

The French Defense Revisited

A Practical Guide for Black

**Dragoljub Jacimovic &
Boroljub Zlatanovic**

First edition 2023 by Thinkers Publishing
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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

Email: info@thinkerspublishing.com
Website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

Managing Editor: Adrien Demuth

Assistant Editor: Daniël Vanheirzeele

Proofreading: Kai Tan

Software: Hub van de Laar

Cover Design: Iwan Kerkhof

Graphic Artist: Philippe Tonnard

Production: BESTinGraphics

ISBN: 9789464201802
D/2023/13732/15

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Boroljub Zlatanovic**

Thinkers Publishing 2023



*To our families for their
wholehearted support*

*To all French Defense
lovers worldwide*

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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Preface

For “French lovers“, their favorite defense is equal to love. It is easy to fall in love with specific structures, to learn to be patient and to have the gift of understanding chess!

The dance by Black’s pieces during deep middlegame is often the key to a deep strategy. I was only 14 when I started feeling that the French Defense would become my eternal companion, and this affinity has lasted almost half a century. I will forever remember my tough fights against Timman, Caruana, Speelman, Psakhis, Velimirovic, Lobron... and I am glad to see stars such as Carlsen, Caruana, Nepomniachtchi, Ding and So being attracted to playing the French.

I have really enjoyed reading this book. It is divided into three parts and it is expertly conceived. Zlatanovic and Jacimovic have regularly played their favorite opening for decades and they have a great sense of the nuances. Boroljub radiates creativity, energy, understanding, a talent in tactical clashes and a strong desire to win. How beautiful is his victory against the strong grandmaster Ante Brkic! I witnessed Boroljub's triumphs in tournaments facing famous grandmasters. He is indeed an eminent coach and author.

Dragoljub’s pieces are always on the right spots, guided by the hand of a skilled strategist. Our meetings at tournaments and conversations about "our opening" were a treat for me. I enjoyed watching his victory over the European champion Macieja – another shining moment of the French Defense! Dragoljub's performance at the Olympiad in Istanbul in 2000 was a great achievement, when he won the gold medal for his results on the third board!

I am glad to see the authors devote an entire chapter to rare systems. Such variations may cause you to feel uncomfortable if you are not well prepared. The book is a valuable guide for chess players who play the French Defense and those who are about to fall in love with this defense.

The book is authentic and is to be recommended. It is a delight for me and has motivated me to “dive into the French whirlpools” once again. Both less devoted players and strong grandmasters will read this book with great enthusiasm.

Grandmaster Milan Drasko, Serbia, January 2023

Introduction

For almost two centuries the French Defense has been a universally popular opening. Many authorities have made their contribution to establishing the theory. Thanks to their efforts, players nowadays can easily make a choice between the many and various options, whether peaceful or sharp, whether statically or dynamically orientated. Just as importantly, if not more so, fans of the French worldwide can today find good options to play both for a win and a draw! All this makes the French Defense very popular. However, the authors think that many lines have not been well explained or should be revisited. Some other lines deserve a better reputation. Finally we have also suggested some new approaches. Simply speaking, the French Defense looks to be inexhaustible and there cannot be enough books dedicated to it. This book takes a step in the direction of revitalizing our favorite opening!

The authors have decided to set the book in order from the less to the more popular and complex lines. In the case of the most popular moves 3. e5, 3. ♘d2 and 3. ♘c3, we decided to offer two options for Black – one aims to lead to calm play, taking care first with finding balance and equalizing; the other aims to lead to a direct game. Needless to say, we wish to arm the reader in all scenarios that can arise in a practical game of chess, depending on their intentions, wishes, preparation, motivation level, and standings etc.

In the theoretical part, we have given more or less common lines suggested and tried to set out plans and patterns for both sides. Additionally, in the model games and exercise sections, we have explained some typical mistakes, failures, tactical motifs, and strategic regroupings in action! Some meticulous readers may think that some lines have not been covered in detail in the theoretical part, but this has been decided deliberately with the intention of paying attention to the last two practical parts. We have tried to keep lines where it's always possible to win as Black (as a real fighting game), and we have also explained the variations from a psychological aspect.

Finally, we have tended to present fragments or whole games that have been played by the true authorities of the defense, simply because they are the ones who set the trends! However, unlike the majority of books, we have also presented many games played by those who are not famous, or even anonymous and unrated! In sum, everyone who has created a masterpiece should find a place in publications. Moreover, this approach should help average players who are lovers of the French to become more confident!

Dragoljub Jacimovic & Boroljub Zlatanovic, Serbia, January 2023

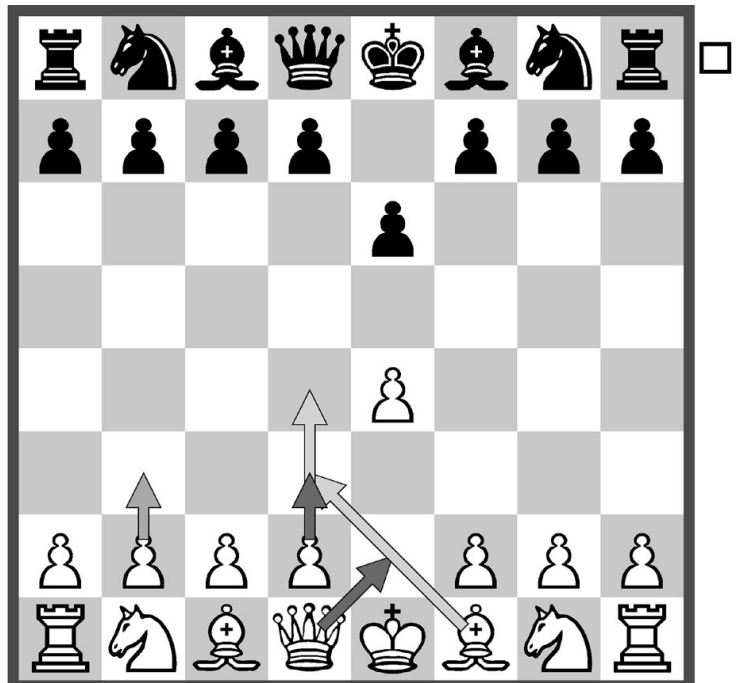
Part I

Theory



Early Sidelines

1.e4 e6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Early Sidelines

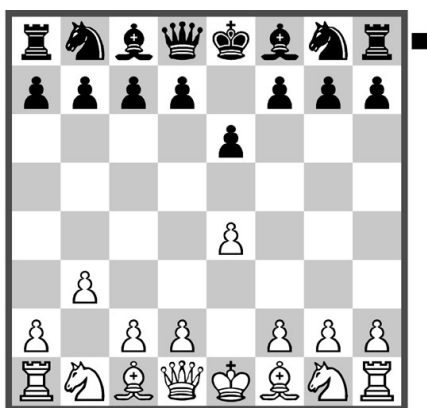
1.e4 e6

a) 2.b3.....	15
b) 2. ♔e2.....	19
c) 2.d3 – King’s Indian Attack	22
d) 2.d4 d5 3. ♕d3.....	27

White generally has many ways to answer on his second move. Therefore as a result Black has many options on his second move. This can lead to a plethora of lines and generally players should be equipped with knowledge of structures that may occur from other lines and openings. Here we present 2. b3, 2. ♔e2 and the King's Indian Attack, 2. d3. These lines sometimes follow similar patterns, but we give various different approaches, with the aim of presenting relatively simple ways to equalize and to reach sufficiently complex positions so as to keep chances even or for more. We also present a deviation on the third move 3. ♖d3. This is a unique deviation that is deserving attention at the moment. Here the reader will gain some suggestions that can easily progress beyond the opening to reach a solid middlegame.

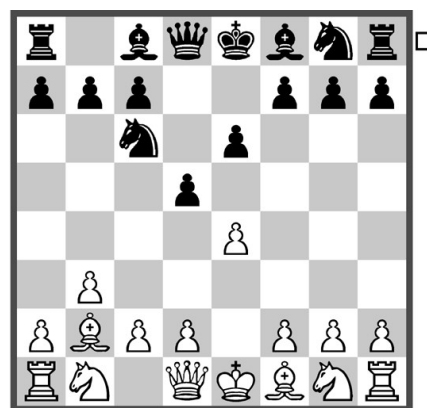
a) 2.b3

1. e4 e6 2. b3?! ■



Position after: 2. b3?!

2... d5 3. ♗b2 ♞c6 □



Position after: 3... ♞c6

This is often used by tacticians. The idea is to get out of theory, to castle queenside quickly and to attack on the dark-squared diagonal. Black has many options, and although capturing looks to be the most principled, we would rather suggest another approach – surprise someone who wanted to surprise you!

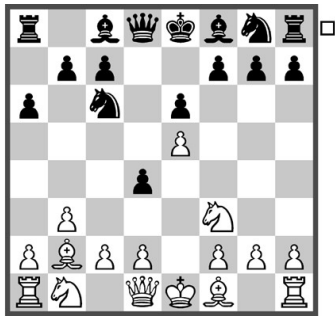
This is our suggestion here. White has a few options. The point is to wait for White's development idea before reacting. Furthermore Black waits for the potential capture to free his light-squared bishop. Another option is to go for the promising advance ...d4 from a Benoni structure. Very often in the Indian Defenses it is dangerous for

Black to meet the d5-advance with a fianchettoed bishop on b7. This is the approach we suggest here.

4. exd5

This primitive move is probably the best here.

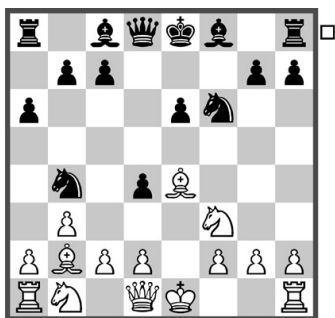
A) 4. e5 This is pointless, but possible.
4... d4!? 5. Nf3 a6!



Position after: 5... a6!

Black's knight must stay alive on c6. It is both a defender and an attacker, the key piece here.

A1) 6. Qd3 Nb4!? 7. Qe4 [7. Nxd4 c5 8. Nf3 Nxd3+ 9. cxd3 Qxd3 10. Qe2 Qxe2+ 11. Qxe2 Ne7] 7... f5!
8. exf6 Nxf6



Position after: 8... Nxf6

9. d3 [9. a3 Nxe4 10. axb4 Qxb4 11. Qxd4 0-0 12. Nc3 Ng5! Black has an advantage.] 9... Nxe4 10. dxe4 c5 11. c3 dxc3 12. Qxc3 Nd3+ 13. Qf1 Qd7! 14. Nbd2 Qe7 15. Qxg7 Rg8 16. Qh6 Qf6 Black is in a great position and has more than enough compensation.

A2) 6. Na3 Qd5 7. c4 Qe4+ 8. Qe2 Qxe2+ 9. Qxe2 f6 10. exf6 gxf6 This is excellent for Black.

B) 4. Qb5?! Another silly attempt.



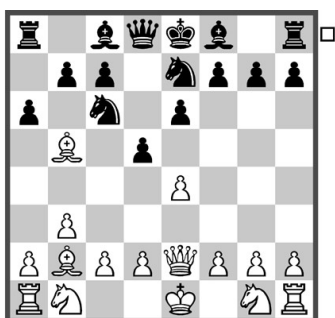
Position after: 4. Qb5?!

B1) 4... dxe4 To be fair this is also good. 5. Nc3 Qg5 This gives Black an advantage, in Tsydypov, Z (2460) – Rapport, R (2717) Danzhou 2016. Here White should choose the following. 6. Qxc6+ [6. g3? This allows Black to play 6... Qd7!. White is already hopeless without anything for the pawn and the opponent has superior development.] 6... bxc6 7. g3 Nf6 Black is in a slightly worse situation.

B2) 4... Nge7

B2.1) 5. ♖c3? d4 6. ♘ce2 a6 7. ♕d3 e5 8. f4 [8. c3 ♘g6 9. cxd4 exd4 10. ♖c1 ♖b4 11. ♕b1 c5] 8... exf4 9. ♘xf4 ♘g6 Evidently Black is better. White has passive bishops.

B2.2) 5. ♔e2 a6



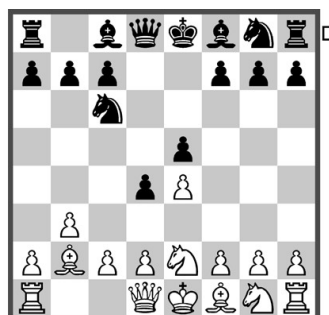
Position after: 5... a6

6. ♕xc6+ [6. ♕d3? This doesn't make sense in view of 6... ♘g6!.] 6... ♘xc6 Now White has a few options.

B2.2a) 7. f4 b6 8. ♘f3 ♕b7 9. d3 dxe4 10. ♔xe4 [10. dxe4 ♔d6! 11. g3 ♔c5 12. a3 a5 13. ♖c3 0-0-0] 10... ♔d5 11. ♔xd5 exd5 This gives Black a better endgame after ...f6!.

B2.2b) 7. exd5 ♔xd5 8. ♘f3 ♔f5 9. d3 [9. ♖a3? b5 The knight is excluded from the game, and at the same time Black installs his bishop on the most dangerous diagonal.] 9... ♕d7 10. ♖bd2 0-0-0 11. 0-0-0 e5 12. ♘e4 f6 Black is preferable with the bishop pair and perfectly restricts the opponent's minor pieces.

C) 4. ♘c3?! A strange move. Black with tempo has the following. 4... d4 5. ♘ce2 e5



Position after: 5... e5

This position should not be played with the bishop on b2.

C1) 6. f4? ♕g4 7. fxe5 [7. h3 ♕h5 8. d3 exf4+] 7... d3+

C2) 6. ♘g3 a6!

C2.1) 7. a4 ♕e6 8. ♘f3 h5 A natural reaction with the knight on g3 which gives Black an advantage.

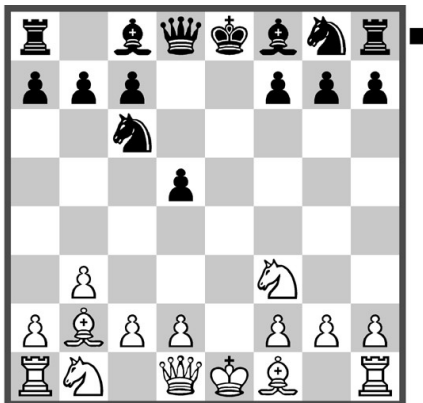
C2.2) 7. c3 A natural reaction, but it achieves nothing here. Black has the following. 7... ♘ge7 8. cxd4 exd4 The black knight goes to g6 and then f4 or e5. This cannot be prevented with 9. f4 because 9... ♘g6 10. ♔f3 ♘b4 is crushing.

C2.3) 7. ♕c4 ♘f6 8. ♘f3 b5 9. ♕d3 h5! 10. h4 [10. a4 This gives nothing in view of the following. 10... bxa4 11. ♕c4 h4 12. ♘g5 ♕e6] 10... ♕g4 Black has a clear advantage.

C3) 6. Nf3 This can be met as follows. 6... $\text{g5!?$ 7. h3 h5 8. c3 Bg7 9. cxd4 exd4 10. d3 g4 11. hxg4 hxg4 12. Rhx8 Bxh8 13. Nd2 Nge7 Black has an advantage.

C4) 6. g3 This is too slow. 6... f5! 7. d3 Nf6 8. Bg2 fxe4 9. dxe4 Bg4 10. f3 [10. h3 Bb4+! 11. c3 dxc3 12. Kxd8+ Rxd8 13. Nxc3 Bh5 14. g4 Bg6 15. f3 Rd3--] 10... Be6 11. Nh3 Bc5 f

4... exd5 5. Nf3



Position after: 5. Nf3

5... Nf6

5... f6 The plan is ... Bf5 and ... Kd7 , and probably ... 0-0-0 is also good.

6. Be2

A) 6. Bb5 Bd6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. Re1 Bg4 9. Bxc6 bxc6 10. h3 Bh5 11. d3 Nd7 This is good for Black.

B) 6. d4 This is strange with the bishop already set on b2. The idea of installing

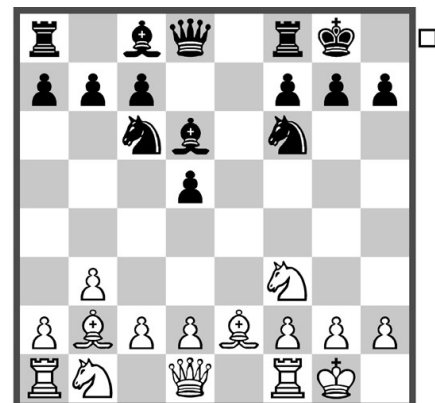
the knight on e5 can be easily parried. 6... Bd6



Position after: 6... Bd6

7. Be2 [7. Bd3 Ke7+ 8. Ke2 Kxe2+ 9. Kxe2 Nb4 10. Bd1 Bf5 11. Na3 0-0 12. 0-0 a5 This gives Black an evident advantage.] 7... 0-0 8. 0-0 Ne7 9. Ne5 Ng6 10. Bd3 c5 11. Bxg6 hxg6 12. dxc5 Bxc5 13. Bd4 b6 Black is preferred.

6... Bd6 7. 0-0 0-0



Position after: 7... 0-0

8. Na3

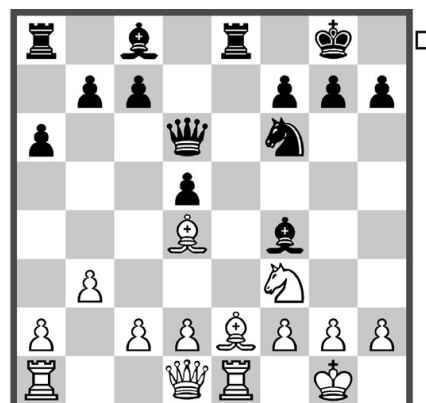
8. Nc3?! a6! The knight on c3 is very bad.

8... Re8

8... a6 This is good here, but White has
9. c4 justifying the knight's position on
a3. 9... ♖e8 This is better for Black.

9. ♞b5 ♙f4 10. ♖e1 a6 11. ♞bd4
♞xd4 12. ♙xd4 ♚d6

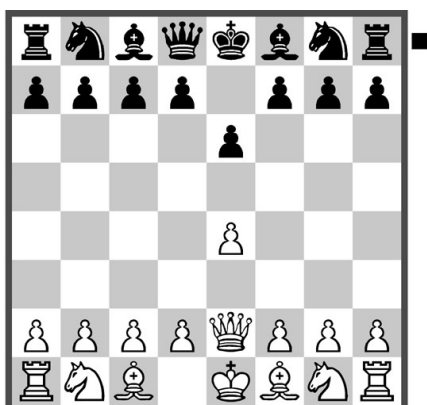
Black has got out of the difficulties and
optically seems even to be somewhat
preferable.



Position after: 12... ♚d6

b) 2. ♚e2

1. e4 e6 2. ♚e2



Position after: 2. ♚e2

This is an attempt to lead the game in
the manner of a King's Indian with
colors reversed. It can be similar to a
King's Indian Attack, but can also
generate completely different
structures and positions. We will try to
explain the patterns and ideas.

2... c5

Black players often play this move here.
The idea is to prevent d4 and secure this

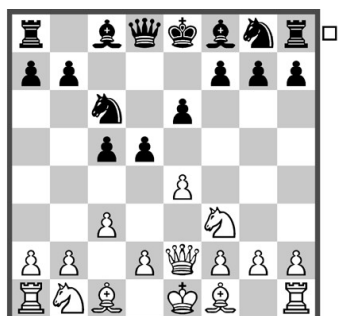
spot for the knight. White usually plays
c3.

A) 2... e5 This is another good and
simple move that will not be analyzed
here in detail. Black wants to switch to
an open game, intending for the queen
to stay on the bad e2-square.

B) If Black wants to insist on advancing
...d5, then 2... ♙e7 is the move. Some
minor problems may arise after White
advances e5 and the knight on g8 then
needs time to get activated. On the
other hand White cannot advance d4
easily and the queen is also bad on e2.
Black is generally OK.

3. ♞f3 ♞c6 4. g3

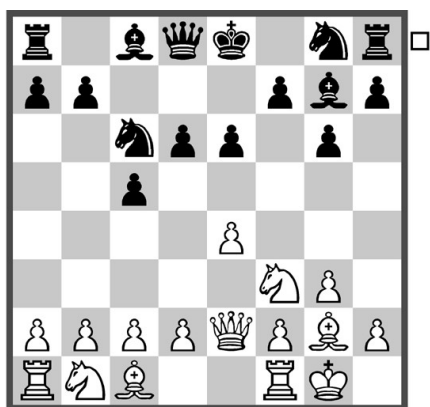
4. c3 This can be played immediately,
but here Black has 4... d5. This works
well now, because after the queen
takes, there is no longer the move ♞c3.



Position after: 4... d5

5. d3 [5. e5? This is bad. 5... ♔c7 6. g3 f6 7. exf6 ♞xf6 8. ♖g2 e5 9. 0-0 ♗d6 Black is better; 5. exd5 This is primitive. 5... ♔xd5 6. g3 e5 7. ♖g2 ♗g4 Black will castle queenside next and obtain an excellent game.] 5... d4 6. e5 dxc3 7. bxc3 b6 8. g3 ♞ge7 The idea is ...♗a6 which is great for Black.

4... g6 5. ♗g2 ♗g7 6. 0-0 d6

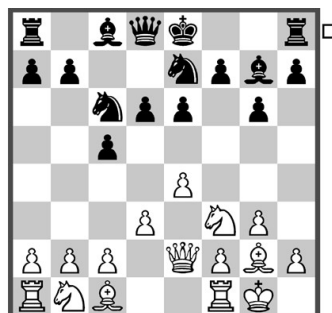


Position after: 6... d6

7. c3

A) 7. c4? This cannot be a good recommendation. 7... ♞ge7 8. ♞c3 0-0 9. d3 a6 10. a4 b6 This gave Black an advantage, in Kamsky, G (2657) – Grischuk, A (2764) chess.com INT 2022.

B) 7. d3 Another common move. 7... ♞ge7 Now White has a few possible setups.



Position after: 7... ♞ge7

B1) 8. c3 b6 9. ♞bd2 0-0



Position after: 9... 0-0

Now White has a few options for the rook.

B1.1) 10. ♖e1 ♔d7 11. ♞f1 ♗a6 12. h4 ♖ae8 13. ♞1h2 f5 This, for instance, is definitely preferable for Black.

B1.1a) 14. exf5 ♞xf5 15. a4 [15. g4? ♞h6! ♣] 15... e5!

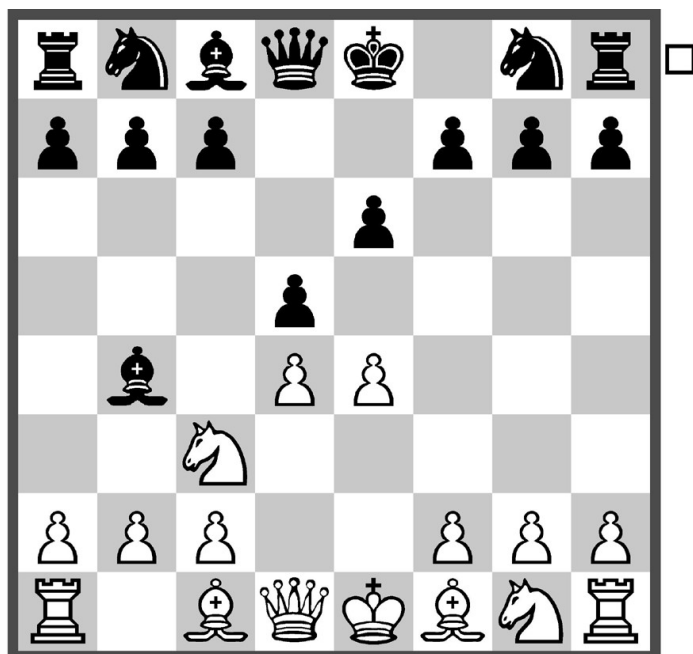
B1.1b) 14. h5?! gxh5! 15. ♞g5 h4



The Winawer



Variation – 3. c3 b4

















1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.  c3  b4



Chapter Guide

Chapter 5 – The Winawer Variation 3. c3 b4

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.  c3  b4

a) 4.--.....	103
b) 4.e5 c5 5.--.....	111
c) 4.e5 c5 5.a3  xc3 6.bxc3  a5.....	118
d) 4.e5 c5 5.a3  xc3 6.bxc3  e7 7.  f3.....	126
e) 4.e5 c5 5.a3  xc3 6.bxc3  e7 7.a4.....	129
f) 4.e5 c5 5.a3  xc3 6.bxc3  e7 7.h4  c7.....	135
g) 4.e5 c5 5.a3  xc3 6.bxc3  e7 7.h4  a5.....	137
h) 4.e5 c5 5.a3  xc3 6.bxc3  e7 7.  g4.....	139

For decades, White's main response was the most critical 3. ♘c3 to gain more space, together with domination on the dark squares. However thanks to authorities such as Nimzowitsch, Botvinnik, Korchnoi, Uhlmann, and in modern times Vitiugov, Nepomniachtchi and Rapport (who revitalized a good idea by Szymon Winawer), we now have a popular, promising and solid opening option for Black.

As before, here we offer two approaches in the Winawer main line: first, 6... ♙a5, which leads to more positional play with the idea of trading bishops and occupying the light squares; and secondly, 6... ♘e7, which leads to either the sharp lines after 7. ♙g4 or 7. h4, or alternatively to strategic play after 7. a4 or 7. ♘f3.

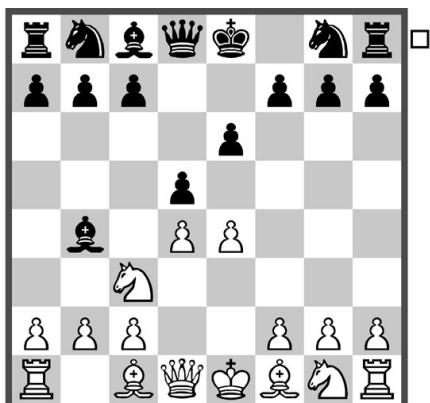
Whichever approach Black chooses here, he will be ready to confront the fight after studying our material. Of course, in order to obtain a full and complete understanding, we suggest that you do not skip the model games and exercises that are set out.

a) 4.--

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘c3

This is the most played continuation in this position for White!

3... ♙b4



Position after: 3... ♙b4

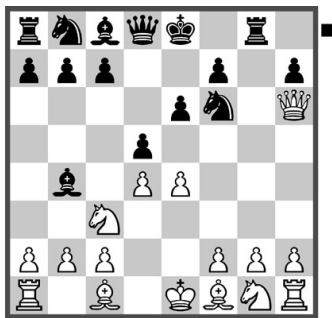
Here Black has several choices. An important continuation is 3... ♘f6, but we have decided to choose the text move instead.

This is the first crossroads for White, with many moves. Here we will analyze: 4. ♙g4, 4. ♙d3, 4. ♙d2, 4. ♙d3, 4. ♘e2 and 4. a3. The move 4. exd5 has already been analyzed in the chapter on the Exchange Variation; and the move 4. e5, being the most dangerous and the most principled move, will be analyzed later in detail.

4. a3

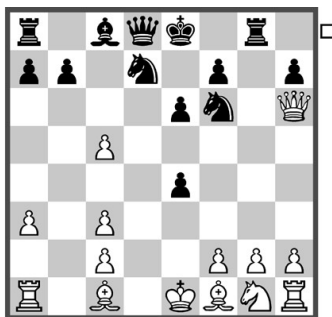
This is a famous gambit widely used by such great players from the past such as Alekhine and Fischer. Nowadays it is known to be not dangerous.

A) 4. ♔g4 Sharp play with the idea of exploiting the vulnerability of the g7-pawn. 4... ♞f6 5. ♕xg7 ♖g8 6. ♕h6



Position after: 6. ♕h6

6... c5 The principal move. Black wants to punish White's queen diversion. [6... ♖g6 7. ♕f4 or 7. ♕h4 7... ♖g4 8. ♕h6 ♖g6 This may lead to repetition.] 7. a3 [7. e5 This is not good. 7... cxd4 8. exf6 dxc3 9. b3 ♞d7 After this Black is preferred; 7. dxc5 ♖g6 8. ♕h4 ♞xe4 9. ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10. a3 ♞xc5 11. ♞xe4 dxe4 Black has a good game.] 7... ♞xc3+ 8. bxc3 dxe4 9. dxc5 This is less principled. 9... ♞bd7 Black is fine after this.



Position after: 9... ♞bd7

10. ♞e2 [10. ♞e3? This allows the following. 10... ♞g4 11. ♕xh7 ♞df6 12. ♕h4 ♞xe3 13. fxe3 ♞g4 Black has a serious advantage] 10... ♞xc5 Black is good.

B) 4. ♕d3 The idea is to support the vulnerable pawn and prepare to castle long. The problem is that it exposes the queen. 4... dxe4 5. ♕xe4 ♞f6



Position after: 5... ♞f6

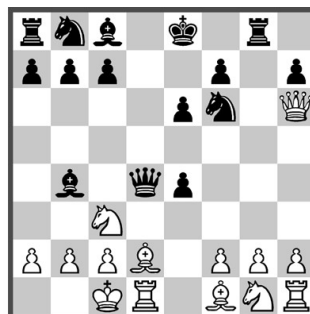
B1) 6. ♕d3 c5 7. ♞f3 ♞c6 8. dxc5 [8. ♞e3?! ♞d5 This is preferable for Black.] 8... ♕xd3 9. ♞xd3 ♞xc5 The position is balanced.

B2) 6. ♕h4 ♕d5 A simple way to equalize. 7. ♞d2 ♞xc3 8. ♞xc3 ♕e4+ 9. ♕xe4 ♞xe4 10. ♞e2 [10. ♞b4?! ♞c6] 10... ♞c6



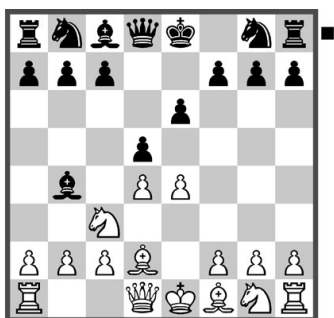
Position after: 10... ♞c6

11. d5!? [11. ♖d1 ♙e7 12. f3 ♘xc3 13. ♘xc3 ♖d8 This is somewhat preferable for Black.] 11... ♘xc3 12. dxc6 ♘xe2 13. ♙xe2 bxc6 This leads to a balanced endgame after the following. 14. 0-0-0 ♙b7 15. h4 ♙e7 16. ♖h3 ♖hd8



Position after: 8. 0-0-0

C) 4. ♙d2 Another attempt to organize castling queenside quickly with the active move ♙g4.



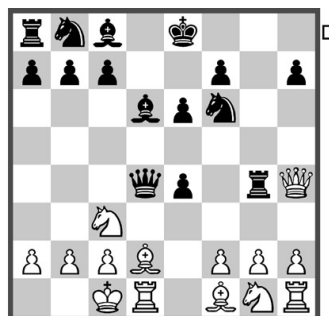
Position after: 4. ♙d2

C1) 4... ♘e7 This is a safe way to secure the g7-pawn and calm down White's aggressive opening play. 5. ♙d3 [5. a3 ♙xc3 6. ♙xc3 dxe4 7. ♙g4 0-0 8. ♙xe4 ♘d7 9. 0-0-0 ♘f6 After ...b6 and ...♙b7 Black also has the resource ...♙d5 and active piece play.] 5... b6 6. ♘f3 ♙a6 This can lead to a strategic game.

C2) 4... dxe4 5. ♙g4 ♘f6 6. ♙xg7 ♖g8 7. ♙h6 ♙xd4 8. 0-0-0 This is a famous position. Black has a few options.

(see analysis diagram next column)

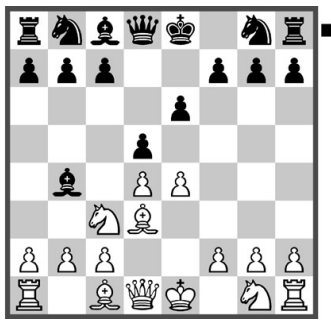
8... ♙f8 9. ♙f4 ♙d6 10. ♙h4 [10. ♙h6 ♘bd7 This is a significant improvement for Black – the bishop is better on d6 and there are no tactics related to ♘b5.] 10... ♖g4



Position after: 10... ♖g4

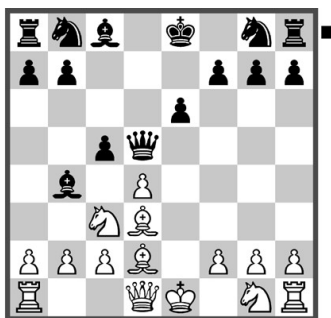
11. ♙h6 [11. ♙h3? ♙xf2 12. ♘b5 ♘c6 13. ♘xd6+ cxd6 Black is better.] 11... ♘bd7 [11... ♖g6 This may lead to a draw by repetition.] 12. f3 [12. ♙e2 ♖xg2 13. ♘h3 a6 14. ♘g5 ♙e5 15. ♖dg1 ♖xg1+ 16. ♖xg1 ♙xh2 Black is preferable.] 12... ♖g6 13. ♙h4 a6 Black eliminates tactics by controlling the b5-square, with a good game. Black will try to find a safe spot for the queen and organize queenside castling. Many of the lines need to be tested in practice.

D) 4. ♖d3 The idea of this move is to install the bishop on the good "Catalan diagonal" after taking back on e4. This was an effective weapon for White in the 1950's, but Black soon found various ways to calm down White's initiative. There are two options and we will give both here.



Position after: 4. ♖d3

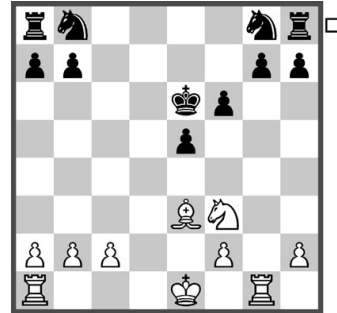
D1) 4... c5 5. exd5 [5. ♖f3 This is bad in view of the following. 5... c4 6. ♗e2 ♖f6 7. e5 ♘e4 8. ♖d2 ♘xd2 9. ♙xd2 ♖d7 Black is excellent – White has nothing on the kingside.] 5... ♙xd5 6. ♖d2



Position after: 6. ♖d2

Now there is an interesting forced line. 6... ♗xc3 7. ♗xc3 cxd4 8. ♗xd4 e5 9. ♗c3 [9. ♗e3 This is less aggressive. Black has the following. 9... ♙xg2 10. ♙f3 ♙xf3 11. ♘xf3 f6

12. ♖g1 ♗f7 13. ♗c4+ ♗e6 14. ♗xe6+ ♗xe6



Position after: 14... ♗xe6

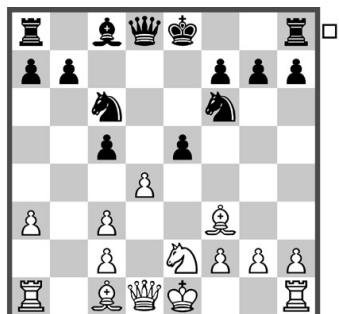
15. ♖xg7 b6 16. 0-0-0 ♘e7 All of White's pieces look dangerous, but this is only optically the case; Black has ...♘bc6, later neutralizing White's artillery.] 9... ♙xg2 10. ♙f3 ♙xf3 11. ♘xf3 f6 12. ♖g1 ♗f7 13. ♗c4+ ♗e6 14. ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 15. ♖xg7 ♘e7 16. 0-0-0 ♘bc6 Black looks good.

D2) 4... dxe4 This is another, different approach. 5. ♗xe4 ♘f6 6. ♗f3 c5



Position after: 6... c5

7. ♘ge2 [7. a3 ♗xc3+ 8. bxc3 ♘c6 9. ♘e2 This will transpose to the main line; 7. ♗e3 cxd4 8. ♙xd4 ♙xd4 9. ♗xd4 ♘c6 10. ♗xc6+ bxc6 This is clearly good for Black.] 7... ♘c6 8. a3 ♗xc3+ 9. bxc3 e5



Position after: 9... e5

D2.1) 10. d5? e4! Black has an advantage.

D2.2) 10. ♘g5 This looks aggressive. 10... cxd4 11. cxd4

D2.2a) 11... 0-0! Correct. 12. ♘xc6 bxc6

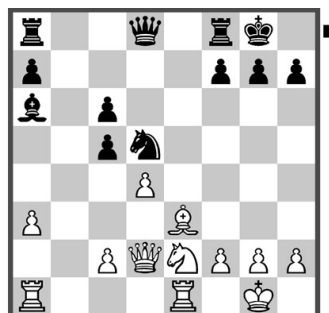


Position after: 12... bxc6

13. 0-0 [13. dxe5 ♚a5+ 14. ♘d2 ♚xe5 Black is optically preferred already.] 13... h6 14. ♘h4 ♘a6 The position is about equal.

D2.2b) 11... ♘xd4? 12. ♘xd4 ♚xd4? 13. ♚xd4 exd4 14. 0-0-0 h6 15. ♚he1+ ♘e6 16. ♘xf6 gxf6 17. ♘xb7 ♚b8 18. ♘d5 ♚e7 19. ♚xd4 This should give White the win, as in Van Foreest, J (2614) – Zlatanovic, B (2376) Skopje 2018.

D2.3) 10. ♘xc6+ bxc6 11. dxe5 [11. 0-0 exd4 12. cxd4 ♘a6 13. ♚e1 0-0 14. ♘e3 ♘d5 15. ♚d2?!



Position after: 15. ♚d2?!

Black has a dream position after the following. 15... ♘xe2! 16. ♚xe2 c4 17. ♚ee1?! ♚e8 18. ♚e2 c3! Black eventually won, in Garic, R (2262) – Zlatanovic, B (2414) Paracin 2013.] 11... ♚xd1+ 12. ♚xd1 ♘g4 13. ♚e1 ♘xe5 This is great for Black.

E) 4. ♘ge2 dxe4 5. a3 ♘xc3+ 6. ♘xc3 ♘c6

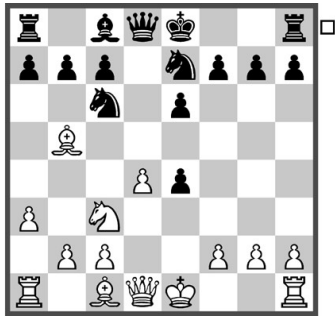


Position after: 6... ♘c6

E1) 7. d5?! exd5 8. ♚xd5 [8. ♘xd5? This does not make sense. 8... ♘e6 9. c4 ♘ge7 White is just lost.] 8... ♘e6 With this simple move Black obtains a promising position, for instance after

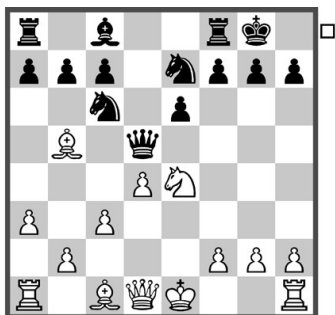
the following. 9. ♖xe4 ♘f6 10. ♖a4 ♖d4 11. ♗b5 ♖xa4 12. ♗xa4 0-0-0

E2) 7. ♗b5 ♘ge7



Position after: 7... ♘ge7

E2.1) 8. ♘xe4?! Premature. Now Black has the following. 8... 0-0 9. c3 ♖d5!



Position after: 9... ♖d5!

10. ♗d3 e5 Black has the initiative.

E2.2) 8. ♗e3 0-0 9. ♖d2 e5 [9... f5 This gives a more complex game and is OK for Black.] 10. dxe5 [10. ♗xc6 ♘xc6 11. dxe5 ♖xd2+ 12. ♗xd2 ♘xe5 This changes nothing and Black is even optically preferable.] 10... ♖xd2+ 11. ♗xd2 ♘xe5 12. ♘xe4 ♗f5 Black has a solid end-game with active play where he can

even force White to play with the isolated e4-pawn.

E2.3) 8. ♗g5 The idea is to damage Black's structure. 8... f6 [8... 0-0 9. ♗xc6 bxc6 10. ♖d2 f6 11. ♗e3 f5



Position after: 11... f5

Although this has not been tested sufficiently, it deserves our genuine recommendation. Here, for instance, Black is excellent after the following. 12. f3 ♘d5 13. fxe4 ♘xe3 14. ♖xe3 ♖h4+ 15. g3 f4] 9. ♗e3 0-0 10. ♖d2 a6



Position after: 10... a6

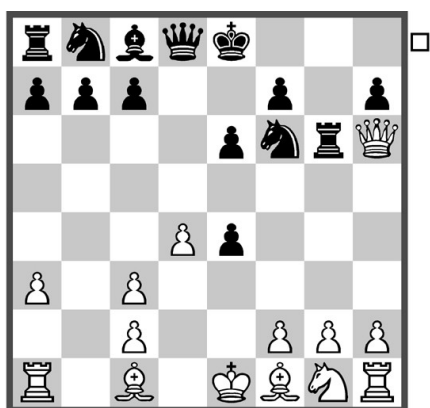
[10... f5 This can transpose to 8. ♗e3.] 11. ♗e2 [11. ♗xc6 ♘xc6 12. 0-0-0 b6 13. ♘xe4 ♗b7 Black is OK. He has less space but a more powerful bishop; 11. ♗c4 f5 Black has ... ♘d5 and is doing well due to

play on the light squares.] 11... f5 12. 0-0-0 ♘d5 13. f3 This is a typical move in this line. However it is not dangerous for Black. 13... f4 14. ♘xd5 ♙xd5 15. ♙xf4 exf3 [15... ♙a2? loses to 16. ♙c3!] 16. ♙xf3 ♙a2 17. ♙e3 ♙d7 A complex and unclear game ensues.

4... ♙xc3+ 5. bxc3 dxe4 6. ♙g4 ♘f6 7. ♙xg7 ♖g8 8. ♙h6

Black can go for various schemes here. The queen can be attacked, but there is no need to rush. The knight can go to d7 or c6. The bishop can reach a6 and fianchettoed sooner or later. We suggest choosing the simple concept here – Black kicks the queen and then goes for the same setup in all cases.

8... ♖g6



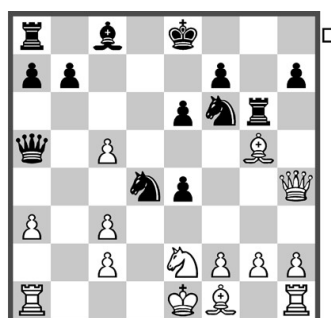
Position after: 8... ♖g6

9. ♙d2

In the past, there was the tenet advice that: "if ♙e3 is played, then ...♘c6" (the idea being ...♘e7-f5); and "if ♙d2

is played, then ...♘bd7". Nowadays this is no longer the absolute case.

A) 9. ♙h4 With the queen here, the c3-pawn is not protected. 9... c5 10. dxc5 ♙a5 11. ♘e2 ♘c6 12. ♙g5 ♘d4!



Position after: 12... ♘d4!

An interesting move which needs deeper investigation. 13. ♖d1 ♘xc2+ 14. ♙d2 ♙d7 [14... ♖xg5 15. ♙xg5 e3+ 16. ♙xc2 ♙a4+ 17. ♙c1 ♙xa3+ This may lead to a beautiful perpetual.] 15. ♙xf6 ♖xf6 16. ♙xf6 ♖d8 Black has a strong attack. 17. ♘f4 ♙a4+ 18. ♙d3 ♘xa3 19. ♙e2 ♙xd1+ 20. ♖xd1 exd3+ 21. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 22. ♘xd3 ♘c4 An equal endgame results.

B) 9. ♙e3 ♘c6 10. ♘e2 b6

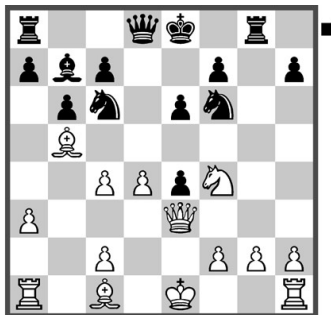


Position after: 10... b6

B1) 11. c4 ♞e7 This is a well-known resource with the queen on e3. 12. ♙b2 ♜f5 13. ♚f4 ♞d6 Black targets the vulnerable c4-square. 14. ♚e5 This indirectly defends the pawn, threatening ♜f4 at the same time. 14... ♖g8 Black has a good game, threatening ...♞d7 and ...♞xc4.

B2) 11. ♞f4 ♖g8

B2.1) 12. ♙b5? This happened in the author's game which continued as follows. 12... ♙b7 13. c4



Position after: 13. c4

B2.1a) 13... ♚d6! This would force White to go for the following line. 14. c5 [14. ♙b2?! 0-0-0 15. 0-0-0? loses to 15... ♞g4 16. ♚d2 ♞xd4 17. ♙xd4 e5] 14... bxc5 15. dxc5 ♚e5 16. ♖b1 0-0-0 The complications are finally in Black's favor.

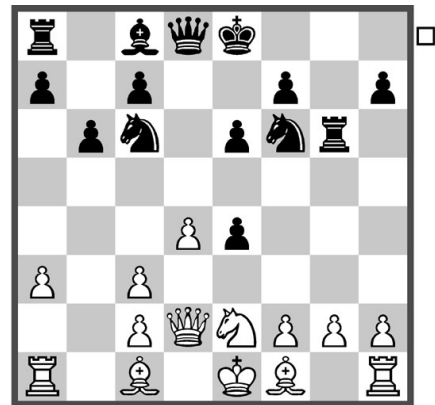
B2.1b) 13... a6?! 14. ♙xc6+ ♙xc6 15. h3 ♚e7 16. ♙b2 0-0-0 17. 0-0-0 ♙b7 18. g3 ♞e8 19. ♖he1 ♞d6 20. ♚b3 b5 Black has an excellent game.

B2.2) 12. f3 This leads to sharp play. 12... exf3 13. ♚xf3 ♙b7 14. ♙b5 ♚d6 15. ♞h3 ♚d5 The situation is simplified, finally giving Black an excellent game after, for instance: 16. ♙d3 ♚xf3 17. gxf3 ♞e7.

9... ♞c6

Here the knight prevents the active advance c4.

10. ♞e2 b6



Position after: 10... b6

The same scheme works if the queen retreats to e3.

11. c4

A) 11. a4?! This is pointless with the knight already placed on c6. White players often play this, but Black has the following move. 11... ♙a6!

A1) 12. ♙a3? ♞d5! White is strategically outplayed, without a normal move. 13. ♞f4 This can be met as follows. 13... ♞xf4 14. ♚xf4 [14. ♙xa6?

e3! 15. fxe3 ♖xg2–+] 14... ♙xf1
White is in ruins.

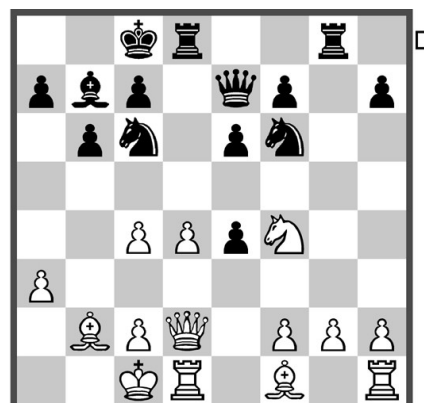
A2) 12. ♘f4 ♙xf1 13. ♘xg6 ♙xg2
14. ♖g1 hxg6 15. ♖xg2 ♚d5 Black is
better due to the strong control of the
light squares.

B) 11. ♘f4 ♖g8 12. ♙b2 ♙b7
13. 0-0-0 ♚e7 This is balanced and can
transpose to the main line.

11... ♙b7 12. ♙b2

12. ♘f4? This fails to 12... ♚xd4–+.

12... ♚e7 13. ♘f4 ♖g8 14. 0-0-0 0-0-0



Position after: 14... 0-0-0

15. d5

The only way to secure the d-pawn is to
advance it.

15. ♙e2? ♘xd4 16. ♙xd4 e5–+

15... e5 16. ♘e2 ♚c5

Black has strong control of the center
and has good practical chances. White
has problems finishing his development
and with utilizing the bishop pair.

b) 4.e5 c5 5.--

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘c3 ♚b4 4. e5

The most principled and aggressive
continuation.

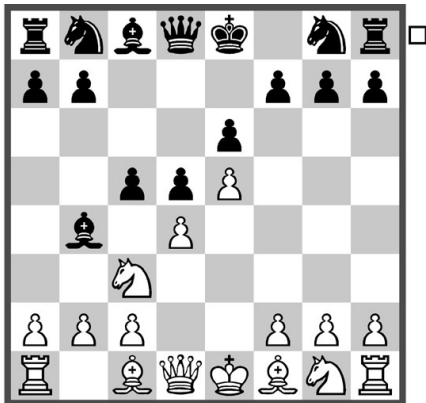


Position after: 4. e5

4... c5

Black strikes while the d4-pawn is not well supported. White has a few solutions. Here we will analyze: 5. ♖g4, 5. dxc5, 5. ♘f3, and 5. ♙d2. The most popular and dangerous move 5. a3 will be analyzed later in detail.

4... ♞e7 This is a possible move order as well and in most cases leads to a transposition.



Position after: 4... c5

5. ♙d2

A) 5. ♖g4 A sharp move which is a relatively frequent choice of tacticians, especially in rapid. However, Black has clear ways to neutralize it. 5... ♞e7



Position after: 5... ♞e7

A1) 6. ♚xg7? This leads to a forced line where Black is better after the following. 6... ♜g8 7. ♚xh7 cxd4 8. a3 ♚a5 9. axb4 ♚xa1 10. ♞ce2 ♞bc6

A2) 6. ♘f3 cxd4 7. ♘xd4 Here Black has many options – probably the simplest is as follows. 7... ♞g6 8. ♙d3 0-0 9. ♘f3 ♞c6 10. ♚h5 ♙e7



Position after: 10... ♙e7

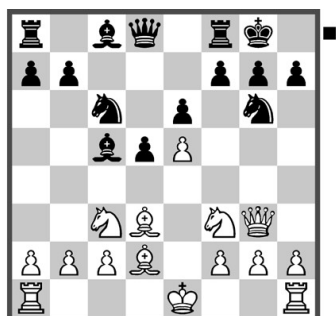
Here the idea is ... ♞b4 to eliminate White's annoying bishop. 11. a3 ♙d7 This is OK for Black. He can opt for ... ♙e8 with ... f6 and for ... ♚c7.

A3) 6. dxc5 ♞bc6

Position after: 6... ♞bc6

A3.1) 7. ♙d2 0-0 8. ♙d3 ♞g6 9. ♘f3 ♙xc5 10. ♚g3

(see analysis diagram next page)



Position after: 10. ♖g3

[10. ♖h5 ♘b4 This is good for Black.]

A3.1a) 10... ♗d7 11. 0-0-0 [11. h4? ♖b8! ♣; 11. 0-0 This is not logical. 11... ♘d4! 12. ♘xd4 ♗xd4 Black is to be preferred.] 11... ♘b4 This is good for Black. 12. ♗xg6 Keep in mind that after this move you should automatically take with 12... fxf6. Even if there is no mate on the h-file, this should still be preferable due to play on the f-file.

A3.1b) 10... ♘b4?! This is risky because it wastes time, but it should still be OK after: 11. h4! ♘xd3+ 12. cxd3 ♘e7.

A3.2) 7. ♘f3 0-0



Position after: 7... 0-0

A3.2a) 8. ♗d3 f5! 9. exf6 ♗xf6



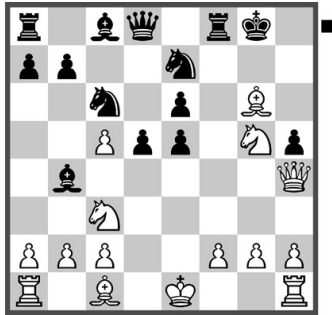
Position after: 9... ♗xf6

A3.2a1) 10. ♗g5 This gives combinatory play after the following. 10... e5 11. ♖h4 e4 12. ♗xf6 gxf6 13. ♖xf6 exd3 14. cxd3 d4 15. ♖g5+ ♗f7 16. ♖h5+ ♗g7 17. ♖g5+ [17. ♘g5? ♖g8+] 17... ♗f7 A draw by perpetual ensues.

A3.2a2) 10. 0-0 h6 For instance the following line is very promising for Black. 11. ♖g3 ♗xc5 12. ♗f4 ♖f8 13. ♘e2 ♘f5

A3.2a3) 10. ♖h5 h6! 11. 0-0 ♗d7 Black activates the bishop via e8 with a good game after the following. 12. ♗e3 ♗e8 13. ♖g4 ♗xc3 14. bxc3 e5

A3.2b) 8. ♖h5 f6 A sharp move. Black has no reasons to decline the challenge. [8... f5 This is also quite possible] 9. exf6 [9. ♗d3 A prelude to wild complications. 9... g6 10. ♖h4 fxe5 11. ♘g5 h5 12. ♗xg6



Position after: 12. ♖xg6

12... ♘g6 13. ♙xh5 ♖f6 14. ♙h7+ ♗f8 15. ♙h6+ ♗g8 This leads to a forced perpetual.] 9... ♖xf6 10. ♘g5 ♖f7 11. ♘d3 g6 12. ♙h4 e5 The position is sharp and double-edged.

B) 5. dxc5 ♘e7 There are other good moves here, but we suggest this flexible move. 6. ♘f3 [6. ♙g4 This transposes to the lines we presented above with 5. ♙g4.] 6... ♘d7



Position after: 6... ♘d7

7. ♘d3 [7. a3? A waste of time. 7... ♘xc3+ 8. bxc3 ♙c7 After this Black is already somewhat better; 7. ♘f4?! ♘g6 8. ♘g3? ♙a5!] 7... ♘xc5 8. 0-0

(see analysis diagram next column)



Position after: 8. 0-0

8... ♘xd3 [8... 0-0?? 9. ♘xh7+ ♗xh7 10. ♘g5+ ♗g6 11. ♙g4 f5 12. ♙h3 ♖h8 13. ♙g3+—] 9. ♙xd3 [9. cxd3 0-0 This does not change the evaluation much and Black is doing fine.] 9... 0-0 White has no attack and Black has good prospects on both flanks.

C) 5. ♘f3 An interesting move. White is ready to recapture on d4 with the queen and transfer it to g4. 5... ♘e7



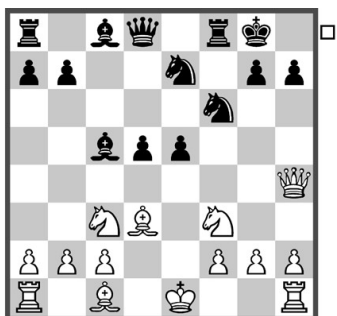
Position after: 5... ♘e7

A flexible move.

C1) 6. a3 ♘xc3+ 7. bxc3 ♘d7 This is a transposition to the Winawer main line which we will analyze later.

C2) 6. dxc5 ♘d7 7. ♙d4 This gives Black tempi and White is in ruins after

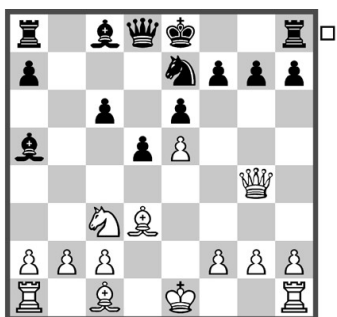
the following. 7... ♘xc5 8. ♔g4 0-0 9. ♘d3 f5 10. exf6? ♖xf6 11. ♔h4 e5!



Position after: 11... e5!

12. ♖xe5 ♖f5 13. ♘xf5 ♘xf5

C3) 6. ♘d3 Pointless. 6... cxd4 7. ♖xd4 ♖bc6 [7... ♖d7 8. f4 ♖c5 9. 0-0 ♖xd3 10. cxd3] 8. ♖xc6 If White must play this then it is clear that he has made a mistake. Black is perfect after the following. 8... bxc6 [8... ♖xc6 9. ♔g4 ♔f8] 9. ♔g4 ♘a5



Position after: 9... ♘a5

10. 0-0 [10. ♔xg7? ♖g8 11. ♔f6 d4+] 10... ♖g6 11. ♖a4 [11. f4 ♘a6! Black is good.] 11... 0-0 12. ♔h5 f5 13. exf6 ♔xf6 Black has a solid position.

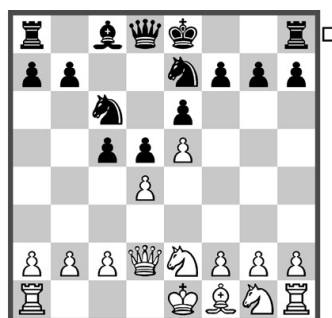
C4) 6. ♘d2 This looks logical. 6... cxd4 7. ♖b5 ♘xd2+ This transposes to lines which we will

analyze later in this chapter. [7... ♘c5 This is playable. 8. b4 a6 9. bxc5 axb5 10. ♖xd4 ♘d7 Black is solid.]

5... ♖e7 6. ♖b5

A) 6. a3

B) 6. ♖ce2 The idea is to trade the dark-squared bishop and to install the knight on d4, creating prospects for a better endgame. 6... ♘xd2+ 7. ♔xd2 ♖bc6



Position after: 7... ♖bc6

B1) 8. f4 ♔b6! [8... cxd4?! 9. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 10. ♔xd4 ♖f5 This may seem to gain tempi, but White has a plus after 11. ♔c5.] 9. c3 cxd4 10. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 11. cxd4 ♘d7 Black is already somewhat better.

B2) 8. c3 This is interesting and it seems that White has time to support his base, but in fact Black is doing perfectly. 8... cxd4 9. cxd4 ♘d7 10. ♖f3 [10. f4?! This wastes time and gives Black an initiative after 10... ♔b6.] 10... ♔b6 This is great for Black.

B3) 8. ♖f3 ♘d7 9. c3 [9. dxc5?! This