

# **The Scandinavian Defense Revisited**

**A Cold-Blooded Counter  
to 1.e4!**

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**Author:** Thomas Engqvist

**Managing Editor:** Adrien Demuth

**Assistant Editor:** Daniël Vanheirzeele

**Typesetting:** Diriq

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**Thomas Engqvist**

**Thinkers Publishing 2025**



## Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
☞	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
≡	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⌢	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

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## Quotes on the Scandinavian Defense Throughout the Ages

*"The chess market is overwhelmed with books, steadily increasing knowledge of the game. The vast majority of volumes focus on modern-day praxis and, in particular, contemporary opening theory. Only a very small proportion of chess literature takes an in-depth look at the game's past, i.e. the historical process that chess has undergone from the primitive creations of the Middle Ages to today's more complicated level of play, the fascinating lives of the chess geniuses of yesteryear and the psychological background of past contests. But times are changing and even Garry Kasparov, who used to be convinced that people's brains worked incomparably worse in the nineteenth-century than they do today, has started to contemplate the roots of chess play and has written a series of books on his predecessors."* – **Victor Korchnoi**, Wohlen, August 2003.

*"The defense of Q.P. versus K.P., or 'The Centre Counter Gambit', as Major Jaenisch terms it, is not often practiced, although it presents many features of interest; and if not opposed with care and judgment, will frequently turn the scale in favour of the second player."* – **Howard Staunton**

*"We do not approve of this mode of playing the closed opening."* – **Johann Jacob Löwenthal**

*"We consider this mode of evading an open game to be decidedly inferior to either P. to K's 3rd or P. to Q. B's 4th [the French and Sicilian openings], though some short time ago it was in high repute, and was even adopted by Mr. Staunton, in some of his games, on the occasion of the Birmingham Meeting."* – **Johann Jacob Löwenthal**

*"This may not be sound but it gets out of the usual groove."* – **Joseph Henry Blackburne**

*"One can already make this move, without therefore, with careful play, assuming a bigger disadvantage, but one must immediately recapture on the next move and before all develop the queenside bishop to g4 or f5."* – **Siegbert Tarrasch, 1896**

*"Black's idea is to make use of the great fighting power of the queen in the opening."* – **Emanuel Lasker**

*“An essentially sound idea. Black disputes the center from the very start. It is his aim to neutralize each piece. White develops by opposing to it an equivalent piece and to proceed with his own development as rapidly as possible.” – Emanuel Lasker*

*“This defence is reminiscent of the Centre Game [1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. ♖xd4] which we have already analysed, and it has the same drawbacks. For though it is true that Black attacks the unprotected King’s pawn with his defended pawn, the immediate exchange brings his queen to the middle of the board with all the risks that such a sortie implies. We have already pointed them out in the Centre Game. Here White has the further advantage of the move, and this makes itself felt all the more. Black can, of course, attempt to win back the pawn by means of another piece, but this cannot be done without appreciably increasing White’s advantage in time.*

*From all points of view the use of this opening is to be discouraged, for it will give no advantage to Black, who will frequently have trouble in equalising. So he must resign himself to a purely passive game with the satisfaction of having exchanged a centre pawn [3... ♕d8], or he must continue to attack the enemy by opening up the game more [3... ♖a5 4. d4 e5]. In the first case we already know the line of play to follow and Black’s being a move behind will not make his task easier.” – Eugene A. Znosko-Borovsky, How to Play the Chess Openings*

*“This opening (formerly extravagantly called Queen’s Pawn against King’s Pawn) arises when Black responds to 1.e4 with 1...d5. For a long time, it was believed that White would necessarily obtain an advantage here, as after 2.exd5 Qxd5, the Black queen would stand insecurely. However, analyses by various Scandinavian masters (hence the name of this opening) demonstrated that the matter was not so simple. After 3.♘c3, the Black queen moves to a5, where it plays a role that should not be underestimated—namely, pinning the knight on c3 if White advances the d-pawn. According to modern understanding, the Scandinavian Defence is therefore not necessarily unfavourable for Black, as the apparent insecurity of the queen is largely an illusion. However, there is **one** drawback that speaks against 1...d7-d5, namely that Black, by advancing the d-pawn, surrenders control of the centre without gaining sufficient compensation. This drawback, which is of a strategic nature, was previously overlooked, as the tactical factor—the premature deployment of the queen—was considered more significant.*

*Modern masters, however, generally place much greater emphasis on strategic considerations, and for this reason, despite its tactical rehabilitation, this opening has never won the approval of the leading chess authorities. In the years immediately preceding 1914, the Scandinavian Defence was played quite frequently, mainly due*

*to a series of impressive successes achieved by Mieses with this defence. However, this flourishing period was short-lived, and for many years now, the Scandinavian Defence has not appeared in an international tournament. Perhaps this is unjustified, for while the Scandinavian Defence may have strategic drawbacks for Black, it also offers neat counterplay of a more or less tactical nature.” – Max Euwe*

*“The Center Counter is of largely theoretical interest since no important example of it has appeared in master chess for almost twenty-five years. Some years ago the noted American analyst Fred Reinfeld attempted to prove its theoretical adequacy, but he found no support among tournament players.” – Reuben Fine (Practical Chess Openings, 1944)*

*“This opening was very popular in the Scandinavian countries around the turn of the century but was only occasionally used in major international tournaments. In his youth, Spielmann tried the defence, but without much success, and the attempts by the American theorist Reinfeld to rehabilitate it have not succeeded. Euwe believes that the defense is not fully viable from a strategic standpoint but it provides Black with good tactical counter chances.” – Gideon Ståhlberg*

*“Black’s basic idea here is unusual; he wishes to get freedom for his pieces at the cost of a theoretically inferior pawn structure and (on occasion) loss of time, in the hope that good development will make it possible to get adequate compensation, either in the form of a counter-attack or of a neutralization of White’s powerful center pawn. There is, however, only one line where compensation is theoretically sufficient and even there Black’s game is extremely cramped. The defense cannot be recommended.” – Reuben Fine (The Ideas Behind The Chess Openings, 1959)*

*“The Center Counter Game 1. e4 d5, is one of the oldest openings. It is also known as the Scandinavian Defense because it was Scandinavian analysts, particularly Collijn, who succeeded in pointing out that the tempo White wins after 2. exd5 ♔xd5 3. ♘c3 has less significance than was formerly assumed. Amongst masters, Mieses frequently adopted this defense and contributed greatly to its theory. According to present opinion, however, the Center Counter does not fully comply with the requirements of sound opening strategy. White’s advance in development, is small, indeed, but it still offers him an initiative.” – I.A.Horowitz (Chess Openings, Simon and Schuster, 1964)*



*"This opening is not very popular these days. Why? Is any other first move better? By attacking White's centre pawn, Black puts his cards on the table immediately."*  
– **David Bronstein**

*"The Scandinavian Defence is one of the oldest semi-open games. For a long time, it was considered an inferior defence against 1.e4. However, strangely enough, it has been used more frequently in stronger tournaments in recent times, even though its complete rehabilitation has not yet been achieved. In this opening, Black effectively plays a sort of Centre Game [1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 ♕xd4] with colours reversed and one less tempo. Similar to the Centre Game, in the main line (1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♕xd5), the early introduction of the queen and the associated loss of tempo (3.♘c3!) prove to be disadvantageous. If Black develops normally, White's advantage in development and superiority in the centre (after 4.d4) become evident. With the continuation 4...e5 (Second variation), Black aims to complicate the game. However, previous practice shows that the better prospects are on White's side, especially when White plays 5.♘f3.*

*The third variation, which focuses on the 2...♘f6 system, is somewhat less clear. According to recent findings, it appears that 3.d4 is favourable for White. In the variations with 3.♙b5, White should not aim to hold onto the pawn gained but should be concerned with rapid piece development. Covering the pawn with 3.c4 is not very popular, but according to Lasker, this is also a risk-free continuation. With the move 4.d4, White can then transition into the Caro-Kann Defense."* – **Ludek Pachman**

*"Almost never played in major tournaments. The defense has little to recommend it. Black's idea is to give up a pawn in exchange for quick development but even when he does so it is at the cost of an inferior pawn structure. If he plays 2...♕xd5, he subjects his queen to dangerous early harassment, and if he plays 2...♘f6 his chances are considerably better, but White can still maintain better than average superiority by responding with 3 d4."* – **Arthur M. Stevens** (*The Blue Book of Charts to Winning Chess*, 1969)

*"In the Scandinavian Defence, Black attempts to impose his will on the opponent right from the first move. The original idea behind this defence was to capture on d5 with the queen and then primarily develop the pieces on the queenside. The goal was to castle long as quickly as possible and to tie White's pieces to the defence of the d4 pawn. However, Black can only carry out this plan if White plays passively. Due to the early excursion of the black queen, White gains a lead in development; with energetic play, he can also achieve a spatial advantage and force Black into a*

*defensive position.” – Isaak Boleslavski (Skandinavisch bis Sizilianisch, Sportverlag Berlin 1971)*

*“This opening dates back to the end of the 15th century and was first recommended by Lucena in 1497. Its detailed variations were later analysed in the opening works of Jänisch (1842/43) and Staunton (1847). The continuation 2. exd5 Qxd5 3. ♖c3 Qa5 has enjoyed particular popularity for a long time, and it was introduced into tournament practice by Anderssen in his match against Morphy (1857). Anderssen combined this with the swift advancement of the centre pawn with 4...e5. In subsequent years, this opening gained widespread recognition and was an integral part of the tournament arena for many years. Today, it is played relatively rarely. Practice has shown that in the main variations, Black can defend adequately, although his position is somewhat cramped, and the pieces are positioned somewhat passively.” – Aleksei Suetin*

*“What would you do if the Sicilian Defense were to be banned? Or if you realized that it takes too much time to stay as well-oriented as your opponents in the Najdorf, Dragon, and other trendy variations? Having 4-5 weapons against 1.e4 makes it more challenging for opponents to prepare. And by playing something they have never seen before, you immediately gain a psychological advantage. Here, I want to speak up for the Scandinavian Defense.” – Bent Larsen*

*“In our days [1996] the Scandinavian Defence is slowly but firmly becoming accepted by grandmasters on the highest levels. The explanation is that by playing 1...d5 immediately, it is Black, not White who is starting the attack. He sees an enemy soldier in the centre of the board, completely alone, and not protected, and what is a better target to start complications? By using this move Black avoids the necessity to carry around the heavy luggage of unnecessary opening variations. Of course the first move 1...d5 has some weak points, but the main advantage is that you can study the exact position which you are going to play at home and you are well prepared to meet these problems. – David Bronstein*

*“A chess-player who starts the game with 1. e4 is ‘sentenced’ to wandering in the Scandinavian forests.” – Sergey Kasparov*

*“The CENTER COUNTER DEFENSE (also known as the Scandinavian Defense) is a straightforward opening that is easy to learn and play. 1...d5 contests the center and removes the white king-pawn from play, ensuring that Black will not have great troubles ahead. The downside is that Black loses time when recapturing on d5.*

*Taking with the queen allows White to develop ♖c3 with tempo, while recapturing with ... ♗f6 and ... ♗xd5 allows White an extra move in setting up a pawn front with d4 and c4. Plus it is normal for White to gain a slight advantage, but only a slight advantage. Often Black will set up a solid position which is hard to breach, while being able to calmly complete development. – Nick de Firmian (Modern Chess Openings 15th Edition, McKay Chess Library, 2008)*

*"Of all the possible replies to 1.e4, the Scandinavian is the only reputable option which creates an immediate clash in the centre. This means that it differs from most other openings where a variety of pawn structures can be reached. For example, the French Defence is noted for thematic positions with a rigid pawn chain ( where the white phalanx d4-e5 is blocked by Black's d5-e6) but many other structures can also be reached. In contrast, in the Scandinavian, right from the start Black breaks up the pawn structure. We will see that 2.exd5 constitutes White's only worthy reply, so players using the Scandinavian can be sure of reaching their favourite scheme. This point should be underlined, since it is a unique case among 1.e4 openings. – Christian Bauer (Play the Scandinavian, Quality Chess 2010)*

*"Whereas 1...g6 gives White a free hand entirely, 1...d5 limits his choice to the utmost. These two opening are opposites in everything. While 1...g6 is probably the ultimate in flexibility, 1...d5 creates a very definite type of position at once. And whereas after 1...g6 the battle often takes a long time to get properly started, after 1...d5 there is a crisis already." – Paul van der Sterren (Fundamental Chess Openings, Gambit 2016)*

# Introduction

The opening move 1...d5, in response to 1 e4, is known as the *Scandinavian Defense* and is one of the oldest recorded chess openings. It was played in a casual game between Francesc de Castellvi and Narcís Vinyoles in Valencia, Spain, around 1475, marking the first recorded game of modern chess. This opening also appears in Lucena's 1497 book, *Repetición de Amores y Arte de Ajedrez con 150 Juegos (Repetition of Love and the Art of Playing Chess with 150 Games)*.

The term *Scandinavian Game* gained prominence around the turn of the 20th century. Scandinavian players, especially from Sweden and Denmark, analysed, popularised, and adopted the opening. Notable Swedish players include Gustaf Nyholm, the Collijn brothers (Gustaf and Ludvig), Fritz Englund, and Karl Berndtsson, alongside the Danish player Carl August Walbrodt. The Collijn brothers consistently replied to 1 e4 with 1...d5 (combined with 2...Qxd5 and 3...Qd8) during the first Nordic Championship in Stockholm in 1897.

The term *Scandinavian Game* first appeared in the Swedish chess magazine *Tidskrift för Schack* in 1909, in Fritz Englund's commentary on the game Leonhardt, P.S. – Sjöberg, V. Before this, the opening had been referred to as *Queen's pawn versus King's pawn*, as seen in the blindfold game Schlechter - Mieses, played in Stuttgart on 15 January 1909. The term *Scandinavian Game* gradually became the standard name. *Wiener Schachzeitung* began using it in 1911. Commentators Andreaschek and Bonosch, referencing the game Cavanagh - Göbel, wrote: "*The analysis by Nordic masters (cf. the Stockholm tournament of 1906) makes the designation 'Scandinavian Game' seem fully justified.*" The tournament book from the 18th Deutscher Schachbund Congress Tournament in Breslau (1912) also adopted this designation.

An alternative name, *Centre Counter Game*, appears in earlier chess literature, including 19th-century sources. This term provides a descriptive reference to the central pawn structure created by Black's pawn on d5 countering White's pawn on e4. When Danish Grandmaster Bent Larsen defeated World Champion Anatoly Karpov in Montreal in 1979, the term *Scandinavian Defense* gained greater popularity.

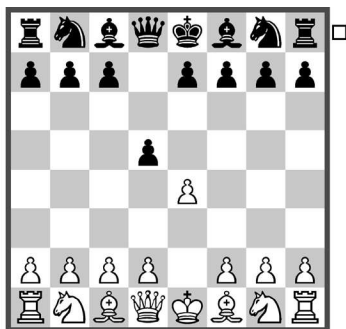
In addition to Bent Larsen, many other prominent players have employed the Scandinavian Defense in their games. Consequently, it became an occasional choice for top players of various eras. Some of the most notable names include Adolf Anderssen, Joseph Henry Blackburne, Jacques Mieses, Siegbert Tarrasch, Akiba Rubinstein,

Efim Bogoljubow, Frank Marshall, Rudolf Spielmann, Savielly Tartakower, José Raúl Capablanca, Alexander Alekhine, David Bronstein, Jonathan Speelman, Michael Adams, Julian Hodgson, Curt Hansen, Ian Rogers, Viswanathan Anand, Vassily Ivanchuk, Anatoly Karpov, Sergey Tiviakov, Hikaru Nakamura, and Magnus Carlsen.

The structure of the present book revolves around model games. I firmly believe that familiarity with both classical and contemporary examples provides a **holistic understanding of the Scandinavian Defense**. By studying entire games, you will gain insight into how this opening has been approached throughout different periods of chess history. This means the book is suitable for use by players of either side (White or Black).

The main position of the Scandinavian Defense arises after the moves:

### 1. e4 d5



Position after: 1... d5

The fundamental purpose of Black's aggressive and provocative move with the d-pawn is to create immediate central tension and to exploit the latent power of the queen on her starting square. Remember Lasker's observation: "Black's idea is to make use of the great fighting power of the queen in the opening"

### 2. exd5



Position after: 2. exd5

Black's audacious pawn move effectively compels White to lose a tempo by capturing the pawn, creating an imbalance in the centre. Black's strategy seeks the dissolution of the centre, as the immediate asymmetry reduces the significance of White's first move and suggests that perhaps 1 c4, the English Opening, would have been more appropriate. Following 1...d5 2 cxd5 ♕xd5, White would have been left with two pawns against one in the central area, which would have been more advantageous for White. So, is the Scandinavian, in essence, a 'refutation' of 1 e4, as Black has already activated his queen far ahead of his opponent, while weakening White's kingside pawn structure? Isn't White essentially punished for aiming for early kingside development with his first move?

Structurally, Black has achieved an ideal exchange, and **the core of the Scandinavian lies in the control of the d5-square**. Black must, under no circumstances, allow White to support a pawn thrust with d4-d5, as this typically means White has effectively countered Black's pawn structure both technically and psychologically.

2... ♕xd5



Position after: 2... ♕xd5

The Mieses – Kotrc Variation (2... ♙xd5) introduces the main Scandinavian line and prepares for quick development on the queenside, with pressure on the d-file. The early clash in the centre clarifies the position, and White, in turn, controls the semi-open e-file. Black, however, has managed to create a half-open game after just two moves. The new pawn structure gives Black the advantage of a king that is shielded by four pawns on the kingside, while White's king is shielded by only three pawns. This provides Black with both a short-term and long-term advantage.

Of course, these advantages do not come without cost, as Black loses time with the early queen move. For a long time, it was believed that the queen on d5 was too exposed and that this would become apparent after the most principled response.

### 3. ♘c3



Position after: 3. ♘c3

This is the key position for Black in the Scandinavian Defense, and we do not mind this at all, as the queenside knight currently prevents the activation of the c-pawn. A broad pawn centre, consisting of a dynamic pawn duo on c4 and d4, is one of the keys to methodically dismantling the Scandinavian. Without this, Black would enjoy a valuable manoeuvring square on d5 for his available pieces.

One of the greatest, if not the greatest, chess theoreticians and teachers, the Latvian/Danish Aron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935), discusses this position at the beginning of his classic "My System" (1925), where he describes the typical tempo gain with the following words:

*"What was the reason for 2 exd5? The answer: to attract onto a compromised square the piece which would be making the recapture. The second part (3. ♘c3) then consisted of the exploitation of the position of the queen which had been thus in a certain sense compromised."*

In the same spirit, we now ask ourselves the consequent question: What is the most suitable square for the queen? Should we opt for the safe but passive 3... ♔d8, the active 3... ♔a5, or the flexible and clever waiting move 3... ♔d6? These are the fundamental questions to address when studying this defense in depth. There are some other queen manoeuvres to be aware of, but these moves are probably better suited for faster forms of chess due to their surprise value. The objective value of moves such as 3... ♔e5+, 3... ♔e6+, and 3... ♔d7 is highly questionable.

The structure of the book consists of three parts. The first part covers other ways for White and Black to handle the Scandinavian Defense (1 e4 d5), excluding the main line, the so-called Mieses – Kotrc Variation 2... ♔xd5).

The second part focuses on all the queen moves at move three, except the Pytel Variation 3... ♔d6, which will be discussed in detail in the third part of the book, as it is suggested as the main repertoire for Black.

The point of suggesting 3... ♔d6 as the key variation is not solely based on concrete variations and evaluations. It is also based on a concept that caught my attention a long time ago when I read the famous classic by the great chess pedagogue Eugene A. Znosko-Borovsky – "The Middle Game in Chess" (Dover, 1980). He proposed two useful guidelines regarding how to treat the valuable queen from a general perspective. The first piece of wisdom is:

*"Posted away from the centre, the queen acts only on a file or a diagonal, which is obviously a waste of her power; such a disposition would only poorly demonstrate our skill in fully employing the power inherent in our pieces."*

This means that if we reply 3... ♔d8, the queen mainly operates from d8-d4. If we reply 3... ♔a5, the diagonal e1-a5 becomes significant. However, we also control the fifth rank (from White's perspective), and it becomes our duty to find a mission along this rank, where we can exploit our control in conjunction with our other pieces. The most logical move based on Znosko-Borovsky's generalisation is 3... ♔d6 (although he didn't suggest this specific move), where the queen will act like an octopus, with all its tentacles in good shape. Here, it controls two black diagonals, one semi-open file, and the sixth rank. This situation arises after only three moves, while White's queen remains on its starting square.

The second most important piece of advice by Znosko-Borovsky made such an impression on the famous trainer Mark Dvoretsky that he wrote about it in the fourth chapter, "Studying the Classics, " of his book "Training for the Tournament Player"



(Batsford, 1993). He was clearly influenced by the following lines from Znosko-Borovsky:

*"A player who is at a disadvantage in point of time should keep up any available threat."*

Dvoretsky rephrased Znosko – Borovsky's insightful sentence as follows:

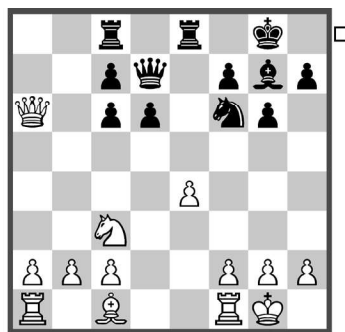
*"If your opponent has a lead in time (in development) but you have extra material, in no circumstances should you divert to defensive duties any pieces which are exerting pressure on the enemy position. Such pieces may be placed perilously, involving some risk, but they prevent the opponent from manoeuvring freely."*

To understand concretely what this means in practical terms, it is useful to examine the diagram position below.

## Introductory Game I

♙ Nimzowitsch, Aron  
♚ Capablanca, José Raoul  
🌐 St Petersburg 1914

1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. ♙b5 d6 5. d4 ♙d7 6. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 7. ♚d3 exd4 8. ♘xd4 g6 9. ♘xc6 bxc6 10. ♚a6?! ♚d7 11. ♚b7 ♖c8 12. ♚xa7 ♙g7 13. 0-0 0-0 14. ♚a6 ♖fe8



Position after: 14... ♖fe8

The theme of this game is material versus development. A key principle for a player lagging behind in development is to avoid retreating developed pieces, as these pieces exert pressure on the opponent's position.

### 15. ♔d3

This move marks the sixth time the queen has been moved out of the fifteen moves played so far. Evidently, White's plan is to consolidate his position and eventually win with the extra pawn. However, White fails to take the best measures against Black's plan, which involves placing rooks on the open files, bringing the knight around to c4 if possible, and, through the combined pressure of the bishop, two rooks, knight, and, if necessary, the queen, targeting the queen's knight and the a-pawn. Black aims to regain material while keeping the upper hand. In this case, the plan is masked by the direct attack on the e4-pawn.

It may be interesting to consider what some well-known commentators, such as Marco, Prins, and Pachman, have to say about White's 15th move:

*"The first inexactitude. 15. f3 is better, tying Black's queen to the defense of his c-pawn."* – Ludek Pachman

Prins gives the following possible continuation: 15... d5 16. ♔d3 dxe4 17. ♔xd7 ♘xd7 18. ♘xe4 ♙d4+ 19. ♚h1 ♙e5, leading to an equal game.

*"There are critics who maintain that 15. ♔c4 would have been better. Why? Because pressure on the point c6 would thereby have been established. Indeed but then first it would have to be demonstrated that White would have fared better with 15... d5 16. exd5 cxd5 than in the game."* – Georg Marco

Pachman's suggestion is likely the most accurate move, but the queen moves are marginally worse. However, considering that the pawn move, which aims to support the centre, keeps the queen in an active position on the queenside, it is a principled move according to Znosko-Borovsky's thesis.

15... ♔e6! 16. f3 ♘d7! 17. ♙d2? ♘e5 18. ♔e2 ♘c4 19. ♖ab1 ♖a8! 20. a4?! ♘xd2 21. ♔xd2 ♔c4! 22. ♖fd1 ♖eb8! 23. ♔e3? ♖b4! 24. ♔g5? ♙d4+ 25. ♚h1 ♖ab8 26. ♖xd4 ♔xd4 27. ♖d1 ♔c4 28. h4 ♖xb2 29. ♔d2 ♔c5 30. ♖e1 ♔h5 31. ♖a1 ♔xh4+ 32. ♚g1 ♔h5 33. a5 ♖a8 34. a6 ♔c5+ 35. ♚h1 ♔c4 36. a7 ♔c5 37. e5 ♔xe5 38. ♖a4 ♔h5+ 39. ♚g1 ♔c5+ 40. ♚h2 d5! 41. ♖h4 ♖xa7 42. ♘d1

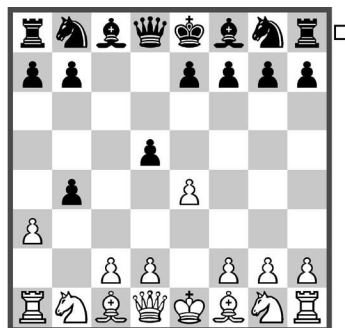
White resigned without waiting for his opponent's reply. What is paradoxical in this game is that, despite the fact that it was Nimzowitsch who had the much more active queen, it was Capablanca who truly understood how to harness the power of 'her majesty.' This understanding of the queen's potential was what ultimately decided the game.

0-1

## Introductory Game 2

♚ Podgorny, Jiri  
♚ Pachman, Ludek  
♚ Prague 1953

1. e4 c5 2. b4 cxb4 3. a3 d5



Position after: 3... d5

It is often possible to adopt the Scandinavian approach in a different setting. This position is certainly an excellent opportunity to activate the queen.

4. exd5 ♚xd5 5. ♘f3

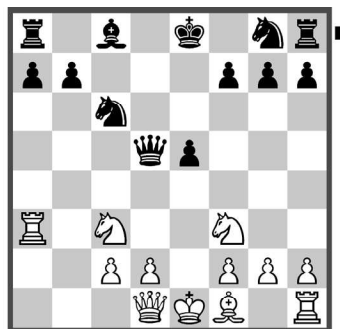
The tactical point of developing the queen early is that White cannot recapture the pawn with 5. axb4?? due to 5... ♚e5+.

5... e5

**A)** Black's move is fully playable, but the most solid move is 5... e6, which is the critical variation. Note that White has a poisonous trap after;

**B)** 5... ♖g4 6. axb4 ♖xf3 7. ♔xf3. Black should avoid the tempting 7... ♔e5+? due to 8. ♔d1 ♔xa1 9. ♔xb7, where White is clearly winning.

6. axb4 ♖xb4 7. ♖a3 ♖xa3 8. ♖xa3 ♘c6 9. ♘c3



Position after: 9. ♘c3

9... ♔d6

Note that White doesn't even have the advantage of gaining a tempo, as Black immediately recaptures a tempo by threatening the undefended rook.

10. ♘b5?

This move is, by its nature, a decentralising move and violates the principle of development by moving a piece twice. The logical follow-up would have been 10. ♔a1, exploiting the fact that White's rook was on a3, with doubling on the a-file.

10... ♔e7 11. ♔a1 ♘f6 12. ♖c4

12. ♘xa7? would not have been very successful, even though it recaptures the gambit pawn. After 12... e4, Black would have had the advantage in time, space, and the centre.

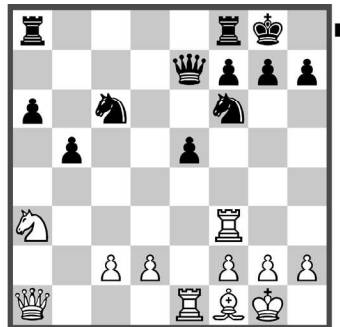
12... 0-0 13. 0-0 ♖g4 14. ♖e1 ♖xf3 15. ♖xf3 a6?

White's activity could be described as pseudo-activity, as there would have been nothing to do after the simple 15... ♖fd8. Now, however, White gets a chance to stay in the game longer.

**16. ♘a3?**

16. ♘d4! ♘xd4 17. ♙xd4 would have been a better continuation, offering more activity than was achieved in the game.

**16... b5 17. ♙f1**



Position after: 17. ♙f1

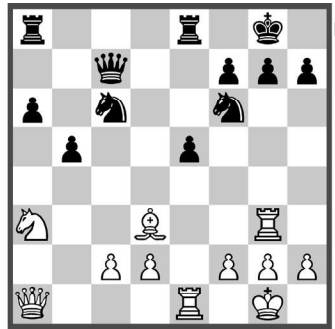
**17... ♙d6!?**

I greatly admire Pachman's queen move, as he could just as easily have played:

17... ♖ad8, adhering to the principles of development and centralisation. It seems to me that he is prioritising queen moves first.

**18. ♖d3 ♙c7 19. ♖g3 ♖fe8 20. ♙d3**

*(see diagram next page)*



Position after: 20. ♔d3

20... ♕d6

Pachman continues to apply pressure on the d-file while preparing ...e4 and is richly rewarded for this active play with the queen. 20... ♖ad8 remained the standard move in the position.

Black, of course, cannot play 20... e4 due to 21. ♕xf6 ♕xg3 22. ♕xc6, with a winning position for White.

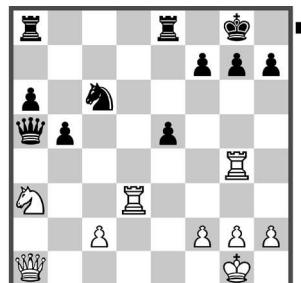
21. ♔e4

21. c3 e4 22. ♔f1 ♘e5 would not have been effective either.

21... ♘xe4 22. ♖xe4 ♕xd2 23. ♖d3 ♕a5

Black's queen now creates a very annoying pin on the a-file.

24. ♖g4

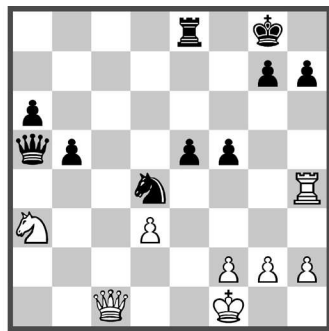


Position after: 24. ♖g4

24... ♖ad8

24... b4 25. ♔c1 bxa3? would not work due to 26. ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 27. ♗g5+ ♔h8 [27... ♕f8? 28. ♗h6+ wins.] 28. ♗f6+ leading to a draw.

25. ♗c1 ♖xd3 26. cxd3 ♞d4 27. ♔f1 f5 28. ♖h4



Position after: 28. ♖h4

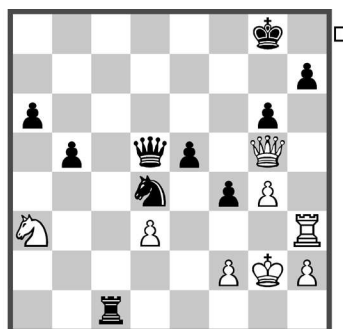
28... ♗d8

Black enjoys the versatility of his queen.

29. ♖h3 ♗d7

Black prepares ...♖c8 to control the only open file.

30. ♗g5 ♖c8 31. ♖e3 ♗d6 32. ♖g3 g6 33. ♖h3 f4! 34. g4 ♖c1+ 35. ♔g2 ♗d5+



Position after: 35... ♗d5+

A beautiful finish, where the queen, in all her glory, demonstrates her strength by controlling two important diagonals from her central position. The reason for Black's resignation was 36 f3 ♔a2+ 37 ♘c2 ♔xc2 mate.

After reviewing these two introductory games, we should be inspired to view the Scandinavian Defense as preparation for the Scandinavian Attack – on the condition that we adhere to the crucial principle that the activity of the queen is the heart of the opening. If we make this mental shift, we will begin to see the opening in a different light. It will give us a mental boost whenever our opponent dares to open with the pawn in front of their king. Isn't this 'best by test' move too ambitious?

This is the question and mindset we should adopt whenever we play this opening. As long as our black queen is in a more active position (remember Nimzowitsch – Capablanca!) compared to White's, it might indicate that White seeks an exchange of queens. In such cases, we should typically agree to the exchange, as a pawn structure with Black's pawns on e6 and c6 versus White's pawn on d4 can be advantageous, provided White fails to create initiative or launch an attack.

One final word before delving into the different systems of the Scandinavian: This opening is an excellent way to learn how to play with the queen! If one can master the art of using the queen effectively, it will deepen your understanding of the queen's mysterious and powerful role in positions well beyond the scope of this book.



# **Part I**

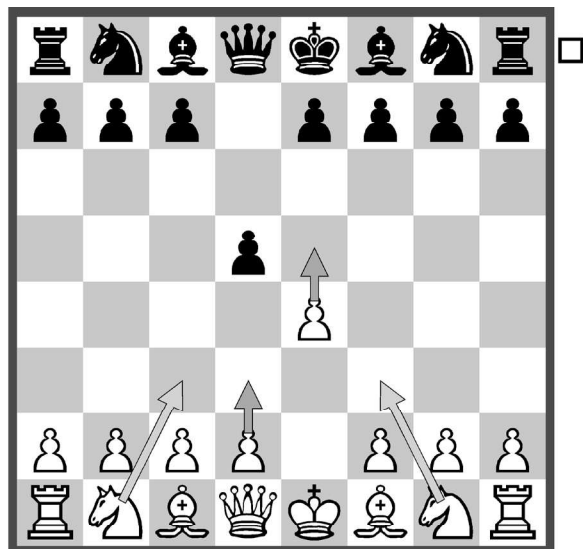
## **Early Deviations**





# Anti-Scandinavian Variations

1.e4 d5



# Chapter Guide

## Chapter 1 – Anti-Scandinavian Variations

**1.e4 d5**

**a) 2.e5 ..... 29**

**b) 2.d3 ..... 30**

Model Game 1: Torgalsen-Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1960 ..... 30

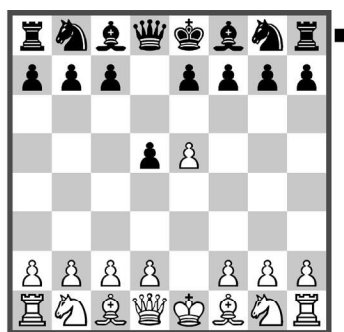
**c) 2.♘c3 ..... 36**

Model Game 2: Vandermeulen-Batrakov, Email 2012 ..... 36

**d) 2.d4 – The Blackmar Gambit ..... 37**

Model Game 3: Richter-Osipov, 2016 ..... 38

**e) 2.♘f3 – The Tennison Gambit ..... 50**

**a) 2.e5****1. e4 d5 2. e5**

Position after: 2. e5

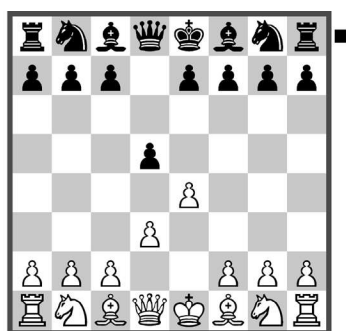
According to the Online Database (database.chessbase.com), this time-consuming move is the third most common choice, with a low statistical success rate of 41.3%, based on 7,646 games played up to and including early 2025. Given that the average score for the first player is approximately 56%, we can safely conclude that this variation favours Black. In fact, Larsen marked 2.e5 with a question mark in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* (Belgrade, 1975). The move is best met by the principled response...

**2... c5**

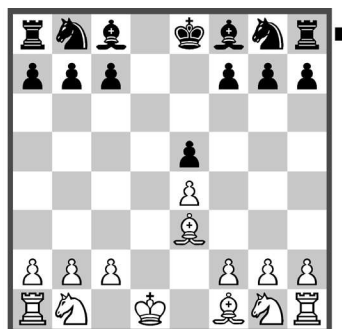
...with immediate equality. Black has laid a dynamic foundation and can now proceed with queenside development of the minor pieces, for example, ...♘c6 and ...♙f5, as well as kingside development (...e6, ...♘ge7, ...♙g6 [or ...♙g4], ...♘f5, ...♙e7, and ...0-0). Another development scheme might involve placing the kingside knight on c6 and the queenside knight on d7. Black strives for maximum activity of all the minor pieces, while White aims to prevent this. Suetin's suggestion in *Pirc – Ufimzew: Verteidigung bis Skandinavisch* (Sportverlag Berlin, 1983), 2...♙f5 3. d4 e6, is also excellent, as it leads to a position reminiscent of the Advance Variation of the Caro – Kann Defence, but more favourable for Black. Here, the c-pawn has advanced to c5 in a single move rather than two. This is, in essence, an Accelerated Caro – Kann. This approach is also Larsen's primary recommendation, as he believes Black already holds a slight advantage. In my view, we should approach this unusual variation pragmatically, using our common sense. This way, we avoid burdening ourselves with superfluous variations or unnecessary model games.

**b) 2.d3****Model Game I: Torgalsen-Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1960**

1. d3 d5 2. e4



Position after: 2. e4



Position after: 5. e3

5... f5! 6. exf5

The passive 1 e4 d5 2 d3 is the fifth most common continuation, with a notably very low success rate of 34.7%, based on 1,478 games played up to and including early 2025.

2... dxe4 3. dxe4 ♔xd1+ 4. ♔xd1 e5

A principled approach in the quest for equality—by exchanging queens early, Black slightly exposes White's king on the d-file.

5. e3

White prevents Black from developing his bishop to the classical diagonal.

(see analysis diagram next column)

White seemingly wants to prevent...f4 followed by ...♞c5, but in doing so, he accelerates Black's queenside development and concedes the initiative. A sensible continuation is 6. ♞f3!N (or 6 f3!?N) 6... ♞c6 (The alternative 6...f4 with ...♞c5 is unrealistic, as after 7 ♞d2, White increases the pressure on e5 with ♞c3, meaning Black's bishop is better placed on d6.) Play might continue 7. ♞b5 ♞d7

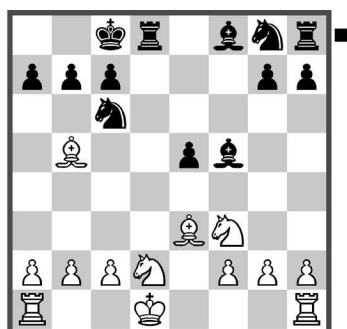
**A)** 8. exf5 ♞ge7 9. ♞e1 0-0-0 10. ♞g5 [10. ♞g5 ♞xf5+ 11. ♞c1 ♞g6 and Black seizes the initiative. After 12. ♞e6?! ♞d6 13. ♞xf8 ♞xf8 Black's pieces are more active.] 10... h6 11. ♞xe7 ♞xe7 12. ♞bd2 ♞hf8 13. ♞e2 ♞xf5 14. ♞d3 ♞ff8 and Black has the initiative.

**B)** After 8.  $\text{Qxc6}$   $\text{Qxc6}$  9.  $\text{Nxe5}$   $\text{Qxe4}$  10.  $\text{f3}$   $\text{Qd5}$  11.  $\text{c4}$   $\text{Qd6}$  12.  $\text{Qd4}$   $\text{Qe6}$ , the position is equal.

**6... Qxf5 7. Nf3**

The alternative 7.  $\text{Ne2}$ , aiming to control the square in front of Black's e5-pawn, is met by 7...  $\text{Nc6}$  8.  $\text{Ng3}$  0-0-0+ 9.  $\text{Nd2}$   $\text{Qg6}$ . In this position, Black is slightly better due to superior development, as demonstrated in D'Amore – Comp Fritz, 1995.

**7... Nc6 8. Qb5 0-0-0+ 9. Nbd2**



Position after: 9.  $\text{Nbd2}$

**9... Nd4?!**

It seems that Najdorf was uncomfortable with his isolated pawn in the centre. A stronger continuation would have been the other knight move 9...  $\text{Nge7}$ , prioritising development. If White responds with 10.  $\text{Ng5}$ , Black has the strong reply 10...  $\text{Qd7}$ , improving the rook's activity and helping to neutralise White's piece pressure, giving Black a slight edge.

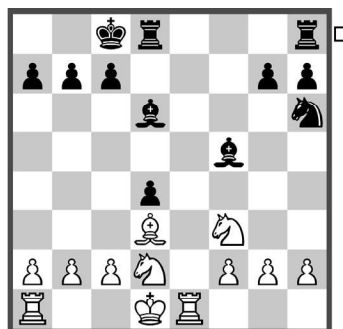
**10. Qxd4 exd4 11. Qd3**

Now White has good control over the white squares and a small advantage.

**11... Nh6 12. Re1**

White is preparing for artificial kingside castling with  $\text{Qe2-f1}$ .

**12... Qd6?!**



Position after: 12...  $\text{Qd6}?!$

A better plan might have been:

12...  $\text{g6}$ , followed by ... $\text{Qg7}$ , aiming to fianchetto the bishop and improve Black's position. However, Najdorf instead chooses 12...  $\text{Qd6}$ , seeking to give his kingside bishop more activity, though this allows White to maintain a slight advantage.

**13. Qxf5+?**

**A)** The alternative 13.  $\text{Nxd4?}$   $\text{Qxd3}$  14.  $\text{cxd3}$   $\text{Qxh2}$  also leads to an equal position, but the correct move is;

**B) 13. ♔e2!**, which gives White excellent prospects.

**13... ♞xf5**

The position is now equal.

**14. ♞c4**

A strong alternative is 14. ♔e2, followed by ♔d3, securing control over the e4-square.

**14... ♜hf8 15. ♜e4 b5?**

A more precise response in line with the positional demands is 15... c5 16. a4 ♘c7.

**16. ♞xd6+**

An interesting alternative is 16. ♞a5!?, which forces Black to respond to the threat of 17 ♞c6.

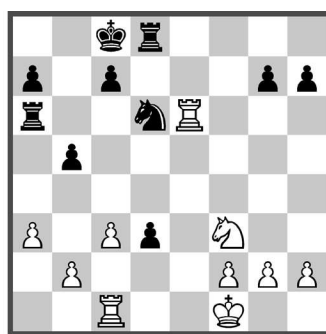
**16... ♜xd6?!**

The best move here is 16... ♞xd6!. If 17. ♜xd4, Black plays 17... ♜fe8, with sufficient compensation for the pawn. Black can strengthen his position with moves like ...♞e4, targeting the pawn on f2, or alternatively gain space on the queenside with the tempo-gaining ...c5, depending on White's response.

**17. ♔e2 ♜c6 18. ♜c1 ♜d8 19. ♔f1?**

The correct move is 19. ♞e1, as the knight is best placed on d3 in this position.

**19... d3 20. c3 ♜a6 21. a3 ♞d6 22. ♜e6?**



Position after: 22. ♜e6?

Instead, 22. ♜e5 ♜b6 23. ♜d5 ♞c4 24. ♜xd8+ ♔xd8 25. b3 ♞d6! [With the possible follow-up 25... ♞xa3 26. ♞e5!] 26. ♜d1 ♜a6 leads to an equal game.

**22... ♔b7?**

Black keeps the rook on a6 to prepare ...♞c4 without allowing 23 b3, but this is not the most accurate plan. A stronger move is 22... ♜b6!, which not only prepares 23...♞c4 but also 23...a5, followed by ...a4, fixing the b2-pawn. If White plays 23. b3, then 23... c5! with the idea of ...c4 becomes a strong response. Another benefit of placing the rook on b6 is that it defends the b5-pawn.