3, but ended up relying on the Euwe System with 5...□d7, as found on page 29. We were satisfied with Black’s chances after 5...□b6 as well, but eventually we preferred the more flexible bishop development.

Curiously, the response we found most challenging actually transposes to the 5...□b6 line. After 6.□d3 □xd4 7.cxd4 □b6 8.0-0 □xd4 White can try to pose problems with 9.□bd2!
This position can be found on page 67. Throughout the book we have endeavoured to choose lines that rest on a strong positional foundation with an underlying sense of logic. In the present case, Black is seeking to keep the queenside closed while preparing to open the kingside with ...g5.

The dreaded Exchange Variation occurs after 3.exd5 exd5. We have covered this from two perspectives, the first catering for those who are content with equal play in a near-symmetrical position, and the second for those who are terrified at the prospect of a dull draw (“Oh NO!”). In the latter case we suggest that Black goes for: 4.d3 f6 5.d3 c5!

Although the first 138 pages of this book deals with the Advance and Exchange variations, the majority of games in the French see White develop the queen’s knight on move 3.

There are those who aspire to a slight positional advantage with 3.d2, which is known as the Tarrasch Variation. The most incurable repeat offenders of this line are Adams and Tiviakov, who have won game after game with it, but recently young players like Jones, Karjakin and Giri have also taken the medicine prescribed by Dr Tarrasch against the French Fever.

Until recently, Black players were trying anything and everything here, believing that equality was relatively easy to achieve. Having helped John Shaw with the analysis for his forthcoming *Playing 1.e4* books, we no longer share this opinion. Actually we felt that the task of solving Black’s problems was just as great in this line as anywhere else.

After some initial research, we decided to focus on the classical main line with 3...c5. Over the years quite a number of variations have been popular against this line (see Chapters 8-10) but the principal theoretical battleground has remained 4.exd5 cxd5 5.gf3 cxd4 6.c4 d6 7.0-0 f6 8.b3 d6 9.bxd4 d4 10.cxd4

At the moment 10...e7 is quite popular, having been played by Kamsky, Giri and others, but our analysis did not arm us with sufficient confidence to recommend it.

Extensive analysis convinced us that 10...a6! was the only sensible choice (see Chapter 11). This is the traditional main line, though recently White has been scoring well with the sharp 11.e1 c7 12.e2!, aiming to exploit his lead in development.
Black has been savaged brutally a few times here. White usually continues with $\text{g}5$ followed by a strong attack on the kingside. For this reason we came up with the weird-looking $12...\text{h}6!$ as Black’s main move. After analysing it ourselves, we noticed that a correspondence player had used the same move to win a nice game. Although we can no longer claim Black’s 12th move as our novelty, we consider it the most important theoretical branch of the Tarrasch at present.

Black’s biggest worry after $12...\text{h}6!$ is the prospect of a sacrifice on e6, but at the moment this is not possible because a subsequent $...\text{e}7!$ will force an exchange of queens. White can prepare the sacrifice with $13.\text{g}3?!$, but analysis on page 216 suggests that Black has little to fear. We do, however, advise the reader to practise playing this position in training games with friends, computers or other monsters, to minimize the risk of a costly opening slip in a competitive game.

Since the King of Clubs was in nursery, the move played by hairy-chested men and bloodthirsty women has been $3.\text{c}3$. The advantages of this move over the Tarrasch Variation are that the knight exerts a greater influence over the central squares, thus discouraging a quick $...\text{c}5$, and that the $\text{c}1$-bishop remains unobstructed. The downside is that the centre is not so easily reinforced by $\text{c}2-\text{c}3$.

Black now has a significant choice. The most popular response is $3...\text{b}4$, the Winawer Variation. Since we knew that our friend Emanuel Berg would be writing an extensive two-volume work on this subject, we decided to focus exclusively on $3...\text{f}6$. This is the second most popular move, but it is by no means second rate, being the preferred choice of Alexander Morozevich, the strongest player in the world who consistently employs the French, as well as some top Chinese GMs.

$4.\text{e}5 \text{f}d7$ introduces the Steinitz Variation and the big tabiya occurs after: $5.\text{f}4 \text{c}5 6.\text{f}3 \text{c}6 7.\text{e}3$

Here there are several branches, for example $7...\text{e}7!$ and $7...\text{cxd}4 8.\text{d}x\text{d}4 \text{b}6!$, while $7...\text{cxd}4 8.\text{d}x\text{d}4 \text{c}5 9.\text{d}2 0-0 10.0-0-0 \text{a}6$ has been a main line forever. We only scratch the surface of those lines (in Chapter 14), choosing instead to focus on $7...\text{a}6! 8.\text{d}2 \text{b}5$. Here White has two main tries. $9.\text{d}x\text{c}5$ (Chapter 15) and $9.\text{a}3!$ (Chapter 16). Both of these variations are likely to remain popular for many years to come, but we believe in Black’s chances.
We were slightly more afraid of 4.\textit{\textbf{g5}}, and therefore decided to cover two major responses. For a long time Black was thought to be struggling in the Classical Variation after: 4...\textit{\textbf{e7}} 5.e5 \textit{\textbf{fd7}}

At this point aggressive players may venture the Alekhine Gambit with 6.h4?!. We recommend declining it with either 6...\textit{\textbf{c6?!}} (Chapter 17) or 6...\textit{\textbf{c5!}} (Chapter 18), with good chances for Black in either case.

More dangerous theoretically is 6.xe7 Wxe7 7.f4, when the main lines involving 7...0–0 and ...c5 often result in a nagging edge for White.

Instead we have focused on the modern 7.a6! 8.f3 d6! with the idea of ...\textbf{d7} and perhaps ...b5 (see Game 49 on page 345). Black has a lot of interesting resources, with a certain amount of surprise value included as a bonus.

Against 4.\textit{\textbf{g5}}, the perennial favourite amongst adventurous French players is the McCutcheon Variation: 4...\textit{\textbf{b4}} 5.e5 h6

The board is already releasing smoke, and White faces a pivotal choice. Chapter 21 covers White’s sidelines on moves 5 and 6; none of them are theoretically dangerous, but we still need to be prepared. We have some affection for both 6.\textit{\textbf{c1}} and 6.\textit{\textbf{e3}} (Chapter 22) and a lot of respect for the most popular 6.\textit{\textbf{d2}} (Chapter 23). To venture the McCutcheon in tournament praxis demands thorough preparation and good positional understanding, but the rewards justify the effort.

Finally, in Chapters 24 and 25 you will find various sidelines that are popular from time to time. Failing to play 2.d4 looks eccentric, but it pays to be prepared against the potentially dangerous King’s Indian Attack and various second-move oddities.

All in all, we think we have achieved our aim of presenting a fighting repertoire with a minimum of drawish positions and perpetual checks. We hope you will win many games with it and never ever lose!
Chapter 1

The Advance Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5

A) 4.dxc5
B) 4.f4
C) 4.g4
D) 4.f3
   D1) 4...c6!?
   D2) 4...cxd4!?  
      D21) 5.xd4?!  
      D22) 5.xd4 
      D23) 5.d3

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On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

**Diagram Preview**

Find a strong plan for White.  
(page 20)  
Find a good plan for Black.  
(page 23)

What is the most accurate move?  
(page 15)

Should Black capture the e5-pawn?  
(page 21)

How should Black defend?  
(page 25)

Where should the g8-knight go?  
(page 18)

How should White proceed?  
(page 22)

Find the best set-up for Black.  
(page 26)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

The Advance Variation contains important ideas that are applicable to other lines as well. Moreover, this variation can be easily broken down into its strategic and positional elements, and can thus be explained and taught in a straightforward manner. Maybe in grandmaster practice the Advance Variation will never again become as popular as it was 10-15 years ago, but at club level 3.e5 remains a frequent choice, perhaps helped by being Yusupov's recommendation for White in *Boost Your Chess 2* (Chapter 4).

3...c5

First I am going to examine some deviations from the main lines. I don’t intend to go in for blanket coverage of these lines, as this is rather impractical. You will face these deviations rarely, and you might well forget long lines of theory. The important thing is to learn some sound ideas to counter these lines – these ideas should stick in your memory. A positive feature is that these deviations will teach us a few things about general French strategy, so the reader is advised not to rush through this section too quickly.

The move 4.Łf3 was proposed a few years ago in some video lectures on chess.com by GM Roman Dzindzichashvili, and from the various 4th move deviations, it is the only one that can be considered somewhat dangerous. It is important to have some idea how to play against it in order to avoid potential headaches. I shall cover A) 4.dxc5, B) 4.f4 and C) 4.Łg4, before turning to D) 4.Łf3.

A) 4.dxc5

This move has only one trap that we need to remember.

4...Łc6!

4...Łxc5?! is met by 5.Łg4, which causes some discomfort, although it may still be playable for Black. Psakhis suggests that Black is okay after 5...Łf8. Houdini has a different opinion though, giving White an edge after the king move, and instead proposing 5...Łe7 followed by ...Łg6, whether the pawn is taken or not.

5.Łf3 Łxc5 6.Łd3

White’s idea is that he can place the bishop on this wonderful square, without worrying that his d4-pawn is going to fall – as there is no d4-pawn anymore!

6...Łf6!

This is the typical reaction when White plays dxc5 and Łd3.
Playing to attack the e5-pawn with ...\(\text{c}6\) ge7 and ...\(\text{c}6\) g6 is not as simple and strong as the text move.

7.\(\text{c}2\)

It seems that White has no better move than this. After 7.0–0? fxe5 8.b5, Black has more than one good response.

a) 8...\(\text{c}6\)!? 9.xe5 0–0!

The position is highly promising for Black. A recent game continued:

10.d3

After 10.xc6 bxc6 11.xxc6? \(\text{b}8\), Black's advantage is already decisive, with threats such as ...\(\text{a}6\) and ...\(\text{e}4\). The combined attack on the f2-square from bishop, knight and rook is too much for White to handle. A sample line is: 12.a4 \(\text{a}6\) 13.e1 \(\text{x}f2\)†! 14.xf2 \(\text{g}4\)† 15.g3 \(\text{d}6\)† 16.xg4 \(\text{xh}2\) 17.d2 h5† 18.g5 \(\text{g}3\)† 19.xh5 g6† 20.h6 \(\text{h}4\)† 21.xg6 \(\text{f}6\)!

10...d6 11.c4 \(\text{d}4\) 12.c3

b) 8...e4!N

We have seen that returning the pawn is fine, but keeping it looks even better – White does not obtain compensation.

9.e5

12...\(\text{c}7\)!N

This is a rather simple double attack on h2 and c4.

12...a6 was played in Kriebel – Neelotpal, Sunningdale 2011, but it gives White counter-chances that he does not deserve. You don't have to remember the following analysis, but it features some entertaining attacking play that you may find fun.

13.cxd5

13.h3 \(\text{xc}4\)†

13...\(\text{xh}2\)† 14.h1 \(\text{xd}5\) 15.e3

The bishop cannot be trapped with 15.g3? because of: 15...\(\text{xb}5\) 16.xb5 \(\text{d}7\)†!

17.xh2 \(\text{h}3\)† 18.g1 \(\text{g}4\)++

15...\(\text{xb}5\) 16.xb5

16...f7! 17.xh2 \(\text{g}4\)† 18.g3

18.g1 \(\text{h}5\)++

18.d7

Apart from attacking the knight, Black has in mind simple development with ...\(\text{ae}8\) coming next.

19.d4 \(\text{g}6\)

Threatening a deadly discovered check.

20.f4 \(\text{xf}4\) 21.xf4 \(\text{e}3\)†++

This is clearly winning, and the computer even "sees" a forced mate on the horizon.

b) 8...e4!N

We have seen that returning the pawn is fine, but keeping it looks even better – White does not obtain compensation.

9.e5
9. \( \text{d4} \) is similar; Black plays 9... \( \text{g7f} \) followed by ...0-0 and ...b6.

9... \( \text{g7f} \)  10. \( \text{h5f} \)

What else can White do here? If not this, then Black simply castles and is already close to winning.

10...g6  11. \( \text{h6} \)

11... \( \text{f5} \)

Simple chess.

12. \( \text{xc6 bx6} \)  13. \( \text{xc6f} \) \( \text{d7} \)  14. \( \text{h3} \)

14... \( \text{xc6} \)  15. \( \text{c3 0-0} \)  16. \( \text{xc5 c8} \)

7... \( \text{xe5} \)  8. \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \)  9. \( \text{xe5} \)

10... \( \text{f6f} \) is fine as well. The always useful ECO gives the line 10. \( \text{b5f} \) \( \text{f7f} \), and it is difficult to disagree. Certainly Black cannot be worse here.

10. \( \text{0-0} \)

10. \( \text{b5f} \) \( \text{f7f} \)  11.0-0 \( \text{f8} \)  12. \( \text{d3 g8} \)  13. \( \text{c3 d6} \) is a curious transposition to the main line, with both sides having lost two tempos.

10. \( \text{c3 d6} \)  11. \( \text{g5 0-0} \)  12.0-0 e5  13. \( \text{g5} \)

10... \( \text{d6} \)  11. \( \text{c3 d6} \)  12. \( \text{g5 e5} \)

10... \( \text{c3 d6} \)  11. \( \text{g5 0-0} \)  12.0-0 e5  13. \( \text{c3} \)

10... \( \text{a6} \)  14. \( \text{h4 d6} \)  15. \( \text{h1 c6} \)  16. \( \text{g5 f6} \)  17. \( \text{d2 d7f} \)

Winkel - Parwicz, email 2004. Of course, you don't need to memorize all the above details. The important thing is to remember to play 4... \( \text{c6} \) and 6...f6!.

B) 4. \( \text{f4} \)

This move shows typical misunderstanding of the French Defence by White. Although playing for f4-f5 is a natural plan, this move weakens a whole bunch of light squares on the kingside. White may hope that by claiming more space he will make Black's development
more difficult, but this does not turn out to be the case, and Black achieves a comfortable development.

4...c6

4...cxd4 is another reasonable move, although it releases the tension and White might be able to use the d4-square: 5.f3 c6

Black is already better. The knight is well placed on h6, an important point being that White cannot take it as the move f2-f4 reduced the scope of the c1-bishop. Black has a “general plan” for those positions: ...e7, ...0-0, ...f6 and ...f7, while on the queenside the natural development involves ...d7 and ...c8. In this exact situation however, Black is also threatening just to win a pawn with ...cxd4 and ...d5, so White’s next seems forced.

7.d3

But if this move is forced, then it is clear that White is facing difficulties. Why is this so? Although the d3-square is often the perfect place for the bishop in the Advance Variation, in this case the d4-pawn is seriously vulnerable, and White will have to waste time moving the bishop again.

7.e3 has the idea of protecting the d4-pawn from the c2-square.

But after 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 a3 9.bxa3 d5 White’s position is a mess. He loses the d4-pawn anyway and has weakened his structure in the process. 10.d2 dxe4 11.dxe4 dxe4 12.b5 d7 13.b1 0-0 14.xc6 xc6 White resigned at this point in Florianovitz – Bargaal, Brasilia 2006. The resignation may seem slightly premature, but I can understand how disgusted with his position White must have felt!
Chapter 1 - The Advance Variation
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7...d7!
7...cxd4  8.cxd4  Qxd4  9.Qxd4  xd4  10.Qb5† is a trick every junior must have fallen for at least once. The text move avoids this trick and genuinely threatens to take the d4-pawn.

8.Qc2
8.a3?! cxd4 9.cxd4 Qxd4 is already a winning advantage for Black.

8...Ec8!
Black does best to increase his lead in development, rather than seek to use it too soon.

That said, 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 Qb4 is also promising for Black. If White lets his bishop be exchanged, he will lose any prospects for active play, but saving the bishop with 10.Qb3? looks even worse for White after 10...Qb5.

9.a3 Qe7 10.0-0
This looks like a mistake, but it is not clear that anything can save White.

10.Qa2?! How bad is White's position if this might be the best move? 10...0-0 11.Qe3 (11.h3 cxd4 12.cxd4 Qxd4 13.Qxd4 Qxc2 14.Qxc2 Qxh4† 15.Qd2 Ec8 and White cannot hope to survive) 11...cxd4 12.cxd4

10...Qxd4 13.Qg1 a5 14.h3 Qh6 15.Qe3 Qb5† Black's ideas include ...Qc4 and ...f6; White is on the ropes.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4

11...Qxd4!! 12.Qxd4 Qc5 13.Qh1
13.Qa2 Qxd4† 14.Qh1 0-0 15.h3 Qb5 16.Qf3 Qc7 17.a4 Qa6 18.b3 Qfc8† Erofeev - Lobas, Kiev 2003.

13.Qe3 loses to 13...Qxb2 14.Qf2 Qxa1 15.Qb3 Qxb1 16.Qxb1 Qxe3.

13...Qxd4
Black is a pawn up and also has his opponent's vulnerable king as a target. The following game is a good example of how the attack may proceed.

14.Qd2 Qb5 15.Qa4 0-0 16.Qxb5 Qxb5 17.Qb3 Qf5 18.Qf3 Qb6 19.g4 Qh6 20.h3 Qc4 21.f5 exf5 22.g5 Qg4 23.Qxg4 Qxg4 24.Qd3 Qh4† 25.Qg2 Qf2† 26.Qh3 Qc4 27.Qg3 Qh4†
0-1 Brants - Spaans, email 1996.
This is usually called the Nimzowitsch Variation. The great teacher used this line with success, applying his ideas of overprotection. In this situation the e5-pawn is a strongpoint for White and Nimzowitsch overprotected it with $\textit{f}3, \textit{e}1 and $\textit{g}3 if required. Of course, today we know how to counter this idea simply and effectively.

4...$\textit{c}6$!

Let’s briefly look at two examples of an effective “overprotection strategy” from Nimzowitsch’s games, so that you know what to avoid as Black!

4...$\textit{c}xd4$ 5.$\textit{f}3$ $\textit{c}6$ 6.$\textit{d}3$

$\textit{c}e7$ 10.$\textit{h}4$! The downside of the knight’s position on g6 is that the advance of the white h-pawn can be strong in the right circumstances. 10...$\textit{f}8$ 11.$\textit{h}5$ $\textit{ge}7$ 12.$\textit{b}3$ $\textit{c}7$ 13.$\textit{b}xd4$ $\textit{xd}4$ 14.$\textit{xd}4$ $\textit{d}7$ 15.$\textit{g}5$+ Nimzowitsch – Menchik, Karlsbad 1929.

7.0–0 $\textit{g}6$ 8.$\textit{e}1$ $\textit{c}7$ 9.$\textit{g}3$ $\textit{c}5$ 10.$\textit{h}4$!

Once again the same story.

5.$\textit{f}3$ $\textit{a}5$†!

Against the Nimzowitsch Variation, this is the important move to remember. White cannot effectively meet this check.
White often blocks the check with:

6.d2 wb6

Atalik came up with the interesting idea of 6...h6 here. The exchange of queens is welcome to Black, who has already developed desirable pressure on the d4-pawn, and if the white queen moves then ...b6 may be even stronger than on the 6th move.

7.b3

7.c3 xb2 and White’s compensation for the pawn is questionable. One practical example is: 8.c1 h6 9.f4 c4+ Tamas – Frank, Hungary 1998.

7...xd4! 8.xd4 cxd4 9.d3 h7 10.0-0

Palkovich – Braun, Plovdiv 2010.

10...d7!N 11.e1 c8??

Black is threatening ...b5. His advantage is beyond doubt.

6...xd4 7.d3

7.xd4

7...xe5!N Black captures a good central pawn, and if 8.g3 then simply 8...f6! with the idea of putting the king on f7. There is no doubt that Black is better, and his position should not be too difficult to play, although of course some care is required.

7...xc3

White is in bad shape because neither recapture is satisfactory.

8.xc3

This is White’s best try. 8.bxc3 has been played in several games, but can be met with:

8...b6!N 9.0-0 a6 10.c4 d8?? White does not have real compensation for the pawn.

8.d4!

This is the choice for those who want an open position with no risk of being mated.

For those preferring a more closed set-up, I can recommend 8...f5 9.f4 c7??.

9.xd4 xe5† 10.e3 f6??

After 7...xc3 White often resorts to playing for tricks. Be alert and don’t fall for them. A good French Defence player should be ready to defend winning positions against tricksters, as he may need to do so lots of times in practice!

11.h4 xd4 12.xd4 xd4 13.xd4 d7??
As I mentioned above, this is a more serious option for White, and I have decided to look at two ways for Black to respond: D) 4...\texttt{\texttt{c}}6!? and D2) 4...\texttt{cxd}4!?.

D1) 4...\texttt{c}6!?

Black defers the capture of the d4-pawn, and introduces the possibility of taking it with the knight.

5.\texttt{d}3

White shows no concern for his d4-pawn.

5.c3 transposes to the main lines that I shall examine in Chapters 2-4.

5...\texttt{cxd}4!?

I consider this move to be a great practical decision. White's whole strategy is based on creating attacking chances against the black king, and the exchange of a pair of knights makes it difficult to do that successfully.

5...\texttt{cxd}4 6.0–0 \texttt{c}5 7.\texttt{bd}2 \texttt{ge}7

This is the way Botvinnik used to play against this system. After his games against Levenfish and Bondarevsky in 1937 and 1941, the popularity of this system for White declined dramatically.

8.\texttt{e}1

8.a3 \texttt{g}6 9.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{b}6 10.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{d}7 11.g3 f6!\texttt{f6}+ Bondarevsky – Botvinnik, Leningrad/Moscow 1941.

8...\texttt{b}6

8...\texttt{g}6 à la Botvinnik is better, though the practical material available here is limited. 8...0–0? 9.\texttt{xh}7\texttt{xh}7 10.\texttt{g}5\texttt{g}6 11.\texttt{g}4 and White was winning in Dzindzichashvili – Comp Fritz, New York 1991. The box was evidently unaware of the Greek Gift sacrifice!

9.\texttt{f}1N \texttt{g}6 10.\texttt{g}3 0–0 11.\texttt{h}5 \texttt{d}7?

This is a cooperative variation given by Dzindzichashvili in his online lectures, allowing White the following impressive blow:

12.\texttt{h}6!±

The idea is 12...\texttt{gxh}6? 13.\texttt{d}2 and White is completely winning.
Of course Black can play a lot better than this, but in this variation the most important thing is for Black to have a sound plan in mind. If we start by exchanging a pair of minor pieces that guarantees that we will avoid a scenario involving such a brutal attack. If you want to take on d4 with the pawn, then you should do so on the previous move – see line D2 below.

6.\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}\textsc{x}d4 cxd4 7.0-0 \textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}e7}}}

The remaining knight will find a perfect place on c6.

8.\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}e1}}

White may also bring his knight round to defend the e5-pawn:

8.\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}d2 \textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}c6 9.\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}f3}}}}

9.f4 is an ugly move that creates a lot of weaknesses: 9...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}e7?!N 10.\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}f3 0-0}}} This is quite safe as there is no \texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}xh7+}} sacrifice. 11.\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}e1 f6?!}} and Black is at least equal.

9...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}c7?!N 10.\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}e2 \textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}e7 11.a3 0-0}}} Black could play ...a5 to stop White's next, but there is no real need to.

12.b4 f6

Black's game is very comfortable. We should always bear in mind that Black rarely has anything to fear when he manages to follow up castling with a quick ...f6.

8...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}c6 9.\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}g4}}}

An alternative is to play on the queenside:

9.a3 \texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}d7 10.b4}}

This was seen in Kuzmenko – Ianovsky, Kiev 2005. Here the computer suggests an interesting way to play:

10...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}b5?!N}}

10...a6 plans ...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}c7} followed by ...g6 and \texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}g7}, and also gives Black an edge. However, 10...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}e7}} is less clear as 11.\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}g4}} disrupts the black kingside.}

11.\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}xb5 a5?!}}

Black has taken over the initiative.

9...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}c7!}}

The ambitious move. Black could equalize with 9...\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}b4}, but why should he be happy with that?}

10.\texttt{\textsc{\textbf{\textsc{Q}}f4}}

So far we have been following Turci – Bukal, Reggio Emilia 1987.
10...h5!N 11.g3
11...e2 e7 12.a3 g5 13.d1 d7 14.d2 0-0-0+
11...h4 12.g4 h3 13.g3 g6
13...b4 and 13...b6 are also possible, but the main suggestion seems clearest.

14.d2 g7??
Black will continue with ...d7 and his king may head to g8, while the rook can always go to h5 to put more pressure on e5. After analysing this position and testing this line in blitz games, I have formed the opinion that Black is a little better here.

5...cxd4
White may now recapture the pawn with D21) 5.exd4? or D22) 5.xd4, or sacrifice it with D23) 5.d3.

D21) 5.exd4?!
This position can also be reached from the Caro-Kann, but with White to move! That line is considered quite solid for Black, so here with an extra tempo he faces no problems at all.

5...c6 6.xc6
6.b5?! achieves less than nothing. 6...d7 7.c6 xc6 8.d3 If White exchanges bishops he is slightly worse due to the vulnerability of the e5-pawn. 8.d4! 9.0-0 d5 Black won the e5-pawn in El Kouch–Hamdouchi, Rabat 2001.

6...bxc6 7.d3 c7 8.d2 g6

D2) 4...cxd4?

We’ll see this set-up again in variation B of Chapter 8 on the Tarrasch Variation. Black is fine and a practical example continued:

9.xf3 c7 10.e2 c5 11.c4 b7 12.0-0 0-0 13.d2?! dxc4 14.xc4?
14.xe4 is an improvement, though after 14...xe4 15.e4 d5 Black is slightly better.
Chapter 1 – The Advance Variation

14...\text{x}f3 15.gxf3 \text{g}5

Black is now winning.

16.e3 \text{f}4 17.Sc1 \text{h}4 18.xf4 \text{x}f4 19.Cc3 \text{g}5† 20.Cf1 \text{ad}8!

Black cuts off the king's escape route and is ready for \ldots \text{g}2† followed by \ldots \text{g}1† and so on.

21.Dd1 \text{g}2†

0–1 Bastian – Khenkin, Bad Liebenzell 2010.

D22) 5.xd4 \text{c}6 6.f4

On this square the queen will be hit by a knight arriving on g6, but it is important for Black to time this correctly.

6.b5?!

This move is reminiscent of a Sicilian line where White recaptures on d4 with his queen. It is not a big deal in the Sicilian, and it is even less of a deal here in the French!

6...Ge7

Now if White takes the c6-knight we can simply take with the other knight. The d4-square will be covered, the pressure on e5 will mount and there will be no light-squared bishop to point at our king's position. There is surely no reason why White should want to play this position.

7.0–0

7...d7!

7...a6?! 8.d3?! \text{x}d4— Puusaari – Lehtinen, email 2010 – accidents happen in correspondence games as well!

8.xc6 \text{xc}6 9.Cd3 \text{c}8†


6...Ge7!

6...Cc6 7.e3 a6 8.d3 Ge7 9.0–0 Gg6 10.Cg3 Gxe5 11.Cxe5 Ce5 12.Cel f6 13.xc6 exd5 14.f4 \text{c}5† 15.Ch1 Velimirovic – Kholmov, Odessa 1975. Scary stuff for sure, but to demonstrate that Black's position in the French Defence is a really hard nut to crack, I provide the following improvement:

15...0–0?!N 16.fxe5 f5= with roughly equal chances.

7.d3 Gg6 8.Cg3

8.xg6 hxg6\text{\textAle} obviously shouldn't worry Black too much.

8...Cc7 9.Cc3 Gxe5 10.0–0 Cxf3† 11.Cxf3 Ce7 12.Cf4 \text{d}8 13.ad1 0–0†

Zvonitsky – Neverov, Kharkov 1988. It is clear that Black has greatly improved on the Velimirovic – Kholmov game, having won the e5-pawn without allowing any tactics along the e-file.
D23) 5.\&d3 \&e7! 6.0-0 \&ec6!

This plan was recommended by Eingorn in *A Rock-Solid Chess Opening Repertoire for Black*, and offers Black an attractive position. Eingorn gives the following continuation:

7.\&e1 \&d7
This is the reason Black brought his king’s knight to c6; that is why 4...cxd4 is a better move order than 4...\&c6 and 5...cxd4 if Black wants to take on d4 with the pawn.

8.a3

8...\&c7\!N 9.\&e2 \&c5 10.b4 \&xd3 11.\&xd3 \&d7\!

Eingorn claims that the position is about equal but I am sure that Black is better here. He has play down the c-file and pressure on e5. The e5-pawn gives White space, but it is hard for him to organize an attack without a light-squared bishop.

Conclusion

In this chapter I introduced several ideas concerning the Advance Variation. White would really like to be able to place his bishop on the wonderful b1-h7 diagonal, but Black’s pressure on d4 means that he cannot do so without cost.

By playing A) 4.dxc5 followed by \&d3, White solves this problem in a simplistic way. Black is advised to develop with 4...\&c6! and then break with 6...f6! with a fine game.

Black’s attack on d4 means that the support of the e5-pawn is also in jeopardy. So, it makes sense for White to try to reinforce e5. Doing so with B) 4.f4 actually helps Black because White becomes very weak on the light squares on the kingside, and it allows the black knight a natural square on h6.

Nimzowitsch suggested another way to overprotect the e5-pawn: C) 4.\&g4 followed soon by \&g3. This manoeuvre worked fine in his praxis, but it allows the concrete response 4...\&c6 5.\&f3 \&a5\! after which Black is doing well.

Sacrificing the problematic d4-pawn for compensation is seen in many variations in the French Defence. D23) 4.\&f3 cxd4 5.\&d3 is one way to do it, albeit not the most respectable one we’ll meet in this book. I like the set-up suggested by Eingorn: ...\&e7-c6 followed by ...\&b8-d7. Also D1) 4...\&c6? with the idea of exchanging a pair of knights after 5.\&d3 \&xd4 is appealing for Black. Obviously, this gives White the chance to avoid being punished by playing 5.c3 and transposing to the next chapters. But don’t worry, you should have good chances to outplay your opponent in the main lines of the Advance Variation after reading the following chapters!
Chapter 2

The Euwe System

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \(c6\)

A) 5.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\)
B) 5.g3
C) 5.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \(d7!\)
   C1) 6.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \textit{cxd4} 7.cxd4 \(\textit{b6}\) 8.0-0 \(\textit{xd4}\)
   9.\(\textit{g5}?! – \text{Game 1}\)
   C11) 9.\(\textit{xd4}?!\)
   C12) 9.\(\textit{bd2}!\)
      C121) 9...\(\textit{xf3}†?!\)
      C122) 9...\(\textit{e7}\)
   C2) 6.\(\textit{dxc5} \textit{xc5}\)
      C21) 7.\(\textit{d3}\)
      C22) 7.\(\textit{b4}\)
         C221) 7...\(\textit{e7}\)
         C222) 7...\(\textit{b6}\)

Game 1 Arthur Mrugala – Reimund Lutzenberger, email 1998
Game 2 Hossein Aryanejad – Vladimir Potkin, Abu Dhabi 2005
Game 3 Dieter Pirrot – Stefan Kindermann, Germany 2004
On this page you will find seven diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

**Diagram 1:** Suggest a good idea for Black here.

*(page 38)*

**Diagram 2:** Would you place the knight or the bishop on f6?

*(page 46)*

**Diagram 3:** Can you find Black’s best plan in this position?

*(page 31)*

**Diagram 4:** The a2-knight appears trapped, but Black has a strong idea.

*(page 40)*

**Diagram 5:** White is threatening both the g6-knight and the f8-rook. How Black should continue?

*(page 49)*

**Diagram 6:** An elementary but attractive combination.

*(page 34)*

**Diagram 7:** Can you find Black’s strongest move at this point?

*(page 44)*
I shall start with an overview of the coverage of the Advance Variation that should help you to navigate your way around the following chapters.

\[1.e4\ e6\ 2.d4\ d5\ 3.e5\ c5\ 4.c3\]

In the next few chapters we are going to learn how to play this position, without having to remember reams of theory. Our aim is to play quiet, strategic positions, rather than seek chaos and dynamic play. There are two reasons for this. First, I suspect that GM Emanuel Berg will provide Black with a dynamic repertoire in his Grandmaster Repertoire 16 – The French Defence. And the second reason is that I am convinced that Black simply doesn’t need to! We can play slowly, aiming to take advantage of the positive features of our position without getting involved in taking great risks. Traditionally the French Defence has served well the “slow” players who liked to win long games (such as Petrosian and Botvinnik), and I’d like to show that playing this strategic, slow chess can still be successful in our fast-moving, dynamic era. That’s why I have always considered the French Defence a great tool for teaching positional chess to ambitious youngsters.

4...\text{c}6\ 5.\text{d}3

In this chapter I shall take a look at a couple of alternatives here, Kupreichik’s 5.\text{d}e3 and Murey’s 5.g3.

5...\text{d}7

The Euwe System, which was also an old love of the great French hero Korchnoi, will be covered in Chapters 2-4.

The Euwe System is characterized in chess literature as “flexible”. In my experience many chess players don’t really understand what this means, but the explanation is not too difficult. In the Advance Variation, Black nearly always places his bishop on the d7-square. The other typical move in the position is ...\text{b}6, but this move can wait – by staying where it is for the time being, the queen keeps control of important squares on both flanks. So it is more flexible to first play the move that we know we should play (...\text{d}7) and hold back ...\text{b}6 for later; depending on circumstances we may even decide to develop the queen elsewhere.

How should White play now? His main strategic concern is the development of his \text{f}1-bishop, and he would love to put it on d3, its “dream square”. However, Black plans ...\text{b}6, when the d4-pawn may become very weak, and if that pawn falls then the e5-pawn will also start feeling vulnerable. White may find
himself thinking, “Why on earth did I play 3.e5 in the first place?”

6.\( \text{\textit{d3}} \) is the most direct approach, putting the bishop where it belongs. White indicates that he does not care if his d4-pawn becomes weak – sacrificing it is an option! This line will be examined in this chapter.

6.\( \text{\textit{xc5}} \) is a somewhat different approach, favoured by Sveshnikov. At the end of this chapter, I will propose an interesting way to meet this safely and effectively.

6.\( \text{\textit{a3}} \) is also a popular solution. One idea of this is to play \( \text{\textit{d3-c2}} \) without fearing ...\( \text{\textit{cxd4}} \) and ...\( \text{\textit{b4}} \). Another possibility is to continue with b2-b4 and \( \text{\textit{b2}} \), defending the d4-pawn before later playing \( \text{\textit{d3}} \). Black can easily cross these plans though, as we shall see in Chapter 3.

6.\( \text{\textit{e2}} \) is a very common reaction. White doesn’t hurry to put his bishop on d3 (it can go there later if the opportunity arises). First he wants to castle, and he hopes that his extra space will offer him slightly the better chances. We will see how to counter this move in Chapter 4.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \( \text{\textit{c6}} \)

We shall take a quick look at the sidelines A) 5.\( \text{\textit{e3}} \) and B) 5.g3, before we investigate the standard C) 5.\( \text{\textit{f3}} \).

A) 5.\( \text{\textit{e3}} \)

This is Kupreichik’s method of protecting the d4-pawn.

5...\( \text{\textit{b6}} \) 6.\( \text{\textit{d2}} \)

With the d4-pawn securely defended, White now hopes to place his bishop on the d3-square.

In the introduction I drew attention to the important “strategic problem” of the Advance Variation of the French Defence – White wants to develop the bishop to d3 without losing the d4-pawn. This desire has given birth to various systems which aim to do just this. But if such a system existed then Black would be condemned to an inferior position straight from the opening. So we must look for a weak point in White’s set-up in each of these systems. In the case of the Kupreichik system, this is not difficult. What we should spot is that the white queen and bishop on d2/e3 are vulnerable to a black knight coming to the c4-square!
6...\( \text{d7} \)

6...\( f6?! \) is also fine for Black, but that is another story!

7.\( \text{f3} \)

White has also tried:

7.\( \text{f4} \)

This move always looks ugly to my eyes.

7...\( \text{h6} \) 8.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 9.\( \text{e2} \)

9...\( \text{xd4} \)

9...\( \text{e7N} \) 10.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{f5} \) 12.\( \text{f2} \)

\( \text{cxd4} \) is an alternative approach that I also like for Black.

10.\( \text{xd4} \)

10...\( \text{b4} \) 11.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a5=} \)

Gunnarsson – Vidarsson, Hafnarfjordur 1995. Just as in the main line, the exchange on the d4-square followed by \( \text{a5-c4} \) proves strong.

8.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{c8} \)

8.\( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{c8} \) 9.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a5=} \)

The knight coming to c4 means that White will almost certainly have to exchange his light-squared bishop for it, and this represents the strategic failure of the Kupreichik system.

10.\( \text{d1} \)

10.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c4} \) 11.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 12.0–0 \( \text{b4}! \)

13.\( \text{ac1} \) (13.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{b5N} \) is similar) 13...\( \text{b5} \)

I prefer Black's position here. A game by the originator of White's system continued: 14.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 15.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 16.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 17.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{c7=} \)

Although White eventually won this game, this has nothing to do with the evaluation of the position, but was rather down to him being the better player.

10...\textit{b}4
Black increases the pressure. He waits with \ldots \textit{c}4 until the f1-bishop has moved, so that \textit{xc}4 will lose a tempo.

11.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}4=
"Equal" is the objective evaluation, but I would rather be Black here.

\textbf{B) 5.g3}

This is Murey's idea. White acknowledges that there are too many difficulties involved with putting the bishop on d3, so decides to develop it on the kingside instead. The bishop may go to the h3-square in order to support a later f4-f5.

5...\textit{b}6
5...\textit{a}5 is Watson's untested proposal, one idea being to meet 6.\textit{f}3 with 6...\textit{xd}4. Indeed, it looks an interesting suggestion.

6.\textit{c}2 \textit{f}6
Now that the white knight cannot control the e5-square, this typical move gains strength.

7.\textit{ex}f6
7.f4 \textit{h}6 8.\textit{h}3 (8.eu6 gx6f6) 8...\textit{e}7 9.a3 Okhotnik – Madan, Torre del Greco 2006.

9...0–0\textdagger 10.eu6 (10.0–0 \textit{cxd}4 11.\textit{cxd}4 \textit{xd}4! 12.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}5–\textdagger) 10...\textit{xf}6 11.0–0 \textit{f}5\textdagger

7.\textit{f}4\textdagger is the computer's suggestion. Here we need to be a little careful.
Avoid 7...cxd4?! because of 8...h5† e7 9.b3! (9.g6† hxg6 10.xh8 f7) 9...xc3 10.a3† b4 11.xc3 d8 12.b5 g6 13.xg6 c2† 14.f1 xa3 15.xh8 d4 16.xf7 xc3 17.d1 e7 18.exf6 f5 19.f7†

Instead please play 7...c7! 8.h5† f7 9.xf7† xf7, when Black is slightly better developed in this roughly level position.

7...xf6 8.g2

8...xd4!
8...d6 9.0–0 0–0 10.xc5! xc5 11.f4†

9.cxd4 d6 10.0–0 0–0 11.bc3 d7

With pressure against the d-pawn and play on the f-file, Black cannot complain.

12.h1 ac8 13.f4? e7 14.h3 f5 15.xd3 xe8 16.ed1 g6

Black was already much better in Neretljak – Brynell, Rodeby 1995, after playing all the "happy" moves (...f6, ...d7-e8-g6, ...c8) of a French Defender.

C) 5.f3 d7!

In this chapter we will examine C1) 6.d3?! and C2) 6.dxc5.

White’s most popular options of 6.a3 and 6.e2 are covered in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

6.e3 b6 7.d2 transposes to line A on page 31.

6.a3

The idea of a3-c2 (covering the d4-pawn) is more commonly played after 6.e2 (see variations A and C of Chapter 4).

6...xd4

It is generally a good time to play this move when White can no longer develop with c3.

7.cxd4 xa3 8.bxa3

White has problems with his structure, and Black has at least equality. A recent practical example continued:
8...ge7?! 9.d3 a5† 10.xd2 c8 11.b1 b6 12.0–0 xd2 13.xd2 f5

Black was fine in Volokitin – Nepomniachtchi, Eilat 2012. If now 14.xf5 exf5 Black will play ...h6 and bring the king to e7 with at least equal chances.

C1) 6.d3?! xd4!

In Attacking Chess: The French, GM Simon Williams recommended:
6...c8?!

This move is in the spirit of the Euwe System (slow, strategic play), and it was also my main suggestion to my pupils for years. But nowadays, I prefer to punish White for offering a good central pawn. And these days
more and more players seem to be playing this line with White, so why not study something ambitious and collect as many points as we can?
Still, let me just mention a couple of interesting possibilities in this line.

7.a3
7.0-0 is met by 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 ³b4. Black will take the bishop and can feel safe with
his position.

7.cxd4 8.cxd4 ³b6 9.³c2
9.0-0 ³xd4 10.³bd2 ³c6 11.³b3 ³ge7
12.³e3 ³c7+

9...³xd4?!
Black usually prepares this sacrifice with
9...g5 forcing 10.h3, and only then
10...³xd4. After many hours of analysis I
still haven’t been able to come to a definite
evaluation of this position. I could certainly
suggest this for players who want to have fun
over the board – but don’t blame me if you
lose!

10.³xd4 ³c5 11.³b3?!
11.³f3 ³xf2† 12.³e2 is a better way to
defend; I believe that it gives White an edge.
11...³xf2† 12.³e2 ³h6 13.³c3 ³g4
Black went on to win impressively in Ziska –
Radjabov, Istanbul (ol) 2012. However, I am
intrigued to know what Radjabov had in mind
after 11.³f3!.

7.cxd4 ³b6

8.0-0
The Milner-Barry Gambit. Attempts to keep
the d4-pawn are less than encouraging for
White:

8.³c2?! ³b4
Black intends to remove the light-squared
bishop and then make White suffer for the
rest of game.
9.³b3?
Trying to keep the bishop leads to disaster.
We now follow a game of mine from long
ago.
9...³a6! 10.³c2
My opponent clearly didn’t like the look of
10.³e2 ³b5.
10...³c8? 11.³c3 ³xc2† 12.³xc2 ³b4
13.³d2 ³e7 14.³g1 ³f5 15.³ge2

15...³xe2†! This was a rapid event, I was
not keeping a score of the game and I don't even remember my opponent's name, but I could not forget such a beautiful finish. This game has served me well in teaching tactics to juniors!

8. \( \text{e}2 ?! \)

This is the move Nimzowitsch favoured, playing it first against Rubinstein in Karlsbad 1911, and then twice at the San Sebastian tournament in 1912, against Tarrasch and Duras.

8... \( \text{d}xe7 \) 9.b3

After 9.\( \text{a}a3 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 10.\( \text{c}2 \) Black is very comfortable, a full tempo ahead of a position that can arise from the 6.\( \text{e}2 \) line.

9... \( \text{f}5 \) 10.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{b}4 \)

Once again, White's loss of tempo with \( \text{d}3-\text{e}2 \) means that Black has an excellent version of the 6.\( \text{e}2 \) line.

8... \( \text{xd}4 \)

8...

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Black accepts the gambit pawn. We shall first take a look at the old main line of C11) 9.\( \text{xd}4 ?! \) and then examine the more topical C12) 9.\( \text{bd}2 ! \).

9.\( \text{g}5 ?! \) is an aggressive move that can be dangerous in blitz, but should not come close to working at slower time controls. We shall see how to deal with it in our first illustrative game.

**GAME 1**

Arthur Mrugala – Reimund Lutzenberger

*email 1998*

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \( \text{c}6 \) 5.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 6.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 7.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 8.0-0 \( \text{xd}4 \) 9.\( \text{g}5 ?! \)

This is the weakest of White's three options in this gambit line, but there are still people out there who will try to surprise you with this one. For starters, White avoids the exchange of the knights with check. Moreover he threatens 10.\( \text{e}3 \), with the point that 10...\( \text{xb}2 \) 11.\( \text{xf}7 \) will result in unclear complications.

9... \( \text{c}6 ! \)

Black avoids White's threat and gains a tempo by attacking the \( \text{e}5 \)-pawn.

10.\( \text{e}1 \)

White's best scoring option in our database is 10.\( \text{c}3 ?! \) but who ever said that statistics should be trusted? 10...\( \text{xe}5 \) 11.\( \text{xe}5 \) (11.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 12.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{d}3 \) 13.\( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 11...\( \text{f}6 \) 12.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 13.\( \text{xd}5 \)
(13.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{W}}}}\textit{xe5 is met by 13...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}6) 13...exd5 14.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}4 }}
\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{X}}}}xg5 15.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{X}}}}xg5 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}6 Black was winning in  Halser - Ostrowski, Vienna 1998.}

10...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}5 11.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}3}

![](image1)

11...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}6!}
11...0-0-0?! is also considered to be a strong option at this point.

12.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}3}
12.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}xh7? was tried in Andersson - Lundback, Hallstahammar 2002, but after 12...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{g}}}}}4!!\rightarrow N White is in serious trouble on f2.

12...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}}4 13.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}}4
13.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}}d1 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}}h5 14.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{a}}}}}4 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}a4 15.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}a4\rightarrow was played in Hempel - Schmitt, Bensheim 2005, and now Black should play:

![](image2)

15...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}}6!\rightarrow 16.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}}h3 0-0\rightarrow
White's best seems to be 13.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}}h3\rightarrow \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}}5
(13...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}}c2 14.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{a}}}}}c2 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}f2\rightarrow 15.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}}f1 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}g1 16.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}e1}}=) 14.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{b}}}}}1\rightarrow which limits his disadvantage. Black might try 14...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}}h6 15.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}}f3 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}}6 16.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}}e2 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}}d4 17.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}d4 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}d4 followed by ...\textit{\textit{\textbf{c}}8. Continuing with ...\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f8 and ...g6 in order to prepare castling is then a possibility.

13...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}}f5
With a sequence of natural moves, Black has achieved a clear advantage. An important point is that the following pseudo-energetic move does not work for White.

14.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{g}}}}}4
After the more restrained 14.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}}3 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}f3\rightarrow 15.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}f3 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}}7\rightarrow, Black is also doing well.

![](image3)

14...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}}h6! 15.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}e6 \textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}x6
15...g5!!?N is another way to tactically refute White's play: 16.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}d5 \textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}}xf4 17.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}ec7\rightarrow \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}xf7 18.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}c7\rightarrow \textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d8 19.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}xa8 \textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}3\rightarrow 20.\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f1 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}}d4 21.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}f4 (21.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e4 \textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}}xg4 creates many problems for White, the most obvious of them being the threat of mate in one!)} 21...\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}g4 22.\textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g2 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}e1\rightarrow 23.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}}x1 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}}f1 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}}6 The trapped white knight gives Black the victory.

16.\textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}f5 \textit{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}}}f5 0-0\right)
There are various minor alternatives for White along the way, but a simple check reveals that all of them are losing.

18.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}xd5 exd5 19.e6}

playing the Sicilian Defence! The reader should look forward to the situation from the current game (having to win a won endgame) appearing frequently in his practice if he becomes devoted to the French Defence.

31.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}d3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}6 32.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{b}}b3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}}6! 33.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}c3+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}}5 34.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}c7}

34.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{b}}b3+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{a}}}}}6 followed by \texttt{...d4} also wins rather easily.

34...\texttt{b6 35.axb6 axb6 36.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{x}}}xg7 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}}4 37.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}c7+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}}3 38.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}c3+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}}2 39.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}c6 d4 40.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{x}}}x b6 d3 41.h3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}}1 42.b4 d2 0–1

\texttt{C11) 9.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}xd4?!}}

This was the old main line, but its popularity has faded. This can be put down to there being several well-known theoretical "antidotes". I have chosen one of these antidotes, which is quite easily memorized yet will remain viable for many years to come.

9...\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{x}}}x d4 10.\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{c}}c3}

The traditional French Defence player is a good endgame player. If you do not like endings, then perhaps you should consider

\texttt{10...a6}

The main alternative is 10...\texttt{\textit{\textcolor{red}{w}}xe5}, but all Black has is a draw.
11.\( \text{e2} \)

The knight is on its way to the b4-square. This is Black's simplest way to play for a small advantage.

12.\( \text{h1} \)

A slow move, but if White cannot play f2-f4, he cannot hope for energetic play.

12...\( \text{c6} \)

12...\( \text{b6} \) 13.\( \text{f4} \) g6 is a decent alternative.

13.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{b4!} \)

13...\( \text{c5} \) is more popular, but the text is much simpler.

14.\( \text{d1} \)

Retreating the bishop allows Black to execute his idea:

14...\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{c4!} \) 15.\( \text{d1} \) d4 16.\( \text{e4} \) d3 17.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c7} \) 18.\( \text{e4} \)

18.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{c2} \) 19.\( \text{xc2} \) dxe4 20.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{c4} \) 21.\( \text{e1} \) Lopez Gomez – Perez Carrillo, corr. 2004.

21...\( \text{c6!} \)

Simple chess.

22.\( \text{f5} \)

22.\( \text{d6} \) 23.\( \text{xd6} \) 23.\( \text{exd6} \) 0–0–0–0 24.\( \text{gxe4} \) 0–0–0!

22...\( \text{exe4} ! \) 23.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{exe4} \) 24.\( \text{exe4} \) 0–0–0?

25.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b8} \) 26.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{d1} \) 27.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{e7} \)

28.\( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{c8} \)!

White cannot develop his queenside, so Black is winning easily.

14...\( \text{c5!} \)

This is strong now. The idea is to play ...\( \text{f2} \) now that the rook has abandoned the protection of this square.

15.\( \text{xa6} \)

White wins his pawn back; he has nothing better.

15.\( \text{xh7} \) is met the same way: 15...\( \text{f2} \)

16.\( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{xf2} \) 17.\( \text{b1} \) 0–0–0 18.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{c6} \)


15.\( \text{b5} ? \) \( \text{f2} \) 16.\( \text{xd7} \) 17.\( \text{g4} \)

(17.\( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{xf2} \) 18.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{a7} \) 19.\( \text{d6} \) f6
20.\(\Boxxb7\) Schulz – Loskamp, Cologne 1994, and now 20...fxe5N 21.fxe5 \(\Boxhf8\rightarrow\)

20...\(\Boxxc6!\)
Beautiful play by Black. Now ...d4 is a major threat.

21.\(\Boxxf3?\)
This loses a pawn and the game, though after something like 21.\(\Boxxd3\) \(\Boxxc4\) 22.\(\Boxxc4\) dxc4\(\pm\) Black would also be very happy.

21...\(\Boxd4\)
White resigned at this point in Milesi – Apicella, Cap d’Agde 2003. After 22.\(\Boxxc2\) \(\Boxxd2\) 23.\(\Boxxd2\) \(\Boxxe3\), the f4-pawn falls and with it goes any hope of saving the game.

\[\text{GAME 2}\]

Hossein Aryanejad – Vladimir Potkin

Abu Dhabi 2005

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \(\Boxlc6\) 5.\(\Boxf3\) \(\Boxd7\) 6.\(\Boxxd3\) cxd4 7.cxd4 \(\Boxwb6\) 8.0–0 \(\Boxxd4\) 9.\(\Boxxd4\) \(\Boxxd4\) 10.\(\Boxc3\) a6 11.\(\Boxe2\) \(\Boxe7\) 12.\(\Boxh1\) \(\Boxc6\) 13.f4 \(\Boxb4\) 14.\(\Boxd1\) \(\Boxc5\) 15.\(\Boxxa6\) \(\Boxf2\)

17.\(\Boxb5\)
This is a very logical move, albeit one which allows Black to demonstrate some brilliant technique.

17...\(\Boxd2\)!! Threatening \(\Boxg1\). 18.h3 h5 19.\(\Boxg5\) \(\Boxe7\rightarrow\) Rudak – Kruppa, Alushta 1998.

15...\(\Boxf2\)\(\Boxf2\)
There is no good way for White to avoid the exchange of the queens, and so Black will be left with the better chances in an endgame.

16.\(\Boxxf2\) \(\Boxxf2\) 17.\(\Boxe2\)
17.\(\Boxb5\) is examined in our next illustrative game.

17.\(\Boxxb7\) is met by 17...\(\Boxa7\)\(\Boxf2\) and the bishop is trapped. A possible continuation is 18.a3 0–0 19.\(\Boxb1\) \(\Boxxb7\) 20.axb4 \(\Boxxb4\) and Black’s pressure is most annoying.

17...0–0 18.\(\Boxd2\) \(\Boxc2\) 19.\(\Boxab1\) \(\Boxe3\) 20.\(\Boxdc1\)
17...AXB5 18.Axb5 Axa2!
A well-calculated pawn snatch.
18...0-0# was also a possibility, for “lazy”
players who can’t be bothered calculating!

19.Axa2 Axa2 20.Ad2
The knight seems trapped...

20...Ad7 21.Aa1

21...Ac8!
The knight will not die yet! There is a
problem on the back rank.

22. Ab3
22.Axa2? Bc2++

22...Ac5!
Planning to save the knight by playing
...Ab4.

22...b5?! N
This also keeps up the pressure. For example:
23.Axa2 b4 24.Ab1?
This is bad, but it is nice to see how it is
refuted.
24.g3! is White’s best, but after 24.bxa3
25.bxa3 Ab4# followed by ...f6, Black is
going to have two connected passed pawns,
while White’s passed a-pawn can be easily
stopped.

24...Ac2 25.g3 b3 26.Aa1 Axb2 27.Ac3 Aa2
28.Ad2 Ac2++
Either a piece falls or the pawn goes to b2
with devastating effect.

White cracks under the pressure.

24.Ac3 was a better defence: 24...d4 25.Ab5
dxc3 26.bxc3 This was Toufighi – Gonzalez
Garcia, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, and now
Black’s most accurate continuation is:

26...Axh3! N 27.Ad6 Ac6# followed by ...f6,
challenging the seemingly well-placed knight.

24...d4!
Of course Black must have seen this far
when he took the a2-pawn!
Chapter 2 – The Euwe System

25.\textit{\textit{c}}x\textit{\textit{d}4} \textit{\textit{c}c}1\textit{\textit{\textdagger}} 26.\textit{\textit{g}g}1 \textit{\textit{c}c}5 27.h3

27.h4 h5\textit{\textdagger} keeps all the white pawns on dark squares – and Black may soon take them all!

27...\textit{\textit{x}x}g1\textit{\textdagger} 28.\textit{\textit{d}d}h2 \textit{\textit{f}f}1 29.g3 \textit{\textit{f}f}2\textit{\textdagger} 30.\textit{\textit{h}h}1 \textit{\textit{f}f}1\textit{\textdagger} 31.\textit{\textit{h}h}2 \textit{\textit{f}f}2\textit{\textdagger} 32.\textit{\textit{h}h}1 \textit{\textit{c}c}6

Clearly Black is doing all the pressing in this endgame. He has the better rook, better king, better minor piece and lots of targets, whereas White has no targets at all! Black need only display a modest degree of technique to bring the point home.

33.\textit{\textit{c}c}4 \textit{\textit{d}d}5 34.\textit{\textit{a}a}5 b6 35.\textit{\textit{b}b}7 \textit{\textit{d}d}4 36.\textit{\textit{a}a}8 \textit{\textit{b}b}2 37.\textit{\textit{d}d}6 f6 38.\textit{\textit{d}d}8 fxe5 39.\textit{\textit{c}c}7\textit{\textdagger} \textit{\textit{e}e}4 40.\textit{\textit{e}e}5\textit{\textdagger} \textit{\textit{e}e}3 41.\textit{\textit{d}d}6 h6 42.\textit{\textit{x}x}e6 \textit{\textit{f}f}3 43.\textit{\textit{x}x}d4\textit{\textdagger} exd4

White threw in the towel.

0–1

C121) 9.\textit{\textit{d}d}b2!

This is the only move that provides any justification for White’s gambit.

I have decided to offer the reader a choice here. C121) 9.\textit{\textit{x}x}f3\textit{\textdagger}? is a relatively simple and practical option, whereas my main recommendation of C122) 9.\textit{\textit{e}e}7 is more complex and requires some memorization of lines.

10.\textit{\textit{x}x}f3 \textit{\textit{b}b}5!

Exchanging the bad bishop is always a dream come true for a French player!

11.\textit{\textit{e}e}3 \textit{\textit{w}w}6 12.\textit{\textit{x}x}b5\textit{\textdagger} \textit{\textit{x}x}b5 13.\textit{\textit{d}d}4 \textit{\textit{w}w}7

Black intends to follow up with ...\textit{\textit{c}c}7. White certainly has compensation, but on the other hand I feel that this compensation is not enough for an advantage, and the simplicity of the whole line makes it a good practical
solution. There is not much theory here and no mass of details to be memorized. I have spent some time analysing this position, and here are the fruits of my work, along with the most relevant practical example that I found in my database.

14.\textit{B}c1 \textit{Be}7 15.\textit{B}d3
15.f4\textit{N} g6\textit{N}

15...\textit{B}c6 16.\textit{B}xc6
16.f4 \textit{Be}7 (or 16...\textit{B}c8 17.f5 \textit{B}xe5 18.\textit{B}xc8+ \textit{W}xc8 19.\textit{W}b5+ \textit{B}c6 20.\textit{B}c1 \textit{Bd}7 21.\textit{B}f4 \textit{Be}7 and Black is fine) 17.\textit{B}xc6 bxc6 18.f5 exf5 19.\textit{W}xf5 \textit{W}xf5 20.\textit{B}xf5 c5 21.\textit{B}xc5 \textit{B}c8 22.b4 \textit{B}xc5+ 23.bxc5 \textit{B}e7 If anyone is better here, it is Black, due to his more active king. One plan is to play the king to e7 and the rook to c7, followed by activating the other rook on the c- or b-file.

16...bxc6 17.\textit{W}a6
17.\textit{B}c2\textit{N} \textit{B}c8 18.\textit{B}fc1 \textit{Be}7 19.\textit{W}a6 The pressure on the c6-pawn is mounting, so it is time to break out: 19...c5! 20.\textit{B}xc5 \textit{B}xc5 This seems virtually equal. For example, 21.\textit{B}xc5 \textit{B}xc5 22.\textit{B}xc5 0–0 and Black can attack the white queenside with ...\textit{B}b8, as well as try to take advantage of his passed pawn. This is the only position I met while analysing the 9...\textit{B}xf3 variation where White's chances could be evaluated as a tiny bit better, but I do not think that Black has any real reasons to worry.

17...\textit{B}c8 18.\textit{W}xa7?!
White should prefer 18.\textit{B}c3 or 18.\textit{B}c2, transposing to the previous note after 18...\textit{Be}7 19.\textit{B}fc1.

18...\textit{W}xa7 19.\textit{B}xa7 \textit{Bd}7 20.\textit{B}c5 \textit{Ba}8 21.a3 \textit{B}xc5 22.\textit{B}xc5 \textit{B}hb8\textit{N}

With the more active king and rooks, Black is now better, Tleptsoch – Arslanov, Moscow 2012.

This is safest, according to GM Vitiugov, and while I disagree with his characterization of the move (and tend to think of it as more “ambitious” than “safe”), I have made it the main recommendation.

10.\textit{B}xd4 \textit{W}xd4 11.\textit{B}b3 \textit{W}b6
11...\textit{W}a4 was suggested by Simon Williams in his \textit{Killer French} DVD, although later in his French book, Williams decided to avoid this line entirely by playing 6...\textit{B}c8. After 11...\textit{W}a4?! White can play 12.b3 \textit{W}a5, and now Solovjov's 13.b4!\textit{N}.

GM Moskalenko steers clear of this variation, instead recommending lines with an early ...\textit{B}h6-f5. I do not agree with the approach of avoiding this line. Although White does have compensation for his pawn, this does not mean it is enough to claim an advantage. Black only has to succeed in finding a safe set-up, and then he may well have chances to play for the win later.

12.\textit{B}e3 \textit{W}d8!
In my opinion, this is the best square for the queen in this line. After many hours of analysis I couldn't find anything wrong with this move, despite Antic & Maksimovic dismissing it in their book \textit{The Modern French}. 
12...\( \text{a}5 \) can be met by 13.b4.

12...\( \text{c}7 \\
This is Vitiugov’s choice.

13.\( \text{c}1 \text{c}6 \text{14.\( \text{a}4! \)
14.a3 \( \text{e}7 \\
15.\( \text{e}1 \) is the move order given by Antic & Maksimovic. Now I quite like 15...\( \text{a}6 \text{16.\( \text{b}1 \text{d}8! \). While the idea of \( \text{a}4 \) is still in the air, postponing ...\( \text{c}8 \) makes sense. If White plays with b2-b4 for example Black can consider ...\( \text{b}5 \) followed by ...\( \text{a}5 \) and the rook is useful on a8. Or, for example, 17.h3 \( \text{b}5 \text{18.\( \text{d}3 \text{c}8 \) and I cannot see how White can improve his position, while Black has the idea of ...\( \text{a}5 \), exchanging rooks and playing ...\( \text{c}4 \), and then ...\( \text{b}8 \) and so on. It seems that only Black can be better here. Note that his extra central pawn means that Black can afford to remain with his king in the centre a little longer.

14...\( \text{a}5 \\
14...\( \text{a}6!? \text{N} \) could be investigated here, though it is obvious that White has compensation.

15.\( \text{a}5! \\
This may seem a surprising decision, but it allows White to gain counterplay.

15...\( \text{d}6 \text{16.\( \text{c}7 \) \( \text{e}7 \)

16.b4!\( \text{N} \\
17.\( \text{b}2 \) was tested in Polivanov – Vysochin, Lvov 2010, but my proposal is an improvement on this.

17...\( \text{c}6 \\

13.\( \text{g}5 \\
This is the recommendation for White in The Modern French, but in my opinion it only gives White compensation, not an advantage. The situation is highly unclear, but not at all bad for Black.

13.\( \text{d}4 \text{c}6 \text{14.f4!? \( \text{c}5\text{=} \)

13.\( \text{c}5 \text{c}6 \text{14.\( \text{xf}8 \) \( \text{xf}8 \) may give White just enough compensation for dynamic equality.

13.\( \text{b}3 \text{c}6 \text{14.\( \text{ac}1 \) (14.\( \text{xb}7? \) \( \text{b}8 \) 15.\( \text{a}6 \text{b}4 \) is good for Black) 14...\( \text{b}8 \) (or 14...\( \text{a}5!? \text{N} \) 15.\( \text{fe}1 \text{e}7 \text{16.b1} \text{0–0} \text{17.\( \text{d}3 \text{g}6 \text{18.\( \text{h}6 \) Nun – Karnik, Pardubice 1992, and now Black should play: 18...\( \text{b}4 \text{N} \text{19.\( \text{d}2 \text{c}8\text{=} \)

13.\( \text{c}1 \text{c}6 \text{14.h4} \\
14.\( \text{e}1 \text{e}7 \) and it is not easy to see how White is going to improve his position further, while Black has the standard plan of aiming for play on the queenside. 15.a3
Playing the French

\[ \text{Ex8 (15...\texttt{b}8?! is also playable) 16.b4 a6} \]

\[ 17.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{b}5 18.\texttt{d}2 (18.\texttt{d}3?! \texttt{a}5!) 18...a5 (18...0-0 is possible, but it seems sensible to first develop the play on the queenside) 19.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{xc}5 20.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{axb}4 21.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{e}7 22.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{xc}5 (22...0-0?! followed by ...\texttt{b}6 is fine as well) 23.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{c}7 24.\texttt{xc}1 \texttt{c}6 25.\texttt{d}3 (25.f4?! 0-0?) 25...0-0 26.\texttt{xb}5 \texttt{b}8 27.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6 28.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6 The position has simplified into a level ending.} \]

14...\texttt{e}7 15.\texttt{h}5

Colovic - Zanengho, Cesenatico 2012. Now an instructive reorganization is:

\[ \begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{a} & \text{b} & \text{c} & \text{d} & \text{e} & \text{f} & \text{g} & \text{h} \\
\hline
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\
\hline
\end{array} \]

14...\texttt{e}7!N

This is much better than 14...\texttt{g}6, the only move that has been tried in my database.

Now there is the threat of ...\texttt{d}4! followed by ...\texttt{x}g5, and either the \texttt{e}5- or \texttt{g}5-pawn will fall under circumstances favourable to Black. So White has to act, but how?

Taking on \texttt{h}7 is critical, but leads nowhere.

15.\texttt{x}h7

15.\texttt{x}h7? loses material to 15...\texttt{x}g5.

15.\texttt{f}3 is quite sensible, but hardly challenging.

15...\texttt{b}4?! 16.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{b}5 17.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{g}6! Stopping any \texttt{f}4-\texttt{f}5 nonsense. 18.a3 \texttt{c}6 Black seems better to me; he is a pawn up and all his pieces are well placed.

15...\texttt{b}4 16.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{b}5 17.\texttt{f}3
Chapter 2 – The Euwe System

17.\textit{\texttt{\v{e}}}e1 d4 18.\textit{\texttt{\v{w}}}xd4 (18.\textit{\texttt{\v{f}}}f2 d3\textsuperscript{+}) 18...\textit{\texttt{\v{w}}}xd4 19.\textit{\texttt{\v{w}}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{\v{d}}}d3 and White is in trouble, in view of the line: 20.\textit{\texttt{\v{g}}}g5 \textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xb1 21.\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xb1 \textit{\texttt{\v{c}}}c2 22.\textit{\texttt{\v{f}}}f3 (22.\textit{\texttt{\v{e}}}ed1? \textit{\texttt{\v{d}}}xd4 23.\textit{\texttt{\v{e}}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{\v{c}}}c5\textsuperscript{--}) 22...\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xe1 23.\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xe1 0–0\textsuperscript{+}

17...d4 18.\textit{\texttt{\v{f}}}f2 \textit{\texttt{\v{c}}}c6\textsuperscript{+}

Black is planning ...\textit{\texttt{\v{w}}}d5, perhaps even followed by ...0–0–0! Only Black can enjoy this position.

C2) 6.dxc5

This was very popular a decade ago, and even today you are likely to face this move from time to time. In \textit{The Modern French}, Antic and Maksimovic write: “The best explanation of this move is probably in the realm of chess psychology, starting with the avoidance of the main theoretical lines...” But I would have to disagree with this statement. This line was developed by Evgeny Sveshnikov, who has influenced opening theory a great deal. Perhaps his systems with 2.c3 against the Sicilian and 3.e5 against the French are not the main lines today, but whatever he played was never without strategic ideas in mind. I think that from what I have already said, the strategic idea of 6.dxc5 is obvious: White is trying to find a safe way to place his bishop on the d3-square. Once this is accomplished, then it only remains to overprotect the e5-pawn in Nimzowitschian style to ensure that the ...f6 break does not succeed. If White can achieve that, then Black will certainly suffer positionally.

6...\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xe5

White’s plans involve using his b-pawn to kick away the black minor pieces. He may first develop with C21) 7.\textit{\texttt{\v{d}}}d3, or he may advance immediately with C22) 7.b4.

C21) 7.\textit{\texttt{\v{d}}}d3

We have already seen this approach by White (playing dxc5 and then \textit{\texttt{\v{d}}}d3) and I said that typically we meet it with a quick ...f6, before White is fully prepared for this break. This position is no exception.

7...f6 8.b4

8.\textit{\texttt{\v{f}}}f4 is well met by 8...g5. Then 9.\textit{\texttt{\v{g}}}g3 g4 is fine for Black, while the sacrifice 9.\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xg5 fxg5 10.\textit{\texttt{\v{h}}}h5\textsuperscript{+} \textit{\texttt{\v{f}}}f8 11.\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xg5 \textit{\texttt{\v{e}}}e7 12.\textit{\texttt{\v{f}}}f4 \textit{\texttt{\v{e}}}e8 does not really work for White.

8.\textit{\texttt{\v{e}}}e2 fxe5 9.\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xe5 10.\textit{\texttt{\v{a}}}xe5 \textit{\texttt{\v{f}}}f6\textsuperscript{+} is reminiscent of line A from Chapter 1, but here Black is in a better position to claim an edge by seeking a queen swap.
8...\textit{Be7}?! 
8...\textit{b6} is perfectly sound, but seems a less practical approach due to the continuation 9.b5 \textit{dxe5} 10.\textit{cxe5} fxe5 11.\textit{Wh5}f8. Black will have to defend against White's initiative for some time, and White might well land a trick before Black gets the h8-rook into play. Unless you are a correspondence player, I would suggest following my main recommendation.

\textbf{9.b5} 
\textbf{9.f4}

\textbf{9...Bh6}?! 
This idea looks strong. If White does not take the knight he will just be worse after \textit{...Bf7}.

9...g5? 10.exf6 gxf4 11.fxe7 \textit{Wc7} 12.0-0± Pap – Zaja, Bosnjaci 2010.

9...\textit{Bh6}?!N 
This idea looks strong. If White does not take the knight he will just be worse after \textit{...Bf7}.

10...\textit{Bh6} is perfectly sound, but seems a less practical approach due to the continuation 9.b5 \textit{dxe5} 10.\textit{cxe5} fxe5 11.\textit{Wh5}f8. Black will have to defend against White's initiative for some time, and White might well land a trick before Black gets the h8-rook into play. Unless you are a correspondence player, I would suggest following my main recommendation.

\textbf{9.b5} 
\textbf{9.f4}

\textbf{9...Bh6}?! 
This idea looks strong. If White does not take the knight he will just be worse after \textit{...Bf7}.

9...g5? 10.exf6 gxf4 11.fxe7 \textit{Wc7} 12.0-0± Pap – Zaja, Bosnjaci 2010.
13...\textit{c}e7 14.\textit{d}0-0 \textit{e}5 15.\textit{a}3 \textit{f}7 16.\textit{d}2

This is a small improvement to the stem game of this line: 16...\textit{e}8 17.\textit{ad}1 \textit{g}4 18.\textit{xd}8 \textit{axd}8 was at least equal for Black in Sveshnikov – Savon, Lvov 1978.

17.\textit{xd}8 \textit{hxd}8 18.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xd}3 19.\textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8

Black has fantastic compensation for the exchange in the form of two wonderful bishops. I can assert with confidence that Black is the side holding a small advantage here.

C22) 7.b4

White first plays b4-b5, kicking the knight away from its good square on c6, before placing the bishop on the aggressive d3-square. This has some pros and cons as the structural commitment is obvious. Black chooses between C221) 7...\textit{e}7 and C222) 7...\textit{b}6.

C221) 7...\textit{e}7

This looks unnatural to me because I don’t want to play ...\textit{f}h6 and allow \textit{xh}6 without a particular reason (I prefer more traditional solutions), but this doesn’t mean that it is bad. Indeed, this move has scored well enough in practice.

8.b5

8.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}6 transposes to line C21 above.

8...\textit{a}5 9.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}7!

I prefer this to the rushed 9...\textit{c}4. For more discussion of the timing of the ...\textit{c}4 move, see line C222 below.

10.\textit{f}4

10.0–0 \textit{c}4 attacks both b5 and e5.

10.\textit{e}2 is Houdini’s first choice, though after 10...\textit{h}5!? with the idea of ...\textit{h}6 without fearing structural damage by \textit{xh}6, Black seems fine to me. 11.0–0 \textit{h}6 12.a4 \textit{b}3 13.\textit{a}2 \textit{xc}1 14.\textit{xc}1 This was played in Ubezio – Lagrotteria, Forli 1993.
Now I like 14...a6!N, which makes any ideas White may have with c3-c4 much less dangerous.

10...\textbf{c}4

This natural move has the double threat of ...\textbf{x}xb5 and ...\textbf{b}2 exchanging the strong d3-bishop.

11.0–0 \textbf{x}xb5

11...\textbf{b}2 or 11...a6!? 12.bxa6 \textbf{b}2 also lead to positions that are slightly more comfortable for Black.

12.\textbf{d}4 \textbf{d}7 13.\textbf{g}4

13...g5! 14.\textbf{x}xc4 h5! 15.\textbf{e}2 \textbf{xc}4 16.\textbf{xc}4 dxc4 17.\textbf{e}3 \textbf{h}6

White was clearly on the ropes against the fantastic French Defence player, Mikhail Ulibin. It is interesting to see a few more moves.

18.\textbf{d}2 \textbf{g}4 19.\textbf{xc}4 \textbf{e}8 20.\textbf{d}6+ \textbf{x}d6 21.exd6 e5

21...f6 followed by putting the king on f7 may be a slightly better way to play.

22.\textbf{f}3 \textbf{xe}3 23.fxe3 f6 24.\textbf{d}2 0–0 25.\textbf{f}2 \textbf{g}7

Black was clearly better in Sveshnikov - Ulibin, Chelyabinsk 1989, although the game ended in a draw after White saved a completely lost position. But what really matters is that Ulibin's opening play was very instructive.

C222) 7...\textbf{b}6 8.b5 \textbf{a}5 9.\textbf{d}3

9...\textbf{e}7!

Black should not rush with:

9...\textbf{c}4

"The threat is more dangerous than the execution", as Nimzowitsch would say. I think this aggressive-looking move is inaccurate; Black should develop first and attack the e5-pawn later.

10.a4 \textbf{c}7 11.\textbf{e}2 a6 12.bxa6 \textbf{b}xa6 13.0–0 \textbf{e}7

14.\textbf{bd}2!

This might not give White an objective advantage, but it leads to positions that are
more difficult for Black to play.
After 14.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{d}3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{d}4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}4}}\) dx\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}}4}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}4}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}4}}\) 0–0 18.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{d}3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{g}6}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{h}4}\) Black seems to be able to force a draw with accurate play: 19...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{d}6}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{h}5}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}f}3}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{g}xf}3}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{w}xe}5}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{hxg}6}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}g}3\dagger\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{h}h}1\) \(\text{\texttt{w}h}3\dagger\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{g}g}1\) \(\text{\texttt{w}xe}5\dagger\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{h}h}1}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}x\texttt{h}1}\) 0–½ Kharlov – Svidler, Novosibirsk 1995.

14...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}4}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}4}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}4}}\) dx\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}}4}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}3}}\) 0–0 18.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{d}6}}\)

In the following correspondence game Black defended well and drew, but it would be no fun to try and defend over the board.

18...\(\text{\texttt{w}d}8\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g}7}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b}6}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{b}4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}d}7\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}8}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{g}5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{g}6}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{d}6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}d}6}\) 25.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{e}6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h}6}\) 26.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{f}3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}6}}\) 27.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}8}}\) 28.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{e}5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}e}5}\) 29.\(\text{\texttt{w}xe}5\) \(\text{\texttt{f}6}\) 30.\(\text{\texttt{w}e}2\) \(\text{\texttt{h}1}\) –½ Hausdorf – Gatto, corr. 2010.

10.0–0 \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}8}}\)

10...\(\text{\texttt{w}c}7\) followed by ...\(\text{\texttt{a}6}\) is liable to lead to the liquidation of the queenside. Black will have better chances to put his opponent under pressure if he keeps this idea in reserve.

11.\(\text{\texttt{a}4}\) \(\text{\texttt{g}6}\)

Leaving the queen on the d8-h4 diagonal makes it difficult for White to arrange an effective h4-h5-h6. If he tries to prepare it with g2-g3 then after 0–0 followed by ...\(\text{\texttt{f}6}\), White will have problems with the f3-square.

12.\(\text{\texttt{e}1}\) 0–0?

This move order is my recommendation for Black, although 12...\(\text{\texttt{w}e}7\)! is also playable and may well transpose. This is examined in illustrative Game 3 on page 50.

12...\(\text{\texttt{c}4}\)

Once again, I think it is too soon for this move, as White is ready to offer the exchange of knights:

13.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{d}2}}\) 1 dx\(\text{\texttt{d}2}\)

13...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{a}5}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{c}4}±\)

14.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}d}2}\) 0–0

15.\(\text{\texttt{c}1}\)!

With the c3-pawn well defended, White is ready to meet the ...\(\text{\texttt{f}6}\) break.

15...\(\text{\texttt{f}6}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{e}6}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}f}6\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{g}5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{w}f}7\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{e}3}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}e}3}\) 19...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{e}3}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{w}f}6\)\(\texttt{f}6\) ±

White is slightly better.

13.\(\text{\texttt{a}2}\)

White may be tempted by:

13.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{c}2}}\)

Hoping that the idea with \(\text{\texttt{g}5}\) will gain strength, but it turns out not to be the case.

13...\(\text{\texttt{e}7}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{g}5}\) \(\text{\texttt{f}6}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{e}6}\) \(\text{\texttt{g}6}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}g}6}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{f}x}g}6\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{h}5}\) (17.\(\text{\texttt{d}3}\) \(\text{\texttt{g}4}±\)) 17...\(\text{\texttt{w}f}6\)\(\texttt{d}6\) ±

16...\(\text{\texttt{e}5}\)!

16...\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{f}e}8}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}g}6}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{h}g}6}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{g}x}g}6\)\(\texttt{f}6\) would show the benefit of the white queen being placed on c2.

17.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{f}8}}\)

17...\(\text{\texttt{x}e}5\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}e}5}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}f}8}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbf{x}f}8}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{\textbf{f}1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e}4}\)
20...\textit{d}e2 \textit{h}h4\rightarrow
17...\textit{xf}3\frown 18.gxf3 \textit{xf}8 19.\textit{h}h1 \textit{h}h6
20.\textit{g}g1\frown \textit{xf}7

With ideas such as ...\textit{c}7-e5, the position looks like good fun for Black.

13...\textit{e}7!N

This is the standard recipe that I recommend. Black wants to double rooks on the c-file and the only way for White to stop this (at least temporarily) is by playing the bishop to \textit{g}5.

13...f5?! may not be too bad, but it leads to a kind of position that I would never recommend for Black. 14.exf6!N (1 4.gae2? \textit{h}h4! was torture for White in Shaw – A. Grant, Dreghorn 1995) 14...\textit{xf}6 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{f}7 16.\textit{c}3 \textit{xc}3 17.\textit{xe}3 \textit{xe}4! 18.\textit{xe}6! \textit{hx}g6 19.\textit{bd}2\frown Given the choice, I would certainly opt for White's position.

14.\textit{g}5!

This seems to be the critical continuation, and it is the only move played in this position.

13...a3 is simply met by 13...\textit{c}5\frown. Although White is not a lot worse, he is certainly the one who is seeking equality.

13.\textit{bd}2? allows 13...\textit{c}5\frown with an effective double attack on the \textit{f}2- and \textit{c}3-pawns.
13...f6 14...e3?!

White had to try:

14.exf6N gxf6 15...h6

White prevents castling and can play for tricks in an unclear position; otherwise he is just worse because of his structure. Of course Black's centre pawns and active pieces promise him good play, but I am not sure if he is objectively better.

15...g8

a) 15...d4 with the idea of ...c7 also seems playable for Black.

b) 15...d8?? plans to go to b8 with the king. 16.xe3exxe3 17...xe3 c7 (17...c5 first might be objectively stronger, but I want to show that Black can afford to sacrifice the d-pawn) 18.xg6 hxg6 19...xh5 b8 Even a pawn down, Black is fine because of his superior structure. If White tries to keep his extra pawn he will be subjected to serious positional pressure. For example, 20.d1 e5 21.b2 g5 22.f1 c4 23.e1 e6 and Black’s compensation is obvious.

16...f7 17.g3 d8?

The king heads for b8 once more.

18...c2

With the idea of playing c-c4 if the king steps onto the c-file.

18...e5 19...bd2

19.c4 can be met by 19...e4, though 19...f4 followed by ...h5 is also great for Black.
16.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{bd2}}}} 0–0 17.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c1}}}  \textit{\textbf{c7}} 18.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{b3}}}}}}
\begin{itemize}
\item 18...\textit{\textbf{c4}} 19.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xc4}}}  \textit{\textbf{xc4}} 20.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{bd2}}}  \textit{\textbf{c7}}}}
\item 21.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{b3}}}  \textit{\textbf{fc8}}}
\end{itemize}
Black has completed his desired set-up.

22.\textit{\textbf{g3}}
\begin{itemize}
\item 22.\textit{\textbf{d4}} f4!? 23.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e1}}}  \textit{\textbf{h4!}}}
\item 22.\textit{\textbf{c4}} a6! 23.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{ec3}}}  \textit{\textbf{dxc4}} 24.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xc4}}}  \textit{\textbf{xc4}}}}
\item 25.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xc4}}}  \textit{\textbf{xc4}}} 26.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{wc4}}}  \textit{\textbf{axb5}} 27.axb5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e8}}} and Black is very slightly better.}}
\end{itemize}

22...a6
\begin{itemize}
\item 22...f4 also looks natural, though first improving the rook with 22...\textit{\textbf{c5!}} may be best.
\end{itemize}

23.\textit{\textbf{d4}} axb5 24.axb5
\begin{itemize}
\item 24.\textit{\textbf{xb5? \textit{\textbf{xb5}}} followed by ...f4 is much better for Black who has got rid of his problem piece. I know that this bishop is the favourite piece of every true devotee of the French Defence, but it doesn't hurt to exchange it sometimes!}
\end{itemize}

24.\textit{\textbf{f4}} 25.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e1}}}  \textit{\textbf{g5}} 26.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f3}}}  \textit{\textbf{g4}} 27.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{b4}}}  \textit{\textbf{c5}}}}
\begin{itemize}
\item 27...\textit{\textbf{e8}} with the idea of ...\textit{\textbf{f7}}, or possibly ...\textit{\textbf{f8}} followed by ...\textit{\textbf{g6}}, looks promising to me.
\end{itemize}

28.\textit{\textbf{b6}} f5g3
\begin{itemize}
\item 28...f5 maintains the pressure.
\end{itemize}

29.\textit{\textbf{h5xg3}} \textit{\textbf{g4}} 30.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e3}}}  \textit{\textbf{h3+}} 31.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{g2}}}  \textit{\textbf{f4+}}}
\begin{itemize}
\item 32.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{g1}}}  \textit{\textbf{h3+}} 33.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{g2}}}}}
\end{itemize}

The French expert Stefan Kindermann decided to force the draw at this point. As this was a team event, one can speculate that Kindermann just needed a draw to secure the team's success, as he is still slightly better. Maybe you can ask him if you see him! $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I introduced the flexible Euwe System against the Advance Variation. White has a couple of ways to avoid it, such as Kupreichik's A) 5.\textit{\textbf{e3}} and Murey's B) 5.\textit{\textbf{g3}}, but Black has no problems dealing with those systems.

We then moved on to examine two 6th move continuations – the Milner-Barry Gambit with 6.\textit{\textbf{d3}} and Sveshnikov's 6.\textit{\textbf{xc5}}.

Nowadays the gambit with C1) 6.\textit{\textbf{d3}} has regained something of its former reputation, mainly based on the discovery that the 9.\textit{\textbf{bd2}} line gives White reasonable compensation, which can be dangerous in practice. I offered a choice of replies. The complex C122) 9...\textit{\textbf{e7}} is the most ambitious line, but if that does not appeal to you then C121) 9...\textit{\textbf{xf3+}} is a practical alternative. In the lines where White doesn't play 9.\textit{\textbf{bd2}}, Black can even obtain an edge.

Sveshnikov's C2) 6.\textit{\textbf{xc5}} is better than its reputation. My favourite way of meeting it is to put the queen on e7 and then double rooks on the c-file. In this way Black aims to get the maximum out of White's concessions on the c-file.
Chapter 3

6.a3

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 dxc6 5.dxc3 cxd7 6.a3

A) 6... \text{ge7} \\
B) 6...c4!

B1) 7.e2?! \\
B2) 7.g3 \text{a5} 8.hd2 \\
B21) 8...e7 \\
B211) 9.h4 \\
B212) 9.ge2 \\
B22) 8...c6 \\
B221) 9.h3?! \\
B222) 9.h4 \\
B223) 9.ge2 \\
B3) 7.e3 \\

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Game 6 Petr Haba – Eckhard Schmittdiel, Austria 2008 64 \\
Game 7 Yochanan Afek – Stephen Giddins, Amsterdam 2001 67
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

**Diagram Preview**

1. **Find a strong plan for Black.**
   - Evaluate the move 15...â"±c2.
   - (page 70)

2. **How can Black obtain counterplay?**
   - (page 56)

3. **Find a good plan for Black.**
   - (page 64)

4. **Find Black's best plan.**
   - (page 70)

5. **White's last move (9.â"±bd2) was inaccurate. Can you see why?**
   - (page 59)

6. **How should Black proceed?**
   - (page 68)

7. **How should Black meet the attack on the rook?**
   - (page 73)
This development scheme involving a2-a3 and b2-b4 was very popular in the 90s, and I am sure that it will continue to appear in tournaments for many years to come. The simple reason for this is that White's play is easy to understand and ambitious at the same time. White wants to play b2-b4 and claim more space, giving him opportunities to play on both flanks. If Black exchanges on d4, then White can play b2-b3 (or b2-b4 and later b2-b3) and c1, and Black must always consider how to defend against a great knight appearing on c5. On the other flank White can typically play with g2-g4, e1 and f2-f4, not fearing a counterstroke in the centre. An important detail is that he may be able to put his bishop on d3, as the d4-pawn will be well protected by the b2-bishop.

From Black's point of view, the good thing is that these plans involve a lot of white moves, so Black should use the time available to take action to stop this ideal development. The hottest theoretical line today starts with 6...f6!, Black's idea being to continue with ...c7 and ...0-0-0. This takes advantage of the fact that White cannot play a quick a3-b5 in combination with his bishop coming to f4, which might quickly refute Black's idea. (That's why Black is not advised to play 6...f6 with the same idea against 6.e2!) Yet, although the idea is so simple, I am not that crazy about it. It reflects the modern thinking in chess, that to play for a win with Black you must achieve unclear positions. I prefer the more classical approach of stepping on the shoulders of our “French Defence fathers” (such as Petrosian, Botvinnik, Korchnoi, Psakhis etc.), and choosing to study clear strategic solutions in order to form a strong basic understanding. Once these foundations are set, then deviating becomes easier and less risky.

Returning to the present position, my main recommendation is a move that I find both ambitious and consistent with Black's general strategy:

6...c4!

Now White will only be able to bring his bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal if he plays b2-b3 (thus creating a weakness on c3, on a semi-open file), or if he plays the manoeuvre e2-d1-c2 which is really slow and is moreover likely to be prevented by Black putting his own bishop on a4. I will introduce some typical ideas for Black by means of two instructive games, before moving on to a deeper study of the theoretical recommendations.

Before then, I shall try to satisfy readers who would like to play something strategically less demanding by looking at 6...c7!?. The idea here is that after 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 f5 White has to defend the d4-pawn, and this gives Black the time to play 9...b5! followed by 10...a5 liquidating the whole queenside. This is an easy system to learn, but of course it is rather drawish as the situation quickly becomes simplified.

Here I'll examine 7.e2, 7.g3, and what is probably the strongest move, 7.e3.
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Qc6 5.Qf3 Qd7 6.a3

We will take a look at A) 6...Qge7 before examining my main recommendation of B) 6...c4!.

First I would like to just briefly mention 6...a5?!, a line that I cannot recommend. This can be met by 7.Qd3! and White will be able to retreat the bishop to c2 without fearing ...Qb4 from Black. An instructive continuation is:

7...Qb6 8.Qc2 cxd4 9.cxd4 Qge7 10.Qc3 Qg6 11.h4± In my database, White has scored 10/10 from this position – stay away from this, please!

A) 6...Qge7

If you want an easy-to-learn option, then this may appeal; the theory on this line comes to an end quite quickly.

7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 Qf5 9.Qb2

9.Qc3 is met in similar fashion by 9...b5!.

10.Qc3

After 10.Qd3 a5 the queenside gets liquidated, meaning that White cannot hope for an edge: 11.Qxf5 exf5 12.Qc3?! axb4 13.Qxb5 bxa3 14.Qc3 Wb6 15.We2 Qd8 16.Qxd6† Qxd6 17.exd6† We6 18.0–0 Qb5 19.Qb1 Qxe2 20.Qxb6 Qxf3 Black was much better in Plukkel – Castaneda, Wijk aan Zee 2012, though White somehow escaped with a draw.

10...a5 11.Qxb5?!

White should prefer:

11.Qxb5!

This capture is far more natural and leads to an equal position.

11...axb4 12.axb4

9...b5!

A move that GM Igor Glek has played several times. The point is that White doesn't gain anything by playing 10.Qxb5, as after 10...Qxe5 Black regains the pawn and is fine.
Chapter 3 - 6.a3

GAME 4

Dmitry Lavrik – Igor Glek

Moscow 2009

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3  5.a3  ge7  
6.Df3  5 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 9.b2  
b5 10.  a5 11.xb5 axb4 12.a4  e7  
13.d3 0–0

This is where we stopped our theoretical examination, claiming that White faces some problems.

14.0–0

14...a5!?

Glek improves on an earlier game: 14...a7  
15.e2  c8 ½–½ Saltaev – Glek, Germany 2005.

14...b6

This was played in another game which had a similar course to our main one.

15.g4?!

This type of operation is fine if the queenside is stable and Black cannot penetrate the white position, but here he can do so with ...a5-c4. This means that White obtains no real attack, but remains with weaknesses that can be exploited later.

15.b3 followed by ...c8 and ...c4 is probably the scenario White wanted to avoid.

15...h4 16.xh4 xh4 17.f4

White wants to cut the bishop out of the game with g4-g5.

17...e7 18.g2 a5

19.f5

This is more consistent than 19.c1? a4  
20.f5 Stojic – Dole, Singapore 2009, and now Black could simply have played 20...xb5,  
when White’s attack is not worth a piece.

19.a4 20.e2 f6!  
20...xb5 21.axb5 xa1 22.xa1 bxb5 is  
also strong, and if 23.c1 then just 23.e8+  
and White can make nothing out of the pin.

21.h1 h6!

Black stops any g4-g5 nonsense and stands much better.

15.d2 b6
Faced with ideas of ...e8 and possibly ...g5, White now resorted to the typical blow:

16.g4?!
I don’t like this move, but I find it difficult to suggest anything better at this point.

16...hxg5 17.hxg5 18.axb5 Wxb5
19.Wxf5 Efc4+

16...hxg5 17.axb5 1d4 18.ad4 Wxd4
19.Ec4 Ab3!
19...Exa1!? 20.Exa1 Exc4+ was also possible.

20.Exa8 Exa8 21.Wxb3

21...dxc4?!
21...Ec5?? was stronger, with the point that knight moves can be powerfully met by either ...a3 or ...Eg4†.

But probably the simplest way was: 21...Eg4† 22.Ed1 dxc4 23.Exc4 Efc3† 24.Ed1 Ec8 25.Ee2 Ed5† It is well known that with opposite-coloured bishops on the board, the attacking side has a big advantage. In this case the white king is insecure, Black is a pawn up, the e5-pawn is weak, and Black’s passed pawn is more dangerous than White’s.

Black wants to march his king to c4 and then advance his passed pawn.

29.Ede3?
Cutting off the king with 29.Ed1! was correct, although Black could then play 29...b3 30.Ed7† Ed6 31.Ed3 Ee5! 32.h3 g5. Black is probably winning here, but it is not trivial and there would certainly be a long game ahead.

29...Ed8† 30.Ec4
After 30.Ee3 Ed4 31.h3 Ed6, Black has the better king and the better rook, so with correct technique he should win. The following sample variation shows some instructive points: 32.Ee8 f6 33.b6 e5 34.b7 Ec7 35.Ec6 g6 36.Ee4 Ed2† 37.Ef3 f5 38.gxf5 gxf5 39.Exf5 Ed4† 40.Ee2 Ef5 41.Ed3 Ef2† 42.Ed3 Ed4 and Black should win.

0–1
White has an important choice to make about where to develop his king's bishop. He may place it in the centre with B1) \(7.\text{e}2?!\), on the flank after B2) \(7.\text{g}3\), or may delay the decision with B3) \(7.\text{e}3\).

\(7.\text{bd}2\) is a common move order, and after \(7...\text{a}5\) White chooses between \(8.\text{e}2\), and \(8.\text{g}3\), transposing to lines B1 and B2 respectively.

\(7.\text{f}4 \text{b}6 8.\text{c}2 \text{f}6\)

This is not the best square for this bishop. Practice has shown that on g2 or h3 the bishop provides much better support to White's plan of expanding on the kingside. However, this move should be looked at, because it is seen quite often in the games of club players.

As mentioned above, White often reaches this line by first playing \(7.\text{bd}2\) and then \(7...\text{a}5 8.\text{e}2\). As the position is closed, many move orders are possible to reach the same positions.

Black has usually played this closed system with the queen placed on the b6-square, but Black benefits from not having committed the queen to that square. The Ukrainian GM Moskalenko, in his inspiring book *The Flexible French*, mentions a plan with \(...\text{e}7-\text{c}8-\text{b}6\),
with the queen going to c7 to keep the c3-pawn under observation, thereby making the principled b2-b3 break less strong. In our case we have a whole tempo more to reach this position because we can put the queen to c7 in one move rather than two (Moskalenko plays 5...\(\text{Wb6}\) instead of our flexible 5...\(\text{d7}!\)). And there is another important benefit from the queen being on d8 rather than b6: Black can play ...\(\text{c6}\) followed by ...\(\text{d7}!\) and then ...\(\text{a4}!\).

7...\(\text{a5}\) 8.\(\text{bd2}\) \(\text{c6}!\) 9.0-0

Now the move I mentioned:

9...\(\text{d7}!\)

More than ten years ago I first saw this position in Nunn's Chess Openings with the evaluation of '+'". Black aims to play ...\(\text{a4}\) and then ideally ...\(\text{c2}\), making his traditional bad bishop the best minor piece on the board! I am not convinced that the evaluation of NCO is 100% accurate (I'd say that it is more close to equal), but it certainly impressed me so much that I made the French Defence my main weapon against 1.e4.

The following typical game shows what Black wants to achieve here, and at the same time shows how White should not play.

**GAME 5**

H.A. Hussein – Rainer Buhmann

Dresden (ol) 2008

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \(\text{c6}\) 5.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{d7}\)

6.a3 \(\text{c4}\) 7.\(\text{bd2}\) \(\text{a5}\) 8.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{c6}\) 9.0-0 \(\text{d7}\)

10.\(\text{e1}!\)

Much better was 10.\(\text{g5}!\) in order to start the play on the kingside (where White is stronger) with \(f2\)-f4, g2-g4, h2-h4-h5 etc. If Black plays ...h6 then White retreats with \(\text{h3}\), leaving his f-pawn free to move forward. Sometimes also \(\text{e1}\) is played with the idea to relocate this knight to e3, via g2. In any case the bishop is better on g2 or h3 in this structure and we are going to examine what is happening in those positions in the examples that follow. But first have some fun with this one that looks like torture for White

10...\(\text{a4}\)

11.\(\text{d1}?!\)

This is too compliant: White exchanges his strong bishop for Black's traditionally bad French bishop! Perhaps White feared that after ...\(\text{c2-g6}\) the black bishop would become too strong.
According to GM Neil McDonald on ChessPublishing, 11.\textit{g}5 is again better.

11...\textit{d}e7 12.\textit{x}a4 \textit{w}xa4 13.\textit{d}d1 \textit{w}xd1
14.\textit{x}xd1 \textit{d}e6 15.\textit{b}1

15...\textit{f}6!

Trying to make the e5-pawn weak is the natural plan in this position.

16.\textit{f}1?

And White accepts the weakness! It must be better to play 16.exf6, though it is true that after 16...gxf6 followed by playing ...\textit{d}d6 and ...\textit{f}7 and preparing to use the g-file, Black's game has a feeling of natural logic.

16...\textit{x}e5 17.\textit{d}xe5 \textit{x}xe5 18.dxe5 \textit{e}7
19.\textit{c}3 0-0 20.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}6 21.\textit{f}3 \textit{b}5
22.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}8! 23.\textit{d}4

23...\textit{g}5! 24.h3 \textit{h}5 25.\textit{b}d1 \textit{f}7 26.\textit{e}3 \textit{g}6
27.\textit{h}2 \textit{xd}4 28.\textit{cxd}4 \textit{b}5

Black wins the endgame quite easily by displaying good technique.

29.\textit{f}1 \textit{c}f8 30.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}8

The bishop will target the d4-pawn.

31.\textit{e}3 \textit{f}5 32.\textit{c}2 \textit{a}5 33.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}6
34.\textit{c}2 \textit{f}4 35.\textit{c}d2 \textit{b}4!

Black creates another problem for White. Soon he won't be able to defend on two or three fronts simultaneously.

36.g3 \textit{e}4 37.\textit{axb}4 \textit{axb}4 38.b3?

This loses, but White's position is beyond hope. Waiting with something like 38.\textit{g}2 can be strongly met by 38...\textit{a}8 or 38...\textit{c}8.

38...\textit{cxb}3 39.\textit{g}2 \textit{a}8 40.\textit{f}1 \textit{xd}4! 41.\textit{b}2
41.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 42.\textit{xd}4 \textit{b}2 and Black promotes.

41...\textit{xd}1 42.\textit{xd}1 \textit{a}3 43.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}4
44.\textit{b}1 \textit{b}2

White resigned because of 45.\textit{xb}2 \textit{a}2 winning the knight.

0–1

\textbf{GAME 6}

Petr Haba – Eckhard Schmittdiel

\textit{Austria 2008}

1.d4 \textit{e}6 2.\textit{e}4 \textit{d}5 3.c5 \textit{c}5 4.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}6 5.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}7
6.a3 \textit{e}4 7.g3

The g2- or h3-square is a better place for the bishop in this line as from there it can assist White's expansion on the kingside. Some players might find it strange to be told that White's best plan in this position is to start pushing pawns in front of his king, when it is obvious that Black will castle on the other side.
of the board! Still, White has to play on the side on which he is stronger.

The above few moves are discussed in the theory section starting on page 64, and here the standard 10.0–0 is covered in line B223 on page 70.

10...a4 11.e2 0–0–0
The play until now has been fairly typical. White continues with a logical plan of development.

12.f4?!
The idea of putting the bishop here is twofold. Firstly, White wants to avoid the exchange of this bishop for the a5-knight (after ...b3). It is not clear if this exchange is always a good idea for Black, but experts such as Psakhis have employed it. At least by exchanging a minor piece, Black gets more space for his remaining ones. The second idea of White's move is to be prepared for the ...f6 break. However, the way I recommend playing for Black contains neither of those ideas (...b3 or ...f6), and so we need not be too concerned. And you should remember that every move contains some negative aspects as well; the possibility that this bishop may be hit with ...g5 offers Black encouragement.

12.c7 13.h4 h6
Playing g5 is not so strong for White when he cannot quickly push his f-pawn, but playing 13...h6 is not so much about preventing g5 as preparing ...g5.

14.h5

14...g5! 15.e3
White now has the idea of using the f6-square with the manoeuvre f1–h2–g4.

After 15.hxg6 fxg6 Black obtains good counterplay.
15...\textit{g}7 16.\textit{h}1\textit{f}2 \textit{f}5 17.\textit{g}4 \textit{b}8

Both sides have chances here, although I slightly prefer Black's.

18.0–0 \textit{c}8

Black frees the d8-square for the queen, from where it will control some dark squares.

18...\textit{d}f8 also makes sense, and 18...\textit{e}7 is similar too.

19.\textit{f}6 \textit{d}8 20.\textit{g}4 \textit{x}e3

20...\textit{e}7 is Houdini's initial preference, but after 21.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}8 22.\textit{x}g8 \textit{x}g8 23.\textit{f}4 \textit{gxf4} 24.\textit{xf4} \textit{e}8 25.\textit{af}1 neither side has any objective advantage.

21.\textit{xe3} \textit{xf6} 22.\textit{xf6}

22...\textit{f}8

Black prophylactically protects f7 in order to threaten to take the f6-pawn; the immediate 22...\textit{xf6}? is met by 23.\textit{e}5.

22...\textit{c}7 has the idea of ...\textit{cd}8-d6-b6 followed by ...\textit{e}8 and ...\textit{c}6, and Black finally threatens ...\textit{e}5. This might seem to be a fantasy scenario, because White also gets to play some moves. But this is what actually happened in a training game I played while testing this position with some clubmates. By the way, training with friendly games at your club or on the internet, starting from interesting tabiyas, is an excellent way to gain some useful experience in an opening you are studying.

23.\textit{e}4

23.\textit{ae}1 should not be met by 23...\textit{xf6}?! 24.\textit{e}4\textup{#}, but rather with further prophylaxis by 23...\textit{c}7?! defending the 7th rank, after which taking on f6 becomes a more realistic option.

23...\textit{dxe4} 24.\textit{e}5 \textit{c}7 25.\textit{xe4} \textit{c}6 26.\textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 27.\textit{xc4}!

27.\textit{f}3 \textit{a}8=

27...\textit{xe5}\textup{#} 28.\textit{xc7}\textup{#} 29.\textit{dxe5}

A double rook endgame has been reached, in which Black has the initiative.

29...\textit{c}4 30.\textit{f}2 \textit{exf4} 31.\textit{e}3?

31.\textit{ad}1 is much better – open files matter in rook endgames! After 31...\textit{e}4 32.\textit{d}7 \textit{exe5} Black is better, but White still has chances of fighting for the draw. For example, 33.\textit{fd}1 \textit{f}5\textup{#} 34.\textit{g}3 \textit{xf6} 35.\textit{e}7. White threatens to double on the 7th rank, so Black has to give back a pawn with 35...\textit{e}5 in order to defend with ...\textit{b}6. Black remains better, but the battle is not over.

31...\textit{g}3\textup{#} 32.\textit{e}4 \textit{g}2 33.\textit{fd}1 \textit{e}2\textup{#}
34.\textit{d}d4?
White can put up more of a fight with 34.\textit{f}3 \textit{xb}2 35.\textit{d}3.

34...\textit{d}8\textsuperscript{+} 35.\textit{c}4

35...\textit{e}4\textsuperscript{+}?
This loses a large part of Black's advantage.

After 35...\textit{xd}1 36.\textit{xd}1 \textit{c}7-- Black would win the e5-pawn without allowing any counterplay.

36.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}8\textsuperscript{+}!!
36...\textit{xd}x\textit{d}4\textsuperscript{+}! 37.\textit{c}xd4 \textit{c}7\textsuperscript{+}

37.\textit{b}3 \textit{xd}x\textit{d}4 38.\textit{c}x\textit{d}4
Black is still a little better, but it seems that White can hold the draw with accurate play.

38...\textit{c}7 39.\textit{d}5
39.\textit{c}4! \textit{d}7\textsuperscript{+} 40.\textit{d}3 is a better way to defend.

39...\textit{d}7 40.\textit{d}6 \textit{c}5 41.\textit{e}1 \textit{g}4 42.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}8\textsuperscript{+}!
Allowing an immediate draw, though by this point it is not easy to find a winning plan.

43.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}5
\frac{1}{2}--\frac{1}{2}
A tense struggle, typical for this line.

B2) 7.\textit{g}3
As I explained earlier, this is a better way for White to play the position compared with placing the bishop on the e2-square.

7...\textit{a}5 8.\textit{a}bd2
This position also commonly arises from the move order 7.\textit{bd}2 \textit{a}5 8.\textit{g}3.

B2 1) 8...\textit{c}7

B2 11) 9.h4

B2 12) 9...\textit{g}2.

B2 11) 9.h4 \textit{c}8 10.\textit{h}3
10.\textit{h}5 \textit{h}6 11.\textit{h}4 \textit{a}6 12.\textit{g}2 \textit{c}7 13.\textit{a}e3 0-0-0 14.f4 is recommended in ECO as good for White, but with typical play Black emerges with a fine position: 14...\textit{e}7 15.\textit{h}3 \textit{b}8 16.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}f8\textsuperscript{+} 17.0-0

From here I offer a choice of approaches for Black: B21) 8...\textit{e}7 or B22) 8...\textit{c}6.
Now 17...a6?! 18.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{a}7\) 19.\(\text{b}1\) was unclear in Malaniuk – Bareev, Minsk 1987, although White went on to win a nice game. Instead Black can improve with 17...f6!?N or 17...g6!?N, with good counterplay in either case.

10...\(\text{b}6\) 11.0–0
White does not benefit from delaying castling: 11.\(\text{f}1\) h6 12.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{b}3\) 13.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 14.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{x}c1\) 15.\(\text{x}c1\) 0–0–0 16.f4 h5 (or 16...g5!?N) 17.f5?! \(\text{e}5\) 18.\(\text{xf}5\) \(\text{xf}5\) 19.\(\text{xf}5\) \(\text{g}6\) 20.\(\text{e}3\) f6+ Savchenko – Zvjaginsev, St Petersburg (rapid) 2012.

11...\(\text{c}7\)!
Black is ready to stop White’s dreams on the queenside after ...\(\text{c}7\) and ...0–0–0, so he must think what else the position contains. White has the idea of manoeuvring his knight to e3 (via e1 and g2) and pushing on the kingside. Black’s last move shows that he will be ready for such a scenario. Starting with 11...\(\text{c}7\) is also possible, and may well come to the same thing.

12.\(\text{e}1\)N
This untried move is White’s most consistent continuation.

12.\(\text{g}5?!\) h6! just loses time for White.

12.\(\text{e}1\) has been tried in practice, presumably with the idea of making ...f6 less attractive. 12...\(\text{c}7\) 13.\(\text{h}2\) 0–0–0 14.\(\text{f}4\) h6 was seen in Kudelya – Piven, Belorechensk 2009, when it is obvious that the rook would rather be on f1. Black is ready to strike with ...g5 with the better game, as White’s kingside play is not developed at all.

12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}7\) 13.\(\text{b}1\) 0–0–0 14.\(\text{e}1\) was Harari – McAllan, London 2005. Black should now play:

14...h6N 15.\(\text{g}2\) g5?! 16.h5 \(\text{b}8\) We have a typical situation where Black’s chances are not worse. A sample line is 17.\(\text{e}3\) f5 18.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 19.\(\text{g}4\) e5 20.dxe5 \(\text{g}7\), when the threat of ...\(\text{f}5\)-d3 is strong; following up with ...\(\text{d}7\) and a rook to e8 will regain the pawn for Black with an excellent game.
Black intends ...g5 next, with a big advantage. We can see how useful it is having the bishop on e7.

16.exf6 gxf6
Black is clearly better and should be able to make good use of the g-file.

B212) 9.g2 c8 10.0-0 b6

White could play 11.g5N while he has the chance, although it does not promise any advantage. 11...e7 12.h3 c7 13.f4 (13.f4 0-0-0 14.f3 f5?) 13...g6 14.e2 0-0-0 and Black cannot complain.

11.e1
This enables f1-e3, but on the other hand if Black plays ...h6 then the f3-knight loses its natural retreat to e1.

11...c7
11...h6N is a possible improvement. It is liable to transpose into our main line, but without allowing White the chance to deviate with g5.

11...e7 12.e2 a4 13.h4 was played in Jenull – Schweigert, Willingen 2001, and now I recommend:
13...h6N This move is very useful as it prevents \( \texttt{g5} \), and at the same time prepares \( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{c2-h7} \) should the opportunity arise. 14.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{b1} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) (It is too soon for 14...\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{c2}? \) which is met by the typical 15.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{x4!} \) \( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{xb1} \) 16.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{xa5} \) with good compensation for the exchange.) 15.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{f1} \) 0-0-0 16.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{Edg8} \) Black intends to continue \( ...\texttt{g5} \), with good play on the kingside.

12.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{b1} \)

12.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{g5} \) seems a more logical choice.

12...\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{a4} \) 13.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{e2} \)

13...h6!

Black could also consider: 13...\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{c2}? \) 14.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{xc4} \) (14.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{a1} \) \( \texttt{g6} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{h4} \) \( \texttt{d3\texttt{f3}} \)) 14...\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{xb1} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{xa5} \) a6 This time it is less clear whether White obtains quite enough for the exchange sacrifice.

14.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{f1} \) 0-0-0 15.\( \texttt{h4} \) \( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{b8} \) 16.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{e3} \) \( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{Edg8} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{g4} \)

This was Karamalis – Ntirlis, Patras 2009, and now instead of the weak 18...h5?! I should have played the obvious:

18...\( \texttt{g5\texttt{N}} \) 19.\( \texttt{hxg5} \) \( \texttt{hxg5} \) 20.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{e3} \) \( \texttt{d7}\texttt{!} \) Black prevents \( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{f6} \), and has the more comfortable position.

B22) 8...\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{c6} \)

Black’s plan is to follow up with \( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{d7} \) and \( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{a4} \). White can now go for various set-ups on the kingside: B221) 9.\( \texttt{h3\texttt{?!}} \), B222) 9.\( \texttt{h4} \) or B223) 9.\( \texttt{\textbullet} \texttt{g2} \).
As usual, 9.b3? is weak at this early stage: 9...cxb3 10.axb3 a4 followed by ...c8 with great play for Black. I have met this type of quick b2-b3 strategy countless times in online blitz games!

B221) 9.h3?! In *The Flexible French*, Moskalenko looks at this bishop move (in a related position with the black queen on b6), calling it the "Armenian Fianchetto". The aggressive way in which he suggested dealing with it is also strong in this specific position:

9...d7 10.0–0 a4 11.e2 e7!N

A common mistake here has been: 11.c2?

12.xc4!!


instead saw a comedy of errors: 12.e1 g6 13.f4 h5! (13.e7! was much stronger) 14.f5 xf5 15.xf5 exf5 16.g2 0–0–0 17.f4? (17.b3=) 17...h4! Black was now better, although he lost in the end!

12...b3

Otherwise Black will just be a pawn down.

13.d6+ xd6 14.exd6 xa1 15.e5

15.a4

15.wxd6 16.b5+-

16.xf7 xf7 17.xe6+ f8 18.f3+ f6 19.h6


12.e1 h5 13.g2

13.g5!

Black takes over the initiative on the kingside.
10.\(\text{h}3\)

The “Austrian Fianchetto” in Moskalenko’s terminology.

10.\(\text{h}5\) 0–0–0 11.\(\text{d}4\) is a fairly typical way for White to play, but it seems that Black can gain more than enough counterplay by responding in typical fashion himself: 11...\(\text{a}4\) 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}8\) 13.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{h}6\) Black wants to put the knight on \(\text{e}7\), so he first stops any \(\text{h}5\)-\(\text{h}6\) ideas that would weaken his dark squares on the kingside. 14.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 15.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{g}8\) 16.0–0 \(\text{g}6\). Black has played exactly as in our main line and has achieved a fine game.

10...0–0–0

10...\(\text{a}4\) 11.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}2?\) has been played several times, but it loses to the same combination that we saw in line B221 above.

12.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{b}3\) 13.\(\text{d}6\)† \(\text{xd}6\) 14.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{xa}1\) 15.\(\text{e}5\) and White is winning. Cubas – Rodi, San Bernardo 2005.

11.0–0 \(\text{a}4\)

In a similar situation, but with the queen on \(\text{b}6\) and the bishop on \(\text{d}7\), Portisch has played ...\(\text{f}5\), a solution which Moskalenko likes against the Austrian fianchetto because Black can then continue with ...\(\text{h}6\)-\(\text{f}7\), preparing ...\(\text{g}5\). Unfortunately 11...\(\text{f}5\)? doesn’t work here because White profits from the opening of the position: 12.\(\text{exf}6\) \(\text{gxf}6\) 13.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{e}8\) 14.\(\text{e}2\)±.

“Our” set-up with ...\(\text{c}6\) and ...\(\text{d}7\) is generally better than the ...\(\text{b}6\) lines, but as with all general rules there are exceptions!

12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}8\)? 13.\(\text{e}1\)

13...\(\text{h}6\)N

This move is always useful, so it makes sense to play it straight away.

13...\(\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{c}8\) 15.\(\text{f}4\)?!

This is definitely premature. White should play \(\text{f}4\)-\(\text{f}5\) only after careful preparation, otherwise he just creates weaknesses in his position.

15.\(\text{g}2\) followed by \(\text{e}3\) would keep the situation roughly equal.

15...\(\text{a}8\) 16.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{g}8\) 17.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{h}6\) 18.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}3\)
19.\( \text{b1} \text{xc1} \)

I am not sure about this move, and would prefer 19...g6?, though it makes no great difference as Black got the better of it in the game anyway.

20.\( \text{bxc1} \text{e8} \) 21.\( \text{c1} \text{g6} \) 22.\( \text{c3} \text{f5+} \)

Black was better in Cubas – Dolezal, Carilo 2005.

14.\text{h5} 

14.\( \text{g2} \) can be met by 14...\( \text{c2!} \) or 14...g5!.

14...\( \text{e7} \) 15.\( \text{g2} \)

15...\( \text{g8!} \)

15...\( \text{c2} \) now is bad because 16.\( \text{xc4} \text{b3} \) can be answered by 17.\( \text{d6!} \text{xa1} \) 18.\( \text{xf7+} \).

16.\( \text{e3} \)

16.\( \text{f4?!} \) achieves nothing and after 16...\( \text{ec6} \) Black can consider ...\( \text{c2} \) again, or even ...\( \text{e7-g5} \) to kick the knight and proceed with ...g6.

16.f4? is just weakening: 16...\( \text{c2} \) 17.\( \text{f2} \) g6+

16...g6\( \text{c2} \)

Black has at least equal play.

B223) 9.\( \text{g2} \)
14...\texttt{g}8!N 15.f4
15.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{g}6 16.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{f}5\texttt{=}
15...\texttt{g}5!
Psakhis gives 15...\texttt{g}6, but his assessment was too modest, as Black stands better.
16.hxg6 \texttt{fxg}6
Black has a clear advantage.

12...0-0-0 13.\texttt{d}f3 \texttt{b}3
Black can also wait with 13...\texttt{h}6 14.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{b}8 and then continue with ...\texttt{c}6 and ...\texttt{e}7, when he will be ready to play for ...\texttt{g}8, ...\texttt{g}5, ...\texttt{h}5 and so on.

14.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{xc}1 15.\texttt{x}c1 \texttt{c}6
15...\texttt{h}6 prevents White's next move.

16.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{h}6 17.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{g}6 18.f4

Black now played 18...\texttt{g}7?! in Dgebuadze – Jurek, Schwaebisch Gmuend 2013, but I cannot see the point of this move.

A better plan is 18...\texttt{e}7N 19.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{b}8 20.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{d}g8 21.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{w}d8, when Black is ready to play on the kingside.

Or perhaps even stronger is 18...\texttt{e}7N 19.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{f}5 20.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{e}7 followed by ...\texttt{d}g8. Black is set for action on the kingside with ...\texttt{h}5-h4, ...\texttt{g}5 and so on, and the knight on \texttt{f}5 provides excellent support for this. If White ever plays \texttt{g}3-g4, he'll give Black additional targets for counterplay.

B3) 7.\texttt{e}3

This idea seems to me the most natural, but that doesn't mean that White cannot run into difficulties very soon. White wants to play \texttt{bd}2 without the \texttt{c1}-bishop being boxed in. Another reason for developing the bishop early is that White wants to be able to counter the break ...\texttt{f}6 in an effective way. Although this break is still playable, I prefer a more classical approach: first put the pieces where they belong, and then play for ...\texttt{f}6, ...\texttt{f}5 or ...\texttt{g}5 according to circumstances. If I could see a clear advantage of the quick ...\texttt{f}6 break I would recommend it. I don't, so we stick to the system that offers more clarity. We can follow an instructive game played here.

7...\texttt{a}5
7...\texttt{f}6?! does actually make a lot of sense here. Sveshnikov, in his two-volume work on the Advance Variation, gives the game Sveshnikov – Kalinin, Kharkov 1978, with the evaluation “clearly better for Black”, which is certainly food for thought. Still, I think that by examining the game continuation we learn more about the position in general.
7...\textit{b}6 8.\textit{c}2 \textit{f}6N also makes some sense, although there is no practical material here and the situation is not at all clear. 9.\textit{bd}2 \textit{c}7 10.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}5 11.\textit{g}3 \textit{g}4 12.\textit{ex}f6 \textit{d}6 13.\textit{g}5 is highly unclear. Again I have to state that I prefer simpler strategic play to such wild complications.

9.\textit{h}4N

9.g4?! h5 10.\textit{h}3 hxg4 11.\textit{x}g4 \textit{g}6 was fine for Black in Afek – Zueger, Groningen 1991.

9...\textit{f}5 10.\textit{f}4 \textit{c}7

After 10...\textit{e}7?! 11.h5 h6 12.g3, I am not fond of Black’s position; he cannot continue with the natural 12...\textit{c}7? because of 13.\textit{h}3 \textit{e}7!

11.h5 h6 12.g3 0–0–0 13.\textit{h}3 \textit{e}7!

13...\textit{b}8?! 14.\textit{xf}5 exf5 15.e6+ 14.0–0 \textit{b}8

Black plans ...g5 with good play.

9.\textit{h}4 \textit{d}7 10.\textit{h}5 h6 11.\textit{h}4 \textit{a}4

12.\textit{b}1! 0–0–0 13.\textit{f}4!

We are seeing White’s plan in full action. In fact I believe that White’s kingside counterplay in this position is as good as it can get, so if Black is fine here then he has a great position in general. This tense situation is examined in our next illustrative game.

GAME 7

Yochanan Afek – Stephen Giddins

Amsterdam 2001

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \textit{c}6 5.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}7 6.a3 c4 7.\textit{e}3 \textit{a}5 8.\textit{bd}2 \textit{c}6 9.\textit{h}4 \textit{d}7 10.h5 h6 11.\textit{h}4 \textit{a}4 12.\textit{b}1 0–0–0 13.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}7 14.\textit{f}2 \textit{xh}4?!

I rather like this decision because it clears the e7-square for the knight, as well as getting rid of a dangerous piece which was controlling f5 and g6.
15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xh4}}}}

15...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{e8}?!}}}

The rook does not belong here. 15...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{f8}}} is an improvement, though most flexible is:
15...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{e7}!N}}}

Black preserves the possibility of playing the queen's rook to f8 or g8.

16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{e2}}}}

16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{g4}}} asks for too much from White's position. Black is better after 16...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{df8}}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{h3} f5!}}.}}

16...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{df8}}} 17.0-0}

17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{g4}}} is met by ...f6 and Black is better.

17...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{f5}!}} 18.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{f2}}}} g6}

I would choose Black here. We can see that the unusual exchange of his dark-squared bishop has accelerated Black's counterplay in this line.

16.g4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{b8}}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{h3} b5}}} 18.0-0 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{e7}}} 19.f5}

White's play is fully developed and we have reached a critical moment of the game.

19...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{ec6}?!}}}

Black's queenside counterplay will not be strong enough, so he should take measures on the other side of the board, instead of transferring his forces away from the kingside. 19...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{hg8}!}} was more logical, though I'd still prefer White slightly in this murky situation.

20.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{f6}}} gxf6 21.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xf6} g8}}} 22.g5?

White should not rush the breakthrough. 22.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{c1}!}}} was better.

22...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{b3}?!}}}

Black can obtain counterplay by 22...hxg5!!!N 23.h6 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{b6}}} (23...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{g6}}} 24.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{g7}! g4}}} 25.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xf7}±}}}) 24.h7 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{g6}→}} with the idea: 25.h8=\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{w}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{hxh8}}} 26.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xb4}}} 27.cxd4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xd4} g4}}} 28.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{d2}}} g4 29.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{g2} g3}}} 30.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{e1}}} gxf2↑ 31.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xf2}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xb2}}} 32.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{b1}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xa3}}} 33.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xf7}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{c3}↑}}} 34.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{f2}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{h6}→}}}

23.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xb3}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xb3}}} 24.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{f2}?!}}}

Instead of this 24.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{g2}}} would keep a big advantage for White, but we can understand the practical problems that players face in these very complex positions.

24...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{xd4}}} 25.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\textmary{h2} c2}?!}}
Here too Black should play 25...hxg5! 26.g4 h5 27.h6 g6. According to the computer Black has a big advantage, but it is still somewhat murky.

26.gxh6 axa1 27.bxa1
Now White’s passed pawns and f6-bishop are so strong that he should be guaranteed at least a draw.

27...b6 28.e1
28.f1 seems better, because the continuation from the game no longer saves Black: 28.d1? 29.h7 g8 30.g7 xh5 31.xf8 xf8 32.g2 and now 32...g6? is met by 33.xg6.

However 28...e3! would offer Black enough counterplay.

28.d1 29.h7 g8 30.g2
30.g7 now loses to 30...xh5 31.xf8 xf8 32.g2 g6.

30.f3! 31.f2 xf2
31...xg2! 32.xg2 e3 is winning for Black.

32.xf2 xh5 33.g2 g6
33...c7 is a slight improvement, making it more difficult for White to force a draw.

34.xe6 xe6 35.h8=xe8 xe8 36.xh8 c7 37.f6 d7 38.g3 b6 39.f4 e6 40.e3 e6
½–½

Chess is difficult! But even when everything was going very well for White, chances were still presented to Black.

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined the important 6.a3 variation of the Euwe System. Although this pawn push is critical against 5...b6, it seems to be less critical here for various reasons.

First of all, Black has a rather simple way to equalize. After A) 6...ge7 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 d5 the d4-pawn is threatened and this gives Black time to continue with 9...b5! followed by 10...a5! with equal chances. Simple solutions can have drawbacks though, and by choosing this way Black won’t get as many winning chances as he would like.

On the other hand, B) 6...c4! is both principled and ambitious. Compared with 5...b6 6.a3 c4, Black can place the queen more flexibly on d7 or c7. We examined two ideas after the main line with 7.g3 d5 8.gd2. Both B21) 8...e7?!, intending ...c8-b6 with the queen coming to c7, and B22) 8...c6 with the idea of playing the queen to d7, give Black excellent positions.

We also examined White’s attempt to play B3) 7.e3 first and then place his knight on d2. This gives Black the opportunity to break with ...f6 if he wishes, though I recommend going for the traditional development scheme mentioned above, when White still lacks any convincing way to claim an advantage.
Chapter 4

6. $\text{e}2$

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 $\text{c}6$ 5.$\text{f}3$ $\text{d}7$ 6.$\text{e}2$ $\text{ge}7$

A) 7.$\text{h}4$ cxd4 8.cxd4 $\text{wb}6$ 9.$\text{a}3$ $\text{f}5$ 10.$\text{c}2$
   A1) 10...$\text{f}6$
   A2) 10...$\text{c}8$
B) 7.dxc5
C) 7.$\text{a}3$
D) 7.0–0 $\text{g}6$
   D1) 8.a3
   D2) 8.$\text{g}3$
   D3) 8.$\text{e}3$ $\text{e}7$ 9.dxc5
      D31) 9...$\text{g}xe5$
      D32) 9...$\text{c}7$!

Game 8  Jesus de la Villa – Viktor Korchnoi, Pamplona 1990  83
Game 9  Ivan Chaika – David Myers, email 2009  91
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Find the best continuation for Black.

(page 84)

Find a strong manoeuvre.

(page 89)

How should White continue?

(page 79)

What should White play?

(page 87)

Evaluate the position after both 14.\texttt{d}d4 and 14.\texttt{W}c2.

(page 89)

White intends h4-h5.

How should Black respond?

(page 83)

How can Black exploit the placement of the bishop on f4?

(page 88)

How can Black develop his attack?

(page 93)
We saw in the previous chapters that White achieved nothing by going for the “play the bishop to d3” strategy, so now he tries something different. He plays a sound developing move and waits to see what Black will do. Shortly White will decide whether to go for a policy of overprotecting the d4-pawn; or he may expand on the kingside in super-aggressive mode with moves like h2-h4-h5, and g2-g4 if a knight appears on f5. Black’s problem is his lack of space, so he needs to carefully decide his scheme of development.

6...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{d}}ge7}

This flexible move is an old favourite of mine from my youth, when my good friend Giorgos Tzolas (now a successful lawyer) with whom I shared a coach, first explained to me the ideas behind it. The knight can go to f5, putting pressure on the base of the pawn chain on d4 (we may call this the classical approach); or the knight may go to g6, putting pressure on the “head” pawn on e5 (we call this the modern approach).

White now has an important choice.

7.0–0 has always seemed to me a slight inaccuracy; at least if I played the Advance Variation I’d play in a different way! White may want to play g2-g4 against ...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{d}}}f5 and h4-h5 against ...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{g}}}g6, and in both cases castling doesn’t fit in with that. The move 6.\textit{\texttt{\textbf{e}}}e2 helped to provide the king with a square on f1 if something scary happens to the centre and the position blows up. Still, 7.0–0 is the main line in all the theoretical manuals (and I must admit, it is the most natural move in the position). Moreover, it remains popular among those grandmasters who still play 3.e5, Grischuk being one notable example.

7.\textit{\texttt{a}}a3 is the move White would like to work. Black no longer has the chance to play an effective ...\textit{\texttt{cxd4}} followed by ...\textit{\texttt{x}}xa3, and White wants to defend the d4-pawn by \textit{\texttt{d}}c2 in order to play \textit{\texttt{d}}d3 sometime in the future. Also by delaying castling, White keeps the possibility of playing h2-h4 in answer to ...\textit{\texttt{g}}g6. We shall look at several approaches for Black here.

As well as these two principal options, we shall also examine 7.\textit{\texttt{h4}} and 7.\textit{\texttt{dxc5}}.

We shall take a look at A) 7.\textit{\texttt{h4}} and B) 7.\textit{\texttt{dxc5}}, before turning to the main choices of C) 7.\textit{\texttt{a}}a3 and D) 7.0–0.
This is not as illogical as it might appear to someone seeing this position for the first time. It is a bit premature though, and before launching this pawn White should prefer to play a more useful move, waiting to see what Black is going to do.

7...cxd4 8.cxd4 e5
This typical French move produces quick counterplay, with ...\e5 coming next.

9.d3
9.g4? h5\*

9.c3
This development of the knight is typical when Black has played an early ...cxd4, but surprisingly there is hardly any practical material here.

9...\e5 10.a4 \a5\* 11.c3

11...\b4
11...\b6 obviously repeats, but in my opinion Black can play for more.

12.0-0N
12.d3 can be met by: 12...\b6N 13.e3 \a5\*
12...\xc3 13.bxc3 \xc3
The d4-pawn is now attacked, so White must drive the queen away.

14.d2 \a3 15.c1 \b4 16.d2 \c7
And now the h4-pawn is attacked.

17.g5 f6 18.exf6 gxf6\*
I prefer Black here.

9...\f5 10.c2

White has completed his regrouping and now is ready for the g2-g4 push, but Black has a choice of two good ways to cope with that, A1) 10...f6 or A2) 10...\c8.

10...\b4
This third option is given by Sveshnikov, but I am not a big fan of it.

11.xb4 xb4\* 12.f1 \b5
Sveshnikov gives 12...\c8 13.g4 \h6, which is probably slightly better for White after 14.xh6 and 15.c1.
But I think that 12...h5! must be played to secure the f5-knight.

From a positional point of view it seems
that Black is doing fine after 12...\(\text{\texttt{b5}}\). This would be the case but for an astonishing possibility for White:

\[13.g4!\]

Otherwise Black has no problems at all.

\[13...\text{\texttt{xе2}}\uparrow \ \ 14.\text{\texttt{е2}}\]

This is an amazing concept. It may seem that the king is ridiculously placed on e2, but Black will soon have to exchange queens and the king will become extremely useful in the centre of the board.

\[14...\text{\texttt{а6}}\uparrow\]

14...\(\text{\texttt{е7}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{а3}}\) and Black cannot avoid exchanging queens.

\[14...\text{\texttt{h6}}\ 15.\text{\texttt{ех6}} \text{\texttt{ех6}} 16.\text{\texttt{b3}}\uparrow\]

15.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd3}}\uparrow\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{xd3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{е7}}\)

I would prefer White’s space here. A typical example is the following game:

17.\(\text{\texttt{h5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h6}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{а3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{а5}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{h4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{ас8}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{е3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g6}}\)

This may seem weakening, but White was threatening \(\text{\texttt{f4}}-\text{\texttt{f5}}\).

\[22.\text{\texttt{f3}} \text{\texttt{еg8}}\ 23.\text{\texttt{аг1}} \text{\texttt{d8}}\ 24.\text{\texttt{еh2}} \text{\texttt{еg7}}\ 25.\text{\texttt{hxg6}} \text{\texttt{fxg6}}\ 26.\text{\texttt{еh1}} \text{\texttt{еg8}}\ 27.\text{\texttt{еg5}}\uparrow\]

In Movsesian – Borovikov, Panormo 2002, White methodically and instructively increased the pressure and eventually won.

\[
\text{A1) 10...\text{\texttt{f6}}}\]

A flank attack is met by a central break.

\[11.\text{\texttt{d3}}\]

11.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\)N is an interesting new idea which can be met by 11...\(\text{\texttt{fxe5}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{xf5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{е4}}\) and Black is fine after some complications which are not difficult for him to navigate: 13.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{dxe4}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{еg5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{еb5}}\) (14...\(\text{\texttt{b4}}\uparrow\) followed by castling also appears okay) 15.\(\text{\texttt{h5}}\uparrow\) (15.\(\text{\texttt{xe4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{е7}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{еg5}}\) 0–0=) 15...\(\text{\texttt{g6}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{е2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe2}}\uparrow\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xe2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{еg7}}\)=

\[11...\text{\texttt{еf7}}\]

An adventurous alternative is 11...\(\text{\texttt{fxd4}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{еf5}}\). If this appeals to you then I recommend studying the game Movsesian – M. Gurevich, Sarajevo 2000. Black has sufficient play for the piece, although to be honest I don’t think that he is better here.

\[12.\text{\texttt{h5}}\]
12.exf6 gxf6 13.\(\text{g}1\) (13.g5 \(\text{g}7\)) was Moskovic – G. Buckley, England 2010.

I think that after 13...e5N Black is somewhat better.

12...\(\text{d}8\)

This has been played by the French Defence expert Ulibin, and everything this man does with the French should be taken seriously.

12...fxe5N 13.dxe5 \(\text{g}8\) is a sound alternative. If White continues with 14.g5 to prevent ...\(\text{h}6\), then Black can complete his development with 14...\(\text{c}5\) followed by ...\(\text{g}e7\)!

13.a4

13.h6 \(\text{f}7\)\(\text{a}\)

13...\(\text{e}6\) 14.0–0 \(\text{f}7\) 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 16.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}8\)

16...fxe5 17.dxe5 0–0\(\text{a}\)

17.\(\text{f}1\)?

17.exf6 gxf6 18.\(\text{fe}1\) 0–0\(\text{a}\)

17...fxe5 18.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{fxe}5\) 19.dxe5 0–0 20.\(\text{g}3\)

Black’s advantage was already decisive in Kiuttu – Ulibin, Stockholm 2010, although 20...\(\text{xe}5\!\!\text{N}\) was even more convincing than the move played in the game. Black wins after 21.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xf}2\!\!\text{t}\) 22.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{xc}2\) 23.\(\text{xc}2\) \(\text{d}4\) 24.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}6\!\!\text{t}\) 25.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{h}4\!\!\text{t}\) 26.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{bxc}6\!\!\text{t}\).

Some alternatives and improvements are possible for White along the way, but I don’t think that Black has the slightest problem in this line.

A2) 10...\(\text{c}8\)

11.g4

11.0–0 \(\text{a}5\) Black clears the way for ...\(\text{b}5\).

12.g4 \(\text{e}7\) 13.b3 \(\text{h}5\!\!\text{t}\) 14.gxh5 \(\text{xf}5\) 15.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{b}5\!\!\text{t}\) Stehno – Tibensky, Olomouc 2006.
11...\texttt{Oh6} 12.\texttt{De3}

After 12.\texttt{xh6?! gxh6} Black will obtain powerful counterplay down the g-file.

12.\texttt{Dg1N \texttt{Dg8}} 13.\texttt{Df1 h5} 14.\texttt{gxh5 \texttt{Dh6}}
15.\texttt{De3 \texttt{De7}}

12...\texttt{Dg8!N}

An attractive move. Black intends to play ...\texttt{h5} next, with strong counterplay.

In \textit{Mukharev – Nazin, Kolontaevo 1998}, Black played 12...\texttt{Da5} 13.\texttt{Df1 \texttt{Db5}}, which is also quite reasonable.

13.\texttt{h5}

13.0–0 \texttt{h5} 14.\texttt{gxh5 \texttt{Exh5}}

13...\texttt{f6!}

This strong move displays another benefit of the knight retreat.

14.\texttt{a3}

14.\texttt{exf6 \texttt{Dxf6}} followed by ...\texttt{Dd6} is much better for Black.

14...\texttt{fxe5} 15.\texttt{dxe5 \texttt{Bc7}}

Black has pressure on e5 and it is not obvious what White has achieved with his kingside pawn advances.

\textbf{B) 7.dxc5 \texttt{Dg6}}

This enables Black to regain the pawn.

8.\texttt{De3}

8.b4 is met by 8...\texttt{a5!} and Black has an excellent position. A good example of play from here is 9.\texttt{Dxb3 axb4} 10.\texttt{cxb4 b6} 11.b5 \texttt{Da5} 12.\texttt{Dd1 bxc5} 13.a4 c4+ \textit{Bastian – Knaak, Germany 1990}.

8...\texttt{Dxe5} 9.\texttt{Dxe5} \texttt{Dxe5} 10.\texttt{f4}

The alternative is:

10.0–0 \texttt{Dc7}

10...\texttt{b6N} offers Black fine counterplay. This seems a good time for this break as White is not ready to answer it with \texttt{Db3}.

11.b4 0–0 12.\texttt{Dd2}

Now 12...\texttt{b6} was okay for Black in \textit{Smerdon...}
– Wang Chen, Kuala Lumpur 2010, although 12...a5!, as played in Schwarzburger – Boehm, Stuttgart 1979, seems even more convincing.

10...ćc6
10...ćc4?! 11.ćxc4 dxc4 12.ća3 ćc6 was played in Overton – Grayland, email 2006, and also makes a lot of sense, though I prefer the main line which was the choice of the young Kramnik.

11.0–0
In Velimirovic – Zueger, Lucerne 1989, Black met 11.ćd2 with 11...b6. Although Black was probably still okay after 12.ćb3, it makes sense to wait for the white knight to move away (for example to f3) before trying the ...b6 break.

Instead, meeting 11.ćd2 à la Kramnik with 11...g6N is possible. Here a sample line goes 12.0–0 ĉg7 13.će1 0–0 14.ćb3 ĉc7 15.ćd2 ĉe7 and I prefer Black.

11...g6 12.ćd2 ĉg7 13.ćf3 0–0 14.h4

8...ćg6!
This is the square that Korchnoi preferred for the knight. The idea is well known, with Black planning ...će7 and ...f6.

The main line of 8...ćf5 9.ćc2 ĉb6! 10.0–0 (10.h4 transposes to line A above) leads to a rich position. While this is also a sound choice for Black, I have decided to recommend the text.

8...ćc8
This manoeuvre, borrowed from the Caro-Kann, was recommended by Artur Yusupov in his coverage of the French Defence in Chapter 11 of Build Up Your Chess 3.

C) 7.ća3 cxd4
When White cannot follow up this exchange with ćb1–ćc3, I think it is to our advantage to release the tension.

8.cxd4
Black now has to decide how to complete development.

8...ćg6!
This is the square that Korchnoi preferred for the knight. The idea is well known, with Black planning ...će7 and ...f6.

The main line of 8...ćf5 9.ćc2 ĉb6! 10.0–0 (10.h4 transposes to line A above) leads to a rich position. While this is also a sound choice for Black, I have decided to recommend the text.

8...ćc8
This manoeuvre, borrowed from the Caro-Kann, was recommended by Artur Yusupov in his coverage of the French Defence in Chapter 11 of Build Up Your Chess 3.

9.0–0 ĉe7 10.ćc2
10.ćd3?! is premature: 10...ćb4 11.ćb1 ĉb6 12.ćc2 ĉxc2 13.ćxc2 ĉb5 =
10...0–0N
This seems best. Black intends to continue
with ...\textit{b}b6 and ...\textit{c}c8, or even ...\textit{a}a6 and ...\textit{b}b8a7.

The bishop occupies its ideal square, aiming at the black kingside.

This is Black’s best reaction, but although play is complex, White’s position is slightly better.

This is the revolutionary idea I loved when I was first shown this position! The black knight will re-enter the game via the \textit{f}7-square after the ...\textit{f}6 break.

The only move worth considering here, aiming to profit from having delayed castling.

After 10.h5 \textit{h}h4 11.\textit{x}xh4 \textit{x}xh4, Black may continue with ...\textit{e}e7! and ...\textit{f}6, and has no problems at all. Let’s see an example: 12.h6 \textit{g}6 13.0–0 (13.\textit{b}b5 \textit{e}e7 14.\textit{e}e3 0–0 15.0–0 f6 with fine play for Black) 13...0–0 14.\textit{c}c2 \textit{b}b6 15.b3 \textit{e}e7 16.\textit{d}d3 \textit{f}6= Rego – Blazsik, email 1997.

10...0–0! 11.\textit{h}h5 \textit{g}8!

11.\textit{d}d3!

12.\textit{c}c2 will be examined in the next illustrative game, which is a classical instructive win by Korchnoi.

12...\textit{g}6 13.\textit{e}e3 \textit{f}6 14.\textit{x}xf6 \textit{xf}6 15.\textit{b}b1!! \textit{f}f7 16.\textit{c}c3 \textit{g}5!!

The position was roughly balanced in Zaitsev – Gleizerov, Kaluga 2003, though if either side can claim any advantage it is Black.

GAME 8

Jesus de la Villa – Viktor Korchnoi

Pamplona 1990

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \textit{c}c6 5.\textit{f}f3 \textit{d}d7 6.\textit{e}e2 \textit{g}e7 7.\textit{a}a3 \textit{g}6
Varying from my recommended move order, but it soon transposes.

8.h4 \textit{c}7 9.g3 cxd4 10.cxd4 0–0! 11.h5 \textit{h}8 12.\textit{c}2

\textbf{12...f6!}$

This evaluation given by GM Knaak still impresses me. White has played sensibly but nevertheless has got into a bit of trouble.

\textbf{13.exf6}

White has also tried supporting the e5-pawn:

13.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}7

Kobalia – Gleizerov, Abu Dhabi 2004, was agreed drawn at this point, but Black obviously can fight for the full point, as an earlier example showed:

14.d3 fxe5 15.dxe5

15...\textit{g}5!

Black exchanges one of the defenders of the e5-pawn.

16.\textit{x}g5 \textit{x}g5 17.\textit{g}4 h6 18.\textit{f}1 \textit{b}6$

White was in trouble in Sepp – Tuominen, Jyvaskyla 1993. Both the b2- and e5-pawns are attacked, the latter because the f4-bishop must shield the f2-weakness.

\textbf{13...\textit{x}f6 14.b3}

White's idea is logical. The bishop goes to b2 to defend the d4-pawn, because if it goes to e3 instead it may be vulnerable to a knight coming to f5.

14.\textit{f}1

This pre-empts the check from a5, but after bringing his knight back into the game, Black is fine.

14...\textit{f}7 15.\textit{g}2 \textit{b}6 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}6?

16...\textit{a}c8 is also sensible. Next Black can think about playing the f7-knight to d6, or the c6-knight to e7.

17.\textit{e}5 \textit{ad}8 18.\textit{g}4

18...\textit{x}e5! 19.dxe5 d4!$

White's best now is:

20.\textit{x}d4N

20.\textit{x}d4?! \textit{c}4! favoured Black, who won quickly in Liu Dede – Graf, Jakarta 1997.

20...\textit{x}d4 21.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}6$

22.\textit{g}1 \textit{f}5

23.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 24.bxc3 \textit{c}8

Black regains the pawn with an equal endgame.
A fine move; Black’s idea is to follow up with ...\textit{ae}8 and ...e5. To avoid this, White decided to go into the endgame.

16.\textit{d}2 \textit{xd}2\# 17.\textit{xd}2
Black is better because of the weakness of the d4-pawn. Although Black also has a weak e6-pawn, it cannot be so easily attacked. Viktor the Great now gives us (not to mention his opponent!) an excellent technical lesson.

17...\textit{d}6
The knight is on its way to the f5-square.

18.\textit{g}4
White prepares to exchange the knight when it goes there, but Black can keep all his options open. For now the knight is well placed on d6, so the improvement of his other pieces takes priority.

18...\textit{fc}8 19.0–0 \textit{c}7 20.\textit{fe}1 \textit{ac}8!
Strategy always comes along with tactics.

21.\textit{g}2
21.\textit{xe}6? is met by 21...\textit{xe}6 22.\textit{xe}6 \textit{d}8 with a double attack on the e6-rook and the c2-knight.

21.\textit{xe}6? \textit{f}7 is no good for White either.

21...\textit{f}7
Black defends the e6-pawn economically, but the objectively stronger 21...\textit{d}8! 22.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}2\# would have increased Black’s advantage.

22.\textit{ad}1 a5?!
Another lovely move. The white rook has left the defence of the a2-pawn, so Black introduces the idea of ...\textit{b}4 to attack it; if then \textit{xb}4 axb4, Black may penetrate to c2.

23.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}7?!
Korchnoi decides not to exchange pieces for now, preferring to just open the c-file and increase the pressure.

23...\textit{b}4!? 24.\textit{xb}4 axb4 25.\textit{e}5\# \textit{xe}5 26.\textit{xe}5 \textit{b}5\#

24.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}4 25.\textit{c}1
White stops ...\textit{c}3, for the moment...

25...b5
Once ...b4 comes, the c3-square will once again become accessible.

26.\textit{h}3 b4 27.\textit{xc}7 \textit{xc}7 28.a3
28...a4!
Another powerful idea.

29.bxa4 b3!
The passed b-pawn is very strong.

30.a5 Qc6?!
This may not be best. Instead, 30...b5! would have avoided the tactical possibility that appears on White's 32nd move.

31.Ac1 Qe7 32.a4?
White misses his chance. 32.b5! threatens to take on e4, and would have given White real chances of holding the game. Even so, after 32...exf5 33.Qxd5† Qd8 34.Qxc7 Qxc7 I still like Black. For example, 35.Qe5 Qxe5 36.dxe5 Qe6 and Black may make progress with ...Qd2-c4.

32...Qd8 33.a6 Qb4 34.Qxc7 Qxc7→
White's queenside pawns are falling, and the b-pawn will decide the game.

35.a7 Qb7 36.Qe1 Qxa7 37.f3 Qg5 38.Qg4 Qa6 39.Qc3 Qxa4 40.Qd1 Qb5 41.Qf2 Qc4 0–1

D) 7.0–0

As already mentioned, this is regarded as the main line.

7...Qg6
Here too, I like this square for the knight, with the typical plan of ...Qe7, ...cxd4, and ...f6.

7...Qf5?! can be met by 8.dxc5 Qxc5 9.Qd3±, as proposed by Moskalenko, or by 8.Qd3 Qh4 9.Qbd2±. In each case White keeps an edge.

We shall take a brief look at D1) 8.a3, before going on to examine the main moves D2) 8.g3 and D3) 8.Qe3.

D1) 8.a3
By playing 6.\textit{e}2 and then following up with this, White is mixing two systems.

\textbf{8...\textit{e}7 9.b4 cxd4 10.cxd4 \textit{c}c8}

Black's development is good enough to deal with White's space advantage. This means that the \textit{...f}6 break will be effective.

\textbf{11.\textit{e}3 0–0 12.\textit{d}d2 \textit{f}6 13.exf6 \textit{x}xf6 14.\textit{x}c3}

11.dxc5! Grischuk – Ivanchuk, Khanty-Mansiysk (6.5) 2011. I think that only this move justifies Moskalenko's above statement. Chucky "forgot" to exchange on d4 first, so that the entrance of the h8-knight to the game would be smooth. Now, with the position opened up, this knight feels really stupid. Even so, Grischuk missed a couple of opportunities and later Ivanchuk stood better. That is the nature of the French Defence. White has to play well to beat you, and helped by your solid pawn structure, you may survive even when the situation seems very awkward. Unfortunately in this case Black produced the last blunder in time trouble and lost.

\textbf{14...\textit{e}ce7!}

Preventing \textit{a}a4.

\textbf{15.\textit{d}d3}

This was Romero Holmes – Nikolic, Wijk aan Zee 1992. Now the simplest would have been:

\textbf{15...\textit{a}a4=}

Black intends to continue with the standard manoeuvre \textit{...e}8-g6.

\textbf{D2) 8.g3}

This is a typical move with the knight on g6, but to be honest I don't think much of it, as the following idea for Black seems very effective.

\textbf{8...\textit{e}7 9.h4 cxd4!}

After 9...0–0?! 10.h5 \textit{h}h8 Moskalenko wrote in \textit{ChessBase Magazine 145}: "One has no need to be a grandmaster to evaluate this position – White should be better by all the rules of chess."
10. cxd4
Of course 10. h5? is met by 10... gxe5.

10... 0-0 11. h5 d8 12. h6
Having already seen a similar situation in Game 8, it should be clear to you that 12. c3 f6± offers Black good counterplay.

12... g6 13. c3
13. bd2 f6 14. exf6 xf6 15. b3 f7
16. h2 was Hjartarson – Korchnoi, Amsterdam 1991, and now Black should play:
16... b6N 17. g4 (17. g4 h8 18. e3 W e7 19. c1 d6?) 17... e7 18. e1 a5?

13... f6 14. exf6 xf6 15. f4
After 15. e3 f7 16. h2 d6 Black is fine, and in Lederer – Psakhis, Kfar Sava 1993, White’s position went quickly downhill:
17. g4?! g5 18. d2 xe3 19. xe3 h4?

15. f7 16. d2
With the bishop on f4, the knight cannot go to d6, but Black can change tack.

16... g5!
This is the drawback of the bishop’s situation.

17. e3 xh6 18. xg5 xg5 19. xg5 h5 20. f3 f6 21. ad1 e8 22. g4 g7 23. h1 e7 24. e3 g6 25. h2 e5

Black held the initiative in Soumya – Drozdovskij, Balaguer 2010.

D3) 8. e3

According to Sveshnikov in his books on the Advance Variation, this is the main line here.

8... e7
8... cxd4 is premature: 9. cxd4 e7 10. c3 0–0 11. d3± White has developed naturally without having to make any concessions. After 11... e8 12. c1 f6 13. exf6 xf6 14. d2 h8 15. b1 c8, White had the advantage in Sax – Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee (10) 1991, and could have considered playing either 16. e2N or 16. a4N.

9. dxc5
9. e1 b6 10. d2 0–0 11. f4 was Kupreichik – Nikolic, Ljubljana/Portoroz 1989. Black could try 11... h4N with at least even chances.

9. g3
White waits for ... cxd4 so that he can develop his knight on c3, but Black can allow this as his counterplay arrives quickly.

9... cxd4 10. cxd4 f6 11. exf6 xf6 12. c3 0–0 13. d2 e7 14. d3
White has achieved exactly what he wanted (his knight on c3 and bishop on d3), but he stands somewhat worse (according to Yusupov in Chapter 11 of *Build Up your Chess 3*) because of the following plan:

14...h6 15...ad1...e8!

This was Romanishin – Nikolic, Leningrad 1987. Black will play ...h5 next. Note the important role of ...h6 in preventing ...g5. Remember those typical schemes: firstly ...g6 and ...f6, and secondly ...e8-h5.

Black may regain the pawn immediately with D31) 9...gxe5 or first play D32) 9...c7±.

**D31) 9...gxe5 10...xe5...xe5 11.f4**

11...g6

I like to retreat the knight to the kingside.

**12.f5**

If White plays slowly then Black obtains excellent counterplay:

12...d2 0–0 13.b4

After 13...d3 c7 Black targets the f4- and c5-pawns, and also the ...b6 break is on the agenda.

**D32) 9...c7!?**

In a similar position from the Caro-Kann Advance Variation, Black is considered to be fine.

13...f6!

First 13...a5!? and then ...f6 is also possible.

14...c2

The tactical point behind Black's last move is that 14...d4 leads to the loss of a pawn:

14...xd4† 15.cxd4...f6 16.b3...xf4 17.g3...xe2† 18...xe2...e7±

14...a5! 15.a3...e8±

Black plans ...e5 with fine counterplay.

**12...exf5 13...xd5 0–0**
In this position Black can develop good counterplay against White's seemingly strong queenside. For example:

14.\texttt{\textbf{\textdollar}d2}

14.\texttt{\textdollar}a3 \texttt{\textdollar}c8=\texttt{\textdollar} and Black threatens to win the c5-pawn after \ldots\texttt{\textdollar}e6 and \ldots\texttt{\textdollar}d8.

14.\texttt{\textdollar}xb7?? \texttt{\textdollar}b8 15.\texttt{\textdollar}xa7 \texttt{\textdollar}xb2N 16.\texttt{\textdollar}f3 f4 17.\texttt{\textdollar}c1 \texttt{\textdollar}c8! and the white queen is trapped.

14...\texttt{\textdollar}c6

14...\texttt{\textdollar}c7 is also good.

15.\texttt{\textdollar}xd8 \texttt{\textdollar}axd8 16.\texttt{\textdollar}ad1 \texttt{\textdollar}h4 17.\texttt{\textdollar}f2 \texttt{\textdollar}fe8 18.\texttt{\textdollar}c4 \texttt{\textdollar}f6

Black was a little better in Siewert – Merino Araguas, corr. 1996, as every single black piece compares favourably with its white counterpart.

D32) 9...\texttt{\textdollar}c7? 10.\texttt{\textdollar}a3 \texttt{\textdollar}cxe5 11.\texttt{\textdollar}xe5

11...\texttt{\textdollar}xe5

This is the only move considered by Sveshnikov, but it may not be entirely satisfactory for Black.

I recommend 11...\texttt{\textdollar}xe5! as an interesting attempt to improve on established theory, and we'll study it in Game 9 below.

12.\texttt{\textdollar}b4

This is more dangerous than:

12.\texttt{\textdollar}b5 \texttt{\textdollar}xb5 13.\texttt{\textdollar}xb5+ \texttt{\textdollar}c6

This line is considered equal by many sources.

14.\texttt{\textdollar}e1N

This is Sveshnikov's proposal.

14.\texttt{\textdollar}c4 \texttt{\textdollar}d8 was equal in Kharlov – Sakaev, Podolsk 1992.

14...0–0 15.\texttt{\textdollar}d3

15...b6!

After 15...f5?! 16.b4 Sveshnikov's evaluation is '+' , but my impression is that White is simply better.

16.\texttt{\textdollar}xb6 axb6 17.\texttt{\textdollar}h5

"With an attack" is given by Sveshnikov, but again I have to disagree with him.

17...g6

Black isn't in immediate danger, and his strong centre combined with his potential pressure on the queenside leads me to evaluate the position as fine for Black.

18.\texttt{\textdollar}h6
18...\texttt{a4}! 19.b4? \texttt{\textbf{a}8}=  
White lacks a knight, which would be required to generate a dangerous attack.

12...0–0
12...a5?! merits investigation, but my feeling is that White is slightly better after 13.\texttt{\textbf{b}5} \texttt{\textbf{x}b5} 14.\texttt{\textbf{x}b5}+ \texttt{\textbf{c}6} 15.a3.

13.f4 \texttt{\textbf{g}6}

14.\texttt{\textbf{b}5}\texttt{N}
Instead 14.\texttt{\textbf{d}2} b6?! was fine for Black in Mukhametov – Stojanovic, Bela Crkva 1996.
This innovation is proposed by Houdini, and the machine seems right – White is slightly better here.

GAME 9

Ivan Chaika – David Myers
email 2009

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 \texttt{\textbf{c}6} 5.\texttt{\textbf{f}3} \texttt{\textbf{d}7} 6.\texttt{\textbf{e}2} \texttt{\textbf{g}7} 7.0–0 \texttt{\textbf{g}6} 8.\texttt{\textbf{e}3} \texttt{\textbf{e}7} 9.\texttt{\textbf{d}xc5} \texttt{\textbf{c}7=} 10.\texttt{\textbf{a}3} \texttt{\textbf{c}xe5} 11.\texttt{\textbf{x}e5} \texttt{\textbf{xe}5=}

12.\texttt{\textbf{d}4}
Attacking the queen is clearly critical, though White has a couple of playable alternatives:

12...\texttt{\textbf{e}4} a6 13.\texttt{\textbf{d}xe5} \texttt{\textbf{xe}5} 14.f4 \texttt{\textbf{g}6=}

12.\texttt{\textbf{b}5}

12...\texttt{\textbf{f}4}
The most ambitious try.
12...0–0= is the safer choice.
13.\texttt{\textbf{e}1} a6?!  
13...\texttt{\textbf{x}e2}+ 14.\texttt{\textbf{xe}2} 0–0 15.\texttt{\textbf{xa}7} \texttt{\textbf{e}8=}
14.\texttt{\textbf{d}6}+ \texttt{\textbf{xd}6} 15.\texttt{\textbf{cxd}6} \texttt{\textbf{xd}6}
15...\texttt{\textbf{x}e2}+ 16.\texttt{\textbf{xe}2} \texttt{\textbf{x}d6} 17.\texttt{\textbf{g}4}! \texttt{\textbf{f}8}
18.\texttt{\textbf{ad}1=}
16.b4 \texttt{\textbf{c}2}+ 17.\texttt{\textbf{xe}2} \texttt{\textbf{c}7} 18.\texttt{\textbf{e}5}

18...h5=  
18...b6 19.\texttt{\textbf{d}4} f6 (19...0–0 20.\texttt{\textbf{e}3} b5 21.\texttt{\textbf{xg}7=}) 20.\texttt{\textbf{h}5}+ \texttt{\textbf{f}8} 21.\texttt{\textbf{ad}1=}
19.\texttt{\textbf{c}3} h4 20.\texttt{\textbf{xd}5} 0–0=  

12...\texttt{\textbf{c}7}
Here too, White has a choice:

13...\textcolor{red}{\textit{b5}}

13.c4 e5 14.cxd5 exd4 15.d6 \textcolor{red}{\textit{wxc5}} 16.dxe7 \textcolor{red}{\textit{wxe7}=}

13.b4 0–0 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{wbb8}} 15.a4 a6 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a3}}}
(16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d6}} e5 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xe6+}} has the point of meeting 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g4}} with 18...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xd6}} 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{cxd6}} \textit{\textbf{e5}} 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xe6+}}} with 19...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d6}} 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e1}}} e5 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e6+}}}}}

13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xg7}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{gg8}}} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d4}}}

14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h6}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{h4}}} 15.g3 may look similar to our main game, but the placing of the black queen makes a difference. Here best is 15...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f5+}}} (intending ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xc5}} next) and obviously 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f4}} loses to 16...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf4}}.}}

14...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e5!}}?}

14...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xc5?!}} 15.g3 0–0–0 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xc5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}}

17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d4}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xd4}}} 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{cxd4}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c7}}} 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{ac1+ \textit{\textbf{d6=}}} 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e3}}} 0–0–0 16.b4 d4 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{cxd4}}} \textit{\textbf{exd4}} 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xd4!}}

18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xd4}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{h4}}} 19.g3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c6}}} 20.f3 \textit{\textbf{f5}} 21.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf4}}}
\textit{\textbf{c6}} 22.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c6}}} \textit{\textbf{xc6}} 23.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d6}} 24.hxg3 \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d6}}} 25.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h4}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xe2--}}}

18...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h4}}} 19.g3

Black has various attacking attempts which are liable to end in perpetual check:

19...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f4}}

19...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c6}}} 20.b5 \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}} 21.\textit{\textbf{xc5}} \textit{\textbf{xd1}} 22.\textit{\textbf{fxd1}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e5}}} 23.bxc6 \textit{\textbf{e4}} 24.cxb7\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b8}}

25.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f1}}} \textit{\textbf{f3+}} 26.\textit{\textbf{h1}} \textit{\textbf{e1+!}} 27.\textit{\textbf{f3}} \textit{\textbf{f3+}}

28.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g1}}} \textit{\textbf{g3+}} 29.hxg3 \textit{\textbf{g3+}} 30.\textit{\textbf{h1}} \textit{\textbf{h4+}}

20.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c4}}} \textit{\textbf{c6}} 21.\textit{\textbf{e5}} \textit{\textbf{f5}} 22.\textit{\textbf{d6}} b5 23.\textit{\textbf{e5}}
\textit{\textbf{h3}} 24.\textit{\textbf{g4+}} \textit{\textbf{hxg4}} 25.\textit{\textbf{f4+}} \textit{\textbf{g4}} 26.\textit{\textbf{g4}}

27.\textit{\textbf{g2}} \textit{\textbf{e1+}}

13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c6}}

14...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e5}}}!?
Perhaps Black did not try this idea in the past because players thought that it was dangerous to allow this pawn to fall, but in reality Black has fantastic counterplay.

14...\texttt{e}d2 e5 15.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{e}e6 16.\texttt{d}d6+ \texttt{xd}6 17.\texttt{c}xd6 0–0?

14...\texttt{g}g8 15.\texttt{h}h6
15.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{xc}5 16.\texttt{h}h6 e5 17.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{d}d6?

15...\texttt{h}h4 16.g3
16.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{xc}2+ 17.\texttt{h}h1 e5 18.\texttt{x}e5 \texttt{h}xh6
19.\texttt{h}h8+ \texttt{f}f8 20.\texttt{e}e5+ \texttt{d}d8 21.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{g}g7
22.\texttt{c}c7+ \texttt{e}7 23.\texttt{x}d5 \texttt{c}d6?

16...\texttt{d}4!
A great resource with the queen on the c6-square.

16...\texttt{f}f5 now is very bad due to 17.\texttt{f}f4, threatening \texttt{c}c7+.

17.\texttt{f}f3 e5 18.\texttt{d}d6!
18.\texttt{c}c1 d3!! 19.\texttt{x}d3 \texttt{xc}5+ 20.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{h}h3
21.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{d}d8 22.\texttt{c}c7+ \texttt{e}7 23.\texttt{e}e4 \texttt{g}2+ 24.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{xe}3+ 25.\texttt{x}e3 \texttt{x}f1 26.\texttt{x}e5+ \texttt{f}f8
27.\texttt{x}xf1 \texttt{x}f3 28.\texttt{x}f3 \texttt{x}f3+ 29.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{h}5?

18...\texttt{x}d6 19.\texttt{x}d6 \texttt{xd}6

Black should not be tempted by 20...\texttt{h}h3
21.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{g}g2 22.\texttt{cx}d4 \texttt{ex}d4 23.\texttt{a}a4+ \texttt{d}d7
24.\texttt{x}d4 \texttt{x}d4 25.\texttt{x}d4 \texttt{xe}1 26.\texttt{xe}1, when White has good play for the exchange. However, 20...\texttt{c}c6! keeps a dangerous attack.

20...\texttt{e}e4
It is amazing how easily Black got this attacking position in a correspondence game, with just a temporary pawn sacrifice.

21.\texttt{e}e1
21.fxe4 \texttt{yg}xg3+ 22.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{c}c6 23.hxg3 \texttt{yg}xg3 24.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{e}7→

21...\texttt{f}f5 22.\texttt{x}d4
After 22.fxe4 \texttt{yg}xg3 23.hxg3 \texttt{yg}xg3+ 24.\texttt{f}f2 0–0–0 25.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{h}h3! 26.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{g}g8 Black is completely winning.

22.g4 e3 23.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{g}g6 24.gxf5 (24.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{h}h6 25.\texttt{g}g2 \texttt{h}h4 26.\texttt{g}g3 d3 27.\texttt{f}f1 0–0–0
28.\textit{\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}}} xe3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 7}} f5→) 24...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h6 25.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f2 (25.f4 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 7}} c6t
26.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 7}} h3 27.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf3 28.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf4→)
25...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf2 26.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h5+

22...e3!
22...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xg3 23.hxg3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xg3\uparrow 24.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h3 looks tempting, but after 25.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} a5! there is nothing more than a draw. It takes only seconds to spot this with the help of the computer, but a practical player might never work it out over the board.

23.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h6 24.g4 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c6 25.d5
Giving up a pawn and hoping for some counterplay, but it never arrives.
25.h3 is logical, but after 25...0–0–0 (25...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f4 is also strong, for example 26.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xg4\uparrow 27.hxg4 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xg4\uparrow 28.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h1 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf3\uparrow 29.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf3\uparrow leaves White in trouble) 26.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h4\uparrow 27.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g1 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} de8\uparrow the difference in the safety of the kings is telling.

25...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xd5 26.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} b5\uparrow \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e7 27.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} b4\uparrow \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d6
28.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xd6\uparrow \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xd6 29.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d1 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xg4\uparrow
Black who goes ahead in material and duly brings the point home.

30.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f1 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xf3 31.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xe2\uparrow 32.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xe2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g2\uparrow 33.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f2\uparrow 34.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xe3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xh2 35.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g8 36.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e1\uparrow \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d7 37.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f4 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xb2 38.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} ab1 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xb1 39.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xb1 b6 40.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d1 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g6 41.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h1
32.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c4 42.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xh7 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e6 43.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h1 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e5\uparrow 44.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} x e5 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} xe5 45.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e1\uparrow \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d5 46.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d1\uparrow \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c5 47.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} b4 48.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d7 a5 49.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e6 50.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} a4 51.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f3 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c6 52.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e1 b5 53.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d2 b4 54.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d1 f5 55.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} x f5 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c3 56.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h5 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} a3 57.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f3 58.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e2 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c3 0–1

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined what is considered the most critical variation in the whole Euwe system: 6.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e2. My recommendation is 6...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} ge7!, after which Black can choose between playing the knight to g6 or f5 in the near future.

After A) 7.h4 cxd4 8.cxd4 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} b6! Black has very good counterplay, and B) 7.dxc5 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g6 does not trouble Black either, so White's main options are 7.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} a3 and 7.0–0.

After C) 7.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} a3 I analysed 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g6! in detail. Black's plan is ...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e7 followed by ...f6, and to combat this White resorts to 9.h4. Then comes the great idea: 9...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e7 10.g3 0–0! 11.h5 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h8! The knight may seem out of play, but after ...f6! followed by ...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} f7, the knight will re-emerge with great effect, and the pressure on the e5-pawn will mount.

D2) 7.0–0 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} g6 8.g3 followed by 9.h4 is very similar to line C, the only difference being that White can place his knight more actively on b3 or c3. But even so Black achieves good counterplay after 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e7 10.h4 0–0 11.h5 \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} h8 etc.

D3) 8.\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e3 is better. White puts the c5-pawn under pressure, and intends to wait for ...cxd4 before committing to any plan. Then, he would play \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c3 and \texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} d3 with a fine position. So Black instead plays 8...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} e7, when White plays 9.dxc5 with an interesting battle ahead. Both D31) 9...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} x e5 and D32) 9...\texttt{\textcircled{\textscriptsize 8}} c7 offer Black satisfactory play.
Chapter 5

The Exchange Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 d6 5.c3 b4 6.d3 0–0

A) 7.g3
   A1) 7...c5!?  
   A2) 7...dxc4
B) 7.f3

Game 10 Henrik Molvig – Jacob Aagaard, Copenhagen 1995 99
Game 11 Rolf Sander – Magnus Carlsen, Bergen 2002 107
On this page you will find seven diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

How should Black proceed? (page 100)

Find Black’s best set-up. (page 104)

Find a strong continuation. (page 105)

How should Black develop his play on the light squares? (page 107)

How should Black continue? (page 105)

Should Black take on a2? (page 106)

What is White’s idea, and how should Black deal with it? (page 101)
1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5

This is the allegedly boring Exchange Variation of the French Defence. We’ll begin with some not-so-boring variations where White seeks a quick initiative by playing c2-c4. The existence of the isolated queen’s pawn (IQP) makes the position open and thus double-edged. The hero of White’s position is undoubtedly the Latvian GM Normunds Miezis, who has won a remarkable number of games with this opening from equal positions against good players (including many solid GMs). However, I am sure that Miezis, who is a skilful master of open piece play, enters this variation not because he thinks it gives White an objective advantage, but rather because it gives rise to positions which suit his style.

3...exd5

4. c4

This is a common way to reach the variation we are discussing. The other way is by playing 4. d3 first, intending to continue with 5. c4, depending on Black’s reply. We’ll discuss the various move orders and the nuances they introduce as we go on.

Other moves such as 4. d3 and 4. d2 where White refrains from c2-c4 will be covered in Chapters 6 and 7.

4...f6!

Many sources have recommended the system with 4...b4↑ followed by 5...e7. This is quite ambitious and after a later ...dxc4 and ...bc6, Black may be able to play ...f5 to put a lot of pressure on the d4-pawn. I have nothing against this system, but the problem is that it cannot be played after 4. d3. I believe that Black’s most practical choice then is 4...f6! and if now 5. c4 (as happened, for example, in Game 11 featuring the young Carlsen with the black pieces), we have obviously lost the opportunity to play the set-up with ...g8-e7. So instead of having to learn two separate systems, I have decided to study only one that meets Black’s needs after both move orders.

Note that 4...dxc4 5. xc4 leads to a position that also arises from the Queen’s Gambit Accepted line 1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. e3 e5 4. xc4 exd4 5. exd4.

Back in 1999, GM Chris Ward pointed out in his book, The Queen’s Gambit Accepted, that White’s active piece play can cause Black serious concerns. This is also the line that Boris Avrukh recommended for White in Grandmaster Repertoire 1. Even so, the current view seems to be that Black has found the way to achieve equal play (those interested should take a look at Moiseenko – Grischuk, Odessa rapid 2009).
In our main line Black delays ...dxc4 until White has moved his king’s bishop, effectively gaining a tempo on this theoretical line, which certainly reduces any theoretical concerns Black might have.

5.\(\texttt{\textit{D}}\texttt{c3}\)

This is the most common move, but there are some transpositional issues connected with the move:

5.\(\texttt{D}f3\)

This position is usually reached from the 4.\(\texttt{D}f3\) \(\texttt{Df6}\) move order.

5...\(\texttt{b4}\)†

6.\(\texttt{D}d2\)

6.\(\texttt{D}c3\) will transpose to our main line.

6...\(\texttt{D}xd2\)† 7.\(\texttt{D}bxd2\)

7.\(\texttt{D}xd2\)† intends to develop the knight on c3, but it is very slow and after 7...0–0, threatening a check on the e-file, Black is doing fine.

7...0–0 8.\(\texttt{D}e2\)

8...\(\texttt{D}c6\)

8...dxc4 9.\(\texttt{D}xc4\) \(\texttt{D}bd7\) 10.0–0 \(\texttt{D}b6\)

11.\(\texttt{D}ce5\) is a transposition to a line of the Tarrasch Variation (3.\(\texttt{D}d2\) c5 4.exd5 exd5!) with reversed colours. 11...\(\texttt{D}f5\) 12.\(\texttt{D}c1\) c6

13.\(\texttt{D}e1\) This was Yusupov – Kasimdzhano, Germany 2005. Since Yusupov has specialized in these Tarrasch lines, it made sense for him to test the then World Champion’s understanding. Psakhis now mentions 13...\(\texttt{D}d6\) with the idea of ...\(\texttt{D}ad8\), when Black is very comfortable.

9.0–0 \(\texttt{D}g4\) 10.\(\texttt{D}h3\) \(\texttt{h}5\)

This has scored fantastically for Black. If 11.c5, then 11...\(\texttt{D}e4\) or 11...\(\texttt{D}e8\) 12.\(\texttt{D}b5\) \(\texttt{D}e4\) are both fine for Black.

5...\(\texttt{D}b4!\)

I like developing the bishop here for many reasons. First I would mention that in these IQP positions it is known that every one of the possible squares for the king’s bishop has specific disadvantages. Let’s consider the situation, as here, where Black will be playing against the IQP.

If the bishop goes to d6, it will block the attack on the IQP along the d-file, and also make the occupation of the blockading square in front of the IQP more difficult (and also here the bishop can be attacked by c4–c5).
On the e7-square, the bishop would be even worse. This would hand over the most important file (that is, the e-file) completely to White’s control, while the bishop’s active possibilities are limited.

Going to g7 is unnatural as well, as the situation is very different from the traditional IQP structures, where Black has an e-pawn to defend some important central dark squares.

So best is the b4-square. From there, Black indirectly exerts control over the d5-square, as the bishop creates pressure on the c3-knight, which will be pinned if a rook comes to e1. Also the possible exchange of this bishop for the knight would transform the IQP structure into hanging pawns. In this case it is more favourable for the side playing against the hanging pawns to have the possibility of the ...c5 break, rather than the ...e5 break when the hanging pawns have arisen from a traditional IQP.

6.\(\text{d}3\) 0–0

We are at the starting position, referred to as the tabiya, of the c2-c4 Exchange Variation. Here White has two ways to play:

A) 7.\(\text{d}ge2\) will be examined first, then we will study B) 7.\(\text{f}3\) which is the main line and the favourite of GM Miezis, who has made a living out of playing the Exchange Variation.

A) 7.\(\text{d}ge2\)!

In amateur circles, 7.\(\text{d}ge2\) is very popular, because it was promoted in the well known Chessmaster application by American IM (and former chess prodigy) Josh Waitzkin, who seems to have abandoned chess in favour of practising Kung Fu’s “pushing hands” system, becoming a world champion at that! In the video lessons by Waitzkin, he explains how, together with his friend GM Maurice Ashley, they developed and practised this system, transforming it into a dangerous practical weapon. However, these lessons do not mention the two lines I will recommend. We shall take a look at A1) 7...c5?! in the following illustrative game, and then examine A2) 7...dxc4, which is the main line of this system.

A1) 7...c5?!

GAME 10

Henrik Molvig – Jacob Aagaard

Copenhagen 1995

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 \(\text{f}6\) 5.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 6.\(\text{d}3\) 0–0 7.\(\text{d}ge2\) c5?!

This is a decent alternative to the main move 7...dxc4. It works equally well against 7.\(\text{f}3\), although surprisingly it is rarely played in that situation.

8.0–0

8.a3 dxc4 9.\(\text{x}xc4\) \(\text{x}c3\)† 10.bxc3 cxd4 11.cxd4 \(\text{e}6?!\) 12.\(\text{d}3\) (12.\(\text{x}e6\) \(\text{f}xe6\) would be very comfortable for Black) 12...\(\text{f}5\) 13.0–0 was played in Miezis – Luther, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. After 13...\(\text{d}7?!\)N Black has no problems and stands at least equal.

8...cxd4

8...\(\text{c}6?!\) is quite bad at this point, and White is better after both 9.\(\text{g}5\), Dvoretsky
10...\( \text{g4} \)!
This is the correct way for Black to equalize, and obviously Black can play along this line against both 7.\( \text{Ge}2 \) and 7.\( \text{f3} \).

11.\( \text{b3} \)
11.\( f3 \) is the only other sensible move here, but 11...\( \text{h5=} \) followed by \( \text{bd7} \) was very solid for Black in Milov – Christiansen, Essen 1999.

11...\( \text{xd4}! \) 12.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{e6} \)
Black takes full advantage of the pin along the 4th rank.

13.\( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xc4} \)

14.\( \text{d1??} \)
White had to be brave and play:
14.\( \text{xa8!} \) \( \text{xf1} \) 15.\( \text{xf1} \) \( \text{g4} \)
Black's attack looks dangerous, but White can defend.
16.\textcolor{red}{e}3! \textcolor{red}{\text{x}}e3\uparrow 17.fxe3 \textcolor{blue}{b}6

This is the best way to preserve winning chances. 17...\textcolor{blue}{w}xe3 18.e4 is level.

18.\textcolor{red}{d}5 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}}xb2

Black has a small technical advantage, as he will soon possess an outside passed pawn on the a-file.

14...\textcolor{blue}{w}b6→

Now it is practically over.

15.\textcolor{red}{w}xa8 \textcolor{red}{c}6 16.\textcolor{red}{e}3 \textcolor{red}{a}6 17.\textcolor{blue}{w}xf8\uparrow \textcolor{blue}{\text{x}}xf8

Black is favoured by the material imbalance of queen and knight versus two rooks and pawn, and Jacob soon created a deadly attack against the white king.

18.\textcolor{red}{c}5\uparrow \textcolor{red}{g}8 19.\textcolor{red}{d}6 h5 20.\textcolor{red}{ad}1 \textcolor{blue}{b}7 21.b4 \textcolor{red}{ce}5 22.a3 \textcolor{red}{f}3\uparrow 23.gxf3

23.\textcolor{red}{h}1 \textcolor{red}{h}4! 24.f3 \textcolor{red}{xf}3!→

23...\textcolor{blue}{w}xf3 24.\textcolor{red}{d}4 \textcolor{blue}{g}4\uparrow 25.\textcolor{red}{h}1 \textcolor{red}{f}3\uparrow 26.\textcolor{red}{g}1 \textcolor{red}{e}4 27.\textcolor{red}{d}8\uparrow \textcolor{red}{h}7 28.\textcolor{red}{e}1 \textcolor{red}{g}5 29.h3 \textcolor{red}{x}h3\uparrow 30.\textcolor{red}{h}2 \textcolor{red}{f}4

0–1

A2) 7...\textcolor{red}{d}xc4 8.\textcolor{red}{xc}4 \textcolor{red}{c}6!

The traditional methods of controlling the d5-point (with ...\textcolor{red}{bd}7, ...c6 and ...\textcolor{red}{b}6) do not work well here, as with the help of \textcolor{red}{\text{f}}4 White can fight effectively for the control of that square. At the same time the c8-bishop will have a difficult time developing (for example ...\textcolor{red}{f}5 can be met by \textcolor{red}{g}3, and after ...\textcolor{red}{g}6 the thrust f4-f5 is quite dangerous for Black, as shown by Waitzkin in his Chessmaster lectures).

Note that when this set-up occurs (with colours reversed) in the Tarrasch Variation, White has already committed the knight to the d2-square, but here Black takes full advantage of the fact that he can develop his queen's knight to a much more influential square.

9.0–0

Now White would love to play \textcolor{red}{g}5 (threatening \textcolor{red}{d}5), followed by \textcolor{red}{e}1, \textcolor{red}{e}1 and \textcolor{red}{b}3 (while Black cannot easily answer ...\textcolor{red}{e}8 because of the sensitivity of the f7-pawn), as Miezis has shown in his games. However, Black's next move stops that effectively:

9...\textcolor{red}{d}6!

The bishop has done its job on b4, and now it is time to relocate it. This move makes perfect sense here as White's kingside lacks the natural defender of a knight on f3. Although the chances of creating a brutal attack based on ...\textcolor{red}{g}4 and ...\textcolor{red}{h}4 are limited, it is always something that White has to watch out for.
10. **h3**

Black need not fear:

10. **\( \text{\texttt{b5}} \)**

Black's bishop retreat also stops \( \text{\texttt{g5}} \), because of the ...\( \text{\texttt{xh2+}} \) trick, but White's reply once again prepares it.

**Diagram:**

![Chess Diagram](image)

This does not carry much of a threat, as \( \text{\texttt{xd6}} \), \( \text{\texttt{xd6}} \) may even help Black a little.

10... **\( \text{\texttt{e6}} \)**?

This takes advantage of the reply \( \text{\texttt{d4-d5}} \) no longer being available.

11. **\( \text{\texttt{xe6}} \)**

11. \( \text{\texttt{xd6}} \), \( \text{\texttt{xd6}} \) is fine for Black.

11... **\( \text{\texttt{xe6}} \)** 12. **\( \text{\texttt{f4}} \)**

12. \( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d5}} \) and Black is more than okay.

12. \( \text{\texttt{xf4}} \), \( \text{\texttt{xf4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d5}} \), \( \text{\texttt{g3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d7}} = \)

Simacek – Cernousek, Olomouc 2005.

10... **\( \text{\texttt{h6}} \)**!

White should not be allowed to put the bishop on \( \text{\texttt{g5}} \), the only good square for it.

10. **\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \)** 11. **\( \text{\texttt{g5}} \)** 12. **\( \text{\texttt{h4}} \)** \( \text{\texttt{a5}} \)?!

This is not a wise idea, and I am mentioning this line to make an instructive point about what Black should avoid.

12. **\( \text{\texttt{e7}} \)** was played in Axelrod – Golod, Haifa 2010, but this set-up is not ideal for Black, and after 13. **\( \text{\texttt{e1N}} \)** White's idea of \( \text{\texttt{d4-d5}} \) followed by \( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) seems strong now that Black doesn't control the e5-square and cannot challenge White on the e-file.

**Diagram:**

![Chess Diagram](image)

13. **\( \text{\texttt{d3}} \)**! **\( \text{\texttt{xd3}} \)** 14. **\( \text{\texttt{xd3}} \)** \( \text{\texttt{c6}} \) 15. **\( \text{\texttt{e4}} \)** \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \)

16. **\( \text{\texttt{xf6}} \)** \( \text{\texttt{xf6}} \) 17. **\( \text{\texttt{ad1}} \)** \( \text{\texttt{e8}} \) 18. **\( \text{\texttt{d5}} \)** \( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) 19. **\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \)** \( \text{\texttt{c8}} \) 20. **\( \text{\texttt{g3}} \)**

White intends either \( \text{\texttt{f5}} \) or \( \text{\texttt{h5}} \), and is developing an annoying initiative. I know how annoying, because I have suffered while defending this position in an online blitz game!

11. **\( \text{\texttt{e3}} \)**

This was played in Potapov – Narmotas, Chotowa 2010, and now I rather like:

**Diagram:**

![Chess Diagram](image)

11... **\( \text{\texttt{e8}} \)**!

Black intends to continue with ...\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \).

11... **\( \text{\texttt{f5}} \)** 12. **\( \text{\texttt{g3}} \)** was the continuation of the game, when Black is just a little worse (if at all).
With the rook on the e-file, \( \text{g}3 \) will no longer be possible.

12.\( \text{b}3 \)

12.\( \text{c}1 \) can be met by 12...\( \text{a}6! \). This is not just to prevent the knight coming to \( b5 \) (as I mentioned above, we should not fear that), but is also played with ideas of expansion on the queenside. For example: 13.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{a}5 \) (13...\( \text{f}5 \) followed by ...\( \text{d}7 \) and possibly ...\( \text{e}4 \) is a solid alternative) 14.\( \text{d}3 \) \( b5 \) 15.\( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 16.\( \text{b}6 \) 17.\( \text{xf}6+ \) \( \text{x}f6= \) The queen's rook will come to \( d8 \).

12...\( \text{e}7 \)

This threatens ...\( \text{a}5 \).

13.\( \text{d}5 \)

13.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 14.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{f}5\text{=} \)

13...\( \text{xd}5 \) 14.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 15.\( \text{c}4 \)

15...\( \text{d}7! \)

15...\( \text{e}6? \) is also a good option, as Black is happy to exchange minor pieces when playing against the IQP. White may avoid the exchange with 16.\( \text{d}5 \), but this is met by: 16...\( \text{d}7 \) 17.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{b}5\text{=} \)

16.\( \text{c}3 \)

16.\( \text{a}3 \) may be answered by 16...\( \text{c}6 \)

(or 16...\( \text{b}5?! \) 17.\( \text{xf}7+ \) \( \text{x}f7 \) 18.\( \text{xf}7+ \) \( \text{xf}7 \) 19.\( \text{xb}4 \) \( \text{xb}4\text{=} \) 17.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{h}4 \) and Black has attacking chances on the kingside.)

16...\( \text{f}6 \) 17.\( \text{a}3 \)

17.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 18.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 19.\( \text{c}4 \) (19.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 20.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{e}7\text{=} \) 19...\( \text{b}5 \) 20.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 21.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{bx}a4 \) 22.\( \text{xa}4 \) \( \text{c}7\text{=} \) and Black will continue with ...\( \text{ab}8 \) and ...\( \text{d}5 \).

17...\( \text{c}6 \) 18.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{ad}8 \)

Black has a fine position – as well as play against the IQP, he has chances to develop an attack on the kingside.

B) 7.\( \text{d}3 \)

This is White's most popular set-up.

7...\( \text{dxc}4 \)

It might be tempting to give a check, but that is actually what White is wishing for.

7...\( \text{e}8\text{=}?! \) 8.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 9.0–0!

A strong pawn sacrifice.

9...\( \text{xe}3 \)

This may look like a clever solution, but it doesn't work.

9...\( \text{xe}3 \) is not much better, because after 10.\( \text{fxe}3 \) \( \text{dxc}4 \) 11.\( \text{xc}4 \) Black faces many problems on the f-file.

10.\( \text{fxe}3 \) \( \text{xe}3 \)
10...\texttt{xc}3 11.bxc3 \texttt{xe}3 is similar: 12.\texttt{xe}7 \texttt{xf}5 14.\texttt{g}4 and White has a
great attack.

White already had a decisive advantage in

8.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{c}6

Here I analysed the untried move:

9.h3N \texttt{e}7↑

9...\texttt{e}4?! 10.0–0! \texttt{xc}3 11.bxc3 \texttt{xc}3 12.\texttt{b}1\texttt{xc}6
10.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{a}5 11.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}5

I had fun trying to find the best variations
for both sides. I came up with:

12.0–0

12.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{f}5↑

12...\texttt{xe}3 13.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{xe}3↑ 14.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{c}6!
15.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{h}6 16.\texttt{xc}7

10...\texttt{d}6!

I like this move very much. Other moves are
of course possible, but most of them compare
unfavourably to the text.

For example, 10...\texttt{b}8 gets the approval of
Lev Psakhis in his French book, but it is too
sophisticated for my taste. Despite some initial
successes for Black, the hero of the White
side of this variation, GM Miezis, has scored
excellently against it in recent years.

10...\texttt{d}6, as we played against the \texttt{ge}2
system, makes less sense here as White's
kingside is well protected.
11.a3
A logical reaction, now that the bishop's natural retreat is no longer available.

11.h3 \( \text{xf3} \) (11...\( \text{h5} \) is fine too) 12.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 13.\( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 14.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{fb8} \) 15.\( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{xa6} \) 16.\( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{c2} \) 17.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{xe3} \) 18.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 19.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e8} \) was okay for Black in the computer game 'Spike' – 'Shredder', Trier 2010.

11.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 12.a3 \( \text{a5} \) 13.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e8} \) was very comfortable for Black in Weissenbach – Graf, Berlin 2008, but 13...\( \text{d5}!N \) might be even better.

11.\( \text{e2} \)
Patented by Miezis, securing the f3-knight and preparing play down the c-file.

11...\( \text{ad8} \)
11...\( \text{fe8} \) 12.\( \text{c1} \) was played in Miezis – Kazhgaleyev, Dresden 2008, and now 12...\( \text{ad8}!N \) is an obvious novelty.

12.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{h6} \) 13.\( \text{fd1} \) \( \text{fe8} \)
Notice how harmoniously Black has developed all his pieces to the most active squares available.

14.\( \text{ac1} \)
14.d5 is premature, as after 14...\( \text{a5} \) 15.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{xc3}?! \) 16.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{b6} \) Black stands better.
After the text move White is fully developed and threatens d4-d5 or \( \text{b5} \).

14...\( \text{xc3}N \)
This is a fine positional solution for Black.
14...\( \text{b6}?! \) 15.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 16.\( \text{xc6}?! \) (16.\( \text{e5}!+\) would have been a cleaner kill) 16...\( \text{xc6} \) 17.\( \text{xb4} \pm \) Meijers – Kraai, Beijing 2008.

15.\( \text{bxc3} \)
15.\( \text{xc3}?! \) \( \text{d5} \) 16.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b4}?! \)
15...\( \text{d5} \)
I think that Black is better, and here is some evidence:
16.\( \text{e1}! \)
16.c4 \( \text{f4}! \)
16...\( \text{xe3} \) 17.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e3} \) 18.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e7} \)
18...\( \text{e1} \pm \) 19.\( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 20.\( \text{xf7} \) is not so clear.
19.\( \text{e5} \)

19...\( \text{xe5} \)
19...\( \text{xe5} \) 20.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{f3} \) 21.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xf3} \) is a decent alternative, though the situation remains fairly complex.
20.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{c5} \) 21.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{xe5} \)
Black stands fine with two pawns for the exchange, and if White retreats his bishop then Black continues ...e6 with the more comfortable game. So the most testing continuation is:


25...d5!
Black first improves his bishop, and will later go for the a2-pawn.
25...xa2 allows White some activity after 26.Bxc7 threatening the b7-pawn. 26...d5 27.g5! White now threatens to pin the bishop. 27...c6 28.Bf1 White’s rooks are very active, and it is doubtful whether Black has any edge.
26.Bxc7 c6+
Black will penetrate to d2 and create problems.

11...a5
This is my favourite, but there is also something to be said for 11...xc3!?, which features in the very instructive Game 11 below.

12.Bxe2
I also analysed:
12.Bc1N xc3 13.bxc3
After 13.Bxc3 Bxd8 Black is at least equal.
13...xa3 14.Bf4

12...h5!!
14...Bac8 15.Bd3
It is not a simple task for White to prove long-term compensation for the pawn.
Black has the easier game.

12...Bd8 13.Ba4 Bb6
Black’s position is comfortable. Let’s see some more moves from a practical example:


23...d1†N
23...h6 24.Bd2! Bxd2 25.Bxd2 Bxd2 was only equal in Artamonov – J. Geller, Samara 2011.
Chapter 5 – The Exchange Variation

24.\textit{xe}1 h6! 25.\textit{h}3 \textit{d}3
Black remains a pawn up.

GAME 11

Rolf Sander – Magnus Carlsen
Bergen 2002

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4
Note that the actual move order of this game was 4.\textit{c}f3 \textit{f}6 5.c4.

4...\textit{f}6 5.\textit{c}f3 \textit{b}4 6.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}6 7.\textit{f}3 dxc4
8.\textit{xc}4 \textit{c}6 9.0–0 \textit{g}4 10.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}6! 11.a3

11...\textit{xc}3!?
Black decides to play against hanging pawns.

12.bxc3 \textit{a}5
12...\textit{fe}8 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{a}5 14.\textit{xf}7+ \textit{f}8 15.\textit{a}2 \textit{xf}3 16.\textit{gxf}3 \textit{e}7 17.\textit{c}4 (17.\textit{b}3 \textit{xb}3 18.\textit{xb}3 \textit{b}6 19.\textit{c}4 \textit{h}5 gives Black excellent compensation) 17...\textit{c}6 (17...\textit{xc}4 18.\textit{xc}4 \textit{d}5 controlling the dark squares is a more human approach) 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}5 19.\textit{c}2 \textit{xe}3 20.\textit{x}e3 \textit{exe} 21.\textit{d}3 \textit{h}6 22.\textit{ab}1 \textit{a}6 23.\textit{f}2 \textit{ae}8 This was played in the game ‘Stockfish’ – ‘Shredder’, Trier 2009. Black is okay but the position is double-edged.

13.\textit{d}3
Over the next five moves Carlsen will emphasize his opponent’s light-square weaknesses.

13...\textit{d}5! 14.\textit{b}1 a6! 15.\textit{h}3?!
This move is part of a bad plan from White. Advancing the h- and g-pawns weakens White’s kingside without getting anything in return.

15.a4 looks more logical, though Black can play 15...\textit{c}6 followed by ...\textit{b}5.

15...\textit{h}5
15...\textit{xf}3 16.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xf}3 17.\textit{xf}3 \textit{b}5 18.a4 \textit{c}6 is unclear.

16.\textit{g}4 \textit{g}6 17.\textit{e}5 \textit{xd}3 18.\textit{xd}3 \textit{b}5
Note how Carlsen has played consistently for the light squares by exchanging bishops and playing ...a6 and ...b5. Soon he also exchanges a pair of knights, leaving on the board White’s bad bishop against a good knight.

19.\textit{\texttt{Be1}} \textit{\texttt{c4}} 20.\textit{\texttt{Bg5}} \textit{\texttt{Dd7}} 21.\textit{\texttt{Bxc4}} \textit{\texttt{bxc4}}
22.\textit{\texttt{We3}} \textit{\texttt{b6}} 23.\textit{\texttt{Bf4}} \textit{\texttt{Dd7}} 24.\textit{\texttt{Gg3}} \textit{\texttt{Dd5}}

Carlsen shows a high level of technique at a very young age.

23.\textit{\texttt{Be5}} \textit{\texttt{f6}}
Restricting the dark-squared bishop.

26.\textit{\texttt{Bh2}} \textit{\texttt{ab8}}! 27.\textit{\texttt{Bb2}}
After 27.\textit{\texttt{Be1}} \textit{\texttt{b3}}! White fails to achieve any counterplay on the e-file.

27...\textit{\texttt{Bb2}} 28.\textit{\texttt{Bxb2}} \textit{\texttt{We7}}
Now Black takes control of the e-file.

29.\textit{\texttt{Bb1}}? \textit{\texttt{We4}}
Winning immediately! A beautiful game, which is reminiscent of the crystal-clear way Karpov played in the 80s and 90s.

\texttt{0-1}

\section*{Conclusion}

The dominant feature of the IQP positions in this chapter is piece play, so Black has to know where his pieces belong in order to make the most of his chances. By putting the bishops on b4 and g4, the knight on c6 and the queen on d6, Black can expect at least equal play. After bringing his rooks to the central files, he can even choose between two plans: either transferring his bishop to b6 or exchanging it for the useful c3-knight.

If White avoids this scenario by putting his king’s knight on e2 instead of f3, then Black can retreat his bishop to d6 and play ...\texttt{Ee8}, ...\texttt{We7} and ...\texttt{Dd7}, when he has good chances of obtaining a kingside attack.
Chapter 6

The Symmetrical Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.\(\texttt{c3}\) \(\texttt{f6}\)

5.\(\texttt{c3}\) – Game 12
5.\(\texttt{g5}\) – Game 13
5.\(\texttt{d3}\)
A) 5...\(\texttt{d6}\)
B) 5...\(\texttt{e7}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Players</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Carl Walbrodt – Geza Maroczy</td>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>1896</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lothar Schnitzspan – Krzysztof Pytel</td>
<td>St Ingbert</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Alexander Grischuk – V. Akopian</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Inna Gaponenko – Monika Socko</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2007</td>
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On this page you will find seven diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

White is threatening the deadly $\text{g}3$. Can you find a defence? (page 115)

White threatens $17.\text{xd}5$. How should Black counter this? (page 121)

White plans $\text{g}3$-$f5$ with an attack. How should Black react? (page 113)

Evaluate $13...\text{xf}3$. (page 118)

Black has a typical move which achieves equal chances. Can you find it? (page 122)

Is there a way to punish White for losing time playing $h2$-$h3$? (page 115)

Choose between $13...c6$ and $13...c5$. (page 119)
Chapter 6 – The Symmetrical Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.Qf3

I rather like this move, even though in terms of popularity in my database it comes second to 4.Qd3. I like it because I believe the best place for the knight is certainly f3, whereas the best place for the f1-bishop is not yet known. However, many players take the contrasting view that the best place for the bishop is definitely d3, so they play 4.Qd3 right away, preserving the possibility of developing their knight to e2. In my opinion, the immediate 4.Qd3 allows Black to respond strongly with 4...c5!, which we shall analyse in detail in the next chapter.

With 4.Qf3, White keeps his options open. He hasn’t forgotten about playing c2-c4, he just wants to see Black’s next move and react accordingly. It seems to me no accident that on the occasions when Kasparov used the Exchange Variation, he invariably played 4.Qf3.

4...Qf6!

This move fits our demands perfectly. Naturally there are many playable alternatives, but I would just like to mention some of their potential drawbacks.

4...Qd6 is met by 5.c4! and, as I said in the previous chapter, the bishop doesn’t always stand well on d6 in these structures. Black may have only a minimal disadvantage (or even no disadvantage at all!) after continuing with 5...Qf6! but if we have to play this move anyway, then why commit the bishop to d6 so early?

4...Qc6 is the “Nimzowitsch method” (explained in My System) of creating asymmetry in the position. I have used this move (as have my students), but I was never entirely happy with the position arising after: 5.Qb5! Qd6 6.c4! dxc4 (6...Qge7?? 7.c5) 7.d5 a6 8.Qa4 b5 9.dxc6 bxa4 10.0-0 Qe7 11.Qbd2! – Black has activity, but the structure favours White. I much prefer my recommended approach as it offers more clarity and seems closer to the general spirit of the opening.

5.Qd3

This is the most natural move. We have already looked at 5.c4 in the previous chapter, and we shall start this chapter with two illustrative games featuring 5.Qc3 and 5.Qg5.

A big drawback of the Exchange variation from White’s point of view is that Black can continue copying White’s moves for a long time, without being afraid that White can punish his play. To illustrate this, we shall examine the symmetrical variation with 5...Qd6, as well as looking at my preferred option of breaking the symmetry with 5...Qe7.
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.Qf3 Qf6
5.Oc3 Qd6 6.Od3 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.Qg5

This form of the Exchange variation was very popular in the 19th and early 20th century. It was a powerful weapon in the hands of Paul Morphy, and on occasion big names of the time, such as Paulsen, Rubinstein and Reti, fell victim to White's brutal approach. Nowadays it is rarely seen, but it could still cause problems to an unsuspecting French Defence player. I shall use this game to illustrate a method of dealing with this variation, as well as to introduce an idea that we'll see again later.

8...Qg4 9.h3

9.Qxf3!? I like this simple approach for Black. It works well here for specific reasons, such as the d4-pawn being undefended, which gives Black the chance to play ...Qb6 with tempo. In general, the bishop pair is not such a fierce weapon for either side in the Exchange variation, especially when the opposing side can restrict one of the bishops by using his pawn structure. In this case, the d3-bishop has no scope on the queenside because of the placement of the black pawns on the light squares, while on the other side of the board, Black can play ...g6 at some point and further restrict this bishop.

9...Qh5

Retreating the bishop is more complex but also fine.
10.g4 Qg6 11.Qe5

White would like to proceed with f2-f4 and Qf3, followed by Qd1-e3 or Qe2-g3, which can prove dangerous if Black is not careful.
11...Qbd7 12.Qxd7

12.f4? Qb6! 13.Qxd7 Qxd7 14.f5 Qxd4† 15.Qg2 f6 16.fxg6 fxg5 and Black was already winning in Chigorin - Fleissig, Vienna 1882.

12...Qxd7 13.Qxf6 gxf6 14.Qf3

This move enables White to keep the balance. 14.f4 f5! 15.g5 f6 16.h4 fxg5 17.hxg5 was Mason – Schwarz, Vienna 1882, and now very strong is: 17...Qg7!N 18.Qe2 Qh5† Black will continue with ...h6 with a great position.

14.Qae8!N

14...Qg7 15.Qad1?! It was much better to put a rook on the e-file. 15...Qae8 16.Qh1 Qc7 17.Qg2 Qh8! (17...Qh8 was also quite
good) 18.f4 f5 19.g5 f6 20.h4 Chigorin – Weiss, Vienna 1882, and now 20...h6!N is very strong.

15...\textit{a}ae1

15...xf6?! is met by: 15...\textit{xd}3 16.cxd3 \textit{e}e6 17.\textit{f}f5! Best, otherwise \ldots f5 becomes an idea. 17...\textit{e}e7!

Black has a very attractive position with ideas like \ldots \textit{e}e8 taking full control of the e-file, or going for an attack with \ldots \textit{h}4 followed by swinging the rook over to h6 or g6.

15...\textit{g}7

This position is equal. Black has ideas such as \ldots \textit{c}7 followed by \ldots \textit{d}6, and \ldots \textit{h}8 followed by \ldots h5, but White has a fairly sound position and has no reason to be overly worried.

10...xf3 \textit{bd}7 11.\textit{d}1

White has also tried:

11.\textit{e}2

This should be met by the same plan as in our main game.

11...\textit{b}6!

11...\textit{b}6!

This is a big improvement on: 11...\textit{c}7 12.\textit{g}3! \textit{x}g3 Practically forced, as otherwise the knight will land on f5, spelling trouble for Black. 13.fxg3 White’s play along the f-file gave him the advantage in English – Mason, Paris 1878.

12.c3 h6! 13.\textit{h}4 \textit{ae}8! 14.\textit{g}3

14...\textit{x}g3 15.fxg3

15.\textit{x}g3 is obviously more prudent, but after 15...\textit{e}4 16.\textit{f}4 \textit{df}6 Black has nothing to worry about.

15...g5 16.\textit{x}g5 hxg5 17.h4 \textit{d}8\textit{=}f

White’s attack is not nearly as strong as he would like it to be.

11...\textit{b}6!

Maroczy’s regrouping idea is worth remembering.
The manoeuvre is complete. Black has arranged his pieces in the best possible way: rooks doubled on the e-file, one knight defending the h7-pawn and the other one excellently placed on e4, while the bishop has gone back to b5 in order to create a battery with the queen on c7.

18.\( \text{b}f5 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 19.\( \text{h}h4 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 20.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \)

Black has the plan of playing ...\( \text{f}f7 \) followed by ...\( \text{e}e6 \), which will maintain his big plus.

23.\( \text{c}c4? \)

White is under a lot of pressure, so it is natural to commit mistakes.

23...\( \text{d}5 \) 24.\( \text{c}e3 \) \( \text{x}a2 \) 25.\( \text{d}d2 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 26.\( \text{c}4? \)

Black can also play 5...\( \text{d}6 \), and after 6.\( \text{d}3 \) 0–0 7.0–0 we have transposed to line A below.

6.\( \text{h}3?! \)

White wants everything! He would like to play a line with \( \text{d}3 \), while avoiding both ...c5 ideas and the ...\( \text{g}4 \) pin. But White’s development is slow, and Black can look to punish him for this.

6.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{g}4 \) transposes to line B on page 120.

6.\( \text{e}2 \)

This is a rather tame move, but it may be chosen if White is playing the Exchange variation with the intention of making a draw.

6...0–0 7.0–0 \( \text{h}6 \) 8.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{f}5 \).

Black is equal, but playing for a win is another matter entirely. However, the following
game fragment shows that if White remains passive then there may come a time when the equality barrier is crossed.

9.\texttt{b}d2 \texttt{bd}7 10.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{c}6 11.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{e}e8 12.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}6 13.\texttt{b}3

So far we have followed Pavlov – Galinsky, Kiev 2002. Here I propose an improvement:

13...g5N 14.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{h}5

Black has the plan of ...\texttt{x}g3 followed by ...\texttt{d}6, when the e5-square is well protected and he may later take advantage of the e4-outpost.

White cannot avoid the exchange of his bishop:

15.\texttt{x}b6 axb6 16.\texttt{c}7 \texttt{ac}8

The bishop is “mated”.

6...0–0 7.\texttt{d}3 c5!

This is the punishment! Black takes advantage of the loss of time caused by h2-h3.

In one of my own games I instead played:

7...\texttt{c}6?! 8.0–0 \texttt{h}6 9.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{e}e8 10.\texttt{e}1

10...\texttt{h}5

This is a typical idea in the \texttt{g}5 lines; the f4-square comes under Black's control. This is not so terrible for White, but it is definitely a small success for Black.

11.\texttt{g}3?!

My opponent wanted to avoid easy equality and tried to complicate matters.

11...\texttt{x}g3 12.\texttt{f}xg3 \texttt{d}6! 13.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{xe}1\texttt{f} 14.\texttt{w}xe1 \texttt{b}4!

½–½ Spyropoulos – Ntirlis, Patraikos 2011. My last move was accompanied with a draw offer, as that result sealed first place in the tournament for me. Black secures the advantage of two bishops against two knights, and stands much better. My opponent did not want to suffer for hours defending this dismal position, so he accepted the draw despite being much higher rated.

8.\texttt{d}c5 \texttt{xc}5 9.0–0 \texttt{h}6 10.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{g}5

11.\texttt{g}3

Sacrificing a piece is an interesting try:

11.\texttt{x}g5!N \texttt{hx}g5 12.\texttt{x}g5

But with cool defence, Black is not worse.

12...\texttt{g}7 13.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{h}8!

Black plans to unravel with ...\texttt{e}6 and ...\texttt{bd}7. Setting up a discovery on the g-file doesn't work:

14.\texttt{w}g3?!
14...\( \text{h}5! \)

The significance of Black's 13th move is that the knight is defended here.

15.\( \text{Wh}4 \text{f6}^\uparrow \)

11...\( \text{De}4 \) 12.\( \text{xe}4 \text{dxe}4 \) 13.\( \text{fd}2 \text{f5} \)

Black's position looks attractive to me.

14.\( \text{We}2 \text{h7} \) 15.\( \text{xe}4? \)

This piece sacrifice is dubious.

15.\( \text{Cc}3 \) is an improvement, though after 15...\( \text{Cc}6 \) 16.\( \text{Cb}3 \text{b6} \) 17.\( \text{fd}1 \text{Wh}6 \) I'd certainly prefer to be Black, as he has the initiative with ideas such as ...\( \text{e}6 \) and ...\( \text{f}4 \).

15...\( \text{fxe}4 \) 16.\( \text{We}4^\uparrow \text{f5} \) 17.\( \text{xb}7\text{d7} \) 18.\( \text{xa}8? \)

18.\( \text{xd}7\text{d7}^\uparrow \)

Black will use his superior forces to launch a decisive attack against the white king. In the remainder of the game, Black did not always manage to keep control, but he eventually netted the point.

20.\( \text{Cc}3 \text{xc}2 \) 21.\( \text{Ac}1 \text{xf5} \) 22.\( \text{xe}1 \text{gg7} \) 23.\( \text{Cc}3 \text{d}d4 \) 24.\( \text{f}f3 \text{g}6 \) 25.\( \text{Cc}1 \text{h}5 \) 26.\( \text{Cb}5 \text{h}4 \) 27.\( \text{xd}4 \text{xd}4 \) 28.\( \text{e}7^\uparrow \text{h}6 \) 29.\( \text{f}8 \text{dd}3 \) 30.\( \text{e}5 \text{d}1^\uparrow \) 31.\( \text{h}2 \text{g}4 \) 32.\( \text{hxg}4 \text{Cc}2 \) 33.\( \text{Cc}6^\uparrow \text{g}6 \) 34.\( \text{g}5^\uparrow \text{h}5 \) 35.\( \text{h}8^\uparrow \text{xe}5 \) 36.\( \text{f}4^\uparrow \text{f}5 \) 37.\( \text{f}6^\uparrow \text{e}4 \) 38.\( \text{h}3 \text{h}1^\uparrow \) 0–1

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.\( \text{Cc}3 \text{Cc}6 \) 5.\( \text{dd}3 \)
In this chapter I shall cover A) 5...\textit{d}6 and B) 5...\textit{c}e7.

A) 5...\textit{d}6

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\t\node[draw] (a) at (0,0) {\textit{a}}; \node[draw] (b) at (1,0) {\textit{b}}; \node[draw] (c) at (2,0) {\textit{c}}; \node[draw] (d) at (3,0) {\textit{d}}; \node[draw] (e) at (4,0) {\textit{e}}; \node[draw] (f) at (5,0) {\textit{f}}; \node[draw] (g) at (6,0) {\textit{g}}; \node[draw] (h) at (7,0) {\textit{h}};
\t\draw (a) -- (b) -- (c) -- (d) -- (e) -- (f) -- (g) -- (h);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

The symmetrical approach.

\textbf{6.0–0}

White sometimes throws in a check:

6.\textit{w}e2+ \textit{c}e6

This is more ambitious than the drawish
6...\textit{w}e7.

7.\textit{g}5 \textit{w}e7

Black has nothing to worry about; I will provide some evidence to back up this claim.

8.\textit{c}xe6 fxe6 9.c3

9.0–0 has been played a couple of times, and in reply I like 9...\textit{c}6!N with the idea of 10.c3 e5 with equality.

9...c5!N

Black should challenge the centre.

9...\textit{c}c6 is now met by the strong 10.f4.

9...0–0 10.0–0 e5 11.dxe5 \textit{w}xe5 12.\textit{w}xe5 \textit{\textit{x}}xe5 13.\textit{d}d2 was okay for Black in Petrie – Sukhov, email 2000. Here I like 13...\textit{b}bd7N with equal chances.

10.dxc5 \textit{x}c5 11.0–0 0–0 12.\textit{c}d2 \textit{c}c6 13.\textit{b}b3 \textit{b}b6

Black will play ...e5 next, with adequate counter-chances. The centre and the f-file, combined with his good pieces, may result in a successful kingside attack.

\textbf{6...0–0 7.\textit{g}5}

7.c4 doesn't bring White anything; 7...dxc4

8.\textit{c}xc4 \textit{c}c6 9.h3 h6 10.\textit{c}c3 \textit{f}5 11.\textit{c}e3 a6 12.a3 \textit{f}e8 13.\textit{f}e1 \textit{w}d7 with equality, Mahapatra – Gleizerov, New Delhi 2009.

7...\textit{g}4

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\t\node[draw] (a) at (0,0) {\textit{a}}; \node[draw] (b) at (1,0) {\textit{b}}; \node[draw] (c) at (2,0) {\textit{c}}; \node[draw] (d) at (3,0) {\textit{d}}; \node[draw] (e) at (4,0) {\textit{e}}; \node[draw] (f) at (5,0) {\textit{f}}; \node[draw] (g) at (6,0) {\textit{g}}; \node[draw] (h) at (7,0) {\textit{h}};
\t\draw (a) -- (b) -- (c) -- (d) -- (e) -- (f) -- (g) -- (h);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

In this line we can see the basic flaw of the Exchange variation from White's point of view – if you want a draw with Black, then keep copying moves!

8.\textit{b}d2

8.\textit{c}c3 c6 transposes to Game 12 on page 112.
8...\(\text{Be1}\) was played in the “immortal drawing game” between Maroczy and Capablanca in the final round of the Lake Hopatcong tournament in 1926. That game continued:

\[ \begin{align*}
8... \text{Bd7} & \quad 9.\text{Bd2} \quad \text{c6} \\
10.\text{c3} & \quad \text{Be7} \\
11.\text{Bc2} & \quad \text{Fe8} \\
12.\text{h4} & \quad \text{h5} \\
13.\text{g3} & \quad \text{Bxg3} \\
14.\text{hxg3} & \quad \text{Bxh4} \\
15.\text{Be2} & \quad \text{Be8} \\
16.\text{Bxg6} & \quad \text{hxg6} \\
17.\text{Be1} & \quad \text{Bxe1} \\
18.\text{Bxe1} & \quad \text{Be8} \\
19.\text{Bd3} & \quad \text{d6} \\
20.\text{Bb3} & \quad \text{a6} \\
21.\text{Bf1} & \quad \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}
\end{align*} \]

Black’s plan is to restrict the white bishop by placing all his pawns on light squares. Black won the game in the end, albeit not without some help from his opponent.

**GAME 14**

**Alexander Grischuk – Vladimir Akopian**

Enghien les Bains 2001

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.e5 f6
5.d3 \(\text{Bd6}\) 6.0-0 0-0 7.\text{g5} \(\text{g4}\) 8.\text{Bd2} \\
\(\text{Bd7}\) \(9.c4\) \(\text{Bxc4}\) 10.\(\text{Bxc4}\) \(\text{Be8}\)

This is a natural move to improve Black’s position. Black implies that he is not afraid of the exchange on d6.

9...c6 10.\(\text{Bc2}\) \(\text{Bc7}\) 11.\(\text{Be1}\) \(\text{Bae8}\) 12.\(\text{Bh4}\) \\
\(\text{Bh5}\) 13.\(\text{g3}\)

13...\(\text{Bxf3}\)!?

This was played in Romanos – Tepelenis, Kavala 2008. This game is not in the databases, but I was at that tournament and was lucky enough to see it in person.

14.\(\text{Bxd6}\) \(\text{Bxd6}\) 15.\(\text{Bxf3}\) \(g6=\)

Black has shown that even in the dullest of positions, you can inject some imbalance.

11.\(\text{Bxd6}\)

Let’s look at a couple of alternatives that have been tried in practice:

11.\(\text{Be3}\) \(\text{Bh5}\) 12.\(\text{Bf5}\) \(\text{Bf8}\)!

This shows another good feature of Black’s 10th move; the knight can arrive on e6 to good effect.

13.\(\text{Bd2}\)!

This was Bitman – Duda, Poland 2002, and now the simplest is:
Chapter 6 – The Symmetrical Variation

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13...\(\text{xf3}\)N 14.gxf3 \(\text{e6}\)

Black's play has the point:

15.\(\text{h4}\) 16.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{g5}\)

If White exchanges bishops, the weakened dark squares around his king would leave him in bad shape, but the alternative is no better.

17.\(\text{g3}\) g6 18.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{xd4}\)+

11.\(\text{cl}\) h6 12.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{f4}\) 13.\(\text{c3}\)

13...c6 followed by ...\(\text{c7}\) would be a more traditional way to play the position, and is also not at all bad.

14.\(\text{dxc}\) 15.\(\text{h3}\)!

15.\(\text{e3}\)N is what my computer suggests as best, but after 15...\(\text{xe3}\) 16.\(\text{fex}\) \(\text{ce4}\) 17.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{xd1}\) 18.\(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 19.\(\text{c7}\) \(b6\)

Black is a touch better due to his superior structure.

So far we have been following Braun – Uhlmann, Germany 2005, and here I recommend:

13...\(\text{e6}\)N

Black threatens to win material with 16...\(\text{xd3}\) 17.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{xc4}\).

16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{xe3}\) 17.\(\text{fex}\) \(\text{ce4}\) 18.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{c8}\)+

We have a similar situation to the note above; Black is slightly better.

11...\(\text{xd6}\) 12.\(\text{b3}\)

White tries to take advantage of the dynamic features of the position. If given time, Black has the plan of controlling the d5-square with ...\(\text{e6}\) and ...\(\text{b6-d5}\), and he may later improve his position with ...\(\text{b6}\) and so on.

12.\(\text{xf3}\) 13.\(\text{gxf3}\) \(h6\) 14.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{a5}\)!

After weakening the kingside, Black naturally aims to transfer his queen to \(h5\).

Playing 14...\(\text{f8}\)!N immediately, to transfer the knight to \(e6\), is an interesting novelty suggested by the engines.
15.\textit{g}3 \textit{f}8 16.\textit{xb}7 \textit{e}6 17.\textit{b}5 \textit{d}8

Black threatens \ldots \textit{xd}4 followed by \ldots \textit{xf}3\dagger.

18.\textit{b}4

18.\textit{a}4 was played in Nataf – Luther, Havana 2001, and the simplest reply would have been 18..\textit{b}6N with equal play.

18...\textit{b}8 19.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xb}2 20.\textit{xd}8

At this point the draw was agreed. A possible end to the game could have been 20..\textit{xd}8 21.\textit{fd}1 \textit{d}5 22.\textit{f}1 \textit{g}5 23.\textit{db}1 \textit{d}2 24.\textit{d}1 \textit{b}2 with a repetition of moves.

\[\frac{1}{2}\!-\!\frac{1}{2}\]

B) 5...\textit{c}7

The previous line was solidly equal, but some asymmetry in the position is always fun. It is the first step to creating a position where Black can play for the win.

5...\textit{g}4 6.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}7 is just a transposition.

6.\textit{g}5

6.0–0 0–0 7.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}4 is a common move order which also transposes to the main line.

6...\textit{g}4 7.0–0 0–0 8.\textit{bd}2

White can also start with:
8.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}8

After 8...\textit{bd}7 9.\textit{bd}2 \textit{c}6 10.c3 \textit{e}8 11.\textit{c}2 White has a slightly improved version of the 5...\textit{d}6 lines we looked at in variation A.

9.\textit{bd}2 \textit{bd}7 10.c3

10...\textit{c}5!?

This is the best choice for Black.

10...\textit{h}6 11.\textit{h}4 (11.\textit{f}4 \textit{h}5=) 11...\textit{h}5!

12.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7 13.\textit{b}3! (13.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7 14.\textit{h}3 \textit{f}4!= was Kosten’s analysis in \textit{ECO})

13...\textit{f}4 14.\textit{f}1 \textit{b}6 White managed to convert his slight advantage into a win in Bellini – Sedina, Montecatini Terme 1995. I do not think Black should lose if he is careful, but it is a miserable position to play.

11.\textit{c}2 \textit{c}4 12.\textit{f}5 \textit{d}5 13.\textit{xf}5 \textit{h}6 14.\textit{h}4

We have transposed to the note to move 10 in our main line.
8...\texttt{bd7}

8...\texttt{c6} is a decent alternative, and we shall examine it in Game 15 below.

9.c3

9.c4 is interesting, but so is the reply 9...c5!N, when Black is not worse.

9...c5!?

In this line Black should seek to avoid the slightly unpleasant positions that would arise from playing similarly to line A, and should either play ...\texttt{c6} or go for ...c5.

In his fine book *Lessons with a Grandmaster*, Boris Gulko analyses the game Shabalov – Gulko, Manila (ol) 1992: 9...h6!? 10.\texttt{h4} \texttt{h5} This is also fine for Black and can be seen as an argument for White playing \texttt{e1} earlier. 11.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 12.\texttt{e1} (12.\texttt{h3} \texttt{f4} = Gulko) 12...\texttt{d6} 13.\texttt{b3} \texttt{f4} 14.\texttt{f1} c6 and Black is comfortably placed.

10.h3

10.\texttt{c2} c4 11.\texttt{f5} \texttt{xf5} 12.\texttt{xf5} h6 13.\texttt{h4} \texttt{e8} (13...g6 is about equal) 14.\texttt{e1} \texttt{c7} 15.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d6} 16.\texttt{ae1} \texttt{xe2} 17.\texttt{xe2} \texttt{wc6} 18.\texttt{f1} This was Glek – Potkin, Internet (blitz) 2004.

**GAME 1**

**Inna Gaponenko – Monika Socko**

Germany 2007

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.f3 f6
5.g5 e7 6.d3 g4 7.0-0 0-0 8.bd2 c6

This is an attractive move for Black. After White’s c2-c3 this knight may appear restricted, but as you will soon see, the positive aspects of the move outweigh the negative ones.

9.c3 h6 10.h4 h5

Again we see this typical manoeuvre.

11.g3

Exchanging the bishops is fine for Black:
11.xe7 xe7 12.e1
12.h3 f4! is a neat detail pointed out by Gulko.
12.b3N can be met with 12..f4 13.f1 d6 14.f1 a5! and the b7-pawn is clearly poisoned: 15.xb7?? fb8 traps the queen.
12..d6 13.h3 f4 14.hxg4
14.f1 d7 followed by ..e8 is level.

14.xd3 15.e3 xb2 16.b3 c4
17.xc4 dxc4 18.xc4

In Dabo Peranic – V. Kovacevic, Medulin 1997, a Petroff-like position had appeared on the board.

18.e8N 19.e1 xe3 20.xe3 c7

Black is fine.

11.xg3 12.fxg3

An understandable decision to play for the win, albeit one that brings White nothing.
12.hxg3 can be met by 12..d6, as in the game, followed by ..f6, ..g6 and ..e8. Indeed, the possibility of playing the queen to d6 to increase control of the important e5-square is an important feature of the ..c6 approach.

12.d6 13.c2 e8
Black is equal, and may continue with \( ...\text{f6} \) followed by \( ...\text{e7} \).

14.\textbf{f5} \textbf{xf5} 15.\textbf{xf5} \textbf{f6} 16.\textbf{f4} \textbf{d7} 17.\textbf{Eae1} \textbf{e6}

Black can slightly improve here with 17...\textbf{Dd8} or 17...\textbf{e7}. In either case, the idea is \( ...\text{b6} \) followed by \( ...\text{c5} \), when Black stands slightly better.

18.\textbf{g4} \textbf{d8} 19.\textbf{g3} \textbf{e8} 20.\textbf{h4} \textbf{exe1} 21.\textbf{exe1} \textbf{exe1}† 22.\textbf{exe1} \textbf{d7}

After carrying out the safe plan of exchanging rooks on the \( e \)-file, Black still has an edge because of her superior pawn structure.

23.\textbf{g3} \textbf{e7} 24.\textbf{g5} \textbf{d6} 25.\textbf{e5} \textbf{hxg5} 26.\textbf{Exg5} \textbf{exe5} 27.dxe5

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

27...\textbf{c5}\textdagger?! 27...\textbf{e7}! 28.\textbf{we3} \textbf{b5}\textdagger would put serious pressure on the white queenside.

28.\textbf{h2} \textbf{e7}

Here too, 28...\textbf{e7} with the idea of \( ...\text{b5} \) could have been tried. After the text the game is close to a draw.

29.\textbf{exe7} \textbf{exe7} 30.\textbf{g3} \textbf{f6}

After this, White is able to draw by pushing her newly-created majority on the kingside.

Another attempt would be 30...\textbf{c5} followed by \( ...\text{g6} \) and perhaps \( ...\text{b5} \), leaving any decision about \( ...\text{f6} \) for later. The position would still be drawn, but at least Black might keep some practical chances.

31.\textbf{exf6} \textbf{xf6} 32.\textbf{f3} \textbf{f7} 33.\textbf{f4} \textbf{e6} 34.\textbf{g4} \textbf{c5} 35.\textbf{h5} \textbf{e7} 36.\textbf{g5} \textbf{f8} 37.\textbf{h4} \textbf{d6}† 38.\textbf{g4} \textbf{d4} 39.\textbf{xd4} \textbf{xd4} 40.\textbf{f3} \textbf{d3} 41.\textbf{e3} \textbf{d2} 42.\textbf{e2} \textbf{f4} 43.\textbf{f3} \textbf{f5} 44.\textbf{h6} \textbf{gxh6} 45.\textbf{gxh6} \textbf{hxh6} 46.\textbf{xd2} \textbf{e5} 47.\textbf{b3} \textbf{d5} 48.\textbf{d3} \textbf{g7} 49.\textbf{c2} \textbf{b6} 50.\textbf{d1} \textbf{½–½}

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Exchange variation of the French is one of the few symmetrical openings where Black cannot easily be punished if he continues to copy White's moves for a long time. This fact gives Black a choice. If he is satisfied with a draw, then he should achieve it quite easily, but if he wants a fighting game then inserting some imbalance is essential. Exchanging a bishop for a knight, or putting the bishop on \( e7 \) instead of \( d6 \), are ways to do so without risking much. In this case, putting the knight on \( c6 \) in order to reserve the \( d6 \)-square for the queen is a fine strategy. Also the manoeuvre \( ...\text{h6} \) followed by \( \text{...\text{h5}} \) is something to remember.

For those who would like to take more risks, then I suggest looking at the next chapter! Frankly, I prefer the sharper lines in the next chapter, but the lines we have examined in this chapter are still relevant and useful.
Chapter 7

Breaking the Symmetry

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5 exd5

A) 4. c3 f3 f6 5. d3 c5 6. 0–0 c4 7. e1 e7 8. f1 0–0 9. b3

B) 4. d3 c5!

B1) 5. b5+

B2) 5. e2+

B3) 5. c3

B4) 5. f3

5. dxc5 – Game 18

Game 16 Akmal Khusanbaev – Raset Ziatdinov, Tashkent 2007 128

Game 17 Hrvoje Stevic – Francisco Vallejo Pons, Aix-les-Bains 2011 130

Game 18 Thorbjorn Bromann – Emanuel Berg, Denmark 2008 136
On this page you will find six diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

White threatens $\mathbb{g}xg5\dagger$. How should Black defend? (page 131)

Evaluate 14...$\mathbb{x}h3$. (page 134)

How can Black damage the white structure? (page 128)

How should Black deal with the pressure against e6? (page 136)

How should Black continue? (page 129)

Is there a way to take advantage of the weakening h2-h3 move? (page 134)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5

We will now look at A) 4.Qf3 (followed by 5.Qd3), as well as the immediate B) 4.Qd3.

A) 4.Qf3 Qf6

4...c5? is inadvisable as White essentially gets to play against a c2-c4 Exchange variation, but with a whole extra tempo. 5.Qb5†! Qd7 (after 5...Qc6 White obtains a fine position by adopting the set-up we recommended for Black in Chapter 5) 6.Qxd7† Qxd7 7.Qe2† Qe7 8.0–0 Qgf6 9.Qe1± Henrichs – Garcia Verd, Palma de Mallorca 2008.

5.Qd3

This is the tabiya we examined in the previous chapter. Instead of moving our dark-squared bishop to one of the two possible squares (d6 or e7), the more aggressively-minded French Defence player may prefer the following suggestion:

5...c5!?

It is said (and has almost acquired the status of urban legend) that GM Vallejo Pons has built his French repertoire in such a way that he can always get winning chances in the Exchange French. If this is true, then this is exactly how Black should play! Meeting Qd3 with ...c5 and entering an isolated queen pawn position is a sound idea, as I have mentioned already.

6.0–0

6.Qb5† Qd7 7.Qxd7† Qbxd7 transposes to variation B1 on page 132.

6.c3 transposes to Game 16 below.

6.dxc5 Qxc5 7.0–0 0–0 transposes to Game 18 at the end of this chapter.

6.Qc3?! c4 7.Qe2 Qe7 8.0–0 Qc6 9.Qe3 0–0 10.Qd2 When I reached this position, I sought to take advantage of the bad placement of the white pieces with:

10...Qb4 11.a3 Qb4 12.Qe1 Qxc3 13.bxc3 Qf5 14.Qb1 Qd6 15.Qb2 Qe8 16.Qf4 Qf6 Black takes control over the e5-square, and sets a trap (yes, traps can work even in correspondence games!). 17.Qxd6 Qxd6 18.Qxb7? Qc6! 19.Qd1 Qc8 White either loses a queen for a rook, or just loses the b7-rook. 0–1 Carrington – Ntirlis, corr. 2012.

6...c4 7.Qe1† Qe7 8.Qf1

ECO assessed this position as slightly favourable for White, mainly due to the influence of the game Kasparov – Korchnoi, Tilburg 1991. However, Moskalenko disputes this assessment in The Flexible French, and I agree with him.
8...0-0 9.b3
9...g5 is covered in Game 17 on page 130.

9...cxb3 10.axb3 1\c6

This position has occurred in more than 70% of my games against the Exchange
variation, and I have many pleasant memories.
The position is unbalanced enough to play
for a win, and the strategic elements are quite
simple to understand. Black can operate on the
open e-file and the half-open c-file, while he
has to keep an eye on the e5-square and the
pressure along the half-open a-file.

11.d3
11...f5 = Narciso Dublan – Moskalenko,
Catalonia 2006, is the only line given by
Moskalenko.

11...e5 12.g5 (12.xc6 bxc6 13.c3
d7 14.f3 g4 15.f4 d7 16.d3 was
‘Naum’ – ‘Critter’, Trier 2010, and now
16...f5N is equal) 12...f5 13.xc6 bxc6
14.a6 d6 15.d2? (15.h4=) 15...g4
16.xe7 xh2+ 17.f1 xex7 18.xe7 e8+-
Van Enk – Kraemer, Germany 1996.

11...g4 12.c3 e8 13.h3
13.f4 d6 14.xe8+ xex8 15.xd6
d3=

13...h5 14.f4 d6 15.xe8+ xex8
16.xd6 xd6 17.xd2 xc8 18.b1
18.e2 a6 19.e1 g6 (19...d7= is
also balanced) 20.e5 xex5 21.dxe5 xdx3
22.xd3 b5 23.b1 c7 24.xd1 e7
25.f4 was ‘Shredder’ – ‘Stockfish’, Trier 2010.
I offer my human proposal of 25...f6N with a
balanced position.

18...g6

I could stop here and say the position is
equal, but I would like to mention another
two games that have been played between
computers, as they provide further evidence of
the soundness of Black's position.

19.e5
19.xg6 xg6 20.b2 a5 21.f1 b5
22.e3 e7 23.e4 24.c4 bxc4 25.bxc4
dxc4 26.xc4 xc4 27.e4 b4 28.e3
d6 29.e1 f8 30.g5 xd4 31.xd4
xd4 32.xa5 xd5 and after a further 104
moves (!) a draw was agreed in ‘GullChess’ –

19...a6 20.xg6 hxg6 21.b2
White has managed to get bishop for knight,
but the c-file gives Black plenty of counterplay
and he does not stand worse.
21...\textit{c7}
21...a5 followed by \ldots b5 seems fine as well.

22.\texttextit{a3} a5 23.\textit{f1} \textit{e8}
23...b5!?

24.\textit{e3} \textit{f6} 25.\textit{a2} b6

The position is balanced and was eventually drawn in ‘Naum’ – ‘Cipollino’, Trier 2010.

\textbf{GAME 16}
\begin{center}
Akmal Khusanbaev – Raset Ziatdinov
Tashkent 2007
\end{center}

1.\textit{e4} c5 2.\textit{c3} e6 3.d4 d5 4.exd5 exd5 5.\textit{d3} \textit{f6} 6.\textit{f3} c4

7.\textit{c2}

The move order in this example, with White having played c2-c3 rather than 0-0, obviously denies him the option of playing \textit{e1}+ followed by \textit{f1}.

7...\textit{d6} 8.0-0 0-0 9.\textit{g5} \textit{g4} 10.\textit{bd2} \textit{bd7} 11.\textit{e1}

It is important to fight for control of the e4- and e5-squares.

11...\textit{b5} 12.\textit{f1} \textit{c7}

We see a first sign in favour of Black, as his control of the d3-square prevents White from creating a similar battery. This means that it becomes difficult for White to guard the e4-square, whereas the e5-square is well protected by Black.

13.\textit{h3} \textit{h5} 14.\textit{h4} \textit{f8f4}

Without too much fuss, Black is already slightly better. The extent of the advantage should not be too scary for White, but being in a slightly uncomfortable situation may induce White to commit further mistakes. White cannot conveniently connect his rooks, so he decides to block the e-file.

15.\textit{e3}

15...\textit{f4}!

Black will create a weakness on the e-file – fine play!

16.g4

This move is clearly weakening, but White cannot avoid some sort of damage to his structure.

16...\textit{xe3} 17.\textit{xe3}

17.gxh5?! \textit{f4}+ would have been even worse.
17...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xe3 18.g3

18.fxe3 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}g6 is not so different from the game.

18...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}c6 19.fxe3 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}g6 20.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xg6 hxg6

Black has increased his advantage, and continues to do so move by move in the next phase of the game.

21.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}g5

White stops ...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e4.

21...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}h7!

Black is favoured by an exchange of knights, as White's remaining minor piece cannot permanently stop a monstrous knight arriving on the e4-square.

22.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xh7

22.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f3 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}df6 23.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e5 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e8 and Black plays ...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e4 next.

22...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xh7 23.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f3 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e6 24.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}h4

White ensures that ...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f6-e4 is at least postponed.

24.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e8 25.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f2 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f8?!

Black has found a logical plan of pushing ...f5.

26.a4

So White decides to distract him on the other flank.

26...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xa4 27.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xa4 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}b8!

Black adapts to the situation and finds a new target in the b2-pawn.

28.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e2 a6 29.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}c2 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}b6! 30.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f3 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e8

A fine manoeuvre. Black is stretching his opponent's defences as he is threatening both ...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e6 and ...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}b8, and White cannot successfully defend on every front.

31.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}a5

31...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f6!

Only now does this move come.

32.g5

32.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xf6 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xf6+ 33.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e2 is met by 33...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}b8! and the black queen penetrates, leaving His Majesty defenceless.

32...\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}e6!

Now it is all over; White cannot defend both e3 and h3.

33.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xf6 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}xh3+ 34.\texttt{\textbackslash{B}}f2 \texttt{\textbackslash{B}}h2+

0–1
13 0 Playing the French

GAME 17

Hrvoje Stevic – Francisco Vallejo Pons

Aix-les-Bains 2011

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.Qf3 Qf6 5.Qd3 c5 6.0-0 c4 7.Re1+ Re7 8.Qf1 0-0

9.Qg5

9...Qe6!?

An interesting strategic decision. Vallejo has done a lot of work on these lines, so his ideas deserve attention. This move is aimed mainly against b2-b3, as in this case Black does not have to play ...cxb3, which concedes the d3-square to White for his bishop.

9...Qg4 should probably be okay, but in practice White has succeeded in achieving slightly better positions from this line. For example: 10.h3 Qxf3 (10...h5 11.g4± Kasparov) 11.Qxf3 Qc6 12.e3 Qe8 13.Qxe7 Qxe7 Now 14.Qa3 Qc7 15.Qc2 Qd6= was fine for Black in Kengis – M. Gurevich, Tilburg 1992, but 14.b3!N would have been more critical.

9...Qc6!?

This looks very logical to me.

10.Qe5

10.h3 h6 11.Qh4 Qf5= Black controls the e4-square and stands fine.

10.c3 has generally been met by 10...Qe6, but I have always thought that 10...Qf5N is more sensible. After 11.b3 cxb3 12.axb3 Re8 13.Qbd2 a5 14.Qe5 Qc7 it is clear Black has nothing to fear.

10...h6 11.Qh4

11.Qxc6 bxc6 was slightly better for Black in Gaponenk o – Moskalenko, Montcada 2007, according to Moskalenko.

11.Qf5

I like this set-up a lot.

12.c3 g5

Simply developing with 12...Qc8 cannot be bad either.

13.Qg3 Qe4 14.Qd2 Qxg3 15.hxg3 Qxe5 16.Qxe5 Qd7 17.Qf3 Qe6

Black is more than okay, and can cope well with the following attacking try.
Chapter 7 – Breaking the Symmetry

10... $\text{c}5$

10.b3 $\text{c}6$ 11.bxc4 dxc4 is fine for Black.

Black now wants to play $\ldots\text{b}5$, while White tries to stop him. 12.a4 a6 13.$\text{c}3$ $\text{b}8$ 14.$\text{b}1$ $\text{a}5$ Black has good activity, and stands slightly better after either 15.$\text{d}2$ $\text{f}8$ or 15.$\text{d}2$ $\text{f}d8$.

10... $\text{e}5$

11.$\text{c}3$

After 11.$\text{xc}6$ bxc6, Black will aim to play the $\ldots\text{c}5$ break under favourable circumstances: 12.b3 $\text{e}8$ 13.$\text{c}3$ (13.$\text{c}3\text{c}5$ and 13.$\text{d}2$ $\text{c}7$ 14.$\text{f}3$ $\text{c}5$ are both fine for Black) 13...h6 14.$\text{h}4$ $\text{b}4$+$

11...$\text{c}8$ 12.$\text{e}2$ h6 13.$\text{h}4$ g5

White has done nothing to challenge Black, so it is time to take over the initiative.

14.$\text{g}3$ $\text{e}4$ 15.c3

Vallejo missed a good opportunity: 15...$\text{b}6$+$N$ 16.$\text{c}1$ (Black is also doing well after 16.$\text{b}1$ $\text{f}5$+$N$ or 16.$\text{xc}6$ $\text{xc}6$ 17.$\text{c}1$
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\[ \text{bxc6 bxc6 17.f3} \]

17...\text{dxc6 is more prudent, though after 17...\text{e8 Black can be happy enough with his position.}}

17...\text{dxc6 18...d5 19...e2 \text{b6 20...d2 \text{b8}}} \]

Black has everything he could want: two bishops, active pieces and pressure on the white centre.

21.b3 \text{e8}

21...\text{cxb3 22.axb3 \text{e8}} was another strong approach.

22.bxc4 \text{dxc4 23...e3 \text{f5 24.dxc5 \text{xc5}}} \]

25...\text{g3 \text{g6}}

25...\text{e6 26...e4 \text{e7 27...h1 \text{a5}} keeps more tension in the position and maintains an edge.}

26...\text{d4 \text{xe4 27...xe4 \text{b5 28...xb6 \text{xb6}}} \]

29...\text{ac1 \text{c5 30...c2 \text{d6 31.g3 a5 32...b1 \text{e6 33...g2 \text{d6 34...f1 \text{e6 35...g2 \text{d6}}} \]

The opposite-coloured bishops prevent Black playing for a win in the endgame. \(1/2-1/2\)

B) 4...\text{d3 c5!}

This bold pawn break is my recommendation against White's move order with 4...\text{d3}. Please note that by learning this system you have a ready-made answer to the line 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3...\text{d3}, which you can meet with 3...c5! and if 4.exd5 then 4...exd5.

We shall examine the funny move B1) 5...\text{b5} followed by the more traditional B2) 5...\text{e2}†, B3) 5...c3 and B4) 5...\text{f3}. Then we will take a look at 5...\text{xc5} in Game 18 at the end of the chapter.

B1) 5...\text{b5}†

This leads to a reversed-colours position (quite typical in the Exchange French). So now it is Black who is playing an Exchange French with an isolated queen pawn! As we'll soon see, Black is fine in this line, but White is not worse just yet.

5...\text{d7}

This is a good equalizing move. White's time-wasting journey from f1 to d3 to b5 is more of a psychological ploy than a theoretical threat. Black just needs to keep calm and not over-react.

6...\text{xd7† \text{xd7 7...f3N}}
7.\( \text{e}2 \) is less natural, but is the only move played in my database: 7...\( \text{g}6 \) 8.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 9.0–0 0–0 10.dxc5 \( \text{xc}5 \) 11.c3 \( \text{b}6 \) and Black had some initiative in Leimkuehler – Kern, Essen-Ueberruhr 2000.

7...\( \text{g}6 \) 8.0–0 \( \text{e}7 \) 9.dxc5 \( \text{xc}5 \)

Here we have a position which can arise from the Tarrasch Variation of the French Defence (3.\( \text{d}2 \) c5 4.exd5 exd5!!) if White later plays the knight from d2 to b1 instead of b3! Black is close to equal in the Tarrasch line (see Chapter 9), so he must surely be equal here, when White has lost a whole tempo to retreat his knight to its original square. Still, I will provide a little more analysis as evidence:

10.\( \text{e}1 \) 0–0 11.\( \text{c}3 \)

11.\( \text{g}5 \)?! is met by 11...\( \text{ce}4 \).

11...\( \text{e}6 \)

Black is fine. White cannot play his bishop to g5 and the knight on c3 is a target for the ...d4 push, while Black also has counterplay down the c-file.

B2) 5.\( \text{e}e2 \)† \( \text{e}7 \) 6.dxc5

Now Black will have to lose a tempo to recapture the c5-pawn, but the tempo gained by White (\( \text{e}2 \)) is not a huge success because the queen will later be hit by a rook arriving on the e-file.

6.\( \text{f}6 \) 7.\( \text{f}3 \) 0–0 8.\( \text{h}3 \)

8.\( \text{e}3 \)? \( \text{e}8 \) was fine for Black in City of London – City of Paris, corr. 1834-6.

8.0–0 \( \text{xc}5 \) 9.\( \text{g}5 \) h6 10.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{c}6 \)

Almost regardless of how White plays, Black will continue with ...\( \text{g}4 \), ...\( g5 \), ...\( \text{e}8 \) and ...\( \text{e}4 \), with the initiative.

11.\( \text{c}3 \)

If 11.c3 \( \text{g}4 \) 12.\( \text{bd}2 \) \( g5 \) 13.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 14.\( \text{d}1 \) then 14...\( \text{e}4 \) and 14...\( \text{h}5 \) are both great for Black.

11...\( \text{g}5 \) 12.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 13.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 14.\( \text{xe}4 \) dxe4 15.\( \text{x}d8 \)

Efano – Ovetchkin, Ekaterinburg 2008. Now Antic & Maksimovic propose the following variation:

15...\( \text{xd}8 \)N 16.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \)
The threat of ...f5-f4 is unstoppable.
17...c3 f5 18.h4 f4 19.h2 xf5
Although a pawn down, the engines immediately prefer Black, which is an indication of just how good the black position is.

8...c6
Black has a promising position, as the following line illustrates.

9.0-0 xc5 10.c3 e8 11.c2

8...d6!
When the pawn has moved to h3, this move is typical, looking to invade on the g3-square.

12.bd2 g3!
12...xh3 13.g5! is not so clear.

13.f5 e2 14.d4 xd4
0–1 Tatai – Korchnoi, Beersheba 1978.

B3) 5.c3

This may be met by the simple:

5...xd4 6.cxd4 c6
I know that many players will say: “How on earth am I going to win this one?” I would answer: “By understanding what is going on better than your opponent.” These positions have certain characteristics and it is known, for example, that here the bishop pair is of no real significance. A correctly timed ...g4xf3 can benefit Black, because the potentially bad bishop is exchanged for the knight which is important for controlling the e5-square.

7.f3
7.e2 is also equal, though Black can inject a little asymmetry with: 7.g6 8.0–0 g7

9.e3 (9.bc3 ge7 10.g5 0–0 is fine for Black. Exchanging bishop for knight is not advantageous for White here, because the g7-bishop’s pressure on the d4-pawn gives Black good play.) 9..ge7 10.bc3 0–0 11.wb3 xe6 12.ac1 This was Shestakov – Terentiev, Voronezh 1998. I would now recommend 12..c8N, followed by ...wd7 and then ...a5. The position is level but not totally drawish.

7..d6 8.0–0 ge7 9.c3 0–0 10.h3
Otherwise ...g4 might come next.

10.h6 11.e1 e6 12.a3 e8 13.e3 wd7 14.bd2
In Okhotnik – Yusupov, Warsaw (rapid) 2010, Black now played the interesting sacrifice 14...xh3?! This would certainly be difficult to face over the board, but the computer assures me that White can defend
with 15.gxh3 N\textsubscript{h}xh3 16.d\textsubscript{d}1 g4\textsuperscript{f} 17.f1 f5 18.g\textsubscript{g}l! and Black does not have quite enough compensation.

A more restrained approach is in order:

14...\textsubscript{f}5N

Black is comfortably placed and at least equal.

B4) 5.f3 c4 6.e2

This is an improved version for Black of line A, as the bishop is slightly in the way on e2. The set-up with ...\textsubscript{c}6, ...d6 and ...\textsubscript{g}e7 has been recommended here, but I prefer to try to take advantage of the e4-square.

6...\textsubscript{f}6 7.0-0 \textsubscript{e}7 8.b3 cxb3 9.cxb3

9.axb3 0-0 10.c4 (10.e5 c6 11.xxc6 bxc6) 10...c6 11.b2 g4 12.bd2 \textsubscript{b}4 13.e5 xe2 14.xe2 e8 15.df3 \textsubscript{e}4 Typical play by a French expert has resulted in a fine position for Black.

16.cxd5 \textsubscript{d}5 17.c4 xc4 18.bxc4 \textsubscript{e}5 19.xe5 d2 20.fd1 f6 21.a4? a5 22.c1 \textsubscript{c}4 0-1 Kuderinov – Lysyj, Novokuznetsk 2008.

9...c6 10.e5 0-0 11.b2

11.xxc6 bxc6 offers Black similar play to the main line.

11...\textsubscript{b}6 12.xxc6 bxc6

12...\textsubscript{xc}6N is also fine for Black, who can continue with ...\textsubscript{f}5 and ...\textsubscript{c}8.

13.c3
This was Arindam – Gleizerov, New Delhi 2009, and I now offer the improvement:

13...çıf5N
Black has a sound position with good play.

Thorbjorn Bromann – Emanuel Berg
Denmark 2008

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.çıd3 c5 5.ıcıxc5
This is White’s most popular move, but allowing Black to take on c5 without losing a tempo cannot be good.

5...şıxc5 6.çıf3 şif6

7.0–0
Checking on the e-file does not achieve anything:
7.çıe2† şe6 8.çıg5 şd7
8...şiwb6 also looks great for Black.

9.çıf5
After 9.ıcıxe6 fxe6 Black’s central pawns compensate for the bishop pair. 10.çıf5 can be met by the solid 10...şıf7, or by the more ambitious 10...ıcıc6, when both 11.ıcıxe6 şe7 and 11.şıxe6† şxe6† 12.ıcıxe6 şd4 are excellent for Black.

Eingorn points out that Black can now play:
9...–0 10.ıcıxe6 şe8
Black plays...fxc6 next, with at least equality.

7...–0–0 8.h3


8...şd6
A typical move, which we have already seen in Tatai – Korchnoi in line B2.
8...c6 9.bbd2
9.c3 a6
9...Wd6
A slightly different version of the same story.

10.b3 b6 11.c3
11.h1? h6 12.c3 Bc8 followed by ...e4 gave Black a great position in Fernandez Romero - Arizmendi Martinez, Malaga 2008.
11...xh3 12.gxh3 Wg3+ 13.h1 Whx3† 14.h2 d5 15.e2 d3 16.f4 h4 17.h5 h5 18.g3?
18.e5 Ae8 19.g1 xf2 20.xf1 Wxf1 21.gxf1 was White's best defence. Black is slightly better in this endgame with three pawns for the piece.

18...Wxg3! 19.fxg3 dxf5 is less spectacular but perhaps clearer.
19.g1

19.fxg3 Wxg3#
19...xf2! 20.xh5 xg1 21.xg1 e5
Black's rook and three pawns against two minor pieces was enough to win in Lhagvasuren - Ulibin, Chelyabinsk 1991.

9.a3

9...g3! 10.g5?
10.h1 was the only defensive try. 10...xf2 11.c3 Bxh3! 12.gxh3 Wxh3† 13.h2 Wg3 14.e2 g4 15.f3 Wh2† 16.wxh2 Whx2 17.Bh3 h6 18.Bxh2 Bxh2 19.Bxh2 Axd8 As in the previous note, Black obtains rook and three pawns against two minor pieces. His advantage is not so great this time as White has the bishop pair, and also with the queens exchanged, the white king is not so vulnerable.

10...h6! 11.h1 xf2 12.Bf3 xf3 13.f3 b6
White has to defend a miserable position a pawn down.

14.c3 Bc6 15.a4 Ac7 16.c5 Bbd7 17.xc5 Bxc5 18.f3 Bf8 19.d4 c4 20.fxe1 g3 21.xe2 f5 22.d1 e8 23.g1 g6 24.c3 e6 25.xf1 xxc3 26.xe6 xxd3 27.xe3 xf1 28.xf1 d4 29.b3 b6 30.b5 Axd8 31.a4 Ac7 32.xe2 f6 33.xe1 f7 34.Ad3 Ae6 35.Bb3 Ae5
36.\textit{e}e3 \textit{g}5 37.\textit{a}5 \textit{\texttt{d}d}6 38.\textit{\texttt{b}b}xe5 \textit{f}xe5 39.\textit{a}xb6 \textit{\texttt{c}c}4\rmt 40.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{e}e}}2 \textit{a}xb6 41.\textit{\texttt{b}b}4 \textit{\texttt{d}d}6 42.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}4 43.\textit{\texttt{f}f}2 \textit{\texttt{f}f}5 44.hxg5 hxg5 45.\textit{\texttt{d}d}1 \textit{\texttt{e}e}5 46.\textit{\texttt{b}b}5 \textit{\texttt{c}c}6 47.\textit{\texttt{b}b}3 \textit{d}4 0–1

**Conclusion**

In this chapter we examined the dynamic ...c5 lines against both A) 4.\textit{\texttt{f}f}3 \textit{\texttt{f}f}6 5.\textit{d}d3 and the immediate B) 4.\textit{d}d3. Playing ...c5 is only justified when White puts his bishop on d3, as on this square the bishop doesn’t stand well against IQP structures. For this reason, the ideas we studied in the previous chapter are also essential, although the current chapter is generally more fun.

If Black is allowed to play ...c5-c4 then he is well placed to take control of the important e4-square, while it is not so easy for White to take advantage of the e5-square. If b2-b3 is then played, Black gains a target on the c-file.

If White exchanges on c5 to reach an IQP structure, then Black has a ready-made plan of attacking on the kingside. In any case, the Exchange Variation doesn’t seem so boring!
Chapter 8

The Tarrasch Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5!

A) 4.c3 cxd4 5.cxd4 dxe4 6.♗xe4 ♘f6
   A1) 7.♕c3
   A2) 7.♗xf6†
   A3) 7.♗d3
      A31) 7...♕d7
      A32) 7...♗xe4 8.♕xe4 ♖b4† 9.♖d2 ♖xd2† 10.♕xd2 ♘d7
           11.♗e2! ♘f6 12.♖f3 0–0 13.0–0
           13.♕c3?! – Game 19

B) 4.♗g3 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♘c6!
   B1) 6.♗xc6
   B2) 6.♗b5 ♖d7
      B21) 7.♗xc6 ♖xc6 8.0–0 ♖d6 9.♕e2 ♘e7?!N
           9...♗b8? – Game 20
      B22) 7.♗xc6

Game 19   Arno Zude – Viacheslav Eingorn, Bad Wiessee 2011 146
Game 20   Larry Christiansen – Artur Yusupov, Munich 1992 151
Game 21   Sergey Fedorchuk – Nikita Vitiugov, Germany 2012 156
On this page you will find seven diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Can you find a way to neutralize the white bishops? (page 150)

Assess this position. (page 156)

Yusupov played 22...fxd4 here. Do you agree with his choice? (page 152)

How should Black deal with White's lethal threat of Wh5? (page 158)

Can you find a plan for Black which completely equalizes? (page 147)

Can you find a strong plan for White? (page 155)

9...a6 looks natural, but is it good? (page 143)
The Tarrasch variation introduces a strategy of piece play for White, who wants to base his actions on the foundations of his solid, weakness-free pawn structure, while avoiding the structural imbalances that can arise from 3.\texttt{d}c3 \texttt{b}4. I consider 3.\texttt{d}2 to be a very sensible choice for the club player. Playing this system with White requires only limited memorizing of theory, and White usually gets quite sound positions without taking major risks.

So are there any problems with playing the knight to d2? Well, it is not a very natural move: the knight blocks the d-file, shuts in the c1-bishop, and in general may not be well placed on d2 if Black opens the position. Therefore I choose to respond:

\textbf{3...\texttt{c}5!}

I would like to just briefly mention a couple of alternatives for Black.

3...\texttt{f}6 is usually met by 4.e5 \texttt{fd}7 5.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{c}5 6.c3 \texttt{c}6 and now White has the opportunity to play 7.\texttt{e}2, allowing the other knight to come to f3, thereby keeping a high level of coordination in the white camp. Readers who would like to know more about this line are referred to the future publications

\textit{Playing 1.e4 – Sicilian & French} by John Shaw, and \textit{Grandmaster Repertoire 16: The French Defence Volume 3} by Emanuel Berg, where this old but still topical line will be discussed in detail.

3...\texttt{e}7 is a rather neutral move and it can be met by the equally flexible 4.\texttt{d}3, waiting for ...\texttt{f}6 before playing e4-e5, although Black may then play 4...\texttt{c}5!. As we saw in Chapter 7 on the Exchange variation, this thrust is often a good way to take advantage of the early placement of the bishop on d3. White may well do better to meet 3...\texttt{e}7 with 4.\texttt{gf}3!.

Anyway, let's return to my recommended line.

Now 4.exd5 is the big main line and will be the topic of Chapters 9-11. But before diving into the important theoretical line, I'd like to look at some alternatives for White in this chapter.

\textbf{A) 4.c3} was recommended by Denis Yevseev in his inspirational and educational book, \textit{Fighting the French: A New Concept}. White wants to play an interesting IQP position, like the ones which arise in the Queen's Gambit Accepted and the Caro-Kann.
B) 4...gxf3 is another popular move which I will examine in detail. After 4...cxd4 5...xd4 (5.exd5 wxd5 transposes to Chapters 9-11, and is the move order recommended by Greek IM Andreas Tzermiadianos in his book How to Beat the French Defence), we will cover the traditional and sound 5...c6.

Another idea is 4...b5 but few strong players have used this. The reason is that after 4...d7 5...xd7 Black can recapture with 5...xd7!, as there is no danger of f3-e5. Black will continue with ...c6, and all White has done is to exchange the traditionally bad French bishop.

A) 4.c3

We shall meet this by exchanging pawns and going into an IQP position.

4...cxd4 5.cxd4 dxe4 6...xe4 f6

We shall take a look at A1) 7...e3 and A2) 7...xf6†, before going on to examine the main move A3) 7...d3.

A1) 7...e3

Keeping minor pieces on the board is a logical strategy in these traditional IQP positions, but with such a loss of time, White cannot expect to gain a theoretical advantage.

7...e7

After 7...d7? White has nothing better than 8...d3, transposing to line A31 on page 144.

8...f3 a6 9.d3 b5

This is recommended by both Vitiugov and Eingorn as fine for Black.

10.a3 Bb7 11.0–0 0–0 12.e1 c6

Practice has confirmed that Black has a favourable version of a traditional IQP position.

13...g5

13...f4 cannot cause any problems, and simply 13...c8N is fine for Black. For example: 14...d2 a5†

13...g6 14...c2 c8 15...c1 a5
Chapter 8 – The Tarrasch Variation

In IQP positions, Black usually does not have time for this move, but here he is quite comfortable.

16.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}4\) 17.\(\text{b}3\)

\[\text{Diagram 1}\]

17...\(\text{xb}2\)!

17...\(\text{d}7\) and 17...\(\text{d}5\) 18.\(\text{x}e7\) \(\text{x}e7\) 19.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{bxc}4\) 20.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 21.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 22.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{xd}4\) 23.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{f}6\) are also satisfactory for Black, but the text is the most ambitious.

18.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}4\) 19.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{bxc}4\) 20.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{xd}4\)

Even 20...\(\text{e}8\) works: 21.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{d}7\)

21.\(\text{ed}1\) \(\text{h}4\) 22.\(\text{xf}8\) \(\text{xf}8\)

With two wonderful bishops and two pawns for the exchange, Black is certainly better and went on to win in Ziegler – Meduna, Gausdal 1988.

A2) 7.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\)

White hopes that f6 will prove to be a poor place for the queen.

8.\(\text{f}3\)

8.a3 \(\text{d}6\) 9.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 10.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}7\) is given by Eingorn. I definitely like Black here, with the bishop coming to c6, possibly even followed by ...\(\text{d}5\) and ...\(\text{c}6\).

8...\(\text{d}7\)

This is Eingorn’s proposal, and it looks strong to me.

9.\(\text{d}3\)

9.\(\text{e}5\) is the only move given by Eingorn. It is met by the accurate 9...\(\text{c}6\), with the idea: 10.\(\text{xd}7\) \(\text{b}4\) 11.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xd}4\) 

The position is similar to one that can arise from the Rubinstein variation (3.\(\text{c}3/d2\) \(\text{dxe}4\) 4.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 5.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) where the queen doesn’t stand well on f6. But here there is one big difference – White doesn’t have a c-pawn, so the following check spoils White’s fun.

9...\(\text{b}4\)

9...\(\text{c}6\)?? loses to 10.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{xf}3\) 11.\(\text{c}1\), a well-known trap from the Rubinstein variation.

10.\(\text{d}2\)

The only game in my database continued 10.\(\text{f}1\) Hellmann – Uirlau, email 2006, and now I propose 10...\(\text{h}6\) with the idea 11.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 12.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{d}6\).

10...\(\text{xd}2\) 11.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{c}6\)

Black is fine, though he may not be much better if White plays energetically.
12.\(\text{e}5!?: \text{xg}2
12...\(\text{d}5=\) is safe and sound; Black intends ...\(\text{c}6\) and ...0-0, followed by bringing the rooks to the centre.

13.\(\text{g}1 \text{d}5\) 14.\(\text{b}5\text{=} \text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{g}4\text{=}\)  
The situation is complicated, although the following line reveals that Black's chances may be slightly favourable.

15...0-0 16.\(\text{d}7\)  
No other moves seem threatening.

16.\(\text{f}5\) 17.\(\text{h}3\)  
Other moves would probably be met with ...\(\text{fd}8\).

Intending to play ...\(\text{f}7\) next.

17.\(\text{fd}8\) leads to a spectacular draw, as pointed out by Houdini: 18.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{f}3\) 19.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{g}6\) 20.\(\text{x}g6\) \(\text{x}g6\) 21.\(\text{x}g6\text{=} \text{hx}g6\) 22.\(\text{x}g6\text{=} \text{h}8\) 23.\(\text{h}6\text{=} \text{g}8\) 24.\(\text{g}6\text{=}\)

18.\(\text{x}f8\) \(\text{x}f8\)  
I prefer Black, who has superb compensation for the exchange.

A3) 7.\(\text{d}3\)  
This is Yevseev's recommendation in Fighting the French.

Black can now choose between the potentially sharp A31) 7...\(\text{d}7\) and the simplifying A32) 7...\(\text{xe}4\).

A31) 7...\(\text{d}7\)  
8.\(\text{c}3\)  
8.\(\text{f}3?! \text{xe}4\) 9.\(\text{xe}4 \text{c}6\) is clearly at least equal for Black.

8...\(\text{c}6\) 9.\(\text{f}3 \text{bd}7\) 10.0-0 \(\text{c}7\)  
Vitiugov says that it is equal here, but Yevseev goes into more detail, so let's see some more moves.
11.\( \text{e1} \)
11.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d5} \) 12.\( \text{d2} \) 0–0 13.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{c7} \)
14.\( \text{b1} \) a6 15.\( \text{e1} \) was Arizmendi – Taboas, Madrid 2006, as analysed by Yevseev, who proposes an improvement for Black:

\[ 15...\text{bxc3N} 16.\text{bxc3 a4} 17.\text{d3} \text{g6} 18.\text{c2} \text{xc2} 19.\text{xc2} \text{b5} \]

(19...\( \text{b6} \)!? is a sound alternative) 20.d5 \( \text{c5} \) 21.c4 “with complete equality”, according to Yevseev.

11...0–0 12.\( \text{c2} \)

This is a brainchild of Jacob’s.

Black has another interesting try here, but I am less convinced by it:

12...\( \text{b6} \)!N

This is recommended by Yevseev, who gives the following line:

13.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{g6} \) 14.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{e8} \) 15.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{d5} \) 16.\( \text{b3} \)

Yevseev evaluates this as unclear. However, I tried this in a training game and, both over the board and while analysing afterwards, I had the feeling that Black’s position is rather precarious.

16...\( \text{xc3} \) 17.\( \text{bxc3 a5} \)

This has the idea of meeting 18.\( \text{c4} \) with 18...\( \text{h5} \) followed by ...\( \text{xf3} \).

18.\( \text{f4} \)

18...\( \text{f6} \)

This is quite a sound and practical move.

I would not repeat my play from the training game: 18...\( \text{b5} \) 19.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{b6} \)?! 20.\( \text{h5} \) \( \text{d5} \)? (20...\( \text{d5} \) was forced, but I still prefer White) 21.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{h6} \) 22.\( \text{xe6} \) and I was tactically killed; I am thankful that it was not a serious game.

18...\( \text{c8} \) threatens ...\( \text{c5} \), and is also an improvement on my play, but after 19.d5 Black must navigate many complicated trappy lines. One sample line is: 19...\( \text{xd5} \) 20.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{b6} \) 21.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b4} \) 22.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 23.\( \text{cxd5} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 24.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{c6} \) 25.d6 \( \text{xa2} \) 26.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{c4} \) 27.\( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 28.\( \text{e7} \) \( \text{ff8} \) 29.\( \text{d7} \)∞

19.\( \text{e5} \)

19.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 20.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 21.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e5} \) 22.\( \text{c5} \)

19...\( \text{xe5} \) 20.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 21.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{d8} \)
Black may seem solid, but in fact the position still holds many dangers, as the following long line illustrates:

22. \( \text{Wg3} \) b5 23. h4 a5 24. h5 a4 25. c2 d5 26. hxg6 hxg6 27. d6 fxg6 28. xg6+ f8 29. de1 c7 30. h5 f7 31. h6! xa2 32. f4 \( d5 \) 33. f5 exf5 34. h8+ d7 35. xe8+ xe8 36. xf5±

13. \( d3 \) \( d8\)

With idea such as \( \text{f8-g6} \) and \( \text{d5} \), Black looks active here, and I like his chances.

Yevseev likes White here, and gives a plan with 0–0, \( \text{f1-c3} \) and then \( \text{a1-c1} \), but I think Black is absolutely safe. First we will examine an instructive game, before moving on to Yevseev's primary suggestion and how to deal with it.

GAME 19

Arno Zude – Viacheslav Eingorn

Bad Wiessee 2011

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. c2 c5 4. c3 cxd4 5. cxd4 dxe4 6. dxe4 f6 7. d3 dxe4 8. b4+ \( d2 \) \( dxe2 \) 10. \( f3 \) f5

This is not best as it interferes with Yevseev's suggested plan of doubling rooks on the c-file. However, it has featured in two recent games, so it makes sense to see how to react.
We shall examine the stronger 13.0-0 after this game.

13...\texttt{b6}

13...\texttt{b8} is a simple and sensible way to prepare the development of the queen's bishop: 14.\texttt{f4 d7 15.d6 c6 16.xd8 fxd8 17.xc6 bxc6 18.0-0-b4 19.e2 xd8 20.b3 a5 21.c2 In Collins - Williams, Dublin 2012, Black was better and the computer likes 21...\texttt{g4}.

14.0-0 \texttt{d8 15.fd1 d7}

Black can already consider the opening a success. White has no pressure to speak of on the long diagonal, and will simply have a weak pawn as a thorn in his side.

16.d5

This does not work, but in any case White is slightly worse after something like 16.\texttt{ac1 c6 17.xc6 xc6}.

13...\texttt{b6}

The same development as Eingorn favoured in the illustrative game above.

I also like 13...\texttt{b8}, the "Williams method" that we saw above: 14.\texttt{fc1 d7 15.c5} (15.e2 \texttt{b6} =) 15...b6 16.\texttt{c2 c8 17.ac1 xc2 And now 18.xc2 c8 and 18.xc2 b8 are both level.

14.\texttt{ac1 d8!}

Black prepares ...e5, which will equalize comfortably.

14.\texttt{d7} 15.\texttt{c3} is given as slightly better for White by Yevseev, but after 15...\texttt{a4} 16.\texttt{fc1 fd8} it is not obvious why White should be any better; he can certainly ask Black a few questions, but good answers exist.

15.\texttt{c4}

15.\texttt{fd1 d7} (or 15...e5= with the idea...
16.d5? e4) 16...c3 a4 17...dc1 e5 18...a3 e4! 19...xa4 exf3 20.gxf3 d5 and Black has good compensation for the pawn.

15...e5!N

This is a convincing route to equality.

15...a5 16...b3 d7 17...fc1 b5 is also playable, and now 18...c7?! c6 19...f4 e5! turned out well for Black in White – Compton, Crawley 2012.

16...g3!

After 16...c3 xd4 17...xd4 xd4 18...xd4 exd4 19...d1 g4! 20...xd4 (20...xg4 dxc3!) 20...xf3 21.gxf3 xf8 22...c4 xd8 the endgame is easier to play for Black.

16.d5 Wa6! 17.b3 d7 is at least equal for Black.

16...xd4 17...xd4 Wxd4 18...xd4 exd4 19...d1 d7 20...e4 c8 21.h3 b6

We have reached a level endgame.

4...xd4

This simple move highlights the downside of White’s move order.

4...c6 can be met by 5.exd5 and if 5...Wxd5 6.c4 then Black cannot really play 6...Wd6? due to 7...e4! with the initiative. Although the other retreats 6...Wd7 and 6...Wd8 may be playable, they fall outside our repertoire.

4...f6 allows 5.e5 fd7 6.c3 c6 7...d3, transposing to a line arising from 3...f6, which also lies outside our repertoire. There is a particular reason I would choose to avoid this line, and that is because it is known as the Korchnoi Gambit. Since Viktor Korchnoi is well known for his love of grabbing material and then defending stubbornly, a gambit line from Korchnoi must surely be treated with respect. After 7...b6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.cxd4 f6 10...xd4 xd4 11...f3 Korchnoi – Udovcic, Leningrad 1967, continued: 11...b6 12.a4 b4 13.c2 h6 14.d2 b6 15.ac1 e7 16.a4 d8 17.ac2 f8 18.f1 b6 19.g4 d7 20.a5 e8 21.xc8 xc8 22.b4 g6 23.h4 g5

This move has been recommended in many repertoire books for White. The Czech GM Vlastimil Jansa proposed it in his excellent Dynamics of Chess Strategy, the Greek IM Andreas Tzermiadianos in How to Beat the French Defence, and the English GM Neil MacDonald in Starting out: 1.e4, just to name a few of them.
30.\textsuperscript{\textit{xh6}} \textsuperscript{\textit{xb4}} 31.\textit{g3} and Black threw in the towel. An amazing game, and one which clearly shows that White's compensation for the pawn is excellent.

Nowadays Black has refined his defences and has found routes to playable positions, and if you are interested in this line, you'll find plenty of material for Black in Emanuel Berg's \textit{Grandmaster Repertoire 16: The French Defence Volume 3}.

5.\textit{xd4}

5.exd5 \textit{xd5} leads to the main lines that I cover in Chapters 9-11, and this move order is Andreas Tzermiadianos's recommendation for White.

5...\textit{c6!}

Developing the other knight gives White more chance of claiming an edge. For example: 5...\textit{f6} 6.exd5 \textit{xd5} (I also analysed the other main line with 6...\textit{xd5} 7.\textsuperscript{\textit{f3}} but I was not happy with Black's prospects.)

7.\textit{b5} \textsuperscript{\textit{a6}} 8.\textit{c3}! Now 8...\textsuperscript{\textit{e5}} 9.\textsuperscript{\textit{e2}} \textsuperscript{\textit{b4}} was evaluated as unclear by Vitiugov, but 10.\textit{c4} \textsuperscript{\textit{c7}} 11.0-0 0-0 12.\textsuperscript{\textit{a5}} \textsuperscript{\textit{bb8}} 13.\textit{c3} \textsuperscript{\textit{e7}} 14.\textit{f3} was more pleasant for White in Liushnin – Tinjaca Ramirez, email 2002.

I could go into great detail about the problems with 5...\textit{f6} but instead let's concentrate on the move I recommend.

White generally chooses between \textbf{B1)} \textit{6.\textit{xc6}} and \textbf{B2)} 6.\textit{b5}.

6.c3 \textit{xd4} 7.cxd4 \textit{dxe4} 8.\textit{xe4} leads to the set-up we saw in line A, but with a pair of knights exchanged; Black has comfortable equality.

\textbf{B1)} 6.\textit{xc6} bxc6

This is a Sicilian Paulsen position in which Black has effectively gained a tempo (in the Paulsen, Black has played ...\textit{a6} and will later play ...\textit{a5}). An exact transposition to the Paulsen is possible if Black plays ...\textit{a6} on any of the next few moves, but clearly there are better ways to spend the tempo.

7.\textit{d3} \textit{f6} 8.0-0 \textit{e7} 9.\textit{e2}

White can also develop with:

9.b3 0-0 10.\textit{b2} \textit{a5}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\begin{scope}
\node at (8,8) {a}; \node at (7,8) {b}; \node at (6,8) {c}; \node at (5,8) {d}; \node at (4,8) {e}; \node at (3,8) {f}; \node at (2,8) {g}; \node at (1,8) {h}; \node at (8,7) {a}; \node at (7,7) {b}; \node at (6,7) {c}; \node at (5,7) {d}; \node at (4,7) {e}; \node at (3,7) {f}; \node at (2,7) {g}; \node at (1,7) {h}; \path[draw] (1,1) rectangle (8,8); \node at (4.5,4) {Black is fine; he plans \textit{\textit{a6}} to exchange the dangerous d3-bishop, and he may also play ...\textit{a4}.}; \node at (4.5,3) {11.\textit{e2}}; \node at (4.5,2) {11.a4 stops the black a-pawn, but doesn't stop 11...\textit{a6}=. A practical example continued: 12.\textit{xa6} \textit{xa6} 13.\textit{e2} \textit{a8} 14.\textit{ad1} \textit{b6} 15.\textit{h1} \textit{ad8} 16.e5 \textit{d7} 17.f4 c5 18.f5 exf5 19.\textit{xf5} Malakhov–Wang Hao, Ningbo 2010, and now Marin suggests the improvement 19...\textit{e6}!N}}
\end{scope}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}
20...\text{Ef}d1 \text{E}d8, with the idea of ...\text{Ed}8-c7.
It seems to me that Black even holds a slight advantage here.

11...a4 12...\text{Ef}3
12.c4 transposes to the main line.
12...\text{Ed}b7 13.\text{Ef}e1 \text{Ed}d7!?
Another typical idea in this system. Black plans ...\text{Ec}5 to attack the important d3-bishop, and also ...\text{Ed}6 becomes an idea, so Black is dealing with both white bishops with this move!
14.exd5 cxd5 15.\text{Ec}e5 \text{Exe}5 16.\text{Exe}5 \text{Ef}6
The position was equal in Pridorozhni – Najer, Moscow 2013.

9...0–0 10.c4 a5?!?
10...\text{Ed}b7 has also been tried, but I prefer to develop the bishop to a6.

11.b3
11...\text{Ed}d1 is an attempt by White to avoid the weakening b2-b3. Black may still consider ...\text{Ed}a6 and ...a4, followed by bring his knight to c5, though it may be safer to first play 11...h6N and then ...\text{Ed}d7-c5.

11...a4 12...\text{Eb}2 \text{E}a6

Black stands well. A simple plan is ...\text{Eb}6 and ...\text{Ef}d8, planning to liquidate with ...axb3 and ...dxc4.

13...\text{Ed}d1 \text{E}e8
As mentioned, 13...\text{Ed}b6?N is sensible.

14.cxd5 \text{Exd}3 15.\text{Exd}3 cxd5 16.\text{Exf}6 \text{Exf}6
17.exd5 axb3 18.axb3 \text{E}a5
Black had absolutely no problems in Fogarasi – Mihok, Budapest 2010.

B2) 6...\text{Eb}5 \text{Ed}7
White sometimes takes the knight with B21)
7.\text{Exc}6, although B22) 7.\text{Exc}6 is much more common.

B21) 7.\text{Exc}6 bxc6
I prefer this recapture to: 7...\text{Exc}6 8.c4!N
dxe4 (8...\text{E}a5 9.exd5 exd5 10.\text{Exe}2+) 9.\text{Exc}6 bxc6 10.\text{Exe}4 White has the better pawn structure and may create a strong passed pawn on the queenside. This was debated in a blitz game between the co-founders of Quality chess (Jacob and John), with White (Jacob) emerging victorious.

8.0–0
8.c4 \text{Ed}6 is given as equal by Yusupov. One game soon drifted in Black's favour: 9.\text{Ec}2 \text{Ec}7
10.e5 \text{Ec}7 11.0–0 0–0 12.c5 \text{E}g6 13.\text{E}f3 f6± Mithrakanth – Dolmatov, Kolkata 1999.
8...d6 9.e2

Bringing the rook to the e-file leads to similar ideas:

9...e7!

This is much safer than 9...b8 10.exd5 cxd5 11.d5 xh2† 12.h1 f8 13.f3 and now:

a) 13.c7 14.e3! is better for White.


c) 13.d6N 14.xd6 xd6 15.c4 e7 offers White good compensation for a pawn, though perhaps not enough for an advantage.

10.e5?! c7 11.d3

This was Osterhus – McCluskey, Copenhagen 1994. Black now missed a chance to claim an edge:

11...c5!N 12.b3 b6+

9...e7?!N

This novelty was suggested by Yusupov after his game against Christiansen in which he played 9...b8! – see Game 20 below.

10.e5 c7 11.b3 g6

Black has good counterplay, according to Yusupov.

GAME 20

Larry Christiansen – Artur Yusupov

Munich 1992

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.d2 c5 4.gf3 cxd4 5.xd4 c6 6.b5 d7 7.xc6 bxc6 8.0–0 d6 9.e2 b8!

10.d3 c7 11.e5

White does not gain much from maintaining the tension:

11.e1

11...a5!

This is most accurate, although 11...g6 is also playable.

12.e5
12...a4 0–0 13.e5 is now met by 13...b4! and if 14.c3 c5 15.d4 then 15...c8 followed by ...a6. If White had a lightsquared bishop, his position would be great, but instead he has a bad bishop and no attack, and he stands slightly worse.

12...c7 13.b3
This move is aimed against ...f6, because then c5 would follow.

13...b5!
This strong move assures Black of at least equal chances, because 14.e3?! can be met by 14...a4 15.c5 b6.

11...c7 12.b3?!
Yusupov criticized this move in his annotations, obviously believing that the b3-square belongs to the knight.

12.b3 b5 with equality is given by Yusupov. Let’s extend this line: 13.e3 b6! 14.c3 c5 15.a4 d4 16.axb5 dxc3 17.bxc3 xxb5 18.e1 0–0–

12...g6 13.e1 f6!
A strong undermining move.

14.b2 0–0 15.c4 b6
Yusupov also mentions the plan 15...f7 16.bac1 b6+ intending ...f8.

16.bac1 e8

Black plans the solid ...f7, or the more aggressive ...f4 followed by ...h5/g6.

17.c5 c7 18.f1
After 18.e3 f7 Black threatens to take three times on e5, after which the f2-pawn would hang, and 19.e2 can be met strongly by 19...c8 intending ...a6 next.

18...f7
18...f4 can now be met by 19.d2.

19.d2
White takes the f4-square under control, but Black can play on both flanks.

19...a5! 20.d4
20.a3 is met by 20...b8.

20...ab8 21.c3 b4 22.ce3

22...xd4?!
Yusupov liked this exchange sacrifice, but analysis with the help of today’s engines reveals that Black has much stronger options:

22...fxe5 23.xe5 xe5 24.xe5 xe5 25.xe5 a4+ followed by ...fb8.

22...f5! plans ...f4 and ...c8-a6, and gives Black the better chances.
23.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{N}}xd4 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{fxe5}} 24.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nx}}xe5 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Q}}xe5 25.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nx}}xe5 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Q}}xe5

25...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nf6}}?! is met by 26.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd2}} intending to continue with \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd}f3}, increasing White’s control over the e5-square.

26.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxe5}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf4}} 27.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}2?

After this mistake White’s position becomes critical.

27.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e3}}! was proposed by Yusupov as best: 27...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxe3}} 28.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxe3}} (after 28.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxe3}? \textcolor{red}{\textbf{N}}b8

\textcolor{red}{\textbf{t}}} the c5-pawn is impossible to defend) 28...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}8 29.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd2}} White has enough control over the central dark squares to avoid being worse.

27...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qb4}} 28.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}1

28.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}2 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}}4 29.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}}2 e5 30.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd2}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf5}!}

28...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd4}} 29.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}3 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}}1! 30.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc2}}

30.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxe6}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxe6}} 31.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxe6}+} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}}8 32.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Nxc6}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd4}}

33.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}}2--

30...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc8}!+} 31.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qg5}?!}

31.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc1}+}

From here the game enters a technical phase in which correct technique should enable Black to win, though White provides excellent resistance.

35...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf5}}

Yusupov pointed out that 35...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf6}!} was much stronger. For example: 36.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe3}} d4 37.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd2}} d3 followed by ...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf3}-e2} would have finished the game quickly.

From here the game enters a technical phase in which correct technique should enable Black to win, though White provides excellent resistance.

36.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}}8 37.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd2}} d4 38.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe7}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf8}} 39.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f4}}

h6 40.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}1+ 41.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qg2}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc2}+} 42.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qh3}}

\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf5}+} 43.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qg2}} d3 44.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf2}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf7}} 45.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe5}!}

45...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd7}?!}

45...\textbf{d}2 was better, according to Yusupov.

46.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd6}!} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qxd6}} 47.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{cxd6}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd}7} 48.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe5}} d2

49.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc2}} d1=\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Q}f} 50.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qxd1}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qxd6}†} 51.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe2}}

51.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc2}?!} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qg8}} 52.h4† would have presented major technical problems for Black to solve in order to win.

51...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qg8}} 52.a4 g5 53.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qg7}} 54.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc4}?!}

54.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe4}} offered more drawing chances.

54...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd5}} 55.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qe5}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{gxf4}†} 56.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qxf4}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qd4}†}

56...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc5}?!} 57.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc4}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf6}†}

57.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf5}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}4?}

34.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qg5}} 35.g3?

White should try 35.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qxc6}}, although Black can meet it with 35...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qf6}} 36.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qxf6}} gxf6 followed by ...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{Qc8}.}
After 57...\textit{Ed}6 58.g4 White is active enough to draw.

But Black’s last chance was 57...\textit{Ed}2! with the point 58.h4 \textit{Ed}2 59.\textit{D}xc6 \textit{D}xb3 60.\textit{D}xa5 \textit{D}xg3, with excellent winning chances.

58.\textit{D}xc6 \textit{D}xb3 59.\textit{D}xa5 \textit{D}b4 60.\textit{D}c6 \textit{D}xa4 61.\textit{D}e5 \textit{D}a5 62.g4 \textit{D}a3 63.h4 \textit{D}h3 64.h5 \textit{D}g3 \textit{\frac{1}{2}}=\textit{\frac{1}{2}}

B22) 7.\textit{D}xc6

7...\textit{bxc6}!

Some players might be surprised that I recommend this recapture, but after 7...\textit{D}xc6 8.\textit{D}xc6\textit{\#} \textit{bxc6} 9.c4 White’s idea is to play \textit{wa}4 next, putting pressure on the black position. In this well known theoretical position, Black has various options, but ultimately none of them satisfied me.

I admit that the bishop on d7 is not the best piece in the world, but after a later ...c5 it may emerge on c6, and in the meantime the b-file is open for Black’s rook or queen. Moreover, in the last few years 7...\textit{bxc6}! has been used against strong opposition by French experts such as Morozevich, Luther, Vitiugov and Potkin. I reckon that if they trust Black’s solid position, then I have no reason not to follow their example.

8.\textit{D}d3 \textit{D}d6

This is played to control the e5-square.

8...e5?! shows Black occupying the centre too early, and White can quickly put the black centre under pressure: 9.0–0 \textit{D}d6 (9...\textit{D}f6 is met by 10.exd5 cxd5 11.c4\textit{\#}) 10.c4 d4 11.f4 \textit{D}f6 12.h3 \textit{D}c7 13.\textit{D}f3\textit{\#} White’s pressure was already annoying in Rodriguez Vargas – Farago, Cienfuegos 1973.

8...\textit{D}c7 has the same idea of controlling the e5-square, but the black queen is not flexibly placed on c7. We know that the bishop belongs on d6, but the queen may prove useful on d8 or b8. I should admit that this move has been used by Korchnoi to beat the great Tal, but I still prefer the text move.

9.\textit{D}c2

White doesn’t let Black develop with ...\textit{D}f6.

9.b3?!

This was seen in a recent high-level game, but I don’t like it for several reasons. First of all, as we saw in the notes to Game 20, maintaining the option of putting the knight on the b3-square reduces Black’s options. Also, b2-b3 gives Black a target for ...a5-a4. Last but not least, White has failed to notice one of the ideas behind Black’s last move.
9...\texttt{e}7
9...\texttt{f}6!N is Black's best move at this point, and after 10.\texttt{b}2 \texttt{e}5! Black can already claim a small advantage. Although Black missed this chance, I will give the continuation of the game because it contains some instructive points.
10.0-0 \texttt{g}6 11.\texttt{f}3 0-0 12.\texttt{e}1 a5= 
Black is fine, with no reason to complain.
13.\texttt{c}4
This was Timman – Potkin, Wijk aan Zee 2012, and now simplest is:
13...a4N 14.exd5 cxd5 15.\texttt{g}5
15...\texttt{b}8 16.cxd5 axb3 17.dxe6 \texttt{xe}6 18.axb3 \texttt{x}xa1 19.\texttt{x}a1 \texttt{d}5= 

9...\texttt{e}7
When Black cannot develop with ...\texttt{f}6, then the plan of ...\texttt{e}7-\texttt{g}6 seems most appropriate.

9...\texttt{c}7 10.\texttt{f}3
Black now finds a way to develop the knight on \texttt{f}6 after all.
10...dxe4 11.\texttt{x}e4 \texttt{f}6 12.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{h}6 13.0-0 \texttt{c}5
Again we see the plan of putting the bishop on \texttt{c}6. Although Black's idea seems reasonable, in a recent high-level game White showed the disadvantages of this approach.

14.\texttt{d}2!
An excellent new idea from Ponomariov.
14.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{d}5 15.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{b}8 was Guseinov – So, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009, and now Erenburg points out in his annotations for ChessBase that 16.\texttt{f}e1N would offer White slightly the better chances.
14...\texttt{d}5 15.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{f}4 16.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{b}8 17.\texttt{e}4? \texttt{x}c1 18.\texttt{x}ac1 \texttt{b}6 19.\texttt{e}3 0-0 20.b3
White has a structural advantage and hasn't allowed Black to create counterplay by putting his bishop on the long diagonal. After a long fight, White won in Ponomariov – Morozevich, Tashkent 2012.

10.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{g}6
In The French Defence Reloaded, Nikita Vitiugov stated the position after 7...bxc6 “has not yet been thoroughly analysed and it is too early to make a final evaluation”. But it would appear Vitiugov was inspired to analyse the position, and we shall see him defending it in Game 21 below.
10...\texttt{Wb}8?!N (à la Yusupov from Game 20) is not great when White has a light-squared bishop instead of a knight. A possible continuation is:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
  &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
\hline
  &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
\hline
  &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
\hline
11.e5 \texttt{c}7 12.0-0 \texttt{g}6 13.\texttt{e}1 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

13...0-0 (13...f6 is met by 14.exf6 gxf6 15.\texttt{a}5!±) 14.b3! This is the right moment for this move as 14...a5? is met by 15.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{e}8 16.\texttt{g}5 and White's threats of \texttt{w}h5 or \texttt{d}h7 are difficult to meet.

\textbf{GAME 2}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Sergey Fedorchuk – Nikita Vitiugov}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textit{Germany 2012}
\end{center}

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{d}2 c5 4.\texttt{g}f3 cxd4 5.\texttt{d}x\texttt{d}4 \texttt{c}6 6.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{d}7 7.\texttt{xc}6 bxc6 8.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}6 9.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}7 10.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{g}6

11.0-0

White's most logical move.

11.h4?! makes no sense if e4-e5 hasn't been played, as after 11...\texttt{f}4 12.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{xf}4 only Black can be better.

11.e5?! \texttt{c}7 12.h4 can be met in typical fashion by 12...f6!, although12...\texttt{b}8?! is also possible as the attack on the e5-pawn practically forces 13.\texttt{x}g6 \texttt{hxg}6!±.

11.c4 0-0 and White doesn't seem to have anything more constructive than 12.0-0, transposing to the note to White's 12th move below.

11...0-0 12.e5

This may seem premature, but since Black has castled he is now threatening to play ...e5 himself. For example, after 12.\texttt{e}1 e5! only White can face problems.

12.c4

This stops ...e5 because White could then take twice on d5, but now Black is in time to stop e4-e5.

12...\texttt{c}7!?

Comparing the current line with Korchnoi's 8...\texttt{c}7 on page 154, the big difference is the presence of the white pawn on c4. This means that at the right moment Black can play the typical idea of ...\texttt{d}xc4 followed by ...\texttt{c}5 with good counterplay.

13.\texttt{e}1

This is the right idea for White, who wants to be able to play e4-e5.

13.g3 can be met by the aggressive 13...\texttt{ae}8, planning ...f5 and/or ...e5.

13.cxd5 exd5 14.exd5 cxd5± is structurally better for White, but Black has active play on the b- and e-files, and also has the idea of obtaining the bishop pair after ...\texttt{f}4.
Chapter 8 – The Tarrasch Variation

13...dxc4

I prefer this to 13...\( \text{c}f4 \) as played in Biaux – Fister, France 2002.

Note that other moves from Black would allow the dangerous plan of e4-e5 followed by h2-h4.

14.\( \text{xc}4 \) c5\(+\)

Black can also play 14...\( \text{e}5 \) first to stop any possible e4-e5 ideas. In either case, Black has good counterplay.

12...\( \text{c}7 \)

13.\( \text{g}5 \)!

An aggressive blow that threatens \( \text{w}h5 \) with catastrophic consequences for Black.

13.h4N can be met by: 13...f6 14.\( \text{xg}6 \) hxg6 15.\( \text{f}4 \) (15.\( \text{exf}2 \)?! \( \text{gx}6 \) 16.\( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{f}7 \) gives Black some initiative as ...e5 is coming) 15...c5\(+\)

13.c4

This occurred in another Tal – Korchnoi encounter, one year after the game mentioned earlier.

13...\( \text{e}7 \)!

A fine move by Korchnoi, which shows the great man’s deep understanding of the position. The queen must stay on the d8-h4 diagonal in order to render the h2-h4 advance harmless.

13...f6 is premature: 14...\( \text{e}5 \) first to stop any possible e4-e5 ideas. In either case, Black has good counterplay.

12...\( \text{c}7 \)

13.\( \text{c}4 \)

This occurred in another Tal – Korchnoi encounter, one year after the game mentioned earlier.

13...\( \text{e}7 \)!

A fine move by Korchnoi, which shows the great man’s deep understanding of the position. The queen must stay on the d8-h4 diagonal in order to render the h2-h4 advance harmless.

13...f6 is premature: 14...\( \text{e}5 \) first to stop any possible e4-e5 ideas. In either case, Black has good counterplay.

13...c5 is possible, but not as flexible as Korchnoi’s move. 14.h4 can now be met by 14...\( \text{c}6 \) 15.h5 \( \text{h}4 \), which shows the benefit of having the queen defending this diagonal.

On the other hand, 13...\( \text{b}8 \)?! is playing with fire. After something like 14.\( \text{e}1 \) a5 15.h4! White has a great attack.

14.\( \text{d}2 \)

This was a prudent choice by Tal.

After 14.b3?! Black can start his counterplay: 14...a5 15.d2 c5 Black has ideas such as ...a4, or ...d4 and ...c6, so White may feel obliged to try and create some confusion.

16.\( \text{g}5 \) f6 (16...\( \text{e}8 \) also seems fine) 17.exf6 \( \text{gx}6 \) 18.\( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{fe}8 \) 19.cxd5 (19.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 20.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{fxe}5 \) 21.cxd5 exd5 transposes) 19...exd5 20.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 21.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{fxe}5 \) 22.\( \text{ac}1 \) \( \text{d}6 \) Black’s massive centre and the
concentration of firepower aiming at the white kingside will cause some headaches for White.

14...c5N

This is better than 14...f6 15.\texttt{\textbf{xf6}} h\texttt{\textbf{xf6}} 16.\texttt{\textbf{fe1}} g5 as in Tal – Korchnoi, Moscow 1972; I slightly prefer White after 17.h3!N.

15.\texttt{\textbf{g5}}

Black may now choose between 15...\texttt{\textbf{e8}}, with ideas such as ...\texttt{b8}, ...d4, ...c6 and so on, or 15...f6 16.exf6 gxf6 17.\texttt{\textbf{h6}} \texttt{\textbf{e8}} followed by ...\texttt{f4} or ...\texttt{e5}, with typical counterplay.

13...\texttt{\textbf{e8}}!

Vitiugov reacts coolly, providing additional defence to the g6-knight.

14.\texttt{\textbf{f4}}

14.\texttt{\textbf{h5}}? is now comfortably answered by 14...\texttt{h6}.

14...\texttt{f5}

14...\texttt{h6}N 15.\texttt{\textbf{f3}} \texttt{\textbf{b6}}† 16.\texttt{\textbf{h1}} c5 17.\texttt{\textbf{c4}} d4 followed by ...\texttt{e7-f5} also looks good for Black.

15.\texttt{\textbf{c4}}

After 15.exf6 \texttt{xf6}! Black’s ideas of ...h6 and ...\texttt{e5} may prove troublesome for White.

15...\texttt{\textbf{b6}}† 16.\texttt{\textbf{h1}} \texttt{\textbf{e7}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{b3}} a5 18.\texttt{\textbf{d2}} a4

18...c5, with the idea 19.\texttt{\textbf{cx5}} \texttt{\textbf{xd5}} 20.\texttt{\textbf{c4}} \texttt{\textbf{c6}}, seems fine for Black as well.

19.\texttt{\textbf{b4}} c5 20.\texttt{\textbf{ab1}} \texttt{\textbf{b8}} 21.\texttt{\textbf{fc1}} d4 22.a3

A draw was agreed here. The position remains complicated, but Black’s chances are in no way worse.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In this chapter we examined two theoretical lines – Yevseev’s 4.c3, which is quite a novel way for White to try and cause practical problems, and the more traditional 4.\texttt{\textbf{g3}}.

On 4.c3 an IQP arises after 4...\texttt{cxd4} 5.\texttt{\textbf{xd4}} dxe4 6.\texttt{\textbf{xe4}} \texttt{\textbf{d6}}. Both A1) 7.\texttt{\textbf{c3}} and A2) 7.\texttt{\textbf{xf6}}† pose no problems for Black. Yevseev’s proposal of A3) 7.\texttt{\textbf{d3}} has the idea that after 7...\texttt{\textbf{xe4}} 8.\texttt{\textbf{xe4}} \texttt{\textbf{d7}} 9.\texttt{\textbf{e2}} \texttt{\textbf{f6}} 10.\texttt{\textbf{f3}} the light-squared bishop can prove strong on the long diagonal. First of all, we saw that Black can avoid this line by playing A3 1) 7...\texttt{\textbf{d7}}, but even in the main line with A3 2) 7...\texttt{\textbf{xe4}}, Black can challenge the long diagonal by playing ...\texttt{\textbf{b6}} or ...\texttt{\textbf{b8}}, followed by ...\texttt{\textbf{d6-c7}}.

4.\texttt{\textbf{g3}} is more testing. I propose 4...\texttt{\textbf{cxd4}} 5.\texttt{\textbf{xd4}} \texttt{\textbf{c6}}, intending after 6.\texttt{\textbf{b5}} \texttt{\textbf{d7}} to recapture on c6 with the b-pawn, whichever way White chooses to take. In both lines the most flexible way to develop the black pieces is first to play the bishop to d6 and then the knight to e7. The knight often heads to g6, inducing White to play e4-e5, otherwise ...\texttt{e5} is liable to be strong for Black. If White discourages ...\texttt{e5} by playing \texttt{c2-c4}, then Black can respond with ...\texttt{dxc4} followed by ...c5, ...\texttt{\textbf{c6}} and ...\texttt{\textbf{e5}}, with a fine game.
Chapter 9

4.exd5 ♘xd5 – Intro and 5.dxc5

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.exd5

A) 4...exd5 161
B) 4...♘xd5!
   B1) 5.♗b3 163
   B2) 5.dxc5 163
      B21) 5...♗xc5 164
      B22) 5...♖f6! 6.♗gf3 ♘xc5 7.♘d3 ♗bd7! 167
          7...♗e7 – Game 23 170

Game 22  Garry Kasparov – Anatoly Karpov, Amsterdam 1988  166
Game 23  Sergei Rublevsky – Ni Hua, Ningbo (rapid) 2010  170
On this page you will find seven diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Find the best set-up for Black's pieces.

(page 164)

Black played 10...\textquotesingle\textquotesingle e5 here. Is this correct?

(page 168)

How should Black recapture the knight?

(page 171)

What is Black's most accurate move?

(page 167)

How would you play here?

(page 172)

A beautiful combination. Can you see White's idea?

(page 166)

Evaluate this position and propose a plan for Black.

(page 170)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qd2 c5 4.exd5

In the previous chapter we covered White's alternatives to this move, and now we are ready to introduce the main variation. At this point I'd like to talk a little about A) 4...exd5, before going on to examine my recommendation of B) 4...Qxd5!. Even though I do not recommend playing 4...exd5, it is worth taking a quick look at some lines because the fundamental structure of this IQP position involves many ideas that a French Defence player should have in his arsenal, even if this particular line is not part of his repertoire.

A) 4...exd5

This move was my favourite for many years. I felt that it was the correct recapture as it is positionally justified by the placement of the knight on d2. Some may argue that the knight belongs on d2 because after the IQP appears on the board, the manoeuvre Qd2-b3 offers excellent control over d4, the traditional blockading square. That is a simplistic way to see the position, and I would say it is wrong. The natural square for the knight is c3, as we have already seen in the Exchange Variation. From c3 the knight controls the e4-square and attacks the d5-pawn. The knight being on b3 or d4 gives Black the opportunity to take control over the e4-square. It is significant that the e-file is open here, and if Black can take control of this file and plant a strong knight on e4, then he should be happy to pay the small price of having a weak d5-pawn.

All these reasons sound good, right? They are, but when I look at the specifics of the position, it seems the objective assessment of the position is slightly in White's favour. Against strong opposition Black will only be playing for the draw, but with no guarantee of achieving it, as Jacob likes to put it. This is not based on general considerations, but on specifics. White's bishop can land on b5, and although the knight is not great on b3, it may later appear on the much more influential d3-square – for details see the main line below.

5.Qg/f3!

I'll skip a lot of the details and options (for both sides) and go straight to the line that troubles me most for Black.

5...Qf6 6.Qb5t!

This is the correct timing for this move.

6...Qd7 7.Qxd7t Qbxd7

The presence of the knight on f3, ready to go to e5, forces Black to recapture with the knight rather than the queen.

8.0-0 Qe7 9.Qxc5 Qxc5
10. \( \text{d4!} \)

It is important to threaten to play \( \text{f5} \), forcing the queen to go to \( d7 \). This will help White to activate the \( d2 \)-knight.

10. \( \text{b3} \) is met by 10... \( \text{ce4} \) and if now 11. \( \text{fd4} \) then Black has gained the possibility of defending the \( f5 \)-square with 11... \( \text{d6} \), as recommended by GM Eingorn. I like the look of the knight on \( d6 \), as it covers the important \( c4 \) and \( e4 \)-squares. White may still have an edge, although my analysis has not proved this.

10... \( \text{Nd7} \)

Otherwise White simply plays \( \text{f5xe7} \), and practice has shown that Black’s defensive task is anything but easy.

11. \( \text{f2b3!} \)

With this smart move order, White has avoided Eingorn’s recommendation.

11... \( \text{ce4} \)

For a long time I considered this position to be entirely satisfactory for Black, who may continue with ...0–0 and ...\( \text{c8} \), followed by transferring a knight to \( c4 \), playing his queen to \( a4 \), or launching a minority attack on the queenside. The plan of doubling rooks on the e-file, along with manoeuvring the bishop to \( b6 \), can cause trouble on the kingside as well. Of course Black has a weakness, but this is not a big deal if he gains free play in return.

12. \( \text{f3!} \)

With accurate play, White manages to contain Black's activity, and the following variation leads to a position which is more pleasant for White. Black is not dead, but I would not recommend the resulting position to an ambitious French Defence player.

12... \( \text{d6} \) 13. \( \text{c5!} \)

That’s why the queen was driven to \( d7 \), so that White can hit her with tempo and improve the \( b3 \)-knight by bringing it to the more influential \( d3 \)-square.

13... \( \text{e8} \)

13... \( \text{c8} \) 14. \( d3 \) is a worse version for Black, for example the manoeuvre ...\( \text{d8-b6} \) is no longer available.

14. \( \text{d3} \) 0–0 15. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e8} \) 16. \( \text{f2} \) \( \text{d8} \)

This position occurred in Zagrebelny – Haritakis, Agios Kirykos 2010, a game I watched live. The Ukrainian grandmaster won effortlessly against a well-respected Greek master who has lifelong experience playing this line. This rang an alarm bell for me, because I had had this position in my files for years and I was not only playing it myself, but also teaching it to various students of mine. I eventually realized that the main line of 17.\( \text{a4} \),
as played in this game, gives White a small plus, despite ECO and some other sources claiming otherwise.

17.\textit{Be}1?!

Psakhis’s recommendation, which may even be slightly more precise than 17.a4. The following example is fairly typical and shows why I am not recommending this line for Black.

\begin{verbatim}
17...\textit{Bxe}1+ 18.\textit{Bxe}1 \textit{Bb}6 19.\textit{Bd}2 \textit{Bc}7
20.\textit{Be}1 \textit{Bc}4 21.\textit{Be}2 \textit{h}6 22.\textit{Be}7 \textit{Bxe}7
23.\textit{Bxe}7 \textit{Bb}8 24.\textit{Be}2 \textit{Be}8 25.\textit{Bxe}8+ \textit{Bxe}8
26.\textit{Bf}5 \textit{Bxf}2+ 27.\textit{Bxf}2 \textit{h}5 28.\textit{Be}3 \textit{Bb}6
29.\textit{Bf}4 \textit{Bf}6 30.\textit{Bf}5 \textit{Bc}8 31.\textit{Be}3\textit{f}2

A draw was agreed in Jaracz – B. Socko, Warsaw 2011, although White could well have played on. Despite exchanging all the right pieces, Black is still not entirely safe in this endgame, so Jacob’s “playing for the draw without guarantees” applies to this situation.

\end{verbatim}

B) 4...\textit{Bxd}5!

This is the line I recommend. Why is this move strong? The main reason is that after the imminent exchange of the c5- and d4-pawns we reach a structure which typically arises from the Sicilian Defence, and has various features in Black’s favour. Black keeps a central pawn while White has none. The central pawn may in the future support a central outpost and lead to a central superiority for Black. Also Black’s open files on the queenside give him chances of launching a minority attack, particularly using the c-file. What White has is a lead in development. He has time to occupy good squares with his pieces and will try to use this activity to restrict the black pieces to passive roles. If this leads to the creation of weaknesses in the black position, then it means that White has transformed his temporary advantage into something concrete. Otherwise the future belongs to Black.

I shall quickly deal with the harmless B1) 5.\textit{Bb}3 and then proceed to examine the more critical B2) 5.\textit{Bxc}5. The big main lines after 5.\textit{Bgf}3 will be covered in Chapters 10 and 11.

\textbf{B1) 5.\textit{Bb}3 \textit{Bxd}4 6.\textit{Bxd}4}

6.\textit{Bxd}4 \textit{Bf}6 7.\textit{Bf}3 \textit{Bc}6 8.\textit{Bxd}5 \textit{Bxd}5 9.\textit{Bb}5
\textit{Bd}7 was level in Van der Wiel – Glek, Tilburg 1994.

6...\textit{a}6 7.\textit{Bf}3

7.\textit{Bf}6

7...\textit{Bf}6N

This is clearer than 8...\textit{Bd}7 Winkler – Schuetz, Forchheim 2011, though that should be equal too.

9.\textit{Bb}3 \textit{Bc}6 10.\textit{Bf}2 \textit{Bc}7=

\textbf{B2) 5.\textit{Bxc}5}
The c5-pawn will soon be recaptured, resulting in the fundamental pawn structure which is covered in this and the following three chapters. This is the typical Sicilian structure that Black was aiming for with 3...c5!.

Rather than comparing it with typical Sicilian games though, a better way to understand this particular structure is to compare it with games from the “Caro-Kann family” (by which I mean the Caro-Kann Defence, the Scandinavian Defence and other openings in which the black d-pawn is exchanged for the white e-pawn). This might sound a bit strange at first, but in that structure (dubbed the “Capablanca Structure” by Sam Collins in his ChessBase DVD Know the Terrain, Vol. 1), Black is trying to achieve the freeing ...c5 break, and this is exactly what has already happened here. So there is a lot of material from similar structures that may help us to appreciate the nuances of our current position and understand how Black should play.

We shall take a quick look at the very common B21) 5...\( \text{x} \)xc5, before turning to our preferred option of B22) 5...\( \text{f} \)f6!

5...\( \text{w} \)xc5 allows White an interesting opportunity: 6.\( \text{d} \)xe4! \( \text{w} \)b4† 7.\( \text{d} \)c3 \( \text{f} \)f6 8.\( \text{a} \)a3 \( \text{w} \)a5 9.\( \text{d} \)d3 a6 10.\( \text{f} \)f4 \( \text{bd} \)7 11.\( \text{f} \)f3 White had an edge and went on to win in Karjakin – Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2012.

B21) 5...\( \text{x} \)xc5

I do not believe this is the right recapture, though of course nothing terrible is happening yet.

6.\( \text{g} \)g3 \( \text{f} \)f6 7.\( \text{c} \)c4

Sometimes when this structure is reached from d-pawn openings, there is already a white pawn at c4. But when White can use the c4-square for his bishop, Black must be careful because he may be left behind in development, and there may be the danger of various sacrifices on e6.

7...\( \text{c} \)c6

This square is not ideal for the black queen, but other squares have their drawbacks too.

8.\( \text{e} \)e2 0–0 9.0–0

This is quite a well-known theoretical position, albeit one that has proven a little unpleasant for Black in practice. I have not been able to find a clear route to equality here.

9.\( \text{bd} \)7

This is Vitiugov’s main line; throughout his book, Vitiugov adopts an objective stance, so the Russian Super-GM doesn’t claim equality. However, he thinks that Black’s position is playable, and I would agree.
Chapter 9 – 4.exd5 w xd5 – Intro and 5.dxc5

9...c7?! 10.b3 e7 is Eingorn’s suggestion. It makes a lot of sense for Black to improve the placement of his pieces in this way, and it may well be Black’s best bet for equality in this particular position. We will look at similar positions later, but for the moment I’ll just say that our recommended line may achieve this set-up in a better way.

9...a6 was a move I investigated: 10.a4 c7

[Diagram 1]

After 11.e4 e7 12.xf6† xf6 13.a3 c6 14.e4 d4 Black gradually equalized in Ni Hua – Lysyj, Dagomys 2010, but I am more concerned about the new idea 11.b3?, intending to continue with e4 and b2.

10.b3 b6 11.xc5 wxc5

Here Vitiugov doesn’t mention:

[Diagram 2]

12.b3! b7 13.b2

This has proved to be more pleasant for White in many games, including Adams – Lemos, Gibraltar 2011, and Tiviakov – Berelowitsch, Netherlands 2011. With the absence of Black’s dark-squared bishop, the b2-bishop looks like a monster. This is the kind of good piece play with some pressure that White wants in this line.

Now that we understand the danger, I would like to propose a good way to counter such a set-up, and also lay the foundation of understanding the lines examined in the next three chapters.

This is our fundamental “Capablanca structure”. I have chosen not to put any white pieces on the board as what I want to concentrate on is the placing of the black pieces. When this structure arises in the Caro-Kann, usually the c8-bishop is outside the pawn chain (on f5 or g6). In that situation Black’s plan is to put his queen on b6 or a5, and the rooks ideally on e8 and d8 (or sometimes c8 and d8). Then Black is as solid as a rock, though generally he has few winning chances. Keeping the bishop inside the pawn chain is somewhat risky, as White may then be able to use his bishop to good effect, targeting sensitive pawns on h7, e6 and f7, but it preserves more
playing the French

winning chances for Black as well. In the Caro-Kann line 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 dxe4 4.Qxe4 Qd7?! Black often fianchettoes this bishop with ...b6 and ...Qb7. In this situation the queen can no longer come to b6 or a5, and so the best place for it by far is c7! While this simple analysis seems very natural, it took Black decades to come to this conclusion, as we’ll see in the following instructive game.

GAME 22

Garry Kasparov – Anatoly Karpov

Amsterdam 1988

1.e4 c6!

Okay, the exclamation mark is just a joke. Of course we care only about 1..e6, but we will soon arrive at the structure under discussion.

2.d4 d5 3.Qd2 dxe4 4.Qxe4 Qd7 5.Qf3 Qg6 6.Qg3

In “our lines” this knight will normally be on d2 rather than g3, which will usually be in Black’s favour.

6...e6 7.Qd3 Qe7 8.0–0 c5 9.Qe2 0–0

10.Qd1

10.Qf4 is not so good because Black plays 10...cxd4 11.Qxd4 Qc5 (or 11...Qd5 followed by ...Qc5), with fine play.

10...Qc7!

Flohr had played this move in the 1950s, but it was not until this game that the concept caught on.

10...cxd4 11.Qxd4

This was the main line at the time of this game.

11...Qe8 12.b3 Qb6 13.Qb2 Qf8 14.Qf3 Qd7 15.Qe5 Qad8 16.Qe4

We can see how White is methodically gathering his forces on the kingside.

16...Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qc8

It may appear that Black is managing to organize his forces, but White now launches the decisive attack.

18.Qh5 Qg6

18...g6 would have been answered beautifully by 19.Qg4!. Readers who are interested in studying the history of this particular type of combination should definitely look at Odessky’s Play 1.b3! – a wonderful book!


11.c4 cxd4 12.Qxd4 a6 13.b3

13...Qe8

This is typical Karpovian prophylaxis. The
\( f8 \) -square is reserved for the bishop or knight, and also the sensitive e6-square is reinforced.

14.\( \text{b}2 \) b6 15.\( h5 \) b7

This may appear risky, especially if Kasparov is sitting on the other side of the board, but analysis confirms that it is fully correct.

Kasparov suggests 15...\( \text{e}5 \)! as a safer alternative.

16.\( xe6 \)

White has no other dangerous ideas here according to Kasparov.

16...\( xe6 \) 17.\( xe6\)† \( f8 \) 18.\( xh7 \)

After the examination of the dangers of the position and the correct set-up found by Karpov, we now return to the French Tarrasch. It is now easy to recommend that Black’s plan should involve capturing the c5-pawn with the queen and then retreating the queen to c7, putting the bishop on e7 and continuing with ...0-0, ...a6, ...\( \text{bd}7 \), ...\( c8 \) and eventually ...b6.

B22) 5...\( f6 \)!

This is the move order I recommend. Black intends to recapture the c5-pawn with his queen, but without allowing White to attack it with \( e4 \).

6.\( g3 \)

Attempting to hold on to the c5-pawn does not promise White any advantage:
6.\( b3 \) \( xd1\)† 7.\( xd1 \)

7...\( d7 \)!

This excellent move (intending ...\( a4 \), ...\( bd7 \) and ...\( c8 \) to regain the c5-pawn) equalizes without the slightest doubt.
8.f3
8...f3 was seen in Novkovic – Isgandarova, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, and here Black should play: 8...a4!N 9.dxe4! (9...xc5? 10.xb7 xf2 11.b3=) 10.b3 (10.eb7? xf2!) 10...d7=
9...a5 10.c6 11.xc6 12.xc6
A draw was agreed in Potkin – Vitiugov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

6...xc5 7.d3 bd7!
In my opinion, this is Black’s best move order.

8.0–0

12...xf6! By recapturing this way to control the e5-square, Black is fine. After 13.g5 0–0 14.xf6 xf3!! 15.xf3 xf6 Black has nothing to fear. His plan is to double rooks on the d-file, and in an endgame with queen and knight versus queen and bishop, he could even try to play for a small advantage.

9.e4 a6
Denying the white minor pieces access to the b5-square is natural, though 9...c5!N 10.b5 wb8 seems fine for Black and may be a simpler solution.

10.ee1
10.ee2 c5 and Black is fine. He can exchange the d3-bishop whenever he wants, and will first develop with ...e7 and ...b6 (or ...b5) followed by ...b7.
Chapter 9 - 4.exd5 \textit{Wxd5} – Intro and 5.dxc5

10...\textit{\textbf{c}e7}!N

I prefer this to 10...\textit{\textbf{e}e5}?! 11.\textit{\textbf{d}e4} \textit{\textbf{x}xd3} (11...\textit{\textbf{c}xe4} 12.\textit{\textbf{x}xe4}4±) 12.\textit{\textbf{x}xf6}† \textit{gx}f6 13.\textit{\textbf{W}xd3} Vachier-Lagrave – Zatonskih, Gibraltar 2012. Although the dynamics are undoubtedly in Black’s favour, I would enjoy White’s long-term pluses, such as the healthier pawn structure.

10...\textit{\textbf{c}c5}N is also an improvement on the game, and after 11.\textit{\textbf{f}f1} \textit{\textbf{c}e7} Black is fine.

11.\textit{\textbf{d}e4}

11...\textit{\textbf{f}f3} is met simply by 11...\textit{\textbf{c}c5} 12.\textit{\textbf{f}f1} 0–0 and White’s position is rather uncoordinated; Black is at least equal.

11...\textit{\textbf{x}xe4}

11...0–0 12.\textit{\textbf{f}f3} may be slightly in White’s favour.

12.\textit{\textbf{x}e4} \textit{\textbf{c}c5} 13.\textit{\textbf{f}f4} \textit{\textbf{W}b6} 14.\textit{\textbf{e}e3} \textit{\textbf{x}xd3} 15.\textit{\textbf{b}xb3} 0–0

The position is just equal. If White chases the black queen with 16.\textit{\textbf{b}b3} \textit{\textbf{c}c5} 17.\textit{\textbf{e}e3}, then Black can avoid the repetition with 17...\textit{\textbf{d}d5} 18.\textit{\textbf{d}d3} \textit{b5}, when it is starting to look promising for Black.

10...\textit{\textbf{b}b5}†!

This is the only move that makes any sense to me.

11.\textit{\textbf{d}d3} & 11.\textit{\textbf{x}xd7}† \textit{\textbf{c}xd7} 12.c4!

This seems to be White’s only challenging set-up. However, if Black is fine in similar
positions with the light-squared bishops on the board (as shown in Game 22), then he should also be fine here, as there is less danger to his kingside castled position, or to sensitive light squares such as e6.

12...\textit{e}7 13.b3 0–0 14.\textit{d}d1 \textit{f}fd8 15.\textit{b}2 \textit{ac}8

I reckon that some players might favour White’s position here, as his queenside majority is a potential asset in the endgame, and his bishop is better than its counterpart, which may give White hopes of developing a kingside attack by bringing a rook across via the third rank. Despite all that, Black should be fine provided he is just a bit careful.

16.\textit{f}1

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16...\textit{a}6

Several plans are possible, but I like the simplicity of this one.

17.\textit{g}3 \textit{a}5!\textit{z}

Preparing ...b5 (and after cxb5 the idea is ...\textit{xb}5!), which provides Black with plenty of counterplay and ensures that White cannot build up on the kingside too easily.

\textbf{GAME 23}

\textbf{Sergei Rublevsky – Ni Hua}

Ningbo (rapid) 2010

1.e4 \textit{e}6 2.d4 \textit{d}5 3.\textit{d}d2 \textit{c}5 4.exd5 \textit{x}xd5 5.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5

As I have said before, I consider 5...\textit{f}6! to be a better move order.

6.\textit{gf}3 \textit{f}6 7.\textit{d}d3 \textit{e}7

This is the most popular reaction, though Black has not done so well in practice. My preferred choice of 7...\textit{bd}7! was examined above.

8.\textit{e}2 \textit{bd}7 9.0–0 0–0

I prefer this to the alternatives. If Black intends to castle quickly, then according to Tiviakov the best place for the black queen is \textit{h}5.

9...\textit{c}7 is a solid variation that was proposed by Vitiugov, though I think it is much better to play this earlier (without ...\textit{e}7) in order to play a quick ...\textit{c}5.

10.\textit{e}4

Tiviakov recently played:

10.c4

Tiviakov explains: “The point is to take control over the d5-square. And with the queen on c5 (if Black plays ...b6 like in the game) White can play \textit{d}d2-e4, and after the exchange on e4 White would have a double attack on the h7-pawn and the rook on a8.”

10...\textit{b}6

Based on the above reasoning, Tiviakov considers 10...\textit{h}5\textit{z} to be equal as Black prophylactically defends the h7-pawn.

11.\textit{e}4 \textit{c}7

Here again, 11...\textit{h}5\textit{z} would bring Black an equal position according to Tiviakov. For
example: 12...g5 (12...g3 c5=) 12...b7
13...c2 xe4! 14...xe4 ac8=
12...xf6†

12...xf6!N
12...xf6 13.e5 b7 14.b3 d7 15.xd7
xd7 16.b2 was equal in Tiviakov –
Romanov, Al Ain 2012, although White
managed to win in the end.
13.g4 g6 14.xa8 b7
Now Tiviakov analyses:
15...xa7
15.f4 c6 (15...e5 16.xax7 a8 17.xa8†
xa8 18.g3±) 16.xa7 a8 17.xa8†
xa8 is similar.
15...a8 16.xa8† xa8=;
Black has no reason to complain.

10...xe4!
10...c7 is met by 11.g5, transposing to
the note to Black’s 9th move above, which is a
line I wish to avoid.

11...xe4 h5
The best way to defend the h7-pawn.

12.e2
White has also played:
12...g5 xg5 13.xg5 f6 14...f4 d7

15.c4
15.f3 d8 16.e5 (16.e2 d5=)
16...d5 17.e4 e8=
15.e1 c6 16.e5 g4 17.xh7† h8∞
15...c6 16.e1 ad8 17.e3
This was Daulyte – S. Lalic, London 2011,
and now I like:
17...e8N
Black intends ...e5 with counterplay.

12...f6 13.e5 xe5 14.xe5 d8
14...d6 15.e4 d5 16.g3 f6 17.d3
was Darbanvaighani – Beheshtaye, Mashhad
2003, and now:
17...\textit{e}5!\textit{N} 18.\textit{\underline{A}}f3 \textit{\underline{A}}e6 19.\textit{\underline{A}}fd1 \textit{\underline{A}}ad8 is more than okay for Black.

15.\textit{\underline{A}}f3 \textit{\underline{A}}d5 16.\textit{\underline{A}}d1 \textit{\underline{f}}6
Black is equalizing easily.

17.\textit{\underline{A}}c4
17.\textit{\underline{A}}d3 \textit{\underline{A}}f7 is also okay for Black.

17...\textit{\underline{A}}d7
17...b6!\textit{N} is much better. Perhaps Black was afraid of 18.\textit{\underline{A}}e3 \textit{\underline{A}}b7 19.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 \textit{\underline{A}}xd5 20.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 \textit{\underline{A}}xd5 21.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 exd5, but after either 22.\textit{\underline{A}}e3 \textit{\underline{A}}c5 or 22.\textit{\underline{A}}f1 \textit{\underline{A}}c8 23.c3 \textit{\underline{A}}c5 24.\textit{\underline{A}}e2 d4, it is just equal.

18.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5
18.\textit{\underline{A}}e3 is also possible, but it is not scary: 18...\textit{\underline{A}}c6 19.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 \textit{\underline{A}}xd5 20.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 \textit{\underline{A}}xd5 21.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 exd5 22.\textit{\underline{A}}e3 \textit{\underline{A}}c8 23.c3 \textit{\underline{A}}c5 Black is equal as his weakness on d5 will quickly be covered by his king coming to e6.

18.\textit{\underline{A}}a5!? might have proved more difficult to counter, but as long as Black keeps a cool head he should emerge in reasonable shape: 18...b6 19.c4 (19.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 exd5 20.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5† looks strong until you notice 20...\textit{\underline{A}}e6! 21.\textit{\underline{A}}xe6† \textit{\underline{f}}8 and Black has strong counterplay) 19...\textit{\underline{A}}xa5 20.cxd5 \textit{\underline{A}}ab8 21.b3 This looks slightly better for White, although after 21...\textit{\underline{A}}c5 Black has decent counterplay.

18...\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 19.\textit{\underline{A}}xd5 \textit{\underline{A}}f5
White has won a pawn, but Black has more than enough compensation.

20.\textit{\underline{A}}xd8\textdagger{} \textit{\underline{A}}xd8 21.\textit{\underline{A}}e3

21...\textit{\underline{A}}c8! 22.\textit{\underline{A}}a3 a6
22...\textit{\underline{A}}xa3 23.bxa3 a6 was possible, although the opposite-coloured bishops make a draw likely.

23.c4 \textit{\underline{A}}xa3
Black decides to goes for this after all. Maintaining the pressure with 23...\textit{\underline{A}}e6 might have been more worrying for White.

24.bxa3 \textit{\underline{A}}xc4 25.\textit{\underline{A}}c1! b5
Allowing the white rook to become active on the c-file would not promise any winning chances.

26.\textit{\underline{A}}xc4 bxc4 27.\textit{\underline{A}}d2
Black's advantage is not enough to win, though he pressed for some time.

27.\textit{\underline{A}}f7 28.f4 \textit{\underline{A}}e6 29.\textit{\underline{A}}f2 h5 30.h4 \textit{\underline{A}}e4 31.g3 \textit{\underline{A}}f5 32.\textit{\underline{A}}b4 \textit{\underline{A}}g4 33.\textit{\underline{A}}c3 \textit{\underline{A}}b1 34.\textit{\underline{A}}b4 \textit{\underline{A}}xa2 35.\textit{\underline{A}}c3 \textit{\underline{A}}b1 36.\textit{\underline{A}}b4 \textit{\underline{A}}e4 37.\textit{\underline{A}}d2
4. \text{exd5} \text{exd5} - Intro and 5. \text{dxc5}

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Conclusion

In this chapter we started the discussion about 4.\text{exd5}.

The reply A) 4...\text{exd5} is positionally justified and is not so bad, but I do not recommend it. I only mention it to give some typical French ideas that should apply to various lines. Nowadays, the majority of grandmasters prefer to avoid the resulting IQP position because White’s plans have been refined, and Black is usually playing for a draw without guarantees.

After B) 4...\text{\texttt{Exd5}}! we are essentially playing a Sicilian structure, and one that may also arise from the Caro-Kann family. In Game 22 I showed the way Karpov found to solve Black’s problems in such a structure. Applying those ideas in line B2) 5.dxc5, I recommend a plan of taking on c5 with the queen and bringing it back to c7 as soon as possible. Although there are not many games played in this line at grandmaster level, but I cannot find any drawback to this plan. Game 23 instead saw Black leaving the queen on c5 and later relocating it to h5 to help defend the kingside. Though not my main recommendation, this also makes sense and is a reliable back-up plan.
Chapter 10

Alternatives to the Main Line

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.exd5 ♦xd5 5.♗gf3 cxd4 6.♕c4 ♦d6!

A) 7.♗e2 ♦f6 8.♕b3 ♦c6 9.♗g5 a6 10.0–0 b5 11.♗d3 ♦c7
   A1) 12.♕bxd4
   A2) 12.♗he1 ♦b7 13.♗fxd4
       13.♗b1 – Game 24
   A3) 12.♗b1 ♦b7 13.♕bxd4 ♦xd4 14.♗xd4 0–0 15.♗f3 ♦d5!!
       15...♗d5 – Game 25

B) 7.0–0 ♦f6! 8.♕b3
   8.♗e1 – Game 26
   8...♗c6
   B1) 9.♗e1
   B2) 9.♗e2 ♦e7! 10.♗d1
       10.♗g5 – Game 27
   B3) 9.♗bxd4 ♦xd4 10.♕xd4 ♦xd4 11.♗xd4 ♦d7 12.♗f4 ♦c8
       13.♗b3 ♦c5 14.♗ad1 0–0 15.h3
       15.♗f1 – Game 28

Game 24 Hilmar Krueger – Vladimir Turkov, email 2006
Game 25 Alexey Kim – Sergey Ivanov, St Petersburg 2004
Game 26 Tomas Oral – Wang Hao, Calvia (ol) 2004
Game 27 Alexander Ivanov – Boris Gulkos, Key West 1994
Game 28 Torsten David – Alexander Naumann, Germany 1993
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

How does Black take advantage of the hanging white pieces? (page 177)

What are Black's options and which would you choose? (page 182)

White is ready to take on d4. What is Black's best move? (page 188)

How does Black prove that $16.\text{cxb5}$ was inaccurate? (page 178)

Black appears to be in trouble, but can he turn the tables? (page 183)

Find a suitable set-up for Black's pieces. (page 191)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 c5 4.exd5 wxd5
5.dxe6 cxd4

6.c4
This is practically forced, as otherwise Black may be able to play ...e5 and keep his extra pawn.

6...b5
This is rare and frankly quite bad. It doesn't lose by force, but Black now gets the advantage without having to play any difficult moves.

6...e5 7.c3
White's only decent practical try.

7...dxc6 8.exd4
Now I like Houdini's proposal:

8...g4!N 9.e2
9.dxe5?! b4† 10.d2 0–0–0†

9.e4 10.fd2 xe2 11.wxe2 b4 12.0–0 d6†
Black will castle and then eventually arrange to play ...w6 and ...d5.

We now have an important decision to make: where to put the queen?

Some years ago this question had a simple answer – on d6! It is quite easy to understand why this was thought to be best. Generally, the best place for the queen is the c7-square, as we have already mentioned when talking about this structure (see line B2 in the previous chapter). So Black can play any of 6...wd6, 6...wd7 or 6...wd8, though eventually he will put his queen on c7. So why should the d6-square be better than the others? Players believed that if White is allowed to play a set-up with bd3, we2 and wd1 with his king on the kingside, then he will have the better chances. It is only with the queen placed on d6 (ready to give an annoying check from b4, or to play ...e5 and keep his extra pawn) that Black prevents this. So to achieve this set-up for his pieces after 6...wd6, White will have to castle queenside, and this will give Black extra opportunities for counterplay.

However, one obvious drawback of 6...wd6 is that it blocks in the b8-bishop, and Black would like to be able develop this bishop quickly before moving the queen again. So in
Chapter 10 – Alternatives to the Main Line

recent years many players have investigated the responses 6...\(\text{\#d7}\) and 6...\(\text{\#d8}\). These let White play the set-up with \(\text{\#e2}\) and \(\text{\#d1}\), but in compensation some other opportunities are gained for Black. The debate is still raging, but current evidence suggests that 6...\(\text{\#d6}\) is still the most trustworthy way to equalize, so that is the move I will cover.

6...\(\text{\#d6}\)!

At this point, there are really only two distinct ideas for White: preparing to castle queenside with A) 7.\(\text{\#e2}\) or going the other way with B) 7.0–0.

7.\(\text{\#e4}\) \(\text{\#b4}\)† 8.\(\text{\#fd2}\) 6.\(\text{\#d7}\) Zambor – Petrik, Slovakia 2013; Black intends to play ...\(\text{\#g6}\) next, and is at least equal.

Castling queenside certainly entails some risk, and may indicate that White is simply hoping for a sharp battle rather than aiming to gain a theoretical advantage.

10...b5 11.\(\text{\#d3}\) \(\text{\#e7}\)

This is starting position of the queenside castling variation. At this point White normally chooses from A1) 12.\(\text{\#bd4}\), A2) 12.\(\text{\#he1}\) or A3) 12.\(\text{\#b1}\).

Before we move on, one untried possibility is 12.\(\text{\#e4}\), which Vitiugov briefly mentioned, mainly to show that it is a mistake. The Russian Super-GM gives 12...\(\text{\#xe4}\) 13.\(\text{\#xe4}\) \(\text{\#b7}\) 14.\(\text{\#bd4}\) \(\text{\#c7}\)† with Black holding at least a small plus.

A1) 12.\(\text{\#bd4}\)

This is the most natural move in the position, but as we shall soon see, it has been effectively neutralized. Note that 12.\(\text{\#fxd4}\) comes to the same thing.

12...\(\text{\#xd4}\) 13.\(\text{\#xd4}\)

13...\(\text{\#d5}\)!

This is the problem with taking the d4-pawn at once: Black launches a double threat against the g5-bishop and the a2-pawn.

14.\(\text{\#xf6}\)

Sacrificing the a2-pawn is slightly tricky, but objectively dubious.

14.h4 6.\(\text{\#xa2}\) 15.\(\text{\#b3}\) (after 15.c3 \(\text{\#d7}\) Stevenson – Bryson, Edinburgh 1999, Black...
will play ...c8 next with a big initiative) 15...d7 16.h3 This was Salmensuu – Barsov, Ubeda 2000; after 16...c6!N Black is much better as ...d5 is coming and there are no tricks available to White.

14.f4 wxa2
Black simply intends to win another pawn with ...a1 t, so White’s next move is forced.
15.c3
15.b3 d7 and with ...c8 coming, Black’s position is just too strong.
15...d7!
15...b7? 16.xb5t is the sort of trickery White is hoping for.
Having avoided this, Black is simply better as he has stopped White’s threat of 16.c6, and is also preparing a fierce attack against the white king with ...c8 and ...b4.
16.b1
16.f5 is met by 16...c8 17.fxe6 fxe6 and the threat of ...xc3† is devastating, for example 18.xxe6?? xc3† 19.bxc3 a3† and mate comes next.
16.a5 17.e5
This was Akopian – Roiz, Sochi 2006, and now Black should play:

17...c8!N
Black has a highly promising position.

14...xf6 15.b1
15.e4 wxa2 16.c3 a7 17.c6 c7 18.d3 0–0 (or 18...d7?!?) 19.xh7† h8 20.e4

15...b7!
Natural play by Black.
15...c5 has been more popular, but I find the simplicity of the main line attractive.

16.f5
This is the only move that has occurred in practice.

16.xb5
This is untried, and rightly so. Vitiugov provided some fascinating analysis to prove that Black emerges on top.
17. \( \text{c4} \) is not mentioned by Vitiugov, but the solution is simple: with 17... \( \text{Wc5} \) Black exchanges queens, and next he will take the \( g2 \)-pawn with a better endgame.

17... \( \text{Wc5} \) 18. \( \text{dx}a8 \) \( \text{gxg2}! \)

The knight is trapped in the corner and Black does not need to rush to take it. Black now threatens \( ... \text{b6} \) with a strong attack against the white king.

19. \( \text{Wc3} \)

It makes sense for White to try and exchange queens.

19. \( \text{hgl} \) \( \text{b8}! \) 20. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 21. \( \text{d}2 \)

16... \( \text{f8} \)

This is the simplest solution. 16... \( \text{d}8 \)N and 16...0–0–0N are favoured by Houdini, but with the black king more exposed, they look riskier to the human eye.

17. \( \text{e3} \)

17. \( \text{g3} \) is unappealing because of the endgame that arises by force after 17... \( \text{Wc5} \) 18. \( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \). Then White can exchange one of the bishops with 19. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 20. \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) but it is well known that rooks like to cooperate more with a bishop rather than a knight, so if someone is better here, it is Black.

17... \( \text{e}5 \)N

17... \( \text{c5} \) 18. \( \text{g4} \) was unclear in Csiba – Kovacik, Slovakia 2012, but I don’t think Black should allow the knight to \( g4 \).

18. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{h5} \)

Black will continue with \( ... \text{d}8 \) and \( ... \text{g6} \), after which he can connect his rooks by pushing his king to \( g7 \). I like Black’s position.

Based on the above variation, we can understand why White has practically abandoned this line and nowadays aims to first improve his position with 12. \( \text{he}1 \) or 12. \( \text{b1} \) before taking the \( d4 \)-pawn.
According to Vitiugov, this is White's best bet for an opening advantage, but as we shall see, Black shouldn't be too worried if he follows the accepted patterns.

12...\textit{b}7

An untried resource suggested by Neil McDonald on ChessPublishing is 12...\textit{a}7??N, aiming to bring the rook to the centre. Then both 13.\textit{b}1 \textit{d}7?? and 13.\textit{fxd}4 \textit{d}7 result in unclear play.

Note that Black should not meet 13.\textit{fxd}4 with McDonald's 13...\textit{xd}4 14.\textit{xd}4 \textit{d}5 because of: 15.\textit{xb}5?? \textit{xb}5 16.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xd}1?? 17.\textit{xd}1 \textit{fxe}6 18.\textit{xf}x6 \textit{gx}x6 19.\textit{xb}5?? \textit{xf}7 20.\textit{a}4?? Although a rook and two bishops usually outgun a queen, in this case the queen has three pawns more!

13.\textit{fxd}4

13.\textit{b}1 is examined in Game 24 below.

13...\textit{xd}4 14.\textit{xd}4 \textit{d}5!

14...\textit{d}5?? should be preferred according to McDonald, but intuitively I like White's position after 15.h4! I think that the bishop is much better placed on d5 than the knight.

14...\textit{d}5?? is not as strong as it was in line A1, because here White has: 15.\textit{f}5! \textit{xa}2 16.\textit{e}5! This attacking move also defends the b2-pawn. 16...\textit{a}1?? 17.\textit{d}2 \textit{a}5?? 18.c3± White was much better in Ganguly – Petrik, Dresden (ol) 2008. The black king has been caught in the centre, and the threat is \textit{xg}7??, while castling allows \textit{x}e7??.

15.g3

I looked at various alternatives:

15.\textit{xf}x6?? \textit{xf}x6 16.\textit{e}4 0–0 17.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 is clearly misguided, as Black can safely win a pawn: 18.\textit{b}3 \textit{xg}2 19.\textit{g}1 \textit{c}6 20.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}8 21.\textit{h}3 \textit{ac}8 Black was much better in Torres Ventosa – Kononenko, Seville 2007, as White's attempts to attack along the g-file are going nowhere.

15.\textit{b}1?

This has not actually been played here, but it reaches a position that has occurred via a different move order with an earlier \textit{b}1.
15...\( \text{axa2} \)†! 16.\( \text{dxaxa2} \)
16.\( \text{dxal} \) 17.\( \text{b3} \) (17.\( \text{xb5} \)† \( \text{axb5} \) 18.\( \text{xdx4} \) \( \text{xc4} \)†→) 17...\( \text{d5} \) 0–1 Meyer – Bromann, Gausdal 2003.
16...\( \text{xdx4} \) 17.\( \text{dxb1} \)

Now 17...\( \text{c5} \) was fine for Black in Su.B. Hansen – Glek, Esbjerg 2002, but offering the exchange of queens by 17...\( \text{g4} \)† is even stronger.

16.h4 is met by: 15...\( \text{c5} \) 16.\( \text{dxbl} \) \( \text{c8} \) 17.\( \text{b3} \) (after 17.\( \text{c3} \) 0–0 18.\( \text{f5} \) Black has 18...\( \text{d8} \)†) 17...\( \text{c6} \) 18.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c7} \) 19.\( \text{e3} \) 0–0 20.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{c5} \)† (20...\( \text{d8} \)† 21.\( \text{xxg7} \) was White's idea) 21.\( \text{xxh3} \) \( \text{h5} \) Black intends ...\( \text{f4} \), and 22.\( \text{g3} \)† is answered by: 22...\( \text{f3} \) 23.\( \text{dxh2} \) \( \text{a5} \)†.

15.\( \text{e3N} \) \( \text{c7} \) 16.\( \text{dxbl} \) \( \text{c8} \) is given as unclear by Vitiugov. Note that 16...\( \text{d8} \) is not as strong because of 17.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{a5} \) 18.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 19.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{bxa3} \) 20.\( \text{c6} \), which clearly shows that the rook is better on the c-file.

Black can also meet 15.\( \text{e3N} \) with the typical 15...\( \text{c5} \). My computer then gives 16.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{xe3} \)† 17.\( \text{exe3} \), but after 17...\( \text{c6} \) Black is fine.

15...\( \text{c5} \)†

Here too, I like this typical move. By moving the queen to a less vulnerable square, Black simply threatens to take the a2-pawn.

\begin{center}
\textbf{GAME 24}
\end{center}

Hilmar Krueger – Vladimir Turkov

email 2006

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\( \text{cd2} \) c5 4.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 5.\( \text{gf3} \) \( \text{cx4} \) 6.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d6} \) 7.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 8.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 9.\( \text{g5} \) a6 10.0–0 0–0 b5 11.\( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 12.\( \text{he1} \)

I have slightly changed the move order of the game, which was actually 12.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 13.\( \text{bxd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 14.\( \text{xd4} \) 0–0 15.\( \text{he1} \).

12.\( \text{b7} \) 13.\( \text{b1} \)

We saw 13.\( \text{fxd4} \) in line A2 above.

13...0–0 14.\( \text{bxd4} \)

14.c3.\( \text{d8} \) gives Black no problems at all.

14...\( \text{xd4} \) 15.\( \text{xd4} \)
15...\(\textit{B}xd4!\)

15...\(\textit{B}fe8\)N – to rule out 16.\(\textit{B}f5\) ideas – was suggested by McDonald, but the text move leads to a position in which only Black has any winning chances.

16.\(\textit{B}xh7\)\+ \(\textit{B}xh7\) 17.\(\textit{B}xd4\) \(\textit{B}xg5\)

Black has three minor pieces for a queen and pawn, and he stands at least equal; in practice Black has a positive score from this position.

18.\(\textit{f}4\)

22.\(\textit{h}4\) \(\textit{B}ad8\) 23.\(\textit{h}5\) \(\textit{B}xd3\) 24.\(\textit{cxd3}\) \(\textit{g}3\)
25.\(\textit{W}g4\) \(\textit{f}5\) 26.\(\textit{g}6\) \(\textit{d}5\) 27.\(\textit{e}5\) \(\textit{h}6\)
28.\(\textit{gxf7}\)\+ \(\textit{x}f7\) 29.\(\textit{W}g6\) \(\textit{f}6\) 30.\(\textit{W}e8\)\+ \(\textit{x}h7\)
31.\(\textit{W}g5\) \(\textit{x}f7\) 32.\(\textit{W}g4\) \(\textit{d}4\) 33.\(\textit{a}3\) \(\textit{f}3\)

33...\(\textit{B}d6\)? followed by ...\(\textit{B}f5\) is logical as well.

34.\(\textit{W}g6\) \(\textit{xf}4\) 35.\(\textit{B}xe6\) \(\textit{B}xh5\) 36.\(\textit{B}xa6\) \(g5\)
37.\(\textit{W}e6\) \(\textit{g}6\) 38.\(\textit{B}xb3\) \(g4\) 39.\(\textit{W}d5\) \(g7\)
40.\(\textit{W}c2\) \(\textit{B}f6\) 41.\(\textit{e}3\) \(\textit{f}2\)\+ 42.\(\textit{h}d1\) \(\textit{xb}2\)
43.\(\textit{W}d7\) \(\textit{B}g2\) 44.\(\textit{a}4\) \(\textit{g}5\) 45.\(\textit{W}d4\)\+ \(\textit{h}7\)
46.\(\textit{W}d5\) \(\textit{B}g1\)\+ 47.\(\textit{B}e1\) \(\textit{e}3\) 48.\(\textit{B}e4\) \(\textit{f}3\) 49.\(\textit{a}5\)
50.\(\textit{W}f7\) \(\textit{B}xa5\) 51.\(\textit{B}xg4\) \(\textit{h}5\) 52.\(\textit{B}xc2\)
53.\(\textit{B}xf7\)\+ \(\textit{x}h6\) 54.\(\textit{B}xb8\) \(\textit{h}5\) 55.\(\textit{W}e8\)\+ \(\textit{h}6\)
56.\(\textit{W}f8\)\+ \(\textit{h}5\) 57.\(\textit{W}e8\)\+ \(\textit{h}6\)

Sermek – Naumkin, Porto San Giorgio 1999. Neither side can play for a win: Black doesn’t have stable squares for his pieces, while White cannot easily attack on the kingside, nor can he hope to gain anything by pushing pawns on the queenside.

19.\(\textit{g}4\) \(\textit{B}b6\) 20.\(\textit{B}d3\) \(\textit{f}6\) 21.\(\textit{g}5\) \(\textit{e}4\)

We can see that Black has achieved an improved version of Sermek – Naumkin, as the bishop is less of a target on \(\textit{b}6\), and the knight is excellent on \(\textit{e}4\). In a practical game, Black’s position is certainly easier to play.

18...\(\textit{g}d8\)

18...\(\textit{B}f6\) 19.\(\textit{B}dd1\) \(g6\) 20.\(\textit{g}4\) \(\textit{ac}8\) 21.\(\textit{f}5\)
\(\textit{ex}f5\) 22.\(\textit{gxf5}\) \(\textit{gxf5}\) 23.\(\textit{B}d3\) \(\textit{e}4\) 24.\(\textit{B}xe4\) \(\textit{fxe}4\)
25.\(\textit{B}xe4\) \(\textit{h}8\) 26.\(\textit{a}3\) was agreed drawn in
This is White’s most popular move in my database, but it seems quite harmless if Black applies the typical ideas.

12...\textit{b}7

12...e5?! 13.\textit{x}f6 gxf6 14.\textit{h}4! was played in Rozentalis – Rustemov, Esbjerg 2001, and some later games; it is very uncomfortable for Black despite his extra pawn.

13.\textit{b}xd4

13.\textit{e}h1 transposes to Game 24 above.

13...\textit{xd}4 14.\textit{xd}4

It is sensible to keep the game simple and use the patterns we have already seen.

14...0–0

This is not a bad alternative.

15.h4 0–0

According to Tiviakov, 15...\textit{d}8 is also fine for Black.

16.\textit{e}h1 \textit{fe}8!

Black has defended against the threats of \textit{f}5 or \textit{xe}6, so White tries something else.

17.\textit{f}3 h6 18.\textit{e}e5! \textit{d}5!

After 18...hxg5 19.hxg5 g6 20.gxf6 \textit{x}f6 21.f4 followed by 22.\textit{g}4, White held the initiative in Rozentalis – Luther, Panormo 2001.

19.f4 \textit{c}7! 20.g3 \textit{a}5!†

Black was attacking in Zapata – Orsini, Sao Paulo 2009.

15.\textit{f}3

15.\textit{e}h1 \textit{xd}4! 16.\textit{x}h7† \textit{x}h7 17.\textit{xd}4 \textit{x}g5 was seen in Game 24 above.

15.h4 \textit{d}5 16.\textit{e}h1 \textit{a}7 17.\textit{g}4 \textit{c}7 18.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}7 19.g5 gave White the initiative in Adams – Buhmann, Luebeck 2003. However, Black can improve with 15...\textit{fd}8!N, gaining a tempo by attacking the d4-knight. Only after 16.\textit{f}3 does Black play 16...\textit{d}5 17.\textit{e}e5 \textit{c}7, and here it is Black who has the initiative, with ideas of ...\textit{ac}8 and ...\textit{a}5.

15.\textit{xb}5? axb5 16.\textit{xf}6
16...\hfill d5! A crucial resource. \hfill 17.\hfill xe7 \hfill x\hfill a2\hfill +\hfill 18.\hfill c1 \hfill x\hfill e7 The rest of the game is fun for Black: 19.\hfill e4 \hfill f5 20.\hfill e5 \hfill d5 21.f4 \hfill b4 22.b3 \hfill a2 23.dg1 \hfill fa8 24.d1 \hfill xb3 25.g4 \hfill xc2\hfill +\hfill 26.xc2 \hfill d8\hfill +\hfill 0–1 Batjancan – Batchuluun, Ulaanbaatar 2009.

20.\hfill f3
20.e4N was better. Black would then defend the g7-pawn with 20...\hfill e5, and after 21.g3 \hfill f6 we once again have a typical doubled-edged Sicilian position, which offers equal chances.

20...\hfill f4 21.\hfill e4
21.h8\hfill +? \hfill e7 22.xg7 \hfill g8 23.e5 \hfill xe5 24.xe5 \hfill xg2 gives Black a clear advantage.

21...\hfill xe4 22.xe4 \hfill f5 23.xd5 \hfill xd5 24.d4 \hfill f7 25.c3 \hfill f6\hfill +\hfill Nikolaidis – Ivanchuk, Peristeri 2010.

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**GAME 25**

Alexey Kim – Sergey Ivanov

St Petersburg 2004

1.e4 \hfill e6 2.d4 \hfill d5 3.d2 \hfill c5 4.exd5 \hfill xd5 5.gf3 \hfill xd4 6.c4 \hfill d6 7.e2 \hfill f6 8.b3 \hfill c6 9.g5 \hfill a6 10.0–0–0 \hfill b5 11.d3 \hfill e7 12.b1 \hfill b7 13.bxd4 \hfill xd4 14.xd4 \hfill d5

This quickly reaches the same position as our recommended move order of 14...0–0 15.e3

15.e5
16...b4
16...c7N 17.h4 f8 followed by ...ac8 is another typical way to play.

17.h4 a5 18.h3 f8!
Simple play by Black.
18...a7? 19.g3 h8 20.e3 b7 21.h6 and Black was already in serious trouble in Mista – Petrik, Brno 2004.

19.g3 a4 20.f4
20...h6 g6 21.h5 e4! is more than okay for Black.

20...a3
20...f8!N looks promising for Black. It threatens ...h6 and also plans to continue the attack with ...a3, without allowing White the opportunity given in the next note.

21.b3
21.xf6! xf6 22.xh7+ f8 23.b3 is unclear. According to Houdini, the best play for both sides is then 23...c5 24.gd3 ac8 25.h5 c6. After some exchanges, the awkward position of the white king will provide Black with compensation for the pawn, and it is probably fair to assess the chances as equal.

21...c7
Threatening ...e4!.

22.c1 g6–+
Now the threat is ...c3!, which couldn't be played immediately because of xh7+ in reply.

23.c4 bxc3 24.xf6 xf6 25.h5

25...g7
25...xb3! 26.axb3 a2+ 27.d1 c2 28.xc2 b6 29.f3 xb3 30.b2 xe5 31.xe5 c3 32.d2 xe5– and White is completely tied up.

26.hxg6 hxg6 27.c2 ab8 28.h1 b4 29.dxe6 fxe6 30.xg6 e4?
This gives White one final chance to survive. Instead 30...f4 32.h5 f6–+ would have killed White's hopes for counterplay.

31.xe6?
31.xe4! d2 32.f3 b2+ 33.a1 c2
34.\(\text{h}8\)\(\text{t}\) \(\text{\text{h}}7\) (34...\(\text{\text{g}}8\) 35.\(\text{\text{h}}3\)\(\text{\text{g}}8\) 36.\(\text{\text{xe}}6\)\(\text{t}\) also leaves Black unable to escape perpetual check) 35.\(\text{\text{xg}}7\)\(\text{t}\) \(\text{\text{g}}7\) 36.\(\text{\text{h}}7\)\(\text{t}\) \(\text{\text{f}}6\) 37.\(\text{\text{h}}6\)\(\text{t}\) \(\text{\text{e}}7\) 38.\(\text{\text{h}}7\)\(\text{t}\) \(\text{\text{f}}6\) =

31...\(\text{\text{x}}c2\)\(\text{t}\) 32.\(\text{\text{xc}}2\) \(\text{\text{xf}}4\) 33.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{\text{f}}7\)

0–1

B) 7.0–0 \(\text{\text{f}}6\)!

This should be played, as otherwise \(\text{\text{e}}4\) can be annoying.

8.\(\text{\text{b}}3\)

This is the main move and the most popular by far.

However, we must also consider the alternative 8.\(\text{\text{e}}1\). It has been played by both Kasparov and Topalov, so it certainly deserves some respect. We shall look at it in the following illustrative game.

GAME 26

Tomas Oral – Wang Hao

Calvia (ol) 2004

1.e4 \(\text{e}6\) 2.d4 \(\text{d}5\) 3.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}5\) 4.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{\text{xd}}5\) 5.\(\text{gf}3\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 6.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{\text{d}}6\) 7.0–0 \(\text{\text{f}}6\) 8.\(\text{\text{e}}1\)

8...\(\text{\text{c}}6\) 9.\(\text{\text{e}}4\) \(\text{\text{xe}}4\)

9...\(\text{\text{d}}8\) was Pedersen's main suggestion, but White can then play: 10.\(\text{\text{xf}}6\)? \(\text{gxf}6\) (10...\(\text{\text{xf}}6\) hasn't been tried, possibly because after 11.\(\text{\text{b}}5\) \(\text{\text{d}}7\) 12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{\text{xc}}3\) 13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{g}6\) 14.\(\text{b}3\) White has a dangerous initiative with the black king still in the centre) 11.\(\text{\text{b}}5\) White had pressure in Spasov – Hug, Istanbul 2003.

10.\(\text{\text{xe}}4\) \(\text{\text{e}}7\)

Black now intends to simply play ...\(\text{e}5\), or even ...\(\text{\text{f}}6\) in some cases.

11.\(\text{\text{xd}}4!\)

11.\(\text{\text{f}}4\) is less common: 11...\(\text{\text{c}}5!\) 12.\(\text{\text{d}}3\) \(\text{\text{f}}6\) 13.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{a}5!\) 14.\(\text{a}1\) 0–0 15.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{\text{e}}7\) 16.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{\text{d}}8\) 17.\(\text{a}7\) \(\text{\text{d}}7\) 18.\(\text{\text{b}}6\) \(\text{g}5\) Black was at least equal and went on to win in Marcotulli – Legemaat, corr. 2004.

11...\(\text{\text{e}}5!\)

11...0–0?! 12.\(\text{\text{f}}4\) \(\text{\text{c}}5\) (12...\(\text{\text{e}}5\)? is of course met by 13.\(\text{\text{xc}}6\)±) And now 13.\(\text{\text{xc}}6\) \(\text{\text{xc}}6\) 14.\(\text{\text{d}}3\) was slightly more pleasant for White in Kasparov – Gelfand, Astana 2001, though the immediate 13.\(\text{\text{d}}3\)± Picard – David, Poitou Charentes 2003, may be more accurate.

12.\(\text{\text{f}}4\)

An amazing move that could throw you off balance if you haven't seen it before.
Chapter 10 – Alternatives to the Main Line

12...\textbf{xe}4 13.\textbf{xe}d4 14.\textbf{xe}g7 15.\textbf{xe}f6! and White didn’t have enough for a piece in Bragg – Bibby, Bern 1991.

12...\textbf{exf}4 13.\textbf{xe}c6 \textbf{xf}d1\uparrow 14.\textbf{xe}d1 \textbf{bxc}6 15.\textbf{ede}1

15...\textbf{d}f8! 

The only move played for a reason: 15...\textbf{e}d8?! 16.\textbf{xe}c7 17.\textbf{xe}c6 18.\textbf{xe}g7\uparrow

16.\textbf{xe}c7 17.\textbf{xe}c6 \textbf{fxe}6 18.\textbf{c}7

18.\textbf{xe}c6\uparrow 19.\textbf{xe}c6 20.\textbf{f}f1 21.\textbf{e}e7 22.\textbf{xe}6\uparrow 23.\textbf{xe}6? Moreno Tejera – Matamoros Franco, Lorca 2003.

18...\textbf{h}5! 

So that the rook can be developed via the h-file.

19.\textbf{f}f1

19.\textbf{xc}6 20.\textbf{f}f1 21.\textbf{h}6 transposes.

19...\textbf{h}6 20.\textbf{xc}6

20.\textbf{e}e2 21.\textbf{xc}6 22.\textbf{a}4 23.\textbf{e}e7 24.\textbf{a}6 \textbf{ed}7 25.\textbf{d}3 26.\textbf{ef}3 27.\textbf{f}f4\uparrow Efimenko – Petrik, Cappelle la Grande 2003.

20...\textbf{d}8! 

In this position both Vitiugov and Stohl rate Black’s chances as slightly higher.

21.\textbf{d}d3 22.\textbf{e}e7 23.\textbf{a}5!

23.\textbf{h}4! is better according to Oral, with equal chances. This seems true because the h5-pawn is fixed as a target, and this will most likely lead to further simplification. A sample line is: 23...\textbf{c}5 24.\textbf{a}a5 \textbf{f}f6 25.\textbf{c}c4 \textbf{h}8 26.\textbf{e}e2 \textbf{hd}8 27.\textbf{a}6\uparrow 28.\textbf{e}e7 29.\textbf{e}e7 30.\textbf{g}5=

23...\textbf{h}4

White is not given another chance.

24.\textbf{h}3 \textbf{g}6

Intending ...\textbf{h}5\uparrow next.

25.\textbf{a}a6 26.\textbf{ae}2 27.\textbf{e}e6 28.\textbf{c}c4 \textbf{e}7 29.\textbf{a}c6 30.\textbf{a}4 \textbf{b}b6 31.\textbf{c}c8 \textbf{e}5 32.\textbf{c}c8\uparrow 33.\textbf{e}g6 34.\textbf{f}f5 35.\textbf{d}d6 36.\textbf{f}f6

Over the last dozen moves White has achieved nothing, while Black has managed to activate both his pawn majority and his king.
36.\texttt{\textbf{a}b8 e4} 37.a6 \texttt{\textbf{e}d6} 38.\texttt{\textbf{b}b5} \texttt{\textbf{f}f6} 39.\texttt{\textbf{a}d5} \texttt{\textbf{e}xd5} 40.\texttt{\textbf{a}xd5} \texttt{\textbf{e}e5} 41.\texttt{\textbf{c}c4} \texttt{\textbf{e}d7} 42.\texttt{\textbf{a}b7} \texttt{\textbf{e}d3} 43.b4 \texttt{\textbf{b}b3} 44.b5 \texttt{\textbf{d}d4} 45.\texttt{\textbf{a}d5} \texttt{\textbf{b}b2}t 46.\texttt{\textbf{c}d1} e3 0–1

We now return to the main line with 8.\texttt{\textbf{d}b3}.

8...\texttt{\textbf{c}c6}

In this chapter I shall cover Ljubojevic's B1) 9.\texttt{\textbf{e}e1}, Zapata's B2) 9.\texttt{\textbf{w}e2} and the queenless middlegame line that starts with B3) 9.\texttt{\textbf{b}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{e}xd4} 10.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4}. The big main line with 9.\texttt{\textbf{b}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{e}xd4} 10.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} will be studied in the next chapter.

B1) 9.\texttt{\textbf{e}e1}

This is a perfectly playable move. White considers that as the d4-pawn is not easy to defend, there is no great hurry to capture it, so White first improves his pieces in the most natural way. Another idea of the text move is to make room for the bishop to retreat to f1 and eventually emerge on the long diagonal with a Catalan-type position appearing on the board.

9...\texttt{\textbf{a}a6}

I prefer to stick with this move, although 9...\texttt{\textbf{d}d7} intending 10...\texttt{\textbf{c}c8} or 10...\texttt{\textbf{e}d8} is perfectly playable too.

10.\texttt{\textbf{g}3}

This leads to the Catalan-type positions I mentioned.

10.\texttt{\textbf{b}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{e}xd4} 11.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} (11.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} transposes to variation E of Chapter 11 on page 206) 11...\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} 12.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{d}d7} 13.\texttt{\textbf{f}f4} \texttt{\textbf{c}c5} 14.\texttt{\textbf{e}ad1} \texttt{\textbf{e}c8} 15.\texttt{\textbf{b}b3} 0–0 was equal in Radulov, – Yusupov, Indonesia 1983. We shall see this exchange of queens again at the start of the next chapter.

10.\texttt{\textbf{a}a4} \texttt{\textbf{d}d7}!

I prefer this to 10...\texttt{\textbf{c}c7} 11.\texttt{\textbf{b}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{e}xd4} 12.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{d}d7} 13.\texttt{\textbf{f}f4} \texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} 14.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{c}c8} 15.\texttt{\textbf{b}b3}, which has generally been evaluated as slightly better for White on the basis of Averbakh – Stahlberg, Zürich 1953. Black's dark-squared bishop might find a better square on c5 in lines where the queens are exchanged, so playing it to e7 at this point is not the most flexible choice.

11.\texttt{\textbf{b}xd4}

11.\texttt{\textbf{g}3} \texttt{\textbf{w}c7} The queen withdraws so that \texttt{\textbf{f}f4} can be met by ...\texttt{\textbf{d}d6}. 12.\texttt{\textbf{b}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{e}xd4} 13.\texttt{\textbf{w}xd4} \texttt{\textbf{c}c5} 14.\texttt{\textbf{c}c3}

This was Sunzhukhanov – Lakerbaya, Belorechensk 2009, and now I like 14...0–0N 15.\texttt{\textbf{e}e5} \texttt{\textbf{f}d8}. It is now a mistake for White to play 16.\texttt{\textbf{e}xd7?!} \texttt{\textbf{e}xd7}, because Black takes over the initiative with ideas such as ...\texttt{\textbf{g}g4}, ...\texttt{\textbf{w}b6} and ...\texttt{\textbf{e}ad8}, but against other moves
Black may preserve the bishop with ...\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{e}8\).
11...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)xd4 12.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{w}}\)xd4 13.\(\text{\textit{cd}}\)xd4 \(\text{\textit{vc}}\)8
14.\(\text{\textit{cb}}\)3 \(\text{\textit{cc}}\)5
Black is at least equal.
15.c3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)xd4?! 16.cxd4 \(\text{\textit{vc}}\)c6
Black faced no problems at all in Abasov – Sumets, Milan 2009.

10...\(\text{\textit{b}}\)5!?
There is nothing wrong with 10...\(\text{\textit{wc}}\)7
11.\(\text{\textit{cb}}\)\text{f}4 \(\text{\textit{cd}}\)6 12.\(\text{\textit{cd}}\)xd6 \(\text{\textit{wd}}\)6 13.\(\text{\textit{cd}}\)xd4, which was equal in Ljubojevic – Speelman, Brussels 1988, but my suggestion is more active.

11.\(\text{\textit{cb}}\)f1N
I have looked for ways to make this position work for White, but I have not found any.

11.\(\text{\textit{cb}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{wd}}\)7 12.\(\text{\textit{cg}}\)\text{f}1 \(\text{\textit{dc}}\)b7!N
12...\(\text{\textit{db}}\)4 was okay in Lukosius – Borisovs, Palanga 2011, but the suggested novelty is better as it is designed to stop White’s main idea of undermining the queenside.
13.a4?!
This is the critical idea, but Black has a tactical counter.
13.\(\text{\textit{cg}}\)2 \(\text{\textit{db}}\)4 14.\(\text{\textit{ce}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{cd}}\)8 is also fine for Black, as White is not allowed to play a2-a4 under favourable circumstances: 15.a4 \(\text{\textit{xa}}\)4 16.\(\text{\textit{xa}}\)4 a5 Now ...\(\text{\textit{da}}\)6 is a threat. 17.\(\text{\textit{dd}}\)2 \(\text{\textit{df}}\)3

B2) 9.\(\text{\textit{we}}\)2

The Colombian GM Alonso Zapata has played this move nine times in my database from 1993 through to 2009, including games against strong opponents such as Dolmatov, Nogueiras and Vescovi, so it is appropriate that this variation should be named after him.

9...\(\text{\textit{cc}}\)7!
There is no point in delaying this move here, as the exchange of queens on d4 will not happen. So it is better to play ...\(\text{\textit{cc}}\)7 and get castled quickly, and when the d4-pawn is once again under threat we can happily play ...e5.

10.\(\text{\textit{dd}}\)1
The alternative is 10.\(\text{\textit{cg}}\)5, though it is generally considered (by Psakhis and Pedersen among others) that Black can emerge from the opening phase with a comfortable position – see Game 27 below.
10...e5!

11.h3
11...b5?! g4?! 12.xc6 bxc6 13.xe5? xe5 0–1 Jakobsen – Heidenfeld, Siegen (ol) 1970.

11...0–0 12.c3
12.b5 was played in Shilin – Vysochin, Kiev 2004, and now I like 12...e8!?N intending ...f5.

12...f5
Black also seems fine after:
12...e6 13.xe6
13.b5 can met by 13...d5, when 14.xc6 bxc6 15.xe5 xe5 16.xe5 dxc3 17.bxc3 ef8 is close to equal, although the bishop pair may just give Black an edge.
13...xe6 14.cxd4

14.e4!
14...ad8?! 15.g5?! (15.dxe5 xd1† 16.xd1 gxe5 would be completely equal, but understandably the young Topalov wanted to play for the full point) 15...e4 16.h2 d5 17.e3 ffd8† Topalov – Skalkotas, Kavala 1990. The Greek IM clearly had the future World Champion on the ropes, though the game was eventually drawn.
15.g5 f5†
White’s best reaction is now:
16.d5 xd5 17.xe4 xe4 18.xe4 ad8 Black has the better-placed pieces; in particular White’s c1-bishop has problems finding a role.
19.d2 xe8 20.ac1 e5 Black’s knight is eyeing the d3-square and may cause some annoyance.

13.cxd4 e4 14.h2
After 14.g5?! h6 the knight has nothing better than sacrificing itself on f7.

14...a6?! Black was better and eventually won in Istratescu – Zsu. Polgar, Budapest 1993.
GAME 27

Alexander Ivanov – Boris Gulko

Key West 1994

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d2\) c5 4.exd5 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}xd5\)
5.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g3\) cxd4 6.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c4\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}d6\) 7.0-0 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f6\!\) 8.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b3\)
\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c6\) 9.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e2\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}7\!\) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g5\)

I like the look of 16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}b8\), intending ...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}a8\) and then perhaps ...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b8\) and ...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d5\); Black is at least okay.

16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}xd4\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}xd4\)

17...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c5!\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e3\)
18...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{h}}}h4?\!) is problematic for White due to 18...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}4\!\).

18...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c7\)
Black is fine.

19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}}}a3\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d5\)
19...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d5\) is also okay.

20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c1\)
20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d3?\!) is met by 20...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{g}}}6\) with the idea:
21.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c1?\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}}}xa3!\) 22.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}xa3\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}xc3\) 23.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d2\) e5+-

20...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c5\)
A draw was agreed here, though Black could continue playing.
\(\frac{1}{2}\)–\(\frac{1}{2}\)

B3) 9.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}xd4\)

This is the start of the big main line. After 9...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}}}xd4\) we shall first discuss the queenless middlegame that arises after 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}xd4\), before turning in the next chapter to the more common and critical 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}}}xd4\).
We have arrived at a battlefield between classical views and modern ideas. According to the classical view, White stands better because he possesses a 3-2 queenside majority, and so may be able to create an outside passed pawn. The modern view comes to the opposite conclusion: Black stands better because he can put the queenside under strong pressure, while his own majority may provide him with a stable central outpost for a minor piece.

The above statements indicate the plans that both sides will seek to implement. White will try to exchange pieces (especially rooks, which are the best defenders against a passed pawn) and slowly create problems on the queenside by creating a passed pawn which will tie down the black king or minor pieces, thus giving freedom to White’s pieces to attack other targets. Black will try to keep at least one pair of rooks on the board (to help tie down the queenside). In the event of the exchange of all the rooks, Black must be well centralized and able to create counterplay with his own majority in the centre.

If the queens were still on the board, White’s development advantage could give him some initiative. But without queens this development advantage doesn’t really count, as there is no way to transform it into an attack.

Moreover the black king can stay in the centre without fearing an assault.

Considering all the above factors, I would certainly prefer Black’s position in practice, though objectively he cannot yet claim any advantage.

11...d7

I like this plan, making room for the rook to quickly come to c8. On the other hand, the best square for the f8-bishop is not yet known, perhaps e7, more often c5, or occasionally somewhere else.

12.f4

Since the play is not especially forcing, a dozen sensible moves are possible, so I shall just give a couple of other examples.

12.c2

A common try, with the idea of placing the bishop on f3 to target the b7-pawn.

12...c5 13.b3 b6 14.a4

14.f3 is usually met by 14...c8?! in practice, but I like 14...0–0–0 which is similar to what happens in our main line. After 15.f4 c6?! 16.xc6 bxc6 Black went on to win in Zesch – Porper, Dresden 2007, but the position at this point is balanced.

14...a6 15.f3 0–0–0

16.e1

Instead 16.g5?! h6 17.xf6 gxf6+ was
better for Black in Petr – Moskalenko, Solsones 2003. Black has a powerful pair of bishops and a useful central pawn mass.

16...c6!?

This is Moskalenko’s proposal and it is understandable why Black is fine after:

17...xc6 bxc6

White’s three queenside pawns are easily stopped by Black’s two, and those two pawns are not weaknesses as they are easily covered by the black king.

18.a5 a7 19.e3

This has been seen in Pirrot – Levitt, Metz 1991, and Azarov – Ni Hua, Oropesa del Mar 1999. In both games Black now put his king at b7, with rough equality, but also fine is:

19...xe3!N 20...d5=

White has also tried harassing the d7-bishop with:

12...f3 c5 13.e5

However, Black found a convincing reply.

13...a4 14.d3

14.b3 d4 15.bxa4 xe5 was Black’s idea. After 16.b5+ e7 17.b1 h8, White’s bishop pair does not outweigh his crippled pawns.

14...d6 15.b3 c6 16.a4 g4 17.h3 e5 18.xe5 xe5 19.b1 0–0–0

Black was fine in Korneev – Svane, Travemuende 2012, and gained a well-deserved draw against his much higher-rated opponent.

12...c8 13.b3 c5 14.ad1

14...0–0

Practice has demonstrated that Black has no reason at all to complain here. Instead 14...e7?! looks rather risky with so many pieces still on the board, thought it may be playable for Black.

15.h3

15.fe1 fd8 16.h3 is seen in Game 28 below, in which the young Alexander Naumann found a good practical way to play for Black.

15...fd8 16.c3
16...h6!?
16...e8 is also a popular option. If White replies with 17...dxe6 fxe6 18...xe6† f7 19...xc8 †xc8, then the resulting unbalanced situation should be fine for Black, but in general it is safer for Black to avoid such possibilities.

17...f1 a6 18...e5 a7 19...c2 a6 20...d4 a4 21...d4 a4 22...d4 a5
A draw was agreed in Savic – Kosic, Neum 2011. Black’s plan would be to centralize his king now that a few pieces have been exchanged.

**GAME 28**

Torsten David – Alexander Naumann

Germany 1993

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3...d2 c5 4...f3 cxd4 5.exd5 †xd5 6...c4 †d6 7.0–0 f6 8...b3...c6 9...bxd4 a6 10...d4 d7 11...f4...x4 12...d4 c8 13...b3 c5 14...d1 0–0 15...e1 †fd8 16.h3

16...b5?! 17.c3 a5 18.a3 h6?!
The 14-year-old Alexander Naumann (now a solid grandmaster) finds an interesting plan.

19...d3?!
With hindsight, the rook would have been better placed on almost any other square.

19...h8?!
This is an interesting plan to avoid any ...dxe6 ideas, although with the rook being on d3, it is not necessary. Both 19...c6 and 19...b4 are sound alternatives.

20...f1 a6 21.g4
21...e5 e7! with the threat of ...d7-c5 is very annoying for White.

21...e4 22.f3 d6 23.g2 c4†
Black is slightly better as he has started attacking the queenside.

24...xc4 bxc4 25...d2 a4 26...c2 a8
A fine move! Black would like to keep the rooks in order to attack along the b-file, and White’s rooks are certainly underperforming on the d-file where the black bishops cover all the entry points.

27...c1 a6 28...e3 a7 29...g3 e5 30.h4...b8 31...e1...b7 32...e2 a4 33.f4...eb8 33...exf4† 34...xf4...xh4† would have won at once.

34...xf5 bxa2 35...b2 b2 36...f3 a2
37.g5 Ax3
Black's a-pawn is a huge asset and White's attempted counterplay doesn't materialize.

38.\( \text{f1} \) h5 39.g6 fxg6 40.e6 \( \text{Ad6} \) 41.\( \text{Af4} \) \( \text{Ac5} \) 42.\( \text{De5} \) \( \text{Ec2} \) 43.\( \text{Ef3} \) \( \text{Ab5} \) 44.e7 \( \text{Dh7} \) 45.\( \text{Gg5} \) \( \text{Ad6} \) 46.\( \text{Af4} \) \( \text{Axe7} \) 47.\( \text{Af7} \) \( \text{Ee2} \) 48.\( \text{De6} \) \( \text{Df6} \) 49.\( \text{Cc5} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 50.\( \text{Ff4} \) \( \text{Gg2} \) 51.\( \text{Hh3} \) \( \text{Gg4} \) 52.\( \text{Ff2} \) \( \text{Exh4} \) 0–1

**Conclusion**

This chapter started our examination of the main line with 6...\( \text{Wd6} \). White's first decision is which side to castle.

After castling queenside, White arrives at a crossroads on the 12th move. If he goes for A1) 12.\( \text{Dxh6} \) Black has 12...\( \text{Dxh6} \) 13.\( \text{Dxh6} \) and now the star move 13...\( \text{Wd5} \)!. This double threat doesn't win at once, but certainly White should avoid it.

So A2) 12.\( \text{Axe1} \) has been tried, in order to introduce the possibility of \( \text{Ae1} \)-f5. In this case Black has time for 12...\( \text{Ab7} \), and after 13.\( \text{Dxd4} \) \( \text{Dxd4} \) 14.\( \text{Dxd4} \) Black plays 14...\( \text{Dd5} \) instead. A useful idea to remember for Black is the manoeuvre ...\( \text{Ec5} \)-c7. Black's chances on the queenside look more serious than White's on the other flank.

A3) 12.\( \text{Axe1} \) is met by the same 12...\( \text{Ab7} \). After 13.\( \text{Dxd4} \) \( \text{Dxd4} \) 14.\( \text{Dxd4} \) Black can then castle as White's cautious 12th move means that he does not have any way to take advantage of this.

After 7.0–0 \( \text{Af6} \), both Kasparov and Topalov have tried 8.\( \text{Axe1} \), but we saw in Game 26 that Black stands well after 8...\( \text{Ac6} \) 9.\( \text{Dxe4} \) \( \text{Dxe4} \) 10.\( \text{Dxe4} \) \( \text{Dc7} \) 11.\( \text{Dxd4} \) \( \text{e5} \)!

White usually plays 8.\( \text{Ab3} \), and after 8...\( \text{Cc6} \) we looked in this chapter at three options for White.
Chapter 11

Main Line with 10.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}xd4

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}d2 c5 4.exd5 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}xd5 5.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}gf3 cxd4 6.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}c4 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}d6
7.0–0 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}f6 8.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}b3 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}c6 9.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}bxd4 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}xd4 10.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}xd4 a6!

A) 11.a4 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}c7 12.b3
   12.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}e2 – Game 29
B) 11.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}b3
C) 11.b3
D) 11.c3 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}c7 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}e2
   12.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}d3 – Game 30
E) 11.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}e1! \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}c7 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}e2!
   12.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}b3 – Game 31

12...h6!!
12...\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}d6 – Game 32
12...\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{}}}}c5 – Game 33
   E1) 13.b3
   E2) 13.h3!
   13.g3 – Game 34

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Game 30  Jonathan Penrose – A. O’ Kelly de Galway, Dundee 1967  205
Game 31  Cyril Ponizil – Tomas Petrik, Slovakia 2012  206
Game 32  Heiko Starke – Joachim Vossenkuhl, email 2007  211
Game 33  Gawain Jones – Jonathan Speelman, London 2007  212
Game 34  Gordon Evans – Aleksandr Kilichenko, Corr. 2011  216
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Find a strong manoeuvre for Black.

(page 201)

How should Black defend against $\text{Wg4}^+$?

(page 209)

How should Black continue?

(page 199)

What should Black play?

(page 205)

Should the knight retreat to g3 or d4?

(page 213)

Should Black worry about his structure being damaged by $\text{axf6}^+$?

(page 200)

White threatens a check on c2. How should Black defend?

(page 208)

Evaluate the position after 13...c5. Is 14.$\text{d}f5$ a good reply?

(page 216)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qd2 c5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.Qg3 cxd4 6.Qc4 Qd6 7.0-0 Qf6 8.Qb3 Qc6 9.Qbxd4 Qxd4 10.Qxd4
This recapture is White's most challenging option

10...a6!
This represents Black's most flexible choice and is my recommendation. We may develop our king's bishop to e7, d6 or c5, and the other one to d7 or b7, but in all cases the move ...a6 is useful because our queen will feel much more secure on c7. I will cover A) 11.a4, B) 11.b3, C) 11.b3, D) 11.c3 and finally E) 11.Qe1!

One minor option is:
11.Qd3
A rare and unthreatening move, but it was played three times by a young Ponomariov.
11...Qd7
Many moves are possible, but threatening the d4-knight is a simple solution.
12.Qf3 Qc7 13.Qe1 Qd6 14.Qe2 Qd5
Threatening both ...Qb4 and ...Qf4.
15.a3 Qf4 16.Qxf4 Qxf4 17.g3 Qh6
Since ...g7-g6 is a useful plan, blunting the d3-bishop, the dark-squared bishop belongs on g7.
17...Qd6 18.Qad1 Qd8 19.c4 g6 20.b4 b6 21.Qe3 0-0 22.Qh6 Qe7 was about level in Ponomariov – Hübner, Istanbul (ol) 2000, but the dark-squared bishop feels misplaced.
18.Qad1 Qd8 19.Qe5 g6 20.Qxd7
Due to the opposite-coloured bishops, a draw was agreed in Berelowitsch – Borovikov, Ordzhonikidze 2001.

A) 11.a4
This is not a bad move, but it is hardly a critical one. White doesn't allow Black to play ...b5, but it is not certain that Black intended to play that anyway.

11...Qc7
This is the move Black wants to play, and White's last didn't provide any argument against it.

12.b3
This is the most economical defence of the bishop. The alternative 12.Qe2 is seen in Game 29 below.

12...Qd6 13.h3 0-0 14.Qb2 Q5
14...Qd7 15.Qe1 Qad8 16.Qf3 Qfe8 17.Qad1 Qc8? as in Ljubojevic – Seirawan, London 1982, is another decent set-up for Black, who is waiting for the right moment to play ...Q5.

15.Qe2
15.Qf3 e4 16.Qg5 Qf5 17.Qxf6 gxf6 18.Qd5 Qh2† 19.Qh1 Qe5 20.Qxe4 Qe6 21.Qd1 Qxc4 22.bxc4 Qf5 23.Qg3 Qxa1 24.Qxa1 Qf6 25.Qxf5 Qxc4 was Movsesian – Morozevich, Reggio Emilia 2011. According to Vitiugov, White has compensation for the exchange, but no more than that.

15...Qf5 16.Qg3 Qg6 17.Qe2 Qfe8 18.Qad1 Qad8 19.Qfe1
So far we have been following Karpov – Chernin, Saint John 1988, and here I like:
Black has a fine position, and one possible plan is ...\textsubscript{b}b6 and ...\textsubscript{d}d4.

\textbf{GAME 29}

Karsten Rasmussen – Lars Bo Hansen

Tonder 1993

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.d2 c5 4.exd5 \textsubscript{x}xd5 5.gf3 exd4 6.c4 \textsubscript{d}d6 7.0-0 \textsubscript{f}f6 8.b3 \textsubscript{c}c6 9.bxd4 \textsubscript{x}xd4 10.\textsubscript{x}xd4 a6 11.a4 \textsubscript{c}c7

12.\textsubscript{g}e2

12...\textsubscript{d}d6 13.h3 0–0 14.\textsubscript{d}d1

Black should not be troubled by:

14.c3?!

White’s biggest problem is the future of his dark-squared bishop.

15.\textsubscript{e}e1 b6?!

15...\textsubscript{d}d7?! \textsubscript{f}f6 followed by ...\textsubscript{e}e8, ...\textsubscript{a}ad8 and ...\textsubscript{e}e5, is another typical plan which I mentioned above.

16.\textsubscript{d}d3 \textsubscript{b}b7 17.\textsubscript{d}d2 \textsubscript{f}fd8

This was fine for Black in Short – Ivanchuk, Montreal 2007.

14.\textsubscript{g}5

This is the best move here, before Black prevents it with ...h6. However, Black can reply with the same idea that Lars Bo Hansen played in our main game:

14...\textsubscript{h}8?!N

I analysed the line:

15.\textsubscript{a}ad1 \textsubscript{d}d7 16.\textsubscript{b}b3 \textsubscript{h}h2† 17.\textsubscript{h}h1 \textsubscript{f}f4
18.\textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4 19.\textit{fe}1 \textit{ac}8

With the dark-squared bishops exchanged, preparing ...e5 makes less sense, so Black simply brings his rooks to the centre then plays ...\textit{e}8.

20.c3 \textit{d}8 21.d2 \textit{c}7 22.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}8

Black has comfortable equality.

14.d7

This move was given an exclamation mark by Hansen, but I think 14...h6\textsubscript{N} is just as good. White faces problems similar to those Short had to solve against Ivanchuk, concerning the future of the c1-bishop.

15.g5

15...\textit{h}8!

This move is the reason this example features as an illustrative game. Black will follow up with the typical ...\textit{h}2\textsuperscript{+} and then ...\textit{f}4, putting the question to the g5-bishop. If the bishop takes the f6-knight, then after ...\textit{xf}6 Black is ready to use the g-file.

16.d3

Hansen doesn't like this move and instead proposes 16.c3, though here too 16...\textit{h}2\textsuperscript{+} 17.h1 \textit{f}4 18.\textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4 19.g1 \textit{fd}8, followed by ...\textit{ac}8 and ...\textit{e}8, gives Black an equal game.

16...\textit{h}2\textsuperscript{+}

The timing of this move is perfect. Black will first offer the exchange of bishops and then decide about the optimal placement of his rooks.

17.h1 \textit{f}4 18.\textit{xf}6?!  

After 18.\textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4\textsuperscript{+} the d4-knight is hanging, and Hansen point out the possibility: 19.f3 c6 20.e5 e4! 21.xe4 \textit{xe}5\textsuperscript{+}

18...\textit{gxf}6\textsuperscript{+}

Now Black can attack along the g-file.

19.\textit{h}5 f5 20.e2 \textit{g}8!

Black's idea is to double rooks on the g-file.

21.\textit{xf}7

21...\textit{xg}2! 22.\textit{f}6\textsuperscript{+}  

22.xf2?? \textit{c}6\textsuperscript{+}

22...\textit{g}7 23.f3 \textit{e}8 24.g1 e5 25.\textit{h}4 \textit{eg}8  

Hansen notes that 25...\textit{b}6\textsuperscript{+} is even stronger.

26.c3 \textit{xd}4 27.xd4 e5 28.c3 f4 29.d3 \textit{xb}3 30.d5 \textit{d}7 31.xg7 \textit{g}7 32.g1 \textit{f}5 33.\textit{f}3?  

33.xg7 \textit{xf}7\textsuperscript{+}
A clever move by White. The idea is that if Black is going to play ...\textit{Wc7} anyway, then White will be ready to reply with the active \textit{Wf3}.

According to Istvan Almasi’s article in \textit{ChessBase Magazine 155}, this variation is currently regarded as one of White’s main attempts to gain an opening advantage, but to be honest I do not see any particular problems for Black.

11...\textit{Wc7} 12.\textit{Wf3} 12.\textit{Wg5} \textit{d6} 13.\textit{xh6} gxh6 14.\textit{Wf5} Other ways of covering h2 are less efficient. (14.g3 can be met by 14...\textit{h5}, while 14.h3 is met by 14...\textit{d7}, after which Black can castle queenside and attack via the g-file.) 14...\textit{c5}! 15.\textit{Wc4} \textit{g5} Black has full equality, and Savchur – Khlusevich, corr. 2000, was agreed drawn here.

12.\textit{Wg5} \textit{d6} 13.\textit{Wf5} The alternative 13.\textit{Wf1} is met the same way as the text, with only a slight difference which I highlight in the note to White’s 18th move.

13...\textit{O-O} 14.\textit{Wg5} 14.c3 e5! 15.\textit{c2} \textit{d7} followed by ...\textit{c6} was fine for Black in Levushkina – Wintzer, Germany 2009.

14.\textit{e1} e5 15.\textit{b2} \textit{d7} was similarly fine for Black in Rigo – Kaniansky, Slovakia 2000.

14.\textit{d7}! 15.c3 \textit{c5}!?

15...\textit{b5}!? also seems fine, though it is more complicated and demands more theoretical knowledge.

16.\textit{h5} \textit{g6} 17.\textit{c2} \textit{b6}!? Modest, but perfectly playable.
18...\(\text{e}4\)
18...\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 19...\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 20...\(\text{f}d1\) (White was rightly concerned that 20...\(\text{x}g6\) \(\text{fxg6}\) 21...\(\text{g}6\) \(\text{xf}3\) 22...\(\text{gxf}3\) \(\text{h}2\)† 23...\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{e}8\) would give Black a huge initiative) 20...\(\text{f}4\) and Black even had an edge in Tiviakov – Ionov, Ohrid 2001.

18...\(\text{ae}1\) is not dangerous in this position, but if White had chosen 13...\(\text{h}1\) instead of 13...\(\text{h}3\), then there would be the idea of swinging the rook to \(\text{h}3\) via \(\text{e}3\). In that case, Black defends with 18...\(\text{b}7\) 19...\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{g}5\!, ready to meet 20...\(\text{h}3\) with 20...\(\text{h}6\).

18...\(\text{b}7\) 19...\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{w}xb7\) 20...\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{f}4\)
A draw was agreed in Serafim – Silva, email 2006. Serafim is Greece’s only correspondence GM, and I find his games interesting to follow, but in this case he accepted that he had gained no advantage with White.

C) 11...\(\text{b}3\)

This move is a serious option against the sideline 10...\(\text{e}7\), but against 10...\(\text{a}6\) it is considered relatively harmless.

11...\(\text{c}7\)
There is no reason to avoid this typical move.

12...\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{d}6\) 13...\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}5\) 14...\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 15...\(\text{c}4\)
This move leads to fascinating play.

15...\(\text{e}1\) 0–0 16...\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{ad}8\) Black is threatening ...\(\text{e}4\) in order to transfer the knight to \(\text{c}5\). 17...\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}5\)! 18...\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}5\) 19...\(\text{h}4\) This was Tiviakov – Psakhis, Rostov-on-Don 1993, and now 19...\(\text{c}3\) is strong for Black.

15...\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}5\) 16...\(\text{g}3\) (16...\(\text{e}4\) 0–0 17...\(\text{fe}1\) \(\text{ac}8\) and Black is slightly better due to the constant threat of ...\(\text{e}4\)) 16...\(\text{c}3\) 17...\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{xc}3\) 18...\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 19...\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{c}8\)

Here a draw was agreed in A. Ivanov – Gulko, Long Beach 1993, although according to the tournament bulletin, it was felt in the analysis room that Black had slightly the better of it.

15...\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{gx}f6\) 16...\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}8\) Black has an active position with a potential attack along the g-file. 17...\(\text{e}4\) (17...\(\text{ac}1\) can be met by 17...\(\text{f}5\), with the idea 18...\(\text{xf}5\) \(\text{xf}3\)†) 17...\(\text{xe}4\) 18...\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xc}2\) 19...\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 20...\(\text{a}7\) \(\text{c}6\) 21...\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{a}8\) Black was better in Giorgadze – Henley, Tbilisi 1983.
D) 11.c3

As with the previous line, this is a challenging way to meet 10...\textit{e}7, but here Black is well placed to avoid any discomfort.

11...\textit{e}7

Once again we can play this typical move. Black gains a tempo on the \textit{c}4-bishop and will continue with \ldots\textit{d}6, gaining another tempo by attacking the \textit{h}2-pawn.

12.\textit{e}2

In many games White has preferred to retreat the bishop, keeping the option of playing \textit{f}3 and thus avoiding a later \ldots\textit{f}4, but each retreat square has a drawback.

12.\textit{d}3 will be discussed in Game 30 below.

12.\textit{b}3 \textit{d}6 13.\textit{h}3 0–0 (13...\textit{d}7 14.\textit{f}3 0–0
15.\textit{g}5 \textit{h}2\texttt{t} 16.\textit{h}1 \textit{e}5 17.\textit{ad}1 \textit{ad}8
18.\textit{c}3 \textit{h}6 19.\textit{f}3 \textit{hxg}5 20.\textit{xe}5= Sambuev – Zontakh, Sochi 2005) and White has tried various moves here:

15...0–0\texttt{N}

Rather compliant is: 15...\textit{xc}4 16.\textit{c}1 ±

15...\textit{g}4?! was played in Tiviakov – Prusikin, Dresden 2007, and later in Womacka – Luther, Chemnitz 2009, both ending in a draw. There is a lot of analysis here from \textit{Chess Informant} and ChessPublishing, but it seems that there is nothing more than a draw, with a lot of pitfalls for both sides to avoid in order to get there. I would not recommend this to a practical player. Moreover, it seems that my main line poses some difficult questions for White.

16.\textit{xb}5 \textit{xb}5 17.\textit{xb}5

17.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gf}6 18.\textit{xb}5 \textit{e}5 19.\textit{a}4 \textit{ad}8
20.\textit{we}2 \textit{h}5 and with \ldots\textit{h}8 and \ldots\textit{g}8 coming, Black has more than enough for the missing pawn.

17...\textit{ad}8 18.\textit{we}2 \textit{xf}3 19.\textit{xf}3 \textit{hh}2\texttt{t}
20.\textit{hh}1 \textit{e}5

I slightly prefer Black's position, because the white queenside pawns will be targets for Black's heavy pieces.

\textbf{a) 14.\textit{g}5 is met by 14...\textit{e}4! 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{hh}2\texttt{t}
16.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}4 and Black has equalized, as shown in Tiviakov – Hübner, Venlo 2000, and several other games.}

\textbf{b) 14.\textit{e}1 \textit{hh}2\texttt{t} (14...\textit{h}6 15.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}5 16.\textit{e}3! followed by \textit{e}2 and \textit{ae}1, gave White strong}
pressure in Khalifman – Volkov, Kazan 2005)
15.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{f}4 16.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{xc}1 17.\texttt{xc}1 \texttt{d}7 Black’s perfectly-timed manoeuvres had given
him an equal game in Rasulov – Andersson, Budva 2009.

c) 14.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}5! 15.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{d}7! 16.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}4 17.\texttt{e}2
was seen in Gutsko – Kostiukova, Alushta 2005, and now I like 17...\texttt{b}5N 18.c4 \texttt{c}6
followed by putting the rooks on c8 and d8, and the bishop on e5; Black is more than okay.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {12...d6 13.h3 0–0 14.b3}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

14.\texttt{g}5 allows a small tactic that is worth remembering:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {14...e4! 15.e3 b5 16.d3 \texttt{b}7 17.c2 \texttt{f}6
18.g5 \texttt{h}8? The same idea that we saw from
Lars Bo Hansen in Game 29.}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {17...xf6 gxf6 20.e4 \texttt{g}8 21.e2 \texttt{xe}4 22.xe4 f5 23.f3
h2\texttt{f} 24.h1 \texttt{e}5 Although he eventually
lost, at this point Black was doing perfectly
well in Seres – Kristjansson, Budapest 2002.

14...b5

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {15.\texttt{g}5
Challenging the b5-pawn with 15.a4N is an
interesting idea, but with all the black pieces
actively placed, 15...\texttt{b}xa4 16.\texttt{xa}4 \texttt{b}7\texttt{f}
looks fine for Black.

15...\texttt{b}7 16.\texttt{c}2

16.xf6 is risky for White as he doesn’t have
a quick way to challenge the \texttt{b}7-bishop, but
now White is ready to consider exchanging on
f6 followed by \texttt{e}4.

16.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{e}4! 17.c1 \texttt{h}2\texttt{f} 18.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{f}4
19.c2 \texttt{xc}1 20.xe4 \texttt{xe}4 21.xc1 \texttt{f}4
22.f1 \texttt{d}8 was slightly better for Black in

16...\texttt{d}5

The e4-square is not available for the knight,
but the d5-square can be used instead.

17.\texttt{fe}1 \texttt{h}2\texttt{f} 18.h1 \texttt{f}4 19.g4 \texttt{xe}5
20.xg5 \texttt{fd}8 21.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{f}6 22.e5 \texttt{b}6
23.b3 \texttt{d}5

In Campora – Hübner, Biel 1987, Black had
the better side of a draw.
Chapter 11 – Main Line with 10.\textit{\text{d}}d4

GAME 31

Jonathan Penrose – Alberic O' Kelly de Galway

Dundee 1967

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{\text{d}}d2 c5 4.exd5 \textit{\text{w}}xd5 5.\textit{\text{g}}f3 cxd4 6.\textit{\text{c}}c4 \textit{\text{w}}d6 7.0-0 \textit{\text{f}}6 8.\textit{\text{b}}b3 \textit{\text{c}}c6 9.\textit{\text{b}}xd4 \textit{\text{w}}xd4 10.\textit{\text{d}}d4 a6 11.c3 \textit{\text{c}}c7 12.\textit{\text{d}}d3

12...\textit{\text{d}}d6 13.h3 0–0

Black can also play 13...\textit{\text{d}}d7 14.\textit{\text{f}}f3 0–0 15.\textit{\text{g}}g5 \textit{\text{h}}h2\textdagger 16.\textit{\text{h}}h1 \textit{\text{e}}e5. In a similar position with the bishop on b3, White can play \textit{\text{d}}ad1 to avoid being given an IQP, but he does not have that option here. 17.\textit{\text{a}}e1 \textit{\text{d}}d4 18.cxd4 \textit{\text{d}}d5 19.\textit{\text{e}}e4 \textit{\text{f}}f5 20.\textit{\text{e}}e2 \textit{\text{b}}b6 21.\textit{\text{d}}d1 \textit{\text{b}}b5 Black was slightly to be preferred in Tiviakov – Kramnik, Kherson 1991, although the game eventually ended in a draw.

14.\textit{\text{g}}g5

14.\textit{\text{f}}f3 has the point that 14...\textit{\text{e}}e5 can met by 15.\textit{\text{f}}f5\textdagger, so instead Black should play 14...\textit{\text{d}}d7, transposing to the previous note.

14.\textit{\text{e}}e1 is met by 14...\textit{\text{h}}h2\textdagger 15.\textit{\text{h}}h1 \textit{\text{f}}f4 with equality, Gorkavij – A. Petrov, Armavir 2010.

14...\textit{\text{d}}d5!

Once again, the e4-square is not available, but the d5-square is.

15.\textit{\text{e}}e1

15.\textit{\text{f}}f3 b5 16.a4 h6 17.\textit{\text{e}}e3 b4 18.cx\textit{\text{b}}4 \textit{\text{d}}d4 19.\textit{\text{e}}e4 \textit{\text{b}}b8 20.\textit{\text{a}}c1 \textit{\text{w}}c7 was equal in Balutescu – Bradshaw, corr. 2008.

15...\textit{\text{f}}f4 16.\textit{\text{x}}xf4 \textit{\text{x}}xf4 17.\textit{\text{c}}c2

Black is at least equal and he implements a good plan in the following moves. The reason I chose this game is to provide an example of sound play to readers who may find themselves with a knight like this in a similar situation.

17...\textit{\text{g}}g6?
Black wants to play ...e5 soon, so he takes the f5-square away from White.

18...d7 19...d8 20...g3?!
20...e3 is better, although 20...e8, planning ...e5 followed by ...c6, is still comfortable for Black.

20...e5 21...e2
White could try 21.b3!?. Then 21...exd4?! 22.xd4 xh3 23.gxh3 xg3 24.fxg3 25.e7 would give White strong counterplay in the endgame, so Black should prefer 21...c8!+.

21...f5!+
A nice idea – the d3-square beckons.

22.b3
22.xf5? xdl shows why the g3-square was the wrong choice for the queen.

22...xd1 23.xd1 d3 24.xf1 xb2 25.b3 d3 26.g5 c5 27.g3 e4?!
27...c6! 28.e6 e8 would have maintained Black’s big advantage.

28.xe4 xe4 29.e1 e5?
This second inaccuracy enables White to equalize. Instead 29...c6! would keep some winning chances for Black. For example, after

30.f3 d5 31.xe5 xxb3 32.axb3 b6+ 33.h2 xxb3 he emerges with an extra pawn.

30.g4
White now wins back the e5-pawn. ½-½

E) 11.e1!

We have finally arrived at the moment of truth. This is White’s only real way to press for an advantage.

11...c7 12.e2!
This is the most active way for White to play, and the one which creates the most problems. IM Andreas Tzermiadianos recommended this in How to Beat the French Defence.

12.b3 is the old main line and is studied in the following illustrative game.

![Diagram](image)

GAME 31

Cyril Ponizil – Tomas Petrik

Slovakia 2012

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.d2 c5 4.exd5 xd5 5.gf3 exd4 6.c4 w6 7.0–0 w6 8.b3 c6 9.bxd4 xd4 10.xd4 a6 11.e1 w7 12.b3 d6
13.\texttt{f5}
This is the main idea behind playing 11.\texttt{e1}, and to someone seeing this position for the first time, it looks really dangerous. However, there is enough practical material nowadays to ascertain that Black can equalize.

13.\texttt{h3}
This is less critical.
13...\texttt{h2}\dagger 14.\texttt{h1} \texttt{f4}
This is a safe option for Black.

15.\texttt{f3}
15.\texttt{xh4} \texttt{xf4} 16.\texttt{g1} 0–0 17.c3 b6 18.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xf3} 19.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{b7} 20.e5 \texttt{bd8} 21.ead1 \texttt{f8} 22.exd8\dagger \texttt{xd8} 23.ead1 \texttt{xd1}\dagger 24.exd1 \texttt{e7} and Black was doing just fine in Sardella – Skogfeldt, corr. 2011.
15...\texttt{xc1} 16.\texttt{axc1} 0–0 17.\texttt{cd1}
This was Kovalev – Emdin, St Petersburg 2011.
17...\texttt{d7}\texttt{N} 18.c3 a5?
Another plan for Black is simply to complete his development with ...\texttt{fe8} and ...\texttt{ad8}, and once the e6-point is securely covered, he may even consider ...\texttt{c8} followed by ...b6 and ...\texttt{b7}.
19.a4
Now the b2-pawn is vulnerable.
19...\texttt{c6} 20.\texttt{xc6} bxc6
Black will continue with ...\texttt{b8}, and he does not stand worse at all.

13...\texttt{xh2}\dagger 14.\texttt{h1} 0–0 15.\texttt{g7}
Having said “A”, White must also say “B”.

15...\texttt{e8}!
15...\texttt{xg7}? is practically refuted by 16.\texttt{d4}!.
A nice example is: 16.e5 17.\texttt{h4} \texttt{f4} 18.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{g4} (18...\texttt{exf4} is met by 19.\texttt{g5}\dagger \texttt{h8} 20.\texttt{xf6}\dagger \texttt{g8} 21.\texttt{e5}, and Black must give up his queen to prevent mate.) 19.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{h8} 20.e8.\texttt{xf4} 21.\texttt{xf8}\dagger \texttt{g7} 22.\texttt{xf7}\dagger \texttt{xf7} 23.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{e5} 24.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{f6} 25.\texttt{e6}+ \texttt{xe6} 26.\texttt{d3} and Black was doing just fine in Sardella – Skogfeldt, corr. 1997.

16.\texttt{f3} \texttt{xg7}
We can now see the point of the zwischenzug with the rook. It is not immediately obvious how White should continue his attack. From this point on, both sides have to proceed with
caution, as a single inaccurate move can lead directly to disaster. The following notes may seem daunting to some readers, as it seems that Black has to remember a lot of complicated theory, but if you play through the notes a few times at home, you should not find it difficult to repeat the moves at the board.

17.\( \mathsf{\text{h}}6 \text{!} \)

A fine resource. Black cannot accept the bishop because \( \mathsf{\text{xf}}6 \) would come with check and the attack against the exposed king would be crushing.

17...\( \mathsf{\text{g}}6 \) 18.c3!

Again the only move to continue the attack, clearing the way for the bishop to check.

18.\( \mathsf{\text{ad}}1 \) is refuted by: 18...\( \mathsf{\text{xd}}1 \) 19.\( \mathsf{\text{xd}}1 \) \( \mathsf{\text{e}}5 \)\( \text{!} \)→ 20.\( \mathsf{\text{hxh2}} \) (20.\( \mathsf{\text{g}}3 \) \( \mathsf{\text{g}}4 \) 21.\( \mathsf{\text{c}}1 \) \( \mathsf{\text{f}}5 \) 22.\( \mathsf{\text{c}}3 \) \( \mathsf{\text{e}}4 \) 23.\( \mathsf{\text{e}}2 \) \( \mathsf{\text{d}}8 \) 24.\( \mathsf{\text{f}}1 \) \( \mathsf{\text{h}}5 \) and Black was just a piece up in Radovanovic – Vakhidov, Chania 2000) 20...\( \mathsf{\text{g}}4 \)\( \text{!} \) 21.\( \mathsf{\text{g}}1 \) \( \mathsf{\text{hxh6}} \) 0–1 Zaw Win Lay – Khalifman, Bali 2000.

18...\( \mathsf{\text{h}}5 ! \)

This is Black’s most reliable defence. As the knight is no longer hanging, the threat to the h6-bishop becomes real.

18...\( \mathsf{\text{e}}5 \) 19.\( \mathsf{\text{c}}2 \)\( \text{!} \) \( \mathsf{\text{e}}4 \) 20.\( \mathsf{\text{xe}}4 \)\( \text{!} \) \( \mathsf{\text{xe}}4 \) 21.\( \mathsf{\text{xe}}4 \)

19.\( \mathsf{\text{c}}1 \)

This is by far White’s most popular choice.

19.\( \mathsf{\text{e}}4 \) \( \mathsf{\text{hxh6}} \) 20.\( \mathsf{\text{h}}4 \)

Here Black is advised to play:

20...\( \mathsf{\text{e}}5 \) ! 21.\( \mathsf{\text{hxh2}} \)

21.\( \mathsf{\text{xf7}} \) \( \mathsf{\text{d7}} \) 22.\( \mathsf{\text{f8}} \)\( \text{!} \) \( \mathsf{\text{g7}} \) 23.\( \mathsf{\text{c5}} \) was agreed drawn in Schramm – Diotalevi, email 2002. Black could continue playing with 23...\( \mathsf{\text{g5}} \) 24.\( \mathsf{\text{f8}} \)\( \text{!} \) \( \mathsf{\text{g7}} \) 25.\( \mathsf{\text{hxh2}} \) \( \mathsf{\text{f5}} \) 26.\( \mathsf{\text{e8}} \) \( \mathsf{\text{d7}} \) 27.\( \mathsf{\text{xa8}} \) \( \mathsf{\text{c6}} \) 28.\( \mathsf{\text{g1}} \) \( \mathsf{\text{f3}} \) 29.\( \mathsf{\text{h5}} \)\( \text{!} \) \( \mathsf{\text{hxh5}} \) 30.\( \mathsf{\text{f8}} \) \( \mathsf{\text{f5}} \) 31.\( \mathsf{\text{xf5}} \)
\[ \text{Chapter 11 - Main Line with } 10.\text{\underline{Q}}x d4 \]

...g2\textbf{t} 32.\text{\underline{Q}}f1 e\text{xf5t} and a long semi-forced line has resulted in a good endgame for Black.

21...d7 22.\text{\underline{Q}}xf7 \text{\underline{Q}}c6 23.f4 \text{\underline{Q}}f5 24.\text{\underline{Q}}xf5 e\text{xf5} 25.\text{\underline{Q}}f7 \text{\underline{Q}}d2 26.\text{\underline{Q}}xh5 \text{\underline{Q}}xg2 27.\text{\underline{Q}}c2t \text{\underline{Q}}xh2t 28.\text{\underline{Q}}xh5 \text{\underline{Q}}e8 29.\text{\underline{Q}}d3

This was Luther - Schlecht, Boblinger 2000, and Black should now play:

\[ \text{29...\text{\underline{Q}}h5!N} \]

Activating his king gives Black the advantage in this endgame, as 30.\text{\underline{Q}}xf5?! \text{\underline{Q}}h4 leaves the white king in trouble.

19.\text{\underline{Q}}e3

This may seem similar to the main line, but Black must respond differently.

\[ \text{29...\text{\underline{Q}}h8} \]

29...\text{\underline{Q}}g8

29...\text{\underline{Q}}g3 30.\text{\underline{Q}}e6t \text{\underline{Q}}g7 31.\text{\underline{Q}}e3 \text{\underline{Q}}xf3t 32.\text{\underline{Q}}g1 \text{\underline{Q}}h2t 33.\text{\underline{Q}}f1 \text{\underline{Q}}g4t 34.\text{\underline{Q}}g2 \text{\underline{Q}}xe6 35.\text{\underline{Q}}xf4 \text{\underline{Q}}xf4 36.\text{\underline{Q}}xe6=

30.\text{\underline{Q}}e6t \text{\underline{Q}}f7 31.d5 \text{\underline{Q}}xd5 32.\text{\underline{Q}}a7t \text{\underline{Q}}c7 33.\text{\underline{Q}}xc7t \text{\underline{Q}}xc7 34.\text{\underline{Q}}e3 \text{\underline{Q}}g3 35.\text{\underline{Q}}g2 \text{\underline{Q}}g6 36.\text{\underline{Q}}h3

\[ \frac{1}{2}\text{-}\frac{1}{2} \] Alarcon Casellas - Hevia, Havana 2010. A logical outcome to a fascinating and rich game.
19...\[f4!\]
19...f5? is wrong here because of 20.g4 \[f6
21.\[xe6! \[xe6 22.\[xe6 \[f7 23.\[g5 \[xe6
24.\[xf5 \[f7 25.\[xf6 \[g7 26.\[e6 \[g7
27.\[h6 \[g8 28.\[xd8 \[xd8 29.\[xh2 \[xh2
30.\[xh2 \[d2 31.\[g3 \[xb2 32.f4, and White
managed to win this endgame in Jovanovic –
Van Rooijen, email 2009.

20.g4 \[g3†

This is virtually always played, but 20...\[g7
is also possible: 21.gxh5 \[xc1 22.\[axc1 b6
23.h6 \[f8 24.\[g4 \[b7 25.f3 \[c7 26.\[g1
\[f6 27.\[b4† and a draw was agreed in
Kuerten – Silin, corr. 2010, because of the
variation 27...\[e8 28.\[a4 b5 29.\[xb5 a\[x5
30.\[x5 \[e7 31.\[xb7 \[d7 32.\[b4 \[d6 33.\[b7†.

21.\[xg3 \[xc1 22.\[axc1 b6

23.\[c2†
23.\[e3 \[b7 24.\[h2 \[c5 25.\[f4 \[g5
26.\[c2 \[h6 27.\[cd1 \[xf4 28.\[xf4 \[f3
29.\[xd8 \[xd8 30.\[g3 \[d2 31.\[xf3 \[e2

23...\[g7 24.\[e4 \[a7
24...\[b8 is also sound: 25.\[cd1 \[xd1
26.\[xd1 \[b7 27.\[xb7 \[xb7 28.\[g2 b5 was
equal in Meribanov – Grib, Minsk 2013.

25.\[c2 \[b7 26.\[h2 \[xe4 27.\[xe4 \[b7
28.\[hxh7 \[g8 29.\[xb7 \[xb7 30.\[h2 \[d3
31.\[g2 \[bd7 32.\[e2 \[g7 33.\[h3
33.\[h1 \[d2 34.\[f2 \[d3 35.\[e1 \[g6 36.\[xd2 \[xd2† 37.\[e2 \[d3 (but not
37...\[xe2†? 38.\[xe2, when White's queenside
majority gives him a decisive advantage)
38.\[g2 \[g5 39.\[h3 \[d1 40.\[e5 \[f6
41.\[e4 \[d2 42.\[b4 b5 43.a4 \[xa4 44.\[xa4
\[xb2 45.\[xa6 \[c2 46.\[c6 \[g6 47.\[c5 \[f6
48.\[c8 \[e2 V. Kovalev – Pacheco, Istanbul
(ol) 2012.

33...\[g6 34.\[h2 \[d1 35.\[e4 \[h1†
36.\[g2 \[dd1 37.\[b4 b5 38.a4 \[hg1†
39.\[h2 \[h1† 40.\[g2 \[hg1† 41.\[h2 \[h1†
\[e2

We return now to the position after the critical
12.\[e2.

12...h6!!
This is my recommendation, but in order to
understand why I came to propose this weird-
looking move, you should study the next two
illustrative games. It will then become easier to
appreciate the hidden nuances of this almost
untried possibility.
Chapter 11 – Main Line with 10...xd4

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 cxd5 4.cxd5 wxd5 5.exd5 c6 6.c4 cxd4 7.0-0 e5 8.b3 e6 9.bxd4 Qxd4 10.xd4 a6 11.xe1 Qc7 12.xe2!

One of the ideas behind this is that the c4-bishop's best retreat square is not yet known, so White plays a useful move and leaves the decision about the bishop's future until later.

12...xd6

12...c5 is the other popular move and is covered in the next illustrative game.

13.g5!

This is the problem. White is fully mobilized and thus can afford to sacrifice the h2-pawn. Black certainly must not accept the offer.

13...0-0!

13...d7? is untried and for good reason: 14.xe6!+– and Black can resign.

13...xh2†? 14.h1 xf4 (14...0-0 15.xf6 gxf6 16.g3 loses a piece for Black without nearly enough compensation) 15.xf6 gxf6 16.xxe6 0-0 17.xf5 xh8 18.xad1+ Kotronias – Sarakauskas, Cork 2005. White has an enormous position without even being material down.

14.xf6 gxf6 15.xd3†

This is what I was talking about earlier. The bishop finds a much better spot than b3, and it is obvious that White has the initiative. Even if deep computer analysis suggests that Black may be able to defend, it is most unpleasant to try to do so in practice. White can even choose between playing for a fierce attack or opting for a positional advantage.

15...xh2†

15...f5 16.xh5 xh8 17.xf3! f6 was played in Roganovic – Milanovic, Tivat 2011, and now White could have played simply with 18.c3N+, intending to target the weak e6-pawn with x4d4, a2-b3 and doubling on the e-file.

16.xf1 a4 17.xh5!

17.g3 xh8 18.xe4 f5 19.xf5 exf5 20.xf4 xf4 21.xf4 xe6 reaches an endgame Vitiugov assesses as better for White but defendable in practice. 22.xe2 x6 23.xg1+ xh8 24.g3 xe8 25.xe3 x6d4 26.xf5 xf4 27.xe6 xe6 28.xe1 x6f6 29.xd8+ xg7 30.xg3+ xh6 31.xh3+ ½–½ Skonieczna – Seidel, email 2006.
17...f5 18...e1!

I like this position for White. He can play slowly with consolidating moves like c3, g3, \( \text{\( \Box \)f3} \) and so on, or he can act more decisively with g2-g4.

A clash between two former correspondence World Champions saw the immediate advance of the g-pawn: 18.g4 \( \text{\( \text{Ke8} \)} \) 20.gxf5 e5 21...a1 h6 22...e2 g5 23.g3 d7 24.c4 and White had the advantage.

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
\hline
\end{array}
\]

24...e8 25.xd8 xd8 26.e4 f8 27.xg5 xg5 28.xg5 hxg5 29.f6 d6 30.xe5 xf6 31.xg5 e7 32.e5+ d8 33.e2 White eventually took the full point in Oim - Slotth, email 2003. The rest of the game is very instructive (and I recommend studying it), but it is not relevant to this book.

18...d7 19.g4

This advance comes under even better circumstances than in Oim – Slotth above.

19...h6 20.xf5 e5 21.f3 e8 22.e4+-

Black is in trouble as the idea of \( \text{\( \Box \)h2-g4} \) is impossible to counter effectively.

22...c6 23.h2 g5 24.g4 e4 25.xg5 h5 26.g4 xf5 27.h6+ xh6 28.xh6 edx3 29.xg5+ g6 30.xd3 xe6 1-0

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
\hline
\end{array}
\]

13.c3 h6?

Black wants to prevent the c1-bishop from having a bright future, though he will have to watch out for a sacrifice on h6. Back in 2003, Glek awarded this move an exclamation mark in \textit{Chess Informant 88}.

13...b5 14.d3 xd4 15.cxd4 \( \text{\( \Box \)b7} \) is just slightly better for White. 16.g5 wd6 17.e5 ed8 18.ed1 g4 19.xd6 edx6 was Petr - Yemelin, Czech Republic 2012, and now an interesting way for White to improve is: 20.f4N xd7 21.f3 d6 22.a4±

After 13...0-0 14.g5 Black should probably accept a small disadvantage with 14...xd4 15.cxd4 \( \text{\( \Box \)d5} \). Instead 14...d5 15.ad1 e7?
leads to disaster: 16.\textit{\textbf{x}}e7 \textit{\textbf{x}}e7 17.\textit{\textbf{x}}e6! \textit{\textbf{x}}xe6 18.\textit{\textbf{x}}xe6 fxe6 19.\textit{\textbf{w}}xe6+ d7 20.\textit{\textbf{d}}d7+– Emms – Kelly, England 2005.

14.\textit{\textbf{d}}f5! 
This is the critical option. 14.\textit{\textbf{b}}3 and 14.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 have also been tried, but they are less troublesome for Black.

14...\textit{\textbf{f}}8! 
This is Black’s best chance of obtaining a playable position.

14...0–0?! 
This can be met a sacrifice which was discovered by Kotronias.

15.\textit{\textbf{x}}xh6+ gxh6 16.\textit{\textbf{x}}xh6 
Tzermiadianos offers some fascinating analysis of this sacrifice in \textit{How to Beat the French Defence}. His main line runs:

16...\textit{\textbf{e}}7 
17.\textit{\textbf{e}}d1! N 
17.\textit{\textbf{b}}3 is the only move to have been tried in practice. After 17...\textit{\textbf{c}}5 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textbf{h}}5 Fabri – Albano, corr. 2009, White may still have some advantage, but Black has plenty of defensive resources.

17...\textit{\textbf{d}}d8 18.\textit{\textbf{x}}d8+ \textit{\textbf{x}}d8 
18...\textit{\textbf{x}}d8 is met by 19.\textit{\textbf{d}}d1, planning to swing the rook into the attack via d3 or d4.

19.\textit{\textbf{d}}d1 \textit{\textbf{e}}7 20.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4 
20.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 is mentioned by Tzermiadianos as being strong for White as well.

20...\textit{\textbf{e}}5 21.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 \textit{\textbf{g}}4 22.\textit{\textbf{g}}3 
White has a winning attack.

15.\textit{\textbf{d}}d4! 
Retreating the knight to g3 would present fewer problems for Black.

15...\textit{\textbf{d}}d7 
15...b5 16.\textit{\textbf{b}}3 \textit{\textbf{b}}7 17.\textit{\textbf{e}}e3 is not an improvement for Black, as there is a constant threat of a2-a4.

16.\textit{\textbf{b}}3 \textit{\textbf{c}}8 17.\textit{\textbf{e}}3 
White is able to develop the bishop to a good square without exchanging it, and also the knight is more influential than on g3.

17...\textit{\textbf{d}}d6 18.\textit{\textbf{h}}3 \textit{\textbf{g}}6 19.\textit{\textbf{d}}d2 \textit{\textbf{g}}7 20.\textit{\textbf{a}}d1 \textit{\textbf{c}}d8
This is the moment of truth – if White does not do something now, Black will play ...e5 followed by either ...c6 or ...f5.

21. d5! gxf5 22. exd6 wxd6 23. exd6 c6
24. exd8 exd8 25. d4

White has a healthy advantage, but Black is not dead yet, and later in the game he even had some chances to equalize completely.

25... g6 26. f3 h5 27. h4 e8 28. f2 g7
29. a4 d5 30. c2 f6 31. b3?! 
31. b5 32. a1?! 
32. axb5 axb5 33. c5 b8 34. e2

32... c8?

33. e3? f7?

Black misses his big chance and goes on to lose the endgame after all. After 33...e5! 34. b6 b8 35. a5 bxc3 36. d1 e6 37. xc3 f7 Black's counterplay is enough for equality.

34. cxb4 f4 35. d2 xb3 36. xb3 f5 37. e3 exd4 38. a5 e7 39. b5 axb5 40. a6 a7 41. b4 d4 42. d1 c7 43. a2 e7 44. e2 c1 45. a7 c6 46. xb5 xa7 47. xa7 d6 48. a2 h1 49. d2 1–0

Having seen some of the problems that can arise from 12...d6 and 12...c5, we shall now study my recommendation of 12...h6!!.

What is the idea behind this move? Firstly, Black prevents the bishop from coming to g5. At the same time the g7-pawn remains defended so that the knight will not come to f5 with tempo. It is essentially a high-class waiting move.

The main moves to consider in reply are E1) 13. b3 and E2) 13. h3! but first there are many minor lines to look at.

On the only occasion this position arose in practice, 13. g3 was played and we'll study this in Game 34 below.

13. c3 d6! is fine for Black because 14. f5 can be met by: 14... exh2 15. h1 0–0 16. xh6+ gh6 In a similar position with the bishop on c5, Black had problems, but here he will be able to defend his kingside with ...f4 or ...e5.

13. f5 can be met by: 13... g6! 14. e3 g7 15. b3 b5 16. d3 b7

13. f4? xf4 14. xe6 doesn't work: 14... fxe6 15. xe6 g4+ →
13.\( \text{dxe6? fxe6} \) 14.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe6} \) 15.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe7} \) 16.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe6} \) 17.\( \text{aac1} \) \( \text{xd8} \) is fine for Black. For example: 18.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 19.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{dxe2} \) 20.\( \text{dxe1} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 21.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 22.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 23.\( \text{dxd4} \) (23.\( \text{a5} \) \( \text{b5} \) 24.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 25.\( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{e5} \) and Black is doing well in the endgame.

13.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe6} \) 14.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe6} \) 15.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe6} \) 16.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe6} \) 17.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe6} \) 18.\( \text{aac1} \) \( \text{b5} \) 19.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 20.\( \text{dxd5} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 21.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 22.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 23.\( \text{dxd4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 24.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 25.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 26.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) and Black is doing well in the endgame.

This is logical, as the best square for White’s bishop now looks to be b2, but Black can disrupt his opponent’s plans.

13...\( \text{b4} \)

Developing with tempo is safest, though other bishop moves may also be playable:

13...\( \text{c5} \) 14.\( \text{b2} \) 0–0 (14...\( \text{b5} \)?! 15.\( \text{dxe6} \) –+) 15.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 16.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 17.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 18.\( \text{d1} \) (18.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 19.\( \text{xa8} \) ? \( \text{b7} \) 20.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{xd8} \) 18...\( \text{b7} \) 19.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 20.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 21.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{g7} \) With a roughly balanced position.

13...\( \text{d6} \) 14.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{dxe2} \) 15.\( \text{h1} \) 0–0 16.\( \text{xg7} \) \( \text{xg7} \) 17.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{b5} \)

14...\( \text{b4} \)

Developing with tempo is safest, though other bishop moves may also be playable:

14...\( \text{c5} \) 15.\( \text{b2} \) 0–0 (14...\( \text{b5} \)?! 15.\( \text{dxe6} \) –+) 15.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 16.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 17.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 18.\( \text{d1} \) (18.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 19.\( \text{xa8} \) ? \( \text{b7} \) 20.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{xd8} \) 18...\( \text{b7} \) 19.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 20.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 21.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{g7} \) With a roughly balanced position.

13...\( \text{d6} \) 14.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{dxe2} \) 15.\( \text{h1} \) 0–0 16.\( \text{xg7} \) \( \text{xg7} \) 17.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{b5} \)

14...\( \text{b4} \)

Developing with tempo is safest, though other bishop moves may also be playable:

14...\( \text{c5} \) 15.\( \text{b2} \) 0–0 (14...\( \text{b5} \)?! 15.\( \text{dxe6} \) –+) 15.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 16.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b5} \) 17.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 18.\( \text{d1} \) (18.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 19.\( \text{xa8} \) ? \( \text{b7} \) 20.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{xd8} \) 18...\( \text{b7} \) 19.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 20.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 21.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{g7} \) With a roughly balanced position.

13...\( \text{d6} \) 14.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{dxe2} \) 15.\( \text{h1} \) 0–0 16.\( \text{xg7} \) \( \text{xg7} \) 17.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{b5} \)
Having looked at all the other options for White, I have come to the conclusion that this is best.

13...c5
Black should certainly avoid both 13...g6? 14...xe6! and 13...d6?! 14...f5.

13...e7 14...b3 0–0 15...f3 d8 16.c3±

13...d7 14.g3 d8 (14...c8 15.d3 c5 16.f4 b6 17.b3 e7 18.a4+) 15.d1 is slightly more pleasant for White.

14...f5 f8!
14...d3 looks dangerous, though White’s attack may only be enough for a draw: 15.gxh6 16.f3 (16...xh6 g3!) 16.e7 17.d3 c6 18.e4! xe4 (18...h8 19.d3 h6 19xe4 e8 20.xh6 h8 21.c3 f6 22.g7 g7 23.g3+ h6 24.f4+ g7 25.g3+ a perpetual.

Compared with Game 33, the white knight cannot retreat to g3 or d4.

15.e3 b5 16.d3 b7
Black has equalized and may continue with ...g6 and ...g7.
14...c5

It is too soon for 14...b7 because of:
15...xe6! fxe6 16...xe6† c8 17...d1 c7
18...e1 d6 19...f5! xf5 20...xd6† c7 21...f4 e8 22...d5† c7 23...c7 d5 24...d1
xe6 25...e1 f8 26...exe6 exe6 27...e7

15...f4
15...b3 b7 16...xc5 bxc5 17.a4 bxa4??

15...b6 16...b3
16.c3...xd4 17...xd4...b7 is balanced.

16...b7 17.a4??
Oops! Accidents happen, even in correspondence games.

White had to exchange the c5-bishop first:
17...xc5 bxc5 18.a4 c6 19.f3 b4 White's weakened king position means that Black is okay here.

17...c6++ 18...xb5 axb5 19...xb5 a7
20...e3...e3 21...xe3...xb5 22.axb5
23...xal† 24...e7 24...a3...d5 25...b3
26...xb3...e8 27...c3...d6 28...g2
29...f3...c7 30.b6...b7 31...a3...xb6
32...b3†...c7 33...xb7†...xb7 34...e2...c6
35.h3...d5 36...d3 e5 37.b3 e4† 38...e3
d7 39.g4 g6 40.f3 exf3 41...xf3...c5
0–1

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed the important theoretical position arising after 10...a6!.

Lines A to D covered a range of White's standard attempts, but none of them promise him anything special because Black becomes very active with ...c7, ...d6, ...b5 and ...

White's most dangerous option is to go for the direct E) 11...e1! c7.

In Game 31 we studied the concrete attempt 12...b3...d6 13...f5!. Then 13...xh2† 14...h1 0–0 15...xg7...d8! 16...f3...xg7
17...h6! might look dangerous, but after 17...xh6 18.c3...h5! Black has demonstrated that he has nothing to fear. The details that need to be remembered are that 19...c3 blocks a quick attack on the e6-pawn, so 19...f5! is the answer; and 19...c1 should be met instead with 19...f4! with balanced play.

More challenging is 12...e2!, with the idea that after 12...d6 13...g5! the c4-bishop can go to b3 or d3 according to circumstances. Instead of this, 12...c5 13.c3 h6 has been recommended for Black, but unfortunately Kotronias's discovery of 14...f5! 0–0? 15...xh6† is so strong that we may consider this line refuted.

Instead of castling, 14...f8 should definitely be preferred, but after the accurate 15...d4! White still holds a healthy edge.

Once we understand the above nuances, the idea of 12...h6!! makes sense. White's...g5 is prevented, and now...f5 is not so strong because g7 is still defended. Black is getting ready for ...d6 hitting h2, followed by castling. White can pre-empt the attack on h2 with either 13.g3 or 13.h3 but both moves have certain drawbacks. For example 13.g3 allows powerful counterplay along the long diagonal, and 13.h3...c5! 14...f5...f8! is fine for Black as 15...d4 is not available here.
Chapter 12

The Steinitz Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 f6 4.e5 \f67

A) \g4

B) \f3 c5 6.dxc5 c6 7.f4 xc5 8.d3 f6 9.exf6 xf6

10.0–0 – Game 35

10.\e2 – Game 36

Game 35 Ljubomir Ljubojevic – Tigran Petrosian, Las Palmas 1973

Game 36 Alexander Zubarev – Dmitry Chuprikov, Alushta 2001
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Diagram Preview

What is Black’s best option? (page 221)
Can you suggest a good plan for Black? (page 223)
Black has the initiative. What is the best way to prove this? (page 225)
Can you see an effective way for Black to gain counterplay? (page 224)
What strong move did Petrosian find here? (page 225)
Can you find an idea which gives Black a great game? (page 221)
Suggest a good and typical move for Black. (page 224)
Can you find Black’s best move? (page 226)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 Qf6 4.e5
This move bears the name of the first World Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, and was recommended by Khalifman in Opening for White According to Anand. White is relying on his greater space and his potential control over the d4-square in order to fight for the advantage.

Now 4...Qe4 is nothing more than a tricky sideline, and 4...Qg8 is too sophisticated for my taste, so we'll stick with the standard:

4...Qfd7
In this chapter we will examine A) 5.Qg4 and B) 5.Qf3. The next chapter covers 5.Qe2, while the following three chapters then deal with the main line of 5.f4.

A) 5.Qg4
This rare sideline is called the Gledhill Attack. It bears some similarities with Nimzowitsch's line in the Advance Variation (see line C of Chapter 1), but here the knight stands on d7 rather than g8, which benefits Black as it attacks the e5-pawn.

5...c5

This seems to be the most dangerous move, though not the most popular.

6.Qf3 cxd4 7.Qxd4
7.Qb5 transposes to the main line.
7...Qxe5 8.Qg3 f6
White does not have enough compensation for the pawn. For example:
9.Qf4 Qbc6 10.Qb5
This was Vavrousek – Urban, Znojmo 2007, and simplest here is:
10...Qc7?!N
Black's advantage is undisputed. He plans ...a6 followed by ...Qd6.

6.dxc5 Qxe5 7.Qg3 Qbc6 8.Qb5

8...Qg6
8...Qd7?!N also favours Black.
9.h4 Qxc5 10.h5 Qge7 11.Qxg7 Qg8 12.Qxh7
This occurred in Rosell – Ziegler, Tylosand 2012, and now I like:
12...e5N
Black has a much more harmonious position and will increase his lead in development with ...Qf5.

6...cxd4 7.Qf3 Qc6 8.Qf4
White should not be tempted by the tactical:
8.Qd6+ Qxd6 9.Qg7
Chapter 12 – The Steinitz Variation

9... b4†!
9... ñxe5 10. ñxe5 ñf6 11. ñxf6 ñxf6 was only equal in Bogoljubow – Reti, Maehrish Ostrau 1923.
10. c3 dxc3 11. ñhx8† ñf8
Black is much better, for instance:
12. b3
12. ñd1 cxb2 13. ñxb2 ñb6†
12... c2† 13. ñd2 ña5 14. ñd3 ñxd2† 15. ñxd2 ñc3 16. ñxc2 ñxa1†
0–1 Vandivier – Fischvogt, USA 1998.

8... h5!N
An excellent new idea.
An early game in this line continued:
8... ña5† 9. ñd2 ñb6 10. ñd6† ñxd6
(10... ñe7? is strongly met by 11. ñh5)
11. ñxg7 ñxe5 12. ñxe5 ñf8 13. ñxc6 ñxc6
Gurgenidze – Petrosian, Moscow 1963. Now I prefer White after 14. ñd3N.

9. ñg3 h4 10. ñg4
10. ñd6† ñxd6 11. ñxg7 ñb4† 12. c3 dxc3
13. ñhx8† ñf8†

10... ña5†
This may look similar to the above Petrosian game, but there is an important difference.

11. ñd2 ñb6 12. ñd6† ñe7!
The advance of the h-pawn means that ñh5 is no longer possible. White’s best try here is to sacrifice a piece, but the black king will successfully flee.

13. ñxf7 ñxf7 14. ñg5† ñe7 15. ñxe6† ñd8 16. ñxd5
16. ñf7† ñc7 17. ñxh8 ñdxe5 18. ñxd5 ñxb2 19. ñd1 ñg4 is winning for Black.
16...\textit{c}c7 17.\textit{e}6\textdagger \textit{b}8 18.0–0–0 a6\textdagger

The king will hide on a7, and Black's extra piece gives him a definite advantage.

B) 5.\textit{f}3

In \textit{The Flexible French}, Moskalenko named this the "Russian Roulette" Variation, and predicted that it will become more popular. Those acquainted with chess history will be aware that this line was used by Spassky to beat Petrosian in Game 19 of their 1966 World Championship match.

5...c5 6.\textit{x}c5

For 6.\textit{e}e2 \textit{c}c6 see line B of the next chapter on page 239.

6...\textit{c}c6 7.\textit{f}4 \textit{x}c5 8.\textit{d}3 f6!

Please do not fall into the trap: 8...0–0? 9.\textit{x}h7\textdagger!

9.\textit{x}x\textit{f}6 \textit{x}xf6

White now has two different ways to play the position. 10.0–0 was the Spassky's choice and is examined in the next illustrative game. 10.\textit{e}e2 prepares long castling and is what Moskalenko proposed in \textit{The Flexible French} – see Game 36.

GAME 35

Ljubomir Ljubojevic – Tigran Petrosian

Las Palmas 1973

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{c}c3 \textit{f}6 4.e5 \textit{fd}7 5.\textit{f}3 c5 6.dxc5 \textit{c}c6 7.\textit{f}4 \textit{x}c5 8.\textit{d}3 f6 9.\textit{x}x\textit{f}6 \textit{xf}6 10.0–0

As already mentioned, Petrosian faced this against Spassky, and here we see him dealing with the same line seven years later.

10...0–0 11.\textit{e}e5

White has also tried:

11.\textit{g}3 a6!

The main idea of this move is to prepare ...\textit{h}h5, the point being that \textit{h}h4 can now be met by ...\textit{c}c7 without fearing \textit{b}b5.

Another point can be to play ...b5 followed by ...\textit{a}a7-e7 to help force through ...e5.

12.\textit{e}e5

This stops both these ideas, but Black can now play similarly to our main game.

12...\textit{d}d7 13.\textit{b}1

This was Szilagyi – Haag, Budapest 1967, and now I propose:

13...\textit{e}e7N 14.\textit{d}2
Chapter 12 - The Steinitz Variation

14...g6!

It is worth making a mental note of this move which prepares ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{h}5\) as well as providing the black queen with a good square on g7.

15.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}f3\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{ae}8\) 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}2\)

After 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}1\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xe}5\) 17.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xe}5\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{c}6\) Black will continue with ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{h}5\) followed by gradually preparing ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5\).

16...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{h}5\) 17.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{h}4\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}4\) 18.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}2\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{g}7\)

11...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}7\)!

This simple move is fine here. Black wants to recapture on c6 with the bishop and he doesn’t fear \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xd}7\).

12.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}2\)

White tries to stop ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5\). If he succeeds he can expect to be better; if he doesn’t then in most cases he will be slightly worse. Here are a few other possibilities.

12.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xd}7?!\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xd}7\) 13.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}1\) was Hagerty – Luchan, Parsippany 2007, and here Black should grab the chance to play 13...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5\)!N, with the point that 14.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xe}5\) is met by 14...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{g}4\) and the f2-point falls.

12.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xc}6\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xc}6\) 13.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}2\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{ae}1\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{ae}8\) 15.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{g}3\)

15.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5?!\) is not a secure blockade. After 15...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{a}6\) 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{h}1\) Barbafera – Avanzi, corr. 1991, Black can play 16...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}7\)!N preparing ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}7\) followed by ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5\).

15...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{a}6\) 16.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{a}3\)

16...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5\)!N

This is my suggested improvement. The aforementioned World Championship encounter continued: 16...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}7\) 17.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{b}4\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}4\) 18.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xe}5\) 19.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xe}5\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}7\) 20.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{g}3\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}5\)

The game is balanced as White has pressure against the black centre. 21.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}3\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}4\)?! (21...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{b}5\) is better, and may be followed by ...\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}6\)) 22.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xf}4\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xf}4\) White is now able to slowly increase the pressure on the centre. 23.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}2\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{g}6\) 24.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}2\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{b}6\) 25.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}e2\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}7\) 26.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}1\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{b}5\) 27.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{c}3\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}7\) 28.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{c}2\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{g}7\) 29.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{b}3\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{h}5\) 30.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}3\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{b}6\) 31.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{c}2\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}7\) 32.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{e}3\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{h}4\) 33.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{f}6\) 34.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{d}4\) \(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{b}7\) 35.a4 Spassky – Petrosian, Moscow (19) 1966. The position may still be objectively okay for Black, but under pressure he played a couple of inaccuracies and Spassky went on to win the endgame.

17.\(\text{\textit{Q}}\text{xe}5\)
What else? 17.b4 \( \text{d}4 \) 18.g5 e4 is even worse for White.

17...\( \text{f}7 \)

Threatening ...\( \text{d}7 \).

18.g2

18.\( \text{h}1 \)? allows: 18...\( \text{e}5 \) 19.\( \text{x}e5 \) \( \text{g}4+ \)

An interesting alternative is: 14.\( \text{g}3 \) a6! Black denies the b5-square to the white minor pieces.

15.b1! This was played in Aleksic – Delizia, Porto San Giorgio 2003, and a couple of later games. The ideas are to play c2-c4 and also to go \( \text{d}2-f3 \) to maintain the blockade on the e5-square. Now Black's best is:

15...\( \text{e}7 \) Black prepares ...\( \text{h}5 \), after which he is at least equal.

14...a6

This is often a useful move, as we have already seen in some of the earlier examples.

15.\( \text{h}1 \)

The other common move is:

15.g3 \( \text{x}e5 \) 16.\( \text{x}e5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 17.b4?!

The beginning of a plan that leads to self-destruction.

Instead 17.\( \text{h}1 \) would transpose to Chandler – Upton in the note to White's 14th move.

17.\( \text{b}6 \)

12.\( \text{w}e7 \) 13.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{ae}8 \) 14.a3

14.\( \text{h}1 \) a6 15.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{x}e5 \) 16.\( \text{x}e5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 17.a3 \( \text{f}7 \)? was fine for Black in Chandler – Upton, West Bromwich 2004. (Another good move is 17...g6, also preparing ...\( \text{d}7 \) – but note that the immediate 17...\( \text{d}7 \) 18.\( \text{h}5 \)! is not so good.)
Chapter 12 – The Steinitz Variation

18...b5?
The calm 18...h1 was called for, though Black can reply 18...g6 intending 19.f4 d7. 18...axb5 19.exb5 xb5 20.exb5
Despite the fact that the rook on e8 is hanging, Black is now able to punish his opponent for neglecting the important e4-square.
20...e4!
Suddenly the f2-pawn is attacked three times.
21.g3
After 21.ex8 fx2 22.fx2 xf2† 23.h1 xe1 24.xe1 xe8 White is a pawn down with a horrid position.
21...d8 22.d3
22...xg3 23.hxg3 f6→
Schneider – Ulibin, Biel 2004. Black followed up by doubling on the f-file, and the opposite-coloured bishops only improved his attacking chances.

15...d4!
With this excellent move Petrosian takes control over the e5-square.
16.xd7 xd7 17.d2 c5 18.f3 h8
18...f7!N with the idea 19.d1 e4 20.xe4 xe4† looks to be a small improvement.
19.d1
½–½
Perhaps Petrosian was trying to avoid ghosts of the past. After 19...a7 20.c3 h5† Black would be in the driver’s seat.

GAME 36

Alexander Zubarev – Dmitry Chuprikov
Alushta 2001

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 d6 4.e5 d7 5.d3 c5 6.dxc5 c6 7.f4 xc5 8.d3 f6 9.exf6 xf6 10.e2
Let us now see what happens when White opts for castling.

10...0–0 11.0–0–0 a6 12.b1 d7 13.e5
13...c8!
As well as looking right on general principles, this allows Black to recapture on c6 with a piece.
14. dxe6
14. \( \text{dxe6} \) Nxd7N 15. \( \text{cxe6} \) dxe6 is not at all bad for Black, who plans ...\( \text{e7} \) followed by ...e5 sooner or later. White does not have enough pressure on the central pawn duo.

14...\( \text{dxe6} \)

The rook is quite useful here, as the bishop is free to be redeployed with ...\( \text{e8} \) and either ...\( \text{g6} \) or ...\( \text{h5} \).

15. \( \text{e5} \)
15. \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{a3} \)! 16. \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{b6} \) 17. \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{c6} \) creates weaknesses around the white king.

15...\( \text{e8} \)!

Making room for the knight to go to d7.

16. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 17. \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{f6} \)!

Powerful play by Black as now the threat of ...\( \text{a3} \) is strong.

18. \( \text{f2} \) \( \text{w2} \) 19. \( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 20. \( \text{al} \) \( \text{b5} \)

White is in an extremely uncomfortable position, and he fails to put up much resistance.

21. \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b4} \) 22. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e5} \) 23. \( \text{c3!?} \) \( \text{x} \) \( \text{d3} \) 24. \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 25. \( \text{x} \) \( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{d4} \) 26. \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{f8} \) 27. \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 28. \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{a4} \) 29. \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 30. \( \text{d2} \)

30...\( \text{xa2} \)!

White resigned in view of 31. \( \text{xa2} \) \( \text{d1} \) 32. \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{c2} \) 33. \( \text{a3} \) \( \text{d3} \) when mate is only a couple of moves away.

0–1

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined two lines after 3. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 4. \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{d7} \).

A) \( \text{g4} \) cannot be critical, even though Petrosian got into trouble against Gurgenidze back in 1963. We propose an improvement on that game with ...\( \text{h5}!\). If you remember this move then you should never have any problems.

B) \( \text{f3} \) is more serious and we should expect to face it more often. After 5...\( \text{c5} \) 6. \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{c6} \) 7. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 8. \( \text{d3} \) we play the typical 8...\( \text{f6} \) 9. \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \), after which White can castle on either side.

Petrosian lost a crucial game to Spassky in their 1966 World Championship match after 10.0–0, but seven years later he more than equalized against Ljubojevic – we analysed this in detail in Game 35. Black’s main idea is to gain control over the e5-square, and for this he uses some standard devices such as the ...\( \text{g6} \) and ...\( \text{h5} \) manoeuvre, or the ...\( \text{xe5} \) and ...\( \text{c6} \) idea, intending to play ...\( \text{f6-d7} \) after first preventing ...\( \text{h5} \) with either ...\( \text{g6} \) or ...\( \text{f7} \).

If White castles queenside then it is better to place the rook on c8 instead and organize a queenside assault. Game 36 provided a good example of this.
Chapter 13

5.\( \text{d}e2 \)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\( \text{c}c3 \text{f}6 \) 4.e5 \( \text{fd}7 \) 5.\( \text{d}e2 \text{c}5 \) 6.c3 \( \text{d}c6 \)

A) 7.f4 \( \text{wb}6 \) 8.\( \text{d}f3 \) \( \text{f}6 \)

A1) 9.g3 cxd4 10.\( \text{d}exd4 \)

10.cxd4 – Game 37

A2) 9.a3 \( \text{e}7 \) 10.b4

10.h4 – Game 38

B) 7.\( \text{d}f3 \)!

Game 37 Ray Robson – Georg Meier, Lubbock 2010
Game 38 Ove Hartvig – Stellan Brynell, Helsingor 2011
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Everything is blocked on the kingside, so is Black okay? (page 231)

Can you find White’s next two moves? (page 232)

Can you find a typical move with a clear idea in mind? (page 238)

How should Black prove that his position is okay? (page 234)

Can you suggest a logical move for Black? (page 240)

White has a nice idea to prove some advantage. Can you find it? (page 231)

Black has a fine move to challenge the white centre. (page 236)

How should Black respond to the threat to his knight? (page 241)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 Qf6 4.e5 Qfd7 5.Qce2

Pedersen calls this line the Shirow/Anand Variation as it was the Latvian super-GM who helped this variation to become popular in the 1990s, and later he found himself defending the black side against Anand in a series of games. Of course, the French is an opening with a rich history and in fact this line can be traced back to one of the first unofficial World Championship matches between McDonnell and La Bourdonnais in 1834! Later Steinitz, Anderssen and Tarrasch played this line sporadically. Much later the multiple-time Danish Champion Jens Enevoldsen used it consistently, and then Anand started playing it towards the end of the 1980s.

White is playing in similar style to the Tarrasch line 3.Qd2 Qf6 4.e5 Qd7 5.f4. In that line White's concept is to defend his strong centre with Qd3 and, if permitted, finish developing his kingside with Qd3 and Qe2. The present variation has one clear drawback, as the light-squared bishop is blocked by the knight on e2.

5...c5 6.c3

6.f4 Qc6 7.Qf3 is playable, but after 7...Qb6 White has nothing better than 8.c3 transposing to variation A below.

6...Qc6

Now White must choose between the traditional A) 7.f4 and the trendy B) 7.Qf3.

A) 7.f4 Qb6

This is the most common way to play for Black, and the move I am recommending. I considered a couple of other options but eventually rejected them. I will include a few fragments of my analysis so you can see where the problems lie.

7...Qe7

This flexible move was recommended by Neil McDonald in How to Play Against 1.e4. 8.Qf3 0-0 9.a3 a5 10.Qeg1!? Qxd4 10...f6 11.Qd3 is dangerous for Black. 11.cxd4 Qb6 12.Qd3 f5 This blunts the power of the bishop on d3, but gives White a clear-cut plan to attack with g2-g4.

13.Qe2 a4 14.Qc3 Qd7 15.0-0 Qa5 16.Qc2

16...Qac4N

16...Qe8 17.Qh1 Qac4 18.Qg1 Qc8 19.Qe1 Qh8 occurred in Paetz - Peng, Ekaterinburg 2006, and now McDonald favours the immediate 20.g4N when White indeed has dangerous attacking potential. The text move was recommended by McDonald. The idea is to transfer the bishop to g6 to help the defence against White's intended g2-g4. Although this may indeed
improve on the above game, Black’s task is still not joyful after:
17...h1 g8 18.g1 d7 19.h3 g6 20.h2
White can slowly improve his position with e2, b1, d2-e1 getting ready for the right time to strike with g2-g4. In the meantime I am not sure what Black is supposed to be doing.

7...b5!?
This active move has a certain appeal, but I was unable to make it work the way I wanted. I will show you a remarkable game between Anand and Shirov in which both players were able to use a computer.

8.a3!
White should slow down Black’s queenside advance.

8...cxd4
I checked several other moves but found no route to equality.

9.exd4 exd4 10.cxd4 b4 11.a4!?
11.f3!? is a good alternative, for instance:
11...bxa3 12.bxa3 a6 13.axa6 a5†
14.d2 xa6 15.c2 xe2† 16.xe2†
Barsky – Castaneda, Russia 1993.

11.a5
11...a5 12.f3 e7 13.d3 a6 was recommended by McDonald, but 14.xa6N
xa6 15.0–0 0–0 16.d3 c6 17.f5±

12.d2 e7
12...a6 can be met by 13.axa6 xa6
14.e2± aiming for a good endgame.

13.f3 0–0 14.b5!
A fine move which hinders Black’s further development. It induces either the pawn to a6 or the knight to b6, both of which are undesirable for Black.

14...b6 15.b3 a6 16.axa6 xa6 17.a5!
 d7 18.e2! b8 19.f2 xe2† 20.xe2
c6 21.hc1 fc8 22.a2 c7 23.ac2 ac8 24.a6±

24.f8
24...f5!? 25.exf6 gxf6 26.g4 f7 is another defensive try.

25.g4 e8 26.f5 d7 27.f4 g5?
27...g6! is offered by McDonald as Black’s best defence, and there is no clear win ahead.

28.e3 h6 29.f6 f8 30.d3 a5 31.xc7†
xc7 32.xc7† xc7
Nowadays my Houdini takes about one and a half seconds to suggest this sacrifice, though it would have taken the engines much longer back in 2000.

33...\textbf{xg}5!! 34.\textbf{xe}5 \textbf{xb}3 35.h4 \textbf{a}1 36.\textbf{c}1 \textbf{b}3 37.\textbf{e}3 \textbf{a}5 38.g5 \textbf{c}4 39.\textbf{c}1 1-0 Anand - Shirov, Leon (Advanced Chess) 2000.

Having seen the type of scenario that Black should avoid, we now return to 7...\textbf{wb}6.

Another popular line continues 8...\textbf{e}7 9.g3 0-0 10.\textbf{h}3 \textbf{cxd}4 11.\textbf{cxd}4 \textbf{f}6 12.\textbf{f}f1! but I was unable to find equality here.

Instead Black should start immediate counterplay and hold off moving the f8-bishop for now, as it is not yet clear if it should go to e7 or give a check from b4. At this point White can choose between A1) 9.g3 and A2) 9.a3.

\textbf{A1) 9.g3 \textbf{cxd}4 10.\textbf{exd}4?}

10.cxd4 is examined in Game 37. The text move is a tricky option that demands close attention.

10...\textbf{fxe}5!

This is the correct move order.

10...\textbf{xd}4 11.\textbf{cxd}4 \textbf{fxe}5 12.\textbf{xe}5! \textbf{b}4\dagger 13.\textbf{f}2! is annoyingly better for White, who has scored an impressive 80% from this position in practice. 13...\textbf{e}7 (13...0-0 14.\textbf{g}2= Psakhis – Dizdar, Zagreb 1993) 14.\textbf{g}2 \textbf{b}8 15.\textbf{c}3 \textbf{c}6 16.\textbf{f}1= N. Kosintseva – Edouard, Cap d’Agde 2010.

11.\textbf{fxe}5

11.\textbf{xe}6?! concedes Black the initiative after: 11...\textbf{c}5! (11...\textbf{e}4? 12.\textbf{fd}4 \textbf{f}6 is only equal, for example 13.\textbf{b}3 \textbf{xd}4 14.\textbf{xd}4 \textbf{c}5= Wizard – White, email 1994.) 12.\textbf{xf}8 \textbf{g}4\dagger 13.\textbf{d}7 \textbf{xd}7 14.h3 Mrdja – Stella, Cesenatico 2012. At this point the strongest continuation is 14...\textbf{xf}3!N 15.\textbf{xf}3 0-0-0\rightarrow intending ...\textbf{xf}4 and ...\textbf{he}8.
11...\textit{d}c5!
This is the only move that gives Black satisfactory chances. Now White's strong outpost on d4 is balanced by his weak e5-pawn and Black's potential outpost on e4.

After 11...\textit{d}c5?! 12.\textit{d}xe6! \textit{d}xe5 13.\textit{d}xc5! \textit{g}4 it may seem that White is in trouble, but he has a cunning resource:

14.\textit{d}xe5! \textit{xd}1 15.\textit{ed}7! \textit{d}f3 If the queen moves, White will take on d1 and be happy with three minor pieces for the queen. 16.\textit{xb}6 \textit{xb}6 17.\textit{e}6! \textit{d}d7 18.\textit{g}1 \textit{xe}6 19.\textit{e}3+ Ploenes – Herrmann, corr. 2001. White has the bishop pair and much the better pawn structure.

12.\textit{h}3
12.\textit{b}5 \textit{e}7 13.0–0 0–0 14.\textit{g}5 was Turko – Mende, email 2005, and now 14...h6N 15.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7= is fine for Black.

12.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}4 leads nowhere special for White, for instance: 13.\textit{c}2 \textit{d}7 14.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}5 15.0–0 0–0 16.\textit{xe}4 \textit{d}xe4 17.\textit{xe}4

17...\textit{xd}4 18.\textit{xd}4 (18.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}7 gives Black compensation for his pawn due to his excellent pair of bishops. White's best seems to be 19.d5 \textit{exd}5 20.\textit{xd}5† but after 20...\textit{e}6 he has no advantage whatsoever.) 18...\textit{c}6 19.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xb}2 20.\textit{b}4 \textit{xb}4 21.\textit{xb}4 \textit{xf}3 The endgame was level in Wunderlich – Gaujens, email 2004.

12...\textit{c}7 13.0–0 0–0 14.\textit{g}5
Luther had already faced 14.\textit{e}2 in a previous game, which continued: 14...\textit{xd}4 15.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xf}1† 16.\textit{xf}1 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{g}2 \textit{h}8
18.\texttt{\textit{\&}e3 \textit{\&}c7} 19.\texttt{\textit{\&}g1 \textit{\&}f8} Black was at least equal in Atlas – Luther, Austria 2001; the e5-pawn is a constant source of worry for White, whereas the e6-pawn is solidly defended.

14...\texttt{\textit{\&}d7} 15.\texttt{\textit{\&}xe7} \texttt{\textit{\&}xe7} 16.\texttt{\textit{\&}e2 \textit{\&}e4} 17.\texttt{\textit{\&}h1}

17.\texttt{\textit{\&}e3} was an attempted improvement in Koller – Wahedi, Marburg 2006. White’s idea is that 17...\texttt{\textit{\&}f5} 18.\texttt{\textit{\&}f5} exf5 18.\texttt{\textit{\&}xb6} spoils Black’s structure. However, with 17...\texttt{\textit{\&}c6!} N Black avoids any problems.

17...\texttt{\textit{\&}f5}! 18.\texttt{\textit{\&}xf5} exf5

This was Koller – Luther, Boeblingen 2005. Black had a good position and went on launch a successful attack involving ...\texttt{\textit{\&}ae8}, ...\texttt{\textit{\&}h6} and a timely ...\texttt{\textit{\&}f4}!

\textbf{GAME 37}

\textbf{Ray Robson – Georg Meier}

\textit{Lubbock 2010}

\texttt{1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{\textit{\&}c3} \texttt{\textit{\&}f6} 4.e5 \texttt{\textit{\&}fd7} 5.\texttt{\textit{\&}ce2} c5 6.c3 \texttt{\textit{\&}c6} 7.f4 \texttt{\textit{\&}b6} 8.\texttt{\textit{\&}f3} f6 9.g3 cx\texttt{\textit{\&}d4} 10.cx\texttt{\textit{\&}d4}}

This has been much more popular than 10.\texttt{\textit{\&}xd4}, but it has scored poorly and is considered fine for Black.

10...\texttt{\textit{\&}xe5} 11.\texttt{\textit{\&}xe5} \texttt{\textit{\&}b4} \uparrow 12.\texttt{\textit{\&}c3}

12.\texttt{\textit{\&}d2?} is already a serious error: 12...0–0 13.\texttt{\textit{\&}g2} (13.\texttt{\textit{\&}b3} \texttt{\textit{\&}xf3}! 14.\texttt{\textit{\&}xf3} \texttt{\textit{\&}dxe5} 15.\texttt{\textit{\&}xe5} \texttt{\textit{\&}xg2} 16.\texttt{\textit{\&}xd2} \texttt{\textit{\&}xb2} \uparrow and 13.\texttt{\textit{\&}b4} \texttt{\textit{\&}xd2} 14.\texttt{\textit{\&}f2} \texttt{\textit{\&}dxe5} 15.\texttt{\textit{\&}xe5} \texttt{\textit{\&}f3} \uparrow 16.\texttt{\textit{\&}xf3} \texttt{\textit{\&}e4} \uparrow are both winning for Black.) 13...\texttt{\textit{\&}dxe5}! 14.\texttt{\textit{\&}xe5} \texttt{\textit{\&}xe5} \rightarrow

White is clearly struggling; from almost fifty games in my database he has scored a miserable 12\%. One practical example should suffice: 15.\texttt{\textit{\&}f4} \texttt{\textit{\&}e3} \uparrow 16.\texttt{\textit{\&}f1} \texttt{\textit{\&}xd2} 17.\texttt{\textit{\&}e5} \texttt{\textit{\&}xe5} 18.\texttt{\textit{\&}xd2} g5 19.\texttt{\textit{\&}e1} \texttt{\textit{\&}f6} 20.\texttt{\textit{\&}e2} gxf4 21.\texttt{\textit{\&}h1} e5 22.\texttt{\textit{\&}xd5} \uparrow \texttt{\textit{\&}h8} 23.gxf4 \texttt{\textit{\&}h3} 24.\texttt{\textit{\&}g1} \texttt{\textit{\&}ad8} 25.\texttt{\textit{\&}g3} \texttt{\textit{\&}e6} 26.\texttt{\textit{\&}d3} \texttt{\textit{\&}f5} 27.\texttt{\textit{\&}f3} \texttt{\textit{\&}g4} 0–1 Slobodjaniuk – Moskalenko, Alushta 1994.

12...0–0 13.\texttt{\textit{\&}f4}
13...dxe5!

If this amazing possibility was not available, White's central superiority would offer him a small advantage. As things stand, he has to play accurately to hold the draw.

14.\textit{c}xe5

Vitiugov points out that 14.\textit{d}xe5? is a mistake due to 14...h5 15.\textit{e}xe5 \textit{xc}3\# 16.bxc3 \textit{b}2 17.\textit{f}4 \textit{xc}3\# 18.\textit{f}2 g5 when White is in trouble.

14.dxe5 is met by 14...h5 attacking the b2-pawn. After 15.\textit{d}2 d4= Black regains the piece with a balanced position.

14...dxe5 15.\textit{c}xe5 \textit{xc}3\# 16.bxc3 \textit{b}2

17.\textit{c}1

There is nothing else, but now Black is able to force an endgame with an extra pawn.

17...\textit{f}2+ 18.\textit{d}1 \textit{xf}1\# 19.\textit{xf}1 \textit{xf}1\#

White would love to invade on the 7th rank.

22...\textit{b}8! 23.\textit{f}7

If White does not force the rooks off, Black will activate his pieces with chances to press with the extra pawn.

23...\textit{b}7 24.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xb}7 25.\textit{h}4 \textit{f}8 26.\textit{g}4 \textit{e}7 27.a3 \textit{d}6 28.\textit{g}5=

White has succeeded in building a simple fortress. The knight cannot be dislodged from e5, White's pawns cannot be attacked and the black king cannot penetrate.

28...\textit{c}6 29.\textit{c}2 \textit{a}4+ 30.\textit{b}2 \textit{d}1 31.\textit{c}1 \textit{h}5 32.\textit{b}2 \textit{d}1 33.\textit{c}1 \textit{h}5 34.\textit{b}2 \textit{d}1 ½–½

A2) 9.\textit{a}3

This not only stops a later ...\textit{b}4\+, but also plans to take control of more space with b2-b4. On the other hand, it delays White's development. The German player Emil Schallop (probably best known today for the solid defence to the
King's Gambit that bears his name) was first to play this move. In a similar position from the Tarrasch Variation (with the e2-knight standing on g1 and Black's pawn being back on f7), this set-up is considered critical, so we should pay it close attention.

9...\textit{e}7!

Now that the check on b4 has been ruled out, this is the best square for the bishop.

10.b4

This is the most popular move nowadays.

10.h4 was the choice of Anand in his 2000 FIDE World Championship final against Shirov, and it contributed to his success. Nevertheless, we shall see that it is Black who can achieve the more comfortable game – for the details see Game 38.

10.g3?! 0–0 11.d3 cxd4 12.cxd4 fxe5 13.fxe5 was Schallop – Paulsen, Leipzig 1877, and here Paulsen sacrificed an exchange in modern style for an overwhelming position.

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10...\textit{e}7

Now that the check on b4 has been ruled out, this is the best square for the bishop.

10.b4

This is the most popular move nowadays.
12.h4 transposes to 10.h4 0-0 11.b4 cxd4 12.cxd4 – see the note to White’s 11th move in the next game.

12.\(\text{c}3?!\) fxe5 13.dxe5 \(\text{d}xe5!\) 14.fxe5 \(\text{d}xe5\) 15.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}7\) was agreed drawn in Smirin – Psakhis, Las Vegas 1999, but Black’s position looks preferable to me. A sample continuation is: 16.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{xf}3\)† 17.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{ac}8\) 19.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{c}7\)†

12.\(\text{b}1\) a5 13.b5 a4 14.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}xe5\) 15.fxe5 fxe5 16.\(\text{d}3\) was Shirov – M. Gurevich, Munich 1993, and the players agreed that 16...exd4!N 17.\(\text{lx}d4\) \(\text{e}5\) would now give Black the advantage.

We have been following the game Guerra Mendez – Herraz Hidalgo, Montcada 2012. At this point Black could have executed a familiar sacrifice:

12...\(\text{b}7\)!

The idea behind this move is twofold: first of all Black increases his firepower against the e5-point, and secondly the positional idea of ...a6, ...b5 and ...\(\text{b}6\) becomes available.

13.\(\text{c}3\)

13.\(\text{c}2?!\) b5! 14.\(\text{ex}f6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 15.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 16.\(\text{d}3\) a5† was another success story for Black in Sax – Luther, Germany 1993.

13...fxe5

13...a6 could now be met by 14.b5∞.

14.dxe5 a5 15.b5

15...\(\text{c}xe5!N\) 16.\(\text{f}xe5\) \(\text{c}xe5\) 17.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xe}5\)†

Black has full compensation and White must play accurately to maintain the balance.

18.\(\text{e}2\)

18.\(\text{c}e3\) \(\text{f}6\) 19.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) 20.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xf}3\) reaches a double-edged endgame where I slightly prefer Black.

18...\(\text{c}5\)

Houdini suggests that White can maintain equality with the following line:

19.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{d}4\) 20.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.0–0–0 \(\text{xc}3\) 22.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{ac}8\) 23.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{g}5\)†
24.\text{e}e1?  
24.\text{c}c2 \text{e}5 gives White nothing better than 25.\text{d}d2 repeating. The text move keeps the game going, but is not much of a winning attempt.

24...\text{xb}5 25.\text{xb}5 \text{xc}3 26.\text{f}1 \text{e}3 27.\text{xf}8\# \text{xf}8 28.\text{f}1 \text{e}4 =

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{game38}
\caption{Game 38}
\end{figure}

Ove Hartvig – Stellan Brynell  
Helsingor 2011

1.e4 \text{e}6 2.d4 \text{d}5 3.\text{c}c3 \text{f}6 4.e5 \text{fd}7 5.\text{ce}2 \text{c}5 6.c3 \text{c}6 7.f4 \text{b}6 8.\text{f}3 \text{e}7 9.a3 \text{f}6 10.h4  
This is a typical idea in such positions. White gains space and prepares to activate his rook along the third rank.

10...0–0 11.\text{h}3  
White can also advance the b-pawn here:  
11.b4 cxd4 12.cx\text{d}4  
12.\text{exd}4?! hasn't been tried for a good reason: 12...\text{cxe}5! 13.fxe5 fxe5\#.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{board1}
\caption{Board 1}
\end{figure}

12...\text{c}7!  
We have seen this move in a similar situation, though it has rarely been played in this exact position.  
12...a5 is considered to be the main line, but many games after 13.b5 \text{xb}5 14.\text{c}3 \text{b}6 15.\text{b}1 have shown that White has definite compensation for his pawn deficit.

13.\text{h}3  
What else? White cannot play 13.\text{c}3? as the knight will be hanging after 13...f\text{xe}5 14.fxe5 \text{cxe}5.

13...b6?!  
13...b5?! is more typical, though the text move is fine as well.

14.b5  
Otherwise ...a6 would be an idea.

14...\text{a}5 15.\text{a}2 \text{b}7 16.\text{c}2 \text{c}4 17.\text{eg}1  
We have been following Lagarde – Shahinyan, Batumi 2010, and here Black should play:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{board2}
\caption{Board 2}
\end{figure}

17...\text{a}6!\#  
Black opens the a-file for his rook to enter the game.
11...\texttt{a5}!
A much praised move which has been played by Bareev and Psakhis, and was used by Shirov in his match against Anand.

11...\texttt{c5}?!?
This was Shirov's choice six months prior to the aforementioned match.

12.b4 \texttt{cxb4} 13.b3!
12...\texttt{a4} followed by ...\texttt{a5}, so naturally White stops it.

12...\texttt{d7} 16.\texttt{e3 cxd4} 17.\texttt{xd4 a4} 18.b4 \texttt{a7} gave Black some advantage in Smirin – Psakhis, Las Vegas (rapid) 1999, but I prefer the text move as there are certain tactical threats against e5 and c3.

13.\texttt{eg1}
There is no better way to develop the f1-bishop.

13...\texttt{g3}? Klimentov – Danin, Smolensk 2005, can be strongly met by: 13...\texttt{cxd4}!N 14.\texttt{cxd4} h4 15.\texttt{f3} \texttt{e5}! 16.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xf3} followed by ...\texttt{xe5} capturing the rook on a1.

13...\texttt{b6}!
White has gone to a lot of trouble to develop his f1-bishop, but Black is now ready to exchange it with ...\texttt{a6}!

Black can also go for the familiar piece sacrifice:

13...\texttt{a4} 14.b4 \texttt{f5} 15.\texttt{e5} \texttt{dxe5} 16.\texttt{dxe5} \texttt{f6} 17.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xe5}! 18.\texttt{xe5}+ picking up the rook on a1.

13...\texttt{c7}! (18...\texttt{a6}?! 19.\texttt{d1} proved highly problematic for Black in Anand – Shirov, New Delhi/Teheran 2000, and some later games.) 19.\texttt{c5} \texttt{d6} 20.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xb4} 21.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{xf3} 22.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xb4}+ 23.\texttt{d1} \texttt{d6} This was eventually drawn in Patterson – Morley, email 2008, but I would prefer to play Black in practice.
Chapter 13 – 5. \( \text{dxe2} \)

14. \( \text{e2} \)

After 14. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 15. \( \text{x}a6 \) \( \text{xa6} \) 16. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 17. \( \text{a}2 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 18. \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 19. \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 20. a4 \( \text{xa}6 \) Black was dominating in Nerzer – Picard, Mulhouse 2006.

14. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 15. \( \text{xa}6 \) \( \text{xa}6 \) 16. \( \text{xf6} \) was Hoogervorst – Vermeulen, email 2005, and now Black should play: 16 ... \( \text{e}6 \) 17. \( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 18. \( \text{xa}6 \)

With his strong bishop exchanged, White cannot hope for much from this position. Black’s chances are clearly higher, and over the next few moves he increases his advantage.

16. \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 17. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 18. \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 19. \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 20. \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 21. \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 22. \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 23. \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{b}6 \)

Black penetrates the white position and White has no visible counterplay.

24. \( \text{g}5 \)

A tactical oversight in a difficult situation.

24 ... \( \text{x}g5 \) 25. \( \text{x}g5 \) \( \text{dxe}5 \) 26. \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{d}3 \) 26 ... \( \text{xd}4 \) 27. \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) threatening \( ... \text{d}3 \) was quicker.

27. \( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{cxd}3 \) 28. \( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \)

Black is material up and has the attack.

29. \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 30. \( \text{xb}8 \) \( \text{xb}8 \) 31. \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 32. \( \text{a}6 \) \( \text{c}8 \)

32 ... \( \text{f}6 \) would be crushing, as White has no way of escaping a deadly discovered attack. The game continuation is still winning though, and despite a few further inaccuracies on both sides, Black made his extra exchange count.

33. \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 34. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 35. \( \text{x}a5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 36. \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 37. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 38. \( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 39. \( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{gxh}6 \) 40. \( \text{xh}6 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 41. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{xa}3 \) 42. \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 43. \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 44. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{a}1 \) 45. \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{e}3 \) 46. \( \text{x}e3 \) \( \text{h}2 \)

0–1

B) 7. \( \text{f}3 \)
This move has attracted a lot of attention in recent years, but it is no more than a practical way for White to avoid lots of theory. There is a popular variation of the Tarrasch Variation where White also arranges his knights on e2 and f3, but in that line he already has his bishop on d3. In the present case he must play creatively just to develop his kingside.

7...\textit{b6}? 
I find this to be the simplest move for Black.

8.g3
8.h4 cxd4 9.cxd4 f6 10.exf6  \textit{xf6} 11.\textit{c3 d6} is fine for Black.

8.a3
If White can get in b2-b4 then at least he won’t have to worry about a weakness on b2.
8...a5 9.\textit{f4 a4} 10.h4N
10.g3 was seen in Baron – Pozdnjakov, Paris 2005, but the text move seems like a better try.
10...h6 11.\textit{e2 c7} 12.\textit{h3}

12...\textit{b3}!
This is the right moment to offer the exchange of queens. White has no good way to avoid the swap.
13.\textit{d3 cxd4} 14.cxd4 \textit{xd3} 15.\textit{xd3 0–0} 16.\textit{d2 b6}
White has slightly more space, but Black has secured some useful outposts on the queenside.

After ...\textit{c4} or even ...\textit{a5} his plan will be to activate his light-squared bishop, and his queenside counterplay gives him at least equal chances.

8...\textit{cxd4} 9.\textit{cxd4 f6}
This provides Black with dynamic counterplay.

10.exf6
10.\textit{h3}?! \textit{b4}? 11.\textit{f1 fxe5} 12.\textit{xe6}?! e4 13.\textit{g5 h6} 14.\textit{f7 f8} 15.a3 \textit{c7} 16.\textit{f4 f6}+ Maljutin – Ulibin, Jurmala 1989.

10...\textit{xf6}
For a thorough analysis of positions featuring this pawn structure, I refer you to the forthcoming third volume of Emanuel Berg’s \textit{Grandmaster Repertoire} series on the French Defence. For our purposes, it is enough to say that with White’s bishop being denied the optimal d3-square, Black has a more comfortable version of the analogous Tarrasch line.

11.\textit{g2}
11.\textit{h3} is well met by: 11...\textit{b4}? 12.\textit{f1 e5}N 13.\textit{xc8 ecx8} 14.\textit{exe5 cxe5} 15.dxe5 \textit{g4} 16.\textit{d4}
Chapter 13 – 5.\textit{\textsc{ce}2}

16...h5!\textsuperscript{+} Black's idea is simply to castle, and after 17.h3 \textit{\textsc{dx}f2!} 18.\textit{\textsc{dx}f2} \textit{\textsc{ce}4} 19.\textit{\textsc{g}g2} \textit{\textsc{xd}4} 20.\textit{\textsc{a}a4\textsuperscript{+}} \textit{\textsc{c}c6} 21.\textit{\textsc{xc}6\textsuperscript{+}} \textit{\textsc{bx}c6} Black's position is slightly preferable due to his active pieces and better pawn structure.

14.\textit{\textsc{xc}2\textsuperscript{†}} Lukin – Kruppa, St Petersburg 1999, should be met by 14...0–0N 15.0–0 \textit{\textsc{d}d7\textsuperscript{†} intending ...\textit{\textsc{c}c8} with the initiative.

11...\textit{\textsc{b}b4\textsuperscript{†}}

This is the best way to exploit the bishop’s placement on g2 instead of d3. In the Tarrasch line Black usually places this bishop on d6, but here White would be well placed to exchange it with a subsequent \textit{\textsc{f}f4}.

12.\textit{\textsc{d}d2} \textit{\textsc{xd}2\textsuperscript{†}} 13.\textit{\textsc{xd}2} \textit{\textsc{ce}4}

Once again exploiting the absence of the bishop from d3.

14.\textit{\textsc{c}c1}

The queen should retreat here in order to come to e3 later.

14...0–0N

14...\textit{\textsc{d}d7} 15.0–0 0–0 16.\textit{\textsc{e}e3} \textit{\textsc{ae}8} was approximately balanced in Bex – Vigh, Biel 1995, but I found a more enterprising way for Black to develop counterplay.

15.0–0 e5?! 16.\textit{\textsc{dx}e5} \textit{\textsc{g}g4}

Black obtains good counterplay, for instance:

17.\textit{\textsc{f}f4} \textit{\textsc{xf}3} 18.\textit{\textsc{xf}3} \textit{\textsc{xe}5}

Black has excellent piece activity with pressure against the f2-pawn.

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined 5.\textit{\textsc{ce}2}. This variation shares similar ideas with the Tarrasch line 3.\textit{\textsc{d}d2} \textit{\textsc{f}f6}, but Black is in better shape here as the knight on e2 blocks the natural development of the bishop to d3, and this gives Black time to prepare his counterplay.

After 5...c5 6.c3 \textit{\textsc{c}c6} White has two main options.

Against A) 7.f4 the ideas are quite well worked out. Black’s best is 7...\textit{\textsc{b}b6} 8.\textit{\textsc{f}f3} \textit{\textsc{f}f6!}, after which there are two main branches.
After A1) 9.g3 Black is advised to play 9...cxd4! 10.cxd4 fxe5 11.fxe5 \( \text{b4} \)† 12.\( \text{c3} \) 0–0 13.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{dxe5} \)! White can try to avoid this with 10.\( \text{xd4} \), but Luther’s 10...fxe5 11.fxe5 \( \text{c5} \)! is a good solution for Black.

A2) 9.a3 is met by 9...\( \text{e7} \), after which 10.b4 cxd4 11.cxd4 0–0 gives Black an active position. Here ...a5 is threatened and after 12.\( \text{d3} \) the idea of 12...\( \text{c7} \)! is excellent for Black, allowing him to play ...a6 and ...b5, or to sacrifice on e5 under better circumstances. Alternatively, Anand’s 10.h4 0–0 11.\( \text{h3} \) is effectively met by 11...a5! 12.b3 \( \text{c7} \)!, intending ...b6 followed by ...\( \text{a6} \).

B) 7.\( \text{f3} \) is trendy these days, but Black can play the same set-up with ...\( \text{b6} \) and ...f6, intending ...cxd4 followed by a check on b4, and he stands absolutely fine.
Chapter 14

Introduction to 7...a6

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 f6 4.e5 f7 5.f4 c5 6.f3 c6 7.e3

A) 7...cxd4
B) 7...e7
C) 7...a6!
   C1) 8.e2
   C2) 8.d2 b5
       C21) 9.d3
       C22) 9.g3
       C23) 9.f2
       C24) 9.e2 e7! 10.0–0 0–0 11.a3
           11.h1!? – Game 39
       C25) 9.d1!

Game 39  Sergey Karjakin – Magnus Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2010
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Does Black have an effective attacking try?  
(page 250)

What is Black's best move in this theoretical position?  
(page 255)

White has a way to prove that Black's position is problematic.  
(page 248)

Evaluate Black's chances and propose a move for him.  
(page 251)

Carlsen played an accurate move here. What was it?  
(page 259)

Can Black play 18...f6, or should he exchange bishops first?  
(page 249)

Black equalizes by following a typical and effective plan.  
(page 254)

White intends Wg4 with an attack. How Black should react?  
(page 263)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 Qf6 4.e5 Qfd7 5.f4

This move introduces the main line of the Steinitz Variation. White gains space and defends the e5-pawn securely, while planning to control d4 with his pieces.

5...c5 6.Qf3 Qc6 7.Qxc3

This move was played by Alekhine once, but it was Boleslavsky’s contribution that gave rise to its popularity.

The only really serious alternative is 7.Qe2 Qb6!? 8.c3, transposing to line A of Chapter 13. Other moves can be handled easily:

7.Qe2? cxd4 8.Qxd4

8...Qdxe5! Every French player should have this trick in his arsenal. The latest example in my database continued: 9.Qxe6 (after 9.fxe5 Qh4† Black goes a pawn up) 9...Qxe6 10.Qxe5 Qc5! 11.Qf3 Qxe5 12.Qxd5 0–0†

In Kalinina – Paulet, Puerto Madryn 2009, White had avoided material losses, but her king was caught in the centre and soon faced a brutal attack.

Steinitz used another method in his games: 7.dxc5 Qxc5 8.Qd3 f6!

The modern method of attacking the centre.

9.exf6 Qxf6 10.Qe2 0–0 11.Qd2

11...a6!

After 11...e5? 12.fxe5 Qg4 13.0–0–0 Qd4 14.Qe1† Black’s early aggression backfired in Nezhmetdinov – Wade, Bucharest 1954. However, 11...Qd7 and 11...Qd4 are both playable.

12.0–0–0 Qc7†

This was Giorgadze – Dvoretsky, USSR 1967. Black is ready to play ...b5 next and his queenside counterplay is at least as strong as White’s attack on the other side of the board.

After 7.Qe3 we reach a major branching point. My recommendation is 7...a6!, and we will analyse it in detail over this and the following two chapters. Before then, however, I would also like to present some analysis of a few other important lines. This will serve as useful background information to enable the
The reader to understand what type of positions to aim for and what to avoid.

We will analyse A) 7...cxd4 and B) 7...e7 before moving on to the recommended C) 7...a6!.

7...wb6 is obviously a critical try, but the latest evidence suggests that it is not quite working: 8.\( \text{c4} \) w\( \text{a5} \)\( ^{+} \) 9.c3 cxd4 (9...c4 is another idea, but after 10.b4 \( \text{xb4} \) 11.cxb4 \( \text{xb4} \)\( ^{+} \) 12.\( \text{f2} \) White's chances are higher.) 10.b4 \( \text{xb4} \) 11.cxb4 \( \text{xb4} \)\( ^{+} \) 12.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xd2} \)\( ^{+} \) 13.\( \text{xd2} \)\( ^{+} \)

This position has been known for decades. Black has three pawns for a piece, but the d4-pawn is weak, and modern analysis indicates that Black will struggle to justify his investment. 13...0-0 14.\( \text{d3} \) b5 15.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{b6} \) was thought to give Black hope for a while, but it turns out that 16.0-0 \( \text{c4} \) 17.\( \text{bxc4} \) followed by \( \text{xh7} \)\( ^{+} \) gives White a near-decisive advantage.

A) 7...cxd4 8.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c}5 \)

8...\( \text{b6} \)\( ^{+} \) 9.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 10.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a3} \) 11.\( \text{b5} \) is a slightly risky pawn grab which has recently been championed by Nakamura. I analysed it in some detail and concluded that Black was doing okay, but eventually decided to recommend the 7...a6 line as it leads to more of a positional struggle, rather than one where Black grabs a pawn and has to defend against concrete threats.

9.\( \text{d2} \) 0-0 10.0-0-0 a6

11.\( \text{f2} \)!

I consider this White's most challenging move. The idea is to develop the bishop to d3 without losing touch with the d4-square, while the queen may switch to the kingside at the right moment via h4.

11.h4 has been the most popular move, planning to activate the rook along the third rank. Black seems to be fine though: 11...\( \text{xd4} \) 12.\( \text{xd4} \) b5 13.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 14.\( \text{b1} \) b4 15.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 16.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{a5} \) 17.b3 \( \text{c6} \) This is the idea behind ...\( \text{b7} \), and we can now see why White replied \( \text{b1} \), so that the a2-pawn is defended. 18.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{b5} \) 19.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c8} \) Black was comfortably equal in Kuipers - Vallejo Pons, Bremen 2012.
11.\( \square b3 \) was developed by the Dutch GM Nijboer, and gained further attention when it was recommended in *Opening for White According to Anand*. An interesting line for Black is: 11...\( \land b4 \) 12.\( \square d3 \) b5 13.g4 \( \Delta a5 \) 14.\( \Delta d4 \) \( \Delta c4 \) 15.\( \land f2 \)

15...a5?! This pawn sac, as played in Gharamian – Ni Hua, Biel 2011, seems like a fine practical try offering Black dangerous counterplay, although White may be able to claim an edge with perfect play. The game has been analysed in depth in *Chess Evolution 4*.

17.g4 was recommended here by Victor Bologan in his *Fit for the French* DVD. This is the kind of position I prefer to avoid defending in practice. One game continued: 17...\( \land xf1 \) 18.\( \land hx f1 \) \( \land f c8 \) 19.h6 g6 20.\( \Delta b1 \) \( \Delta e7 \) 21.d2 \( \Delta a b8 \) 22.f5 Black was in a difficult position in Pascual-Perez – Evans, email 2010.

12.\( \Delta b1 \! \)

This strong prophylactic move is directed against ...f6.

12.\( \Delta d3 \)! is met by 12...f6! 13.\( \Delta x f6 \) \( \Delta x f6 \) 14.h3 (14.\( \Delta f5 \) \( \Delta x e3 \)† 15.\( \Delta x e3 \) d4++) 14...\( \Delta d6 \) 15.\( \Delta h f1 \) \( \Delta d7 \) 16.\( \Delta e 1 \) \( \Delta b4 \) 17.\( \Delta d2 \) and Black held the initiative in Jakovenko – Morozevich, Moscow 2007, with ...b5 and ...\( \Delta c 8 \) coming.

12...\( \Delta x d4 \)

12...f6? now runs into 13.\( \Delta f 5 ! \) exf5

11.\( \land e 7 ! \)

By choosing this square for the queen, Black prevents the plan of \( \Delta d3 \) and \( \Delta h 4 \).

11...\( \Delta x d 4 \) 12.\( \Delta x d 4 \) b5 13.\( \Delta c 3 \) b4 14.\( \Delta a 4 \) a5 15.h4 \( \Delta a 6 \) 16.h5 \( \Delta c 7 \) is another established theoretical variation.
14.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}5+} as the e3-bishop cannot be taken with check.

13.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}4 b5 14.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}d}3}

14...\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}4!}

14...b4?! 15.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}e}2 a5

This natural plan fails to equalize.

16.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{R}}}b5!

White exploits the loose bishop on c5 to force a positional concession: Black must either allow unfavourable exchanges or compromise his position in some other way.

16...\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}4}

16...a4N was proposed by Watson on ChessPublishing as equal for Black, but I cannot agree. After 17.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}7} \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}7 18.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}d}4 \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}7 19.h4} White has a dominant minor piece and attacking chances on the kingside.

17.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}4} \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{B}}b}8

Black tries to avoid the nightmare scenario of a bad bishop against the great knight at d4.

18.f5!

Having used the threat of a long-term positional advantage to induce an undesirable knight retreat from his opponent, Karjakin changes tack and opens the position to exploit his lead in development.

18...exf5 19.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x}f5 \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x}f5

19...\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}xe5 20.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}xd5±

20.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}xf5±

Karjakin – Iljushin, Russia 2008.

15.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}x\texttt{d}4 b4 16.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}e4}

This is the only way to cast doubt on Black’s decision to exchange on d4 on the previous move.

16.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}e2 a5 17.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}e3 \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}a6 18.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}d4 was seen in Kravtsiv – Sharma, Livigno 2012, and here Black looks to be fine after 18...\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}fc8N intending the usual counterplay with ...a4.

16...a5 17.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}d6

This is the critical continuation.

17.h4 \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}a6 18.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}g5 \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}xd3 19.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}xd3 f5 20.exf6 gxf6 21.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}f3 (21.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}h3 \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}c5 followed by ...a4 is fine for Black) 21...\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}c5 22.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}d4 (22.\texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}e3 \texttt{\texttt{\textbf{Q}}}e4! and ...a4! will come next)
This was Bologan’s recommendation for White, based on Al Sayed – Roghani, Dubai 2003, but Vitiugov correctly points out that Black has 22...a4!N, after which he is not worse at all.

17...a6
Intending to continue with ...f6.

18.f5
18...f2N has the idea of meeting ...f6 with ...h4, but Black can instead reply 18...a4! and save the idea of ...f6 for later.

18...a1N xd3! (the immediate: 18...f6?! allows 19.f5!!) 19.xd3 f6 is fine for Black.

18.xd3 19.xd3 f6 20.fxe6

20..xe5!
This is more accurate than 20...xe6 21.xd5 xd5 22.xd5 xe5 23.b3 f6 24.xd1 Zhang Pengxiang – Lou, Hefei 2010, which Vitiugov assesses as slightly better for White.

21.xf6 xe6 22.xd5 xe8
Black has no problems.

B) 7...e7

In recent years, Black has tried to avoid the scenario of the dark-squared blockade by playing this followed by castling, ...b6 and eventually ...f5 (or ...f6). As an added bonus, he sets a trap of sorts, based on the fact that
White’s popular plan of long castling simply does not work; see the note to White’s 9th move for details.

8.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{W}}d2} 0-0 9.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}e2!}
9.0-0-0? is a mistake due to 9...c4! when Black has made a huge practical score. White’s best chance is 10.f5, but after 10...b5! Black’s attack is faster.

9.g3?! b6 10.g2 would be met by the annoying 10...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}a6} preventing castling.

White’s most important alternative is:
9.dxc5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}xc5} 10.0-0-0
This resembles variation A, but here White’s knight is on f3 instead of d4. I am not too enthusiastic about defending this sharp line with Black, as I prefer a safer road when it is available. Having said that, Black is probably not worse.
10...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}a5} 11.hxc5 dxc5 12.h4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}d7} 13.h5?!
13.h3 and 13.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}b1} are two other lines that are approximately balanced. The problem for Black is that a slight inaccuracy can prove harmful, so he must be well prepared.

13...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}ab8} 14.h6 g6 15.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{W}}e3}

15...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}fc8}!
15...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}a4?!} turned out badly in the following game: 16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}xa4} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}xa4} 17.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}b1} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}fc8} 18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}d2} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b}}4} 19.a3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}xc2} 20.axb4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}cl} 21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}xc1} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{W}}a1} 22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}c2} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}c8} 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{W}}c3} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}xc3} 24.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}xc3}

16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}b5} 25.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}d4}+ Svidler – Riazantsev, Russia 2008.
16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}b1}
Black was threatening to win with 16...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}b4} 17.a3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}e4}!
16.a3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}e7}! followed by ...b5 is dangerous for White.

\texttt{\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image1.png}}

16...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}b4}!
With the big threat of ...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{A}}e4}!
17.a3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}xc2}! 18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{D}}xc2} b5
Black had excellent compensation for the piece in Kurnosov – Kotsur, Moscow 2011.

\texttt{\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image2.png}}

9...b6
GM Lars Bo Hansen explains the thinking behind this move in What Would a GM Do. I cannot find a better way to explain Black’s ideas, so I would like to quote him: “In my view ...b6 is much more dynamic because
this little pawn move indirectly influences the battle for the centre. With ...b6, rather than ...a6 and ...b5, White can rarely play dxc5 and then blockade on the dark squares in the centre by putting a knight on d4, because now Black can retake with the b-pawn instead of with a piece. When Black plays ...f6 a few moves later, White's centre will be under attack from two sides."

While this all sounds quite appealing, it turns out that White has a way to safeguard his centre against this two-sided assault. For this reason, I think Black should prefer 9...a6!, with a view to transposing to variation C24 after 10.0-0 b5.

10.\textit{\texttt{d}d1}\!

10.0-0 f5! (10...f6?! 11.dxc5! \textit{\texttt{x}c5} [11...bxc5? 12.\textit{\texttt{x}d}x5!]) 12.exf6 \textit{\texttt{x}f6} 13.\textit{\texttt{a}d}1 \textit{\texttt{b}7} 14.\textit{\texttt{d}d}4 White has a small but clear advantage, and managed to win both games that reached this position.) 11.dxc5 \textit{\texttt{x}c5}! (11...bxc5 again fails to 12.\textit{\texttt{x}d}x5!) Black had a good position and went on to win a fine game in Cabarkapa – Ulibin, Paracin 2012.

The above game worked out well for Black because he was able to combine the ...f5 advance with a knight manoeuvre from c5 to e4. The text move prevents Black from carrying out the same plan. If Black exchanges on d4 now, he will not be able to carry out ...f5 in a favourable way. If Black does not exchange on d4, White will reinforce the d4-pawn with c2-c3, ensuring that a black knight will never travel along the path from c5 to e4.

10...f5

10...f6N 11.c3 is not an improvement for Black. White will castle and then play \textit{\texttt{f}2} and \textit{\texttt{e}3}, with some advantage.

10...\textit{\texttt{b}7} may be met by 11.0-0 or 11.c3.

10...\textit{\texttt{c}xd}4 11.\textit{\texttt{x}d}4 \textit{\texttt{x}d}4 12.\textit{\texttt{x}d}4 reaches a structure that favours White when ...f5 has not been played. 12...\textit{\texttt{b}8} 13.0-0 \textit{\texttt{c}6} 14.\textit{\texttt{c}3} \textit{\texttt{d}7} 15.\textit{\texttt{e}3} b5 16.\textit{\texttt{f}2} \textit{\texttt{a}5} 17.b3± Dembo – Sedina, Rogaska Slatina 2011.

11.c3\!

White secures his centre and ensures that the enemy knight will not reach the e4-square. One practical example continued:

11...a5 12.0-0 \textit{\texttt{a}6} 13.\textit{\texttt{x}a}6 \textit{\texttt{x}a}6 14.c4!

White has the initiative and went on to win in T. Kosintseva – Hou Yifan, Jermuk 2010.

Having discussed the main alternatives, it is now time to focus on the line I am recommending for Black.

C) 7...a6!

Preparing ...b5 immediately has a couple of advantages. For one thing, Black makes it virtually impossible for his opponent to castle on the queenside. Also, by delaying the development of the dark-squared bishop, Black avoids losing a tempo in the event that White exchanges on c5.

We shall take a quick look at C1) 8.\textit{\texttt{c}e}2 before turning our attention to C2) 8.\textit{\texttt{d}2}, which appears in the great majority of games in this variation.
8.a4
This rare move goes against the old axiom: “Don't play on the side of the board where you are weaker.” I mention it partly to show the usefulness of having a cursory knowledge of the more popular variations, as you can then apply that knowledge to less common positions.

8...b6!
This works perfectly, as White does not have the a4-square available for his knight.

8...e7!? gives Black a slightly improved version of variation B: 9.d2 0–0 10.e2 b6 11.d1 (11.0–0 is strongly met by 11...f5!) 11...f5 12.c3 a5! Black takes aim at the queenside weaknesses created by White's 8th move. 13.c2 b7 14.0–0 c8 15.f2 (15.f2 g5!) 15...e8 16.g1! g6 I would be happy to take Black's position, with ...cxd4 coming next.

9.d2
9.b1 can be met by: 9...g5!N 10.f5 cxd4 11.xd4 c5 12.ce2 dxe5+ Morozevich has often played such ...g5 thrusts in similar French positions.

9...cxd4!
9...xb2?! allows White to force a repetition with 10.b1 a3 11.b3 a1 12.b1.
10.xd4 xb2! 11.b1 a3 12.b3 e7
The queen escapes and White does not have enough compensation for the pawn, Rotermund – Steinkohl, Lampertheim 2002.

C1) 8.e2

This move has enjoyed some popularity lately, but White's play was neutralized effectively by Topalov in a game against his second, Cheparinov.

8...e7
Another direction that Black can choose is:

8...b6 9.c1 g5!?
The more restrained 9...e7 featured in Shirov – Potkin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, and some other games.

10.c3 cxd4 11.cxd4 b4! 12.f2 f6 13.g3

13...g4!
This was Morozevich's improvement over 13...f8 14.g2 g4 15.h4; which led to a win for White in Topalov – Morozevich, Morelia/Linares 2007.
Chapter 14 – Introduction to 7...a6

14. \( \textcircled{h}4 \) fxe5 15. fxe5 \( \textcircled{d}xe5! \) 16. dxe5 d4 17. \( \textcircled{f}4 \) f8 18. \( \textcircled{g}2 \) d7

Black eventually won in Predojevic – Morozevich, Sarajevo 2008. This is certainly fun stuff, but I would hesitate to recommend it to mere mortals like us.

9. c3 0–0 10. g3

10. a3 was tried in Svidler – Vitiugov, Moscow 2009, but I don’t think that the general character of the position is changed, so Black should be fine after 10...cxd4N as in our main line.

10...cxd4! 11. \( \textcircled{d}xd4 \)

11. cxd4 can be met by 11...\( \textcircled{b}6 \) as given by Postny. Black intends ...\( \textcircled{d}7 \) and ...\( \textcircled{c}8 \), with active prospects on the queenside.

11...\( \textcircled{c}5 \) 12. \( \textcircled{g}2 \) d7 13.0–0 \( \textcircled{c}8 \) 14. \( \textcircled{h}1 \)

So far we have been following Cheparinov – Topalov, Sofia 2008. Now I rather like:

In this position White has two main continuations. The Old Main Line with 9. dxc5 has the idea of playing for the traditional blockade on the dark squares, and is featured in Chapter 15. The Modern Main Line with 9. a3 tries to stop (or at least delay) Black’s ...b4 and ...a5 plan, and will be examined in Chapter 16.

In this remaining part of this chapter we will cover five of White’s less common tries: C21) 9. \( \textcircled{d}3 \), C22) 9. g3, C23) 9. \( \textcircled{f}2 \), C24) 9. \( \textcircled{e}2 \) and C25) 9. \( \textcircled{d}1?! \). The first three are not especially challenging but the last two should be studied closely.

C21) 9. \( \textcircled{d}3 \)
On this square the bishop is exposed to a timely ...c4.

9...b4 10.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d}}\text{a}4}\)

The alternative is:
10.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d}}\text{d}1}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{b}}\text{b}6}\!) 11.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f}}\text{f}2}\)

An unfortunate square for the queen as the knight would like to go there, but there is no better way to defend against ...cxd4.

11...a5 12.0–0 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{a}}\text{a}6}\) 13.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{x}}\text{xa}6}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{x}}\text{xa}6}\) 14.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{c}}\text{c}3}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{e}}\text{e}7}\)
15.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{c}}\text{c}1}\)
15.f5?! exf5 16.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{f}}\text{f}4}\) cxd4 17.cxd4 0–0
18.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{h}}\text{h}1}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{d}}\text{d}8}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{e}}\text{e}3}\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{e}}\text{e}7}\) White did not have enough compensation for the pawn in Shaposhnikov – Volkov, Samara 2000.
15...0–0
This was Leung – Luppi, email 2002, and now Antic & Maksimovic believe that White’s best try is:

16.g6?!
Chapter 14 - Introduction to 7...a6

This is an improvement on 16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}g5}}\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}xg5} \texttt{\texttt{Q}e7}}, which gave White the chance to develop an initiative in Motylev - Wang Hao, China 2010. The problem for Black was that the positionally desirable 17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}6} would have been met by 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}h7} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}h7}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}5 \texttt{\texttt{g}8}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{f}4 with a strong attack.}}}

17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}g4}}}

White wants to transfer the queen to h3, at the same time preventing ...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}6 due to the reply \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}h7}.}}}

17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}2}} is met by 17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}6}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}7 when Black is ready to play}}}}}

17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}5!}}}

The timing is now perfect.

18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}xg5 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}6}}}

Black is at least equal.

C22) 9.g3 b4 10.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}e2}}}

10...\texttt{g6!}

It is important to restrain White's kingside play. The following line highlights the danger: 10...a5? 11.f5! exd4

White also builds up an initiative after 11...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}x}f5} 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd4}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}}}xd4, according to McDonald.}}}

12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}exd4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}xd4}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}xe5}} 14.0-0-0}}}

15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c4}}

After 15...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}d6} 16.fxe6 fxe6, there is the amazing shot 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f5}!! exf5 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}x}d5 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}c6}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}b}5! and White is winning.}}

16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}c}c4N}}

This killing move was pointed out by Neil McDonald on ChessPublishing.

After 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}e2? \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}f6, Black was a little worse in Inarkiev - Vitiugov, Dagomys 2008, but it was not a disaster.}}}

16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}xc4}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}e2!}}

Threatening \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}xe6}}}

17...\texttt{\texttt{f}f6} 18.fxe6 fxe6

19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}b}5!!}}

After this powerful move Black collapses.

19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}xb}b5}}

19...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}c8}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}c7\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}c7}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}c}c7 is hopeless for Black.}}}}}
20.\textit{\text{\textbf{Wh5}}} \textit{\textbf{Wg6}} 21.\textit{\textbf{Wxb5}} \textit{\textbf{Wf7}} 22.\textit{\textbf{Wb7}} \textit{\textbf{We7}} 23.\textit{\textbf{Wd6}}

McDonal extends the analysis further, but I am happy to stop here, as it is clear that White is winning.

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

\textbf{abc de f g h}

11.\textit{\textbf{Wg2}} \textit{\textbf{a5}} 12.0-0 \textit{\textbf{a6}} 13.\textit{\textbf{Wf2}}

This occurred in Richards – Kiriakov, West Bromwich 2005, and here I suggest:

13...\textit{\textbf{We7}}!?N

Black has the clear plan of castling and then playing ...a4-a3 with a fine position.

\textbf{C23)} 9.\textit{\textbf{Whf2}}

\textbf{8}
\textbf{7}
\textbf{6}
\textbf{5}
\textbf{4}
\textbf{3}
\textbf{2}
\textbf{1}

\textbf{abc de f g h}

18.\textit{\textbf{Wxc5}}! \textit{\textbf{Wxc5}} 19.\textit{\textbf{Wb3}} \textit{\textbf{Wbd3}} 20.\textit{\textbf{Wxc5}} \textit{\textbf{Wxf2}} 21.\textit{\textbf{Wxb6}} \textit{\textbf{Wxb6}} 22.\textit{\textbf{Wxf2}} \textit{\textbf{a4}} 23.\textit{\textbf{Wc5}} \textit{\textbf{Wxb2}} 24.\textit{\textbf{Wxa4}} \textit{\textbf{Wxa2}}

A draw was soon agreed in Miladinovic – Kosic, Niksic 1997.

\textbf{C24)} 9.\textit{\textbf{We2}}

Though innocent-looking, this is one of the more critical lines covered in this chapter.

9...\textit{\textbf{We7}}!

This flexible move is Black's best reaction.
Incidentally, if the reader happens to have $7...\text{c}e7$ in his repertoire, then he can aim to transpose to this line by meeting $8.\text{d}2$ 0–0 9.\text{c}e2 with 9...a6 (instead of 9...b6) followed by ...b5, as discussed in variation B.

9...cxd4 10.\text{x}d4 \text{x}d4 11.\text{x}d4 \text{c}5
12.\text{x}c5 \text{xc}5 13.\text{d}4 \text{b}6 14.\text{b}4! \text{a}4
15.\text{xb}6 \text{xb}6 16.a4 is an example of what Black should avoid. Although Black eventually won in Doggers – Moskalenko, Solsones 2004, his position here is unappealing.

9...b4 10.\text{d}1 a5 11.0–0 g6 12.c4! was also good for White in Svetushkin – Iljushin, Moscow 2010.

A third problematic line is:

9...\text{b}6 10.\text{d}1! b4 11.0–0 a5
11...\text{c}7 12.c4! Kurnosov – Lysyj, Dagomys 2010.
12.\text{c}1! \text{b}7!

Black bolsters the d5-pawn in anticipation of c2-c4.

13.c3!
But White reacts excellently.

14.\text{x}d4 \text{x}d4 15.cxd4 f5
Otherwise White would play f4-f5 with excellent attacking chances.
16.g4!
White had a strong initiative in Andreikin – Shimanov, Dagomys 2010.
14. \( \text{axc5} \)
Watson suggested that 14.c4N is worth a try, but Black has an adequate response in:
14...bxc3 15.\( \text{wx} \text{xc3} \) \( \text{fxe3} \) 16.\( \text{exe3} \) \( \text{a6=} \)
14...\( \text{xa6} \) 15.\( \text{dxc3} \) \( \text{a} \)
Black has equalized, and it is instructive to follow this super-GM game a little further.
16.\( \text{exe3} \) \( \text{xd3} \) 17.\( \text{dxc3} \) \( \text{a4} \) 18.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{e7} \)
19.\( \text{fc1} \) \( \text{d7} \) 20.\( \text{ed4} \) \( \text{fc8} \) 21.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xc1} \)
22.\( \text{xc1} \) \( \text{c8} \) 23.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{h5} \) 24.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b7} \)
25.\( \text{xc8} \)\( \text{t} \) \( \text{xc8} \) 26.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 27.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{c6} \)
Kamsky – Morozevich, Amsterdam 1996. By now Black had a slight edge, though the game was eventually drawn in 60 moves.

11...\( \text{wb6} \)
Since White has taken action against ...\( \text{b4} \) and ...\( \text{a5} \), Black switches plans.

12.\( \text{d1} \)
12.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) This exchange, aiming for a Sicilian-like minority attack, is a common theme when a2-a3 has been played. 13.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 14.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 15.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 16.\( \text{xd4} \)
\( \text{a6} \) 17.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{ac8} \)

18.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{g6} \) (18...\( \text{c7} \)N is also possible) 19.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{h5} \) 20.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 21.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{xf2} \)\( \text{t} \) 22.\( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{b6} \)
23.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{h6} \) 24.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{c7} \) 25.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{fc8} \) The position was close to equal, but slightly more comfortable for Black in Parushev – Galanov, corr. 2010.
15...\texttt{b3!N}
15...\texttt{c4} 16.\texttt{f2} f5 was unclear in Djukic – Kalezic, Tivat 2011.

16.\texttt{b1} \texttt{a6c2}
Intending \ldots b4.

17.dxc5 \texttt{dxc5} 18.\texttt{f2} \texttt{c6}
Watson stops here with an assessment of equality, but I decided to check a bit further.

19.\texttt{d4} \texttt{xd4} 20.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{b3} 21.\texttt{e3} \texttt{g6}?
Black stands well because of the constant possibility of \ldots d4 (which can be prepared by \ldots \texttt{fd8}) followed by \ldots b4.

[Sergey Karjakin – Magnus Carlsen
Wijk aan Zee 2010]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c6} 4.e5 \texttt{fd7} 5.f4 c5 6.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 7.\texttt{e3} a6
The game actually went 7.\texttt{e7} 8.\texttt{d2} 0–0 9.\texttt{e2} a6 10.0–0 b5, but I have modified the move order to fit with my recommendation for Black.

8.\texttt{d2} b5 9.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e7} 10.0–0 0–0 11.\texttt{h1}!

Karjakin opts for a useful waiting move. He wants to see how Black is going to develop before choosing his course of action. On the other hand, the move is not particularly threatening. If Black understands White’s ideas then the correct response may be found, and Carlsen is up to the challenge.

11...\texttt{c7}!
The logical 11...b4? was met by 12.\texttt{a4}! cxd4 13.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xd4} 14.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{b7} in Nijboer – M. Gurevich, Amsterdam 2000, and in Chess Evolution 5, Baramidze now proposes 15.b3N \texttt{c6} 16.\texttt{b2} with a slight advantage for White.

Baramidze also shows how White can make life difficult for Black after:
11...\texttt{b6} 12.\texttt{d1}! b4 13.c4!
This is Black’s best try.
13...cxd4 14.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}xd4 15.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}c5 16.\textit{\text洮}xc5 \textit{\text洮}xc5 17.cxd5 exd5 18.\textit{\text洮}d4 is uncomfortable for Black, and after 18...\textit{\text洮}a4 19.\textit{\text洮}xb6 \textit{\text洮}xb6 20.\textit{\text洮}e3± White went on to win in Potkin – Wang Hao, Ningbo 2010.

14.d5! exd5 15.\textit{\text洮}xd5 \textit{\text洮}a5 16.\textit{\text洮}g1 \textit{\text洮}c7 17.\textit{\text洮}e3 \textit{\text洮}b6 18.\textit{\text洮}e4 \textit{\text洮}b7 19.\textit{\text洮}c2

Baramidze stops his analysis here and says the position offers chances to both sides. Objectively this may be the case, but in a practical game I would rather be White.

19...\textit{\text洮}d8 20.\textit{\text洮}d2

White will regain the pawn by taking on c4. He may then play against the weakness of Black’s remaining queenside pawns, and at some point may also launch an attack on the other flank with f4-f5.

12.a3

White decides that he cannot manage without this move after all, but it seems likely that ...\textit{\text洮}c7 will prove more useful than \textit{\text洮}h1.

12.\textit{\text洮}d1 allows 12...b4! with the typical idea of ...a5 and ...\textit{\text洮}a6, and in this position 13.c4?! doesn’t work: 13...\textit{\text洮}c5 14.d5? exd5 15.\textit{\text洮}xd5 \textit{\text洮}b6 16.\textit{\text洮}e4 g6±

12...\textit{\text洮}b7 13.\textit{\text洮}d1

13.\textit{\text洮}e1 \textit{\text洮}a8 14.\textit{\text洮}d3? cxd4 15.\textit{\text洮}xd4 occurred in Nijboer – Visser, Tilburg 2003, and now Black should play: 15...\textit{\text洮}xd4N 16.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}c5! (16...\textit{\text洮}c5 17.\textit{\text洮}e2!) 17.f5 exf5 18.\textit{\text洮}xf5 \textit{\text洮}e6±

13...\textit{\text洮}a8

“\textit{\text洮}A typical manoeuvre. White intends to gradually start an attack on the kingside. Therefore I decided to start counterplay in the centre immediately.” – Carlsen

14.\textit{\text洮}e1

14.dxc5 \textit{\text洮}xc5 15.\textit{\text洮}d4 was Danin – Vasilevich, Zvenigorod 2008. Now Black should exchange pieces on the d4-square: 15...\textit{\text洮}xd4!N 16.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}xd4 17.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}c5± If Black is allowed to exchange queens then he is happy, and if not then he plays ...\textit{\text洮}c7 and ...\textit{\text洮}c8, with ...g6 also being a sensible move.

14.\textit{\text洮}d3 is similar to the note to White’s 13th move above: 14...\textit{\text洮}d4 15.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}xd4 16.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}c5! (16...g6 17.f5!? looks dangerous for Black) 17.\textit{\text洮}e2 f6±

14...\textit{\text洮}xd4 15.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}xd4 16.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}c5 17.\textit{\text洮}h4?

Carlsen questioned this move and suggested 17.\textit{\text洮}f2 to keep more influence in the centre. A sample variation is 17...\textit{\text洮}xd4 18.\textit{\text洮}xd4 \textit{\text洮}c5
19.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}fxd1}} (19.f5? f6!) 19...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}e7}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g3}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}c7}}
21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}d3}} g6 22.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}e2}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}c5!}} and Black is okay as he will soon play ...f6.

17...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xd4}} 18.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xd4}}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ch14-01.png}
\end{figure}

18...f6! 19.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}d3}}
19.f5? makes no sense because of: 19...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xe5}}
20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g4}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}f6}}--

19.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}exf6}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf6}} 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}h3!}}? is possible, but Black keeps the initiative with 20...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}cf8}}.

19...h6?!
19...g6?! is playable, though I tend to trust Carlsen's choice more.

20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}exf6}}
20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g4}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}b6}}\texttt{+} and 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}h3}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}c5}} 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}exf6}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf6}}\texttt{+} are both fine for Black.

20...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf6}}
"Now it is clear that something has gone wrong for White. The rook on d4 is exposed, f4 is weak, and he will be facing tactical problems with ...e5 quite soon. The 'bad' bishop on b7 is certainly no worse than the white knight, which has dominated it in so many textbook games." – Carlsen

21.f5?

After 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g4}} Golubev gives the instructive variation: 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}cf8}} 22.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}b3}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}b8}}! 23.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g6}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}c6}}
24.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}d2}} d4!? 25.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}e4}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}e7}} 26.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf6}}\texttt{+} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf6}}
27.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}d3}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf3}} and Black wins the f4-pawn.

21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}cf8}} 22.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g1}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}c5}} 23.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}fxe6}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xe6}}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ch14-02.png}
\end{figure}

24.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g4}}
24.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}exd5}}? is strongly met by 24...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}f4}}!.

After 24.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xd5}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xd5}} 25.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xh3}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}d4}} 26.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}d4}}
\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}c5}} White has give up the exchange, in view of: 27.c3? \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xd3}} 28.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xd3}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xg1}}\texttt{+} 29.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xg1}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}f1}}#

24...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}f4}} 25.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}g3}} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}e7}}!
Carlsen: "The last key move, after which Black is completely winning. The point is to control e2, leaving the white knight without a good square after ...d4 next."

26.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf4}}
Neither 26.h3 d4 nor 26.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}e1}}? \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xd3}}! would save White.

26...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash{}xf4}}
White has no compensation for the exchange, and Black duly won.
I suspect that this could become more popular in the near future, as it sets genuine problems for Black to solve. White keeps flexibility with the development of his f1-bishop, as well as being ready for an effective c2-c4 break in the right circumstances.

9...e7 10.d3

10.e2 0–0 11.0–0 transposes to 11.d1 in the notes to variation C24 – see page 257.

10...b4

10...c4 11.e2 a5 12.c3 b4 was Nepomniachtchi – Ding Liren, St Petersburg 2012. This may be playable, but I am not comfortable releasing the tension on d4 so soon, so I would advise against it.

11.0–0 0–0 12.c3

12.dxc5 xc5 13.d4 b7 14.f2 c7 15.g4 e4+ Debashish – Song, Kemer 2009.

12.f2N a5 13.c4? is an interesting idea when the bishop is on e2, but here Black has no problems: 13...cxd4 14.d4 c4 15.d4

15...c5! Taking advantage of the d4-bishop being undefended. 16.e3 xd4 17.xd4 b7 18.cxd5 xd5 19.e4 wb6 with equality.
12...a5
Black carries out the typical plan, preparing to exchange White's strong bishop with ...a6.

13.f5
It is logical to try this before Black can exchange the light-squared bishops.

13...a6 14...c2 cannot be recommended for White. After 14...g6! the white pieces are placed rather clumsily for taking action on the kingside, for example 15.g4? f6! and White is already suffering.

13...f2N delays ...a6 by putting some pressure on c5, but Black can react with:
13...bxc3 14.bxc3 cxd4 15...xd4 ...xd4
16...d4 a6 17...xa6 ...xa6 18.f5 This advance meets with a typical response. 18...f6! 19...e2 ...b8! (19...c6 20.fx e6 ...b6 is adequate as well) 20.d3 c6? ... Black is not worse.

Another possibility is:
13...f2 a6 14...xa6 ...xa6 15.f5
This was Milliet – Ding, Villandry 2009, and here I like the following idea:

A sample line goes:
17.exf6 ...xf6 18.fx6 a4! 19.a3
Otherwise ...a3 would be strong.

19...h5!
The knight is coming to f4 to attack the e6-pawn.
20...e3 bxa3 21.bxa3 ...b6!
Improving the rook before continuing with ...c8 and ...f4. Black is more than okay here.

13...exf5 14...xf5 ...b6
Black should not be afraid of any ghosts in this position. The central tension makes it difficult for White to generate any serious attacking chances.

15...c2?!
Preserving the bishop with 15...d3N is
more ambitious, but White cannot count on anything more than a complicated middlegame with chances for both sides: 15...bxc3 16.bxc3 cxd4 17.exd4 (17.exd4?! b4 18.b1 a6?) 17...c4± White’s weak pawns on a2, c3 and e5 give Black excellent counter-chances.

15...xf5 16.xf5 c8

After the exchange of the bishops, Black has a comfortable position.

17.h5

This was A. Zaitsev – Chuprikov, Miass 2007, and now Black should play:

17...bxc3N 18.bxc3 c4

With slightly better chances.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the main 5.f4 variation of the Steinitz. After the standard moves 5...c5 6.d3 c6 7.e3, both A) 7...cxd4 and B) 7...e7 are popular moves which I eventually decided not to recommend. Nevertheless, the brief analysis of these two moves helps to show some of the important positional themes for both sides, as well as highlight some potential pitfalls that we should avoid.

The main part of the chapter was devoted to the recommended C) 7...a6!, after which we first observed that C1) 8.e2 cannot be considered critical after the game Cheparinov – Topalov, Sofia 2008.

More common is C2) 8.d2 b5, when the idea of playing ...b4, ...a5 and ...a6 is the most natural way to improve Black’s position.

Even the minor lines should be handled carefully here. For instance, after 9.g3 b4 10.e2, it is important to remember to play 10...g6!, because 10...a5? 11.f5! favours White.

After 9.e2 e7 10.0–0 0–0 Black is ready to follow the aforementioned plan with ...b4. Karjakin’s 11.h1 of Game 39 is an interesting try, but Carlsen’s flexible reply 11...c7! offers Black good game.

Finally, the tricky 9.d1?! should be met by 9...e7 10.d3 b4 11.0–0 0–0 12.c3 a5. Black’s idea, as usual, is ...a6, and if White plays the critical 13.f5 then the position turns out to be dynamically equal.
Chapter 15

The Old Main Line – 9.dxc5

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 c6 4.e5 cfd7 5.f4 c5 6.d3 c6
7.e3 a6! 8.d2 b5 9.dxc5 xc5

A) 10.e2 b6 11.xc5 xc5 12.ed4 xd4
   12...d7! – Game 40 267
B) 10.xc5 xc5 11.d2 b6 12.d3 b4 13.e2 a5 14.0-0 a6
   15.h1 e7 274
   16.ad1 – Game 41 275
B1) 16.fd1 276
B2) 16.g3 278
B3) 16.b3 279

Game 40 Ernesto Inarkiev – Igor Lysyj, Rijeka 2010 271
Game 41 David Kanovsky – Viktor Erdos, Balatonlelle 2003 275
On this page you will find seven diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Is 18...a6 good? If not, what should Black play instead? (page 268)

White has just played 18.f5. How would you respond? (page 269)

Is 16...a4 good? If not, can you suggest another idea for Black? (page 276)

Black has a resource which gives him excellent play. What is it? (page 270)

White has just played 13.b3. How should Black respond? (page 274)

Is White’s attack strong, or is it really a bluff? (page 279)

How can Black successfully defend against the kingside attack? (page 280)
Chapter 15 – The Old Main Line – 9.dxc5

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 c6 4.c4 g6 5.f4 c5 6.d3 c6 7.e3 a6 8.d2 b5 9.dxc5

Paul Keres first played this in 1960, and a series of grandmaster games in the 1980s established the line as White’s main attempt to gain an advantage. I am calling it the Old Main Line because nowadays most theoreticians consider 9.a3 to be more critical. The strategic idea behind the move is to set up the classical dark-square blockade.

9...dxc5

9...Qxc5 is generally avoided because of 10.Wf2, which theory judges to be slightly better for White.

We are going to cover the continuations A) 10.Qe2 and B) 10.Qxc5 in detail, but first we can deal quickly with a third option:

10.Qd3

This has been popular lately, but there is quite a simple way for Black to equalize:

10...Qb6! 11.Wf2
11.Qxc5 Qxc5 12.Wf2 transposes to variation B.

A) 10.Qe2

10...Qb6 11.Qxc5

Exchanging bishops is consistent with White’s idea of playing for a blockade on the dark squares.

11.ed4 b4 12.Wf2
12.0–0–0 a5 13.Qe1 Qxd4 14.Qxd4 0–0 15.g4 was seen in Vajda – Berescu, Sarata Monteoro 2012, and now GM Sumets suggests 15...a4N, when Black’s advanced pawns are more dangerous than White’s.

11...Qb7
11...b4?! 12.Qa4 Qxf2† 13.Wxf2 Qxf2† 14.Qxf2 a5 15.Qac1 Qa6 16.Qxa6 Qxa6 17.c4 was better for White in Karjakin – Carlsen, Monaco (blindfold) 2011.

12.0–0 Qxf2† 13.Wxf2 Qxf2† 14.Qxf2 Qe7=

Li Chao – Ding Liren, Hefei (rapid) 2011.

B) 10.Qxc5

12...Qxd4! 13.Qxd4

After 13.Qxd4?! 0–0 it is not easy for White to complete his development, for example:

14.Qe2?! f6†
13...a5 14.a3

So far we have been following Heinl –
Grabert, Ingolstadt 1991, and now Sumets suggests:

14...bxa3N 15.Łxa3 0–0 16.Łe2 a4 17.0–0 Ła6
With equal chances.

11...Łxc5 12.Łed4

12...Łxd4
It is important to stress that 12...Łd7! is Black’s most accurate continuation, and we shall examine it in Game 40 on page 271. The text move is slightly less flexible, but studying it will help us to understand some important positional themes before we move on to the best line.

By the way, 12...Łe4?! may look tempting but it achieves nothing. 13.Łe3 b4 14.Łd3 Łb7 15.0–0 0–0 16.Łae1 Łxd4 17.Łxd4 Łxd4† 18.Łxd4± White went on to win a fine game in Leko – M. Gurevich, Elista 2007.

13.Łxd4
The alternative is:
13.Łxd4
The idea behind this move is to increase the probability of a queen exchange.
13...b4!
This space-grabbing plan on the queenside is typical and correct.

14.a3
White should attempt to cause problems before Black strengthens his position with ...a5 and ...Ła6.

14.Łd2 Łb8 15.Łb3 Ła4 16.0–0–0 0–0 17.a3 a5 18.Łxb6 Łxb6 19.Łd4 Łd7 20.axb4 axb4 was fine for Black in Shomoev – Potkin, Taganrog 2011.

14...Łb8 15.Łe2 a5
15...Łe4?!N has been proposed by Ftacnik as leading to equality.
16.axb4 axb4 17.0–0 0–0 18.Łe3

18.Ła6
Black can hold the position more comfortably with 18...Łd7!N 19.Łd4 Ła4 20.Ła2 Łc5, when Black threatens ...b3. If White stops the threat with 21.b3, then 21...Ła8 22.Łfa1 Łxa2 23.Łxa2 Łe4 gives Black good counterplay.
19.Łxa6 Łxa6 20.Łxb6 Łxb6 21.Łf2
The black b-pawn is weak and White is able to activate his king, something that Black cannot do.

21...\texttt{a}b8 22.\texttt{a}a8 \texttt{c}c6 23.\texttt{a}fa1±


\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\end{center}

13...\texttt{d}d7!

This seems to be the most convincing way to solve Black’s opening problems, although the following alternative should also suffice.

13...\texttt{b}4?! 14.\texttt{w}e3!

Black is not troubled by: 14.\texttt{e}e2 0–0 15.0–0 a5 16.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{a}a6 17.\texttt{xa}a6 \texttt{xa}a6 Black is more than okay here, with his minority attack well advanced. 18.f5 This White’s only active idea, but it does not come to anything.

14...\texttt{d}d7!N

A pattern is starting to emerge: on moves 12, 13 and 14, Black’s most accurate continuation has involved putting the bishop on d7! I will discuss the specific merits of this choice of square in the notes to Game 40 below. In this particular position, the text move was suggested by Jacob when he first annotated his win over Socko, as referenced just below. Black wants to be ready to meet \texttt{b}3 by ...\texttt{c}c8.

14...0–0?! 15.\texttt{b}3! shows White’s idea: 15...\texttt{a}a4 16.\texttt{xb}b6 \texttt{xb}b6 17.a3± Guerra Bastida – Herrain Hidalgo, Málaga 2008.

14...\texttt{a}a4?! 15.0–0–0 \texttt{d}d7 16.g4! 0–0–0?! 17.h4 \texttt{b}b7 18.h5 h6 19.f5 gave White a clear advantage in Aagaard – B. Socko, Helsingor 2008.

14...\texttt{b}8?! counters the threat of \texttt{b}3 by defending the queen, but later the rook may prove more useful on either the a- or the c-file.

15.\texttt{d}3 0–0 16.0–0 a5 17.g4

White is preparing f4–f5.

After 17.f5 Black should certainly avoid 17...\texttt{xd}3? 18.f6!. Instead 17...\texttt{ex}f5! 18.\texttt{xf}5 (18.\texttt{xf}5 \texttt{e}e8) 18...\texttt{xf}5 19.\texttt{xf}5 \texttt{fe}8 offers Black excellent play.
Nimzowitsch would certainly have approved of this prophylactic move. By moving to the e-file, the rook prepares for f4-f5, and it also clears the way for the queen to reach f8 in the event of an emergency.

18...\textit{Be}h1

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,1) -- (8,1);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,2) -- (8,2);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,3) -- (8,3);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,4) -- (8,4);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,5) -- (8,5);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,6) -- (8,6);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,7) -- (8,7);
\draw[thick,lightgray] (0,8) -- (8,8);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

are more accurate ways for Black to handle the position.

14...\textit{Be}2

Black should be happy to see this move, as it makes it more difficult for White to play an effective f4-f5.

The chief advantage of Black's last move (as opposed to 13...\textit{b}4!? as analysed in the notes) is that 14.\textit{B}d3 can be met by 14...\textit{Ba}4! 15.c3 \textit{b}4! with strong counterplay.

14.\textit{B}e3 0--0 15.\textit{B}d3 is covered later under the move order 12...\textit{B}d7! 13.\textit{B}d3 0--0 14.\textit{B}e3 \textit{B}xd4 15.\textit{B}xd4 – see the note to White's 13th move in Game 40, where I point out that 15...\textit{B}a5†!N is fine for Black.
14...0-0!N
This is more flexible than 14...Ec8 as played in Bayramov – Rudakov, Thessaloniki 2010.

15.Wc3 b4
15...f6 is also possible, but the text move works well.

16.0-0
16.d3 b5 gives White nothing better than 17.0-0, transposing to the main line below.

16...b5!? 17.d3
White has nothing better, but now Black has a more comfortable version of the 13...b4!? note examined earlier, having achieved the ...b5 move for free!

17...a4 18.Qab1 Qxd3 19.cxd3 b3!
Black has exchanged off his bad bishop and successfully obtained counterplay on the queenside.

Although the above line seems fully satisfactory, the treatment seen in the following game is a touch more accurate.

GAME 4

Ernesto Inarkiev – Igor Lysyj
Rijeka 2010

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 Qf6 4.e5 Qfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Qf3 Qc6 7.Qe3 a6 8.Qd2 b5 9.dxc5 Qxc5 10.Qe2 Wb6 11.Qxc5 Qxc5 12.Qed4 Qd7!

Having explored 12...Qxd4, we saw that in several lines the black bishop was best placed on d7. On this square it clears the c8-square for a rook, defends against a future f4-f5 break, and may be activated via the b5-square, or even by ...,Qe8-g6 as occurs in this game.

By developing the bishop here before exchanging on d4, Black maintains more tension in the position and keeps his opponent guessing.

13.Qxc6
White denies Black the luxury of choosing the timing of the exchange on d4. The ensuing positions resemble those occurring after 12...Qxd4, but here Black may be able to benefit from having his bishop on c6. Other moves also lead nowhere for White:

13.0-0-0?! is too risky. 13...0-0 14.Qb1 b4
15...d3 a5 16.g4 This was Quesada Perez – Steadman, Khanty-Mansisyk (ol) 2010, and here Black can obtain good attacking chances with 16...a4!N, intending to follow up with ...f6 and ...b3.

13.wc3 d4! 14.b1 0–0 15.d3 b4 16.wf2
(The more natural 16.0–0N d4 17.wxd4 c6 also gives White nothing, for instance 18.f5 exf5 19.wxf5 wxf5 20.wxf5 wxe8 and the e5-pawn comes under fire.) 16...d4 17.wxd4 c5 18.whd1 b5! 19.wxg1 wfc8 ½–½ Plomp – Soukny, corr. 2010.

13.d3 0–0 14.wc3 d4 15.wxd4 was played in Danin – Stopa, Wunsiedel 2011, and now I like:

14.wd4
White has also tried occupying this square with his queen:
14.wd4 b4 15.a3
15.d3 0–0 16.0–0 was played in Danin – Kotainy, Senden 2010, and now after 16...b5!N Black is doing well.

13...xc6

14...wxb8!
15.a5 16.axb4 axb4 17.wxa8+ wxa8 18.wd3 was riskier for Black in Van Kampen – Zumsande, Haarlem 2009. White has the simple plan of 0–0 and f4–f5, and if Black spends time stopping f4–f5 then White will be first to play on the queenside with wxa1.
16.axb4 wxb4 17.wxb4 wxb4
This is a typical situation where Black's piece activity offers more than enough compensation for the weakness of his a-pawn.
18.wa5
18.b3 can be met by 18...w7 19.g3 d4! and the c6-bishop is great!
18...\textit{d7} 19.\textit{\texttt{xa}6} \textit{\texttt{b}7} 20.\textit{\texttt{a}7} \textit{\texttt{xb}2} 21.\textit{\texttt{d}2}
Now 21...0-0 followed by ...f6 was okay for Black in Köepke – Bunzmann, Boeblingen 2008, but I would prefer to keep the king in the centre.

21...\textit{e7N}
Next comes ...\textit{c8} and Black is fine.

14...0-0 15.\textit{d3}
15.\textit{e2} gives Black a pleasant choice. One safe option is 15...\textit{d7}, when the likely continuation 16.0-0 b4 17.\textit{\texttt{e}3} transposes to the line 12...\textit{xd4} 13.\textit{\texttt{xd}4} \textit{\texttt{d}7}? 14.\textit{e2} 0-0 15.\textit{e3} b4 16.0-0 as considered in the previous analysis section. The second player might also explore 15...b4!? with a view to saving time by avoiding the bishop retreat, or at least keeping the opponent guessing for another move before retreating to d7.

15...f6? 
15...\textit{ac8N} is a sensible alternative. Then 16.0-0 \textit{a4}? 17.c3 b4 gives Black good counterplay, while 16.\textit{\texttt{e}3} \textit{\texttt{a}5}? 17.\textit{\texttt{f}2} \textit{\texttt{d}8} followed by ...f6 is also fine for Black.

16.exf6 \textit{xf6}
If White could magically exchange a few pieces he would be doing well, but as things stand Black’s piece activity gives him good middlegame chances.

17.0-0-0
17.0-0 can be met by 17...\textit{\texttt{xd}3} 18.\textit{\texttt{xd}3} \textit{\texttt{e}8} followed by ...\textit{g6}. Queenside castling has its own risks though, and over the next phase of the game Black gradually takes over.

17...\textit{e8} 18.\textit{\texttt{h}f1} \textit{\texttt{c}8} 19.g4 \textit{\texttt{d}6} 20.\textit{b1} \textit{\texttt{xd}3} 21.\textit{\texttt{xd}3} \textit{\texttt{d}7} 22.\textit{\texttt{e}2} \textit{\texttt{c}8} 23.\textit{\texttt{g}1} d4
24.h4 \textit{\texttt{c}6} 25.\textit{\texttt{d}f1} b4
Black sensibly stopped White’s attempts to create threats against his king, and now slowly pushes on the other flank.

17...f5 18.\textit{\texttt{xf}5} \textit{\texttt{e}8} 19.g4 \textit{\texttt{d}6} 20.\textit{b1} \textit{\texttt{xd}3} 21.\textit{\texttt{xd}3} \textit{\texttt{d}7} 22.\textit{\texttt{e}2} \textit{\texttt{c}8} 23.\textit{\texttt{g}1} d4
24.h4 \textit{\texttt{c}6} 25.\textit{\texttt{d}f1} b4
26.h5 a5 27.\textit{\texttt{f}2}
27.g5 \textit{\texttt{f}5} threatens ...e5, and neither 28.g6 h6 nor 28.h6 g6 leads anywhere.

27...a4 28.\textit{\texttt{g}f1} a3 29.b3 \textit{\texttt{f}7} 30.\textit{\texttt{g}3} \textit{\texttt{d}5}
31.h6 g6 32.Qe2 @b7 33.f5?
White should have accepted that Black was
in control and defended patiently. Now the
task of converting Black's advantage becomes
much easier.

33...exf5 34.gxf5

This is White's usual choice, but there are a
couple of alternatives to mention briefly.

12.Qd2 was introduced in Savchenko –
Rakhmanov, Ulan Ude 2009. In *New in Chess*
Yearbook 106, GM Sumets proposed the
novelty 12...b8N, intending 13.Qb3 a4! 14.Qxb6 Qxb6 with a slight edge to Black.

12.b4? 34...Qc8! 35.f6 Qf5 36.Qf3 Qxf6 37.Qc1
Qc5 38.Qe2 Qc8 39.Qd2 Qc3 40.Qxc3
B) 10.Qxc5 Qxc5

This is another important theoretical line. 
White's idea is to post the queen on f2, where
it puts some pressure on the queenside and
may also join in a future kingside attack via
the h4-square if Black castles.

11.Qf2 Qb6 12.d3  

A draw was now agreed in Sobirey – Groffen,
email 2004, but Black could have played on
with 18...f6!.

12...b4 13.Qc2 a5 14.0–0 Qa6 15.Qh1
This has been by far the most popular move
here.

15.f5!? exf5 16.Qf4 Qd7 17.e6 f6 is equal. A
practical example is: 18.Qxa6 Qxa6 19.Qad1
Qxe6 20.Qxb6 1/2–1/2 D. Mastrovasilis –
Jeremic, Leros 2010.
15...\texttt{xd3}?! 16.\texttt{cxd3} \texttt{b5}? (16...\texttt{e7N would be the lesser evil}) 17.f5! gives White a serious initiative, for instance: 17...\texttt{xd3} 18.\texttt{g3} \texttt{xb2} 19.\texttt{xg7} 0-0-0 20.\texttt{f4} exf5 21.e6+—Maxion – Marschner, Germany 1990.

Black's plans now include ...\texttt{xd3} followed by ...\texttt{b5}, and White often plays a rook to d1 to stop this idea. 16.\texttt{ad1} has been the most popular move in practice, and is examined in Game 41 below. After that we shall study the alternatives B1) 16.\texttt{fd1}, B2) 16.\texttt{g3} and B3) 16.b3.

\textbf{GAME 41}

David Kanovsky – Viktor Erdos

Balatonlelle 2003

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{c3} \texttt{f6} 4.e5 \texttt{fd7} 5.f4 c5 6.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 7.\texttt{c3} a6 8.\texttt{d2} b5 9.dxc5 \texttt{xc5} 10.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 11.\texttt{f2} \texttt{b6} 12.\texttt{d3} b4 13.\texttt{e2} a5 14.0-0 \texttt{a6} 15.\texttt{h1} \texttt{e7}!

16.\texttt{ad1}

Despite its popularity, Black need not be afraid of this move. This game will show that the resulting Sicilian-style endgame is fine for Black.

16...\texttt{a4} 17.\texttt{xb6}

White cannot sensibly avoid the exchange of queens, for example: 17.\texttt{g3} \texttt{xd3} 18.\texttt{xd3} \texttt{f5} 19.h3 \texttt{xb2} 20.\texttt{d2} \texttt{c4++}

17...\texttt{xb6} 18.b3

18.\texttt{ed4} \texttt{a4} 19.\texttt{b1} (19.b3?! \texttt{c3} 20.\texttt{de1} g6?! 21.\texttt{f2} h5 22.\texttt{g5} \texttt{xd3} 23.cxd3 \texttt{f5} 24.\texttt{gf3} \texttt{d7} 25.g3 a4+ Pruess – Perelshteyn, Tulsa 2008) 19...\texttt{c5} 20.\texttt{fd1} 0-0 21.\texttt{g1} a4 22.\texttt{f2} \texttt{fd8+} Vehi Bach – Glek, Biel 1997.

Please make a mental note of this position as it is a textbook example of the minority attack— the dream of every Sicilian Defence player!

18...\texttt{f5}

The earlier game Forarasi – Erdos, Budapest 2002, was agreed drawn after 18...g6 19.\texttt{fd4}, but this time the talented Hungarian player (now a strong GM) plays for the win against his lower-rated opponent.
19.\texttt{\textit{}} xe6 xe6
The position is objectively equal, but White plays passively and is gradually outplayed.

20.\texttt{\textit{}} d3

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\t\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\t\draw[thick] (0,0) -- (8,0);
\t\draw[thick] (0,1) -- (8,1);
\t\draw[thick] (0,2) -- (8,2);
\t\draw[thick] (0,3) -- (8,3);
\t\draw[thick] (0,4) -- (8,4);
\t\draw[thick] (0,5) -- (8,5);
\t\draw[thick] (0,6) -- (8,6);
\t\draw[thick] (0,7) -- (8,7);
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\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {1};
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\t\node at (4.5,4.5) {5};
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\t\node at (7.5,7.5) {8};
\t\node at (0.5,8.5) {a};
\t\node at (8.5,8.5) {h};
\t\node at (8.5,0.5) {g};
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {b};
\t\node at (1.5,1.5) {c};
\t\node at (2.5,2.5) {d};
\t\node at (3.5,3.5) {e};
\t\node at (4.5,4.5) {f};
\t\node at (5.5,5.5) {g};
\t\node at (6.5,6.5) {h};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

20...h5!
Defending against g2-g4 is the correct approach here, as there is no way White can take advantage of the g5-square.

21.\texttt{\textit{}} fd4 xd4 22.\texttt{\textit{}} xd4 g6 23.g3
23.ea1 d7 24.a3 ha8, and 23.c3 d7 followed by ...xc8 are both fine for Black.

23...\texttt{\textit{}} d7!
The knight is en route to the e4-square.

24.\texttt{\textit{}} g2 c5 25.e3 d7 26.h3 e4
27.eel a4t

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
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\t\draw[thick] (0,0) -- (8,0);
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\t\draw[thick] (0,6) -- (8,6);
\t\draw[thick] (0,7) -- (8,7);
\t\draw[thick] (0,8) -- (8,8);
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\t\node at (3.5,3.5) {4};
\t\node at (4.5,4.5) {5};
\t\node at (5.5,5.5) {6};
\t\node at (6.5,6.5) {7};
\t\node at (7.5,7.5) {8};
\t\node at (0.5,8.5) {a};
\t\node at (8.5,8.5) {h};
\t\node at (8.5,0.5) {g};
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {b};
\t\node at (1.5,1.5) {c};
\t\node at (2.5,2.5) {d};
\t\node at (3.5,3.5) {e};
\t\node at (4.5,4.5) {f};
\t\node at (5.5,5.5) {g};
\t\node at (6.5,6.5) {h};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

White has played with no plan and now faces the consequences.

28.\texttt{\textit{}} h1 \texttt{\textit{}} a5 29.e3 c5 30.bxa4 xa8 31.g4?
This accelerates White's downfall, although his position was already bad.

31...\texttt{\textit{}} xa4 32.f5 gxf5 33.gxf5 b3 34.\texttt{\textit{}} xe6+ \\
\texttt{\textit{}} xe6 35.\texttt{\textit{}} xe4 dxe4 36.eb3 xc2+ 37.\texttt{\textit{}} g3 \\
xc3+ 38.\texttt{\textit{}} h4 e3+ 39.\texttt{\textit{}} xh5 xa2 40.\texttt{\textit{}} d4 e2
0–1

B1) 16.\texttt{\textit{}} fd1

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
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\t\draw[thick] (0,0) -- (8,0);
\t\draw[thick] (0,1) -- (8,1);
\t\draw[thick] (0,2) -- (8,2);
\t\draw[thick] (0,3) -- (8,3);
\t\draw[thick] (0,4) -- (8,4);
\t\draw[thick] (0,5) -- (8,5);
\t\draw[thick] (0,6) -- (8,6);
\t\draw[thick] (0,7) -- (8,7);
\t\draw[thick] (0,8) -- (8,8);
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {1};
\t\node at (1.5,1.5) {2};
\t\node at (2.5,2.5) {3};
\t\node at (3.5,3.5) {4};
\t\node at (4.5,4.5) {5};
\t\node at (5.5,5.5) {6};
\t\node at (6.5,6.5) {7};
\t\node at (7.5,7.5) {8};
\t\node at (0.5,8.5) {a};
\t\node at (8.5,8.5) {h};
\t\node at (8.5,0.5) {g};
\t\node at (0.5,0.5) {b};
\t\node at (1.5,1.5) {c};
\t\node at (2.5,2.5) {d};
\t\node at (3.5,3.5) {e};
\t\node at (4.5,4.5) {f};
\t\node at (5.5,5.5) {g};
\t\node at (6.5,6.5) {h};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

In selecting the king's rook to defend the d3-point, White keeps his other rook on the queenside in anticipation of an open file becoming available.

16...0–0?! has never been tried in practice, probably because 17.\texttt{\textit{}} xh7! \texttt{\textit{}} xh7 18.\texttt{\textit{}} g5+ \\
followed by \texttt{\textit{}} h4 and \texttt{\textit{}} g3 gives White an ongoing initiative. According to my computer Black can defend, but it is not a trivial task for a human being to do so in practice, because White can try various ideas, each of which requires Black to find only moves.

It is worth checking the same idea that we saw
in the previous game against 16...ad1, to see how the choice of rook affects the subsequent evaluation.

16...a4?! 17.xb6
17.g3? fails to 17...xb2 and Black is better in the complications. If White is too greedy he may even fall victim to a smothered mate:

18.xg7 xd1 19.xh8+ (19.xd1++)
19...d7 20.xa8 f2+ 21.g1 h3+
22.h1 g1+ 23.fxg1 f2#
17...xb6 18.xa6 xa6

19.a3!
This is where the presence of a rook on a1 comes into play. Nevertheless, matters are still not completely clear.

19...bxa3 20.b3!
This has been assessed as favourable for White, and he managed to win in Maciej a - Gradalski, Lubniewice 1998. However, I think Black's position is playable after the following improvement:

20...c6!N 21.xa3 e7
Black is certainly close to equality, if not equal already. His plan is to break with ...a4 and use his other rook to put pressure on the white queenside, for example along the c-file. I have tested this in friendly games as well as computer games, and I believe that it is a viable option.

17.g3
17.ed4
Now Black's safest option is:

17...a4?!N
For those attracted to a more complex middlegame, the theoretical recommendation is 17...0-0 18.h4 a7!?
19.g4 g6 as played in Mainka - Glek, Recklinghausen 1995. This is reckoned to be slightly better for Black, though in a practical game White will have attacking chances.

18.xa6 xa6 19.ab1 0-0
With the bishops exchanged, the kingside attack doesn’t look so threatening anymore, and Black is at least equal.

20.\texttt{h4 a7} 21.g4 \texttt{c5} 22.f5 \texttt{e4}!

There is no easy way for White to continue the attack, and his advancing pawns have left a lot of open space which Black may be able to exploit later.

After 21.b3 \texttt{c6}! Black can play ...\texttt{e7} followed by ...\texttt{c8} as we saw above, but there is another idea to keep in mind: 22.\texttt{xa3} \texttt{g5}! With the knight on e2, White could simply reply 23.g3 or 23.\texttt{fxg5 hxg5} 24.\texttt{ed4}. Obviously these are impossible here, so Black gains excellent counterplay against the \texttt{e5}-pawn.

21...\texttt{c4}! 22.\texttt{a2} \texttt{c6} 23.\texttt{d4} \texttt{e3} 24.\texttt{d2} \texttt{xd4} 25.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xc2} 26.\texttt{da4} 0-0 27.b4 \texttt{e3} 28.\texttt{e2} \texttt{c4} 29.\texttt{g1} \texttt{f6}+


B2) 16.\texttt{g3}

17...\texttt{a4}!!

Again the offer to exchange queens plays a key role.

17.\texttt{xb6}

White can also avoid the exchange: 17.\texttt{d4} g6 18.\texttt{ae1}?

Although this move was successful in practice, objectively its value is questionable. 18.b3N \texttt{c5} 19.\texttt{ad1} h5!? was mentioned by Glek.

18.\texttt{xa6} \texttt{xa6} 19.c4 \texttt{bxc3} 20.\texttt{bc3} was played in Fenwick – Sandstroem, email 2005, and now 20...\texttt{c5N} is solid and offers equal chances.
Chapter 15 – The Old Main Line – 9.dxc5

Black) 21.b3 ¥c8 22.¥d4 ¥c6 23.¥ge2 a4 24.¥g1 ¥b4 gave Black at least equality in Kristoffel – G. David, corr. 1999.

18...¥g6 19.¥xa6 ¥xa6
Once again the poor placement of the knight on g3 helps Black in the endgame.

20.a3 bx a3 21.¥xa3 ¥d7 22.¥fa1 a4 23.¥ge2 ¥c8=

B3) 16.b3

22...¥c6 23.¥b3 ¥xf2 24.¥xf2 ¥a4 25.¥xf5 ¥c8! 26.¥xe6 ¥xe6 27.¥f6 ¥d8+=
Black remains a pawn up with another juicy target on a2.

17...¥xb6 18.¥d4
18.¥xa6 ¥xa6 19.a3 bxa3 20.¥xa3 ¥d7?! (20...¥c6 followed by ...¥e7 is also fine for

Stopping once and for all our approach of going for the endgame.

16...¥h6 17.¥ad1 ¥c8
17...0–0?!
This slightly provocative move is not at all bad if followed up correctly.
18.g4
This has scored excellently for White, but I believe Black should be all right.
18...hac8! 19.Qg3
We have been following Szelağ – Vysochin, Cappelle la Grande 2006, and here I found a significant improvement:

19...Wb7!N
Black's key to a successful defence is to play his knight to e4, forcing exchanges.
20.Qxa6
20.f5 Qe4!±
20...Wxa6 21.f5 Qe4
Black is doing fine. Possible is:

21...Qxd3!N
This logical move was proposed by Finkel. The whole idea behind putting the rook on c8 was to take advantage of the weaknesses White created by 16.b3, so this is the consistent way to play.

21...Wb6 22.Qxa6 Wxa6 is also playable, if slightly less accurate. After 23.g4?! h5 24.f5 g5! 25.Wh3 xc2! Black went on to win a nice game in Lutz – Zifroni, Tel Aviv 1999.

22.Qxe4 Qxe4 23.f6 exf3 24.fxe7 Wxe7 25.Qxf3
Black has at least equal chances.
Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with 9.dxc5, which can be considered White’s most classical way to fight for an advantage. A glance at some older games may give the impression that White can simply exchange dark-squared bishops, occupy the d4-square and be automatically better. However, the modern understanding is that, even in this grim scenario, Black’s queenside minority attack gives him enough counterplay to claim equality.

A) 10.\textit{f}e2 \textit{b}6 11.xxc5 \textit{xc}5 12.\textit{e}d4 is a popular set-up, but we saw in both the analysis section and Game 40 that Black can get a fine position, the main rule being to deploy the bishop on d7.

After B) 10.xxc5 \textit{xc}5 11.f2 \textit{b}6 White has tried lots of ideas, but none of them promise an advantage. Important for the status of the whole line is the evaluation of the queenless middlegame which can arise after 12.d3 b4 13.e2 a5 14.0–0 a6 15.h1 d7. Generally, Black wants to play ...a4 and exchange queens, though it is considered safer to do this when White has moved his rook from a1, because then the undermining a2-a3 won’t be as strong.

However, my analysis shows that even after B1) 16.Ed1 the move 16...a5!? is possible, though Black may prefer to preface the knight move with 16...h6.

If White stops ...a5 with B3) 16.b3, I would advise against castling for the moment. Instead Black should fortify the kingside with ...h6 and ...g6 and then play ...\textit{b}7 followed by ...\textit{e}4. White has no way to break through to the king in the centre, and Black obtains good play on the queenside.
Chapter 16

The Modern 9.a3

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textbf{c3} d5 6.\textbf{f3} d6 7.\textbf{c3} a6! 8.\textbf{d2} b5 9.a3

A) 9...\textbf{b6}

B) 9...\textbf{a5}!

B1) 10.\textbf{d1}

10.\textbf{e2} – Game 42

B2) 10.dxc5 \textbf{x}c5 11.\textbf{x}c5 \textbf{x}c5 12.\textbf{d4}

12.\textbf{e2} – Game 43

B3) 10.\textbf{a2} \textbf{b6}!

B31) 11.g3

B32) 11.\textbf{e2}

B321) 11...\textbf{c7}?!N

B322) 11...b4

Game 42 Yu Yangyi – Ding Liren, Xinghua 2012

Game 43 Nikita Vitiugov – Vladimir Potkin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

White played an instructive manoeuvre. Can you find it?  
(page 286)

Can Black take the a3-pawn?  
(page 291)

Black has a fine move which solves all his problems.  
(page 296)

Can White show that Black’s counterplay arrives too late?  
(page 287)

Can you find a good way for Black to play?  
(page 292)

How would you recommend dealing with White’s attack?  
(page 297)

10...b4 is playable, but can you see a more ambitious possibility?  
(page 287)

Is there a way to exploit the rook’s peculiar position on a2?  
(page 295)
After examining the various alternatives in the previous two chapters, we finally arrive at the move which is most often recommended for White these days (for example, by Khalifman and Bologan), and can be considered the Modern Main Line. White’s idea is simply to discourage ...b4 in the most flexible way. After Black’s next move White can choose what to do next. For example, the f1-bishop can go to e2 or d3 according to Black’s response, and the c3-knight can choose between d1 and e2.

We shall look at developing the queen with A) 9...\texttt{\texttt{w}b6} or B) 9...\texttt{\texttt{w}a5}!

9...\texttt{\texttt{w}b7} is quite common, but I consider it to be inflexible. Without going into details, both 10...\texttt{\texttt{e}e2} followed by \texttt{\texttt{d}d1}, and 10...\texttt{\texttt{e}d3}, usually followed by \texttt{\texttt{w}f2}, have offered White an edge in practice. As a general rule in these positions I am against putting the bishop to b7 too soon, because even though a2-a3 has been played, the plan of ...b4, ...a5 and ...\texttt{\texttt{a}a6} still remains an idea. Moreover, White’s f4-f5 may become stronger when the bishop has left the c8-h3 diagonal.

9...\texttt{\texttt{g}g5}!? is a famous idea popularized by Morozevich. It leads to fascinating positions but I don’t fully trust its objective value. Moreover, throughout this book I have preferred calm strategic solutions to Black’s problems, and I will not be making an exception here.

\textbf{A) 9...\texttt{\texttt{w}b6}}

This is not the move I am recommending, but it is important to study it to see where the problems lie. Besides, the preferred 9...\texttt{\texttt{w}a5}! move often leads to positions closely resembling those that occur after the text move, except for a minor change in Black’s favour. Therefore it makes sense to study 9...\texttt{\texttt{w}b6} in order to gain a full appreciation of the merits of 9...\texttt{\texttt{w}a5}!.

10...\texttt{\texttt{e}e2}!

This is the critical reply.

10...\texttt{\texttt{d}d3}? \texttt{\texttt{c}xd4} 11...\texttt{\texttt{c}xd4} \texttt{\texttt{c}c5} is simply winning for Black.

10...\texttt{\texttt{e}e2} 11.0–0 0–0 transposes to variation C24 of Chapter 14 (position after 11...\texttt{\texttt{w}b6} on page 258).

10...\texttt{\texttt{c}c7}!?

This move was first played in 2004 by the strong correspondence player Wolfgang Brodda. The only book I found that mentions it is \textit{The Modern French} by Antic and Maksimovic, though they offer only a little explanation and analysis. Black’s main idea is
to counter White’s positional threat of dxc5 followed by \( \text{Qe}4\text{d}4 \), because now Black simply retakes on c5 with the knight and move the same knight to the strong e4-square. With the queen on b6, Black cannot take back with the knight as it would be pinned, leading to the loss of a piece after b2-b4.

10...c4?! 11.g4?! h5 12.gxh5 \( \text{Exh}5 \) 13.\( \text{Qg}3 \) h8 14.f5 was Kasparov – Radjabov, Linares 2003. Although Radjabov famously won that game, the opening was considered favourable for White.

10...\( \text{Be}7 \)

Other neutral moves (such as 10...\( \text{Bb}7 \)) can be met similarly.

11.dxc5 \( \text{Bxc}5 \) 12.\( \text{Qe}4 \) ±

Practice has shown that White has an edge. The immediate positional threat is b2-b4, and when Black defends against that, White will play \( \text{Qd}3 \) and later \( \text{Wf}2 \) with good chances for a kingside attack. The following practical example perfectly illustrates the dangers Black is facing.

12...\( \text{Rxd}4 \) 13.\( \text{Qxd}4 \) \( \text{Wc}7 \) 14.\( \text{Qd}3 \) g5?!

Black’s desire to be active and change the course of the game is understandable, but sometimes in situations like this it is better to follow the old rule: “If you cannot improve your position, at least try not to worsen it.” As Michal Krasenkov explained to me once, even in inferior situations, Black’s solid pawn structure in the French Defence gives him a relatively safe position which even grandmasters may find hard to break down.

15.g3 \( \text{Bb}7 \) 16.0-0-0 0-0-0

With the pawn back on g7, Black’s position would have been passive but playable, whereas here White enjoys a clear plus.

17.\( \text{Qb}1 \) \( \text{Bb}6 \) 18.\( \text{Wf}2 \) \( \text{Qc}4 \) 19.\( \text{He}1 \) \( \text{Bb}6 \)?

This gives White the chance to employ a typical tactical device.

20.\( \text{Bxc}4 \) dxc4 21.\( \text{fxg}5 \) \( \text{Ed}7 \) 22.\( \text{Qf}5 \)! \( \text{Bxe}3 \) 23.\( \text{Wxe}3 \) \( \text{Wxe}3 \) 24.\( \text{Qxe}3 \) ±


10...b4?!

This was proposed by Vitiugov, and it is a reasonable way for Black to play, albeit not the most ambitious.

11.axb4 \( \text{Wxb}4 \)

11...cxb4?! is met by 12.f5! \( \text{Exf}5 \) 13.\( \text{Qf}4 \) \( \text{Qc}7 \) 14.\( \text{Qd}3 \) and Black’s position was already suspect in Konguvel – Jaiswal, Aurangabad 2011.

12.\( \text{Wxb}4 \)!

This is better than 12.c3 \( \text{Bb}7 \) and now:

a) 13.f5? \( \text{Exf}5 \) 14.\( \text{Qf}4 \) is not so strong here because of the simple 14...\( \text{cx}d4 \), when 15.\( \text{cx}d4 ?? \) loses the queen to 15...\( \text{b}4 \).

b) 13.\( \text{Qc}1 \)!! \( \text{Qc}7 \) 14.\( \text{Qd}3 \) c4 was balanced in Karjakin – Vitiugov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009.
c) 13.\(\text{dxc5?!} \quad \text{\$xc5} \quad 14.\text{\$ed4} \quad \text{\$e7} \quad 15.\text{\$e2}
0-0 \quad 16.0-0 \quad a5=\text{ was okay for Black in Li Chao – Ding Liren, Xinghua 2010.}

12...\(\text{\$xb4} \quad 13.\text{\$d2}\)

White's better pawn structure gave her a small plus in Milliet – Zhukova, Porto Carras 2011, though Black should not be too worried.

11.\(g3!\)

This move may look unambitious, but that is not the case. When studying this position with Jacob at the Istanbul Olympiad in September 2012, we realized that White's space advantage is a huge long-term asset, and if Black doesn't obtain counterplay soon, he will be in trouble.

I will mention a few alternatives to highlight some positional themes that may be applicable in related lines.

11.\(\text{g3}!\) is misguided because of 11...\(h5!\) with good play, Lelenko – Turkov, corr. 2010.

11.c3 is met by 11...\(\text{a5}!\) and Black does indeed develop counterplay quicker than White would like. For example: 12.\(\text{wc2} \quad \text{c4} \quad 13.\text{f2} \quad \text{e7} \quad 14.\text{g3} \quad \text{cxd4} \quad 15.\text{xd4} \quad \text{b7}
16.\text{xc4} \quad \text{dxc4} \quad 17.0-0 \quad 0-0 \quad 18.\text{e4} \quad \text{h6} \quad 19.\text{e2}
16.\text{xe4} \quad 20.\text{xe4} \quad \text{c5} \quad 21.\text{xc5} \quad \text{xc5}+ \quad 22.\text{h1}
\text{ad8=\textsc{F}} \quad \text{Klimakovs – Ingersol, email 2009.}

11.\(\text{c1}\) White wants to reroute this knight to \(b3\) or \(d3\) to help him to establish the desired dark-squared blockade. The problem is that Black has a concrete way to stop these ideas:

11...\(\text{cxd4}N \quad 12.\text{\$xd4} \quad \text{\$c5} \quad 13.\text{d3} \quad \text{a5}
14.\text{\$c3} \quad \text{\$c4}\)

11...\(\text{\$c7}\)

11...\(\text{cxd4}\) is more solid, but after 12.\(\text{\$xd4} \quad \text{\$c5} \quad 13.\text{\$xc6} \quad \text{\$e4} \quad 14.\text{c2} \quad \text{xc6} \quad 15.\text{d4}
\text{\$c7} \quad 16.\text{g2} \quad \text{b7} \quad 17.0-0 \quad \text{\$c5} \quad \text{White has an instructive manouvre:}

12.\(\text{\$g2} \quad \text{b7} \quad 13.0-0 \quad 0-0 \quad 14.\text{c3} \)
14.dxc5? dxc5 is excellent for Black, whose knight will go to e4.

14... a5 15. c2 c4 16. f2 ac8

Finally we come to the best line for Black. Looking at the database, we see French experts such as Potkin and Ding Liren using this move on a regular basis against strong opposition. Black’s idea is to play ...b4, taking advantage of the fact that the a1-rook is undefended.

We shall briefly examine two lines in which White doesn’t react to Black’s plan in the most challenging way: B1) 10.d1, and then 10.e2 in Game 42. We will then turn our attention to the main moves B2) 10.dxc5 and B3) 10.a2.

B) 9.a5!

A rare move, but it has scored well in practice, even at grandmaster level.

10...b8!

This is Black’s strongest response, as the threat of 11...b4 12.axb4 xb4 is annoying for White.

The immediate 10...b4 is playable but less ambitious: 11.axb4 xb4 12.b3 b7 13.a4 xd2+ 14.xd2 cxd4 15.xd4 xd4 16.xd4 c6 17.f2 (17.b2 is met by 17...c5 threatening ...a5-a4 and Black is at least okay) 17...xa4 18.bxa4 and a draw was agreed in Gashimov – Potkin, Abu Dhabi 2006.
Offering Black the chance to exchange queens can hardly be considered an opening success for White, whose chances of conducting a kingside attack practically disappear. Only the plan of blockading the dark squares can give White any hope for a positional advantage, but Black can generate enough counterplay.

11...e2 allows Black to carry out his idea: 11...b4 12.axb4 !xb4+ White is already under pressure in the centre and on the queenside.

11.dxc5 b4 12.axb4 occurred in Serner – Mignon, corr. 2010, and now the strongest recapture is:

12...xb4!N Perhaps Black was afraid of 13.dxd5, which initially appeals to the analysis engines, but going a bit deeper we see that Black has no problems at all: 13...exd5 14.c3 !b3 15.!!xd5 !xb2 16.!!xc6 !xc3+ 17.!!d2 !xc5=

11...b4
11...!!xd2+!N should also lead to equality.

12.axb4 !xb4 13.!!xb4 !xb4 14.!!d2
We have been following the game Najer – Ponkratov, Dagomys 2010, and here I would like to offer the following improvement:

14...a5!N

The possibility of exchanging the bad bishop should never be forgotten.

15.!!a1
Both 15.!!c3 and 15.!!g3 allow 15...!!a6.
15...!!c6 16.!!c1 !!a6 17.dxc5 !xc2 18.!!xe2 !xc5 19.!!d2 0-0
Black will double on the b-file, with at least an equal game.

GAME 42

Yu Yangyi – Ding Liren
Xinghua 2012

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.!!c3 !f6 4.e5 !fd7 5.f4 c5 6.!!f3 !c6 7.!!e3 !a6 8.!!d2 b5 9.a3 !a5 10.!!e2
This simple developing move does not pose Black any problems.

10...b4
10...!!b8?! makes no sense here, because after 11.0-0 b4 12.axb4 the queen is attacked and Black does not get time for ...!!xb4.

11.!!d1 !!b8
A top-level rapid game continued:
11...c4!?
Threatening ...bxa3, when White will not be able to take back with the rook.

12.a4 c3
Black wants to keep things fluid and unclear on the queenside, so that White will not be able to focus fully on creating play on the other flank.


Now that the situation has stabilized on the queenside, Black would like to stop any play on the other side, but this is easier said than done.

22...Bc8
McDonald suggested that Black could try to hold the kingside with 22...h5 23.Bh4 g6 24.Bf6 Bh8, but White has a way to break through: 25.f5! gxf5 (25...exf5 26.Bg5 looks grim for Black as well) 26.Bg5± followed by Bxh5.

White had developed a serious initiative and went on to win in Anand – Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2005. Although Ivanchuk’s play looked logical in the opening, I cannot recommend repeating it because Anand’s response was so powerful and convincing.

12.0-0

15.Bxd4 Bc5 16.Bxc5 Wxc5 17.b4 Wad7 was more or less equal in Grischuk – Potkin, Moscow 2012. Black can also consider 12...c4!? intending ...bxa3 followed by ...Bb3 with good counterplay on the queenside.


17...Bc5!
This temporary piece sacrifice leads to equality.

After 20...Be7 21.Bxe6 fxe6 22.Bc1 the endgame is slightly more pleasant for White.

21.Bc1 Bxc8 22.Bd4 Be7

20.0-0

15.Bxd4 Bc5 16.Bxc5 Wxc5 17.b4 Wad7 was more or less equal in Grischuk – Potkin, Moscow 2012. Black can also consider 12...c4!? intending ...bxa3 followed by ...Bb3 with good counterplay on the queenside.
23.\( \text{\textit{b5}} \)
Neither side can profitably avoid the draw by repetition.

23...\( \text{\textit{c8}} \) 24.\( \text{\textit{a7}} \) \( \text{\textit{c7}} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{b5}} \) \( \text{\textit{c8}} \) 26.\( \text{\textit{a7}} \) \( \text{\textit{c7}} \) 27.\( \text{\textit{b5}} \)
\( \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \)

B2) 10.\( \text{\textit{dx}} \text{\textit{c5}} \)

10...\( \text{\textit{x}} \text{\textit{c5}} \) 11.\( \text{\textit{xc5}} \) \( \text{\textit{dx}} \text{\textit{c5}} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{d4}} \)
This rather annoying move was recommended by Khalifman in \textit{Opening for White According to Anand}, but since then the solution for Black has been found.

12.\( \text{\textit{b4}} \)? simply blunders a pawn to 12...\( \text{\textit{dx}} \text{\textit{b4}} \).

12.\( \text{\textit{e2}} \) is seen in Game 43 below.

12...\( \text{\textit{b6}} \! \text{!} \)
The alternative is worse: 12...\( \text{\textit{dx}} \text{\textit{d4}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{xd4}} \) \( \text{\textit{a4}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{b4}} \) \( \text{\textit{b6}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{xb6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xb6}} \)
Now 16.\( \text{\textit{dx}} \text{\textit{d3}} \) \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{de2}} \) \text{h5} 18.\( \text{\textit{d4}} \) \text{g6} enabled Black create a fortress in Ponomario\( \text{v} \) – Akobian, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009. Ponomario\( \text{v} \) tried for another thirty moves without getting anywhere; despite the solid final result, the position is a joyless one for Black to defend.

In any case, White can do better with 16.\( \text{\textit{a4}} \! \text{!} \) as played in Komissarov – Smirnov, Podolsk 1993. This was recommended by Khalifman and I have not found a satisfactory answer for Black.

13.\( \text{\textit{xc6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc6}} \)

14.\( \text{\textit{b4}} \)
In Frolyanov – Skorchenko, Voronezh 2008, White played 14.\( \text{\textit{dd4}} \) threatening \text{a3-a4}, but a good way to deal with this is 14...\( \text{\textit{b8}} \! \text{!} \)
intending ...\( \text{\textit{b6}} \) and ...\text{b4}, with fine play for Black.

14...\( \text{\textit{d4}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{xe4}} \) \( \text{\textit{dx}} \text{\textit{e4}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{c1}} \! \text{!} \)
We are still following Khalifman's recommendation. Playing for a quick c2-c4 is White's only dangerous idea.

16...\( \text{\textit{0-0}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{c4}} \) \( \text{\textit{xc4}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{xc4}} \)
White has also tried:
18.\( \text{\textit{e3}} \) \text{a5} \! \text{!} \text{N}
Creating pressure and forcing White's reaction.
18...\( \text{\textit{b7}} \) was not so promising in Fuchs – Offinger, Germany 2008.
19.\( \text{\textit{xc4}} \) \( \text{\textit{d5}} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{b5}} \)
Otherwise Black opens the a-file and puts the other rook at d8, after which the white king will feel vulnerable.
Chapter 16 – The Modern 9.a3

Black is fine after 23...h6, defending against any back-rank mates. It is worth adding that the aggressive 24.f5?! turns out in Black’s favour after: 24...exf5 25.e6 c6 26.exf7+ f8

20...b7

20...xb5?? 21.xc8 is a tactic to avoid but, having moved the bishop, Black now threatens the b5-pawn.

21.c5 a2!

The queen is annoying here.

22.e2 fc8

Black has active play with at least equal chances.

21.e5 bxa3!N

This simple move was rejected by Black, but for no good reason.

23...d7? 24.d1 c7 25.c5 xc5† 26.bxc5 f8 27.a4 d5 28.c1 e7 29.d2 d8 30.e3 b6 31.c2 b2 32.e3 a2 33.e4 e4 34.e4 xe4 35.xe4 xg2 produced an interesting rook endgame in Ragger – B. Socko, Heraklio 2007, which ended in a draw.

24.f5

24.b6 xb3 25.xb7 e3† 26.xd8— is not an improvement for White.

24...d5!

Perhaps Black missed this strong resource.

24...xb4?? 25.fxe6 h6 26.exf7+ f8 27.d1—

25.f6 xb4—

The queen gets back to defend the g7-square, and the game is practically over.
White's e5-pawn is a problem and Black is already threatening \( \texttt{...f4} \).

17.\( \texttt{\texttt{c}3} \) \( \texttt{d}7 \) 18.\( \texttt{\texttt{x}e6} \) \( \texttt{e}8 \) 19.\( \texttt{c}7 \)!

19.\( \texttt{d}4 \)N is a better choice. After 19...\( \texttt{x}e5 \) 20.\( \texttt{\texttt{d}2} \) \( \texttt{a}7 \) followed by swinging the rook over to \( \texttt{e}7 \) or \( \texttt{f}7 \), Black is fine, but White has no reason to feel that he is worse.

19...\( \texttt{x}e5 \)† 20.\( \texttt{\texttt{d}4} \)

This king is uncomfortable here, but after 20.\( \texttt{\texttt{d}2} \) \( \texttt{a}7 \) the knight is trapped. So White has to use his king to provide the knight with the \( \texttt{d}5 \)-square as an escape route.

20...\( \texttt{\texttt{e}4} \)† 21.\( \texttt{\texttt{c}3} \) \( \texttt{d}4 \)† 22.\( \texttt{\texttt{d}2} \) \( \texttt{a}7 \) 23.\( \texttt{\texttt{d}5} \)

\( \texttt{c}5 \) 24.\( \texttt{\texttt{d}3} \) \( \texttt{g}4 \) 25.\( \texttt{\texttt{h}g1} \) \( \texttt{x}d3 \)

25...\( \texttt{f}7 \)†N was another idea.

26.cxd3

26...\( \texttt{\texttt{e}6} \)! 26...\( \texttt{\texttt{b}7} \)N was better in order to meet 27.\( \texttt{\texttt{b}4} \) with 27...\( \texttt{\texttt{x}g2} \)†.

27.h3!

After 27.\( \texttt{\texttt{b}4} \) \( \texttt{g}6 \) 28.\( \texttt{\texttt{e}a1} \) White may continue with \( \texttt{\texttt{c}2} \), and having to defend the \( \texttt{d}4 \)-pawn will limit Black's options.

27...\( \texttt{g}3 \) 28.\( \texttt{\texttt{d}4} \)
28.\( \text{b}4 \) now is met by 28...\( \text{c}f5 \) and Black threatens ...a5.

28...\( \text{a}5 \)

Now the threat is ...g5, and White has to defend tactically.

29.\( \text{e}ae1! \)

29...\( \text{f}7! \)

29...g5?! allows White to solve his problems with 30.\( \text{e}8! \) \( \text{f}7 \) 31.\( \text{e}5 \).

30.\( \text{e}8! \) \( \text{f}8 \) 31.\( \text{x}f8! \) \( \text{x}f8 \) 32.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 33.\( \text{e}2! \)

33.\( \text{h}4! \) \( \text{d}6 \) 34.\( \text{e}3 \) is a better defensive try, though after 34...\( \text{xf}3 \) 35.\( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) Black is much better.

33...\( \text{d}6 \) 34.\( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{xd}3! \) 35.\( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 36.\( \text{f}6 \) \( \text{h}5? \)

36...\( \text{h}6! \) would win quite simply.

37.\( \text{x}h5 \) \( \text{e}3 \) 38.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 39.\( \text{e}2 \) a5 40.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{b}3? \)

40...g5! should have been preferred, denying the white knight the use of the f4-square.

41.\( \text{c}1 \) b4 42.axb4 axb4 43.\( \text{g}1?! \)

Afer 43.g4! \text{e}6 44.\( \text{f}4! \) White manages to defend.

43...\( \text{e}4 \) 44.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e}3 \) 45.\( \text{g}4? \)

45.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xe2}! \) 46.\( \text{xe2} \) \( \text{g}2 \) 47.\( \text{h}4? \) would have kept some drawing chances.

45...\( \text{g}5 \) 46.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{g}3 \) 47.\( \text{e}1 \) d3 48.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 49.\( \text{e}1 \) b3 50.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{g}2 \) 51.\( \text{f}3! \) \( \text{e}3? \) 52.\( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 53.\( \text{f}8 \) \( \text{h}2 \) 54.\( \text{d}8? \) \( \text{g}3 \) 55.\( \text{e}8? \) \( \text{f}4 \) 56.\( \text{f}8? \) \( \text{g}3 \) 57.\( \text{d}8 \) \( \text{h}1? \) 58.\( \text{d}2 \) b2

0–1

B3) 10.\( \text{a}2 \)

This odd-looking move defends against Black’s threat of ...b4 without abandoning the a-file. It was recommended by Kasimdzhanov in his Beating the French ChessBase DVD.

10...\( \text{b}6! \)

Black opts for an improved version of the 9...\( \text{b}6 \) variation that we have studied in line A, with the benefit of having lured the white rook to the a2-square. We shall take a brief look at B31) 11.\( \text{g}3 \) before concentrating on B32) 11.\( \text{c}2 \).

B31) 11.\( \text{g}3 \)

11...\( \text{cxd}4 \) 12.\( \text{cxd}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 13.\( \text{c}2 \)

This retreat is forced, but in such positions White would prefer his knights to be on d4 and f3.
13...a5
Preventing b2-b4 and preparing the typical plan of ...a6 and ...b4.

14.c3
Renewing the threat.

14...a4
Now Black’s queenside pawns are immobilized, but he can look to exploit his opponent’s light-square weaknesses.

15.h3 a5 16.b4 a4 17.c2 f6?
Opening the centre is tempting, but Black can also opt for a more patient handling of the position with 17...b8N followed by ...c6, with at least equal chances.

18.xe6 fxe6 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.c8 x8 21.xf5
So far we have been following Hou Yifan – Ding Liren, Xinghua 2012. At this point Black missed a powerful idea:

21...x6N 22.0-0 x8 23.h5+ g6
Black is ready to walk his king to the queenside and then attack the white king unhindered. I would evaluate the position as unclear but more dangerous for White. Here is one brief example showing how quickly White may fall into trouble:

24.xh7+ d2!
With the deadly threat of 25.xh6 26.xg7 ef3† followed by mate.

B32) 11.e2
Turning to this critical move, we have two proposals for how Black may proceed, B321) 11...c7N and B322) 11...b4.

B321) 11...c7N

Black plays a third consecutive move with the queen, and achieves equal chances! At the start of the chapter I mentioned that Wolfgang Brodda introduced this move in a similar position, so it seems appropriate to call the current line the “Brodda Deferred”. The following continuation shows that Black’s scheme is made stronger by the presence of the white rook on a2 instead of a1.

12.g3 cxd4 13.xd4 c5 14.xc6 e4 15.xe2 x6c6 16.d4 x7 17.g2 b7 18.0-0 c5 19.c3 0-0 20.b3
In Papp – Kantor on page 286, we saw the same position, but with the white rook on a1; the difference is enough to change our assessment.

20...xe3† 21.xe3
21...\textit{\textbf{c}}4!

This gives Black the necessary tempo to equalize.

22.\textit{\textbf{d}}1 \textit{\textbf{ac}}8 23.\textit{\textbf{a}}1

23.\textit{\textbf{h}}1? \textit{\textbf{xc}}3! 24.\textit{\textbf{b}}xc3 \textit{\textbf{xf}}1†! 25.\textit{\textbf{x}}f1 \textit{\textbf{d}}4† shows that White cannot avoid the exchange of queens.

23...\textit{\textbf{wc}}5 24.\textit{\textbf{e}}1 \textit{\textbf{xe}}3† 25.\textit{\textbf{xe}}3 \textit{\textbf{c}}6=

Black is perfectly solid, although it will be tough to generate winning chances from such a position. The following line leads to more open play.

\textbf{B322) 11...b4}

This is the main line, and the obvious way of playing against the rook on a2.

12...\textit{\textbf{xb}}4?! is playable but less logical, and enables White to claim a slight edge: 13.\textit{\textbf{dxc}}5! \textit{\textbf{xd}}2† (13...\textit{\textbf{xc}}5 14.\textit{\textbf{ed}}4†) 14.\textit{\textbf{xd}}2 \textit{\textbf{xc}}5 15.\textit{\textbf{ed}}4†

13.\textit{\textbf{a}}1 \textit{\textbf{c}}6! 14.\textit{\textbf{ab}}1? N

I have made this untried move the main line because it was recommended by Bologan in his \textit{Fit for the French} DVD. Two other moves have been tested; the first is rather feeble but the second should be considered carefully.

14.\textit{\textbf{a}}2

Now 14...\textit{\textbf{db}}4 led to a draw by repetition in Dembo – E. Danielian, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, but it is possible for Black to continue with:

14...\textit{\textbf{b}}7N 15.\textit{\textbf{c}}3 \textit{\textbf{b}}4 16.\textit{\textbf{e}}2 \textit{\textbf{xd}}4 17.\textit{\textbf{xd}}4 \textit{\textbf{xd}}4 18.\textit{\textbf{xd}}4 \textit{\textbf{c}}5 19.\textit{\textbf{xc}}5 \textit{\textbf{xc}}5

Black plans to castle and then play ...\textit{\textbf{c}}6 followed by ...\textit{\textbf{a}}5-a4.

20.\textit{\textbf{a}}4 \textit{\textbf{c}}7 21.0–0 0–0 22.\textit{\textbf{b}}3 \textit{\textbf{c}}6 22...\textit{\textbf{f}}6 also offers equal chances.

23.\textit{\textbf{b}}2 \textit{\textbf{a}}5 24.\textit{\textbf{fa}}1 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 25.\textit{\textbf{g}}4 \textit{\textbf{f}}5 26.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 \textit{\textbf{c}}5

Intending ...\textit{\textbf{e}}4 with good play.

14.\textit{\textbf{b}}3

12.\textit{\textbf{xb}}4 \textit{\textbf{xb}}4

14.\textit{\textbf{e}}7? N

14...\textit{\textbf{b}}7 15.\textit{\textbf{c}}3 \textit{\textbf{c}}7 16.\textit{\textbf{a}}4 gave White

15...\texttt{c}c3
15.g3 0–0 16.\texttt{g}2 a5 17.\texttt{c}c3 (17.0–0 \texttt{a}6=) 17...\texttt{c}c7 18.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{b}8 is at least equal for Black, who intends ...\texttt{a}6.

15...\texttt{c}c7! 16.\texttt{a}4?!
After 16.g3? cxd4 17.\texttt{d}xd4 \texttt{b}4 the pin of the c3-knight is bad news for White.
I also considered 16.\texttt{e}2 cxd4 17.\texttt{x}xd4 \texttt{b}4 18.0–0 0–0 19.\texttt{x}c6 \texttt{xc}6 20.\texttt{d}4 a5 when Black is fine, with ...\texttt{a}6 coming next.

16...\texttt{g}5!!
This is the only idea that avoids a slight disadvantage for Black.

17.dxc5 gxf4 18.\texttt{x}f4 \texttt{xc}5 19.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5
Black is at least equal due to the weakness of the e5-pawn.

14...\texttt{e}7 15.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{c}7!
This is our usual method for pre-empting \texttt{a}4.

Bologan’s line continues 15...0–0 16.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{f}6 17.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{b}4 18.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 19.\texttt{xc}5 fxe5 20.c3 \texttt{b}8 21.fxe5 \texttt{xe}5 22.0–0 \texttt{g}4 23.g3 and White is better.

16.\texttt{a}2
16.g3 0–0 17.\texttt{g}2 a5 followed by ...\texttt{a}6 is fine for Black.

16...0–0 17.0–0 \texttt{a}5!
The standard idea; Black wants to exchange his bad bishop.

18.\texttt{h}1
18.f5? is met by 18...\texttt{xd}4 19.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{dxe}5\texttt{+} and White’s attack is not dangerous.

18...\texttt{xd}4!
Exchanging pieces on d4 is a safe route to equality, and the only line I would recommend.

18...\texttt{a}6?! 19.f5!
From a practical perspective there is no sense in allowing this kind of attack. Nevertheless, even in this unfavourable line Black has enough defensive resources to hold a draw.
I have included my analysis for instructive
purposes, as some of the following ideas may be applicable in related positions.

19...\textit{cxd}4 20.\textit{\textbf{c}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{x}}xe2 21.\textit{\textbf{f}}xe2 \textit{\textbf{c}}c5!

The bishop moves away from the intended f5-f6 break and puts pressure on White's centralized knight.

22.\textit{\textbf{c}}b5 \textit{\textbf{xd}4} 23.\textit{\textbf{xd}4}

23...\textit{\textbf{b}}b6!

Black counters the flank attack with pressure in the centre.

24.\textit{\textbf{xc}5} \textit{\textbf{xc}5} 25.\textit{\textbf{d}6}!
25.f6 gxf6 26.\textit{\textbf{xf}6} \textit{\textbf{h}8} White has avoided being brutally mated, and has even emerged slightly better due to the weak f6-pawn and his potential play both on the queenside and along the g-file.

25...\textit{\textbf{d}4}!

Black has to attack the e5-pawn.
After 25...f6!? 26.\textit{\textbf{f}xe6} \textit{\textbf{xe}5} 27.e7 \textit{\textbf{f}b}8 28.e8=\textit{\textbf{b}} \textit{\textbf{xe}8} 29.\textit{\textbf{xe}8} \textit{\textbf{xe}8} Black does not have full compensation for the exchange, despite his impressive centralized knight.

26.\textit{\textbf{be}1} \textit{\textbf{ad}8}

Renewing the threat to take on e5.

26...\textit{\textbf{xb}2}!? 27.f6 gxf6 28.\textit{\textbf{g}4} \textit{\textbf{h}8}
29.\textit{\textbf{h}5} \textit{\textbf{xc}2} 30.\textit{\textbf{xf}7} \textit{\textbf{g}8} looks dangerous for Black, although my computer insists that White has no more than a draw.

27.\textit{\textbf{xf}7} \textit{\textbf{xf}7} 28.\textit{\textbf{xe}6}

This also appears dangerous, but it only leads to a draw.

28...\textit{\textbf{xf}1} 29.\textit{\textbf{xf}1} \textit{\textbf{xe}5} 30.e7 \textit{\textbf{e}8} 31.\textit{\textbf{f}5}

White's attack has run out of steam, so he has to deliver perpetual check.

19.\textit{\textbf{xd}4}

19...\textit{\textbf{b}4}! 20.\textit{\textbf{cb}5}! followed by c2-c3 gives White the advantage.

20.\textit{\textbf{xd}4} \textit{\textbf{c}5} 21.\textit{\textbf{b}5} \textit{\textbf{b}6}

This familiar simplifying method leads to equal play.

22.\textit{\textbf{a}1} \textit{\textbf{xd}4} 23.\textit{\textbf{xd}4}

23...\textit{\textbf{xd}4} 24.\textit{\textbf{xd}4} \textit{\textbf{a}6}
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25...\texttt{xa6}

25...\texttt{xa5}?! initiates complications that turn out in Black's favour: 25...\texttt{xe}2 26.\texttt{xa}8 \texttt{xf}1 27.\texttt{a}1 \texttt{c}4 28.b3 \texttt{c}8\texttt{+}

25...\texttt{xa6} 26.b3=

The endgame is balanced.

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined the most critical variation of the 7...a6 system, which arises after 8.\texttt{d}2 b5 9.a3.

After A) 9...\texttt{b}6 10.\texttt{e}2! the German correspondence GM Wolfgang Brodda introduced 10...\texttt{c}7?!. This has some interesting ideas behind it, but careful examination revealed a route to an advantage for White.

B) 9...\texttt{a}5! is a better move, when White must decide how to react to the prospect of ...b4. One important option is B2) 10.\texttt{xc}5 as recommended by Khalifman, but the later improvement 18...\texttt{a}4! gives Black comfortable equality.

White's most important try these days is B3) 10.\texttt{a}2, when 10...\texttt{b}6! gives Black an improved version of Variation A, as the white rook is worse on \texttt{a}2 than \texttt{a}1. After 11.\texttt{e}2 Black can choose between the solid Brodda Deferred line with 11...\texttt{c}7?!N and the more open 11...b4 12.axb4 \texttt{x}b4. The two lines lead to different types of positions but both can be evaluated as approximately equal and theoretically healthy for Black.
Chapter 17

The Classical Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\(\triangle c3\) \(\triangle f6\) 4.\(\triangle g5\) \(\triangle e7\)

A) 5.\(\triangle xf6\) \(\triangle xf6\) 6.e5
   6.\(\triangle f3\) – Game 44

B) 5.e5 \(\triangle fd7\) 6.h4!? \(\triangle c6!?\)
   B1) 7.\(\triangle h3\)
   B2) 7.f4
   B3) 7.\(\triangle g4\)
   B4) 7.\(\triangle d2\)
      7.\(\triangle f3\) – Game 45

Game 44  Jan Foltys – Paul Keres, Prague 1937  302
Game 45 Sebastien Maze – Mateusz Bartel, Aix-les-Bains 2011  309
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

The threat of $\text{h}5^+$ looks strong. Is there a way to deal with it? (page 306)

White is threatening a pawn. How would you react? (page 309)

Can you find the clearest way for Black to proceed? (page 302)

Suggest a logical plan of action for Black. (page 307)

Not a typical French position. What is Black's best move? (page 309)

Can you see how White secures an advantage? (page 305)

Should White exchange on e7 or not? (page 308)

What is Black's most logical plan? (page 310)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\text{\textit{c3}} \text{\textit{c6}} 4.\text{\textit{g5}} \text{\textit{e7}}

This move introduces the Classical Variation, which is recommended for those who do not want to become involved in the chaos of the McCutcheon Variation. The worst thing that can happen to Black here is to suffer a slight disadvantage, but even that should be manageable in practice.

I have to admit that, prior to writing this book, I never fully trusted 4...\text{\textit{e7}}. First of all, exchanging Black’s good bishop for White’s bad one seemed like a strategic concession. Secondly, when dealing with the specifics, there was always a theoretical problem in each line I looked at. After 5.e5 \text{\textit{d7}}, not only 6.\text{\textit{xe7}} but also 6.h4?! looked to be in excellent theoretical shape.

When Jacob told me that we should feature 4...\text{\textit{e7}} in the book, I revisited my old notes, trying to find traces of hope, while checking modern analytical engines and the latest games, especially high-level correspondence ones.

What I discovered was actually quite enlightening! First of all in the Alekhine Gambit with 6.h4?!.., the reply 6...\text{\textit{c6}}?!., played a couple of times by Morozevich, has become popular and appears perfectly playable. The older 6...c5 line also looks in fine shape these days, so I feel more confident than ever against 6.h4.

Against 6.\text{\textit{xe7}}, Jacob offered excellent advice accompanied with some fascinating analysis of 6...\text{\textit{xe7}} 7.f4 a6! 8.\text{\textit{f3}} \text{\textit{b6}}!. Thus after more than ten years of playing and studying the French Defence, I suddenly find myself yearning for a suitable chance to test 4...\text{\textit{e7}} in my own games.

In this chapter we will analyse the rare A) 5.\text{\textit{xf6}}, before commencing our study of the main continuation, which is of course B) 5.e5.

5.exd5 exd5 transposes to an unthreatening version of the Exchange Variation.

A) 5.\text{\textit{xf6}} \text{\textit{xf6}}

6.e5

This has a certain appeal in a strategic sense. Having exchanged bishop for knight, White closes the centre and puts his pawns on dark squares.

6.\text{\textit{f3}} is covered in Game 44 below.

6...\text{\textit{c7}} 7.\text{\textit{g4}}

7.f4 c5 8.\text{\textit{f3}} \text{\textit{c6}} 9.\text{\textit{d2}} looks like a plausible way for White to develop, but it does not trouble Black: 9...\text{\textit{xd4}} 10.\text{\textit{xd4}}
10...\textit{\texttt{d7}}!N 11.\textit{\texttt{b3}} (11.0-0-0? allows the nasty 11...\textit{\texttt{xe5}}! winning a pawn) 11...\textit{\texttt{c8}} 12.\textit{\texttt{d3}} 0-0\# Black is fully mobilized and ready to break with ...\textit{\texttt{f6}} next.

7...0-0 8.\textit{\texttt{d3}}

8...\textit{\texttt{f5}}! 9.\textit{\texttt{h3}}  
9.exf6?! \textit{\texttt{xf6}} gives Black easy play on the dark squares.

9...\textit{\texttt{c5}} 10.\textit{\texttt{dxc5}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{b6}}! 12.0-0-0  
After 12.\textit{\texttt{cxb6}} \textit{\texttt{xb6}} White is in trouble as he cannot hide his king.

12...\textit{\texttt{bxc5}} 13.\textit{\texttt{g4}} \textit{\texttt{c4}} 14.\textit{\texttt{xc4}} \textit{\texttt{fxg4}} 15.\textit{\texttt{g2}}

15...\textit{\texttt{xf4}}!N  
15...\textit{\texttt{a5}}?! 16.\textit{\texttt{xd5}} exd5 17.\textit{\texttt{xd5}}\# \textit{\texttt{h8}} 18.\textit{\texttt{xa8}} was unclear in Pilnik – Stahlberg, Mar del Plata 1942.

After the text move Black is doing well because the sacrifice on d5 no longer works:

16.\textit{\texttt{xd5}} \textit{\texttt{wb6}}! 17.\textit{\texttt{b3}} \textit{\texttt{e3}}\# 18.\textit{\texttt{d2}} \textit{\texttt{d4}} 19.\textit{\texttt{d1}} \textit{\texttt{xd2}}\# 20.\textit{\texttt{xd2}} \textit{\texttt{xd2}} 21.\textit{\texttt{xd2}} \textit{\texttt{xe5}}--+  
Black’s extra pawn, bishop pair and lead in development add up to a decisive advantage in the endgame.

\begin{center}
\textbf{GAME 44} \\
Jan Foltys – Paul Keres \\
Prague 1937
\end{center}

1.\textit{\texttt{d4}} e6 2.\textit{\texttt{e4}} d5 3.\textit{\texttt{Cc3}} \textit{\texttt{df6}} 4.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{Cc7}} 5.\textit{\texttt{xf6}} \textit{\texttt{xf6}} 6.\textit{\texttt{f3}}  
This move, a pet line of the unofficial World Champion Adolf Anderssen back in the 19th century, is more dangerous than closing the centre.

6...0-0 7.\textit{\texttt{d3}}  
White is preparing for a Greek Gift sacrifice on h7, but this idea is doomed to failure without the dark-squared bishop.
7...c5 8.e5 dxe5 9.dxc5

9.h4 cxd4 10.hxh7+ gxh7 11.g5+ h6!
is great for Black, simply because White doesn't have a dark-squared bishop. 12.c1N (After 12.d3 g6 13.e2 g7 14.f4 h8 15.0-0-0 c6 White had nothing for the sacrificed piece in Kemeny – Schrader, Saint Louis 1904.)

10...xc5

This move was proposed by Watson on ChessPublishing. The engine likes it, but I am not convinced that many humans would be happy going down this path.

11.xh7+!
The only critical move.

11...xh7 12.g5+ g6
12.g6? does not work this time: 13.d2 xg5 14.hxg5+ g6 15.f4±

According to Watson, White does not have enough compensation for his piece. Technically this may be true, but in a practical game Black would face an ongoing attack.

10...a5! The queen steps out of the range of the threatened discovered check. 13.xe6+ h7 14.xf8+ xf8 Black is simply winning.

13.g4 xg5 14.f4 h8 N

This was Watson's proposal. Another idea is: 14...f5 15.exf6 xf6N (15.gxf6? 16.hxg5 h8 17.h6+ f7 18.h5+ 1-0 Lundin – Ask, Gothenburg 2006) 16.hxg5+ e7 17.h7 g8 18.0-0-0 A

According to Houdini Black can defend here, although in a practical game White's compensation would be annoying.

15.0-0-0

White has genuine compensation. Here is an illustrative line, using Houdini's top suggestions for Black.

15...f5 16.exf6 xf6 17.hxg5 fxg5 18.xh8 xh8 19.g5+ f7 20.f5

Black is in trouble.
11.exf6?!
11.b4 is White’s best try. Then 11...b6! 12...b5 was played in Bichsel – Zueger, Switzerland 1995, but after the simple 12...a6!N Black is much better.

11...fxe5+
White wants to castle queenside, so the bishop will do a great job on the long diagonal, defending and attacking at the same time. The rest of the game turns into a one-man show, as Keres skilfully develops his advantage.

12.dxe5 dxe5 13.0–0–0 a5 14.a3 d7
Black could obtain a good endgame with 14...dxc3 15.xc3 xc3 16.bxc3 d7, but he would rather keep the queens on the board as his attack is more dangerous.

15.e1 c8 16.e5 xe5 17.xe5 d4 18.xc5
White has to give up the exchange, because if the knight moves then 18...b3† wins the queen.

18.xh7+ xh7 19.xd4 a4?! 20.xa4 x4 21.e4 x5 leaves White with insufficient compensation for the piece.

18...xe5 19.e4 d5 20.b1 e5 21.f3 h6 22.b3 e6 23.h5 a5 24.a4

24.h8
Good technique by Keres; by moving to a dark square the king avoids any tactical accidents.

25.g1 c3 26.b5 c7 27.d3 d7 28.g4 x3 29.g5 f5 30.xh6 x4 31.xg7+ x7 32.xg7+ x7 33.g5+ f7
The checks are over, so White resigned.
0–1

Returning to 5.e5, we shall now focus on:

B) 5.e5 fd7 6.h4?

6.xe7 is the main line covered in Chapters 19 and 20, but before then we must deal with the aggressive text move. We have chosen to call this simply the Alekhine Gambit, though it is also known as the Albin-Chatard Gambit as well as the Alekhine-Chatard Attack. It was first played by the Romanian Adolf Albin in 1890, and then was taken up by the French player Eugene Chatard and others. Alekhine was apparently the first to discover, after 6...xg5 7.hxg5 xg5, that 8.h3!! is stronger than Albin’s 8.f3, and it was this discovery that made the gambit appear dangerous. More than 75 years later, the Swedish GM Hector discovered an even better move, 8.d3!, making the acceptance of the gambit even
more problematic from a theoretical point of view. I would advise against accepting the gambit, as for the cost of a flank pawn White gets an excellent lead in development and a fantastic rook without even moving it.

In the present position, my primary recommendation is 6...c5!, which is covered in the next chapter. In this chapter I would like to draw your attention to a different plan which I also find quite appealing.

6...c6!?

Before analysing this move, let me briefly show you one other topical line that I discarded:

6...0–0

This has been advocated by Moskalenko and Ziegler, but I consider it dangerous for Black. Here is a shortened version of my analysis, showing the most important points:

7.d3 c5 8.g5 g6 9.h6 c6
9...cxd4 10.f3 cxd5 11.xe5 dxc3 (11...c6? 12.xg6!N) 12.xg6! fxg6 13.xg6 hxg6 14.xg6+ h8 15.h3 cxb2 16.b1 was better for White in Martin Clemente – Holmberg, email 2006.

After that brief diversion, let us return to the safer 6...c6!?:

10.f4 cxd4
10...cxd4N 11.f3!! is good for White, as shown by Moskalenko in *The Flexible French*. 11.0–0–0!
11.h5? xg5 12.fxg5 e7?!N is an important defensive idea. White’s attack is stymied and his centre is collapsing.

11...e8N
11...f5 12.f3 (12.h3?!N is also strong) 12.xf3 13.gxf3 xg5 14.hxg5 e7 15.b5+ Bellon Lopez – Gleizerov, Stockholm 2005.
12.xe7 xe7 13.h5 f8 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.h4 b5

Moskalenko says Black has counterplay here, but Goh Wei Ming points out the following strong continuation on ChessPublishing:

16.f2! xe2† 17.xe2

Intending f3–g5, with better chances for White.
I find the idea behind this move quite brilliant; Black wants to lure White into exchanging on e7, and after taking back with the queen, Black will play ...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\)6 and ...\(\text{\texttt{d}}\)7 then castle queenside. This plan is viable only after White has played 6.h4. If the pawn stood on h2, White would simply be able to castle kingside and launch a pawn storm on the queenside, gaining time by attacking the black knights. With the pawn on h4 though, Black will have at least as many attacking chances as White, because he can open the kingside with ...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)6 (or ...\(\text{\texttt{h}}\)6) and ...\(\text{\texttt{g}}\)5. If White castles queenside then ...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)6 will give Black counterplay in the centre, while allowing the d7-bishop to be activated via e8 and g6 or h5.

White might avoid exchanging on e7 and play ...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\)3 or ...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)4, but in that case the bishop won’t be particularly well placed and White still won’t be able to castle on the kingside. In this scenario, Black may keep his king in the centre and expand on the queenside with ...\(\text{\texttt{a}}\)6, ...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\)5, and ...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\)6. For this reason, Black should generally refrain from playing ...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\)6 until the white bishop has committed to an exchange on e7. If the knight goes to b6 prematurely, White can retreat his bishop to f4 or e3, when the ...\(\text{\texttt{b}}\)5 plan is no longer available to Black.

We will examine B1) 7.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\)3, B2) 7.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)4, B3) 7.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\)4 and B4) 7.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\)2.

7.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)3 is the most common move, and it will be discussed in the illustrative game at the end of the chapter.

**B1) 7.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\)3**

White defends the g5-bishop, but the lack of control over the e5-square makes the following break more effective.

7...\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)6! 8.\(\text{\texttt{xf}}\)6

White should not be tempted by:

8...\(\text{\texttt{xf}}\)4?!

It looks tempting to attack e6 while threatening \(\text{\texttt{h}}\)5\(\text{\texttt{f}}\), but Black can counter with a temporary knight sacrifice:

8...\(\text{\texttt{dxe}}\)5! 9.\(\text{\texttt{dxe}}\)5 \(\text{\texttt{xe}}\)5

10.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\)5\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)

10.\(\text{\texttt{e}}\)2 \(\text{\texttt{fxg}}\)5 11.\(\text{\texttt{hxg}}\)5 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)6 12.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\)5\(\text{\texttt{f}}\) was played in Euwe – Maroczy, Amsterdam 1922, and now simply 12...\(\text{\texttt{g}}\)6\(\text{\texttt{f}}\) is much better for Black.

10...\(\text{\texttt{g}}\)6 11.\(\text{\texttt{dxe}}\)6 \(\text{\texttt{xd}}\)6 12.\(\text{\texttt{e}}\)3 \(\text{\texttt{d}}\)7 13.\(\text{\texttt{h}}\)6 \(\text{\texttt{g}}\)8 14.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\)4 \(\text{\texttt{xc}}\)6 15.0–0–0 \(\text{\texttt{c}}\)7

White did not have enough for the pawn in Asgari – Ghane Gardeh, Teheran 2005.

8...\(\text{\texttt{xf}}\)6 9.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\)2

9...\(\text{\texttt{a}}\)6?! 10.0–0–0 0–0 11.\(\text{\texttt{e}}\)2 \(\text{\texttt{b}}\)5

The position was double-edged in Kosteniuk – Matveeva, Moscow 2010.
B2) 7.f4

This was seen in a clash between two strong grandmasters, both of them French Defence players, and we shall follow this short but instructive encounter.

7...b6

There is no need to maintain the possibility of ...a6, ...b5 and ...b6, because White is unable to avoid the exchange on e7.

8.d2 h6 9.e7xe7 10.e7f3 d7 11.d1

11.0-0-0 0-0-0 12.d3 b8 13.b1 f6 also gives Black good counterplay.

11...0-0-0 12.e3

12...f6!

We now see the second stage of the plan.

13.c3 d8 14.d3 c8 15.e7 d7 16.h5 fxe5 17.fxe5 c7 18.c2 f7 19.g4 e8 20.h4 c5

½–½ Vallejo Pons – Zvjaginsev, Rijeka 2010. With ...c6 and ...b8 coming next, Black is definitely not worse in the final position.

B3) 7.g4

7...f6!

According to my database, this was played the first time this position arose more than eighty years ago, and it is still considered strong today.
8. exf6
8. d3? dxe5! 9. dxe5 dxe5 10. h5 g6 11. xg6 hgxg6 12. h6 occurred in the stem game Euwe – Olland, Amsterdam 1921. At this point 12... g8N is clearly better for Black who has an extra pawn and good central control.

8... dxe6 9. d1 0–0 10. f3 h6 11. e3
Black has a comfortable position, and the following game is instructive:

19... e7!N
Black can continue with ... f6 and ... b5, with excellent chances.

B4) 7. d2

A natural move; White defends the g5-bishop while maintaining flexibility with his other pieces.

7... h6!
7... b6?! is an instructive mistake which has been seen in several games. 8. 0–0 h6 9. xxe7?! xxe7 transposes to the main line, and this was the move order that actually occurred in the Petrosian – Sedlak game as referenced below. The problem with this move order is that 9. f4!N and 9. e3!N are more troublesome, as Black does not have the plan of ... a6 and ... b5 available.

8. xxe7
In this position retreating the bishop would be met by ... a6 followed by ... b5 and ... b6, with good play for Black.

8... xxe7 9. 0–0–0 b6
We have arrived back at a common position, having prevented White from making an advantageous bishop retreat to f4 or e3.
10.\text{\textit{f}} h3

10.……\textit{d} b1N is met by the standard 10...\textit{d} d7 11.\textit{h} 5 0–0–0, intending ...\textit{b} b8, ...\textit{e} e8 and ...f6 with counterplay.

10.\textit{f} f3 \textit{d} d7 11.\textit{h} 5 0–0–0 12.\textit{h} h4 was played in Simonian – Jarocho, Warsaw 2011, and here 12...f6!N would be thematic and good.

10...\textit{d} d7 11.\textit{g} g3 f6

11...\textit{g} g8? 12.\textit{x} xh6!±

12.exf6 gxf6 13.\textit{g} g6?! 
So far we have been following D. Petrosian – Sedlak, Rijeka 2010. At this point Black can make a promising pawn sacrifice:

13...\textit{e} e5!N 14.\textit{x} xe5 fxe5 15.\textit{x} xh6

15.\textit{xd} d5 \textit{xd} d5 16.\textit{xd} d5 0–0–0 17.\textit{e} e4 \textit{d} d8 also gives Black fine compensation.

15...\textit{f} xh6 16.\textit{f} xh6 0–0–0
Black has excellent compensation for his pawn. A possible continuation is:

17.\textit{xd} d5?! \textit{xd} d5 18.\textit{xd} d5 \textit{f} f7 19.\textit{d} d2 \textit{e} e7 20.\textit{e} e5 \textit{g} g4 21.\textit{d} d3 e4 22.\textit{xa} xa7 \textit{d} d6!

22...exd3? 23.\textit{a} a8+ \textit{d} d7 24.\textit{xd} d3+ \textit{d} d5 25.\textit{xd} d8+ \textit{xd} d8 26.\textit{x} xd4 is not a simple position to play for either side, but the four pawns for the piece along with the unsafe black king gives White the advantage.

23.\textit{a} a8+ \textit{b} b8?
Black wins a piece under more favourable circumstances than in the previous note. Here too, White will have a lot of pawns in return, but the big difference is that White's king is in more danger.

\textbf{GAME 45}

\textit{Sebastien Maze – Mateusz Bartel}

Aix-les-Bains 2011

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{c} c3 \textit{f} f6 4.\textit{g} g5 \textit{e} e7 5.e5 \textit{d} d7 6.h4 \textit{c} c6 7.\textit{f} f3
As mentioned previously, this has been White's most popular choice.

7...h6

7...b6?! has been more popular, but once again this move makes it more tempting for White to avoid the exchange on e7.

7...f6?! is an interesting alternative. A possible continuation is: 8.exf6 (8...f4 fxe5N 9.dxe5 0–0 10.g3 b6 offers Black good counterplay.) 8...xf6 9.b5 0–0 10.e2 b4 11.xc6 bxc6 12.d2 a5 13.0–0–0 b6 Black had taken over the initiative in Govedarica – Sedlak, Belgrade 2009.

8.f4

8.xe7 wxe7 is fine for Black, who plans ...b6, ...d7 and ...0–0–0, followed by breaking with ...f6.

8...a6! 9.e2

9.h3 was played in Bodek – Wheeler, Las Vegas 2012, and here the consistent continuation for Black is 9...b5N 10.g3 f8!? with balanced play. Black may continue with ...e7 and ...c5, or ...b6-c4.

9...b5

Let me repeat once again: this space-gaining move is the reason why Black should not play ...b6 too early.

10.a4 b4

10...bxa4?N 11.a4 0–0, with ideas such as ...f6, or ...b4 followed by ...c5, gives Black enough counterplay and would have been a sound alternative.

11.g3 a5 12.e3 c5

Black is doing fine, and over the next few moves he starts to get the better of the struggle.

13.h5 g6 14.f4 cxd4 15.xd4 c6 16.c4

This seems a bit optimistic, but Black was at least equal in any case.

16.xd4 17.xd4 c5 18.d2

18...c7
18...dxc4! 19.\textbf{\textit{d}}xc4 \textbf{\textit{d}}b7 is a better choice, when the French bishop triumphantly occupies the long diagonal.

19.cxd5 \textbf{\textit{d}}xe5 20.\textbf{\textit{d}}xe2 \textbf{\textit{g}}4 21.\textbf{\textit{d}}d3 \textbf{\textit{d}}d6
22.dxe6 \textbf{\textit{d}}xe6 23.\textbf{\textit{d}}d4 \textbf{\textit{e}}7 24.\textbf{\textit{x}}xe6 \textbf{\textit{x}}xe6
25.\textbf{\textit{f}}4 \textbf{\textit{f}}6

26.g3 h5 might be a safer route to equality, though a draw was agreed here anyway.

$\frac{1}{2}$–$\frac{1}{2}$

**Conclusion**

We began our coverage of the Classical Variation by dealing with the old move 5.\textbf{\textit{x}}xf6, which does not cause any problems against correct defence. We then moved on to the main theoretical branch involving 5.e5 \textbf{\textit{d}}fd7, examining the aggressive Alekhine Gambit with 6.h4?!

After discussing the drawbacks of a couple of popular lines, we concentrated on the modern 6...\textbf{\textit{c}}c6?! Depending on White's choice of 7th move, Black may continue with 7...\textbf{\textit{f}}6, or in some cases 7...h6, forcing White to decide what to do with his bishop.

If White exchanges on e7, then after ...\textbf{\textit{w}}xe7 followed by ...\textbf{\textit{b}}6, ...\textbf{\textit{d}}7 and long castling, the presence of the white pawn on h4 enables Black to obtain counterplay on the kingside.

If White goes back with \textbf{\textit{f}}4 or \textbf{\textit{e}}3, then Black is advised to play ...a6 and ...b5 followed by ...\textbf{\textit{b}}6 with good prospects on the queenside.

The 6...\textbf{\textit{c}}c6 variation has not been tested and analysed in as much detail as some other moves, but based on the evidence so far, it looks fully playable. Factor in the surprise value and the simple logic of Black's follow-up play, and you have a fine system whose popularity is only likely to increase.
Chapter 18

Alekhine Gambit with 6...c5!

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 f6 4.g5 e7 5.e5 d7 6.h4!? c5! 7.xe7! xe7!

A) 8.b5
B) 8.f3!
C) 8.f4 wb6! 9.a4 a5+ 10.c3 b6 11.h3
   11.f2 – Game 46
D) 8.g4
E) 8.xc5 xe5! 9.e2! bc6 10.0–0–0 wa5! 11.b1
   11.f4 – Game 47
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

**Diagram Preview**

What simple move should Black play? (page 317)

How should Black continue? (page 320)

How can Black defuse White's initiative? (page 325)

Evaluate Black's chances. (page 326)

How does Black arrange his pieces harmoniously? (page 322)

Should Black exchange bishops on f1, or is there a better move? (page 318)

Can you find a plan to solve the problem of the h8-rook? (page 323)

Black has two playable ideas. Can you find either of them? (page 327)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 d6 4.g5 e7 5.e5 fd7 6.h4?! c5!

Although 6...c6!? is a fully viable option that will appeal to many players, there is something appealing about meeting White's system head-on with a strong central counter.

I have always considered this to be the most natural move in this position, and I am not the only one. The great Richard Reti played the Alekhine Gambit several times as White, but the only time he faced it as Black, against the future World Champion Max Euwe in 1923, he opted for this continuation. In the 1930s the strong Swedish GM Stahlberg used this line exclusively. In more modern times, Ulibin and Gleizerov championed this move in the 1990s, but despite their efforts, my old edition of *ECO* and Pedersen's *The Main Line French* (published in 2001) preferred White's chances. Today though, with more recent practical material available and more powerful analytical tools to work with, it seems that new life can be breathed into the line.

7.xe7!

This has been by far White's most popular choice here, no doubt because it obliges Black to recapture with the king. Other moves are not critical.

7.g4?!

This allows Black to obtain at least equal chances.

7...hxg5! 8.xg5

8.hxg5 cxd4 9.xd4 (9.b5 Binder – Ripperger, St Ingbert 1994, can be met by 9...a5+N 10.c3 xe5 11.xd4 bc6, with the better game for Black.) 9...c6 10.d2 dxe5 11.f4 Scacco – Sharikov, email 1998, and now Black should play: 11...d4! 12.e4 d5 13.f2 g6=+ 8...xg5 9.hxg5 c6 10.b5 e7 11.f4 a6 12.d6 dxe4 13.0–0–0 b6 14.d3 b5 15.xb5 axb5 16.b1

This was Van Bavel – Wustefeld, Groningen 2005, and Black should now go for:

16...c4! 17.xb5 d7 18.c3 c6

Continuing with ...d4 will give Black an excellent position.

7.b5?!

This might look threatening, but Black has a strong reply:
7...f6! 8.exf6
8...d3? a6 9.h5+ f8 10.h3? cxd4 11.f3 axb5 12.h6 a5†! (12...gxh6? 13.xh6† e8 14.h5† would give White a perpetual) 13.d2 b4 White resigned in Kapnisis – Ulibin, Athens 1997. Black’s position is too solid for such brutal play to be effective.

8...xf6
Both the h4-pawn and the knight on b5 are misplaced. White is slightly worse already, and in the following game his position went downhill rapidly.
9.d3?! a6 10.a3 cxd4 11.f3 c6 12.e2 b4† 13.f1 0–0†
White was in serious trouble in Caruso – Gleizerov, Padua 1999.

7...xe7!
I don’t believe in Black’s compensation after:
7...xe7 8.b5 0–0 9.c7 c6
Black has also tried 9...cxd4? 10.xa8 f6! 11.xd4 c6 12.d2 fxe5. Although in a practical game Black has some compensation, White’s chances are objectively higher.

10.xa8

Returning to the main line, moving the king is a definite concession, but one that Black can withstand thanks to his solid pawn centre. Meanwhile the pawns on d4 and e5 are under fire, so White must decide what to do.

We shall first take a look at the lesser possibilities A) 8.b5 and B) 8.f3, and then study in some detail the main theoretical options of C) 8.f4, D) 8.g4 and E) 8.c5.

A) 8.b5

Black had won some material back and eventually managed to draw in A. Hunt – Short, Bunratty 2011, but I would not recommend this line as anything more than a blitz weapon.

8...cxd4 9.xd4 e6 10.xc6 bxc6 11.0–0 0–0 b6 12.g4

This was Euwe’s choice in the aforementioned game, which we will follow for a while.
12.\textit{f}4N is another option, but with 12...\textit{b}8 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{h}6! Black stops \textit{g}5+ and stands fine.

This rare move provides a simple and effective solution.

8...\textit{c}xd4
This is the obvious choice, but there is a problem with it.

9.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{f}4 \textit{c}7 11.0–0–0 \textit{dxe}5

A possible continuation is 14.\textit{h}3 \textit{c}7 15.\textit{f}3 \textit{f}8 and Black intends ...\textit{c}5 and/or ...\textit{a}5 with excellent counterplay.

12...\textit{f}8 13.\textit{f}3 \textit{b}8 14.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}4 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}7 16.\textit{f}4
Now in Euwe – Reti, Scheveningen 1923, the simplest continuation for Black is:

16...\textit{c}5N
With good counterplay.

B) 8.\textit{f}3
This move is not as innocent as it looks.

8...\textit{b}6!
11...c4! 12.h5 h6= White will have to weaken his queenside to rescue the knight from a4.

The queen move was played in Kovacevic – Saric, Herceg Novi 2007. At this point Black should have played:

**9...cxd4N**

Followed by ...c6 with equality.

**C) 8.f4**

A logical move from a strategic point of view, but fortunately for Black it gives him enough time to equalize with a typical French manoeuvre.

**8...b6! 9.a4**

Black need not fear the pawn sacrifice: 9.f3?! xb2 10.b5

**10...b4?!**

This shows Black’s desire to continue playing. 10...a6 is possible, after which best play by both sides continues 11.b1 xa2 12.a1 b2 with a draw to follow, as in Maksimovic – Ulibin, Chelyabinsk 1990.

11.f2 a6 12.d6

This position is highly complex but still about balanced. Now 12...c6 13.c4?! was messy in Rakow – Lamprecht, Hamburg 1998. Instead I would recommend the simpler continuation:

**12...c3?N**

Black will play ...c6 next, with good chances.

**9...a5† 10.c3**

**10...b6**

This is Black’s idea, with ...a6 to follow. White will maintain a space advantage, but with two pairs of minor pieces exchanged, that is not a huge concern.

11.h3

This was suggested by Pedersen back in 2001, but had to wait until 2009 for a practical test.

11.f2 features in Game 46 below.

Another idea is:
11.a3
Threatening b2-b4.
11...c4! 12.b4 cxb3 13.axb3 c6!
By threatening ...d5, Black conveniently
develops with tempo.
14.b5
14.f3 a6 15.xa6 cxa6 is fine for
Black, one point being that 16.f5? is met
by 16...d3 when it is Black who grabs
the initiative. White should instead go for
16...b2, but after 16...a5 Black is at least
equal.
14...b7 15.f3

15...hc8!!
Black has the simple idea of doubling on the
c-file. 15...xb5 16.xb5 h5 was also fine for

11.b1 has the same idea as 11.a3, but White
hopes that the rook will be more useful on
the b-file. After 11...c4 12.b4 cxb3 Hector –
He. Gretarsson, Gentofte 1999, Finkel gives
13.xb3N as slightly better for White.
However, Black does better with 11...c6!!N,
stopping any b2-b4 ideas. Black plans ...a6
next, and equalizes quite easily.

11...a6 12.f3
Here too, 12.b1N is met by 12...c6=, rather than 12...xf1 13.xf1 c6 14.e2= as
given by Pedersen.

12...c6!!N
White is not yet ready for f4-f5, and so Black
simply completes his development.

12...xf1 13.xf1 was okay for Black in Trent –
Rendle, Torquay 2009, but there is no real
point in exchanging on f1 as White would like
to hide his king on the kingside anyway.

13.xa6 cxa6 14.f2
14.f5? exf5 15.xf2 he8=

14...g6 15.h5
15.g1 h5=

15...f6! 16.g1 fxe5 17.fxe5 a8
Black has good counterplay.
Chapter 18 – Alekhine Gambit with 6...c5!

GAME 4

Igor Nataf – Mikhail Ulibin

Stockholm 1999

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 c6 4.g5 e7 5.e5 f6 6.h4 c5 7.xc5 xe7 8.f4 wb6 9.a4 a5† 10.c3 b6 11.e2

This game is included not for its theoretical relevance, but because it features direct and powerful play by Black. It is useful to have examples like this in your mental database, which you can access (consciously or subconsciously) in similar situations in your own practice.

11...a6 12.e3 xf1 13.xf1 c6 14.g1 g6

Black has fully equalized. White now embarks on a dubious plan of playing on the queenside, the flank where Black is stronger.

15.b3?! ac8 16.a3 cxd4 17.cxd4 b5!

Provoking a favourable change in the pawn structure.

18.c5

18.b2 would be met by 18...c3†.

18...xc5 19.b4 wa4 20.bxc5 wxd1

21.xx1 bxb5†

White faces an unpleasant defence. His passed pawn is firmly blockaded, and now Black can put his own majority into motion.

22.db1 zb7 23.e2 ab8 24.a2 a5 25.e3

By defending the d4-pawn, the king frees up White’s other pieces. On the other hand, it becomes a target for knight checks, as seen in the next note.

25...b4 26.ab2

26.axb4? xb4 27.ab2 xc2† wins for Black.

26...a4 27.axb4 a3 28.ab3 ab4 29.ab4 xb4
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\[ 30.\text{a}1 \text{ b}3f 31.\text{d}2 \text{b}4 32.\text{e}1 \text{a}2 \\
33.\text{c}2 \text{b}1 34.\text{c}3 \text{h}5 35.\text{g}3 \text{d}8 36.\text{d}2 \\
\text{c}7 37.\text{c}3 \text{b}8 38.\text{d}2 \text{xc}2 39.\text{xa}2 \\
\text{xd}4 \\
0-1 \]

D) 8.\text{g}4

This position occurred in Vogt – Crouch, Lenk 1991, and now 15...\text{c}6N would have been at least equal for Black, who enjoys excellent control over the centre.

White's only other idea is:

9.\text{f}3 \text{cxd}4 10.\text{xd}4 \\
10.\text{b}5?! \text{a}5f 11.\text{d}1 \text{dxe}5 12.\text{xe}5 \\
\text{xe}5 13.\text{xg}7 \text{d}7 14.\text{xd}4 was Alexander – Menchik, Cambridge 1932, and now 14...\text{c}7N is great for Black, who threatens \ldots \text{hg}8. After 15.\text{g}5f \text{f}6 16.\text{g}7f?! \text{f}7 Black is much better.

9.\text{dxc}5

9.\text{xg}7? \text{g}8 10.\text{hxh}7 \text{cxd}4 is heavily in Black's favour.

Exchanging queens is harmless: 9.\text{g}5f \text{f}8 10.\text{xd}8f \text{xd}8 11.\text{f}4 \text{cxd}4 (Also possible is 11...\text{b}6 12.\text{f}3 \text{c}6 13.0–0–0 \text{c}7 = Situru – Hübner, Yerevan [ol] 1996.) 12.\text{b}5

10...\text{f}8f!

Only now does the king withdraw, when the pressure against d4 and e5 prevents White from building his attack too easily.

10...\text{dxe}5 11.\text{xc}6f \text{xc}6 12.\text{xg}7 is quite dangerous for Black. My computer suggests 12...\text{h}6 with the idea of playing
...\(\text{\textit{g}}8\) to exchange queens, but after 13.\(\text{\textit{g}}3\) \(\text{\textit{g}}8\) 14.\(\text{\textit{f}}4\) intending 0–0–0, it seems to me that Black’s position is more difficult to play than White’s.

11.\(\text{\textit{c}}6\)

Otherwise the e5-pawn will drop.

11...bxc6 12.f4 \(\text{\textit{b}}8\) 13.0–0–0

13...h5?!N

13...\(\text{\textit{a}}5\) gave Black decent counterplay in Limpert – Zschiedrich, Germany 2001, but I like the idea of securing the kingside first.

14.\(\text{\textit{f}}3\) g6

White will not be able to create any kingside threats in the foreseeable future, while Black is ready to get started on the queenside.

9...\(\text{\textit{f}}8!\)

Once White has given way in the centre, I really like this safe approach for Black. It can be justified strategically, as without control of the centre White cannot easily organize a strong attack. Examining all White’s possibilities, we see that it also holds up theoretically.

9...\(\text{\textit{d}}xe5?!\) has scored well, but I find it excessively risky. The critical line continues: 10.\(\text{\textit{x}}g7\) \(\text{\textit{g}}8\) (10...h6?!N intending ...\(\text{\textit{g}}8\) could be an area for investigation.) 11.\(\text{\textit{x}}h7\) \(\text{\textit{d}}7\) 12.\(\text{\textit{h}}6!\) Improving the offside queen. 12...\(\text{\textit{a}}5\) 13.\(\text{\textit{d}}2\) \(\text{\textit{x}}c5\) 14.0–0–0 d4 15.\(\text{\textit{a}}4\) \(\text{\textit{d}}5\) 16.b3 b5 17.\(\text{\textit{b}}2\) \(\text{\textit{c}}5\) 18.\(\text{\textit{b}}1\) \(\text{\textit{a}}3\) This was Cordts – Prusikin, Bad Wiessee 2006, and now after 19.\(\text{\textit{e}}2!N\) I was unable to find any convincing ideas for Black.

10.\(\text{\textit{f}}3\)

Neither of the following alternatives can cause Black any real problems:

10.0–0–0 \(\text{\textit{c}}xe5!\)

The correct way to take, because the other knight keeps an eye on both c5 and f6.

11.\(\text{\textit{f}}4\)

11.\(\text{\textit{g}}3\)N can be met by 11...h5?! 12.\(\text{\textit{b}}5\) \(\text{\textit{h}}6\) activating the rook.

11...\(\text{\textit{f}}6\) 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}2\) \(\text{\textit{xc}}5\) 13.\(\text{\textit{f}}4\) \(\text{\textit{c}}6\) 14.\(\text{\textit{f}}3\)

This was played in Tournier – Thiel, Cannes 2000, and now my preference is:

14...h5N

Black has a fine position.
10.f4 d4
10...h5 11.g3 xc5 12.0-0-0 a5
13.f3 a6 Después de ...b5 también fue mejor para negro en Butze – Dinkel, corr. 1975.
11.e4 xc5 12.xc5 a5† 13.f2 xc5 14.xd3

Now in Jedryczka – Marchio, Griesheim 2002, Black should have played:

14...d7!N
Intending to put the knight on e7 and the bishop on c6.
15.f3 h5 16.g3 e7
Both ...c6 and ...b5 are ideas, and Black is in excellent shape.

10...dx e5 11.xe5 xe5 12.g3

12...d7!
This move gives Black fine prospects. The knight is ready to go to f6, after which ...d7, ...e7 and ...c8 will give Black good counterplay. Black’s only problem is his offside king’s rook, but at the right time the black king may go to g7 and allow the rook to join the game. Meanwhile, Black remains with a solid central pawn chain which will thwart White’s dream of launching a successful attack.

13.b5
This has been White’s most common try in practice.

13.d6† e7 14.xe7† xe7 makes no sense for White, as Black’s centralized king has gone from being a weakness in the middlegame to a strength in the endgame. 15.a4 c6 16.b5 c7 17.xd7 cxd7 18.xd2 c8 19.b4 b6 20.cxb6 axb6 21.b2 c3† Steiner – Kashdan, New York 1931.

13.e3 N e7 14.a4 c6 15.c4 d7 16.c3 c8 17.b4 b6f±

13.h5 N h6 14.0–0–0 d6 can be compared with 13.0–0–0 below. Then 15.b5 d7 16.d6 b6 is a variation I have encountered in my training games, and Black is more than okay.

13.0–0–0
Here I found a useful improvement for Black.
13...\textipa{f}6!N
This is stronger than 13...\textipa{xc}5, which leaves the black king somewhat vulnerable.
The knight is excellently placed on \textipa{f}6, adding some defensive cover to the kingside while preparing ...\textipa{d}7 and ...\textipa{c}8 with excellent play. A sample variation is:
14.\textipa{d}3 \textipa{d}7 15.\textipa{b}1 \textipa{c}7 16.\textipa{f}4 \textipa{xc}5 17.g4 \textipa{c}8 18.g5 \textipa{h}5 19.\textipa{d}2 \textipa{d}6!
Eyeing the \textipa{f}4-square. White does not have much of an attack, while Black has an extra pawn and is ready for counterplay with ...\textipa{a}6, ...\textipa{b}5 and so on.

13...\textipa{a}6 14.\textipa{a}3
14.\textipa{c}7? \textipa{a}7 and the knight is trapped in the black camp.

14...\textipa{g}8!N
A novelty suggested by our silicon friend, which changes the evaluation of the whole line!

14...\textipa{e}7 15.\textipa{d}6 \textipa{f}6 16.\textipa{d}3 g6 17.0-0-0 gave White a stable edge in Moussard - Bodenez, France 2010.

15.h5 h6 16.0-0-0
16.\textipa{d}6 \textipa{c}7 17.0-0-0 \textipa{xc}5 18.\textipa{g}3 \textipa{e}7 is more comfortable for Black due to the unfavourable placement of the white knight, which may look good but is essentially trapped. A sample line is: 19.\textipa{b}1 \textipa{d}7 20.\textipa{d}3 \textipa{c}6 21.\textipa{he}1 \textipa{f}8! followed by ...\textipa{d}8 and the knight is lost.

16...\textipa{xc}5 17.\textipa{xc}5 \textipa{xb}5 18.\textipa{b}1 \textipa{d}7 19.\textipa{h}3
Black is a pawn up and stands at least equal. His only real problem concerns the activation of the rook on h8. The simplistic approach of putting the king on h7 and meeting \textipa{d}3 with ...\textipa{f}5 is extremely risky because White will open the game with \textipa{g}2-g4. A better solution is to carefully prepare ...\textipa{f}6 followed by ...\textipa{c}6 and ...\textipa{e}5, and finally ...\textipa{f}7. The following continuation shows how this may be achieved.

19...\textipa{c}8 20.\textipa{a}3
20.\textipa{d}4 is met by 20...\textipa{f}6!.

20...\textipa{f}8 21.\textipa{b}3 \textipa{c}5 22.\textipa{e}3 \textipa{f}6 23.\textipa{d}3 \textipa{d}6!
Stopping f2-f4.

24.\textipa{de}1
24.g3 gives Black time to reorganize his pieces: 24...\textipa{f}7 25.\textipa{g}6+ \textipa{e}7 26.\textipa{f}4 \textipa{hc}8 27.c3 \textipa{f}8 Black is better, and the main question is whether he will find a way to exploit his extra pawn.
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24...f7 25.g6† e7 26.fx5 e5 27.xd7 xd7 28.f4 e4 29.g4 b8

Black stands better. The king can retreat to f8, and White’s attack based on g4-g5 is not as strong as Black’s counterplay on the other flank.

E) 8.dxc5

8...dxe5!

In the previous line we saw that it was risky to capture the e5-pawn, but that was when the white queen was poised to do damage on the kingside. Here there is no such danger, so Black should take the opportunity to eliminate the important central pawn.

9.wd2 c6 10.0-0 wa5! 11.h3 xc5 gives Black excellent counterplay.

9...bc6 10.0-0-0

10.f4 d4 11.0-0-0 wa5 transposes to Game 47.

10...wa5!

Better than 10...f8 11.f4 d7 12.f3 xc5 13.b1 as played in Sakaev – Ulibin, Dubai 2000. This position is generally regarded as favourable for White, who intends f4-f5 on his next move.

11.Db1

White takes a moment to secure his queenside and take the sting out of the ...d4 push.

11.f4 is examined in Game 47 below.

11...f8!N

This novelty was given by Sakaev and in ECO.

11...d4? 12.xd4! xxd4 13.xe5 gives White a dangerous initiative, and after 13...f5 14.g4 f6 15.e1! White was already winning in Pannekoek – Van der Merwe; Dieren 2003.

12.f4
This is the only dangerous move. If White does not threaten to play f4-f5 at some point, then Black will continue with ...\textit{Wxc5} followed by ...h5 and ...g6, when White’s compensation will be in doubt.

12...\textit{Cc4}!

Threatening ...\textit{Bxb2} followed by ...\textit{Bb4} and ...\textit{Bxc3}.

13.\textit{Bf3} \textit{Bxc5}

14.\textit{Bxc4}

Practically forced, otherwise ...\textit{Bd4} or ...\textit{Be3} will cause problems to White.

14...\textit{Bxc4} 15.\textit{Bge2}

Sakaev stops here, with the evaluation that White has compensation. This may be true, but I do not believe that Black is in any way worse.

15.h5 allows 15...d4! 16.\textit{Bd4} \textit{Bb4}, leading to a relatively balanced position: 17.\textit{Bb3} \textit{Bxb3} 18.axb3 d3 19.\textit{Bc3} \textit{Bd5} 20.\textit{Bxd3} \textit{Bc7} In practice I would rather be Black here, because of his sounder structure.

15...h5!

The main idea behind this move is to block White’s attack with ...g6, though ...\textit{Bg8-h7} and ...\textit{Bh6} are also ideas.

Both 15...\textit{Bg8}?! 16.\textit{Bh6} 17.\textit{Bf5} and 15...g6?! 16.\textit{Bh5} offer White attacking chances.

16.\textit{Bf5}

This is White’s only serious attempt to cause problems.

16...\textit{Bh6}?

Black has good prospects. Another reasonable continuation is 16...\textit{Bg4} 17.\textit{fxe6} \textit{Bxe6} 18.\textit{Bf4} \textit{Bh6}! with at least equal play.

\begin{game}
\begin{center}
Artur Gabrielian – Oleg Nikolenko
\end{center}

Moscow 2006
\end{game}

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{Bc3} f6 4.\textit{Bf3} Bf5 5.e5 \textit{Bf6} 6.h4 c5 7.\textit{Bxe7} \textit{Bxe7} 8.dxc5 \textit{Bxe5}! 9.\textit{Bb2} \textit{Bc6} 10.0–0–0 \textit{Ba5}! 11.f4

11...d4!

Previously we saw that this advance was a poor choice against 11.\textit{Bb1}, but in this position it gives Black excellent counter-chances.

12.\textit{Bd4}
Playing the French

12. \( \text{b}5 ? \) is met by the strong 12... \( \text{d}3 ! \) 13. \( \text{cx}d3 \)
(13. \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 14. \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{dxc2} \) 15. \( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{b}4 \) gives Black a dangerous attack) 13... \( \text{xb}5 \)
14. \( \text{fxe}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 15. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) and White's compensation for the pawn was doubtful in

12. \( \text{fxe}5 \) !? \( \text{dxc}3 \) 13. \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xa}2 \) also poses some
problems for White:

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
2 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
3 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
4 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
5 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
6 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
7 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
8 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

14. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 15. \( \text{bxc}3 \) \( \text{a}3 \) 16. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{xc}3 \)
17. \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 18. \( \text{d}8 \) \( \text{xd}8 \) 19. \( \text{x}c3 \) \( \text{d}7 \)
Black was clearly better in Hector – Gleizerov, Stockholm 2002.

12. \( \text{x}d4 \)
This was the critical move after 11. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{d4} \) !,
but here it is not so dangerous.
12... \( \text{x}d4 \) 13. \( \text{x}e5 \) \( \text{d}8 \)

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
2 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
3 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
4 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
5 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
6 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
7 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
8 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

14. \( \text{xg}7 \)
14. \( \text{ge}2 \)N \( \text{c}6 \) 15. \( \text{xg}7 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) gives Black
at least equal play. For example: 16. \( \text{g}4 \)
(16. \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) ! 17. \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{b}7 \) \( \text{e}2 \) 16... \( \text{d}7 \) 17. \( \text{f}5 \)
\( \text{e}5 \) 18. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 19. \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 20. \( \text{x}e6 \)
\( \text{xe}6 \) 21. \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{ac}8 \) Black will complete
the king's promenade with ... \( \text{b}8 \), with an excellent position.
14... \( \text{xc}5 \) 15. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 16. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 17. \( \text{xf}6 \)
17. \( \text{h}5 \) ? would give White a serious
advantage if his king was on \( \text{b1} \), but here
it soon comes unstuck: 17... \( \text{e}3 \) 18. \( \text{b}1 \)
\( \text{e}1 \) 19. \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{g3} \) 20. \( \text{xh}7 \) \( \text{d}6 \) and
Black wins.
17... \( \text{xf}6 \) 18. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 19. \( \text{xc}5 \)
This endgame arose in Naalden – Van
der Merwe, Dieren 2003, and now most
accurate is:

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
2 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
3 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
4 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
5 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
6 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
7 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
8 &  &  &  &  &  &  &  \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

19... \( \text{b}6 \)N 20. \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{g}8 \)
White tries to keep the c5-pawn, a logical but risky decision.

On the other hand, 13.\( \mathcal{b} \)b1 \( \mathcal{d} \)xc5 14.\( \mathcal{f} \)f3 \( \mathcal{d} \)d7 gives Black a comfortable position, with plenty of potential for counterplay.

13...\( \mathcal{f} \)5!

The weakness created on e6 is insignificant compared to the importance of conquering c5.

13...b6!? 14.\( \mathcal{c} \)xb6 \( \mathcal{b} \)b7 is an alternative solution; in return for a pawn, Black completes his development and his pieces suddenly come to life.

14.\( \mathcal{g} \)g5
14.\( \mathcal{d} \)d6?! \( \mathcal{d} \)xc5 15.\( \mathcal{b} \)b5 \( \mathcal{e} \)e4

14...\( \mathcal{d} \)xc5 15.\( \mathcal{h} \)h3 \( \mathcal{d} \)d8

16.\( \mathcal{a} \)a3
16.\( \mathcal{d} \)xh7 \( \mathcal{e} \)e4 17.\( \mathcal{g} \)g5 \( \mathcal{d} \)d5?! 18.\( \mathcal{c} \)xe4 fxe4 19.\( \mathcal{b} \)b1 e5! is at least okay for Black. An amusing variation is 20.\( \mathcal{g} \)g3?! exf4! 21.\( \mathcal{x} \)xg7+ \( \mathcal{f} \)f6, when despite the airy king, Black stands better.

16...\( \mathcal{b} \)b4 17.\( \mathcal{w} \)xb4 \( \mathcal{d} \)xb4 18.\( \mathcal{d} \)xh7
1/2–1/2

The players agreed to draw at this point, but Black could well have played on with: 18...d3!

19.\( \mathcal{x} \)xd3 (19.\( \mathcal{c} \)xd3 \( \mathcal{d} \)d7\( ^{\mp} \)) 19...\( \mathcal{c} \)xd3\( ^{+} \) 20.\( \mathcal{c} \)xd3 \( \mathcal{f} \)h8 21.\( \mathcal{g} \)g5 \( \mathcal{x} \)xh4 22.g3 \( \mathcal{h} \)h2\( ^{+} \)

**Conclusion**

This has been a demanding chapter for the reader, but that is to be expected when meeting the fierce Alekhine Gambit with an equally aggressive central counter. If the reader wishes to meet 6.h4!? in the most combative way possible, with a view to fighting not just for equality but potentially for the advantage, then 6...c5! is the best way to approach the task.

After 6...c5! 7.\( \mathcal{x} \)xe7 \( \mathcal{f} \)xe7! Black has a characteristically solid French structure with the usual ideas of counterplay based on developing the knight to c6 to put pressure on the d4- and e5-pawns. There is also the strong idea of 8...\( \mathcal{b} \)b6!, meeting 9.\( \mathcal{a} \)a4 with the manoeuvre 9...\( \mathcal{a} \)a5\( ^{+} \) followed by ...b6 and ...\( \mathcal{a} \)a6, giving fine counterplay on the queenside. White’s most dangerous options are 8.\( \mathcal{g} \)g4 and 8.\( \mathcal{d} \)xc5, which do not allow this manoeuvre.

On D) 8.\( \mathcal{g} \)g4 \( \mathcal{c} \)c6! the critical position is reached after 9.\( \mathcal{x} \)xc5 \( \mathcal{f} \)b8! 10.\( \mathcal{f} \)f3 \( \mathcal{d} \)xc5 11.\( \mathcal{x} \)xe5 \( \mathcal{c} \)xe5 12.\( \mathcal{g} \)g3, when the key move is 12...\( \mathcal{d} \)d7!. The knight is flexibly placed and may go to f6 to frustrate White’s kingside ambitions.

E) 8.\( \mathcal{d} \)xc5 \( \mathcal{x} \)xe5! 9.\( \mathcal{e} \)e2 \( \mathcal{c} \)c6 10.0–0–0 \( \mathcal{a} \)a5 is another critical tabiya of this variation. After 11.f4 d4! we saw in Game 47 that Black is doing well. However, after the prophylactic 11.\( \mathcal{b} \)b1 Black should avoid pushing the d-pawn in favour of 11...\( \mathcal{f} \)f8! followed by picking off the weak c5-pawn. According to my analysis, best play for both sides is 12.f4 \( \mathcal{c} \)c4 13.\( \mathcal{f} \)f3 \( \mathcal{x} \)xc5 14.\( \mathcal{x} \)xc4 \( \mathcal{w} \)xc4 15.\( \mathcal{d} \)ge2 h5! with at least equal chances for Black.
Chapter 19

Classical 6.\(\text{\underline{\text{xe7}}}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{xe7}}}\)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\(\text{\underline{\text{c3}}}\) f6 4.\(\text{\underline{\text{g5}}}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{c7}}}\) 5.e5 \(\text{\underline{\text{fd7}}}\) 6.\(\text{\underline{\text{xe7}}}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{xe7}}}\)

A) 7.\(\text{\underline{\text{f3}}}\) 330
B) 7.\(\text{\underline{\text{d2}}}\) 331
C) 7.\(\text{\underline{\text{b5}}}\) 332
D) 7.\(\text{\underline{\text{g4}}}\) 333
E) 7.\(\text{\underline{\text{h5}}}\) 334
F) 7.f4
   F1) 7...0–0 336
   F2) 7...a6! 338
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Black has just played 11...f6. Was that a good move? (page 330)

Is 13...\textit{wxb2} possible, or should Black play 13...\textit{wa4} instead? (page 332)

How does White prove that he is winning? (page 337)

How should Black react to the threat to the b5-pawn? (page 332)

It has been suggested that this is good for White. Is that the case? (page 335)

How does Black finish his development? (page 331)

Find a typical method of attack for Black. (page 333)

White has a route to an advantage. Can you find it? (page 337)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3...c3 d6 4.g5 c6 5.e5 
dfd7 6...xe7 ...xe7

From many years of studying opening theory, I have developed a special fondness for the “Classical Variations” which are present in every major opening (notwithstanding my prior distrust of this particular system for Black, as explained in the opening remarks to Chapter 17).

The “Classical” label is generally reserved for systems that feature logical, principled moves from both sides, and which have proved their resilience over many decades of practical testing from some of the best players in the world. This is all true of the present system.

Although 7.f4 is the dominant choice in the above position, this is a repertoire book and we must mention, at least briefly, the alternatives A) 7...f3, B) 7...d2, C) 7...b5, D) 7...g4 and E) 7...h5, before finally coming to F) 7.f4.

A) 7...f3 0–0 8...d3 c5

By undermining the d4-pawn, Black puts indirect pressure on the e5-pawn as well.

9.dxc5

Black will now aim to destroy White’s centre with a well-timed ...f6.

9...c6 10...e2

After 10.0–0 ...xc5 11...e1, playing 11...f6?! looks natural, but it allows an instructive reaction worth remembering:

12.exf6 ...xf6 13...b5! White is able to take control of the e5-square. 13...a6 (13...d7? 14...x d5!) 14...xc6 bxc6 Rios - Soza de la Carrera, email 2000, and now 15...d4N gives White a clear plus.

Instead Black should first play 11...d7! and after further preparation with ...ac8 and/or ...a6, then ...f6 will come.

10...xc5 11.0–0–0

11...f6

The preliminary 11...a6?! is also possible.
12.exf6 wxf6 13.b1 a6 14.h4 h6 15.de1 d7 16.h3 b5 17.g4 b4 18.d1 e5

In Kanefschk – Gomez Baillo, Buenos Aires 1990, Black had gained the initiative in instructive style.

B) 7.d2 a6!

White can meet 7...0-0 with 8.f4!? transposing into a line that is not in our repertoire.

8.d1

This is White's only independent idea, preparing to meet ...c5 with c2-c3.

8.f4 b6 9.f3 transposes to variation B of the next chapter on page 345.

8...c5 9.c3 c6 10.f4

10...f6!

This equalizes more easily than: 10...f5!? 11.f3 b5 (11...0-0 was agreed drawn in Kasimdzhanov – Morozevich, Mainz 2006, which does not really tell us anything about the objective merits of the variation.) 12.f2 0-0 13.e2 b8 14.0-0 a5 Black had some counterplay in Karim – Akobian, Gibraltar 2011, but I am not convinced that he is fully equal.

11.f3 cxd4 12.cxd4 fxe5 13.fxe5 0-0 14.f2

14...b6! 15.d3 d7 16.0-0

16.a3 can be met by 16...e8 planning ...h5.

16...b4

16...e8N is possible too.

On the other hand, the exchange sacrifice 16...xf3? is not good here: 17.gxf3 xd4? 18.xh7+ xh7 19.xd4±

17.b3

17.b1 c4 18.c3 e8

17...xd3 18.xd3 b5

The position was balanced in Domont – Korchnoi, Geneva 2012, though Viktor the
Great went on to outplay his opponent after exchanging his bishop for the potentially annoying d3-knight.

C) 7...\(\text{Q}b5\)

8...\(\text{Q}b6\)
Black intends ...a6 next.

8.a4
White may also play:
8.c3 a6 9.\(\text{Q}a3\) c5 10.\(\text{Q}c2\) \(\text{Q}d7\) 11.\(f4\) \(\text{Q}b5\)!

This is similar to our main line suggestion after 7.\(f4\), and Black is already fine here. A practical example continued:
12.\(\text{Q}x\)b5† axb5 13.\(\text{Q}e2\)
Here Black should have played:

13...\(\text{Q}c6\)!\(N\)
Black was afraid of losing the b5-pawn and played 13...c4 in John – Fahrni, Mannheim 1914, but after 14.\(a3\)!\(N\) White blocks the queenside and has a free hand on the other flank.
14.\(\text{Q}f3\)
14.\(\text{Q}x\)b5? \(\text{Q}a4\) 15.\(\text{Q}b1\) c4† leaves the white queen uncomfortably placed.
14...b4
Black has good counterplay on the queenside.

8...a6 9.a5 axb5 10.axb6 \(\text{Q}xa1\) 11.\(\text{Q}x\)a1 c6!
12.\(\text{Q}a8\) \(\text{Q}b4\)? 13.c3

13...\(\text{Q}xb2\)!
Black has a safe alternative in 13...\(\text{Q}a4\) 14.\(\text{Q}x\)b8 \(\text{Q}a1\)† 15.\(\text{Q}e2\) \(\text{Q}xb2\)† 16.\(\text{Q}e3\) \(\text{Q}c1\)† 17.\(\text{Q}e2\) \(\text{Q}c2\)? 18.\(\text{Q}e3\) \(\text{Q}c1\)? ½–½ Gyarmati – Lehmann, Hungary 1998. However, the text move keeps the option of a draw in hand, while giving White the opportunity to go wrong.

14.\(\text{Q}e2\)
14.\(\text{Q}x\)b8? is no good: 14...\(\text{Q}xc3\)† 15.\(\text{Q}e2\) 0–0 16.\(\text{Q}f3\) c5 17.dxc5 b4†

14...b4 15.\(\text{Q}x\)b8 0–0 16.cx\(b4\) \(\text{Q}xb4\)? 17.\(\text{Q}d1\)
Now Black can force a draw by perpetual check, but he may also continue playing with:
Chapter 19 – Classical $6\text{xe7} \text{xe7}$

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

This was J. Geller – R. Bagirov, Krasnodar 2001. The computer assures us that White can hold the draw, but for a human player it will not be easy to defend.

D) 7.$\text{g4}$

7...c5!? 18.$\text{c7} \text{a4}t$ 19.$\text{d2} \text{d7} 20.$\text{e3} \text{c6}t$?

With White's dark-squared bishop exchanged, this is a valuable defensive resource for Black. Although it creates a hook, the thrust $\text{g4}$-$\text{g5}$ is not coming soon and Black has central counterplay to distract White from his attempts to organize an effective attack.

9...$\text{c6}t$? ignores White's threat: 10.$\text{xh7}t$!

$\text{xh7}$ (10...$\text{h8}$ 11.$\text{h5}+-$) 11.$\text{h5}t$ $\text{g8}$

12.$\text{g5}$ and Black has to give up his queen to avoid being mated.

10.$0-0-0$ $\text{c6} 11.$\text{he1}$

After 11.$\text{dxc5} \text{dxe5} 12.$\text{xe5} \text{xe5}t$ White doesn't have any ideas to endanger the black king. For example, 13.$\text{f4} \text{d3}t$ 14.$\text{xd3} \text{xc5} 15.$\text{g3}$ is simply met by 15...$\text{h8}$, and White's attack comes to nothing.

So far we have been following Llaneza Vega – Gleizerov, San Sebastian 2010. Now Black could have used a typical and effective device for these positions:

11...c4N 12.$\text{e2} \text{b5}t$!

White is facing a terrible attack.

13.$\text{xb5} \text{b4}$ 14.$\text{c3} \text{b8}$

White is now forced to run with his king.

15.$\text{d2} \text{b6}$

Black has various promising options, but this is my favourite, the threat of $\text{a4}$! giving Black a clear advantage.
This was recommended by Watson in *Dangerous Weapons: The French*. Compared with 7.\textit{g}4, the text move has the advantage that an attempt to defend with ...\textit{h}6 will be met by a quick g4-g5.

\textbf{7\ldots 0-0}

This may appear provocative, but it turns out that White's attack is nothing to fear.

Black may also play:

\textbf{7\ldots a6 8.f4}

This is an important position, as it can also arise from 7.f4 a6 8.\textit{h}5.

8...c5 9.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}6 10.0-0-0 \textit{cxd4} 11.\textit{xd4}

Black must be on guard against the annoying \textit{f}5!.

\textbf{11...\textit{b}6!}

This has scored excellently; Black defends against the threat and makes way for his bishop to develop.

11...\textit{xd4} 12.\textit{xd4} \textit{b}5 is also decent, and after 13.\textit{h}4 \textit{b}4 Black has sufficient counterplay. A practical example continued 14.\textit{d}1? \textit{c}5 15.\textit{d}2 \textit{a}5± and White was in trouble in Vidarsson – Thorhallsson, Arborg 1998.

\textbf{12.\textit{f}3}

12.\textit{h}4 \textit{h}6 13.\textit{g}4 0-0 14.\textit{h}3 \textit{f}6 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}7= Van der Wiel – Yu Shaoteng, Wijk aan Zee 2002. Black plays ...\textit{ac8} next and can consider ...\textit{f}5 at any point.

\textbf{12...\textit{d}7 13.\textit{g}4 0-0 14.\textit{d}3}

14...\textit{f}5! 15.\textit{g}3

15.exf6?! is met by 15...\textit{xf6} hitting the f4-pawn, followed by ...\textit{e}5 next move.

This was Mateo – Korchnoi, Thessaloniki (ol) 1988. Here I suggest:

15...\textit{e}8?!N

Black stands at least equal, with ...\textit{ac8} and ...\textit{h}5 coming.

\textbf{8.\textit{f}4}

Black need not fear:

8.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}5 9.\textit{d}3 \textit{g}6 10.\textit{h}6

Play has transposed to a century-old game in which Black quickly took control.
10...cxd4!
Watson only gave 10...c6 11.b5 c4, but the text move amounts to a near refutation of White's play.

11.b5 c6 12.g5
12.c7 is a tricky idea which does not work: 12...b8 13.g5 f6 14.gxe6 f7→
White is busted because he can hardly avoid ...dxe5 followed by ...xe6 winning a whole piece.
12...f6 13.exf6 xf6 14.0-0 a6 15.a3 e5→
Duras – Spielmann, San Sebastian 1911.
The white position is in complete disarray.

8...c5 9.d3N
This was Watson's main suggestion, but so far nobody has tested it.
9.f3 cxd4 10.exd4 c6 11.0-0 f6!
(Watson only mentions 11...xd4 12.exd4 f6 with dynamic equality, but Black can do better) 12.exf6 xf6 13.de2 This was played in Vasvari – Suez-Panama, Gibraltar 2008, and now 13...b8!N prepares ...b5 and gives Black the initiative.

9.0-0-0N cx6 10.b5 c6 is White's best according to Eingorn, though Black still stands slightly better.

9.b5?N
This simply does not work.
9...c6 10.0-0 a6 11.d6 xd4
11...cxd4 is also good.
12.d3 g6 13.h6

13...f6!
Watson points out this strong move, defending before h4-h5 comes.
14.h4 g7→
White has no choice but to exchange queens, after which Black's material advantage should decide.

9...g6! 10.h6
Watson described this position as "undesirable for Black" without giving further details. I strongly disagree with his assessment.

10...cxd4!
10...f6!? is also strong, but it makes sense to capture the undefended pawn first.

11.b5 f6! 11.f3
12.\( \text{c}7? \) \( \text{dxe5!} \) 13.\( \text{dxa8} \) \( \text{wb4} \uparrow \) 14.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{g4} \) gives Black a decisive attack.

12...\( \text{c}6\uparrow \)
White's centre is crumbling and his attacking chances are insufficient.

\[ F) \] \( 7.\text{f4} \)

We now come to White's main option, which can be considered the classical approach. Having removed the dark-squared bishops, White gains space while putting his pawns on the opposite colour to his remaining bishop.

I will offer a brief summary of \( F1) \) \( 7...0-0 \) to explain why I do not believe in it, before moving on to my recommendation of \( F2) \) \( 7...a6! \).

\( 7...c5? \) is a clear mistake due to \( 8.\text{b}5 \).

\( 7...\text{c}6?! \) aims for something similar to the system we employed against the Alekhine Gambit in Chapter 17, but here the plan is flawed. \( 8.\text{f3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 9.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 10.0-0! Here is the difference: without the move h2-h4 having been played, White can safely castle kingside. 10...0-0 11.a4 \( \text{b4} \) 12.\( \text{d3} \) f6 13.b3 \( \text{df8} \) 14.\( \text{a2} \) \( \text{c7} \) 15.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b8} \) 16.a5± Andriasian – Zvjaginsev, St Petersburg 2010. White's attack is well underway, and the knights on b6 and c6 only help White by allowing him to gain further time. Without a white pawn on h4, Black is slow to obtain counterplay on the other flank.

\( F1) \) \( 7...0-0 \) 8.\( \text{f3} \) \( c5 \) 9.\( \text{d}3! \)

White has the makings of a strategic advantage based on a blockade on the d4- and e5-squares. For this reason, there is no need for him to go for an unbalanced position with castling on opposite sides.

Here is an extremely short summary of the other main line: 9.dxc5 \( \text{c}6 \) 10.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 11.0-0-0 \( \text{b6} \) 12.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{d7} \) 13.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{ac8} \) (13...\( \text{fc8} \) ⌗ 14.\( \text{b5} \) favours White.) 14.\( \text{b5} \) (14.\( \text{xh7} \) ⌗ only leads to a draw.) 14...\( \text{f6} \) 15.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 16.\( \text{bd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 17.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{a4} \) 18.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 19.g3 \( \text{e5} \) 20.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 21.\( \text{c1} \) following Naiditsch – Blauert, Budapest 1998. Here Black can improve with:

\[ a b c d e f g h \]

21...\( \text{f8} \) \( \text{N} \) 22.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{d6} \) Both sides may be satisfied with the outcome of the opening. White has a symbolic edge based on his structural superiority, but Black's active pieces give him enough counterplay to keep a dynamic balance.
Chapter 19 – Classical 6.\textit{\textbf{xe7}} 7.\textit{\textbf{xe7}}

9...\textit{\textsf{f6}}

Both 9...a6? and 9...\textit{\textsf{b6}}? allow the strong 10.\textit{\textsf{xh7t}}!.

9...\textit{\textsf{cxd4}}? leads to an attractive variation: 10.\textit{\textsf{xh7t}} 8.\textit{\textsf{xh7}} 11.\textit{\textsf{g5t}} 8.\textit{\textsf{xg5}}? 12.\textit{\textsf{fxg5}} \textit{\textsf{dxc3}} It may appear that Black should be okay with three pieces for the queen, but White has a specific way to take advantage of the vulnerability of the black king:

13.\textit{\textsf{h5t}} 7.\textit{\textsf{g8}} 14.0–0 \textit{\textsf{xe5}} (14...\textit{\textsf{xb2}} is met by 15.\textit{\textsf{ab1}}, followed by \textit{\textsf{xb2-b3-h3}} with a decisive attack) 15.\textit{\textsf{ae1}} 8.\textit{\textsf{g6}} 16.\textit{\textsf{ae3}} White threatens \textit{\textsf{h3}} with an unstoppable attack, and after 16...e5 17.g4! Black was busted in Szilagyi – Harding, corr. 1989.

10.e6 8.\textit{\textsf{x6f}} 11.g3 \textit{\textsf{c6}} 12.\textit{\textsf{dxc5}} 8.\textit{\textsf{xc5}} 13.0–0

Having castled on the kingside, White avoids any prospect of his opponent launching an attack. White has an obvious structural advantage, and if he can complete development over the next few moves then he will automatically stand better. I have not found a way to make anything happen for Black, and must therefore conclude that he cannot equalize.

13.\textit{\textsf{d7}} 14.\textit{\textsf{d2}} 8.\textit{\textsf{ad8}}

14...a6 15.\textit{\textsf{ae1}} 8.e8 16.\textit{\textsf{e5}} 8.c8 is gives as equal by Eingorn, but I do not agree with this assessment.

17.\textit{\textsf{d2}}! Clearing the way for the bishop to transfer to h3 with great effect. 17...\textit{\textsf{xe5}} 18.\textit{\textsf{xe5}} 8.c6 19.\textit{\textsf{f1}} 8.g6 (19...\textit{\textsf{d7}} 20.\textit{\textsf{ae1}} 8.b6 21.\textit{\textsf{d1}}! also favoured White in Stefansson – Hjartarson, Reykjavik 1995.)
20.\textit{h}3 White maintained a slight edge in Bellmann – Schubert, corr. 2000.

15.\textit{ae}1 \textit{e}8

16.\textit{a}3!?  
Leko is fond of such Karpovian prophylaxis.  
16.\textit{ce}5± is simpler and after 16...\textit{xe}5  
17.\textit{xe}5 \textit{f}7 18.\textit{d}1 \textit{d}7 19.\textit{e}1 \textit{d}4†  
20.\textit{e}3 \textit{xe}3† 21.\textit{xe}3 \textit{c}5 22.\textit{f}2 \textit{e}8  
23.\textit{c}3 White went on to win in Keres – Lilienthal, Moscow 1949.

16...\textit{h}5 17.\textit{ce}5 \textit{xe}5 18.\textit{xe}5 \textit{g}4  
19.\textit{w}g2? \textit{ec}8 20.\textit{h}3 \textit{xd}3 21.\textit{xd}3 \textit{f}5  
22.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}4 23.\textit{b}5 \textit{e}c1† 24.\textit{h}2 \textit{d}8  
25.\textit{d}2 \textit{xa}1 26.\textit{g}4

In Leko – Volkov, New Delhi/Teheran 2000, Black made a rather desperate piece sacrifice and lost. However, by this stage he is already in severe difficulties, for instance:

26...\textit{g}6N 27.\textit{w}e2 \textit{f}7 28.\textit{xa}7±  
White is material up and the constant threat of \textit{f}4-\textit{f}5 is bothersome.

F2) 7...\textit{a}6!  
This variation has usually been played with the idea of forgetting about castling and advancing on the queenside with ...\textit{c}5, ...\textit{b}5, ...\textit{c}6, ...\textit{b}4 etc. However, I prefer a modern plan involving ...\textit{b}6 and ...\textit{d}7, which will be covered in the next chapter. For now we will take a brief look at what happens if White avoids the main line of 8.\textit{f}3.

8.\textit{w}g4  
In variation D we examined this queen thrust on move 7, and in reply we castled and played a quick ...\textit{c}5. If we tried the same thing here, the move ...\textit{a}6 would count as an important loss of time, so a different approach is needed.

8...\textit{h}5 transposes to the note to Black’s 7th move of line E on page 334.

8...\textit{g}6!  
The simplest way to secure the kingside. The \textit{f}4-\textit{f}5 break is a long way from happening, and later ...\textit{h}5 may come with tempo.

9.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}5
10.dxc5
10.0–0–0  c6 11.h4 b5 12.h3 b5+ gave Black excellent attacking chances in Pirhala – Van Osmael, corr. 2010.

10... c6 11.0–0–0  xc5
Black intends to complete development with ...b5, ...b7 and ...c8.

12.h4 h5
Obviously White should not be permitted to open the h-file.

13.g5
After 13.g3 b5 14.f2 b4 15.e2 a5 Black has time to develop his counterplay.

13...b5 14.a3 b7 15.h3 c8 16.d4

So far we have been following Gabuzyan – Gleizerov, Jermuk 2011. Black has no objection to a queenless middlegame, and having finished developing the queenside, it makes sense now to play:

16...g5N 17.hxg5 e7
The position is balanced. If White could exchange a few pieces and establish a solid blockade on d4 then he would stand well, but this is not so easy to achieve. Meanwhile Black can prepare to double rooks on the c-file.

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined various 7th moves for White.
Against A) 7.f3 and B) 7.d2, Black’s typical play with ...c5 followed by ...c6 gives him fine chances.
C) 7.b5 is well met by 7...b6 followed by .a6.
D) 7.g4 and E) 7.h5 may look threatening, but Black can afford to castle and then obtain strong counterplay in the centre before White’s kingside attack gets anywhere.

Turning to the main line of 7.f4, we saw that things are not so rosy for Black after F1) 7...0–0, but we introduced the alternative F2) 7...a6!, which will be the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 20

Classical Main Line with 8.\( \text{d}f3 \)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\( \text{c}c3 \text{f}6 4.\text{g}5 \text{e}7 5.\text{e}5 \text{fd}7 6.\text{xe}7 \text{xe}7 7.f4 a6! 8.\text{d}f3 \text{b}6!

A) 9.\text{d}3 c5! 10.0–0 \text{c}6 11.\text{we}1?!N

11.dxc5 – Game 48

B) 9.\text{we}2 \text{d}7!

10.0–0–0?! – Game 49

B1) 10.a4?! c5 11.a5 \text{c}8 12.dxc5

12.\text{a}4?! – Game 50

B2) 10.\text{d}3! c5

B21) 11.dxc5

B22) 11.0–0!

Game 48 Milos Perunovic – Nikola Sedlak, Kragujevac 2009

Game 49 Ernesto Inarkiev – A. Morozevich, Krasnoyarsk 2003

Game 50 Deep Sengupta – Nigel Short, Gibraltar 2011
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Find the move that best meets the needs of the position.

(page 344)

What is Black’s best set-up for his pieces?

(page 349)

How does White secure an edge?

(page 342)

White has just played 19.\textdagger c1, trying to run. Will you let him?

(page 347)

Themes from the Sicilian may also be applicable in the French.

(page 352)

Black needs an accurate move. What is it?

(page 343)

An easy one. Black to play and force mate.

(page 348)

Another critical theoretical position. What would you play?

(page 353)
342 Playing the French

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.�c3 �f6 4.g5 �e7 5.e5 
�fd7 6.��xe7 ��xe7 7.f4 a6! 8.��f3

We come now to White's most natural move. As indicated at the end of the previous chapter, my choice is:

8 ... h6!

The older continuation of 8 ... c5 9.��d2 h6 10.dxc5 ��xc5 11.��d3 b5 can be met by 12.��e2!, when an impressive positional game from Tal continued: 12 ... h6 13.b3! ��d7 14.a3 f6 15.��d4 �xd4 16.��xd4 fxe5 17.fxe5 0–0

18.��b4!± Tal – Lahav, Tel Aviv 1990.

After the text move Black intends to launch his queenside counterplay before castling. The big question is whether his next move will be ... c5 or ... d7, and in fact the correct choice will vary depending on White's next move.

White's main options are A) 9.��d3 and B) 9.��d2.

9.a3 was proposed by Korchnoi. Then 9 ... d7 10.b4! ��c6 11.��d3 ��a7! was close to equal in Werner – Russo, Fontaine L'Eveque 2009.

However, I consider 9 ... c5!N most natural, avoiding b2-b4 altogether. Black will obtain a good game by continuing with ... ��d7, ... ��c6 and ... ��c8.

A) 9.��d3

By developing the bishop first, White hints at short castling.

9 ... c5!

We will see in variation B that after 9.��d2 the reply 9 ... ��d7! has a special purpose in dissuading White from castling queenside. Here the advance of the c-pawn achieves the same end, as it would be too risky for White to allow ... c4 with tempo, after which the pawn-roller with ... b5-b4 would come quickly. The pawn move also exerts immediate pressure against White's centre, and thus should be considered slightly more accurate than the bishop move.
9...d7 10.0–0 c5 11.e1! (11.h1 c6 12.dxc5 bxc5 transposes to Game 48) 11..c6 12.f2 transposes to variation B22 on page 352. This is perhaps the most theoretically critical line of the chapter, and while I believe Black is okay there, he has a slightly easier time in the present variation.

10...d6 11.e1!!

11.dxc5 is featured in Game 48 below. The text move is intended to be compared with the line 9...d7 10.0–0 c5 11.e1! as given in the note to Black’s 9th move above.

11...xd4!

Exchanging a pair of knights makes it easier for Black to organize his position. This is where we see a real benefit of playing 9...c5 and ...d6 instead of 9...d7.

12.xd4 cxd4 13.e2 c5 14.b3 d7 15.f2

This funny-looking move is favoured by the computer. It produces a different type of challenge, but ultimately is nothing to fear.

After the straightforward 16.xd4 e7 17.ad1 c8 18.h1 h6 Black is fine; he will castle next and then double rooks on the c-file.

16..e7 17.c4 dxc4 18.xc4 b6 19.xd4

After 19.xd4 xd4† 20.xd4 d5 the king comes to e7 and Black is fine.

19..c6

20.xd1 h6 21.g3

21.d6 xf2† 22.xf2 gives Black a choice between the solid 22..c8 and the more combative 22..g5?.

21...0–0 22.e4 c8 23.xc6 xc6 24.e4 d5

The position remains equal.

GAME 48

Milos Perunovic – Nikola Sedlak

Kragujevac 2009

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 d6 4.g5 c7
5.e5 \( \mathcal{A}d7 \) 6.\( \mathcal{A}xe7 \) \( \mathcal{W}xe7 \) 7.f4 a6 8.\( \mathcal{A}f3 \) \( \mathcal{A}b6 \) 9.\( \mathcal{A}d3 \) c5 10.0–0 \( \mathcal{A}c6 \) 11.dxc5

This move is not dangerous, but it leads to typical positions that every Classical player should know how to handle.

11...\( \mathcal{W}xc5 \)† 12.\( \mathcal{A}h1 \) \( \mathcal{A}d7 \) 13.\( \mathcal{A}e1 \) h6

A necessary preparation for short castling.

14.a3
14.\( \mathcal{A}d2 \) \( \mathcal{B}c8 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}ae1 \) \( \mathcal{A}e7 \) 16.a3 0–0 is solid for Black.

14...0–0
14...\( \mathcal{A}e7 \) 15.b4 \( \mathcal{A}c7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{A}e2 \) \( \mathcal{A}b5 \)†! 17.\( \mathcal{A}ed4 \) \( \mathcal{A}xd3 \) 18.cxd3 \( \mathcal{B}c8 \) 19.\( \mathcal{A}e3 \) is slightly more comfortable for White, and after 19...\( \mathcal{A}d7 \)†! 20.f5! Black had problems to solve in Jenni – Sedlak, Samnaun 2008.

15.b4

This plan was successful in the game in the previous note, but Sedlak shows the correct way for Black to handle it. Against other moves, ...\( \mathcal{A}e7 \) followed by ...\( \mathcal{A}a4 \) is fine for Black.

15...\( \mathcal{A}e7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{A}e3 \)

16...\( \mathcal{W}d8 \)!

Making room for the knight to retreat to e7. After a subsequent ...\( \mathcal{B}c8 \), the other knight will be able to go to c4.

17.\( \mathcal{A}e2 \) \( \mathcal{B}c8 \) 18.\( \mathcal{A}g3 \)

White plays for a kingside attack, but it doesn’t work out.

18.\( \mathcal{A}ed4 \) \( \mathcal{A}c4 \) 19.\( \mathcal{W}e2 \) \( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) 20.\( \mathcal{A}xd4 \) \( \mathcal{W}e7 \) followed by doubling on the c-file is fine for Black.

18...\( \mathcal{A}e7 \) 19.\( \mathcal{A}d4 \) \( \mathcal{A}c4 \) 20.\( \mathcal{W}f2 \)

20...\( \mathcal{A}b2 \)!

Preparing to eliminate a dangerous attacking piece.
21.\texttt{h5} \texttt{xd3} 22.\texttt{cxd3} \texttt{g6!} 23.\texttt{ac1} \texttt{h4}

The idea behind Black's previous move.

24.\texttt{xh4}

24.\texttt{f3} can be met in various ways. One that I especially like is 24...\texttt{b6} intending ...\texttt{a5}, and if White replies with \texttt{b4-b5}, then ...\texttt{c5!} comes.

24...\texttt{xh4} 25.\texttt{g1}

The endgame is fine for Black, especially after his next move.

25...\texttt{b5!} 26.\texttt{g3?} \texttt{xd3?}

Black misses a good opportunity: 26...\texttt{f5!} 27.\texttt{xf5} \texttt{exf5} 28.\texttt{fd1} \texttt{d4+}

27.\texttt{gxh4} \texttt{xh1} 28.\texttt{xf1} \texttt{Ec3} 29.\texttt{f5} \texttt{Ec4?!}

After 29...\texttt{ed3} 30.\texttt{f4} \texttt{e8}, chances are more or less equal. Now Black is a bit worse, but he manages to draw.

30.\texttt{d1} \texttt{exf5} 31.\texttt{xf5} \texttt{Ed8} 32.\texttt{f2} \texttt{g6}
33.\texttt{f6+} \texttt{f8} 34.\texttt{h7+}

White could have played on with 34.\texttt{d4?}.

34...\texttt{g8} 35.\texttt{f6+} \texttt{f8} 36.\texttt{h7+}

1/2–1/2

B) 9.\texttt{d2}

I believe this is White's most accurate try for an advantage, if followed up correctly.

9...\texttt{d7!}

This time we bring the bishop out first. As we shall see, this move is specifically directed against White's plan of long castling, as well as being a useful developing move. We shall study three options for White: 10.0–0–0?! is featured in Game 49, and then we shall look at B1) 10.\texttt{a4?} and B2) 10.\texttt{d3?!}.

GAME 49

Ernesto Inarkiev – Alexander Morozevich

Krasnoyarsk 2003

1.\texttt{e4} \texttt{e6} 2.\texttt{d4} \texttt{d5} 3.\texttt{c3} \texttt{e7} 4.\texttt{g5} \texttt{e7} 5.\texttt{c5} \texttt{d7} 6.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 7.\texttt{f4} \texttt{a6} 8.\texttt{f3} \texttt{b6}

9.\texttt{d2} \texttt{d7} 10.0–0–0?!

Can this really be a mistake?

10...\texttt{b5!}

Morozevich shows that the answer is "Yes!" Black takes the opportunity to exchange off his bad bishop while inviting White to open the a-file.

11.\texttt{xb5?!}
White underestimates his opponent’s attack. Now he risks becoming worse, whereas quieter moves would keep the position equal, albeit with fewer problems for Black than in the main lines where he does not manage to exchange his bishop so easily. Here are a couple of examples:

11.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xf1} \) can be met by 11.\( \text{c6}! \) as seen in Sirch – Vaznonis, Ankara 2007. Black keeps the tension for the moment, and may continue with \( \text{...xd3} \) followed by long castling.

11.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xf1} \) 11...\( \text{c6}! \) 12.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{axb5} \) 13.\( \text{xb5} \)±

11.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xf1} \) 11...\( \text{c6} \) followed by long castling is also okay for Black.

13.\( \text{c1} \) 13.\( \text{d3}! \) \( \text{d7}! \) is fine for Black. For example, after 14.\( f5 \) 0–0–0 15.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{xd2} \)† 16.\( \text{xd2} \) \( \text{b6} \), Black will play his king to b8 and then break in the centre with \( \text{...f6} \), with equal chances.

13.\( \text{c6} \) 14.\( f5 \)

This was Gerzhoy – Haskel, Wheeling 2010, and now Black should play:

14...0–0–0?!N

Although White has more space, Black is fine as he has a sound position without weaknesses.

White’s idea is to play his king to d2 and his rook to the a-file to exchange the dangerous black rook. Black may respond in various ways, but the simplest is 14.\( \text{d7}?! \) 15.\( \text{d2} \) (15.\( b3 \) is met by 15...\( b5! \) with a dangerous initiative) 15...\( c5 \) 16.\( \text{a1} \) \( \text{xa1} \) 17.\( \text{xa1} \) \( c4 \) 18.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c6} \) with equality. White’s bishop is restricted by the enemy pawn chain, and he will be more or less forced to exchange queens.
in the near future, leading to an endgame with no problems for Black.

14...\texttt{xa4}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

15.g4?

White is hoping that he can somehow distract Black from his attack, but this move drew a harsh comment from Korchnoi: “One should not have a title of a master and make such moves. His king’s house is in danger, but he does not care!”

15.f5!? is a slight better attempt to distract Black. Nevertheless, after 15.exf5 16.\texttt{he1} (16.\texttt{xf5 c4} 17.\texttt{c3 0–0+} 16...0–0 17.\texttt{g5 xg5 18.g5 xg5 dxc4} 19.e6 f6 20.e7 \texttt{xe8} 21.\texttt{xe6 xe4+} Black stands well.

15.c3! is obligatory, though after 15.\texttt{xc4} 16.\texttt{xc4 dxc4} 17.\texttt{c2! b5} 18.\texttt{a1 a7} White remains under pressure. In fact, if White plays energetically he can just hold the balance. One sample line is: 19.\texttt{xa4 a4+} 20.\texttt{b1 0–0} 21.\texttt{c2 a6} 22.\texttt{g5 g6} 23.h4 \texttt{d7} (23...h5? 24.\texttt{xe6} 24.h5 a8 25.\texttt{c1 a1+} 26.\texttt{b1} with equal play.

15...\texttt{c4} 16.\texttt{xc4}

16.\texttt{c3 b5} 17.b3 \texttt{a8} 18.bxc4 bxc4 19.\texttt{xc4 dxc4} 20.\texttt{d2 0–0+}

16...\texttt{dxc4}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

17.\texttt{g5}

17.c3 is the computer’s suggestion. The correct response is 17...b5 18.f5 (18.\texttt{c2 b4} 19.\texttt{b1 c5+} 18...\texttt{a7} and Black’s attack continues.

17.f5

This was perhaps the best attempt, although it does not quite work.

17...b5!

After 17...0–0? 18.\texttt{g5}! White might even be better!

18.\texttt{g5}

White aims for counterplay on the kingside.

18...\texttt{a7} 19.\texttt{c1}

The king attempts to run.

19...\texttt{a5}!
And obviously Black should not let him. It is a basic rule of the attack that you should never chase the king out of the kill zone. The finish might be:

20...\(\text{\textit{\text{c2}}}+3!!\) 21.bxc3 b4 22.fxe6
22.cxb4 \(\text{\textit{\text{a1}}}+\) 23.\(\text{\textit{\text{b1}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xb4}}}\)-
22...\(\text{\textit{\text{a1}}}+\) 23.\(\text{\textit{\text{b1}}}\) bxc3 24.exf7+ \(\text{\textit{\text{f8}}}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{\text{d1}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{b6}}}\)
Black’s attack is decisive.

17...b5 18.\(\text{\textit{\text{e3}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{a6}}}!!\) 19.c3
19.\(\text{\textit{\text{c4}}}\) 0–0 20.f5 \(\text{\textit{\text{b4}}}\) 21.f6 \(\text{\textit{\text{a7}}}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{\text{c1}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{d5}}}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{\text{g5}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{a1}}}+\) 24.\(\text{\textit{\text{d2}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xd4}}}+\) 25.\(\text{\textit{\text{e2}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xe4}}}+\) 26.\(\text{\textit{\text{f2}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xc2}}}+\) 27.\(\text{\textit{\text{g3}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{g6}}}\) 28.\(\text{\textit{\text{xe6}}}\)
was suggested by Finkel as White’s last chance, but here Black has:

28...\(\text{\textit{\text{a3}}}+!!\) 29.bxa3 hxg6 and the endgame is winning for Black.

B1) 10.a4??

19...\(\text{\textit{\text{c7}}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\text{e4}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{d5}}}\)
Black is now in complete control.

21.\(\text{\textit{\text{f3}}}\) 0–0 22.f5 b4 23.\(\text{\textit{\text{h1}}}\) bxc3 24.\(\text{\textit{\text{xc3}}}\)
24.fxe6 cxb2 25.exf7+ \(\text{\textit{\text{h8}}}\) leaves the white king facing a painful last few moves.

24...\(\text{\textit{\text{xc3}}}+\) 25.\(\text{\textit{\text{xc3}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{b8}}}\) 26.\(\text{\textit{\text{f3}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{b3}}}\)
27.\(\text{\textit{\text{c2}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{a7}}}\) 28.\(\text{\textit{\text{f2}}}\) c3 29.\(\text{\textit{\text{xc3}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{a1}}}+\)
30.\(\text{\textit{\text{c2}}}\)

So far, so good! Now let us see what happens when White is not so compliant as to allow a quick ...\(\text{\textit{\text{b5}}}\).
Though relatively rare, this is quite a challenging option.

10...c5
Black should ignore the advancing pawn and proceed with his own counterplay.

11.a5 \( \triangleleft \) c8
After the black queen moves (usually to c5), the knight will re-emerge on the e7-square.

12.dxc5
The only other move to have been played here is 12.\( \text{\textsf{a4}} \text{?} \), but it was not successful – see Game 50 below.

12...\( \text{\textsf{xc5}} \text{ 13.\textsf{d3}} \)
13.\( \text{\textsf{d4}} \text{ 14.\textsf{xd4}} \) occurred in one game. White probably hoped that his strong knight on d4 and his better bishop would give him a stable advantage, but in fact the advanced a-pawn helps Black to obtain counterplay. Play continued:

14...\( \text{\textsf{e7}} \text{ 15.\textsf{d3}} \text{ 16.\textsf{f3}} \) Now in Goloshchlapov – Feygin, Belgium 2005, the simple 16...\( \text{\textsf{b4N}} \) followed by ...\( \text{\textsf{e8}} \text{ would have been fine for Black. Later ...f6 might be possible, or even attacking the a5-pawn with ...\( \text{\textsf{c5}} \text{ and ...\textsf{ec6}} \).

13...\( \text{\textsf{e7}} \)
13...\( \text{\textsf{c6}} \) is another viable option: 14.\( \text{\textsf{e2}} \) (After 14.\( \text{\textsf{a4N}} \text{ 15.\textsf{xa5} \text{ 15.\textsf{xa5}} we see that the knight on c8 is doing a fine job keeping White out of b6. 16.\( \text{\textsf{c5}} \text{ b6 17.\textsf{xa6} 0–0} \) followed by ...\( \text{\textsf{e7}} \text{ is equal.}) 14...\( \text{\textsf{b6}} \text{ 15.\textsf{xb6}} \text{ 16.c3 \textsf{e8}} \text{ 17.\textsf{ed4} \textsf{xd4}} \text{ 18.\textsf{xd4} 0–0 19.\textsf{f2} \frac{1}{2}–\frac{1}{2}} \) Bosiolic – Pap, Balatonlille 2006. After 19...\( \text{\textsf{fb8}} \) Black would have good counterplay, and he could think of pushing his a-pawn next.

14.\( \text{\textsf{f2}} \)
Otherwise Black will just play ...0–0, followed by either ...f6 or ...\( \text{\textsf{c8}} \).

14...\( \text{\textsf{xf2}} \text{ 15.\textsf{xf2} 0–0 16.\textsf{he1}} \)
In this position Black can solve all his problems if he chooses the right set-up for his pieces.
16...\textit{\v{c}c8!}\textbf{N}
Intending to drop the bishop back to e8 and bring the queen's knight to d7, where it will cover the hole on b6. Instead 16...\texttt{\v{c}bc6} 17.\texttt{\v{c}a4!} gave White a small edge in Vuckovic – Sedlak, Kragujevac 2009.

17.\texttt{\v{b}ed1} \texttt{\v{e}e8} 18.\texttt{g4}
18.\texttt{\v{e}e2} \texttt{\v{d}d7} 19.\texttt{\v{f}d4} \texttt{\v{c}c5\texttt{\v{c}e}5} is okay for Black, who may double rooks on the c-file or simply play ...\texttt{\v{c}c6}.

18...\texttt{\v{d}ec6} 19.\texttt{\v{a}a4} \texttt{\v{d}d7}
Black covers the b6-square and attacks the a5-pawn. He is in no way worse.

\begin{center}
\textbf{GAME 50}
\end{center}

\textbf{Deep Sengupta – Nigel Short}

Gibraltar 2011

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\texttt{\v{c}c3} \texttt{\v{g}f6} 4.\texttt{g5} \texttt{\v{e}e7} 5.e5 \texttt{\v{f}d7} 6.\texttt{\v{g}xe7} \texttt{\v{w}xe7} 7.f4 \texttt{\v{b}b6} 8.\texttt{\v{f}f3} \texttt{\v{d}d7} 9.\texttt{\v{w}d2} a6 10.a4 c5 11.a5 \texttt{\v{c}c8} 12.\texttt{\v{a}a4?!}
This is a rather misguided attempt by White to play for a queenside initiative.

12...\texttt{cxd4}
12...\texttt{\v{x}a4} 13.\texttt{\v{x}a4} cxd4 is also fine for Black.

13.\texttt{\v{w}xd4} 0–0 14.\texttt{\v{c}c5}
14.\texttt{\v{c}c5} \texttt{\v{b}b5!} also allows Black to exchange his bad bishop.

14...\texttt{\v{x}a4} 15.\texttt{\v{w}xe7} \texttt{\v{w}xe7} 16.\texttt{\v{x}a4} \texttt{\v{d}d7?}
The semi-open c-file and the vulnerability of the a5-pawn give Black a slight edge.

17.\texttt{\v{d}d3} \texttt{\v{c}c6} 18.\texttt{\v{d}d2} \texttt{f6}
Black could also play 18...\texttt{g6?!} and then ...\texttt{\v{c}c5} or ...\texttt{\v{c}c8}, before breaking with ...\texttt{f6}.

19.\texttt{exf6} \texttt{\v{x}f6} 20.g3 \texttt{h6} 21.h4?! \texttt{\v{c}c5} 22.\texttt{\v{a}a3}

22...\texttt{\v{c}e4}! 23.\texttt{\v{x}e4} dxe4 24.\texttt{\v{h}h2} e5!
Excellent dynamic play, opening the position to Black's advantage.

25.\texttt{\v{g}g4} \texttt{\v{d}d6}! 26.\texttt{\v{e}e3} \texttt{exf4!} 27.\texttt{\v{x}xf4} \texttt{\v{e}e8} 28.\texttt{\v{a}a4} \texttt{\v{g}6} 29.\texttt{\v{e}e5} \texttt{\v{x}e5} 30.\texttt{\v{f}xe5} \texttt{\v{x}e5} 31.\texttt{\v{x}e4} \texttt{\v{x}a5}
Black has converted his initiative into an extra pawn. Double-rook endgames are not easy to win, but Short continually creates problems and eventually wears his opponent down.

32.\texttt{\v{e}e7} \texttt{\v{b}b5} 33.\texttt{\v{b}b3} \texttt{\v{g}g3\texttt{\v{g}3}} 34.\texttt{\v{d}d2} \texttt{\v{g}4} 35.\texttt{\v{c}c7} \texttt{\v{h}5} 36.\texttt{\v{h}h3} \texttt{\v{d}d5}! 37.\texttt{\v{c}c1} \texttt{\v{b}5} 38.\texttt{\v{a}a7} \texttt{\v{d}d6} 39.\texttt{\v{c}c3} \texttt{\v{g}2} 40.\texttt{\v{f}f3} \texttt{\v{e}e6} 41.\texttt{\v{d}d1} \texttt{\v{e}e4} 42.\texttt{\v{h}h3} \texttt{\v{f}f4} 43.\texttt{\v{e}e1} \texttt{\v{f}f2} 44.\texttt{\v{b}b4} \texttt{\v{a}a2}
Chapter 20 – Classical Main Line with 8.\( \text{d}f3 \)

45.\( \text{d}f1 \text{ g}f2+ 46.\( \text{e}e1 \text{ f}c2 47.\text{d}d7 \text{ h}h7 \\
48.\text{e}d6 \text{ g}6 49.\text{e}d8 \text{ g}7 50.\text{e}d1 \text{ h}h6 \\
51.\text{e}d7 \text{ b}c82 52.\text{e}d1 \text{ e}g2 53.\text{f}f1 \text{ h}h2 \\
Good technique – Black forces the exchange of a pair of rooks, after which the h4- and c3-
pawns will both come under fire.

54.\text{x}xh2 \text{x}xh2 55.\text{e}d4 \text{ h}h3 56.c4 \text{ b}xc4 \\
57.\text{x}xc4 \text{ e}g3 58.\text{f}f2 \text{ e}g4 59.\text{x}xg4 \text{x}xg4 \\
60.\text{g}g2 \text{ h}h5 61.\text{g}g3 \text{ g}5 \\
0–1

B2) 10.\text{d}d3!

I consider this flexible move to be White's best.

10...\text{c}c5 \\
Here White can go for long castling with B21) 11.\text{d}xc5, but more challenging is B22) 
11.0–0!.

B21) 11.\text{d}xc5 \text{ w}x\text{c}5 12.0–0–0 \text{ c}c6 \\
13.\text{b}b1 \text{ c}c8!±

Black's correct strategy is to continue delaying castling in favour of developing queenside 
counterplay.

14.\text{h}he1 \\
14.\text{f}5? \text{exf}5± leads nowhere for White.

After 14.\text{e}e2 \text{ b}b4 15.\text{ed}4 \text{ c}c4 Black has enough counterplay and at least equal chances.

14...\text{a}a5 \\
Now Black threatens ...\text{bc}4, so White decides a queen exchange is in order.

15.\text{e}e3 \text{ w}xe3 16.\text{e}xe3 \text{ g}6 \\
Now we see another advantage of delaying castling: the king will be ideally placed in the 
centre for the endgame. Black is fine here.

17.\text{g}g4!! \\
17.\text{d}d4N would have been better, though Black has no reason to complain. A sample 
line is 17...\text{h}h5 18.\text{c}ce2 \text{ a}a4 19.\text{b}b3 \text{ c}c5 20.\text{c}c3 
\text{xd}3 21.\text{e}exd3 \text{ e}e7 22.\text{e}e2 \text{ e}e7 23.\text{f}f3 
\text{h}hc8 with equal chances.
17...h5! 18.gxh5 $\text{gxh5}$ 19.$\text{e2}$?
19.$\text{e2}$ $\text{bc4}$ 20.$\text{xc4}$ $\text{xc4}$

19...$\text{xc3!N}$
Black missed this opportunity in Bosbach –
Jankovskis, Germany 1994.

20.$\text{xc3}$ $\text{d4}$
Black regains the exchange by force and ends
up a pawn ahead, with a superior structure to
boot.

B22) 11.0–0!

This is the most challenging approach of all.
White aims for a dark-square blockade, having
lured Black into an early ...$\text{d7}$. We will see
that this small difference effectively rules out
the ...$\text{xd4}$ plan that we saw in variation A.

11.$\text{c6}$ 12.$\text{f2}$
I also considered 12.$\text{h1}$N, but it seems
harmless after 12...$\text{xd4}$ 13.$\text{xd4}$ $\text{xd4}$
14.$\text{e2}$ $\text{c4}$ 15.$\text{xc4}$ $\text{xc4}$ 16.$\text{xd4}$ 0–0
17.$\text{d1}$ $\text{c5}$, planning ...$\text{ac8}$ and ...$\text{fd8}$
with equal chances.

12...$\text{xd4}$
This is the only sensible way for Black to
play.

12...0–0? loses to the Greek Gift sacrifice
13.$\text{h7}$.

Releasing the tension with 12...$\text{c4}$?! is
inadvisable: 13.$\text{e2}$ $\text{c8}$ (13...0–0 14.$\text{d1}$ f6
15.exf6 is also promising for White) 14.$\text{d1}$
f6 15.exf6 gxf6 16.c3 f5 This was played in
Jackova – Korchnoi, Marianske Lazne 2009.
White should now play 17.b3N, opening
another front on the queenside and leaving
Black in trouble.

Finally, 12...$\text{xd4}$?! is unsatisfactory here due
to 13.$\text{xd4}$ $\text{cxd4}$ 14.$\text{xd4}$ when Black has
coordination problems and f4-f5 ideas are in
the air.

13.$\text{e2}$!
This chapter examined the most critical battleground of our repertoire in the Classical Variation. I favour the modern approach with 8...\(\text{c}6!\) intending quick queenside counterplay, although the best way to go about this will depend on how White plays.

Against A) 9.\(\text{d}3\), the immediate 9...c5! 10.0–0 \(\text{c}6\) offers Black good chances, as shown in the analysis and accompanying game.

In the event that White prefers B) 9.\(\text{d}2\), Black does best to respond with 9...\(\text{d}7!\) so that 10.0–0–0?! can be met by 10...\(\text{b}5!\) as seen in Game 53.

White can change tack with B1) 10.a4?!, but after 10...c5 11.a5 \(\text{c}8\) the knight can return to the game via e7 later, while it is not at all clear that having the pawn on a5 is a useful achievement for White.

B2) 10.\(\text{d}3!\) is best, maintaining the option of castling on either side. After 10...c5 White often chooses B21) 11.dxc6 followed by queenside castling, but more challenging is B22) 11.0–0!, changing direction and aiming for a positional edge with control over the d4-square. Nevertheless, with accurate play, Black can minimize his disadvantage and eventually make it disappear.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the most critical battleground of our repertoire in the Classical Variation. I favour the modern approach with 8...\(\text{c}6!\) intending quick queenside counterplay, although the best way to go about this will depend on how White plays.

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Chapter 21

The McCutcheon Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 f6 4.g5 b4!

A) 5.d3 dxe4 6.xe4 c5
   A1) 7.e2
   A2) 7.dxc5
B) 5.e2
C) 5.exd5 xd5! 6.xf6! gxf6!
   7.e2 – Game 51
   7.d2 – Game 52
D) 5.e5 h6
   D1) 6.xf6
   D2) 6.h4
   D3) 6.exf6

Game 51  Simon Williams – Daniel King, Birmingham 2005 363
Game 52  Martin Ramsauer – Peter Behrends, Correspondence 1994 365
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

**Diagram Preview**

Can you find the best set-up for the black pieces? (page 360)

White’s last was 2.e2-c1. Can Black take advantage of this? (page 366)

How should Black proceed? (page 357)

Should White be worried about the attack on the h1-rook? (page 366)

White’s last move was 13.d3N. How can Black counter it? (page 369)

How should Black play against the c-pawns? (page 359)

How can Black solve his development problems? (page 363)

What is Black’s best continuation? (page 371)
Welcome to the McCutcheon! John Lindsay McCutcheon was a lawyer from Pittsburgh, USA, who defeated two world champions in “his” variation, admittedly with one of those victories coming from White’s side of the board. He won against Steinitz (the first World Champion) in a simultaneous exhibition (with Steinitz playing against multiple opponents, one of them being the young McCutcheon) in New York in 1885, and against Lasker (the second World Champion) twenty years later in one of two games in a thematic correspondence match in which both players were obliged to play the McCutcheon Variation. For the record, both of those games were won by White. All three of these games will be referenced in the present chapter, as none of them featured the modern main lines.

Moving ahead a few decades, another famous McCutcheon player is Viktor Korchnoi, who has employed it in more than twenty games. By comparison, the database shows he has chosen 4...c67 in just five games, most of which were against weak opposition. Many of Korchnoi’s McCutcheon games require close examination and we will see some of the most instructive examples from the great man’s praxis in the coming three chapters.

By the way, in the seventh game of the Lasker – Tarrasch match of 1908, Lasker also won against Tarrasch’s McCutcheon using the harmless 5.d3 variation and accepting tripled pawns (sometimes known as “Irish pawns”, which I understand to be a joke from the English towards their neighbours). Lasker used the same pawn formation successfully against McCutcheon himself in their thematic correspondence match. I will discuss this structure later in this chapter.

The McCutcheon Variation has been a favourite choice of many players who were dissatisfied with Black’s chances in the 4...c67 variation. One example that comes quickly to mind is Dr Tarrasch, who went as far as to claim that the entire French Defence was “not a correct opening” after his 11th game against Lasker in their 1908 World Championship match. In that encounter Lasker played a variation that was subsequently promoted by Capablanca (another McCutcheon fan with the black pieces), namely 5.exd5!!, which is still considered a respectable option for White. Luckily for us, today this is not considered to be the refutation of the French Defence (Black can, after all, opt for the Winawer with 3...b4 if he wishes!) and of course not the refutation of the McCutcheon either.

In Tarrasch’s famous work *The Game of Chess*, written in 1931 but published in English a few months after his death in 1934, the author no longer considers 5.exd5 advantageous for White, but instead writes “The value of McCutcheon’s system is rendered doubtful by 5.dxe5, a move first played by Mieses in the Vienna tournament of 1907.” Curiously, in the same book Tarrasch offered an improvement whereby Black obtains a good game. In any event, nowadays the knight move is considered harmless.

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Chapter 21 – The McCutcheon Variation

From the starting position after 4...\(\texttt{b4}\), there are four options for us to consider: A) $5.\texttt{d}3$, B) $5.\texttt{e}2$, C) $5.\texttt{exd}5$ and D) $5.\texttt{e}5$.

A) $5.\texttt{d}3$

Lasker’s move, which he used twice in his 1908 World Championship match against Tarrasch. Lasker won the seventh game of the match, but Tarrasch won the theoretical battle by obtaining a solid advantage in the ninth game. Tarrasch’s improvement is still considered the main line and Lasker’s line remains out of business as an attempt for a theoretical edge.

$5...\texttt{dxe}4$

$5...\texttt{c}5$? was mentioned by Tarrasch in his book on the 1908 World Championship match, and was later tested in Marshall – Alekhine, St Petersburg 1914. The same move has been recommended recently by Vitiugov and Antic & Maksimovic in their respective repertoire books, but it seems to me that Black is heading for unclear play without special reason. It is a matter of choice of course, but I like the clarity of the main line.

$6.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{c}5$

$6...\texttt{bd}7$? has been used by amazing players like Bronstein and Stahlberg, but I think it suffices to give one good antidote against this minor line.

White can react to the central challenge with A1) $7.\texttt{e}2$ or A2) $7.\texttt{dxc}5$.

$7.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{cxd}4$ will quickly transpose to variation A1.

A1) $7.\texttt{e}2$

$7...\texttt{xd}4$ 8.\texttt{xf}6$

8.\texttt{xd}4?! This is dismissed by Tarrasch in his notes, due to:

$8...\texttt{xc}3\uparrow 9.\texttt{bxc}3 \texttt{a}5$

Tarrasch points out that Black is winning a pawn, but it is worth checking a bit further.

10.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xc}3\uparrow 11.\texttt{d}2
11...\texttt{Wxd2}\texttt{+}N

Vitiugov mentions this line in a note to his main recommendation of 5...c5?!. In fact this novelty is forced.

11...\texttt{Wxa1}\texttt{+} leads to disaster: 12.\texttt{exd2} \texttt{Wxa2} (or 12...\texttt{Wxh1} 13.\texttt{axb6}! and White delivers checkmate in a few moves) 13.\texttt{Wxe6} \texttt{Wc4}\texttt{+} 14.\texttt{f3} \texttt{d7} 15.\texttt{gxf7}\texttt{+} \texttt{g8} 16.\texttt{Wd6}\texttt{+} \texttt{g8} 17.\texttt{f5}\texttt{+} Grant – Sanders, corr. 1947.

12.\texttt{exd2} \texttt{gxf6} 13.\texttt{ab1} \texttt{a6}

Vitiugov opines that Black is at least equal, and this seems correct to us.

8...\texttt{Wxf6} 9.\texttt{Wxd4} \texttt{Wxd4} 10.\texttt{Wxd4} \texttt{c7}

10...\texttt{Wxc3}\texttt{+} 11.bxc3 \texttt{Wd7}= was also fine for Black in Wisker – Blackburne, London 1870.

11.\texttt{Wxb5} \texttt{c7} 12.a3

12.0–0 \texttt{Wf6} 13.\texttt{Wf3} \texttt{d7}= Puroski – Komarov, Maromme 1994.

12...\texttt{Wxc3}\texttt{+} 13.\texttt{Wxc3} \texttt{f6} 14.0–0–0

14.\texttt{f3} \texttt{e8}\texttt{=} prevents long castling, and after 15.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d7} Black has a fine game.

14...\texttt{Wxe4} 15.\texttt{Wxe4} \texttt{d7} 16.\texttt{He1} \texttt{c6}

Black is more than fine in this position. Objectively it is still about equal, but the future belongs to Black as the combination of rook and bishop is generally stronger than that of rook and knight. White is trying to use the asset of the queenside majority, which was thought to be a real advantage until roughly the 1970s, but actually does not have much significance here.

17.f3 \texttt{Hd8} 18.\texttt{Wc5} \texttt{Hd5} 19.\texttt{Wxd5} \texttt{Hxd5} 20.\texttt{He3} \texttt{Hd8} 21.b3 \texttt{Hc6} 22.c4 \texttt{b6} 23.\texttt{Hd3}

Marshall – Tarrasch, Mannheim 1914. Black only had a tiny advantage and the game ended in a draw.
continues: “Lasker permits an isolated tripled pawn! But this is utterly correct. If I had better heeded my own teaching, I would not have taken the knight. I have often emphasized my view that good positions for the pieces matter much more than that of the pawns.”

What a valuable comment by one of the most influential chess teachers of the 20th century. Nevertheless, I believe that his subsequent defeat influenced his judgement of the position.

7...dcc3†!

According to Tarrasch: “Very weak! The tripled pawn here is not at all disadvantageous, because White has an extra pawn and Black must lose time regaining it, and the pawn at c5 is resistant to pressure, which finally leads to a weakening of the black kingside. In short, taking on c3 (i) loses a pawn, (ii) loses time and (iii) weakens Black’s position. The right continuation, which I implemented in the 9th game, was ...Wxd1† and ...Dbd7, and Black has a good game.”

Is this true? I think not. Modern analysis shows that Black can indeed take the knight, leading to a balanced position after correct play.

In the 9th game, Tarrasch “improved” with 7...Bbd7 8.Axf6? Dxf6 9.Af3 Wxd1† 10.Bxd1 Axc5 11.Gge2 Ae7 and got a small advantage, but Lasker saved the game eventually.

This is not the end of the story though. Keres subsequently suggested 8.Af3! which led to an eventual white victory in the game Tal – Lein, Leningrad 1971. Another quite interesting deviation is 8.c6?!N.

7...Wxd1†! is a good alternative which may easily transpose to the main line below. 8.Bxd1 Bbd7 (8...Dxe4?? 9.Bd8#) 9.Af3 (9.c6? can now be met by 9...Dxe4!) 9...Axc3†! 10.Bxc3 Bxc5 Black is fully equal and eventually won the stem game Reti – Bogoljubow, Stockholm 1919.

8.bxc3

8...Wxd1†N

My small contribution to this historical variation, although we soon transpose to a known position a few moves down the line. The exchange of queens is logical because White’s structural problems are counterbalanced by his dynamic prospects, and without queens on the board these prospects become more limited.

8...Aa5 9.Axf6 gxf6 10.Axd4 e5 11.Ae3 Ac7 12.Bd2 Bf5 was seen in Lasker – Tarrasch, Germany (7) 1908. At this point the champion could have caused the most problems to the challenger with 13.c6!N or even 13.Bh6?N with a big advantage in either case.

9.Bxd1 Bbd7

9...Dxe4?? 10.Bd8# must be avoided.

10.Af3

10.c6? Axe4 11.cxd7† Axd7†

After 10.Axf6 Dxf6 11.Af3 e5! 12.c6 e4 13.cxb7 Axb7 14.Ae2 0-0 Black is at least equal, if not better. He is a pawn down, but after ...Af8 he will attack White’s doubled, isolated pawns, and the move e4–e3 may release the power of the bishop at any moment.

10...Axc5=
We have transposed to the Reti–Bogoljubow game given in the note to Black's 7th move. Black is doing fine, as White's two bishops are counterbalanced by his damaged structure.

B) 5.\(\text{\textit{e}}2\)

As revealed in one of the Tarrasch quotes in the introductory part of the chapter, it was Mieses who introduced this move in the Vienna tournament of 1907. He was soon followed by other great players such as Rubinstein, Bogoljubow, Lasker and Alekhine.

5...dxe4!

5...h6 was proposed by Tarrasch and more recently by Vitiugov. Play may continue: 6.\(\text{\textit{xf6}}\) (6.h4? g5 7.g3 \(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) simply wins a pawn for Black.) 6...\(\text{\textit{xf6}}\) 7.a3 \(\text{\textit{a5}}\) 8.exd5 0-0 9.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{d8}}\) 10.0-0 exd5 11.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\)

9.c3

9.\(\text{\textit{xf6}}\)\(\text{\textit{xf6}}\) 10.c3 e5 11.d5 \(\text{\textit{e7}}\) is already slightly more comfortable for Black, for instance:

12.c4N (12.g3 occurred in Peres–Goncalves,
Portugal 1995, and now the natural 12...0-0 favours Black.) 11...0-0 13.c3 f5 Black is ahead in development and after ...ad8 and ...c6 he will have the initiative.

9...e7!
White didn’t take the bishop, so why not keep it?

10.g3
10...2g3 has been played, but after 10...f5!N 11.d2 (11.c5 xc5 12.xc5 e7=) 11...e5 Black is more than okay, as d4-d5 is not possible.

10...f5
Black can also consider 10...0-0 11.g2 as played in Sibarevic – Rogers, Mendrisio 1988. At this point 11...e5N makes sense, intending 12.d5 a5 perhaps followed by ...c4-d6, when Black is more than fine.

11.d2 d5 12.g1 e5
Black is already at least equal, but let’s follow a practical example to get a better feeling for this position.

16.xf4 17.xf4
This position was reached in Willemze – Oreopoulos, Kallithea 2009, and now my compatriot should have played:

C) 5.exd5
Lasker switched to this continuation in the 11th game of his 1908 match against Tarrasch, after getting the worse of the opening battle in the 9th game as referenced earlier after 5.d3. Previously Lasker had used this continuation three times in his 1907 match against Marshall, scoring a win and two draws. The text move...
was also Capablanca's favourite way to play against the McCutcheon, which he also liked using with the black pieces.

5...\textit{xd}5!

5...\textit{xd}5 6.Wf3 favours White, who can follow up with 0-0-0, \textit{d}d3 and \textit{ge}2-g3, with active prospects on the kingside and/or the e-file.

6.\textbf{x}f6!

This was the move Lasker used against Marshall.

Against Tarrasch he tried to improve with:

6.\textit{f}3?!

Although White won the game, Tarrasch later pointed out that Black stands fine after:

6...\textit{bd}7!

Surprisingly, this strong move has hardly ever been played, but you can find treasures like this by looking at the old sources! Black simply develops and prevents the damaging of his pawn structure.

7.\textit{d}3

The most logical reply, and the only move found in my database.

6...\textbf{gx}f6!

Black is correct to keep the idea of exchanging on c3 in reserve.

6...\textbf{xc}3\dagger is proposed in most of the sources in my possession, but I consider it inaccurate due to: 7.bxc3 \textit{gx}f6 8.Wd2! \textit{a}5 This is the usual suggestion, directed against White's plan of c3-c4. At this point I like the plan seen in the following game:

![Chess Diagram](image)

9.g3! \textit{bd}7 (9...\textit{d}5N is well met by 10.Wf4! \textit{wh}1 11.Wf3\dagger) 10.Wg2 \textit{c}6 11.Wf3 \textit{d}7 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.Wfb1\dagger White was better in Lanka – Glek, Eupen 2000.

![Chess Diagram](image)

From this position I am going to cover 7.\textbf{e}2 and 7.Wd2 in the following two illustrative games.
Chapter 21 – The McCutcheon Variation

GAME 51

Simon Williams – Daniel King

Birmingham 2005

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 d6 4.g5 b4
5.exd5 wxd5 6.axf6 gxf6 7.c2
White wants to break the pin without allowing the doubling of his pawns.

7...c6!
By putting pressure on the d4-pawn, Black prevents the white knight from recapturing on c3.

8.a3?!
This is a minor inaccuracy, as the weakening of the b3-square gives Black an extra possibility.

White should prefer:
8.d2 xxc3 9.xc3
9.xc3 d7 10.b3 a5† 11.c3 0–0–0† was more than adequate for Black in Zezulkin – Skrzypnik, Polanica Zdroj 2000. White is behind in development and will face an attack along the g-file.
9.bxc3 is a deservedly rare move, as 9...e5!N is a good response.

9...xd4 10.xd4 exd4 11.0–0 0–0 12.c4 b6 13.c3
This is where the pawn’s placement on a2 comes into play, as the knight does not have the option of moving to b3.
13...f5 14.g4 h4 15.xf6† e7 16.g3 h6 17.f4

17...b8!
17...g6?! allows 18.g2 b8 19.hf1 when White definitely has some advantage. Play may continue 19...hxg5 20.xg5 e5 21.h4! when 21...xh4 allows 22.g8† e8 23.xe1 followed by c6† and d8†. By placing the rook on b8 first, Black threatens to put the knight on g6, having ensured that the enemy bishop will not come to g2 with gain of tempo.
18.b5 a6!
This was recommended by Watson in the fourth edition of Play the French and tested in a subsequent game.
22...\textbf{\textit{d}7}!

Threatening the h-pawn.
After 22...\texttt{Exh}2 23.\texttt{Exg}8† \texttt{E}e8 it is not clear if White can achieve more than a perpetual, but in any case Black can play for more.

23.\texttt{Exf}2 \texttt{Exb}5 24.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{Exd}8
Black was at least equal in Bromann – Carlstedt, Kolding 2013.

8...\texttt{x}c3† 9.\texttt{Exxc}3
9.bxc3?! does not make much sense here either, and after 9...\texttt{e}5† I cannot help but prefer Black.

9...\texttt{Exd}4 10.\texttt{Exd}4 \texttt{Exd}4 11.0–0–0 c5
12.\texttt{E}e4 b6 13.c3

13...\texttt{Exb}3†!
Here is where the drawback of the earlier a2–a3 becomes apparent.

13...\texttt{Exf}5 is fine as well, and is essentially just the same as the 8.\texttt{Exd}2 line examined above.

14.\texttt{Ec}2 \texttt{E}a5 15.\texttt{b}4
White has to keep attacking the knight, otherwise after ...\texttt{E}e7 and ...c5–c4 Black will be clearly better.

15...\texttt{Exb}7 16.\texttt{Exf}6† \texttt{E}e7 17.\texttt{E}e4
The other knight retreat is fine for Black as well: 17.\texttt{Exg}4 \texttt{Exd}7 18.\texttt{Exb}3 a5 Black is already comfortable and after the following inaccuracy he emerges on top.
23...\textit{h5} Black was already close to winning in Sieiro Gonzalez – Vallejo Pons, Cienfuegos 1997.

17...\textit{xb4 18.axb4}
18...\textit{xb4} would have been safer, but in any case after 18...\textit{d7} Black has no problems at all.

18...\textit{d7 19.b2 a5 20.d2 axb4 22.cxb4}

22...\textit{a4 23.b3 a8f}
It transpires that the opening of the queenside has favoured Black.

24...\textit{c4 c6 25.xb6 a3f 26.c2 d8}
27...\textit{c4 d6 28.a1?}
28...\textit{b2f} would have maintained the balance.

28...\textit{xc4?!}
28...\textit{e4f 29.b2 a1 30.xa1 b8f would have won material. The text move is less precise, but Black still has some initiative which he converted after a few more inaccuracies on both sides.

29...\textit{xc4 a4f 30.b1 b3f 31.b2f c6 32.a7f f6 33.c2 xb4 34.f3 g8 35.c3 f4 36.a6 d5 37.d1 c8f 38.d3 b8 39.c2 b3f 0–1

\textbf{GAME 5}

Martin Ramsauer – Peter Behrends

Correspondence 1994

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 f6 4.g5 b4 5.exd5 xd5 6.xf6 gxf6 7.d2

This time White breaks the pin immediately while preparing long castling.

7...\textit{a5}
Black removes the queen from danger and hints at the possibility of doubling White's pawns.

8...\textit{ge2}
White could also consider:

8. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c6} \)!

8...\( \text{xc3} \)N 9.bxc3 \( \text{d7} \) followed by ...\( \text{c6} \) and ...\( \text{d7} \) looks okay, but there is no reason to go for this just yet.

9. \( \text{f3} \)N

9.\( \text{ge2 d7} \)\( ^{2} \) Wikner – Sundin, Stockholm 1994. Black follows with long castling and has excellent counterplay. The same plan works well after the text move.

By the way, 8...\( \text{d7} \) 9.0–0–0 \( \text{c6} \) 10.a3 \( \text{f8} \)N is bad due to 11.d5!.

9.\( \text{a3} \)

9.\( \text{c1} \) was the choice of a true chess giant, but Black gets a comfortable game with: 9...\( \text{xc3} \)N (9...\( \text{b6} \) was played in Capablanca – Bogoljubow, New York 1924. White eventually won in fine positional style, but Black was not worse after the opening.) 10.bxc3 \( \text{b6} \) Black intends to complete development with ...\( \text{b7} \), with a slightly better position. The knight at c1 seems weird and 11.\( \text{b3 a4} \) does not help White.

9...\( \text{b6} \) 10.\( \text{d1} \)

10.\( \text{c1} \) \( \text{d6} \) was fine for Black in Peter – Czebe, Balatonlelle 2001, but I would prefer 10...\( \text{e7} \)N to keep the d-file clear for a rook.

10...\( \text{e7} \)

Black is ready to play ...\( \text{d7} \) and castle long with a fine position, so White decides to take immediate action.

11.\( \text{b4} \)N \( \text{g5} \) 12.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{h6} \)

8...\( \text{d7} \)!

Excellent! White has blocked his bishop, so Black is looking to take advantage by getting his knight to the c4-square.

13.\( \text{c1} \)

13.\( \text{b5} \) is no problem after 13...\( \text{d8} \) intending ...\( \text{c6} \) and ...\( \text{c7} \).
Chapter 21 – The McCutcheon Variation

13...\( \text{d7} \) 14.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{g8} \)

14...0–0–0?!N would have made the idea given in the next note slightly less appealing for White.

15.\( \text{b5}?! \)

15.\( \text{f5}?! \) was a better chance to maintain the balance. After the text move Black has chances to develop a serious advantage.

15...\( \text{xb5} \) 16.\( \text{xb5} \) 0–0–0 17.\( \text{a5} \)

17.\( \text{xa7}?! \) \( \text{b8} \) 18.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{c4} \+)

17...\( \text{b8} \) 18.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{f5} \)

18...\( \text{g4} \)N+ is a more powerful way to continue. Black has multiple threats, the main one being to double rooks on the g-file.

19.\( 0–0 \) \( \text{f6} \) 20.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{g7} \) 21.\( \text{f3} \) c6 22.\( \text{c5} \) \( \text{d5}?! \)

22...\( \text{d5} \! \) 23.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{d7} \) would have kept some advantage.

23.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{xd4} \)† 24.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{a4} \? \)

24...\( \text{xd6} \! \) 25.\( \text{cxd6} \) \( \text{d5c6} \) would have kept all three results open. Black has clearly lost the thread of the game, and in the next few moves he collapses.

25.\( \text{dxb7} \) \( \text{c7} \) 26.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{h5} \? \) 27.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{c3} \? \)

28.\( \text{b5} \† \) \( \text{d7} \) 29.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \)

1–0

Black resigned without waiting to see which easily winning continuation his opponent would choose. Despite the unfortunate end to this game, we have seen that the opening verdict was a positive one for Black.

D) 5.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{h6} \)

Black's last move requires no explanation. In this, the final section of the chapter, I will take a step closer to the main lines by covering a few sidelines on the next move, namely D1) 6.\( \text{xf6} \), D2) 6.\( \text{h4} \) and D3) 6.\( \text{exf6} \).

6.\( \text{e3} \) and 6.\( \text{c1} \) can be found in the next chapter, while the most popular 6.\( \text{d2} \) is the subject of Chapter 23.
Before doing any further analysis, I would like to emphasize that the three sidelines are only rarely encountered, and while they should not be ignored, I do not believe it is worthwhile to devote too much energy to them. In my ten years of experience in this opening, I have only encountered the move 6.exf6 in a single game in a rapid event. It is much more important to understand what is happening in the critical main lines as found in the next two chapters.

**D1) 6.\texttt{xf6} gxf6**

7.\texttt{e3} \texttt{d7}!

Intending ...c5. This plan was recommended by McDonald and I see no reason to disagree.

7...f5 8.d3 c5 9.dxc5 \texttt{xc5} 10.0-0 \texttt{c6} 11.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e7} was seen in Steinitz – McCutcheon, New York (simul) 1885. At this point Steinitz missed 12.\texttt{a4}! which would have offered him excellent control of the dark squares and a stable advantage.

8.\texttt{exf6}

8.\texttt{e2} c5\textsuperscript{=} was good for Black in Aftosglou – Kourkounakis, Kavala 1995.

8...\texttt{xf6} 9.a3

**D2) 6.\texttt{h4} g5**

9...\texttt{e7}!\textsuperscript{N}

9...\texttt{f8} 10.\texttt{e2} \texttt{c6} 11.\texttt{g3} \texttt{g7} 12.\texttt{g2} 0-0 13.0-0 e5\textsuperscript{=} gave Black an excellent position in Agur – Dreev, Oviedo 1991, but I am not sure why both players underestimated 10.\texttt{b5}!.

10.\texttt{b5}

Against other moves Black will play ...a6, ...c5 and perhaps ...b5, with a fine game.

10...\texttt{d8}!

Black is at least equal; this is why the bishop retreated to e7 instead of f8.
After 7.exf6?! gxh4 8.Wf3 \(\text{d}7\) the f6-pawn falls and White is fighting for equality.

7...\(\text{d}e4\) 8.\(\text{c}e2\)
This is an old line, used by McCutcheon himself to defeat Lasker in their themed correspondence match.

8...f5!
This is my preference, although the following alternative is also playable:

8...c5
Antic and Maksimovic don’t like this move, but I am not convinced by their reasoning.

9.a3 \(\text{x}c3\) 10.\(\text{l}x\)c3 \(\text{l}x\)c3 11.bxc3 \(\text{a}5\) 12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}6\)

10...\(\text{x}c3\)\(\uparrow\)N A move that any modern exponent of the French Defence would have played instantly. (10...\(\text{a}5\)?! 11.dxc5 d4 12.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{x}c3\)\(\uparrow\) 13.bxc3 \(\text{e}7\) 14.h4 \(\text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{e}3\) was McCutcheon – Lasker, corr. 1904. Despite his ugly pawn structure, White was clearly better and won convincingly.) 11.\(\text{x}c3\) \(\text{x}c3\) 12.bxc3 \(\text{a}5\)\(\uparrow\)

13.\(\text{d}3\)N
Instead of 13.h4 \(\text{g}8\) followed by ...\(\text{d}7\) and ...0–0–0 when Black is fine.
The text move is a proposed improvement from the Serbian authors, who argue that the black king is not safe. However, this problem can be solved by means of:

13...\(\text{cxd}4\) 14.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}2\)\(\uparrow\) 15.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{xd}4\)
The queens are off and White is a pawn down with enough compensation for equality at best.

9.f3
Watson believes that this casts some doubt on Black’s play. While I agree that it is White’s best try, I think Black should be okay.

Let us see how Black could have avoided problems in the aforementioned historic encounter: 9.f4 c5?! (Black is also fine after 9...\(\text{x}c6\) intending ...\(\text{d}7\), ...\(\text{e}7\) and long castling.) 10.a3
11.a3 \texttt{\textbackslash $\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash $}e$\texttt{\textbackslash $\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash $}c$3}\texttt{\textbackslash $\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash $}t$ 12.bxc3  d6 13.\texttt{\textbackslash $\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash $}f$2  a5 14.d2

At this point I found a good novelty.

14...c4!N

The game continued 14...d7 15.dxc5 0–0–0 with compensation for Black and a draw in Tamburro – Crook, corr. 2010, but such a position would not be to everyone’s tastes.

I also considered 14...cxd4N 15.cxd4 \texttt{\textbackslash $\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash $}d$2 which is strategically risky but may just be playable. The following illustrative line is fun, but it comes with a health warning: 17.h4 f7 (17...0–0–0 18.g4 leaves Black under pressure on the kingside.) 18.g4 f4 19.d3 a5 20.h3 b8 Black abandons the kingside to its fate and strives for counterplay. 21.h1 c4† 22.e2 x3 23.hxg5 b5 24.d1 xd3 25.cxd3 a5 26.h6 h6 27.xh6 a4 This wild line has turned out okay for Black, but it seems likely that White can improve somewhere along the way.

15.h4 g8 16.hxg5 hxg5

Black will park his king on the queenside, while the future of the white monarch remains uncertain. The position bears some resemblance to the blocked structures occurring in the Winawer, but here the dark-squared bishop is a long way from the ideal a3-square.

17.f4

It is hard to see any other way for White to create problems.

17...d7! 18.fxg5 0–0–0 19.e3 g7 20.e2 d8

Black has full compensation and can consider ...d8-f7 next.

Some years ago, while I was going through the French Defence section of \textit{NCO}, I noticed that this line was assessed as leading to an edge for White. This prompted me to check it more closely, and I am happy to report that Black should have nothing to fear.
8.h4

8...h5?! is met by 8...f6 and Black gets some advantage. The following example saw White collapse in just a few moves: 9.f3 xg7 10.e2?! d7! 11.0-0?? f6! White was losing at least a piece in T. Bauer – Reitinger, Plzen 2004.

8...gxh4 9.g4

After 9.h5 f6 10.exh4 xg7 11.0-0 d7 Black has absolutely no problems, and plans to play ...c6 and castle. 12.d3 c6 13.g3 f8 14.xg8 xg8 15.f4

9...f6!

Black simply intends to take the g7-pawn.

The alternative is 9.e7 intending ...c5. It is less strong than the text move, but lovers of chess trivia may be interested to know that it was once used successfully by Alekhine, who then went on to invent the famous 'five queens game', which he published with himself playing White and winning in brilliant style. Interested readers can easily find the game and the full story behind it on the internet, but to delve into it here would be to stray a little too far off topic.

10.exh4 c6!

This move casts a shadow on the assessment in NCO.

10...xg7 11.xg7 xg7 12.h8# is the main idea for White, but even this is rather unclear: 12.f8 13.0-0-0 d7 14.e1 c6 15.f4 d7 16.f5

15...0–0–0# Black was better in Thakur – Das, Mumbai 2008. The d4-pawn is vulnerable and Black has the better structure and the pair of bishops. It is important to recognize that the f7-pawn is not falling, as 16.xf7 (16.xf7? e8) 16...d6 17.f3 g5† 18.b1 xd4 is grim for White.

16...0–0–0! 17.xe6 xe6 18.xe6 g4 19.f3 g7 20.h5 f6 21.f5 e4= Black had fine compensation for the pawn in Belavenets – Bondarevsky, Tbilisi 1937.

11.0–0–0 xg7 12.h8# c7!

12..f8 13.f3 xf3 14.xf3 d7 15.g3 0–0–0 was equal in Yefremov – Donnenfeld, corr. 1999, but the main line continuation is more ambitious.
13.\textit{\textsc{W}}h4N \textit{\textsc{W}}xh4 14.\textit{\textsc{B}}xh4 \textit{\textsc{A}}d7 is pleasant for Black.

13...\textit{\textsc{W}}xf3 14.\textit{\textsc{B}}xf3

The horse must be eliminated, as 14...b6 runs into 15.\textit{\textsc{Q}}b5!.

14...\textit{\textsc{A}}xc3

We have been following the game Lanin – Ibar, email 2001. I have labelled the position as equal, but deep down I prefer Black’s position. The ‘French bishop’ is not particularly bad here, and White’s bishop is also restricted by the wall of black pawns on light squares. Black has a better structure, with one pawn island versus three, which gives him good long-term prospects.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have had our first meeting with the famous McCutcheon Variation. After 4.\textit{\textsc{B}}g5 \textit{\textsc{B}}b4 Black doesn’t care about the pin and establishes a counter-pin which gives him counterplay in all lines. For example, after 5.\textit{\textsc{Q}}d3 dxe4 6.\textit{\textsc{B}}xe4 e5 White’s centre comes under fire and 7.dxc5 \textit{\textsc{A}}xc3\textdagger 8.bxc3 gives White tripled isolated pawns. Black’s best plan is to exchange queens and play against those pawns.

5.\textit{\textsc{Q}}e2 is another idea, but once the position opens up the knight will not be well placed on e2, and after 5...dxe4 6.a3 \textit{\textsc{Q}}e7 7.\textit{\textsc{Q}}xf6 \textit{\textsc{B}}xf6 8.\textit{\textsc{B}}xe4 \textit{\textsc{A}}c6! Black has at least enough resources to equalize.

5.exd5 was the favourite move of Capablanca and was highly regarded by other renowned players, including Tarrasch. Nevertheless, Black is fine after 5...\textit{\textsc{W}}xd5 6.\textit{\textsc{B}}xf6 gxf6, preparing to put further pressure on White’s centre with ...\textit{\textsc{A}}c6, while keeping the ...\textit{\textsc{A}}xc3 exchange in reserve.

Finally we came to the main 5.e5 move, which obviously should be met by 5...h6. The three sidelines 6.\textit{\textsc{B}}xf6, 6.\textit{\textsc{B}}h4 and 6.exf6 all deserve some respect, but in each case Black can obtain a good game without too much effort. In the next couple of chapters we will turn our attention to the more critical bishop retreats to c1, e3 and d2.
Chapter 22

6.\( \mathcal{A}c1 \) and 6.\( \mathcal{A}e3 \)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\( \mathcal{A}c3 \) \( \mathcal{A}f6 \) 4.g5 \( \mathcal{Ab4} \) 5.e5 h6

A) 6.\( \mathcal{A}c1?! \) \( \mathcal{A}e4 \) 7.g4
   A1) 7...\( \mathcal{G}f8?! \) 375
   A2) 7...g6!
      A21) 8.\( \mathcal{D}e2 \) \( \mathcal{Ax}c3! \)
         A211) 9.bxc3
         A212) 9.\( \mathcal{D}xc3 \)
      A22) 8.a3!? \( \mathcal{A}xc3\)†! 9.bxc3 \( \mathcal{A}xc3\) 10.\( \mathcal{A}e2??N \)
         10.\( \mathcal{D}d3\)! – Game 53 382

B) 6.\( \mathcal{A}e3?! \) \( \mathcal{A}e4 \) 7.g4 g6!
   B1) 8.\( \mathcal{D}e2 \)
   B2) 8.a3 \( \mathcal{A}xc3\)† 9.bxc3
      B21) 9...\( \mathcal{D}xc3 \)
      B22) 9...c5! 10.\( \mathcal{D}d3 \) h5! 11.\( \mathcal{G}f4 \) g5! 12.\( \mathcal{G}f3 \) \( \mathcal{A}xc3 \)
         13.dxc5 d4 14.\( \mathcal{A}d2 \) \( \mathcal{G}c6 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}xc3 \)
         15.\( \mathcal{G}f6\)! – Game 54 390

53 Leonid Ovcharenko – Evgeny Tsygankov, Correspondence 2012 382
54 Alexander Areshchenko – David Smerdon, Isle of Man 2007 390
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

How should White proceed? (page 376)

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

What is White threatening and how should Black counter it? (page 384)

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

How does Black bring order to the chaos? (page 389)

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

The knight must move, but where? (page 381)

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

How should Black proceed? (page 387)

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Find a plan for Black. (page 391)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{dxc6}\) 4.g5 \(\text{b4}\) 5.e5 h6

In this chapter I will analyse A) 6.\(\text{c1}\)!? and B) 6.\(\text{e3}\)!?. The two moves are related, as they both involve safeguarding White's bishop from being exchanged by a knight on e4. White also takes something of a risk by neglecting to break the pin on his knight.

A) 6.\(\text{c1}\)!?

If you were to ask me to recommend a line for White against the McCutcheon, this would probably be my suggestion, with 6.\(\text{e3}\) being a close second. It is no coincidence that I have chosen to study those two moves together in the same chapter, because on one occasion a certain method of counterplay works well, but in the other case it does not. I will point out the relevant points at which the placement of the dark-squared bishop makes a significant difference to the evaluation.

6...\(\text{c5}\) 7.\(\text{g4}\)

This is the only move that is really worth analysing.

7.\(\text{e2}\) and similar moves can be met by 7...c5 when the initiative is already on Black's side.

At this point the fundamental decision concerns how to protect g7. I used to prefer putting the king on f8 in all three main lines, but more recently I have changed my opinion against 6.\(\text{c1}\) and 6.\(\text{e3}\).

Before going into details, I would like to point out a few conceptual differences between those two moves and the main 6.\(\text{d2}\) line, as found in the next chapter. The most obvious point is that, by avoiding the d2-square, White safeguards his bishop from being exchanged by the black knight from e4. In some scenarios Black may have to make concessions to prevent the knight from being trapped by f2-f3.

In more abstract terms, we may observe that 6.\(\text{c1}\) and 6.\(\text{e3}\) have the potential to lead to faster attacks than 6.\(\text{d2}\), so in the first two lines it is more important for Black to keep the option of castling queenside, which justifies the weakening ...g6 move. This principle is rather vague, but I think there is some truth to it.

From here we will begin by seeing where the problems lie with A1) 7...\(\text{f8}\)!?, before analysing the more reliable A2) 7...g6!.

In passing, I'd like to mention 7...g5!? as another possibility. The critical line continues 8.\(\text{e2}\) c5 9.a3 \(\text{a5}\) 10.b4 \(\text{xc3}\) 11.\(\text{xc3}\) cxd4 when White can choose between 12.bxa5 and 12.\(\text{b5}\). There is no direct refutation, but I do not trust Black's position and prefer moving the g-pawn one square.

A1) 7...\(\text{f8}\)!?

In his Chess Fundamentals book, Capablanca argued that Black should usually defend his g7-pawn with the king in such situations, rather than place a pawn on g6, where it might later be attacked by \(\text{d3}\) and/or h4-h5. After the king move Black has lost his castling rights but has avoided weakening his kingside structure and is ready to attack the centre with ...c5. In
this particular case, however, the king move runs into some problems.

8.\( \text{Qe2} \)

Protecting c3 is best.

8.a3 should be met by 8...\( \text{Qxc3} \)† 9.bxc3 \( \text{Qxc3} \)† when Black should be able to withstand any direct attacking attempts, although the position can be described as dynamically balanced.

8...\( \text{c5} \)

8...f5?! could be an interesting move to analyse, but in the only practical outing so far White got the better of it after 9.\( \text{Wh3} \) c5 10.f3 in Kosteniuk – Zueger, Lenzerheide 2010.

The main alternative is:

8...\( \text{Qxc3} \) 9.bxc3 \( \text{a5} \)

I tried to make 9...e7 work, but came to the conclusion that after 10.\( \text{Qf4} \) c5 11.\( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) (11...g6? is refuted by 12.\( \text{Qxg6} \)†) 12.\( \text{Oh5} \) White is better. Note that this particular attacking set-up would not be as effective with Black’s king on e8 and pawn on g6.

10.h4!

White preferred 10.\( \text{Qa3} \)† \( \text{Qg8} \) 11.h4 in Popov – Vallejo Pons, Moscow 2012, but in this case Black can play ...h5 at some point without fearing the arrival of the bishop on g5.

9.a3 \( \text{Qxc3} \)†

I found nothing better.

9...h5?!N is a new move that could be investigated, although I doubt that it equalizes.

9...cxd4 10.axb4 dxc3 is given in NCO, but after 11.\( \text{Qxc3} \) \( \text{Qxc3} \) 12.bxc3 White is better.

9...a5 10.dxc5 \( \text{Qd7} \) (10...\( \text{Qxc3} \) 11.\( \text{Qxc3} \) \( \text{Qxc3} \)† 12.bxc3 was better for White in Hector – Unzicker, Nuremberg 2011. Just over a century after the Lasker – Tarrasch match of 1908, another great German player was beaten by an opponent with tripled pawns!) 11.b4 \( \text{Qxe5} \) 12.\( \text{Wh5} \) \( \text{Qc7} \) 13.\( \text{Qxe4} \) dxe4 14.\( \text{Qb2} \)
14...\textit{g5} 15.\textit{wxg5} \textit{hxg5} 16.\textit{c3} e3!? Black eventually won a complicated struggle in Bruzon Bautista – Short, Havana 2010, but after the correct 17.0-0-0!N (threatening \textit{b5}) White has some advantage.

10.\textit{bxc3!}

This is one of the cases hinted at earlier, where Black must worry about the future of the knight on e4.

15.\textit{xe6}!N \textit{exe6} 16.\textit{b4}! \textit{g8} 17.\textit{xc3} \textit{c6} 18.\textit{f4} Black has some problems to solve; his king is poorly placed, while White has the bishop pair and the possibility of preparing \textit{f4-f5}.

11.\textit{cxd4} \textit{wa5} 12.\textit{c3} \textit{d6} 13.\textit{c3} \textit{e7} 14.\textit{h3}

This position occurred in Vallejo Pons – Kindermann, Bahia Feliz 2011, and a subsequent high-level game. Black’s best chance seems to be:

14...\textit{b5}!N

As proposed by Vituugov. I analysed this position quite a lot and eventually concluded that White’s chances are higher after:

15.\textit{c1}!
Interested readers may analyse deeper if they wish. I will just mention one elementary point:

**15...\textit{\textbf{\textit{W}}xa3} 16.f3**

The knight is lost. Let us now turn our attention to the more accurate move:

**A2) 7...g6!**

From this position White’s two main options are **A21) 8.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Q}}e2}** and **A22) 8.a3!?**. The first is much more popular, but the second is at least as dangerous.

One other move has been tried, but it is harmless at best:

8.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}3} \textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}c3} 9.a3

9.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}2} \textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}xa2}! 10.c3 \textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}c3} 11.bxc3 \textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}7}

12.h4 was seen in Dekker – Yu, Silicon Valley 1993, and after 12...h5N 13.\textit{\textbf{\textit{g}}3} c5 it is difficult to believe that White has enough for the two-pawn deficit.

9...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}2}†?!N

9...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}5} 10.\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}2} \textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}4}! is a safe alternative, which is equally applicable in the analogous path beginning with 6.\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}3}.

10.axb4

10.c3?? \textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}c1}! is a nice detail that works here, but is not applicable in the 6.\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}3} line.

10.\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}}xb4}

The d3-bishop will soon be eliminated and White will struggle to demonstrate full compensation for the missing pawn.

**A21) 8.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Q}}e2}**

This has been overwhelmingly the most popular move here, but I was able to find a convincing solution.

8...\textit{\textbf{\textit{d}}xc3}!

8...c5 has been more popular, but the text move is simple and strong. White now chooses between **A211) 9.bxc3** and **A212) 9.\textit{\textbf{\textit{Q}}xc3}**.

**A211) 9.bxc3**

9...\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}}7}!

Black’s strategy is simple: he is striving for a favourable version of a Winawer, where he has damaged White’s queenside structure without exchanging his valuable dark-square bishop.

10.\textit{\textbf{\textit{f4}}}

Another game continued: 10.h4 h5 11.\textit{\textbf{\textit{f}}4} c5 12.\textit{\textbf{\textit{h}}3} \textit{\textbf{\textit{c}}6} Black was more than fine in Sanchez Ibern – Jareno Badenas, Barbera del Valles 2012. In the event of 13.\textit{\textbf{\textit{f}}3}N Black defends easily with 13...\textit{\textbf{\textit{f}}8}, after which it will soon be Black’s turn to cause trouble with ...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}5-\textbf{\textit{a}}4} and/or ...b6 and ...\textit{\textbf{\textit{a}}6}.

10...c5

In the note to Black’s 8th move in variation A1, we encountered a similar situation with Black’s king on f8 and pawn on g7.
The present version is more favourable, as White does not have the h5-square for his knight, while the king has the option of fleeing to the queenside in the event that White fully commits to a kingside attack.

11...b5†!

The best try, setting a trap that we must avoid.

11...c6!

11...d7? allows 12...xe6! intending to meet 12...fxe6?? with 13.fgx6† b8 14.h4+ when the imminent rook lift decides the game.

12.a4!

White borrows an idea from the Winawer. In the present position the idea is not so much to activate the bishop on a3, but more to deprive Black of the typical manoeuvre ...a5-a4. Most other plausible moves should be met by ...a5 with excellent play for Black. Note that the black queen does not always have to rush to a4 on the next move, but it still useful to have the square available, for instance if White plays c3-c4 to uncover an attack from the bishop on d2.

After the text move Black can improve on the game Najer – Glek, Istanbul 2003.

12...a5!N

Even without the a4-square available, the queen move is a good one.

13.d2 c4!

As proposed by Vitiugov (the exclamation marks are mine). Black has a solid position and will soon obtain the long-term advantage of the two bishops after forcing White to exchange on c6.

A212) 9...c5 10.a3

10...xc3†

10...a5?! 11.axb4! axa1 12.f4 does not look reassuring. The dark squares are weak and Black is far behind in development.

11.bxc3 a5 12.d2 a4 13.h4?

This led to a win in an email game, but there are a couple of other options that also demand our attention:

13.c4?! c6! 14.dxc5 xc2 should be fine for Black.

13.f3 led to a scary-looking position in one game:

a) 13...xd4?! 14.d3 dxc3 15.xc3 h4 16.g3 xh8 17.h4 xc6 18.xd6 d4 19.f4
\( \text{f5} 20. \text{xf5} \text{gxf5} \) As I said, this looks very scary. However, Houdini is not afraid and in a correspondence game Black simply drew:

21.0-0 \text{id7} 22. \text{ab1} \text{b6} 23. \text{fc1} \text{g5} 24. \text{d4} \text{g8} 25. \text{c4} \text{g4} 26. \text{xf4} \text{xf4} 27. \text{cxd5} 1/2–1/2

Fernandez Vicente – Pessoa, email 2009.

b) 13... \text{c6?N} is a sensible alternative. Critical is 14. \text{dxc5} \text{c5} 15. \text{f6} \text{e4} 16. \text{e2} \text{h7} 17. \text{f3} \text{f5} 18. \text{xf5} \text{gxf5}, where Black's powerful centre should secure him a decent game.

\[ \text{xc2!N} \]

13... \text{c6?!} led to a fine victory for White in Bergmann – Schindler, email 2006.

\text{h5}

This is the critical move.

14. \text{f3} \text{e4}! 15. \text{xe4} \text{dxe4} 16. \text{dxc5} \text{d7} 17. \text{b1} \text{c6} gives Black no problems.

14... \text{g5} 15. \text{f4} \text{xd4} 16. \text{xd4} \text{e4}! 17. \text{xe2} \text{xd4} 18. \text{xc1} \text{c6} 19. \text{xf5} \text{xf4} 20. \text{xf4} \text{xc5} 21. \text{xe2} \text{c6!}

21...hxg5 22. \text{xd5} \text{g5} feels a bit too passive.

22. \text{g6} \text{g8} 23. \text{h6} \text{fxg6} 24. \text{hxg6} \text{e5}

The situation remains unclear.

This rare but critical move prevents Black from exchanging on c3 with the knight as in the previous line. Black must react precisely.

\text{xc3}!?

8... \text{a5} is the only sensible alternative and it has been recommended in many sources, but I don't think Black can equalize. 9. \text{e2} \text{c5} 10. \text{dxc5} \text{c6} 11. \text{b4} \text{c6} 12. \text{h3} \text{c7}

\[ \text{xe5} \]

This may seem an improvement for Black over the 7... \text{f8} line (the queen wasn't able to go to h5 here), but still after 13. \text{xe4}! \text{dxe4} 14. \text{c3} White is better. Here is one practical example: 14... \text{a5} 15. \text{b4} \text{axb4} 16. \text{d1} \text{f6} 17. \text{b5}! \text{f8} 18. \text{xb4} \text{f5} 19. \text{h4} \text{g4} 20. \text{h3} \text{f6} 21. \text{xe4} \text{g5} 22. \text{xe5} \text{c5} 23. \text{d3} \text{c5} 24. \text{xg5} \text{h6} 25. \text{b5} \text{d5} 27. \text{c4} 1-0 Kotainy – Svan, Oberhof 2011.
Chapter 22 - 6.\(c_1\) and 6.\(\texttt{e}3\)

9.\(\texttt{bxc3}\)

Taking this pawn looks – and indeed \(i\)s – somewhat risky, but there is no other way to punish White for refusing to play 6.\(\texttt{d}2\).

This is an important moment where Black's best approach depends on whether the white bishop stands on c1 or e3. Let us see what happens if Black tries to follow the same plan that I recommend against the 6.\(\texttt{e}3\) line: 9...c5 10.\(\texttt{d}3\) h5 (10...cxd4 was played in Gagliardi – Oreopoulos, corr. 2012, but after 11.\(\texttt{e}2!\)N White's chances are higher.) 11.\(\texttt{f}4\) g5

10.\(\texttt{e}2!\)N

10.\(\texttt{h}3!\)N \(\texttt{e}4\) is already better for Black, who intends ...c5 next, and if 11.\(\texttt{f}3\) \(\texttt{c}3\) 12.\(\texttt{d}2\) \(\texttt{a}4\) Black has no problems whatsoever.

10.\(\texttt{d}3\)! seems to be White's best try for a theoretical advantage. This move can be found in the illustrative game immediately after the present line of analysis.

The text move is a logical novelty which should be considered carefully. The c3-knight has already moved three times, and now White offers to exchange it for a piece that has only moved once. If Black refuses to exchange on e2 then the knight will expend yet another tempo, and White's knight can move to the wonderful f4-square.

10...\(\texttt{a}4!\)

From this square the knight prevents a3-a4, supports ...c5 and can easily move to important squares such as c3 and c4, should the need arise. We might also arrive at this choice by the method of elimination, as the alternatives don't look good:

10...\(\texttt{e}4?\) 11.\(\texttt{f}3\) forces the knight to take an unfavourable route.

12.\(\texttt{e}3!\) Exploiting the fact that the bishop is not occupying the e3-square! White stands better.
After 10...\(\diamondsuit\)xe2?! 11.\(\diamondsuit\)xe2 Black has lost considerable time and is unable to create counterplay strong enough to deal with the simple plan of \(h4-h5\). Here is an illustrative line: 11...b6 12.h4 h5 (12...\(\diamondsuit\)a6 13.\(\diamondsuit\)xa6 \(\diamondsuit\)xa6 14.h5 g5 15.f4 gxf4 16.\(\diamondsuit\)xf4 \(\diamondsuit\)e7 17.0-0±) 13.\(\diamondsuit\)f3 \(\diamondsuit\)a6 14.\(\diamondsuit\)xa6 \(\diamondsuit\)xa6 15.\(\diamondsuit\)g5 \(\diamondsuit\)d7 16.c4 c5 17.\(\diamondsuit\)f6 \(\diamondsuit\)h7 18.\(\diamondsuit\)d1±

11.h4!

Attempting to target g6 with 11.\(\diamondsuit\)f4 c5 12.\(\&\)d3 doesn't work after 12...\(\diamondsuit\)c6. Black is a pawn up with strong threats against White's centre. White's pieces are clumsily placed and the brutal attempts bring nothing: 13.\(\diamondsuit\)xg6? (13.\(\diamondsuit\)xg6? \(\ild{g}8\)±) 13...\(\ild{g}5\)±

11...\(\ild{e}7\)!

11...c5?! 12.h5 g5 13.f4\(\uparrow\) is better for White, as 13...gxf4? runs into 14.\(\ild{g}7\)! The text move is designed to prepare for this possibility by enabling Black to defend with ...\(\ild{f}8\).

11...h5?! 12.\(\ild{f}3\) c5± is a reasonable alternative, albeit slightly riskier than the main line.

12.h5 g5 13.f4 gxf4\(\ild{\ast}\)

Black will follow up with ...\(\ild{c}6\), ...\(\ild{d}7\) and long castling. White has sufficient compensation for a pawn, but not to claim an advantage.
14.\textbf{Ba3!}N

For example:
14...\textit{c}e4 15.f3 \textit{g}g5 16.h4 \textit{h}h7 17.\textit{b}b5 \textit{f}f8
18.\textit{e}e2±

11.a4

This whole line is quite fresh, and the present
game is currently the only one in my database.
The text move is a good option that forces
Black to play accurately, but the following
alternative also deserves close attention.

In the similar position arising after 6.\textit{e}e3,
White's best is considered to be:
11.h4?N

Turn ahead to page 387 and you will see
that, in the similar position with the white
bishop on e3 instead of c1, the same move
offers White an advantage. It is important
to consider it here as well, to identify the
moment where Black can benefit from the
bishop's placement on c1.

11...\textit{e}e7!

We saw the same idea in the analysis section
with 10.\textit{e}e2. Once again, Black gets ready
to meet the potential queen invasion on g7.
11...c5 may seem like a good choice with the
bishop being at c1 and not at e3, but after
12.h5! g5 13.f4 c4 White has the devilish
14.\textit{e}e2! which gives him the upper hand.
11...\textit{a}a6 is met by 12.h5 g5 13.f4 gxf4
14.\textit{g}g7! \textit{d}d7 15.\textit{xf}f7\textbf{e}e7 16.\textit{xe}e7\textbf{e}e7

12.\textbf{c}c2
12.h5 is nothing to fear now: 12...g5 13.f4
gxf4 Since the move \textit{g}g7 is no longer a
problem, Black is able to play ...
\textit{a}a6 and/or ...
\textit{c}c5 in the near future, with good counterplay.

12...\textit{xe}e2 13.\textit{xe}e2

Preventing ...
\textit{a}a6. We have reached the
crucial moment where Black can benefit
from the placement of the bishop on c1.

13.\textbf{c}c6!

Gaining a tempo by attacking the d4-pawn.
Black will follow up with ...
\textit{b}b7 and long
casting, with a solid position.

14.\textit{e}e3 \textit{b}b7 15.h5
15...0–0–0!
An important nuance.
16.hxg6 fxg6 17.♖xg6 ｂd8
Black has given back his extra pawn but achieved great piece activity. This would not have been possible had the white bishop gone to e3 on move 6, but with the bishop on c1 the idea works like a dream.

11...ｂd7!
An important move to remember.

11...c5? is a mistake:
12.ｂa3 h5 13.ｂf4 g5
14.ｂxg5 ｂxg5 15.ｂxg5 cxd4 16.ｃf3 ｃc6
17.ｏxd4 ｏxd4 18.ｘxc3±

11...ｂa6 12.ｂa3! ｂd7 forces the knight to return to the e4-square, since 12...ｂxd3? 13.cxd3 leaves it stranded on c3.

12.ｂa3
White has to do something, because quiet moves will be met by ...ｂa6 and possibly taking on a4 with the knight. With the text move White forces Black to take the pawn immediately, having a particular follow-up in mind.

12...ｂxa4 13.c4!
This was his idea. The threat is cxd5 followed by ｂb5, winning the a4-knight.

13...ｂb7
Black develops while preparing to use the bishop for defensive purposes if needed.

14.ｃe2
Inviting an endgame featuring three pawns versus a piece, where Black’s chances are certainly not worse.

The following alternative leads to a different type of endgame:
14.ｂc2? ｂc6 15.cxd5
Black was threatening to capture on c4 and play ...b5.
15...ｂxd5 16.ｂxa4 b5!
16...ｂxa4? leads to a poor endgame after
17.ｂxa4 ｂc6 18.ｂd1 ｂxg2 19.ｂf3 ｂxf3 20.ｂxf3+. The piece is considerably better than the three pawns, as Black is unable to mobilize the pawns without creating serious weaknesses.
17.ｂd1 ｂxg2 18.ｂxg2 ｂxg2 19.ｂf3 ｂxh1 20.ｂxh1 c6
We have reached an unclear endgame with White having two strong bishops against a rook and three pawns. I would evaluate the position as objectively somewhat better for Black, although White has his trumps as well.
Black has the more pleasant endgame, with three connected passed pawns for a piece. In a practical game this would equate to good winning chances, but in this correspondence game White was able to neutralize the pawns and achieve a draw.

19.\textit{Ba6} \textit{Bb4} 20.\textit{Bxa5} a6 21.\textit{Be3} \textit{Cc6} 22.\textit{Ba2} \n
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board1.png}
\end{center}

22...\textit{g5}?
Black is searching for a way to bring the h8-rook into the game.

22...\textit{Be7} could be a better practical attempt to play for the win. Play may continue 23.\textit{Bd2} a5 24.\textit{Bb1} \textit{b4} 25.\textit{Baa1} c6 and the knight can choose between d3 and d5. Nevertheless, the white king’s proximity to the queenside should enable the first player to hold the position.

23.\textit{Bd2} a5 24.\textit{f4} \textit{gxf4} 24...\textit{g4}?! is met by 25.\textit{f5}!.

25.\textit{Bxf4} \textit{b4}
White’s position may appear critical, but actually he is fine.

26.\textit{Bc1} c3† 27.\textit{Bc2} a4 28.\textit{Baa1}

The pawns cannot advance further, but they will continue to keep at least one of White’s rooks occupied, so White cannot hope to win the game.

28...0–0
Black was correct to avoid 28...\textit{Be7}? 29.d5!.

However, he might have considered 28...\textit{Ba5}!? as a winning attempt, planning to put the king on e7 next.

29.\textit{Bd3} \textit{Bfb8} 30.\textit{Bcb1}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\end{center}

30...\textit{a3}
30...\textit{Bb5} 31.\textit{Bc5} a3 32.\textit{Bb3} reaches the same type of position and is also an obvious draw.

31.\textit{Bc1} \textit{Bg7} 32.\textit{Bb3} \textit{Bc7} 33.\textit{Bf1} h5 34.\textit{h3} \textit{Bf5} 35.\textit{Bf3} \n
\[1/2–1/2\]
Not a bad result against the dangerous 8.a3 line. Black was never in trouble and his practical chances in the endgame are higher than White’s. That concludes my coverage of the 6.\textit{Bc1} line; let’s now see how the play differs when the bishop instead goes to e3.

B) 6.\textit{Be3}?
Another critical continuation, and one of Watson’s recommendations in his 2007 Dangerous Weapons book on the French.

6...\textit{e}4 7.\textit{w}g4 g6!

I consider 7...\textit{f}8 to be slightly more viable here than against 6.\textit{c}1. Let us follow the parallel line as discussed earlier on page 377 to see how the bishop’s placement makes a difference: 8.\textit{e}2 c5 9.a3 \textit{x}c3\textit{t} 10.bxc3? \textit{w}a5 11.f3 In the analogous position with the bishop on c1 Black was forced to take on c3 here, allowing 12.\textit{d}2 with White’s advantage. With the bishop on e3, however, he can refute his opponent’s set-up with:

I eventually decided in favour of 7...g6 for two reasons. First of all, I like the consistent approach of playing 7...\textit{f}8 when we can exchange on d2, and 7...g6 when we cannot. I also noticed that Vitiugov gave some suggestions for White after 7...\textit{f}8 8.a3!. I actually believe Black has enough resources to maintain the balance there too, but it would take several pages of complicated analysis to show it. By contrast, after 7...g6! Black can equalize by relatively easy and straightforward means.

In this position White has a familiar choice between B1) 8.\textit{e}2 and B2) 8.a3.

8.\textit{d}3?! \textit{x}c3 9.a3 (9.\textit{d}2 \textit{xa2 has already been considered under the 6.\textit{c}1 move order – see the 8.\textit{d}3 \textit{x}c3 9.\textit{d}2 note on page 378) 9...\textit{a}5 10.\textit{d}2 \textit{a}4 11.\textit{xa}5 \textit{xb}2

Black already had the upper hand in Tzintzios – Markidis, Kavala 2011. At this point White should preserve his bishop with 12...e2N, but then Black has the strong 12...b6! 13.c3 a4 followed by ...a6 and ...c5 with some advantage.

B1) 8.e2

In the 6.c1 line this is a serious option for White, but with the bishop on e3 it is completely harmless.

8...c5!

Black should follow a different formula from that seen in the earlier variation A21. The point is that here 8...xc3 is met by 9.xc3! with an edge to White, as 9...c5 can be met by 10.dxc5.

9.a3

9.f3 h5! 10.h3 xc3 11.bxc3 cxd4 12.xd4 e7⩾ was good for Black in Mohammed – Jakab, Budapest 1999.

9...a5!

In the fourth edition of *Play the French*, Watson recommends taking on c3 followed by ...a5-a4, but there is no need to release the tension so early.

10.d1 xc3† 11.xc3 c6!⩾

White was under pressure in Tringov – Fuchs, Kienbaum/Berlin 1958. Note that on the last move 11...xc3? would have been met by 12.d2 with an edge for White, but with the knight on c6 the threat of ...xc3 becomes real, as d2 will run into ...cxd4.

B2) 8.a3 xc3† 9.bxc3

We have reached an important position where the position of White’s bishop on e3 instead of c1 necessitates a different approach. To gain a full appreciation of the difference, I will analyse B21) 9...xc3 before moving on to the correct B22) 9...c5!.

B21) 9...xc3 10.d3 b6

We have already analysed the equivalent position with the bishop on c1. With the bishop on e3 White can seize the initiative.

11.h4!

I have not been able to find a path to equality from this position.
the human touch reveals a different picture. Still, the alternatives are not any better:

11...\textit{a}6 12.h5 g5 13.f4 (13.\textit{a}xa6 \textit{xa}6 14.\textit{e}2 is also promising according to Naiditsch. This may be true, but the main line causes even more problems.) 13...gx\textit{f}4 14.\textit{g}7! \textit{d}7 15.\textit{x}f7+ \textit{e}7 16.\textit{xe}7+ \textit{xe}7 17.\textit{xf}4 was better for White in Naiditsch – Stellwagen, Wijk aan Zee 2006, as referenced earlier on page 383.

11...\textit{e}7 worked well when the bishop was on \textit{c}1, but here after 12.\textit{le}2 \textit{xe}2 13.\textit{xe}2 \textit{c}6 14.h5 White’s extra tempo gives him the upper hand, as the plan of ...\textit{b}7 and long castling is too slow.

12.dxc5 bxc5 13.\textit{xc}5 \textit{c}6
I also considered:
13...\textit{e}4?! 14.\textit{xe}4 \textit{c}7!

This is a nice tactical idea which, unfortunately, fails to equalize after White’s accurate response:

15.\textit{d}3! \textit{xc}5 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}3† 17.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}6
Black’s problem is that 17...0–0 is met by 18.\textit{b}4! when exchanging queens gives Black a horrible ending while retreating to \textit{c}6 or \textit{c}7 allows 19.\textit{f}4 with a strong attack.

18.\textit{f}4
White’s ideas include \textit{f}6 and/or \textit{hb}1.
18...\textit{b}8
Now if White contests the b-file the pawn on a3 will drop.
19.\textit{bd}1
White stands better; his king will find safety on f1 in the near future and it is difficult see how the h8-rook can get into the game.

14.\textit{e}2?!
Inviting a short tactical sequence leading to a small edge for White.

The computer’s suggestion of 14.\textit{b}4?! is also quite promising.

14...\textit{e}4 15.\textit{xe}4 \textit{a}5† 16.\textit{b}4! \textit{xb}4
17.0–0 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}8
Both 18...\textit{xe}5 19.\textit{d}4 and 18...\textit{a}6 19.\textit{f}4 favour White.
White is better thanks to the wonderful and unchallenged knight on d4.

B22) 9...c5!

This continuation works well – but only when the bishop stands on e3.

10.d3 h5!

The presence of the bishop on e3 makes this thrust effective, as the white queen is short of good squares. It is worth mentioning that the play soon transposes to a position that has been known for a long time from the 7.g4 g5!? variation (see the next illustrative game for a brief discussion of that move order), but the idea of transposing to it with 10...h5! in the present position is a relatively recent discovery. My database contains several obscure email games from 2004 and 2005 that featured this move, but it was Vitiugov who brought it into the mainstream when he used it to draw with Jakovenko in the 2007 Russian Championship before analysing it in Chess Informant 101.

11.f4

The most popular choice.

11.h3 xc3 12.dxc5 d4 13.d2 d5

14.f3 was seen in Van Kampen – Kotainy, Dortmund 2011. At this point Black can obtain good chances by choosing one of Vitiugov’s suggested improvements, 14...e4N or 14...d7N, hunting the central pawns.

11.f3

This can easily transpose to the main line. White can steer the game along independent channels, but gains no advantage from doing so.

11...xc3 12.dxc5 c6 13.f4 d4 14.d2 g5!

15.xg5

15.f6 transposes to the main line as covered in the next illustrative game.

15...xg5 16.xg5 xe5 17.f6 xd3† 18.cxd3 g8 19.xd4
19...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d4}}}?! 
I slightly prefer this to 19...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d5}}} as played in Kosteniuk – Zhukova, Gibraltar 2010, although Black had a playable position there as well.

20.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d7}}}! 21.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f4}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g5}}}!
Black was poised to restore material equality and stood fine in Valutana – Silva, corr. 2010.

11...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g5}}}! 12.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}} 13.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{dxc5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d4}}}

13...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c6}}} has been played, but I prefer the text move.

14.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c6}}}
At this point there are a few options for us to consider.

15.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}}
The critical move is 15.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f6}}}, which can be found in the illustrative game immediately following this section of analysis.

15.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g3}}} is met by 15...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d5}}}! with fine play for Black, as shown in the following example:

16.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xg5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xe5}}} 17.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xe5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xe5}}} 18.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{dxc3}}} 19.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e2}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d7}}} 20.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e8}}}

Black had the better endgame prospects in Stankovic – Farkas, Sentia 2012.

The text move has been awarded an exclamation mark by Watson, but Black has a useful improvement in store.

15...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}} 16.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e3}}}

16...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d4}}}!N=
White can hardly hope for an advantage with so many pawn weaknesses. I should mention that Antic and Maksimovic have already pointed out this improvement over 16...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d5}}?} 17.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f3}}} as played in D. Ledger – Cumbers, England 2010.

Alexander Areshchenko – David Smerdon

Isle of Man 2007.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c3}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c6}}} 4.\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g5}}} \textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b4}}} 5.e5
h6 6.\textit{c}e3 \textit{d}e4 7.\textit{g}g4 \textit{g}6

The move order that actually occurred in the game was 7...\textit{g}5 8.a3 \textit{h}5 9.\textit{f}f3 \textit{xc}3\textdagger 10.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{c}5 11.\textit{d}d3 \textit{xc}3 12.\textit{dxc}5 \textit{d}4 13.\textit{d}d2 14.\textit{f}f6, reaching the starting point of my analysis for the present game. I will not discuss the 7...\textit{g}5 move order in any detail, other than to say I do not fully trust it and see no good reason to give White additional attacking options based on a quick h2-h4.

I will present my recommended move order as the main line, partly to reinforce it to aid memorization, and also because the transposition occurs with differing numbers of moves having been played. I prefer to keep the move counts the same for both the analysis section and the illustrative game, for obvious reasons.

8.a3 \textit{xc}3\textdagger 9.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{c}5 10.\textit{d}d3 \textit{h}5 11.\textit{f}f4 \textit{g}5 12.\textit{f}f3 \textit{xc}3 13.\textit{dxc}5 \textit{d}4 14.\textit{d}d2 \textit{c}6 15.\textit{f}f6!

As I mentioned in the previous analysis section, I consider this the most challenging option. IS .\textit{x}c3 and IS .\textit{g}g3 have been analysed above.

15.\textit{xf}6 16.\textit{xf}6 \textit{a}4!

This was a novelty at the time, and it has been played many times since. The knight heads for \textit{c}5 without delay, and will often exchange itself for the strong bishop on \textit{d}3 in the near future.

17.\textit{x}g5 \textit{xc}5 18.\textit{f}f3

This is White's most natural move.

In a later game Smerdon faced 18.\textit{e}e2?!. He went on to lose the game, but this had nothing to do with the merits of White's last move. 18...\textit{xd}3\textdagger 19.\textit{cxd}3 \textit{b}6 20.\textit{d}d2 \textit{b}7 21.\textit{f}f4 This was Goh Wei Ming – Smerdon, Dresden (ol) 2008. Here Wei Ming proposed the improvement:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

18.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}5! is also fine for Black, for instance: 19.\textit{fxe}5 (After 19.\textit{b}5 Black has several good options, including 19...\textit{f}5 with at least equal chances.) This was D. Wells – Groffen, Liverpool 2008, and now after 19...\textit{xe}5 Black's chances are higher.

18...\textit{xd}3\textdagger 19.\textit{cxd}3 \textit{b}6

Objectively Black is fine here, but it is worth playing through the rest of the game along with the accompanying examples. The pawn structure is highly irregular and I would recommend familiarizing yourself with some of the typical piece manoeuvres. One important plan is to activate the rook along the fifth rank with ...\textit{d}8-d5.
20...b7 21.d2
I will show a couple of instructive examples after the other king move.

21.e2 d8 22.c4 d5 23.hc1 d7 24.h4
The Turkish player Erdogdu has suffered two defeats with White from this position. Both games were against well-known French Defence experts, who handled the position in similar ways.

24...c8
24...e8?N 25.h6 c8 could be considered, although I am not sure it is really an improvement, and Black hardly needs one anyway.

25.4c2
Improving on 25.d2? a6 26.4c2 e5 27.e1 c4 28.g5 a5 when White was already in trouble in Erdogdu – Kindermann.

Novi Sad 2009.
25...e5 26.d2 a6 27.e4 b5 28.d1 b3
Having made its way from a8-d8-d5-b5 and finally to b3, the rook has become a real nuisance for White.

29.c1 g8 30.g3
30...d8!
Black's manoeuvring makes a strong impression.
31.b2 xb2+ 32.xb2 e6 33.d2 c5 34.xc5 bxc5 35.a4 g6 36.c1 xf6 37.e1 c6 38.a3 d6 39.d2 f5 40.f3 d5–

White soon had to resign in Erdogdu – Moskalenko, Ankara 2010. Black's method of improving his pieces is as simple as it is strong, and only Areshchenko in our main game demonstrated some ideas to counter it.
21...\textit{d}d8 22.\textit{e}c2 \textit{d}d5 23.\textit{h}c1 \textit{d}d7

Another idea is 23...\textit{g}8?!N 24.\textit{h}4 \textit{d}d7 25.g3 (25.\textit{e}2 is met by 25...\textit{e}5!) 25...\textit{e}8?! with the idea of pushing with ...\textit{e}5-\textit{e}4 when Black is at least equal. (Note that the premature 25...\textit{e}5?! is met by 26.\textit{h}6 threatening \textit{g}5.)

24.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}8 25.\textit{g}3 a5 26.\textit{h}4

26.\textit{e}xc6 \textit{e}xc6 27.\textit{d}e5+ \textit{e}xe5 28.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xc}1 29.\textit{xc}1 \textit{e}g2 30.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}6 reaches an opposite-coloured bishop ending. It should be a draw, but Black is the one who can press for as long as he wishes.

26...\textit{e}5

26...\textit{xa}3? 27.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 28.\textit{e}5+ \textit{e}8 29.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 30.\textit{c}6 is no good for Black.

27.\textit{g}5?!

Areshchenko is trying to play for a win, but White's position is not strong enough to justify this level of ambition.

27.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 28.\textit{xe}5+ \textit{xe}5 29.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 30.\textit{xe}5 \textit{e}g2 31.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}6 is similar to the endgame discussed in the note to White's 26th move above. This is a better version for White as Black's e-pawn is missing, but Black is in no danger and a draw is highly likely.

27...\textit{d}d8 28.\textit{xc}8 \textit{xc}8 29.\textit{e}1 \textit{d}6 30.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}6 31.\textit{fxe}5+

31.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 32.\textit{fxe}5+ \textit{d}5 is highly uncomfortable for White, so keeping the rooks on the board seems like a good practical decision.

31...\textit{d}d5+

There is no doubt that Black is better, but it is hard to convert the advantage against such a strong player as Areshchenko.

32.\textit{a}1 \textit{b}7 33.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xe}6 34.\textit{f}2 \textit{c}5 35.\textit{c}2

35.\textit{xd}4?? allows a fork on b3.

35...\textit{xe}5

This allows White to obtain counterplay along the open e-file. 35...\textit{d}d5?? is worth considering, but with all Black's pieces on the queenside White can obtain counterplay with 36.\textit{g}4!.

36.\textit{e}1+ \textit{d}5 37.\textit{e}8 \textit{xa}3 38.\textit{d}8+ \textit{e}6 39.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}3

Black is a pawn up, but his passed pawns are a long way from promoting. In the game White manages to draw by attacking the vulnerable f7-pawn.
Playing the French

40.\texttt{Be}e8+ \texttt{Bd}d5 41.\texttt{Bc}c3 \texttt{Bc}c5 42.\texttt{Bc}c7 \texttt{Bc}c4
43.\texttt{Bd}d2 \texttt{Ba}a2+ 44.\texttt{Bd}d1 \texttt{Bd}d3 45.\texttt{Bc}c3+ \texttt{Bd}d4
46.\texttt{Bc}c7 \texttt{Bd}d3 47.\texttt{Bc}c3+ \texttt{Bd}d4 48.\texttt{Bc}c7 \texttt{Bd}d4
49.\texttt{Ba}g5 \texttt{Bf}f2+

\hfill 49...\texttt{Bx}xg5 50.\texttt{Bx}h5 \texttt{Bx}g2 51.\texttt{Bx}f7 \texttt{Bx}g5
52.\texttt{Bx}a7 \texttt{Bf}f5 53.\texttt{Ba}a7 looks like a draw.

\hfill 50.\texttt{Be}e1 \texttt{Bd}d3+ 51.\texttt{Bc}c1 \texttt{Bc}c1+ 52.\texttt{Bh}h2 \texttt{Ba}a2+
53.\texttt{Bc}c1 \texttt{Bd}d3 54.\texttt{Bc}c1 \texttt{Bf}f2 55.\texttt{Bc}c1 \texttt{Bd}d1+ 56.\texttt{Be}e1 \texttt{Bg}g5
57.\texttt{Ba}a1 \texttt{Bc}c3 58.\texttt{Bc}c3 \texttt{Ba}a1+ 59.\texttt{Bc}c1 \texttt{Bc}c1
60.\texttt{Bc}c1 \texttt{Ba}a1 61.\texttt{Bc}c3 \texttt{Bf}f5 62.\texttt{Bc}c3 \texttt{Bd}d3

$1/2-1/2$

The players agreed a draw here, although Black can still press in the final position.

Conclusion

Of all the chapters in the book, I found this one the most difficult to write. It was unquestionably the chapter that demanded the most analytical work, as most of the theoretical variations published in other sources did not seem fully satisfactory to me.

Take for example the move $6.\texttt{Bc}c1$? After $6...\texttt{Bc}c4 7.\texttt{Bc}c4 \texttt{Bf}f8 8.\texttt{Bc}c2 c5 9.a3$ I discovered that White is better in every line, so I went on to analyse $7...g6$ carefully. The critical line turned out to be $8.a3 \texttt{Bxc}3 9.bxc3 \texttt{Bxc}3! 10.\texttt{Bd}d3! b6! when Black is holding his own, as evidenced by the illustrative correspondence game and my supporting analysis.

The $6.\texttt{Bc}c3$ move is quite dangerous as well, but at least here there was a well established main line where Black still seems to be doing fine. After $6...\texttt{Bc}c4 7.\texttt{Bc}c4 g6 8.a3 \texttt{Bxc}3+ 9.bxc3$ it is too risky for Black to take the $c3$-pawn, but $9...c5! 10.\texttt{Bd}d3 h5!$ takes advantage of the bishop's placement on $e3$ instead of $c1$. For example, after $11.\texttt{Bf}f4$ the strong reply $11...g5!$ equalizes for Black, but if the bishop was on $c1$ then $12.\texttt{Be}e3!$ would offer White a comfortable advantage.

I have tried as much as possible to offer advice on positional themes and the reasons for choosing one move over another. However, there is no denying the role of concrete analysis, so some memorization of variations is essential for a player wishing to employ the McCutcheon Variation in practice.
Chapter 23

6. \( \text{d}2 \)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{f6} \) 4.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{b4} \) 5.e5 h6 6.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xc3} \)

A) 7.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{e}4 \)
   A1) 8.\( \text{e}2! \)
   A2) 8.\( \text{b}4 \)
B) 7.bxc3! \( \text{e}4 \)
   B1) 8.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xd}2 \) 9.\( \text{xd}2 \) c5 10.dxc5
       10.\( \text{f}3 \) – Game 55
   B2) 8.\( \text{g}4! \) \( \text{f}8! \)
       B21) 9.\( \text{e}3 \)
       B22) 9.\( \text{f}4 \)
       B23) 9.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xd}2 \) 10.\( \text{xd}2 \) c5 11.dxc5!
          11.\( \text{f}3 \) – Game 56
          11.h4 c4 12.\( \text{f}1 \) – Game 57
          12.\( \text{e}2 \) – Game 58

Game 55    Rhobel Legaspi – Barlo Nadera, Manila 2006  401
Game 56    Joseph Sanchez – Sabino Brunello, Milan 2012  407
Game 57    Judit Polgar – Viktor Korchnoi, Zürich (blitz) 2006  409
Game 58    Arghyadip Das – Alberto David, Kolkata 2008  412
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

White’s last was 15.g4. Can Black exploit it? (page 401)

How did Nimzowitsch play from here? (page 398)

How should Black react to the kingside build-up? (page 405)

Find a way to combine attack and defence. (page 413)

Find a strong plan for Black. (page 401)

What should Black do with his king? (page 408)

How should Black proceed? (page 414)
Chapter 23 – 6...d2

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 c6 4.g5 g6 5.b4 b4 5.e5 h6 6.d2

This has been by far the most popular move, and the logic behind it is simple. White breaks the pin and forces Black to exchange off his bishop to facilitate the knight jump to e4.

6...xc3

From this position A) 7.xc3 is a valid option, but B) 7.bxc3 is a more challenging move and the main line.

A) 7.xc3

With this move White avoids doubled pawns, but the bishop is not well placed on c3 and Black has no problem demonstrating equality.

7.e4

Here it is worth analysing A1) 8.e2? and A2) 8.b4.

With the bishop on c3, 8.g4?! is pointless because Black can simply castle. In the 7.bxc3 line this is not the case, as the reply xh6 would refute Black’s play. This, in a nutshell, explains why the latter is a stronger move.

A1) 8.e2?! 0–0

9.b4

9.f3?! xxc3 10.xc3 c5+ is highly problematic for White. His centre is collapsing and he has no secure place for his king. 11.dxc5 was played in Koch – Murey, Paris 1989, and here I favour the strong and thematic 11...b6N as after 12.cxb6 xb6 Black has great compensation.

9.c5! 10.a3 b5! 11.c3

11.xc5 xc5 12.dxc5 xc7 was agreed drawn in Velicka – S. Petrosian, Hamburg 2000, but I slightly prefer Black. A possible continuation is: 13.f4 xc5 14.d4 c6

15.xc6 (15.c3 a5+ Black intends ...b4 and ...a6 while White has yet to complete development.) 15...xc6 16.d3 a5 Followed by ...b4 and ...a6, with good play on the queenside.
Playing the French

This has been the most popular choice, although it is widely accepted that White has zero advantage.

\[8...c5! \text{9.} \text{dx}c5\]

9.dxc5? \text{dx}f2! is a trick which occurred in the original stem game with 6.d2, and has caught many more unsuspecting players since. 10.\text{Wh}h5 (10.\text{dx}f2 \text{Wh}h4†) 10...\text{dx}h1 11.\text{xf}3 \text{dc}6 12.d2 \text{We}7 13.e3 \text{ad}7 14.c3 0–0–0 Black won rather easily in Janowski – Showalter, New York (3) 1899.

9.dxc3?! was effectively refuted in another historic encounter: 9.\text{dc}6 10.dxc5?! \text{Wa}5†!

\[8.a5!N\]

11.\text{dc}6 12.\text{dx}c5 \text{dx}c5 13.dxc5 \text{dx}e5 14.\text{d}4\text{=}v was complicated in Ninov – Oreopoulos, Kallithea 2009. Black would have been fine after 14...\text{ad}7N according to my computer, but I prefer the clarity of my main suggestion.

\[12.\text{dx}c5\]

12.b3? b4†

\[12...\text{dx}c5 13.dxc5 \text{ad}7?\]

Black easily regains his pawn and will soon solve the problem of the ‘French bishop’ with ...\text{a}6 and ...b4.

A2) 8.b4

11.\text{e}2? (11.c3 \text{d}4†v was the lesser evil although White is clearly in trouble here too.) 11...\text{dx}e5–+ In McCutcheon – Pillsbury, corr. 1901, White tasted the bitter flavour of his own medicine. (11...b6!N was actually even stronger, not that it matters much.)

\[9...\text{dx}c5 10.dxc5 \text{ad}7=\]

Not for the first time, the optimal strategic solution is shown by a game between two of the old masters. On this occasion it is Nimzowitsch who shows us the way.

It is worth comparing our main line with the following modern grandmaster game, where White methodically exploited his opponent’s inaccuracies to launch a winning attack.
10...c6 11.f3 c7 12.e2 a5 13.d2 xc5 14.xd3 d7 15.0-0-0 16.fxe1
Nimzowitsch himself would surely have approved of White's overprotection of the e5-pawn.
16...b5
16...f6 would have been safer, although after 17.exf6 White's control over e5 gives him a small but pleasant advantage.

17.a1! b4 18.c4! bxc3 19.xc3 b6 20.b1! fb8 21.b3 e8 22.d3 g6 23.h4
The attack has started and it is rather dangerous.
23...g7 24.h5 b4 25.d2 xc3 26.c3 e8 27.d2 c6 28.f4
Already the game is as good as over.

28...d8 29.hxg6 fxg6 30.xg6! xg6 31.h4+ g7 32.e3+
White soon won in Mastrovasilis – Antic, Valjevo 2011.

11.d4
It is important that White is unable to put his bishop on b5, on account of the queen check.

11...c7! 12.f3 xc5 13.d3 d7 14.0-0 e8 15.fxe1 b6=
Black was fine in Spielmann – Nimzowitsch, Gothenburg 1920. The bad bishop can be exchanged on b5 at any time.

B) 7.bxc3! e4

From this position we will start by analysing B1) 8.d3, as first introduced by Lasker. The big main line is of course B2) 8.g4, which is more dangerous and theoretically challenging.
B1) 8...d3 Qxd2 9...xd2

9...xd2? commits the king to a bad position and Black obtains the better chances with simple moves: ...

...c5 10...g4 0–0 11.h4 Qc6 12.Qh3 f5 13...f4 Qd7 14.Qg3 Qh8 Auletta – Malloni, Asiag 1995. White’s attack is over and he will soon have to face Black’s counter-assault with...

...a5, ...

...c8 and ...

...xd4. If White tries to bring in reinforcements with Qf3, h4-h5 and Qh4, Black can easily defend with ...

...e8 and/or ...

...e7.

9...c5

Given the chance, Black will advance this pawn to c4 on the next move. For a full explanation of the ensuing positions, see the next illustrative game where both 10.f4 and 10.Qf3 are examined. In the present analysis section we will see what happens when White prevents the ...

...c4 move.

10.dxc5

This move was first played by Tarrasch against Mason in Monte Carlo 1903, and it was employed by Lasker a year later to defeat McCutcheon in a themed correspondence game. Curiously, variation A2 of Chapter 23 also featured Lasker on the white side of a position with so-called “Irish pawns” on the c-file.

10...c7 11.Qf3

11.Qe3 was played in the aforementioned game Lasker – McCutcheon, corr. 1904. At this point, instead of McCutcheon’s 11...a5, I like 11...Qd7 with a likely transposition to the main line below after 12.Qf3.

11...Qd7!

The most accurate move order. Black is playing the same set-up that we saw in Spielmann – Nimzowitsch, Gothenburg 1920 (...

...c7, ...

...c5 and ...

...d7), but with White having doubled pawns on the c-file.

11...0–0 12.0–0 Qd7 gives White the extra opportunity of 13.Qfe1 Qxc5 14.Qd4 a6 15.Qe3 as played in El Taher – Poulsen, Dubai 2004. Objectively the position is unclear, but White has decent attacking chances and we would prefer to avoid this type of situation in a practical game.

12.Qe3 Qxc5 13.0–0 Qd7 14.Qab1 0–0

By now it is safer to castle.

15.Qb4

Compared to the earlier note with 11...0–0, White’s plan of 15.Qfe1 Qac8 16.Qd4 is less purposeful here, as the queen on e3 blocks the rook’s path to the kingside. After 16...a6± intending ...

...b5 followed by ...

...a4, Black is at least equal.
15...\( \text{cxd3} \) 16.cxd3 \( \text{Wxc3} \) 17.\( \text{AXB7} \) \( \text{ac8} \) 
18.\( \text{Eb3} \) \( \text{wa5=} \)

Black had no problems in Pedersen – Sorensen, Esbjerg 1972.

**GAME 55**

Rhobel Legaspi – Barlo Nadera

Manila 2006

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{df6} \) 4.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{Eb4} \) 5.e5 h6 6.\( \text{Ebd2} \) \( \text{xcd3} \) 7.bxc3 \( \text{Lle4} \) 8.\( \text{d3!} \) \( \text{Llxdl} \) 9.\( \text{lxdl} \) c5

In this game we will see how the play may develop when White refrains from 10.dxc5.

The correct plan for Black involves ...c4 followed by ...\( \text{a5-a3} \) and ...\( \text{d7-b6-a4} \), putting the c3-pawn under heavy pressure.

The credit for discovering this plan goes to an American player called Walter Penn Shipley, who played it in the early years of the 20th century. Shipley was a decent amateur player, but is best known as a tournament organizer. For example, he organized the historic tournaments of Cambridge Springs 1904 and New York 1924, which remain two of the strongest tournaments ever to take place in the USA.

10.\( \text{d3} \)

This has been White’s most frequent choice. Another popular option is:

10.f4 c4 11.\( \text{Ee2} \) \( \text{wa5} \) 12.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 13.0-0 \( \text{b6} \) 14.\( \text{h4} \)

14...g6!

14...\( \text{a4} \) is also fine, as long as Black follows up with ...g6! in the near future.

The main thing for Black is to restrain the f4-f5 push before proceeding with ...\( \text{d7} \) and ...0-0-0. I see no way for White to exploit the hole on f6, and if White wants to break through on the kingside he will have to weaken his own position by playing g2-g4. This is indeed what happened in a game involving one of the strongest players of the last century.

15.g4?!

Now in Brinckmann – Maroczy, Rogaska Slatina 1929, Black could have exploited his opponent’s last move with:

15...\( \text{a4} \) 16.\( \text{f3} \) h5!!

White has problems on the kingside.

10...\( \text{c4} \) 11.\( \text{f1} \)

The idea of retreating the bishop to its original square after ...c4 is well known from the Winawer. White hopes to deploy the bishop on h3, perhaps to support a future attack with f4-f5. Unfortunately for White, the present version is a worse version for White as he lacks a dark-squared bishop.
11.\textit{e}2 \textit{a}5 also gives Black a fine game, as shown by Shiplely in the stem game from 1905:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}

% White to move

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

12.0–0 \textit{\textit{d}}7 13.\textit{e}1 \textit{\textit{b}}6 14.f4 \textit{\textit{a}}3 15.\textit{f}3 \textit{\textit{d}}7 16.\textit{\textit{c}}1 (16.\textit{g}3 \textit{\textit{g}}8 17.\textit{e}3 0–0–0\textsuperscript{=} ) 16...\textit{\textit{x}}c1 17.\textit{\textit{x}}c1 \textit{\textit{a}}4 18.\textit{b}1 \textit{\textit{b}}8\textsuperscript{+}

White's doubled pawns will remain weak for a long time. 19.\textit{g}3 0–0 20.\textit{e}3 \textit{\textit{c}}8 21.\textit{f}3 \textit{\textit{a}}6 22.\textit{d}2 \textit{\textit{b}}6 23.\textit{f}3 \textit{\textit{x}}b1\textsuperscript{+} 24.\textit{x}b1 \textit{\textit{c}}8 25.\textit{e}1 \textit{\textit{c}}6 26.\textit{f}2 \textit{\textit{b}}6 27.\textit{c}1 \textit{\textit{b}}2\textsuperscript{+}

Cravens – Shiplely, Cable Match 1905. Black was dominating and went on to increase the pressure with some impressive manoeuvring involving ...\textit{b}6 followed by ...\textit{a}4 and ...	extit{a}8-c7-b5.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}

% White to move

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

11...\textit{a}5 12.g3 \textit{\textit{d}}7 13.\textit{h}3 \textit{\textit{b}}6 14.\textit{b}1 \textit{\textit{a}}3 15.0–0 \textit{\textit{a}}4

White's moves have not been the best, but Black's set-up makes perfect sense and would ensure a good position in any case. As I said before, this whole line is essentially a Winawer where White suffers from the doubled c-pawns without having a dark-squared bishop to compensate.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}

% White to move

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

16.\textit{h}4 \textit{\textit{x}}c3

Black wins his first pawn for no compensation. The remaining moves are not so important; White tries to muster a kingside attack but falls into an even greater mess.

17.\textit{d}1 \textit{\textit{b}}8 18.f4 \textit{\textit{e}}3\textsuperscript{+} 19.\textit{h}1 \textit{\textit{c}}3 20.\textit{g}4 \textit{\textit{g}}6 21.\textit{\textit{b}}e1 \textit{\textit{d}}4 22.\textit{f}3 \textit{\textit{e}}4 23.\textit{d}1 \textit{\textit{c}}3 24.\textit{g}2 \textit{b}5 25.\textit{f}3 \textit{b}4 26.\textit{g}4 \textit{h}5!

Black nicely exploits the fact that he never castled. Already two pawns up, he is now poised to take the initiative on the kingside as well, so White decided he had had enough. 0–1

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}

% White to move

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textbf{B2) 8.\textit{g}4!}

Just as in the previous chapter, this is the move Black must be well prepared to face.

8...\textit{f}8!

On this occasion I prefer to avoid weakening the kingside with the ...\textit{g}6 move. In the previous chapter I mentioned that there were some specific reasons for avoiding the king
move, especially against the tricky $6.c1$ line. With the white bishop on $d2$, the first player does not have the same attacking resources available.

From this position we will analyse B21) $9.e3$, B22) $9.f4$ and B23) $9.d3$, the last option being the main line by far.

$9.c1$ $c5$ $10.d3$ $xc3$ $11.dxc5$ $a5$ leaves White with nothing better than $12.d2$ transposing to line B21 below.

B21) $9.e3$

Safeguarding the bishop makes a certain amount of sense, but it costs time and abandons the $c3$-pawn to its fate.

$9...c5$ $10.d3$ $xc3$!

Simple and strong.

$11.dxc5$

$11.d2$ is met by $11.e4$ $12.xe4$ $dx4$ $13.e2$ $cx4$ $14.xe4$ $c6$ Blazkova – Zier, Karlovy Vary 2009. The black king will be able to hide on $h7$ later, as White doesn’t have a light-squared bishop.

$11...a5$ $12.d2$

$12.f3$ $e4$ is no problem either, for instance: $13.e2$ ($13.d2N$ $e5$ 14.0–0 $d3$ 15.$xd3$ $c6$ Black is a pawn up and can repel any attack with $...d8$ and $...e7$ if needed.) $13...xc5$

14.$hc1$ $c6$ 15.$f1$ This position was reached in Malmstroem – Trani, email 2004, and now I like 15...b6!N intending $...a6$.

12...$a4$!

Black uses simple tactics to evade the pin.

$13.h3$


13...$xg4$ 14.$hxg4$ $a4$ 15.$g5$ $h5$ 16.$h4$ $xc5$
17...g4 g6 18.gxh5 \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet 19.cxd3 \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet \textbullet 20.exh5 gxh5

Black was just marginally better in Zurakhov – Levin, Kiev 1960. White held the draw without difficulty, but it is obvious that Black had no problems from the opening.

**B22) 9.\textbullet f4**

14.a4 \textbullet d7 15.0–0 \textbullet c7 16.\textbullet c1 \textbullet d7 17.\textbullet d2 \textbullet c8 18.\textbullet b2 \textbullet b8 19.\textbullet h1

The king walk has been completed and it is time for action.

19...f6!

Black often employs a similar strategy in the Winawer, but in that variation he may need to think twice about opening the centre due to White’s bishop pair. Here there are no such worries.

White wants to be able to take back with the queen on d2.

9...c5 10.\textbullet d3 \textbullet xd2 11.\textbullet xd2

The position resembles the Legaspi – Nadera game, but here Black does not have the option of long castling, which means he has to be slightly more careful. Despite this minor drawback, his prospects are still good.

11...c4 12.\textbullet e2 \textbullet d7

Black goes for Shipley’s manoeuvre as in the aforementioned game.

Another appealing idea is:

12...\textbullet c6!? 13.\textbullet f3 \textbullet e7!

A typical idea for the French Defence. Black intends to walk his king to b8 before breaking with ...f6. White can do surprisingly little to counter this.
20.exf6
20.f4 can be met by 20...g5!.
20...gxf6 21.f4 e5
Black clearly had the initiative in Kargin – Volkov, Moscow 2008.

13.f3 a5 14.g4?
We will see that this is a mistake, but it is easy to see why White may be tempted to choose such a move. The 'hook' on h6 can have a hypnotizing effect at times.

14.h4 is more sensible, although the following game shows that Black does well here too:
14...a3 15.h3 a5b2 16.c1 b6 17.h5 d7 18.h4 a4 19.f4 b5 20.g4 White is ready to attack, so Black employs the familiar tactic of evacuating the king from the danger zone.

20...e8! 21.f5 d8! 22.f3 a5 23.fxe6 fxe6 24.g6 e8 25.f4 c7 26.f1 b4 Rabiega – Vitiugov, Germany 2009.

14...b6 15.c3 a3 16.g5 a4
Once again we see Shipley’s plan being put to good use, more than a century after the American first played it.

17.d2 b5 18.ab1 d7 19.hg1 e8
Black has regrouped his forces beautifully and is now ready for ...a8 and ...b4. White, on the other hand, is struggling to create a single threat.

20 gxh6 xhx6 21.g3 b8 22.g5
22...b4!
A decisive breakthrough.

23.cxb4 axb4 24.c1 e4b4 25.h3 c3†
26.d1 hxh3 27.xh3 b1
Black threatens a simple mate with ...xcl† and ...a1. White is dreaming of salvation with a possible perpetual, but it does not exist.

28.xe6† g8!
White soon had to resign in Romanov – Nepomniachtchi, Dresden 2007.

B23) 9.d3

As mentioned previously, this move is the main line. White forces an exchange on d2 and intends to build a kingside initiative.

9...xd2 10.xd2 c5
Given the opportunity, Black will opt for the familiar plan of ...c4, blocking the centre and intending ...b5-b4 with counterplay. Normally White allows this plan, but in the following short analysis section we will see what happens when he prevents it.

11.dxc5?! Not for the first time in the McCutcheon, White can opt for tripled c-pawns.
White's most popular choices are 11.f3 and 11.h4, as found in the three illustrative games that follow this short analysis section.

11...d7 12.f3 c7 13.d4N
This novelty was proposed by GM King on one of his ChessBase DVDs. It may well be White's best continuation, but I still see no reason for Black to fear it.

13.f4 xc5 14.h4 d7 15.h3 c8 16.d4 occurred in Karayev – Jorczik, Vung Tau 2008. A simple way to continue at this point is:

16.xd3N 17.xd3 g8 Having exchanged off White's light-squared bishop, Black is ready to post his king on h7, after defending the f7-pawn with ...e8. White has the better minor piece, but this is counterbalanced by Black's superior pawn structure.

13 xc5 14.a4
King ends his analysis here, adding that White intends \( h_b1 \). My experience with the French Defence has taught me that Black should not fear such positions. The most logical plan is:

14...\( d7 \) 15.\( h_b1 \) \( e7 \)

Followed simply by ...\( h_c8 \) and perhaps ...\( f8 \). The position is close to equal, but I tend to favour Black due to his better pawns. It is also useful to have the option to eliminate the d3-bishop at a moment of Black’s choosing.

We will now look at three illustrative games involving the blocked centre, which can be considered the critical battleground of the 6.\( d2 \) system.

**GAME 5**

**Joseph Sanchez – Sabino Brunello**

Milan 2012

I am pleased to present this game from my Italian friend and fellow Quality Chess author, GM Sabino Brunello, who played a series of French Defence games after studying the notes I gave him – the same notes that have become the book you hold in your hands.

1.e4 \( e6 \) 2.d4 \( d5 \) 3.\( c3 \) \( f6 \) 4.\( g5 \) \( b4 \) 5.e5 \( h6 \) 6.\( d2 \) \( xc3 \) 7.bxc3 \( c4 \) 8.\( g4 \) \( f8 \) 9.\( d3 \) \( xd2 \) 10.\( xd2 \) \( c5 \) 11.\( f3 \)

This is slightly less accurate than 11.h4, for reasons that will be explained shortly.

11...\( c4 \) 12.\( e2 \) \( b5 \)!

I have taken the liberty of changing the move order slightly, in order to emphasize the more accurate sequence with which Black commences his queenside counterplay immediately.

12...\( c6 \) 13.h4 \( b5 \) was seen in the game, but this move order gives White the additional options of 13.a4 and 13.\( h_b1 \), holding up Black’s queenside expansion.

13.h4

13.a4 does not make much sense here, as 13...\( bxa4 \) 14.\( xxa4 \) \( a5 \) is promising for Black.

The text move is by far the most frequent choice in the database. It is at this point that we may appreciate why 11.\( f3 \) is a slightly less accurate continuation than 11.h4. The point is that if White is going to play h2-h4 anyway, he may as well play it earlier and keep some other useful options open for the knight – see the next two illustrative games for details.
13...\(\text{Cc6}\)
After a short move order diversion, we are now back in the game Sanchez – Brunello.

14.a3 \(a5\) 15.\(\text{Bf4}\) \(\text{Bb8}\)
Another promising continuation is 15...\(\text{e7}\) with the idea of ...\(\text{a7}\), similar to the Volokitin – Korchnoi game as referenced in the note to Black's 14th move in Game 58. After playing those moves Black may wish to continue manoeuvring, for instance by shuffling the king to \(d8\), but it also looks tempting to go for a quick ...\(b4\) with attacking chances.

16.e\(e3\)
It seems that White understood he was not in a position to create serious threats on the kingside, so he opted to retreat his queen to guard against ...\(b4\) ideas.

16...\(\text{e7}\) 17.h\(5\) \(\text{e8}\)
The computer proposes 17...\(\text{g8}\)? but this is the wrong direction, and after 18.g\(4\) White soon develops an attack.

18.g\(4\) \(\text{d7}\) 19.\(\text{hgl}\) \(\text{b4}\) 20.axb\(4\) axb\(4\) 21.\(\text{gb1}\) \(\text{d8}\)!
Despite the opening of the queenside, the king will be perfectly safe on \(c7\).

22.cx\(b4\) \(\text{xb4}\) 23.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{xb1}\) 24.\(\text{xb1}\) \(\text{c7}\)

The king walk is complete and the h\(8\)-rook can finally enter the game.

25.\(\text{Bb5}\) \(\text{a8}\) 26.\(\text{Cc5}\)!
Presumably White wanted to prevent ...\(\text{a3}\) while attempting to put Black's king under pressure. Unfortunately for him, the rook turns out to be more of a weakness than a strength.

26...\(\text{d8!}\) 27.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{b8}\) 28.\(\text{xb8}\)\(\text{+}\) \(\text{xb8}\)\(\text{+}\)
White is in serious trouble in the endgame; his rook is trapped on \(c5\), and it will not take long for Black to capture it.

29.g\(5\)
Kingside counterplay is White's only chance.
29...hxg5! 30.\textit{\texttt{Ngx5}} \textit{\texttt{g6}} looks stronger, especially from a practical perspective to reduce White's swindling chances.

\textbf{30.gxh6 gxh6 31.\textit{\texttt{Nh2}}}

Now White gets a chance to complicate the game by going after the h-pawn.

\textit{\texttt{\textbf{b6}}} 32.\textit{\texttt{\textbf{Axc6}}!}

The best chance. Instead 32.\textit{\texttt{Ac3}} gives Black a choice of winning continuations, with 32...\textit{\texttt{Acl}} and 32...\textit{\texttt{Ad8}} being equally convincing.

32...\textit{\texttt{Axc6}} 33.\textit{\texttt{Ag4}}

\textbf{33...\textit{\texttt{Aa5}}!}

33...\textit{\texttt{Ab5}}! would have been more accurate.

34.\textit{\texttt{Axe6}} \textit{\texttt{Ae8}} 35.\textit{\texttt{Af3}}?!

35.\textit{\texttt{Ag4}}! \textit{\texttt{Ahl}} 36.\textit{\texttt{Ae3}} would have rendered the conversion of Black's advantage quite problematic.

35...\textit{\texttt{Ab4}} 36.\textit{\texttt{Ag4}}?

36...c3\texttt{f} was the last chance, although 36...\textit{\texttt{Ab3}} maintains a decisive advantage.

36...c3\texttt{f} 37.\textit{\texttt{Ae3}} \textit{\texttt{Aa4}}

0–1

The next two games feature the more accurate 11.h4. This way White maintains the options of bringing the knight to the f4-square to bolster the attack.

\textbf{Judit Polgar – Viktor Korchnoi}

Zürich (blitz) 2006

Despite the blitz time limit, these two great players produced a game of some theoretical significance.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{\texttt{Ae3}} f6 4.\textit{\texttt{Ag5}} \textit{\texttt{Ab4}} 5.e5 h6 6.\textit{\texttt{Ae2}} \textit{\texttt{Axc3}} 7.bxc3 \textit{\texttt{Ae4}} 8.\textit{\texttt{Ag4}} \textit{\texttt{Axf8}} 9.\textit{\texttt{Ad3}} \textit{\texttt{Axd2}} 10.\textit{\texttt{Axd2}} c5 11.h4 c4 12.\textit{\texttt{Ae2}}

The point of this move is to keep the e2-square free for the knight. 12.\textit{\texttt{Ae2}} is considered in the next game.
12...b5
Once again I have opted for a small modification of the move order.

The game continued 12...c6 13.e2 b5 14.a3 a5. This time the move sequence does not matter so much, since the positioning of White’s minor pieces on f1 and g1 (compared with e2 and f3 as in the previous game) makes her less equipped to play on the queenside with a move such as a2-a4. Nevertheless, for the sake of consistency, I would like to reinforce the plan of establishing the pawn on b5 at the earliest convenience.

13.a3 a5 14.e2
White also has some move order flexibility; for instance, 14.h3 g8 15.e2 c6 is another route to the same position.

14...c6
We have now transposed back to Polgar – Korchnoi.

15.h3 g8 16.f4
From this square the knight adds considerable weight to White’s attack.

16...e7!
I consider this the strongest plan, although it is worth considering a couple of alternatives.

16...d7 is the move I have tried in my own practice, with the idea of dropping the bishop back to e8 to defend f7. 17.f3 e7! (Obviously Black must avoid 17...e8 18.g6#. Also 17...e8?! is well met by 18.h5 hitting g7.)

18.h5 f8! Black remained solid in Ganguly – Sadvakasov, Doha 2003. It is worth adding the possible continuation 19.g3N b4! 20.axb4?! axb4 21.xa8?! bxc3+ 22.e2 wa8 23.xg7? wa4! when Black’s counterattack is lethal. Although this line seems to hold up okay, I cannot help feeling that Black can do better.

Another interesting idea is: 16...a7?! 17.f3 d7 18.b1 b7

This position occurred in Aronian – Vallejo Pons, Menorca 1996, when both budding super-GMs were juniors. I consider the position
to be on the dangerous side for Black, and not optimal from a theoretical point of view. Nevertheless, it is worth familiarizing yourself with the set-up using the rook to defend along the 7th rank while also supporting the ...b4 break.

17.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 \textit{\textbf{g}}5

Perfect timing! This manoeuvre with the knight to f5 is the most economical way to defend against this \textit{\textbf{h}}3-\textit{\textbf{f}}3 plan. The h4-pawn is also a target.

18.\textit{\textbf{h}}3 \textit{\textbf{e}}8!

18...\textit{\textbf{x}}h4?? loses to 19.\textit{\textbf{x}}h4 \textit{\textbf{x}}h4 20.\textit{\textbf{g}}6†, but now the threat is real.

19.\textit{\textbf{h}}5 \textit{\textbf{h}}4!

This is not the top choice of my computer, but from a practical point of view it makes perfect sense. Black forces a queen exchange and maintains a solid position with chances for a subsequent counterattack.

20.\textit{\textbf{g}}4 \textit{\textbf{x}}h3 21.\textit{\textbf{x}}h3 \textit{\textbf{e}}7

Black's chances are at least equal. The rest of the game is not especially important for our study of the opening; both sides made a few inaccuracies, but we should remember this was a blitz game, and the overall quality was pretty high until Black blundered on move 30.

22.\textit{\textbf{g}}5?! \textit{\textbf{h}}8 23.\textit{\textbf{e}}2 \textit{\textbf{x}}g5 24.\textit{\textbf{x}}g5 \textit{\textbf{f}}5 25.\textit{\textbf{f}}4 \textit{\textbf{e}}7 26.\textit{\textbf{g}}1 \textit{\textbf{d}}7 27.\textit{\textbf{g}}4 \textit{\textbf{h}}6 28.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 \textit{\textbf{g}}8 29.\textit{\textbf{h}}3 \textit{\textbf{e}}8 30.\textit{\textbf{g}}5

30...\textit{\textbf{f}}6?

Correct was 30...\textit{\textbf{f}}5! intending ...\textit{\textbf{f}}7 when Black preserves an edge.

31.\textit{\textbf{x}}g7†! \textit{\textbf{x}}g7 32.\textit{\textbf{x}}f6† \textit{\textbf{f}}8 33.\textit{\textbf{x}}g7† \textit{\textbf{x}}g7 34.\textit{\textbf{g}}5 \textit{\textbf{f}}7?

34...\textit{\textbf{d}}7! would have kept some chances to resist. Now it is all over.

35.\textit{\textbf{f}}xf7! \textit{\textbf{x}}f7 36.\textit{\textbf{g}}4† \textit{\textbf{f}}8 37.\textit{\textbf{g}}6!

Black is unable to defend the e6-pawn.

37...\textit{\textbf{h}}6 38.\textit{\textbf{g}}4 \textit{\textbf{e}}7 39.\textit{\textbf{x}}e6

1–0
Despite the unfortunate end, the way Korchnoi handled the opening was exemplary. In the final game we will examine an almost identical set-up with the white bishop retreating to e2 instead of f1.

GAME 58

Arghyadip Das – Alberto David
Kolkata 2008

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 d6 4.g5 b4 5.e5 h6 6.d2 xc3 7.bxc3 d4 8.g4 f8 9.d3 dxe2 10.dxe2 c5 11.h4 c4 12.e2

On this square the bishop temporarily blocks the knight from coming to e2. White has two ways of justifying the decision. One idea is simply to bring the knight via h3 to f4, with almost identical play to the previous game, except for the position of White's bishop. A second plan, unique to this particular line, is to move the queen to f4 and post the bishop on h5, making f7 the focal point of the attack.

12...b5 13.h3 c6 14.f4

White can also abandon the bishop manoeuvre to h5 and bring his rook into play.

14.f3 a5 15.a3 d7!

15...e7! Good timing.

16.f4

18.e8 19.h5 c6!? There are no serious threats on the kingside, so Black decides to put his knight back on c6 rather than f5. 20.g4 b4 Sanchez – David, Calvi 2008.
Black has completed his optimal defensive set-up and is ready for \( \ldots b4 \).

22.\( g4 \)?

22.\( \text{a1} \) was better. A possible continuation is: 22...\( b4 \) This is the most direct, but Black could also consider a waiting move of some kind. 23.\( \text{a}xb4 \) \( \text{a}xb4 \) 24.\( \text{e}el \) bxc3 25.\( \text{xc}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 26.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{b}2\text{c}2 \)

22...\( \text{xh}4 \) 23.\( \text{f}6 \)?

Having given up a pawn for nothing, White collapses.

23...\( \text{xf}3 \uparrow \) 24.\( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{h}8\rightarrow \)


14...\( \text{d}7 \)

Not for the first time, Black has more than one playable method of organizing his defences.
20...b4! 21.axb4 axb4 22.a7xa7 bxa7
Black had the initiative in Volokitin – Korchnoi, Igualada 2005. In the final position 22.bxc3† 23.a7xa7 looks slightly more accurate, as the d4-pawn is weak and the rook is misplaced on c3. Still, in theoretical terms this is a moot point as Black has an earlier improvement on move 19.

15...h5 e7 16.b3 e8
This time Black used the bishop rather than the rook to defend f7. This plan also works fine, especially in conjunction with Black's strong follow-up play.

17.a3 a5 18.e2 b8
Now ...b4 could come at any moment, so White retreats his king.

19.e1 g8!
Black prepares to put the king on h7. Normally this would be dangerous, but here it is justified by the peculiar placement of the bishop on h5.

20.g3
20.g4? is of course met by 20...g6+.

20...h7 21.h3 h8 22.g4 f5†
White has been outplayed.

23.exf6 xf6
23...xf6!N intending ...d7 and ...e5 would have been stronger.

24.g4?!
24.f1 would have kept White's disadvantage to a manageable level.

24...b7!
Not only defending e6 indirectly, but also attacking f4, as the checkmate on g7 will be guarded by the rook.
This loses material but there was nothing better. 25.\texttt{e}2 would be a humiliating retreat, and after 25...b4 or 25...g6 Black is dominating.

25 ...\texttt{e}7 26.\texttt{xd}5?
White’s last chance to prolong the game was: 26.\texttt{e}4! \texttt{g}8? (26...dxe4 27.\texttt{xf}8\texttt{f}8\texttt{f}8\texttt{f} is also strong.) 27.\texttt{x}g7 \texttt{f}7 28.\texttt{x}g7 \texttt{g}7 29.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{e}7\texttt{f} Black’s extra knight is worth more than White’s three pawns; nevertheless, White still has chances to resist.

26 ...\texttt{xe}6\texttt{f}?
The computer prefers 26...\texttt{xf}2\texttt{f} but one winning line is good enough.

27.\texttt{xe}6 \texttt{xf}2\texttt{f} 28.\texttt{d}1

28...\texttt{h}5! 29.\texttt{xh}5 \texttt{xg}3 30.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{xc}3
31.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{xd}4
0–1

\textbf{Conclusion}

In this chapter we analysed the main line of the McCutcheon beginning with the moves 6.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{xc}3. Then 7.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{e}4 followed by ...c5 is known to give Black adequate play in all lines, so 7.bxc3 \texttt{e}4 is normal.

In the event that White follows up with 8.\texttt{d}3, the plan of 8...\texttt{d}2 9.\texttt{xd}2 c5 followed by ...c4, ...\texttt{a}5-a3 and ...\texttt{d}7-b6-a4 worked well in 1905, and more than a century later White has still not found a convincing way to counter it.

8.\texttt{g}4! is the only serious try for an advantage, and here we opted to avoid weakening the kingside dark squares in favour of 8...\texttt{f}8\texttt{f}!. The main line continues 9.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{xd}2 10.\texttt{xd}2 c5 when, given the chance, Black will block the centre with ...c4. A complex middlegame ensues, where Black must defend carefully against his opponent’s kingside threats, often by walking the king across to the queenside. Another key theme is the counterattack with ...b5, ...a5 and ...b4, opening up the queenside and making inroads towards White’s king. Apart from studying the recommendations contained in these pages, the reader is also advised to study the games of experts such as Alberto David and especially Viktor Korchnoi.
Chapter 24

The King's Indian Attack

1.e4 e6

A) 2.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}7!  
A1) 3.b3  
A2) 3.d4  
B) 2.d3 \textit{d}5  
B1) 3.\textit{e}2  
B2) 3.\textit{d}2 \textit{f}6 4.\textit{g}f3 \textit{c}5 5.g3 \textit{c}6 6.\textit{g}2 \textit{e}7 7.0-0 0-0  
8.\textit{f}1 \textit{c}7!  
B21) 9.\textit{f}1  
B22) 9.e5  

Game 59  Alexey Kim – Zhang Pengxiang, Moscow 2004  
Game 60  Robert Fischer – Uzi Geller, Netanya 1968
On this page you will find eight diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

Find Black's best move.  
(page 422)

Find White's trick.  
(page 431)

Demonstrate an advantage for White.  
(page 435)

Find a way to put White on the ropes.  
(page 431)

Show why 15...xd5 was an error.  
(page 433)

Justify the sac of the b5-pawn.  
(page 419)

Exploit White's c2-c3 push.  
(page 426)

White has an incredible draw.  
(page 426)
In this chapter we will cover the King’s Indian Attack and related systems. Naturally that means lines where White fianchettoes his king’s bishop, so the main move analysed is 2.d3, but I also consider 2.\textit{We}2 in this chapter, for reasons I will explain below.

Declining to occupy the centre with 2.d4 may strike some as an unambitious approach, but in fact the King’s Indian Attack deserves its aggressive-sounding name. White’s plan is to secure his centre then launch a kingside attack. This is a potentially dangerous line that requires careful handling from Black.

So the lines to consider are A) 2.\textit{We}2 and B) 2.d3.

A) 2.\textit{We}2

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_diagram.png}
\caption{A) 2.\textit{We}2}
\end{figure}

I have always associated this move with the King’s Indian Attack, maybe correctly, maybe not, but it certainly makes sense to study this move in this chapter. Chigorin said he had the idea of this move after his 1892 match with Steinitz in Havana, Cuba. In particular, in the 14th game of this match in a Ruy Lopez position, Steinitz reacted against the move ...d5 by playing his queen to e2. In Chigorin’s words “...and by this way Steinitz didn’t have to take exd5. This gave me the idea of the plan with g3-\textit{g}2 and d3 which later was improved.”

So this is indeed the foundation of the King’s Indian Attack formation and, going a bit further, for the later development of the King’s Indian Defence! Steinitz’s reaction to the move ...d5 may seem normal today, but back then every match between the world’s top players greatly enriched chess understanding.

As a practical French player I never really bothered studying 2.\textit{We}2. There was a time I was intending to counter it with 2...\textit{e}5 and another time I planned to play 2...\textit{c}e7, but without spending five minutes to check the theory. For example, it had never crossed my mind that 2...\textit{e}5 can be met by 3.f4! with a good King’s Gambit for White (the extra move \textit{We}2 is useful) and that 2...\textit{c}e7 3.d4 \textit{d}5 4.e5 c5 5.\textit{We}g4 is a Tarrasch variation with 3.\textit{c}d2 \textit{c}e7 but without the move \textit{d}d2, which can actually be seen as an improvement for White, at least from a first glance! After a series of articles in the German magazine \textit{Kaiisiber} on 2.\textit{We}2 and after Gawain Jones recommended the similar 2.d3 \textit{d}5 3.\textit{We}2 (via a different move order that comes from the Sicilian Defence) in his book \textit{How to Beat the Sicilian Defence} I came to appreciate more this slightly odd line.

2...\textit{c}e7!

After all, this is my choice. I spent a lot of time analysing the alternatives listed below. The analysis I offer shouldn’t be seen as the ultimate truth, but as a collection of practical points that helped my understanding and led me not to recommend each line.

2...\textit{e}5 3.exd5 (3.d3 transposes to 2.d3 \textit{d}5 3.\textit{We}2) 3...\textit{xd}5 4.\textit{De}3 \textit{b}d8 Black is slightly behind in development, but he has good control of d4, perhaps with ...\textit{e}5 next. Now 5.\textit{f}3 with a small edge is a bit better than 5.g3 c5 6.\textit{g}2, which should be met by 6...\textit{De}7!\textit{e}2.

2...\textit{e}5 3.f4 \textit{d}6 4.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}6 5.\textit{f}2!± ECO
2...\texttt{c6}?! When the queen arrives at e2 this is generally considered a good move to play, but I am not enthusiastic. 3.\texttt{f3} e5 4.c3 \texttt{f6} (4...d5 5.d4!) 5.d4 exd4 (5...d6 is analysed by Eingorn as okay for Black but I don’t think that this dark-square approach is consistent with the philosophy of the French Defence. Also I see a slight space advantage for White and he certainly isn’t worse) 6.e5 \texttt{d5} 7.\texttt{e4} White has a tiny edge after this, and certainly has found a way to take advantage of the move 2.\texttt{e2}.

In this position it is valuable to study the historically important Chigorin – Tarrasch match in St Petersburg in 1893. The “theorist” Tarrasch managed to get great positions in most of the games where his opponent tried his invention, but Chigorin, a great practical player, managed to overcome the difficulties and even score some wins from inferior positions.

![Diagram](image)

Now there are two main moves to consider: \textbf{A1)} 3.h3 and \textbf{A2)} 3.d4. Before that there are a couple of other moves to mention.

3.\texttt{f3} d5 4.d3 transposes to 2.d3 d5 3.\texttt{e2} and this is what you will meet today most often in practice. We’ll examine this in some detail in Variation B1. (4.exd5 is bad for White as the queen stands badly on the open e-file.)

3.\texttt{c3}?! d5 4.d3 \texttt{f6} 5.g3 0–0 6.\texttt{g2} \texttt{c6}! Now that c2-c3 is not possible, this is a strong move. After 7.\texttt{f3} e5 Black was comfortably equal in Chigorin – Tarrasch, St Petersburg (10) 1893, but probably he could have gained even more with 7...d4?! \texttt{N} 8.\texttt{b1} e5.

\textbf{A1)} 3.b3 d5 4.\texttt{b2}

This was one of Chigorin’s methods in his match against Tarrasch. The German Doctor played 4...\texttt{f6} in every game, but as Kasparov pointed out, simpler and better is:

4...\texttt{f6}!

Falling into Chigorin’s trap!

5.exd5

We should also consider the advance:

5.e5 \texttt{fd7}

This is a regular French Defence position where Black is fine. An example:

6.g3 c5 7.f4 \texttt{c6} 8.\texttt{f3}

So far this is Shovunov – Vaganian, Elista 1998, and now Houdini points out an incredible possibility:

8...\texttt{b5}?! This accelerates Black’s play on the queenside and the point is that after:

9.\texttt{xb5}?! \texttt{b4} 10.b3 \texttt{a6} 11.\texttt{a4} \texttt{xf1} 12.\texttt{xf1} a6

On a4 the queen is completely out of play.
A sample continuation:

13.\( \text{g2} \) 0–0 14.\( \text{ae1} \) \( \text{c7} \) 15.\( \text{hg1} \) \( \text{fb8=} \)

White is already in trouble. The simple threat is \( ...\text{c6} \) followed by \( ...\text{c4} \) and \( ...\text{c5} \) after which the white queen is checkmated.

5...exd5 6.\( \text{xf6} \) gxf6

For his broken pawn structure “Black gets in return the powerful pair of bishops, the open g-file and the weakening of White’s queenside with b2-b3.” – Kasparov. He then goes on to give a sample line:

7.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 8.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{g4} \) 9.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d7} \)

“With equal chances.” Kasparov’s assessment received a practical test in the following game:

10.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{h5} \) 11.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{g6} \) 12.\( \text{h4} \) 0–0–0

13.\( \text{dxg6} \) fxg6 14.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{de8} \)

14...\( \text{a3}?? \)

preventing long castling is another attractive possibility.

15.\( \text{d3} \)

This move was never tried by Chigorin, but for a modern player it is quite logical and this was the move that kept me away from 2...\( \text{e7} \) for some time before I discovered a nice equalizing strategy.

3...d5 4.e5 c5 5.\( \text{g4} \)

We are at a “grey zone” of opening theory. It seems like a French Tarrasch with 3...\( \text{e7} \) (1.e4 \( \text{e6} \) 2.d4 d5 3.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{e7} \) when the traditional main line has been 4.e5 c5 5.\( \text{g4} \)! with a small advantage for White) but the knight is on b1 not d2. I finally came to the conclusion that this is to Black’s advantage if he goes for:

5...\( \text{f8}! \)

For the modern French player this move is not so mysterious.

6.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 7.c3?!  

Better might be:

7.dxc5N

But in any case after:

7...\( \text{xc5} \) 8.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f6}! \)

Black doesn’t have any problems. With a knight on d2 the move \( \text{b3} \) would give White a valuable tempo and better prospects of taking advantage of Black’s curious development.
9. \( \text{g3} \)

9. exf6 \( \text{Qxf6} \) is more than okay for Black.
9. \( \text{c7} \) 10. \( \text{f4} \) g5 11. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xe3} \) 12. \( \text{fxe3} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \+)

This is just a sample line that shows how things can go well for Black.

7... \( \text{cxd4} \) 8. \( \text{cxd4} \)

And now I have a new idea:

8... \( \text{b6}! \)N

Followed by \...h5 and \...\( \text{h6} \) with the idea \...\( \text{f5} \) or \...g5-g4 and the \( d4 \)-pawn feels a lot of pressure.

Instead 8... \( \text{b4} \)?! 9. \( \text{c3} \) proved to be better for White in Pihlajamaki – Toth, Budapest 2001.

After the text move a sample line goes:

9. \( \text{c3} \) h5 10. \( \text{f4} \)

Not 10. \( \text{g3?} \) \( \text{xd4} \).

10... \( \text{h6} \) 11. \( \text{d3} \)

11. \( \text{b1} \) is met by the same idea: 11...g5!
12. \( \text{xg5} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 13. \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 14. \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{g7} \)\=

Followed by \...f6 when Black is fine.

11...g5! 12. \( \text{xg5} \)

12... \( \text{xg5} \)

Black must avoid 12... \( \text{xd4?} \) 13. \( \text{h7} \)\!
\( \text{g8} \) 14. \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 15. \( \text{h6} \) \( \text{h7} \) 16. \( \text{h7} \)\!
\( \text{h7} \) 17.0-0-0 and White is simply an exchange up.

13. \( \text{xg5} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 14. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xe5} \)\!

White has compensation for his pawn because of his strong pair of bishops, but Black cannot complain either. He is a pawn up, with a strong and solid centre. I'd definitely prefer his chances.

B) 2. \( \text{d3} \) d5

And here we split: B1) 3. \( \text{e2} \) or B2) 3. \( \text{d2} \).
B1) 3.\textit{\texttt{e2}}

Many sources consider this as an inferior form of the Classical King's Indian Attack (aka KIA). In the classical KIA the rook comes to e1 to offer overprotection to the important e-pawn (which usually advances to e5 when a knight goes to f6), mainly because the placement of the queen at e2 provides a target for a bishop on a6. On the other hand, the good thing about the queen coming to e2 is the possibility to play at the right moment c2-c4! followed by \textit{\texttt{c3}}.

Many believe that this extra possibility offered by the placement of the queen is nothing serious for Black to worry about and can even be avoided by a clever move order, while on the other hand White’s problem with the “improved” traditional queenside attack with the bishop coming to a6 remains. After reading and working on the KIA chapter by Gawain Jones in his book \textit{How to Beat the Sicilian Defence}, I am not sure at all if this is the case and I’d be really worried if I had to face the lines Jones suggests in a practical game.

3...\textit{\texttt{d5}} 4.\textit{\texttt{f3}} \textit{\texttt{c7}} 5.\textit{\texttt{c5}} 6.\textit{\texttt{g2}} \textit{\texttt{c6}}

The reason for this is that after 7...\textit{\texttt{dxc4}} 8.\textit{\texttt{dxc4}} e5 Black is fine due to his control over the d4-square. Now ...\textit{\texttt{g4}} is a big threat and if 9.h3 there follows 9..\textit{\texttt{d4!}} 10.\textit{\texttt{x}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{cx}}d4 11.0-0 \textit{\texttt{e6!}} planning ...\textit{\texttt{d7}} with an advantage for Black. The g2-bishop is closed in, Black’s d4-pawn is very strong and Black has strong play on the queenside.

7...\textit{\texttt{b5!}}

This is the move order trick I talked about.

7...0-0?! should be called dubious in my opinion, as it unnecessarily gives White the option of 8.e5 when Black has two options:

a) 8...\textit{\texttt{d7}} 9.\textit{\texttt{c4}} Followed by \textit{\texttt{c3}} when White enjoys a certain edge.

b) 8...\textit{\texttt{e8}} is considered to be somewhat better (for example, recommended in the ChessBase DVD on the French by Ari Ziegler) in order to meet 9.\textit{\texttt{c4}} with 9...\textit{\texttt{c7}}, but even here White has chances for an edge. Once again I refer to the lines shown in Jones’ anti-Sicilian book.

8.\texttt{e1}

8.\texttt{c4? bxc4} 9.\texttt{dxc4 dxe4} followed by ...\texttt{d4} is bad for White.

8.\texttt{a4} b4 9.\texttt{bd2} a5 10.exd5 exd5 11.\texttt{b3} 0-0 12.\texttt{e3} \texttt{b6} was fine for Black despite the bad
outcome of the game Strikovic – Rodriguez Guerrero, Seville 2004. Black's correct plan is ...h6 and ...\texttt{a}e6 followed by ...c4.

8...0–0 9.e5 \texttt{d}d7

And now comes a series of moves that is logical and typical for the KIA.

10.h4 a5 11.\texttt{b}d2 b4 12.\texttt{f}f1 \texttt{a}6 13.\texttt{g}5 c4 14.\texttt{e}3 cxd3 15.cxd3

This position appears twice in my database: Sitnikov – Trofimova, Prokojevsk 1998, and Smirin – Popov, Plovdiv 2008. Both Eingorn and Antic & Maksimovic believe that Black is better here (although the Serbians don't mention the strong move 14.\texttt{e}3 and give their evaluation a bit earlier). Bauer in Experts on the Anti-Sicilian offers a more balanced opinion (although he doesn't consider this exact position) giving the evaluation “unclear” or “White has attacking chances”. On the other hand, the engines prefer Black but Jones prefers White's practical chances. I am with Bauer and Jones on this. I will just offer these two games and you can make up your own mind. In the next game I offer a much safer and more appealing line.

15...\texttt{b}3

This is the Smirin – Popov game. The other game went: 15...\texttt{b}6 16.d4 \texttt{f}c8 17.\texttt{x}e7 \texttt{e}7 18.\texttt{c}ac1 \texttt{d}8 19.h5 \texttt{b}6 20.b3 \texttt{a}7 21.\texttt{x}c8 \texttt{x}c8 22.\texttt{f}f4 h6 23.g4 \texttt{c}c7 24.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{d}d3 25.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{b}1 26.g5 \texttt{f}f8 27.\texttt{h}h3 \texttt{a}a2 28.\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{e}3 29.\texttt{g}6 \texttt{x}xg6 30.hxg6 \texttt{b}3 31.gxh6 gxh6 32.\texttt{h}5 and White soon won in Sitnikov – Trofimova, Prokojevsk 1998. Many improvements are possible but the general picture doesn't change. White always has good attacking chances.

16.a3

Now Popov exchanged:

16...\texttt{x}g5 17.hxg5

Avoiding the scenario of the last game, but this doesn't look like an improvement either.

17...\texttt{c}c8

18.\texttt{a}c1

18.d4 is recommended by Jones and he likes White's chances.

18...d4 19.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{b}6 20.\texttt{h}1h2 \texttt{b}5 21.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{c}xe5 22.\texttt{x}c8 \texttt{fx}f3+ 23.\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{xc}8 24.\texttt{d}d6 \texttt{c}6 25.\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6 26.\texttt{x}d4 \texttt{b}6 27.\texttt{c}c1 h6 28.g6 \texttt{d}6 29.\texttt{xb}3 a4 30.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{fx}g6 31.\texttt{a}xa4 \texttt{e}3 32.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{c}5 33.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{b}3 34.\texttt{e}6 \texttt{b}7 35.\texttt{xe}6 \texttt{d}1+ 36.\texttt{h}2 \texttt{xe}4 37.\texttt{xe}4
And 1–0 in Smirin – Popov, Plovdiv 2008. I think we can do better than this! Before I show exactly how Black should answer 3.\textit{We}2 I want to introduce a plan that is essential to Black’s success.

\textbf{The Gipslis Plan}

1.\textit{e}4 \textit{e}6 2.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}5 3.\textit{c}c4 \textit{d}f6 4.\textit{g}g3 \textit{c}c6 5.\textit{f}f3 \textit{a}a6 6.\textit{c}c3 \textit{c}c5 7.0–0 \textit{c}c6 8.\textit{e}e1

Just for a moment I am stepping ahead to the Classical KIA (which we’ll examine in more detail later) in order to show an important plan that is worth remembering, as it is also applicable in the 3.\textit{We}2 KIA, as we’ll see in the next illustrative game.

\textit{S ... h}5

\textit{S ... b}6!? is the start of the Porto Carras Variation which we’ll see later.

9.\textit{e}5 \textit{t}f7 10.\textit{t}t4

In this position I was inspired by the game Fischer – Uzi Geller, Netanya 1968, (not the famous Efim Geller, but a solid Israeli former national champion) where the following plan was played:

8...\textit{b}5

8...\textit{b}6!? is the start of the Porto Carras Variation which we’ll see later.

9.\textit{c}c5 \textit{d}d7 10.\textit{G}f1

In this position I was inspired by the game Fischer – Uzi Geller, Netanya 1968, (not the famous Efim Geller, but a solid Israeli former national champion) where the following plan was played:

11.\textit{f}4 \textit{b}7 12.\textit{d}4 13.\textit{h}h2 \textit{f}c8

14.\textit{f}x\textit{d}4?!

Probably White should have avoided this exchange. Even so, 14.\textit{h}5 \textit{xf}3† 15.\textit{x}f3 \textit{h}6 16.\textit{g}g4 \textit{f}f8 is fine for Black.

14...\textit{c}c7

With the idea ...a7–a5, ...\textit{a}a6, ...\textit{f}c8 and ...\textit{d}8. The queen can return to the kingside and defend if required (for example from f8) while Black will play ...\textit{d}d4 at the right time and double rooks on the c-file if White exchanges on d4. This is what I call “The Gipslis Plan” because it was first played by the well-known Soviet Grandmaster.

Another set-up is also possible: ...\textit{b}7 and ...\textit{d}d4 with the queen usually at b6 (to defend the new d4-pawn). Usually, if ...\textit{c}c7 is played a bit earlier, White won’t have another way to defend the e5-pawn except to play \textit{e}2 thus transposing to the 3.\textit{We}2 variation we are dealing with now. In this exact instance White can defend with \textit{f}f4 and this is what happened in the stem game played by Gipslis:

11.\textit{f}4 \textit{b}7 12.\textit{d}4 13.\textit{h}h2 \textit{f}c8
16...\( \text{c}6 \) 17.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{ac}8 \) 18.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 19.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xc}2 \) 20.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xe}2 \) 21.\( \text{xe}2 \) \( \text{d}8 \)

And in Yuktman – Gipslis, Sverdlovsk 1957, White had only created weaknesses in his position and had no realistic attacking chances. Black won after displaying adequate technique. So let’s see how Black can use this piece of knowledge in practice.

GAME 59

Alexey Kim – Zhang Pengxiang

Moscow 2004

1.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{e}6 \)

Actually this game started as a Sicilian, but it soon transposed.

2.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 3.\( \text{fe}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 4.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 5.\( \text{g}2 \) 0–0 6.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 7.0–0 b5!

And here actually Black played the inaccurate 7...\( \text{c}6 \) ?!

8.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{ac}6 \) 9.e5 \( \text{d}7 \) 10.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 11.\( \text{bd}2 \) \( \text{c}7 \)

I like this plan a lot; it is relatively safe and sound.

In this game White doesn’t allow ...\( \text{d}4 \), but in return he creates a weakness on his queenside which is known as a “hook”.

12.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 13.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{cxd}4 \) 14.\( \text{f}4 \)

This is very similar to the Gipslis game we saw. A couple of more modern examples will convince you about the soundness of Black’s position:

14...\( \text{fc}8 \)

15.\( \text{ec}1 \)

15.\( \text{ac}1 \) allows 15...\( \text{a}5 \) !? as in the game Mihajlovskij – Kim, St Petersburg 2007. We see that the Korean GM took the knowledge gained from our main game and used it with the opposite colour! 16.a3 \( \text{c}6 \) followed by doubling on the c-file.

15...\( \text{b}6 \) 16.\( \text{f}3 \)

16.h5N \( \text{h}6 \) 17.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}8 \) !? Now the sacrifice on \( \text{h}6 \) is not dangerous. 18.\( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 19.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{ac}8 \) Black continues with his plan and if 20.\( \text{xh}6 \) \( \text{g}xh6 \) 21.\( \text{h}6 \)\( \text{xf}6 \) 22.\( \text{d}xh6 \) \( \text{d}8 \) ! the queen returns to the defence and White has nothing for his material deficit.

16...\( \text{c}7 \)

Also logical is 16...\( \text{ac}6 \), leaving the b6–d8 diagonal open for the queen.

17.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{ac}8 \) 18.\( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 19.\( \text{d}1 \)

White chooses a defensive set-up.

19...\( \text{b}4 \) 20.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{a}4 \) 21.\( \text{ab}1 \) \( \text{a}7 \)

21...\( \text{c}6 \) ! would have avoided White’s next.
22...g5 f8

23...xd4! xxd4 24...e3 xxe5 25...f4 de4 26...e3 f6 27...g5 d4

And in Kononenko – S. Zhigalko, Alushta 2010, White found an amazing perpetual attack on the queen to force the draw in what would otherwise have been a slightly inferior position. Something to remember.

12...fd8 13...f1 d4

This is a strong way of taking advantage of the move c2-c3. From now on, Black is in the driving seat.

14...f4
14...g5 dxc3 15.bxc3 b6

14...b6 15...ac1 dxc3 16.bxc3 b4

16...c4 17.d4 b4 was very strong as well. 18...e1 bxc3 19...x3 de5 20...c2 c3 21...g5 cb4 22...xe7 xxe7 23...e1 c2 and the Albanian GM was already winning in Dovramadjiev – Dervishi, Yerevan 1999.

17...e3 bxc3 18...xc3 d4

18...b4 is preferred by my engine and indeed it looks more convincing.

19...xd4 xxd4 20...xb7 xxb7 21...g5 x5 22...c4 e7 23...h6 24...e3 d8 25...xb6

Otherwise Black would have unpinned with ...c6 or ...a6.

25...xb6 26...cb3 d5 27...f4 a8 28...xb6 xxd3 29...b8 xxb8 30...xd3 d5 31...c2

31...a8?!

Now White has chances to get back in the game. Better was: 31...xb1 32...xb1 c4

32.a4 d4 33...d1 b4 34...b1 a3

After 34...xa4 35...xa4 xxa4 36...b8 b4 37...c8 White has enough counterplay for a draw.

35...e3 g6
Chapter 24 – The King's Indian Attack

The Classical KIA

B2) 3.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}6\) 4.\(\text{g}f3\) \(\text{c}5\) 5.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 6.\(\text{g}2\)

1) Put a pawn on \(\text{e}5\), which limits Black's defensive resources considerably as he cannot use the \(\text{f}6\)- (or \(\text{d}6\)-) squares for a piece and the \(\ldots\text{f}6\) break has considerable positional risks as it will create a weak pawn on an open file. This \(\text{e}5\)- pawn will be overprotected with \(\text{f}4\) and \(\text{e}2\) if necessary.

2) Manoeuvre the \(\text{d}2\)- knight to the kingside with \(\text{d}2\)- \(\text{f}1\), and after \(\text{h}2\)- \(\text{h}4\), then \(\text{h}2\)- \(\text{g}4\).

3) Use the \(\text{h}\)- pawn to create weaknesses in Black's castled position. If the white pawn advances to \(\text{h}6\) then the dark squares have been weakened. If Black stops that pawn on \(\text{h}5\) with the move \(\ldots\text{h}6\), then potential sacrifices at \(\text{h}6\) are in the air.

4) Use the \(\text{g}5\)- square for the bishop (to gain a tempo on the \(\text{e}7\)-bishop) or for the knight, which many times can even be sacrificed after the move \(\ldots\text{h}6\) by not moving from its outpost.

Black often goes for an all-out attack on the queenside, as happened for the first time at the highest level in the already mentioned Chigorin – Tarrasch 1893 match. Black leaves the kingside at White's mercy, assuming that he cannot organize a quick and effective attack there. Instead I am a fan of a more rounded approach, considering the attack and taking preventive or defensive measures against it, while focusing more on the centre than the queenside.

8...\(\text{c}7\)!

I am not the only one who gives an exclam to this move. The legendary Bobby Fischer did so back in 1968. Black wants to put some pressure on \(e5\) before White is able to protect it with a bishop on \(f4\).

8...\(b6\) can lead to the “Porto Carras Variation” a line invented by Jacob and me during our
preparation for the first round of the European Team Championships which took place in Porto Carras, Greece in November 2011. We’ll talk more about it later.

The Classical Main Line of the KIA has been:

I was able to follow live a recent game that shows how things might develop. Balaskas – Ganguly, Greek League 2013, continued:

10...b4

The move 10...a5 is more popular, as it avoids the possibility of 11.a3 in the next note.

11...a5 12...f4

12...h4 again might be more flexible. The knight certainly goes there, while the bishop might have other possibilities.

12...a4

13...h2?!

It is known from the old Fischer games that here White should play 13.a3!.

13...a6?!

13...a3! would have been stronger.

14...g5 we8

Another move of questionable value from the Indian Grandmaster. Now White gains some tactical opportunities.

15.h5 Ec8

15...h6 would have been more prudent, but after the white knight comes to g4 several ideas with a sacrifice at h6 are in the air and probably Black wanted to avoid them.

16.h6 g6 17...g4

Now things are looking a bit scary around Black’s king, aren’t they? Objectively Black is still fine, but he has problems to solve every move.

17...d4!

The knight goes back to the defence.

18.c3 b5 19.c4

A nice idea by the Greek master. By sacrificing a pawn he gains access to the e4-square for his g5-knight.

19...dx4?

Black should have played 19...d8 with unclear play.
This was White’s chance. After 20.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}}} \)xa4! Black is in trouble. Also promising was 20.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{D}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}} \)4. Instead White played 20.dxc4 allowing 20...\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}}}}} \)x4 21.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}}}}} \)4 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b}}}}}}}} \)! when Black was holding on to equality, and in fact later won.

What does the above game teach us? The KIA is a difficult opening to handle, even for high-level players; Black was over 400 points higher rated, yet was struggling badly in the early middlegame.

There are lots of typical ideas and devices, like the ...a3 and ...h6 pushes, and tough decisions about when they are good or not. Also White’s kingside build-up is psychologically not easy to deal with, unless of course you are a brilliant defensive player and always keep a cool head under pressure. So for the more typical player who dislikes being under attack, I should offer a system which has certain typical devices that are easy to understand and remember; a system that doesn’t give White so much play against our kingside.

We shall have a further split: B21) 9.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{D}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}} \)1 and B22) 9.e5.

B21) 9.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{D}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}} \)1 dxe4 10.dxe4 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}}}}} \)8 11.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{W}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}} \)2

11...\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}}}}} \)4!

11...e5 12.c3 h6 13.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{h}}}}}}}} \)4 is a slight edge to White according to ECO, citing the game Stein – Korchnoi, Stockholm 1962, but my PC disagrees, offering 13...\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}}}}} \)4N 14.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}}}}} \)2 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}}}}} \)6 15.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}}}}} \)5 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}}}}} \)8 with equal chances.

12.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{D}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}} \)4 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}} \)4 13.e5 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}}}}} \)

And here we’ll see two examples:

14.h4 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b}}}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}} \)4 15.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}} \)3\) \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}} \)4 17.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}} \)3 \)b6 18.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}} \)4 a6 19.\( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{a}}}}} \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}} \)1 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}} \)7 In Pfleger – Portisch, Palma de Mallorca 1966, Black never faced a problem and was putting
mild pressure on White's position throughout the game.

14.a3 \( \text{d7} \) 15.\( \text{e}4 \)
15.\( \text{Wd3} \) \( \text{a4} \infty \) is evaluated as unclear in ECO based on the game Stein – Klovans, USSR 1963. After 16.\( \text{e}4 \) \( g6?! \) N 17.b3 \( \text{e}8 \)
I’d rather be Black.

15...\( \text{e}8 \)
15...\( \text{a4} \) first may be a slight improvement. 16.\( \text{d}3 \) \( b5 \) 17.\( \text{d}2 \) \( b4 \) 18.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{b6} \) 19.\( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 20.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{c5} \) 21.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xc5} \) 22.\( \text{b}3 \) \( g6 \) 23.\( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 24.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{ab8} \) 25.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{b5} \) 26.\( \text{ec}1 \) \( a6 \) 27.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{d5} \) 28.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{xd}3 \) 29.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{f}1 \) 30.\( \text{xf}1 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 31.\( \text{f}4 \) \( d3 \)
This was the course of Sammalvuot – Solozhenkin, Finland 2006, where Black was pressing in the endgame.

**B22) 9.e5**

9...\( \text{d7} \) 10.\( \text{e}2 \)
10.\( \text{f}1 \)? has surprisingly been played a few times, though it drops the e5-pawn.

10...\( \text{b5} \)
10...\( \text{f}6?! \) 11.\( \text{exf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) is usually met by 12.\( \text{h}3 \) \( e5 \) 13.\( \text{xc}8 \) \( \text{axc}8 \) 14.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 15.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{d}6 \) and we have a sort of “Marshall Gambit” position, as Ari Ziegler puts it in his DVD. Here the computers are happy with Black’s chances but I am not, to be honest. There have been a few games played from here, and White’s statistics are better.

10...\( \text{b6}?! \) This is usually a prelude to central play (see also the Porto Carras Variation). 11.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{b7} \) 12.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{ae}8 \) With the idea of \( \text{wb}8 \) and \( \text{d}8 \) followed by \( \text{f}6 \) or even \( \text{c}7 \) first; this is a plan I had discovered about 10 years back when I saw the game Haritakis – Cvetkovic, Korinthos 1998, where Black won a nice game. I have only used it though in online blitz games. I am not 100% sure if it gives fully adequate counter-chances, but it certainly is another practical weapon you could use. Examining my old notes today with the use of modern chess engines, all I have to say is that I don’t see a flaw in the idea, but it requires some care and flexibility in the implementation. For example, sometimes playing \( \text{d}4 \) offers better chances than sticking with the original plan. Certainly food for thought, and a good area for personal investigation. However, the main suggestion presented here is simpler.

11.\( \text{h}4 \)
Another move order is:
11.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{a6} \)
11...\( \text{a}5?! \) was better and would transpose to
my main line.
11...\e7 12.\d4 cxd4 transposes to the
Kononenko – Zhigalko game we examined
under the 3.\f3 move order (that incredible
perpetual attack on the queen).
12.h4 \bc8 13.\xf4 \d4
13...\e8 or 13...b4 were better.
14.\xd4 cxd4

15.\xd5!
A typical strike in these positions, known
from the classic Fischer game that follows.
15...\b7 16.\xb7 \xb7 \xc7 17.\ce1 \c7 18.\d2
\ac8 19.\b3 \d5 20.\e4 \xc2 21.\xc2
\xc2 22.\xd5 exd5 23.\xd4 \xb2 24.\c1
\a3 25.\f5 \xe5 26.\xb2 \xb2 27.\b1
\xd3 28.\f1
1–0 Votava – Stoczek, Turnov 1996. Please
watch out for this kind of sacrifice!

11...a5 12.\f1 \a6
This has been my favourite way to play the
position. Of course we have already seen the
plan with ...\b7 and we’ll also see the plan
with ...\a6 and ...\d4. My personal favourite
is to postpone the ...\d4 move for a while and
put the bishop on a6, targeting the queen and
not fearing the \xd5 sac because the queen will
return back to d8. This means that after ...\d4
the d4-pawn will not have good protection,
but on the other hand Black is well prepared
for White’s assault, so he can slowly prepare his
queenside play without rushing.

12...\d4?! 13.\xd4 cxd4 14.\f4 \a6 is seen
in the next illustrative game.

13.\f4
13.\g5 \bc8 followed by ...h6 only helps
Black.

13...\bc8 14.\e3 \d8 15.h5
15.\ac1 b4 (15...a4 looks sensible as well)
16.c4 bxc3 17.bxc3 and now 17...\f8∞ is
given Uhlmann in \it{ECO} (17...\ab8? is met
by 18.\xd5± with the point being 18...exd5
19.e6!).

15...h6
My old source, \it{ECO}, stops here with the “=”
sign but let me go a bit deeper than this.

16.\h3 \b6 17.\g4

17...\f8
17...\a4 18.\ab1 b4 gives Black sensible
counterplay.

17...\c4 18.d4 c3 19.b3 a4 also gives Black
good counterplay: 20.\e3 \b4 21.\ec1
\b7! threatens ...axb3 and after 22.a3 \xc2! 23.\xc2 axb3+ is just a funny sample line I
produced with the help of my PC (which was
responsible for White’s choices!).
**GAME 60**

Robert Fischer – Uzi Geller

Netanya 1968

I decided to include the notes of the chess legend Bobby Fischer here for the reader to see. Fischer was a great authority on the KIA, so his comments have special value. The notes come from the Israeli Chess Magazine Shamat (August 1968, pages 1-2) and were re-published in Newsletter #475 of the Mechanic’s Institute, which I found on the internet.

1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.\(\text{d}2\) c5 4.g3 \(\text{f}6\) 5.\(g2\) \(\text{e}7\) 6.\(g3\) 0–0 7.0–0

“These first few moves needed no comment since all this has been played many times before. White is playing a King’s Indian with a tempo in hand and against a rather passive set-up of the Black pieces.”

7...\(\text{c}6\) 8.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}7\)!

“This is better than 8...b5 9.e5 \(\text{d}5\) as in the game Fischer – Mjagmarsuren, Sousse 1967.”

9.e5 \(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{e}2\)

“Now White’s queen may become subject to threats on this square, for example ...\(\text{d}4\).”

10...b5 11.h4 a5 12.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 13.\(\text{x}d4\) \(\text{xd}4\)

“Now both sides have weaknesses: White a backward pawn on the c-file, Black an artificially isolated pawn on d4. White, with latent kingside attacking chances, however, still has an edge.”

Fischer’s evaluation has not passed the test of time. ECO, for example, evaluated the position as equal and modern chess engines even prefer slightly Black’s position.

14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{a}6!\)?
“Black decides to bring immediate pressure on White’s helpless pawn on c2, ignoring or overlooking White’s threat of 15.\texttt{\textbf{A}}xd5. But after some consideration I rejected this combination because after 15.\texttt{\textbf{A}}xd5 \texttt{\textbf{B}}b4! 16.\texttt{\textbf{B}}c1? (16.\texttt{\textbf{B}}e1 is better) 16...\texttt{\textbf{A}}xd5 17.e6 \texttt{\textbf{A}}xe6 18.\texttt{\textbf{B}}xe6 \texttt{\textbf{A}}xf4 19.\texttt{\textbf{B}}xd7 \texttt{\textbf{A}}xc1 and wins.”

As we have seen already, 14...\texttt{\textbf{B}}b7 followed by ...\texttt{\textbf{B}}c8 is another efficient way to get a completely sound position (the “Gipslis Plan”).

15.\texttt{\textbf{B}}h2 \texttt{\textbf{A}}c6 16.\texttt{\textbf{B}}ac1 \texttt{\textbf{A}}a6

“It turns out Black was not aware of White’s tactical possibilities on d5. Correct was 16...\texttt{\textbf{B}}b6.”

I would also recommend 16...\texttt{\textbf{B}}e8!! which is okay for Black, as ...\texttt{\textbf{B}}f8 will come if needed. In addition, 16...\texttt{\textbf{B}}b4 is the first choice of the engines and Black seems fine after this.

17.\texttt{\textbf{A}}xd5! \texttt{\textbf{A}}xd5

17...\texttt{\textbf{A}}c5 was, according to Fischer, the only move that offered Black some practical chances, but White’s position is better anyway.

18.e6 \texttt{\textbf{A}}d8 19.\texttt{\textbf{A}}xd7 \texttt{\textbf{B}}e6 20.\texttt{\textbf{B}}g4 f5

“After 20...\texttt{\textbf{A}}xd7 21.\texttt{\textbf{A}}e5 wins a pawn and eventually the game. Now the weakened e-file proves Black’s downfall.”

21.\texttt{\textbf{A}}h5 \texttt{\textbf{A}}xd7 22.\texttt{\textbf{F}}f3 g6 23.\texttt{\textbf{H}}h6 \texttt{\textbf{A}}f6

24.\texttt{\textbf{B}}xe6 \texttt{\textbf{A}}xe6

25.\texttt{\textbf{A}}e5

“Forcing by a little combination the exchange of bishops, creating numerous holes on Black’s dark squares. This factor is decisive. Geller’s last hope was 25.\texttt{\textbf{B}}e1? \texttt{\textbf{B}}xe1!! 26.\texttt{\textbf{B}}xe1 \texttt{\textbf{B}}g7 27.\texttt{\textbf{B}}g5 \texttt{\textbf{A}}f6 and draws.”

25...\texttt{\textbf{B}}xe5 26.\texttt{\textbf{B}}e1 f4 27.\texttt{\textbf{B}}xe5 \texttt{\textbf{B}}d7 28.h5

“Cracks Black wide open. If 28...\texttt{\textbf{B}}xh5 then 29.\texttt{\textbf{B}}g5†.”

28...\texttt{\textbf{F}}xg3 29.hxg6 \texttt{\textbf{G}}xf2†

“Or 29...\texttt{\textbf{F}}xf3 30.\texttt{\textbf{B}}e8†!! and the g-pawn queens.”

30.\texttt{\textbf{B}}xf2 hxg6 31.\texttt{\textbf{B}}xg6† \texttt{\textbf{B}}g7 32.\texttt{\textbf{B}}g5

“The finishing touch: exchanging queens costs Black his bishop on a6.”

32...\texttt{\textbf{B}}f7

“And here, while I was trying to decide on 33.\texttt{\textbf{B}}h6 or 33.\texttt{\textbf{B}}h5 Black resigned.”

1-0

The Porto Carras Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.\texttt{\textbf{D}}d2 \texttt{\textbf{D}}f6 4.\texttt{\textbf{G}}f3 c5 5.g3 \texttt{\textbf{D}}c6 6.\texttt{\textbf{G}}g2 \texttt{\textbf{E}}c7 7.0-0 0-0 8.\texttt{\textbf{E}}e1
While preparing for the first round of the European Team Championships where Denmark was facing Hungary, I noticed that Berkes (with an impressive 2705 rating at the time) was playing the KIA rather often. Jacob asked if I had an offbeat idea against it. I said “Yes! When he plays e5 everybody plays ...\texttt{d}d7 or ...\texttt{e}e8 but there is also the move ...\texttt{g}g4?”. Of course Jacob was very sceptical, but I explained that if h2-h3 is played this knight sits comfortably on h6 from where it can go to f5 or even f7 after the planned ...f6 break. If not h2-h3 then after ...f6 there is the threat of ...\texttt{d}xe5 and if exf6 then ...\texttt{x}xf6 and if h3 then ...\texttt{x}xe5! Jacob said “Okay, let’s analyse it” and as usual left the room and let me provide my traditional variation tree. While I was doing that, I noticed that White had a strong possibility. After 8...\texttt{b}6 9.e5 \texttt{g}g4 there was 10.\texttt{b}3! and by putting some pressure on the c5-pawn White could make the whole idea dubious. So I started analysing the same idea, but starting with:

8...\texttt{b}6? 9.e5

These are also the moves 9.b3 and 9.a3 to consider, but the only way to “punish” Black for the move ...\texttt{b}6 is to play traditionally. Now Black isn’t quick enough on the queenside (as we saw, he usually attacks there with ...\texttt{b}5 and ...a5, so ...\texttt{b}6 is just a waste of time considering this plan) so White carries on with his attack.

9...\texttt{g}g4?!

But now this plan might work! I produced my variation tree; Jacob was happy and went on to achieve a winning position. But by playing the Tarrasch instead! After this experience we both believed we had made a rather significant discovery. By simple means, we had refuted the KIA!

10.\texttt{f}f1!

Sadly, after reviewing my analysis I found the flaw in our concept.

10.\texttt{h}h6 11.\texttt{f}f1

11.c3 should be met by 11...\texttt{f}f5±, as 11...\texttt{f}f6 12.exf6 \texttt{x}xf6 13.\texttt{d}f1 \texttt{f}f7 might just be playable for Black, but it is positionally suspect after 14.\texttt{e}3 or 14.d4.

11...\texttt{f}5

12.\texttt{c}3

12.g4 is comfortably met by either 12...\texttt{h}h4 or 12...\texttt{f}d4.

12...\texttt{b}7

Intending ...\texttt{d}4 with fine play for Black. One possible line instead is:

13.\texttt{d}4 cxd4 14.cxd4 \texttt{c}c8±

10.\texttt{b}3 a5
10...f6 11.exf6 \textit{xf6} 12.c3 a5 should transpose as there is no better move than a2-a4.

11.a4 f6 12.exf6 \textit{xf6} 13.c3 e5!

13...\textit{xa}7 14.h3 \textit{ge}5 15.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 16.d4±

14.h3 \textit{h}6 15.\textit{xh}6 gxh6

The position is unclear but roughly balanced. In return for his damaged kingside, Black has the bishop pair and a strong centre.

10...f6

11.exf6

11.h3? is met by 11...\textit{ge}5, \textit{xe}5 ...\textit{xe}5, and f2-f4.

11...\textit{xf}6

11...\textit{xf}6 12.c4 \textit{d}6 13.\textit{g}5 is better for White.

12.c3!

By planning d3-d4 White is counting on a small positional edge. You can still play this with Black, but I cannot guarantee equality.

12...c7

With the idea of retreating the bishop to d6 in the event of h2-h3 ...\textit{ge}5, \textit{xe}5 ...\textit{xe}5, and f2-f4.

12...d6 13.h3 \textit{ge}5 (13...\textit{h}6 14.\textit{f}4 e5 15.\textit{xh}6 gxh6 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}6 17.c4 seems better for White) 14.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 15.f4 \textit{f}6 16.\textit{e}3± and White has a positional edge.

13.\textit{e}3!

13.h3 \textit{ge}5 14.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 15.f4 \textit{d}6±

13...\textit{h}6

13...\textit{xe}3 14.\textit{xe}3± with the idea d3-d4.

14.\textit{c}2±
Again planning d3-d4. We can say that this is not the end of the story and Black can search for other ways to make this concept work. My aim for this book is to provide well-tested methods that will definitely work, but also to offer some inspiration with risky new ideas and discoveries.

So, I leave the reader with the task of trying to make my “Porto Carras” idea work. If you do, please email me!

Conclusion

In this chapter we analysed the potentially dangerous King's Indian Attack.

We started with Chigorin's 2.\(\text{We2}\) which historically was the first step towards the development of the KIA and later the King's Indian Defence. Our choice was 2...\(\text{Ke}7\) intending to play 3...d5. After 3.b3 d5 4.\(\text{Bb}2\) Kasparov's 4...\(\text{Qf}6!\) is better than Tarrasch's 4...\(\text{Qf}6\). The most critical line is 3.d4 d5 4.e5 c5 and after 5.\(\text{Wg}4\) Black should reply 5...\(\text{Qf}8!\) intending ...\(\text{cxd}4\) followed by ...\(\text{Qc}6\), ...\(\text{Wb}6\), ...\(\text{h}7\)-h5 and ...\(\text{Qh}6\) putting pressure on d4. And if White plays dxc5 then ...f6!.

The true KIA starts after 2.d3 d5 when White can either play 3.\(\text{We}2\) or 3.\(\text{Qd}2\). In both cases Black is advised to proceed in classical style with ...\(\text{Qf}6\) and ...\(\text{Ke}7\) and then ...c5, ...\(\text{b}5\) and ...\(\text{Qc}6\), with White trying to develop his initiative on the other flank.

We analysed three different set-ups for Black.

In the first set-up Black played ...\(\text{Wc}7\) and ...\(\text{Qb}7\) with the idea ...\(\text{Fc}8\) and ...\(\text{Qd}4\). If White stops this with c2-c3 then Black has ...\(\text{d}4!\) followed by ...\(\text{Qd}7\)-b6.

The second set-up is again with the queen coming to c7, but this time the bishop goes to a6 after ...a7-a5. Now Black can re-organize his forces with ...\(\text{Fc}8\) and ...\(\text{Wd}8\).

The third set-up is with ...\(\text{b}6\) and meeting e4-e5 by putting the knight on g4. We call this the “Porto Carras Variation” because we discovered this idea at the 2011 European Team Championships in Porto Carras, Greece. As we see things today, White is better here, but Black's idea is playable and some practical tests might repair the few problem areas.
Chapter 25

Six Rare Birds

1.e4 e6

2.e5 – Game 61
2.c4 – Game 62
2.\textit{c3} – Game 63
2.f4 – Game 64
2.b3 – Game 65
2.\textit{f3} d5 3.e5 c5 4.b4 – Game 66

Game 61   Wilhelm Steinitz – James Mason, Vienna 1882  439
Game 62   Irina Chelushkina – Alisa Marie, Tivat 1995  441
Game 63   Judit Polgar – Vladimir Kramnik, Cap D’Agde 2003  443
Game 64   Andrew Green – Ervin Toth, Szeged 2008  446
Game 65   Eva Repkova – Elena Cosma, Pula 2002  449
Game 66   Gyula Emodi – Gabor Portisch, Hungary 1999  452
On this page you will find seven diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to ten minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found in the following chapter.

Black is to move unless otherwise indicated.

How should Black challenge the long diagonal? (page 445)

What is the accurate choice? (page 450)

Find a way to organize Black’s pieces. (page 440)

Find the simplest win. (page 446)

Find a plan. (page 452)

Find a good set-up. (page 442)

Find a good plan. (page 447)
In this chapter I am going to analyse in some depth six interesting sidelines after 1.e4 e6. My main criteria in choosing those six lines from the many rare French sidelines is that my students or I have faced these lines more than once, and that there are things that can be helpful in practice to know about these lines.

2.e5 is a move I have played myself once, but I have never faced it. I include it out of respect for the first official World Champion, Steinitz. Steinitz played it in quite a number of games, so I call it “the old Steinitz Method” to distinguish it from the “Steinitz Main Line” after 2.d4 d5 3.\textit{c}c3 \textit{f}6 4.e5. For more details on 2.e5 see the first illustrative game of the chapter.

2.\textit{c}c4 3.d5 is examined in Polgar – Kramnik, Cap D’Agde 2003.

2.f4 is seen in Green – Toth, Szeged 2008.

2.b3 was my former coach’s favourite move against the French. I propose a nice simple line to meet it, seen in the game Repkova – Cosma.

2.\textit{f}f3 d5 3.e5 c5 4.b4 is the French Wing Gambit. In the game Emodi – G. Portisch, Hungary 1999, we’ll study it to conclude this Rare Birds chapter.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_board}
\caption{Wilhelm Steinitz – James Mason}
\end{figure}

Vienna 1882

1.e4 e6 2.e5 c5

2...d6 is the “equalizing move”. I prefer a more fluid approach.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_board_1}
\caption{GAME 61}
\end{figure}

3.f4

Another set-up is:

3.\textit{f}f3 \textit{c}c6 4.e3

This is the only move which makes some sense to me. Otherwise, after ...d6 White will be tortured positionally down the d-file.

4...d6 5.exd6 \textit{b}xd6 6.d4

6.\textit{a}a3 \textit{f}f6 7.d4 cxd4 8.\textit{b}b5 \textit{b}b8 9.\textit{b}xd4 \textit{d}d7 10.\textit{g}g5 \textit{e}e7 is equal.

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 \textit{f}f6 8.\textit{c}c3 \textit{e}e7

Black had a comfortable anti-IQP position.
in Boricsev – Shtryrenkov, Alushta 2003. Black will continue with ...b6 and ...\(\text{b7}\) then put the rooks on c8 and d8.

3...\(\text{c6}\) 4.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{h6}\)! 5.g3 b6 6.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 7.c3 \(\text{b8}\)!

According to ECO, this is the path to equality. Black’s last move might not seem very useful, but Black proved that it is useful later in the game with a beautiful manoeuvre.

10.\(\text{d5}\) 11.exd6

11.0–0 h5?! and Black has a great version of the French. White’s idea from his second move is to meet \(...\text{d7-d5}\) by taking on \text{d6}.

11...\(\text{xd6}\) 12.0–0 0–0 13.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{c8}\) 14.\(\text{f1}\)

White sensibly prepares \(\text{d3-d4}\) at the right moment, but this would give him equality at best.

14...\(\text{d8}\) 15.\(\text{e3}\)

After 15.\(\text{d4}\) exd4 16.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 17.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xg2}\) 18.\(\text{xg2}\) \(\text{a6}\) all the black pieces stand better than their counterparts.

15...\(\text{a6}\) 16.\(\text{c2}\) \(\text{e8}\) 17.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{b7}\) 18.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{bd7}\)

Black has completed his re-organization brilliantly and stands slightly better. Of course it would have been difficult to beat the World Champion in his prime years, but Black came quite close.

19.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{f6}\) 20.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{b7}\) 21.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{a6}\) 22.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{d6}\) 23.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{b8}\)

Another sensible re-organization; Black is getting ready for \(...\text{e6-e5}\).

24.\(\text{ad1}\)

24...\(\text{e7}\)??

But he misses his chance! After 24...\text{e5} 25.\text{f5} \text{e4} 26.\text{g4} \text{xg4} 27.\text{xg4} exd3 28.\text{f6} \text{g6} 29.\text{g5} \text{d6} White would have been in some trouble.

25.\(\text{f3}\)??

Luckily another chance pops up! 25.\(\text{c4}\) would have been better.

25...\(\text{e4}\) 26.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 27.\(\text{xd2}\)??

Black is a clear exchange up, but he failed to convert his advantage.

27...\(\text{g6}\) 28.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 29.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 30.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 31.\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 32.\(\text{e4}\) \text{g6} 33.\text{g5}
Chapter 25 - Six Rare Birds

33...\textit{\texttt{x}}e3

Giving back the exchange to get rid of the dangerous knight. 33...\textit{\texttt{d}}d7!++ was stronger, but no doubt Black was worried about 34.\textit{\texttt{g}}4. In fact, Black then has a cold-blooded defence with 34...\textit{\texttt{d}}d1\texttt{t} and 35...\textit{\texttt{f}}5. The knight check on \textit{f}6 looks scary, but it comes to nothing. Easy to say with an engine helping; over the board Black's choice was understandable.

34.\textit{\texttt{x}}e3 \textit{\texttt{f}}5 35.\textit{\texttt{f}}2

Black is still better of course, but Steinitz now has something to hold on to: his pair of bishops and the fact he is down by only one pawn. I shall give the remaining moves without comment; there are some fun moments, but nothing of great relevance to the French Defence.

35...\textit{\texttt{c}}7 36.\textit{\texttt{g}}4 \textit{\texttt{d}}6 37.\textit{\texttt{d}}3 \textit{\texttt{e}}5 38.\textit{\texttt{g}}5 \textit{\texttt{e}}4 39.\textit{\texttt{e}}2 \textit{\texttt{e}}6 40.h5 \textit{\texttt{f}}6 41.\textit{\texttt{h}}4 \textit{\texttt{e}}3 42.\textit{\texttt{e}}1 \textit{\texttt{c}}4 43.\textit{\texttt{h}}x\textit{g}6 \textit{\texttt{x}}g6 44.\textit{\texttt{h}}x\textit{h}6 \textit{\texttt{f}}5 45.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 \textit{\texttt{f}}7 46.\textit{\texttt{h}}1 \textit{\texttt{b}}5 47.\textit{\texttt{d}}5 \textit{\texttt{d}}6 48.\textit{\texttt{b}}3 \textit{\texttt{b}}x\textit{b}3 49.\textit{\texttt{a}}x\textit{b}3 \textit{\texttt{b}}6 50.\textit{\texttt{f}}1 \textit{\texttt{f}}8 51.\textit{\texttt{c}}4 \textit{\texttt{b}}x\textit{c}4 52.\textit{\texttt{a}}x\textit{c}4 \textit{\texttt{d}}1 53.\textit{\texttt{c}}6 \textit{\texttt{d}}6 54.\textit{\texttt{e}}2 \textit{\texttt{d}}4 55.\textit{\texttt{d}}7 \textit{\texttt{e}}4 56.\textit{\texttt{g}}6 \textit{\texttt{f}}6 57.\textit{\texttt{d}}7 \textit{\texttt{e}}7 58.\textit{\texttt{c}}8\texttt{t} \textit{\texttt{g}}7 59.\textit{\texttt{d}}3 \textit{\texttt{d}}2\texttt{t} 60.\textit{\texttt{e}}2 \textit{\texttt{b}}x\textit{b}3 61.\textit{\texttt{c}}3\texttt{t} \textit{\texttt{d}}4\texttt{t} 62.\textit{\texttt{x}}x\textit{d}4\texttt{t} \textit{\texttt{x}}x\textit{d}4 63.g4 \textit{\texttt{f}}x\textit{g}4 64.\textit{\texttt{x}}x\textit{g}4 \textit{\texttt{b}}4 65.\textit{\texttt{x}}x\textit{g}6\texttt{t} \textit{\texttt{f}}8 66.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 \textit{\texttt{b}}6

\texttt{½-½}

4.exd5

White should avoid: 4.\textit{\texttt{a}}4\texttt{t}?! \textit{\texttt{d}}7! 5.\textit{\texttt{b}}3 \textit{\texttt{d}}xe4 6.\textit{\texttt{c}}4 \textit{\texttt{f}}6 7.\textit{\texttt{b}}7 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 8.\textit{\texttt{b}}3 \textit{\texttt{e}}6 9.\textit{\texttt{xe}}6?! (9.\textit{\texttt{a}}3 \textit{\texttt{x}}c4 10.\textit{\texttt{c}}4 \textit{\texttt{d}}7\texttt{t}) 9...\textit{\texttt{x}}c4\texttt{t} 10.\textit{\texttt{c}}2 \textit{\texttt{f}}6++ White was already busted in Chua Heng Meng - Basheer, Genting Highlands 1998.

4...\textit{\texttt{f}}6 5.\textit{\texttt{b}}5\texttt{t}

After 5.\textit{\texttt{c}}4 \textit{\texttt{d}}x\textit{d}5 two games between legendary opposition proved Black is slightly better: 6.\textit{\texttt{c}}6 \textit{\texttt{b}}6 7.\textit{\texttt{b}}3 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 8.\textit{\texttt{g}}2 \textit{\texttt{c}}5 9.\textit{\texttt{d}}4 \textit{\texttt{d}}4\texttt{t} was Rubinstein - Spielmann, Vienna 1908, and 6.\textit{\texttt{b}}3 \textit{\texttt{e}}7\texttt{t} 7.\textit{\texttt{c}}2 \textit{\texttt{b}}6\texttt{t} was Nimzowitsch - Rubinstein, Hannover 1926.

5...\textit{\texttt{d}}7 6.\textit{\texttt{c}}3 \textit{\texttt{e}}7 7.\textit{\texttt{f}}3
7.\( \text{Ge}2 \) is reasonable, but not if the plan is to follow up with \( \text{f4} \); 7...0-0 8.\( \text{f4}?! \) (8.0-0 \( \text{b6=} \)) 8...\( \text{b6} \) 9.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{d6=} \) In Quinteros – Ioseliani, Rio de Janeiro 1985, Black was better as she can take on \( f4 \) and then capture the \( d5 \)-pawn.

7...0-0 8.0-0
8.\( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 9.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 10.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{a6} \) 11.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d8=} \) shows how White can keep the \( d5 \)-pawn, but Black has plenty of compensation for it. For example: 12.\( d3 \) b5 13.\( \text{b3} \) b4 14.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 15.0-0 \( \text{d5} \) 16.\( \text{f5} \) \( \text{f8=} \) Miezis – Stripunsky, Porz 1993.

8.\( \text{b6} \) 9.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{bxd5} \)
We have a typical IQP position, of a type which usually arises from a Petroff. In this case White will lose a tempo due to ...c7-c6, so Black should have no theoretical problems here.

10.\( \text{e5}?! \)
More natural would have been:
10.\( \text{e1} \) c6 11.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e6=} \) 12.\( \text{b3} \)
12.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{xex} \) 13.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 14.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{xd8} \) 15.\( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{e8} \) 16.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{d5} \) 17.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{cx}d5 \) 18.\( \text{c1} \) \( \text{b6=} \) Black is somewhat more comfortable, enjoying the better bishop, but White should hold.
12...h6 13.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 14.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{f8} \) 15.\( \text{d2} \)

So far we have followed Benjamin – Van der Sterren, Munich 1994, and now the game continued 15...\( \text{b4} \) 16.\( \text{e4} \) which favoured White. I propose two better ways:

a) 15...\( \text{d6=} \)N 16.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{ad8} \) threatens ...\( \text{b4} \), and after 17.a3 \( \text{xex} \) 18.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{xe6} \) followed by ...\( \text{d5} \) Black is a bit better.

b) 15...\( \text{c7=} \)N is also interesting. 16.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 17.\( \text{xex6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 18.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 19.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xxb3} \) 20.\( \text{axb3} \) \( \text{ad8} \) with more or less equal chances.

10...c5
10...c6 was equal in Needham – N. Thomas, British Championship 1984, but the text is stronger.

11.\( \text{g5} \)
11.\( \text{dxc5} \) \( \text{xc5=} \) is Black’s idea.

11...\( \text{xc3} \) 12.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{d5} \) 13.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \)
14.\( \text{xe} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 15.\( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{cd4} \) 16.\( \text{cd4} \) \( \text{xd4=} \)

Objectively, with careful play White should not lose this position, but IM Alisa Marie, who incidentally is currently the Serbian Minister of Youth and Sports, displays fine technique to grind out a win.

17.\( \text{ac1} \) \( \text{ac8} \) 18.\( \text{xc8} \) \( \text{xc8} \) 19.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f6} \)
20. \( \text{c5?!} \)

20. \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 21. \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{d5} \) followed by ...
...b6 and ...
...\( \text{f8} \) would offer Black the better chances, but White is still within the drawing zone.

20...\( \text{xf3} \) 21. \( \text{gxg3} \) \( \text{c3} \) 22. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d5} \) 23. \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{b6} \) 24. \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 25. \( \text{fxe4} \) \( \text{xa2} \) 26. \( \text{a1} \) \( \text{c2} \) 27. \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{f8} \) 28. \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{a5} \) 29. \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{b2} \) 30. \( \text{f3} \) 

Black is winning. The knight is back in the game and the queenside pawns are much more mobile than White's central ones. The rest of the game is not so interesting.

33. \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{a6} \) 34. \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 35. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{a4} \) 36. \( \text{f5} \) \( \text{gxg5} \) 37. \( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{c5} \) 38. \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{a3} \) 39. \( \text{a1} \) \( \text{a2} \) 40. \( \text{h5} \)

3.f4

It is practical to meet 3.\( \text{f3} \) with 3...\( \text{f6} \), and after 4.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{fd7} \) 5.\( \text{d4} \) we reach variation B of Chapter 12. Harald Keilhack in his original work \textit{Knight on the Left}: 1. \( \text{c3} \) agrees with me.

3.d4 simply transposes to a big main line.

3.g3 \( \text{dxe4} \)

This leads to equality according to Keilhack.
3...\textit{f6} 4.e5 \textit{\textit{f}}\textit{d}7 5.f4 \textit{c5} 6.\textit{\textit{g}}\textit{2} \textit{c6} 7.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{3} \textit{e7} 8.0–0 0–0 9.d3 was Nimzowitsch – Alekhine, Semmering 1926, a game which can be found in \textit{Chess Praxis}. There Nimzowitsch suggests 9...\textit{f}6 instead of the clumsy 9...\textit{b}6?!.

4.\textit{\textit{xe}}\textit{4} \textit{\textit{f}}\textit{6}!
And indeed Black is just fine.

5.\textit{\textit{xf}}\textit{6}+\textit{\textit{t}}
5.g2 \textit{\textit{xe}}4 6.\textit{\textit{xe}}\textit{4} \textit{e5} = Bartsch – Cech, Germany 2001.
5...\textit{\textit{xf}}\textit{6} 6.g2
6.d4 \textit{c5} 7.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{3} \textit{cxd}4 8.\textit{\textit{xd}}\textit{4} \textit{\textit{c}}\textit{5} 9.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{3} \textit{c6}
10.c3 \textit{\textit{e}}5 and Black was even a tiny bit better in Bartsch – Huber, Germany 2000.
6...\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{5} 7.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{3} \textit{\textit{e}}7 8.e2 e5 9.0–0 \textit{\textit{c}}\textit{6} 10.c3 0–0
Black was comfortably equal in Bartsch – Knaak, Germany 2003.

3...\textit{c5}!
After this move we transpose to a very good variation for Black of the Grand Prix Attack.

3...\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{6} 4.e5 \textit{\textit{fd}}7 will either transpose to the Steinitz main line, or the Nimzowitsch – Alekhine game mentioned above.

4.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{3}
There are a couple of other moves to consider:

4.b5+ \textit{\textit{d}}7 5.\textit{\textit{xd}}7+ \textit{\textit{xd}}7=

This is equal, but there is still a lot of play left. Let's follow one example:
6.d3 \textit{c6} 7.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{3} \textit{dxe}4 8.\textit{dxe4} \textit{\textit{x}}\textit{d}1+ 9.\textit{\textit{xd}}\textit{1} \textit{\textit{f}}\textit{6}
10.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{2} \textit{\textit{b}}\textit{4} 11.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{1} \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{8}+ 12.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{2} \textit{c4}
13.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{2} \textit{c}5 14.\textit{\textit{xb}}\textit{4} \textit{\textit{xb}}\textit{4} 15.\textit{\textit{hd}}1

15...\textit{e}7
Palliser assesses this as fine for Black.
15...\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{5} = is the first choice of most of my engines.
16.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{5} \textit{d}6 17.\textit{\textit{xc}}\textit{4} \textit{\textit{xf}}\textit{4} 18.\textit{e}5 \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{7}
19.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{4} \textit{\textit{fh}}\textit{2} 20.\textit{\textit{h}}\textit{1} \textit{\textit{g}}\textit{3} 21.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{4} \textit{\textit{f}}\textit{4}
22.\textit{\textit{c}}\textit{3} g5 23.\textit{\textit{hd}}1 h5 24.a4 \textit{\textit{b}}\textit{8} 25.\textit{\textit{xd}}\textit{8}
\textit{\textit{xd}}\textit{8} 26.\textit{\textit{xd}}\textit{8} \textit{\textit{xd}}\textit{8} 27.\textit{\textit{f}}\textit{3} \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{7} 28.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{4} \textit{f}6
29.\textit{\textit{xf}}\textit{6} \textit{\textit{xf}}\textit{6}+ 30.\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{4} \textit{\textit{d}}\textit{7} 31.\textit{\textit{e}}\textit{5}+ \textit{\textit{xe}}\textit{5}+\textit{\textit{t}}
32.\textit{\textit{xe}}\textit{5} \textit{\textit{e}}7 33.a5 \textit{h}4 34.b4

Black is a clear pawn up and winning. After say 34...\textit{g}4?! he could have easily proved this. Instead he played:

34...\textit{\textit{d}}\textit{5}??
And after:
The bishop can also head for g2: 6.g3 \( \text{g}f6 \) 7.\( \text{f}f2 \) (7.\( \text{xf}6 \) 8.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 9.0–0 \( \text{g}7 \) 10.d3 0–0 11.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{e}7= \) Bermudez Adams – De la Riva Aguado, Morelia 2008) 7...\( \text{e}7 \) 8.\( \text{g}2 \) 0–0 9.0–0 \( \text{c}7 \). The simplest way to challenge the long diagonal. 10.b3 b6 The position is equal and after 11.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 12.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) a draw was agreed in E. Atalik – Skripchenko, Krasnoturinsk 2004.

6...\( \text{d}7 \) 7.0–0 \( \text{f}6 \)
7...\( \text{h}6=!? \) 8.b3 \( \text{f}5 \) 9.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 10.g4?! \( \text{fd}4 \) 11.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) is given in ECO based on the game Pribyl – Nei, Tallinn 1973, but Kramnik’s choice is quite logical, so I would like to stick to that.

8.d3
8.\( \text{xf}6 \) 9.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) is about equal according to Gary Lane and this has been confirmed in computer games where Black scored 2/3) 9.\( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 10.\( \text{fxe}6 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 11.\( \text{c}1 \) So far we are following Malb ran – Mellano, Buenos Aires 1993, and now I like Gary Lane’s proposal on ChessPublishing: 11...0–0–0N 12.\( \text{xf}6 \) c4 13.\( \text{xc}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) This is where Lane’s analysis stops. Obviously the idea is 14.\( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 15.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xf}2 \) 16.\( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) planning ...\( \text{g}7 \) and ...\( \text{e}5 \).

8...a6 9.\( \text{xf}6 \)†
9...gxf6

13.We2 0–0 0–0 14.Of2 Oc7
Black is a bit better due to his attacking chances on the g-file and Kramnik masterfully proves this.

15.Ob2
Polgar gives up a pawn to try to create some play against the doubled f-pawns, but Kramnik plays like a machine.

15...Wxf4 16.Oe4 Oc7 17.c3
17.Oxf6 h5 is pretty bad for White. Black can play ...Og7 followed by ...Oe5 sooner or later, and then ...Odg8 with excellent attacking chances.

17...Od6 18.b4
Polgar doesn’t like to sit and wait, but she probably had nothing better at this point anyway. 18.h3 Whg8, planning ...Wg6 and doubling on the g-file, was unpleasant for her as well.

18.Oxh2† 19.Wh1 Og3 20.bxc5 Whg8
21.Og1 Wh2† 22.Wh1 Og3 23.Oab1 Og6

32...Wxf2†
32...Wd5 would have been hopeless for White, but Kramnik’s simplifying choice is also fine.

33.Oxf2 Whh2† 34.Oe3 Oxb2 35.Oxb2 h5
A draw was agreed at this point, which is explained by the fact that Kramnik only needed a draw to qualify for the next round and there were no FIDE Rapid Chess ratings back then! Anyway, Black is definitely winning this rook endgame with his two extra pawns. $\frac{1}{2}–\frac{1}{2}$

GAME 6A

Andrew Green – Ervin Toth

Szeged 2008

1.e4 e6 2.f4
In the 19th century this was considered the main line of the French Defence!

\[ 2...d5 \ 3.e5 \ c5 \ 4.\textit{d}f3 \ \textit{d}c6 \ 5.c3 \ \textit{w}b6 \ 6.\textit{a}3 \ \textit{d}d7 \ 7.\textit{c}2 \ \textit{c}c8 \]

As we saw in the variation B of Chapter 1, in this type of position Black has easy play. He simply goes for the set-up with \...\textit{h}6, \...\textit{e}7, \...0-0 and even \...f6 and \...\textit{f}7. I don’t like so much to play \...d5-d4 and give White what he really wants, because I don’t mind allowing White to go for d2-d4 here and play an inferior Advance Variation.

\[ 8.g3 \]

White can chose various set-ups:

\[ 8.d3 \ \textit{h}6 \ 9.\textit{e}2 \ \textit{e}7 \ 10.0-0 \ 0-0 \ 11.\textit{e}1 \ f6 \ 12.\textit{g}3 \ \textit{f}xe5 \ 13.\textit{f}xe5 \ \textit{d}f5 \ 14.\textit{h}3 \text{ and now in Bangiev – Homuth, Dudweiler 1996, Black chose the manoeuvre \...\textit{d}8-e8 while I like the more classical 14...\textit{e}8 and after 15.g4 \ \textit{h}6 \ 16.\textit{x}hxh6 \ \textit{gxh6} \ 17.\textit{w}xh6 \ \textit{g}6 \ 18.\textit{w}c1 \ \textit{f}7 Black has excellent compensation for his pawn deficit after doubling on the f-file.} \]

\[ 8.d4N \]

This must be best.

\[ 8..\textit{cxd4} \ 9.\textit{cxd4} \ 9.\textit{f}xd4 \ 10.\textit{xd4} \ \textit{c}5 \]

9...\textit{h}6?!

Bangiev gave 9...\textit{b}4 with the idea of exchanging light-squared bishops. For example: 10.\textit{c}3 \ \textit{b}5 11.\textit{f}2 It is a good idea in general, but it makes more sense to wait until the \textit{f}-bishop has moved. Also interesting is: 9...\textit{b}4?! 10.\textit{f}2 (not 10.\textit{d}2? which drops the \textit{b}2-pawn: 10...\textit{x}d2 11.\textit{xd2} \ \textit{xb2}) 10...\textit{h}6 with the makings of an initiative.

\[ 10.\textit{d}3 \ \textit{b}4 \]

Black is pressing for an edge. For example: 11.\textit{xb4} \ \textit{xb4} 12.\textit{d}2 \ \textit{b}5

After just a dozen moves, White is struggling to equalize.
12.b3 is preferred by my engine. 12.cx b3 13.axb3 wxb3 14.a3 b6 gives White enough compensation to keep some kind of balance.

12...f5 13.h2 h5
13...f2! 14.g4 g3+ would have won an exchange at once.

14.d4
14.e3 c7 and Black keeps the bind.

14...cx d3 15.xd3 f2 16.d2 xg3†
17.h1 c7→
Black should be simply winning, so the rest of the game is not essential for our purposes. In fact, there were some wild tactics and crazy moments, so I shall include the moves with brief comments, just for fun.

18.d4 b5 19.d1 h4 20.a4 d7 21.b3 h5 22.a3 g6 23.xf5 xf5 24.d4 xh4 25.xf1 c7 26.c4 xe5 27.f3 c7 28.b2 d4 29.xd4 a6?
Black was steadily heading for victory, but now chaos is unleashed. 29...f6! would have blocked the white queen's route to g7 and kept control.

30.b5?
Right idea, wrong way. 30.f5! could have saved an unlikely half point. For example:

30...exf5 31.xg7 xf1† 32.xf1 d6 33.e1† c6 34.xe6† fxe6 35.xg6† and Black cannot escape perpetual checks.

30...xb5
Also effective was 30.axb5 31.xg7 c6.

31.xg7 e5
A solid human move.

31...c6 also works if Black can play like a machine: 32.g8† d7 33.fd1† d5 34.g7 f2 35.xd5

This looks terrifying but Black has one winning move: 35...h8!! The only square; it makes sense when one considers the needs of the black king. It needs a square on c8 if the d5-bishop retreats, say to g2, but the king also needs the e8-square if White plays xb7†.

32.g8† d7 33.ad1† c7 34.xf7†
A great try: White keeps throwing punches.

34.xf7 35.xf7† b6 36.xb7† a5 37.axb5
I would bet both players' flags were hanging at this point.
The only winner was 37...\( \texttt{d}8! \) exploiting White's back rank problems. Then after 38.\( \texttt{f}1 \) Black must find another only move: 38...\( \texttt{f}2! \) Exploiting the back rank again to defend against the vicious threat of \( \texttt{a}7 \).

38.\( \texttt{b}8? \)
Missing his last chance. After 38.\( \texttt{x}c7 \) \( \texttt{xc}7 \) 39.\( \texttt{a}1! \) \( \texttt{b}6 \) 40.\( \texttt{b}4! \)

Black must play precisely to save half a point:
40...\( \texttt{f}4! \) The only drawing move! 41.\( \texttt{x}a6\) \( \texttt{c}7 \) 42.\( \texttt{d}6\) \( \texttt{d}7 \) 43.\( \texttt{a}7\) \( \texttt{d}8 \) 44.\( \texttt{a}8\) \( \texttt{d}7 \) 45.\( \texttt{a}7= \)

38...\( \texttt{d}7!\)++ 39.\( \texttt{x}d6 \) \( \texttt{xd}6 \) 40.\( \texttt{b}4\) \( \texttt{a}4 \) 41.\( \texttt{b}1 \) \( \texttt{e}2 \) 42.\( \texttt{b}xa6 \) \( \texttt{d}1\) 0–1

The late drama should not obscure the theoretical verdict: in the opening Black equalized almost instantly and was soon winning.

**GAME 65**

Eva Repkova – Elena Cosma

Pula 2002

1.\( \texttt{e}4 \) 2.\( \texttt{e}6 \) 2.\( \texttt{b}3 \)

This variation is very popular in Greece with players like GM Dimitrios Mastrovasilis, GM Ioannis Papaoannou and even IM Georgios Makropoulos (the well-known deputy FIDE President) having lots of games in my database. Even my former coach, the late FM Nikos Karapanos, was a keen supporter of White's chances. The reason for this is that the Bulgarian IM Nikolai Minev, a coach of the Greek National Team at the start of 80s, analysed this line and suggested it back then in his training sessions.

2...d5 3.\( \texttt{b}2 \)

My original intention was to recommend the quirky line 3...\( \texttt{f}6 \) 4.e5 \( \texttt{g}8 \), but after 5.d4 c5 6.c3 White has an Advance Variation
with the rather useful b2-b3 and b2b3 as extra moves. White can follow up with Qf3, d3 and 0–0, with good chances of an edge.

4.\(1c3 \text{d}6\)

Trying to keep the extra pawn with 4...f5 is possible, but it creates long-term weaknesses that make Black's position very difficult to play.

```

4.\(1c3 \text{d}6\)

Trying to keep the extra pawn with 4...f5 is possible, but it creates long-term weaknesses that make Black's position very difficult to play.
```

5.\(\text{we}2\)

This is the sensible approach, but White has a wild option:
5.g4?!  
This weakens f4 without any special reason.
5...\(1d7! 6.\text{g}2 \text{c}6\)

```

5.\(\text{we}2\)

This is the sensible approach, but White has a wild option:
5.g4?!  
This weakens f4 without any special reason.
5...\(1d7! 6.\text{g}2 \text{c}6\)
```

7.g5  
7.\(\text{we}2 \text{h}5 8.g5 \text{d}5 9.\text{h}3 \text{xc}3 10.\text{xc}3 \text{d}5 11.g6 In Gelashvili–B. Socko, Panormo 2001, Black played 11...f8x6, but better

```

7.g5
```

was 11...f6!N+. For example, 12.0–0–0 \(Qd7 13.Qf4?! Wf5\) is great for Black.
7...\(Qd5 8.Qxe4 h6\)

Also good is: 8...Qf4N 9.Qf3 h6 10.h4 h5g5 11.hxg5 \(\text{h}xh1 12.\text{xh1} Qxe4 13.\text{xe4} Wxg5\) 14.Qe2 c6 White's compensation is not enough for a pawn.
9.g6 f5 10.Qg3 Qf4 11.Qxc6+ Qxc6 12.Wf3 Qxg6 13.Qh5 Qf5+


5...\(Qb4 6.0–0–0 Qe7 7.Qb1\)

The most common move is:
7.Qxe4 Qa3 8.Qxf6+  
8.Qf3 Qbd7 is comfortable.
8...Qxf6 9.d4

9.Qxa3?? Qa1# is too much to hope for.

```

5...\(Qb4 6.0–0–0 Qe7 7.Qb1\)

The most common move is:
7.Qxe4 Qa3 8.Qxf6+  
8.Qf3 Qbd7 is comfortable.
8...Qxf6 9.d4
```

Now in 21 games in the database Black has every time chosen 9...Qxb2+ 10.Qxb2 when White has the slightest of edges. Instead 9...Qe7!N is a simple improvement with equal prospects. Given a chance, Black might even go for ...a7-a5.

7...\(Qxc3\)

The point of White's previous move was 7...Qa3 8.Qa1.

8.dxc3

The other recapture has also been tested:
8.Qxc3?! Qd7
9.f3
9...exf3 10...xf3 c6 11.e3 d7
12.e2 0–0 Black can castle on either side, but it makes sense to castle on the opposite side because White has weakened his king’s position with b2-b3. For example, 13.f3 a5 14.c3 e7 15.c1 a4 16.d4 d6 17.c4 d5 was excellent for Black in Hamberger – Jauernig, Aschach 2000.
9...xf3 10.xf3 c6 11.g4 h6 12.g1 0–0–0
In Hernandez – Arribas Robaina, Havana 1999, White had compensation, but it is difficult to believe it is fully enough for a pawn; Black is at least equal.
8...d7 9.g4 h6 10.g2 c6 11.xe4 xe4
12.xe4
Instead 12...0–0–0 13.e2 e5 14.g3 e6= was Kapnisis – Berelowitsch, Kavala 2002. This game was given by Psakhis in his book, and my coach and I agreed that White has nothing here.
13.f3 hxg4 14.xg4 0–0–0 15.hg1
Not 15.xg7? dg8++ when the queen has no squares.
15...g6 16.c4 e5 17.g5 xg5
Black could have kept his edge with 17...de8!N.
18.xg5
18...xh2
18...df8 would be met by 19.a3, so it is not easy to suggest a logical alternative to the text move.
19.xf7 f8 20.xe5 xe5 21.xe5 xhf2 22.d4 e2 23.e1 xe1+ 24.e1 e8 25.xe8+
25.g1 f5 26.g2 is also drawish.
25...xe8 26.e3 d7 27.c1 f5 28.d2 a6 29.c5 d7 30.c4 e4 31.f4 c6
½–½
4...\texttt{cxb4!}

White offers a pawn, so why not take it?

4...c4 has been recommended by Williams and is the only line I have ever played, but without looking at any theory. I see now that the position arising after 5.c3 a5 6.b5 \texttt{d7} 7.d3 \texttt{cxd3} 8.\texttt{xld3} f6 has been analysed by Williams, and also Watson in his \textit{Play the French 4th edition}. I can see clear similarities with some lines I examined in the Advance Variation chapter, but I am not sure if it is worth the risk. I believe my suggestion is more clear-cut and less messy.

5.a3

This has been considered by some sources as less accurate because it allows 5...d4?! but this is a practical repertoire and I suggest that we play the same way as after 5.d4.

5.d4 \texttt{c6} 6.a3 \texttt{bxa3} simply transposes to our main game.

\begin{center}
\textbf{GAME 6}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
Gyula Emodi – Gabor Portisch
\end{center}

\begin{center}
Hungary 1999
\end{center}

1.e4 e6 2.\texttt{f3} d5 3.e5 c5 4.b4

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

5.bxa3 6.d4 \texttt{c6} 7.c3 \texttt{d7}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

8.\texttt{d3}

There are other moves to consider:

8.\texttt{xa3}?! is not a very strong option as it solves Black's development problems after 8...\texttt{xaxa3} 9.\texttt{xxa3} as the knight comes to e7 without blocking its own pieces. 9...a6 10.\texttt{d3} \texttt{e8} 11.0–0 \texttt{a5} (11...\texttt{ge7N} intending ...\texttt{a5} next is also better for Black) 12.\texttt{e2} \texttt{c7} 13.\texttt{e7} h6 14.\texttt{d2} \texttt{a4} 15.\texttt{a2} \texttt{c7} 16.\texttt{e3} \texttt{b3} 17.\texttt{e2} b5+ Strater – Baumlter, Goch 2010.

8.\texttt{g5}

This untried possibility was mentioned by Eingorn, but it is not especially dangerous.

8...\texttt{e7}

8...h6 is also possible as the sac on f7 is ineffective: 9.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf7} 10.\texttt{f3}+ \texttt{f6} This was given by Eingorn; Black is much better.

9.h4

Or 9.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf7} 10.\texttt{f3}+ \texttt{e8} and White has little to show for the piece.

9...\texttt{h6}

Black is at least a bit better as he has a much improved version of a known theoretical line where the bishop goes to e7 and the knight goes to h6 anyway; in the meantime White has played the less useful moves \texttt{g5} and h2-h4.
10.\textit{d}3 \textit{a}5
This is another point, with the idea 11.0–0 \textit{a}2 and White’s centre collapses as \textit{c}3 and \textit{d}4 fall. Pawns rarely reach the 7th rank as early as move 11!

8.\textit{d}xa3 \textit{a}6 9.\textit{d}3 transposes to 8.\textit{d}3.

8...\textit{h}6
Instead 8...\textit{a}6?! 9.\textit{g}5 looks a bit scary, but it is probably nothing more than a draw.

9.0–0 \textit{a}6 10.\textit{d}xa3 \textit{c}8
This position has been recommended by Eingorn and his assessment is that White has insufficient compensation for the pawn. My engines don’t believe him, but I certainly do after looking at this position for a long time and playing it against both humans and my PC. As in many other lines in the French Defence, we can afford to leave our king on his original square in order to take care of more urgent matters first. In this case White has long-term prospects on the queenside, as our kingside can take care of itself without help. A set-up that I found very comfortable for Black here was ...\textit{a}5, ...\textit{c}6 and ...\textit{e}7 followed by ...\textit{g}7 or even ...\textit{xa}3 followed by ...\textit{ge}7, ...\textit{c}4 and ...\textit{b}5; I couldn’t find a way for White to stop this or make it ineffective.

11.\textit{c}4
In the only practical test, White tried this move, but it fails to trouble Black. However, a calmer build-up by White would allow Black to follow the plan mentioned above. For example: 11.\textit{e}2 \textit{a}5 12.\textit{b}2 \textit{e}7 13.\textit{c}2 \textit{f}5 Black is developing easily, and let’s not forget his extra pawn.

11...\textit{b}4!
This is a safe move, as after a potential ...dxc4 Black will keep control of d5.

12.\textit{c}5
If 12.\textit{e}2 dxc4 13.\textit{xc}4 then 13...\textit{c}6 or 13...\textit{b}5 are both more than okay for Black, but this was probably the lesser evil.

12...\textit{b}6
12...\textit{e}7? keeps a bit more tension in the position and is a tiny improvement for Black.

13.\textit{xb}6 \textit{xb}6 14.\textit{b}1 \textit{e}7 15.\textit{xa}6 \textit{xa}6 16.\textit{xb}4 \textit{g}6 17.\textit{b}3 \textit{a}4 18.\textit{d}3 \textit{xd}3 19.\textit{xd}3 \textit{e}7 20.\textit{d}2 0–0 21.\textit{b}1 \textit{b}8 22.\textit{xb}8 \textit{xb}8 23.\textit{g}3 \textit{b}3 24.\textit{c}1 \textit{a}4
Black is slightly better here due to the weakness of d4, but it would be difficult to exploit this in practice. So a draw is a fair result, but of course Black clearly won the opening battle.

\(1/2-1/2\)
2.e5 is included mainly for historical interest. Black can equalize in many ways, but I have chosen the lively 2...c5 with Sicilian-style play.

2.c4 is comfortably met by 2...d5 3.cxd5 exd5 4.exd5 d6 with an anti-IQP position where Black has free and easy development.

2.c3 frequently transposes to other lines; independent lines are harmless. For example: 2...d5 3.f4 c5 is an unthreatening line of the Grand Prix Attack.

2.f4 leads to a feeble version of the Advance Variation after 2...d5 3.e5 c5 4.d3 d6.

2.b3 is a surprisingly tricky line that is highly popular with Greek players. My suggestion is 2...d5 3.b2 dxe4 4.c3 d6. Black is happy to return the pawn to reach a solidly equal position.

2.f3 d5 3.e5 c5 4.b4 is the French Wing Gambit. I recommend taking it and hanging on to it! After 4...cxb4 5.a3 bxa3 6.d4 c6 7.c3 d7 White has insufficient compensation.
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Aagaard & Ntirlis

The French Defence is one of the most solid and strategically rich responses to 1.e4. Many opening lines have been analysed to death by computer, but the French is relatively resistant to this growing trend, as the characteristic blocked pawn centre leads to situations where a player with superior understanding can overcome an opponent whose expertise lies in computer-assisted preparation.

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