

Viktor Moskalenko

The Fully-Fledged French

Fresh Strategies and Resources for Dynamic Chess Players

New In Chess 2021

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On The Fully-Fledged French

Compared to *The Even More Flexible French*, *The Fully-Fledged French* has:

- 56 new games
- new chapters, updates and expansions in every chapter
- hundreds of improvements, alternatives and new ideas.

For this project, I've checked many recent books on the French Defence, and discovered that most of these books are mainly 'engine work' aimed to look for either a 'professional advantage' for White (\pm) or equality for Black ($=$). This is not a very creative approach, and it doesn't teach the reader anything about the concepts behind the moves.

In *The Fully-Fledged French* I have re-structured many chapters; lines that have become more important have been turned into separate games, or even separate chapters. 'Old' games have been either replaced by others or updated. For example, the Part on the Advance Variation now features 10 games instead of 22. Also, recently at the Tata Steel Chess Tournament, Pentala Harikrishna surprised Nils Grandelius with the line with ...♙d7 and ...♙b5, but I already concluded in *The Even More Flexible French* that this line is too slow, and therefore I have not included it in this book either.

As a result, you see before you a book that may look rather similar to my previous books on the French Defence, but in fact by far the most of the material is new. I guess we can speak of 'new wine in old bottles'!



Foreword

Fresh strategies and resources for dynamic chess players



'May your will be done! May the Force be with you!' – 'Zarathustra'

The French Defence remains a fantastic and inexhaustible opening. This is already the fourth book I've written on it! Through the years, not only new move sequences but also entirely new concepts keep being introduced into this opening. In the French, a good knowledge of these numerous basic ideas remains the most important tool for the practical player, rather than a memorization and repetition of long, forced lines – even in this computer age! In most of the variations, a tense battle starts already after the first few moves.

This new book, *The Fully-Fledged French*, continues to mix various aspects as did my earlier works *The Flexible French* and *The Even More Flexible French*: my broad experience in this opening (this book also contains many of my own games), my vision of its concepts and analysis of creative new ideas that keep coming up. The purpose of these books has always been to offer a combative repertoire to black players. This is the case especially in this new book, in which I have concentrated more on Black and removed a number of less relevant lines. Still, there is also much to learn here

for white players, and after my two previous books on the French it has become clear that my readers have acquired a better understanding of the opening as a whole.

With 1...e7-e6, Black builds a fortress with a closed centre, so the main roads to success are those leading to a game where White's extra tempo is not so important. This defence is also full of strategic as well as tactical resources, and according to many masters, its lines are among the most complicated in chess. There are also several forgotten systems that are still full of possibilities, sharp and exotic lines, original ideas and much more.



The author's workshop

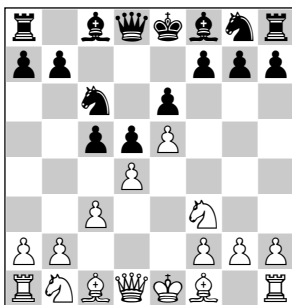
As usual, my approach to the French in this book is more of a strategic nature, with lots of practical pieces of advice that reveal the key resources of the opening. Of course, all the important tactics are also highlighted, some of which have been presented as exercises for the reader.

I have carefully chosen the most interesting games – in total, 54 by other players and 18 of my own. In my analyses of these games I have strived for a good understanding of the intentions of the players, during the opening and also beyond it, into the French middlegame and even sometimes into a French ending.

Below I give short introductions to each of the five Parts of this book.

Part One – The Advance Variation

Chapter 1: to begin with, we focus on the 'Universal System' with an early development of Black's king's knight:



5...♖h6 (Game 1) and especially 5...♗e7!? (Game 2). Black's counterplay here (mainly his pressure on d4) is quite simple and effective.

If you are looking for more complications, then Part 1 also offers:

Chapter 2: the old Gulko System reloaded: 5...♗d7 and 6...f6, with a direct attack on the advanced e5-pawn.

Chapter 6: the most ambitious attack by Black's queen: 5...♔b6, combined with the blocking idea ...c5-c4. This is the oldest system against the Advance Variation.

The remaining Chapters (3-5) describe improved methods for dealing with White's gambits and other common set-ups.

Part Two – The Tarrasch Variation

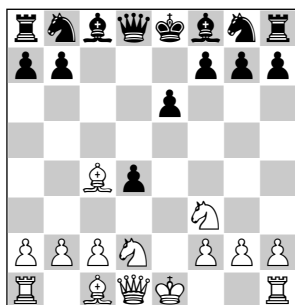
Throughout Chapters 7-13, you will come across many interesting ideas that have not been noticed (or properly understood) before.

For instance, recently I came back to the closed anti-Tarrasch system ...b7-b6/...♙a6, and actually 'fell in love' with it:



Position after Black's 6th move (**Chapter 10**, Games 17 and 18). You will certainly be delighted to find several so far unexplored defensive resources for Black here.

Even in the last game of Part Two (exotic lines), a pleasant surprise awaits you in today's most popular 'Scandinavian Hybrid': 6...♔d8!?

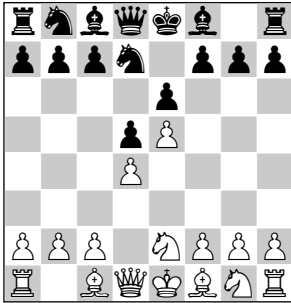


This 'illogical' queen retreat has not been properly appreciated up till now. However, it turns out that the black king's bishop has direct access to the more active squares in this line – see the WEAPON in Game 29.

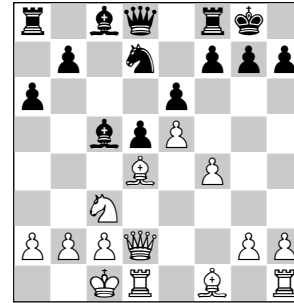
Part Three – The Classical System

Actually, this system, which we might also call ‘French Magic’, is my favourite part of the book, with many discoveries as always.

Chapter 14 – The Attacking Machine

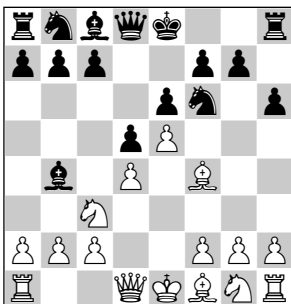


Game 30: the manoeuvre $5.\text{♞e2}$, with the aim of strengthening the centre after $5\dots\text{c5}$ with $6.\text{c3}$, has been known since the days of McDonnell and Steinitz. Today it has gained popularity, particularly online at all levels. Without having to study a lot of lines, Black can start counterplay immediately with $6\dots\text{cxd4}$ $7.\text{cxd4}$ f6! $8.\text{♞f4}$ ♙b4+ $9.\text{♙d2}$ ♚b6! – the queen defends and attacks at the same time!



Game 32: after $10\dots\text{♞xd4}$ $11.\text{♙xd4}$ a6! , despite the fact that White has about five different continuations, which also have been covered for many years in all the anti-French books, none of these moves guarantees the first player an advantage. Some even lead to quick trouble for White!

Chapter 16 – The McCutcheon



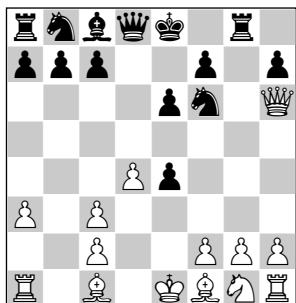
Game 42 includes a weapon against the brand-new artificial move $6.\text{♙f4!}?$.

The Alpha/Leela Chess Zero engines have reached the point where they find killing novelties in centuries-old variations already on the 6th move! However, it turns out that the old chess ideas are tenacious!

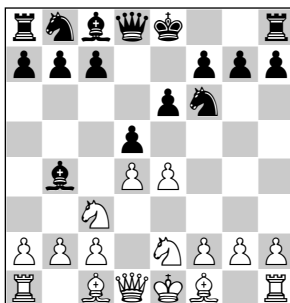
Part Four – The Winawer Variation

The ‘Wonderful Winawer’ part of this book has been nicely expanded – Black will be armed to the teeth against any white system!

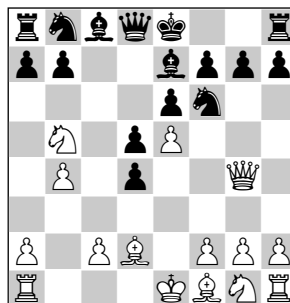
Here are some examples from the chapters on the ‘open game’ theme:



Game 43: no less than five options are examined here: **8...c5**, **8...♙d7**, **8...♞g6**, **8...♜bd7** and **8...b6**



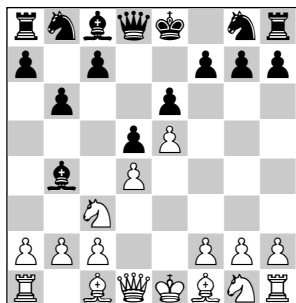
Game 46: **4...♞f6!?** (with the purpose of transposing from an anti-Winawer to a Classical French) **5.e5 ♜fd7!**



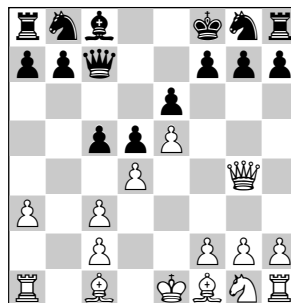
Game 50: in the semi-Winawer line **4.e5 c5 5.♙d2 cxd4!?** **6.♞b5 ♙c5!**, see the WEAPON **7.b4 ♙e7 8.♞g4 ♞f6!N**

Finally, in the main-line Winawer, Black defends strategically behind the barricades:

Chapter 19: **4.e5 b6!?**

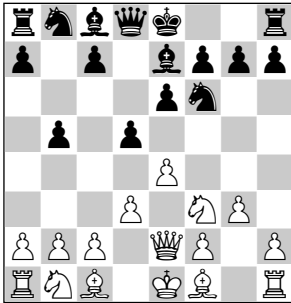


Chapter 22: **7.♞g4 ♞f8!?**

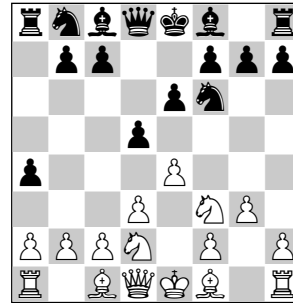


Part Five – Dynamic weapons

Among other surprises (in **Chapters 23-27**), I am glad to present two practical ideas in the King's Indian Attack: the Barcza System with 2.♖e2 and 2.d3 d5 3.♘d2.



In a well-known position, after 5...**b5?**, White's main threat e4-e5 and c2-c4 is no longer effective due to ...bxc4 and the pin ...♗a6 !



5...**a4**: Black pushes his a-pawn as the universal method to meet the King's Indian Attack (C00) and the Réti Opening (A07).

In both cases White finds himself in zugzwang very soon! See **Chapter 24** (Games 67 and 68).

The current state of opening theory

As a result of the global evolution in our time, chess has practically ceased to be an art, or some sort of culture or religion, to become a somewhat artificial form of individual fulfillment (by hook or by crook), as evidenced by the crowded current generation of PlayStation-style online players.

This change has also deeply affected chess literature. We find multi-volume works on openings everywhere, but they are stuffed with computer lines rather than presenting a useful concept.

In contrast, the reader of *The Fully-Fledged French* will find it easier and more interesting to learn the main plans with the following structure in each Part:

- The historic origin of each variation
- A presentation of the main ideas, resources, and advice
- Analysis of the most interesting lines through model games
- Illustrative games
- Statistics, summaries and conclusions.

I hope that the present work, just like my previous publications, can serve as good examples of this creative method of writing opening books and articles.

Of course, many questions will always remain open, for practical players as well as theoreticians. However, in this day and age you won't need years and years to study this great opening – the French Defence. Just read this book!

Greetings to you all!
Grandmaster Viktor Moskalenko,
Barcelona 2021

Seven symbols

For the convenience of the reader of my books, certain special lines in the analysis are marked with either of the following seven symbols:



TRICK: hidden tactics and some tricky ideas, e.g. traps you can set and pitfalls you have to avoid.



PUZZLE: exercises, possible transpositions, move-order subtleties, curiosities and rare lines.



WEAPON: the best lines to choose; strong or surprising options for both attack and defence, which deserve attention.



PLAN: the main ideas for one of the sides in the next phase of the game.



STATISTICS: winning percentages for a line or for either side/player.



WORKSHOP: how the author plans to construct the chapter at hand.

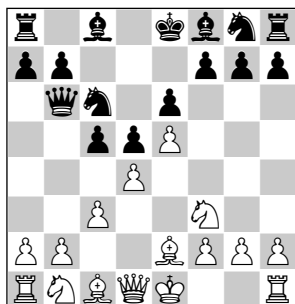


KEEP IN MIND: here, fundamental ideas for either side are given.

CHAPTER 5

A hundred years later: 6. ♖e2

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5. ♘f3 ♚b6 6. ♖e2



• Game 7: 6. ♖e2

With this old but natural move White strives for the fastest possible development and further play in the centre. The main ideas helping White here are 6... ♗ge7 7.dxc5! and 6... ♘h6 7. ♖xh6!.

However, despite the outward calm of the position, the battle begins already on the next move: 6...cxd4!. It is hard to imagine that White does not even have time to castle!

It's noteworthy that I had been looking for the best move-order for Black for a long time, and unexpectedly found the answer on a YouTube video.

I invite you to enjoy a great game between two legends: Vasiukov-Kortchnoi, Suzdal 2011.

A hundred years later – Game

Game 7 – 6. ♖e2

Evgeni Vasiukov 2455

Viktor Kortchnoi 2553

Suzdal 2011 (5)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6

4... ♗b6!? is even playable right now.

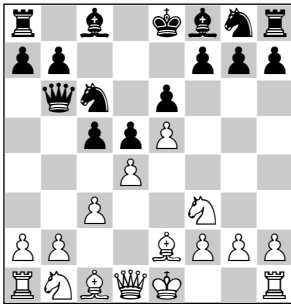
This move-order avoids 5. ♖e3 which is another popular plan for White.

5. ♘f3

5. ♖e3 (1668 games = 49.1%) 5... ♗b6 (5... ♘ge7!?) 6. ♗d2 f6!? ⇌.

5... ♗b6 6. ♖e2

This seems the most natural move in this position: 8607 games = 44.8% for White.



6. ♖d3: 7934 games = 49% – Chapter 3; 6.a3: 19281 games = 55% – Chapter 6.

6...cxd4!?

A universal solution against the calm (but quite poisoned) variation with 6. ♖e2.

My good old weapon 6... ♘h6 isn't strong enough against modern engines: 7. ♖xh6! gxh6 8. ♗d2 ♖g7 9.0-0 0-0 10. ♘a3 cxd4 11.cxd4 f6 12.exf6 ♗xf6 13. ♘c2 ♖d7 (13...a5 14.a4!?!± and 15. ♖b5) 14.b4! ♖e8

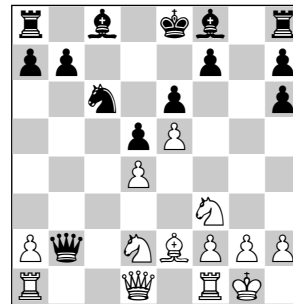
(14...a6 15.a4!) 15.b5 ♘e7 16.a4! and White has an edge (4-1).

7.cxd4 ♘ge7!

Avoiding any possibility of ♖xh6.

I have deliberately corrected the order of moves in this game.

Again 7... ♘h6 (this was also Kortchnoi's move) allows the same nasty exchange: 8. ♖xh6! ♗xb2 9. ♘bd2 (9. ♘c3!?) 9...gxh6 10.0-0.



analysis diagram

A popular position recently, with good practical chances: for the pawn, White has space and a lead in development. 10... ♘xd4 (10... ♗a3 11. ♘b3 ♖d7 12. ♗d2 ♗c8 13. ♗fc1± Shirov-Kislov, chess.com blitz 2020) 11. ♗b1 ♘xe2+ (11... ♘xf3+ 12. ♘xf3 ♗a3 13. ♖b5+ ♖d8 14. ♗d2+– Shirov-Lomasov, Moscow 2020) 12. ♗xe2 ♗a3 13. ♘d4 a6 14. ♗fc1↑ Jones-Howell, London 2019.

8. ♘c3

White does not have time to castle, as he loses the d4-pawn after 8.0-0 ♘f5.

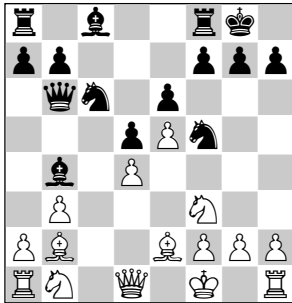


PUZZLE: 8. ♘a3 ♘f5 9. ♘c2 transposes to the line in Game 2 (see 9. ♖e2), Chapter 1.



TRICK: After the weak 8.b3 Black has a forced option

based on tactics: 8...♘f5 9.♙b2
♙b4+! 10.♚f1 0-0.



analysis diagram

This also goes back to the early days of modern chess: 11.g4?! (11.♘c3 f6⇒) 11...♘h6 12.h3 f6! with the idea 13.exf6 ♗xf6! 14.g5? ♗xf3, winning.

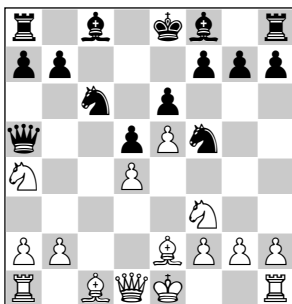
8...♘f5! 9.♘a4

Indirectly protecting the d4-pawn. 9.♙b5?! ♙d7, threatening 10...♘xe5!.



TRICK: The tricky 9.♚f1! loses tactically to 9...♘fxd4! 10.♘a4 (10.♙e3 ♗xb2!) 10...♗b4 11.♙d2 ♗e7♞.

9...♗a5+



10.♚f1!?

The only way to fight for a win, so Vasiukov throws down the gauntlet!



WEAPON: 10.♙d2 has been a main line for over 100 years

(Nimzowitsch-Spielmann, Stockholm 1920): 10...♙b4 11.♙c3 ♙xc3+ (11...b5!? 12.a3 ♙xc3+ 13.♘xc3 b4⇒) 12.♘xc3 ♗b6 13.♙b5 ♙d7 14.♙xc6 ♙xc6♞.

10...♙d7



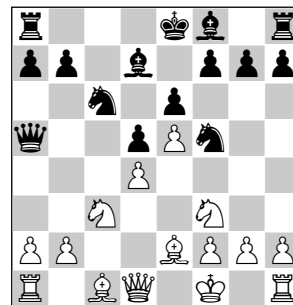
WEAPON: Black can start his counterplay immediately: 10...b5!? 11.♘c3 b4 12.♘b5 (12.♙b5 ♙a6!; 12.♘b1?! ♗b6! 13.♙e3 ♙e7–+ and ...f7-f6) 12...h5 13.♙f4 ♙d7!?!⇒ Pastor Alonso de Prado-Iagar, Madrid 2018.

11.♘c3

However, White's opening play resembles the famous 'one step forward, two steps back' principle.



TRICK: 11.g4? loses material after 11...♘fxd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xa4–+.



11...h5!?

Willingly accepting the challenge. Still: 11...♗b6 12.♘a4 ♗a5=.



WEAPON: An interesting line is 11...♙e7 12.g4 ♘h4 13.♘xh4 ♙xh4⇒ Werner-Peters, Germany tt 1992/93.

12.a3

After the game, Kortchnoi immediately announced to his

opponent: ‘You should not have allowed ...h5-h4, after that Black’s position is won!’.

In case of 12.h4 Black has 12...a6!? followed by ...b7-b5.

12...h4

(!) according to Kortchnoi.

The engine’s favourite moves are 12...b5 or first 12...a6!?

Whoever is right, one thing is certain: Black already owns the initiative.

13. ♖f4 ♖b6

It was easier to prepare the advance ...g7-g5 after 13...♖e7!? and 14...♖d8!.

14. ♘a4

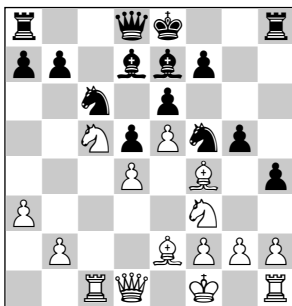
Once more, dancing with the knight and defending the centre pawn.

14... ♖d8 15. ♖c1

15. ♘c5? ♘fxd4!.

15... ♖e7 16. ♘c5 g5!

Timely starting the offensive.



By the way, have you noticed that this typical break is applied in almost every chapter of this book?

17. ♖e3

17. ♘xd7 ♘xd7 18. ♖e3 ♖b6↑.

17...g4 18. ♘e1 ♖xc5!

Eliminating White’s only active piece.

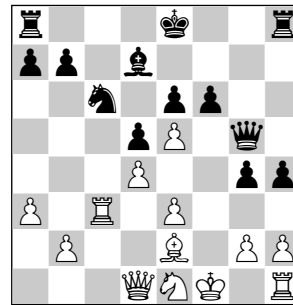
19. ♖xc5 ♘xe3+ 20.fxe3 ♖g5



Grandmasters Evgeny Vasiukov (1933-2018) and Viktor Kortchnoi (1931-2016).

20...f6!.

21. ♖c3 f6!



After another French break on move 21, White is hopelessly lost.

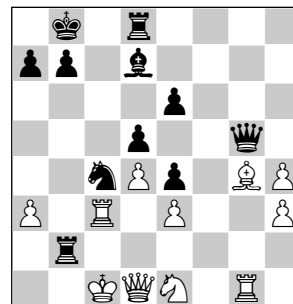
22. ♖xg4 fxe5 23.h3 e4!?

All roads lead to Rome here.

24. ♖e2 0-0-0! 25. ♖d2 ♖hf8 26. ♖c2

♖b8 27. ♖b1 ♖f2 28. ♖g1 ♘a5 29.g3

♘c4 30.gxh4 ♖xb2+! 31. ♖c1



PUZZLE: Black to move.

31... ♖e7! 32. ♘c2
32... ♗xc4 ♖xa3–+.
32... ♗b6 33. ♙e2 ♘b2 34. ♖e1 ♘a4
35. ♖g3+ e5 36. ♗c5 ♘xc5 37.dxc5
♗c6 38. ♙d2 ♗xc5 39. ♖g5 ♖xg5
40.hxg5 ♗dc8 41. ♘e1 ♙xh3 42.g6

♗5c7 43. ♗g5 ♗e8 44. ♙h5 d4
45. ♙d1 ♗d8 46. ♙b3 dxe3+ 47. ♙e2
♗c3!

White resigned.

A fantastic game played by
Kortchnoi on his 80th birthday!

Summary of 6. ♙e2

Over time, both the early developments of the king's bishop, ♙e2 and ♙d3 (Chapter 3), have become less popular than the modern pawn move 6.a3!?



Keep In Mind

The previous mini-chapters (1-5) contain many important lines and moves which are very helpful for a good understanding of the way the Advance Variation should be played.

Hasta la vista!



Dedicated to Arnold Schwarzenegger

If the ideas mentioned in Chapters 7-11 were not enough for you, we will present in Chapters 12 and 13 a brief update of some very special variations against 3.♘d2. Let's leave the closed struggles aside and open up the game!

Directions

Chapter 12: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♗e7!? (Games 22-24)

Chapter 13: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.exd5 ♖xd5!? (Games 25-29)

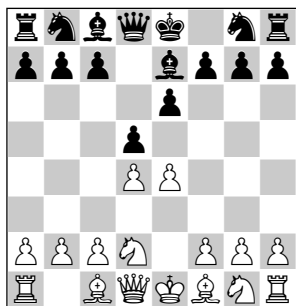
Generally, a true 'terminator' player uses these variations to avoid his opponents' home preparation.

However, some of these 'exotic' lines have grown to be so popular that they have become main weapons!

CHAPTER 12

The Romanishin Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♕e7!



3...♕e7 is an asymmetrical response! – though very similar to a waiting strategy poker-style.

History

Ukrainian GM Oleg Romanishin (born 1952) is a specialist in exotic variations in all kinds of openings. In the mid-1970s he rediscovered 3...♕e7.

The French with 3...♕e7! is Alexander Morozevich's main weapon against 1.e4. Everybody knows this well in advance, but no-one has been able to claim a serious opening advantage against him here.

Nowadays it is very fashionable, because of its peculiarity, but also thanks to the support given to it by grandmasters Romanishin in the 1970s, Rainer Knaak in the 1980s, and more recently Morozevich, Lputian, Radjabov, Pert, Sadler, Nepomniachtchi, So and many others. They have enriched the line with new and unusual ideas.



Oleg Romanishin.

Grandmaster Lev Psakhis writes: 'The main idea of 3...♕e7 is that Black first wants to see what plan White will adopt, before deciding on a

corresponding course of action. Another point of some significance is that in this line Black avoids the numerous exchanges that can occur following 3...c5.’

Author’s note: But the tempo spent is very important here. White must try to take advantage of this.

Grandmaster Julen Luis Arizmendi Martinez writes: ‘This variation is becoming popular nowadays, but it was Romanishin, back in the seventies, who first began to use it frequently. The main idea behind 3...♙e7 is to wait and see White’s piece setting, and react accordingly, while having developed the bishop (admittedly not to such an active square, but a normal one in the French). Thus after 4.♘g3 ♘f6 5.e5 ♘fd7 we reach a Tarrasch with the knight on f3, something which is not to everyone’s liking. Or 4.c3 c5 5.dxc5 ♙xc5 6.exd5 exd5, which leads us to a normal 3...c5 Tarrasch where White has committed himself to an early c2-c3, which is not considered to be dangerous for Black at all. I guess 4.e5 c5 5.♖g4 is the most “principled” variation, but Black has scored quite OK with Morozevich’s 5...♙f8, making use of White’s misplaced queen to develop a quick initiative.’

Author’s note: I am sure that the most critical positions arise after the flexible move 4.♙d3!?. On the other hand, many positions in the 3...♙e7 variation can be defended thanks to unexpected tactical resources!



Statistics for the move 3...♙e7

Total (year 2008) 2812 games: 1-0=963, 0-1=816, 0.5=1033

Total (year 2014) 5590 games: 1-0=1931, 0-1=1697, 0.5=1960

New (update 2020) 8829 games: 1-0=3232, 0-1=2732, 0.5=2863

Line 4.♘gf3: year 2008=1062=52.3%, year 2014=2230=51.6%, 2020: 3548=52.2%

Line 4.♙d3: year 2008=1037=53.2%, year 2014=1936=52.2%, 2020: 2919=52.8%

There are certain possible transpositions between the moves 4.♘f3 and 4.♙d3.

Line 4.e5: year 2008=343=54.7%, year 2014=671=54.7%, new: 1206=56.7%

Line 4.c3: year 2008=318=50.9%, year 2014=653=51.8%, new: 998=51.7%

The situation has not changed much over the years. Only with the sharp advance 4.e5 the percentage has grown in White’s favour, but perhaps this is due to the increase of online blitz and rapid games. In any case, here I have tried to strengthen Black’s defence with some clearer directions and tactical resources.

Exotic Lines

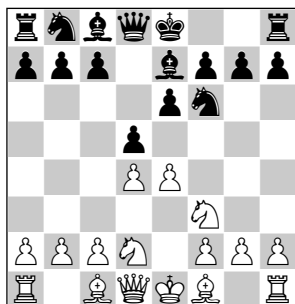
The most interesting options will be examined in the main lines.

First, two white pawn moves:

- 4.e5 – an ‘ambitious’ line, Game 22: Tan-So.
- 4.c3 – a ‘discreet-modest’ line, Game 23: McShane-Rapport.

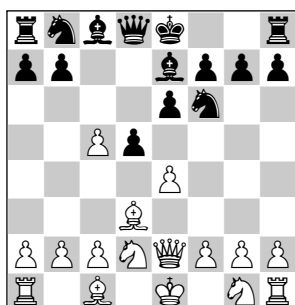
And then two different piece moves that merit serious attention:

- 4.♘gf3 – the most natural move. After 4...♘f6



... now 5.e5 transposes to the Universal System, see Game 16 (Libiszewski-Sadler), and 5.♙d3 c5 6.exd5 ♖xd5! transposes to the next Chapter, No. 13.

- 4.♙d3 is more flexible. The idea is 4...c5 5.dxc5 ♘f6 6.♖e2.



This popular set-up is perhaps the most dangerous for Black.

Here we examine the strength of the solid classical counterplan of 6...0-0, 7...a5!? and 8...♘a6 followed by recovering the pawn on c5. There are many possibilities for both sides; see Game 24, Erenburg-So.

The Romanishin Variation – Games

Game 22 – 4.e5

Justin Tan

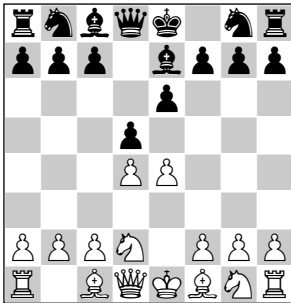
2502

Wesley So

2765

chess.com 2019 (1)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♙e7



Playing hide-and-seek! This is also Morozevich's main weapon against 3.♘d2.


4...c5! 5.c3

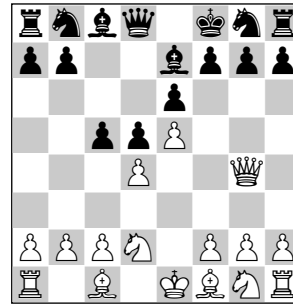
White chooses an ambitious but risky line.

The attacking idea 4.♙g4? fails after, for instance, 4...♘f6! 5.♙xg7 ♖g8 6.♙h6 dxe4 7.♙e3 ♙d5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 and Black has the initiative, Heredia Serrano-Kantor, Budapest 2011.

4...c5! 5.c3

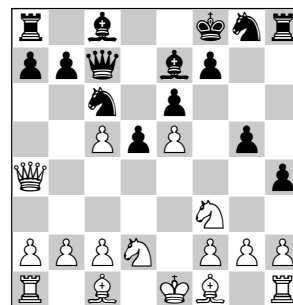
This is White's most popular move. We have now reached a position that is typical of the Advance Variation, with the extra moves 3.♘d2 ♙e7.

 WEAPON: 5.♙g4!?. This idea from the Winawer Variation is not a panacea for the entire French! 5...♙f8!.



analysis diagram

Black loses the right to castle, but White's central pawn chain is about to fall apart (5...g5 6.♙h5!? and the queen blocks the kingside), e.g. 6.dxc5 ♘c6 7.♘gf3 (a logical response; 7.♙g3 h5!? 8.♘b3 h4 9.♙e3 ♘h6!?⇒; 7.♘df3 f6!? 8.♙f4 h5!?N 9.♙g6 ♙xc5⇒) 7...h5!?. Black starts counterplay with the help of his foot soldiers: 8.♙g3 (8.♙a4 ♙c7!? 9.♙f4 ♘h6⇒ Olofsson-Boukal, cr 2013) 8...h4! 9.♙f4 g5! (the key to Black's counterplay) 10.♙a4 (10.♙e3 ♘h6!) 10...♙c7!.

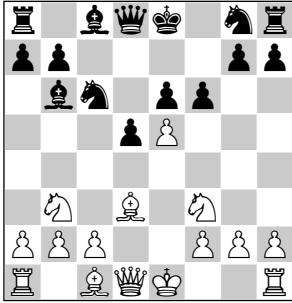


analysis diagram

Now Black is flexible and has more interesting options, Sherwood-Cabello Rodriguez, cr 2006 (an improvement on 10...♙d7 Adams-Morozevich, Sarajevo 1999);

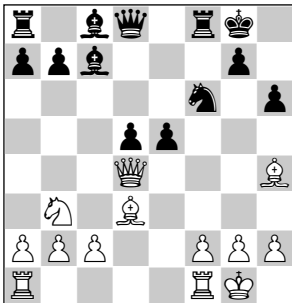


WEAPON: A powerful demonstration of Black's possibilities is 5.dxc5 ♘c6 6.♘gf3 ♙xc5 7.♘b3 ♙b6! 8.♙d3 f6!.



analysis diagram

The battle for e5 begins: 9.♙e2 fxe5 10.♘xe5 ♘f6!? 11.0-0 (11.♙b5? 0-0!) 11...♘xe5! 12.♙xe5 0-0 13.♙g5 (13.c4 h6!; 13.♙f4? ♘g4+). This inaccuracy has tragic consequences, since Black gets a chance to develop a dangerous initiative: 13...♙c7! 14.♙d4 h6 (14...e5!?) 15.♙h4 e5!↑.



analysis diagram

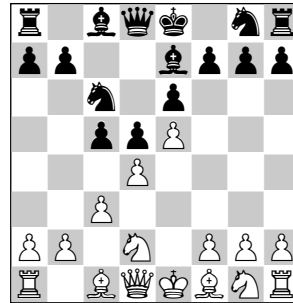
After this important advance Black is clearly comfortable, Adams-Morozevich, Dortmund 2001.

5...cxd4

After this exchange Black can use two ideas that are common in the 'Advanced' structure.



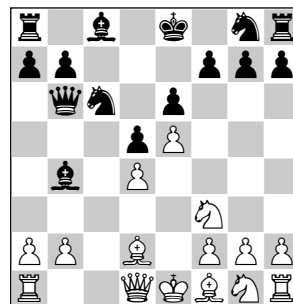
WEAPON: 5...♘c6!? retains more tension:



6.♙d3!? ♙d7 7.♘e2 (7.♙g4 (Mamedov-Lagarde, Skopje 2018) 7...g5!?) 7...f6 8.♘f3 (8.f4 ♘h6= is an anti-Pawn Wedge set-up, Hauge-Ragger, Graz 2017) 8...fxe5 9.♘xe5 ♘xe5 10.dxe5 ♙c7 11.♙f4 g5! perfectly echoes the ideas of Gulko's System (Chapter 2), Van den Doel-Sadler, Haarlem 2016.
6.cxd4 ♙b6 7.♘df3 ♙d7!?
Intending 8...♙b5.



PLAN: The years 2016-20 saw 25 games with the sequence 7...♙b4+!? 8.♙d2 ♘c6



analysis diagram

... which is the easiest path to an equal game: 9.♙c3 (9.♙xb4 ♙xb4+ 10.♙d2 f6 11.♙c1 ♙xd2+ 12.♙xd2 ♙d7 13.♙d3 ♘h6= V.Kovalev-J.

Christiansen, Dubai 2018) 9...♔d7
 10.♖d2 f6 11.♔d3 ♗ge7 12.♗e2
 (Mamedov-Anton Guijarro, Turkey
 tt 2017) 12...fxe5 13.dxe5 0-0=.

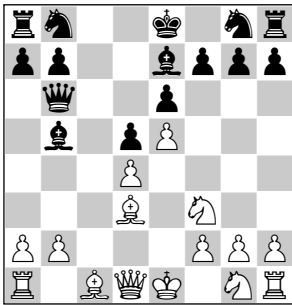
8.♔d3



WEAPON: 8.♗e2 is an old
 move: 8...♗c6!? with the idea
 9.♗c3 ♗h6! 10.♔xh6 gxh6
 11.♖d2 ♖g8=.

8...♔b5

The critical moment. Remember:
 8...♔b4+?! is better on move 7, as
 now White would be able to avoid
 simplification with 9.♗f1!.



9.♔c2!?

An ambitious concept. White has
 two other tries:



PLAN: 9.♔xb5+!? ♖xb5
 10.♗e2 ♔b4+ (10...♗c6!?)
 11.♗f1! (11.♔d2=) 11...♗e7
 12.g3 (Grandelius-Ostenstad,
 Bergen 2018) and now
 12...♗d7!? with the idea 13.♗g2
 ♖c8 14.h4 ♖c4 15.♗f4 ♖c2=.



PLAN: 9.♗e2 is a natural
 move. Then, 9...♔xd3 10.♖xd3
 ♗c6 (10...♖a6!?)=) 11.0-0
 ♔d8!?∞ should slightly
 favour White with his space
 advantage, Yu Hua-Xuwen
 Wang, Hangzhou 2019.

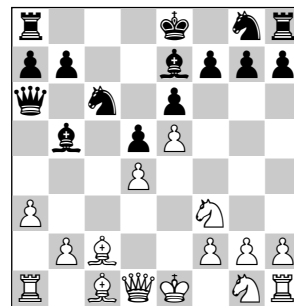


The hero of Chapter 12: the US (online)
 champion of 2020, GM Wesley So (born
 1993), with two brilliant wins in Games
 22 and 24.

9...♗c6 10.a3?!

Too slow; 10.♗e2 ♔b4+ (10...♗b4!?)
 11.♔d2 ♔xd2+ 12.♖xd2 ♔xe2!
 13.♗xe2 ♗ge7=.

10...♖a6!



A nice counterattacking resource,
 intending 11...♔f1 or 11...♗b4.

11.♔e3

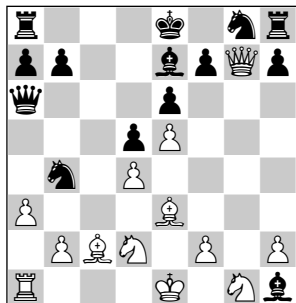
11.♗e2 is natural, but allows
 11...♗b4!.

11...♔f1! 12.♗d2?

White was clearly confused on
 moves 10-12. 12.h3 ♔xg2 13.♔d3
 ♖b6 14.♖h2 ♔xf3 15.♗xf3 would

offer some compensation, although Black remains objectively better.

12...♙xg2 13.♚g4 ♘xh1 14.♚xg7 ♘b4!



Now the battle is tactically lost for White.

15.♖c1 ♘xc2+ 16.♖xc2 ♚d3 17.♚xh8

If 17.♖c3, 17...♚g6 wins.

17...♘d7 18.♖c3 ♚g6 19.♘e2 ♖e8

20.♘f4 ♚g1+ 21.♘f1 ♘f6 22.f3

♚xe3+ 23.♖xe3

23.♘xe3 ♖xh8 24.exf6 ♘d6!-+.

23...♖xh8 24.exf6 ♘xf6 25.♖d3 ♘g5

26.♘h3 ♘h4+ 27.♘g3 ♖c8

27...♖g8-+.

28.♘d2

28.♘d1 ♘g2 29.♘f4 ♘xg3 30.hxg3 ♘f1♣.

28...♘g2 29.♘f4 ♘g5 30.♘ge2 ♘f1

31.♖c3 0-1

Summary of 4.e5:

Some of the games mentioned here are a fantastic window display of modern chess, full of resources!

- 5.c3 – leads to a similar kind of balanced game as in the Advance Variation.

- 5.dxc5 – after the French break 8...f6, White does not hold the centre and loses all hope for an advantage.

- After 5.♚g4 the most important moves in the opening are those made by the black pawns: ...h7-h5, ...g7-g5, ...f7-f6 and also the knight manoeuvre ...♘g8-h6-f5. After 6.dxc5 Black does not recover this pawn, but looks for tactical possibilities instead.

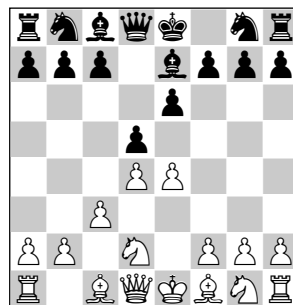
Game 23 – 4.c3

Luke McShane 2697

Richard Rapport 2676

Germany Bundesliga 2013/14 (11)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘e7!? 4.c3




A modest try for technical players. The present game is the most interesting and attractive one played in this line.


4...c5!?

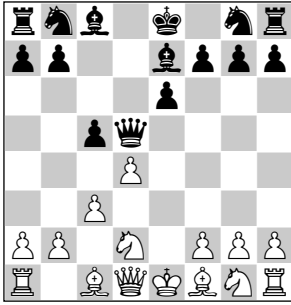
4...dxe4 (analogous to the Rubinstein Variation) is a good way to equalize: 5.♘xe4 ♘d7 6.♘f3 ♘gf6 7.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 8.♘d3 0-0 9.♚e2 b6=.

5.dxc5

Other options for White:

 **PUZZLE: 5.e5 – Game 22.**

 **PLAN: 5.exd5 ♚xd5!?** is a more relevant position for Chapter 13, next.

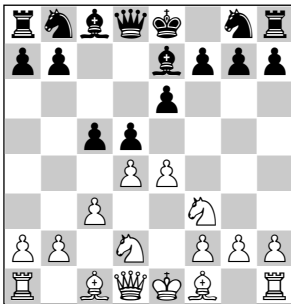


analysis diagram

The inclusion of the moves c2-c3 and ...Qf8-e7 slightly favours Black (5...exd5 6.dxc5 is the main C07): 6.dxc5 (6.Qgf3 cxd4=) 6...Wxc5 7.Qe4 Wc6 8.Qd3 Qd7 9.Qf3 Qgf6 10.We2 Qxe4 11.Qxe4 Wc7 12.0-0 0-0= intending ...Qf6 and ...b7-b6, Dvoirys-Morozevich, Samara 1998.



PLAN: 5.Qgf3 is a normal move



analysis diagram

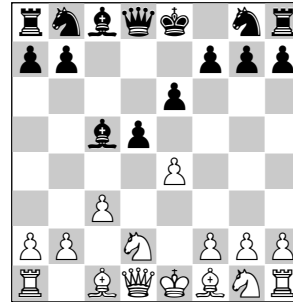
... but here it is harmless after 5... cxd4 (5...Qf6 6.e5 (6.exd5 Qxd5; 6.Qd3 cxd4) 6...Qfd7 7.Qd3 Qc6 is the Universal System, Game 16) 6.Qxd4 (6.cxd4 dxe4=) 6...Qc6 7.Qb5 Qd7 (this is the Tarrasch Variation with 3...c5, but with the extra moves c2-c3 for White and ...Qe7 for Black) 8.Q4f3 (8.Qxc6

Qxc6=; 8.Qxc6 bxc6!) 8...Qf6 9.exd5 (9.e5? Qxe5T) 9...Qxd5 is very comfortable for Black, Guramishvili-Bok, Wijk aan Zee 2017.

5... Qxc5



WEAPON: 5...Qf6!? is an equivalent and also popular option, for example: 6.exd5 Qxd5 (6...Wxd5 7.b4∞) 7.Qe4 0-0 8.Qf3 Qd7=.



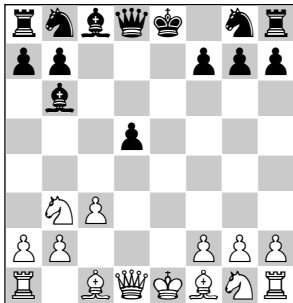
6.Qd3!?



PLAN: Another sharp and dramatic game by Alexander Morozevich saw 6.Qgf3 Qf6 7.e5!? (for 7.Qd3 see the main game). This advance always leads to sharp and double-edged positions, e.g. 7...Wb6! (7...Qg4?? loses the knight after 8.Wa4+) 8.Qd4 Qfd7 9.Wg4 (a provocative manoeuvre; 9.Q2f3 Qc6=) 9...0-0 10.Q2f3 Qc6!. Thanks to his lead in development, Black soon obtains a dangerous initiative after preparing an exchange sacrifice: 11.Qh6 g6↑ A.Onischuk-Morozevich, Germany Bundesliga 1998/99.



PLAN: 6.♘b3 ♖b6 7.exd5 (7.e5 ♘c6 8.♘f3 f6!⇒ transposes to the Adams-Morozevich duel, see the notes to Game 22) 7... exd5.



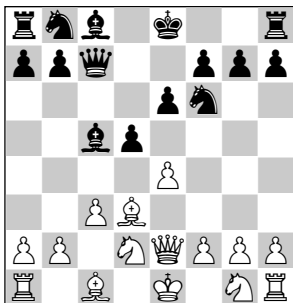
analysis diagram

With typical play revolving around the isolated pawn: 8.♘f3 (8.♖b5+ ♘c6 9.♘f3 ♘f6 10.♖e2+ ♘e4 11.♖e3 0-0= Tiviakov-Rapport, Wijk aan Zee 2013) 8...♘f6 9.♖e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♖g5 (11.♖f4?! ♖e8 12.h3 ♘e4↑ Malakhov-Morozevich, Moscow blitz 2014) 11...♖e8 12.♖h4 h6 13.♖e1 g5! 14.♖g3 ♘e4 15.♘fd4 f5= A.Onischuk-Kramnik, Tilburg 1997.

6...♘f6 7.♖e2



PLAN: 7.♘gf3 dxe4 8.♘xe4 ♘xe4 9.♖a4+ ♖d7 10.♖xe4 ♖c6 11.♖e2 ♘d7= Svidler-Shipov, Moscow 2006.



7...♖c7!N



PLAN: Instead of the usual 7...♘c6, Black intends to develop the knight to d7 and then play ...b7-b6 and ...♖b7.

8.♘gf3 0-0 9.0-0



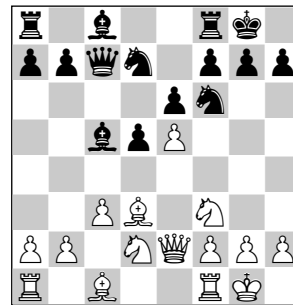
TRICK: Importantly, the tactic fails: 9.e5 ♘g4 10.♖xh7+? ♖xh7-+.

9...♘bd7!? 10.♖c2

It is strange that such an active player as McShane takes such a very modest stance in this game.



TRICK: He should at least have tried 10.e5!?



analysis diagram

10...♘g4 11.♘b3 ♖b6 12.♘g5 ♘dxe5! 13.♖xh7+ ♖h8 14.♖d3 ♖f6 15.♖f4 fxg5 16.♖xe5 ♖xe5 17.♖xg4 ♖f6 with a balanced but sharp position.

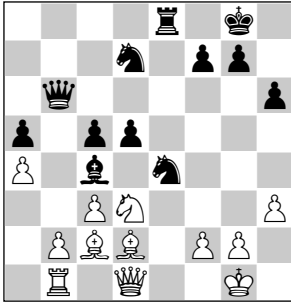
10...b6! 11.exd5 exd5!

White's entire set-up, including the queen, will remain passive against an isolated pawn.

11...♘xd5 was balanced.

12.♘b3 ♖e8 13.♖d3 a5! 14.♘xc5 bxc5! 15.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 16.♘xe1 ♖a6 17.♖d1 ♖e8 18.♘d3?! ♖b6! 19.h3 h6 20.♖b1 ♖c4 21.a4 ♘e4 22.♖d2?

Quite a natural mistake in such a stalemate position.



PUZZLE: Black to move.
Check your tactical vision.

22... ♖xd3! 23. ♗xd3 ♜xf2!—+

An elegant combination that brings home the point.

24. ♖f3

24. ♜xf2 c4+.

24... ♜xd3 25. ♖xd3 c4+ 26. ♗d4 ♜e2

27. ♜d1 ♖xb2 28. ♖xd5 ♖c2 29. ♗f4

♜xg2+ 30. ♜h1 ♜e2 31. ♜g1 ♖d3

32. ♖xd3 cxd3 33. ♗xh6 d2 34. ♜xg7+

♜h8 35. ♜g1 ♜e5 36. ♗f4 ♜f3 0-1

Summary of 4.c3:

This move is not especially useful in these lines. The game is still very balanced. But if White plays the advance e4-e5, the arising positions are very similar to those of the Advance Variation with 4.e5; the extra move ♜d2 is not very appropriate here, as we have seen confirmed throughout Games 22 and 23.

Game 24 – 4. ♗d3

Sergey Erenburg 2601

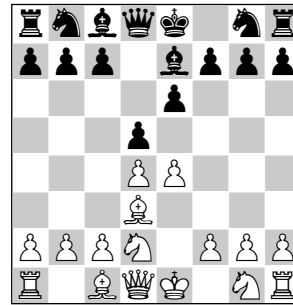
Wesley So 2762

Las Vegas 2014 (5)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. ♜d2 ♗e7 4. ♗d3!?



The young 'Terminator' and champion of exotic lines GM Richard Rapport (born 1996) loves sharp positions with the initiative, his imagination is limitless, and his blows are dangerous for any opponent.



Another popular set-up, which is more flexible. The difference with 4. ♜gf3 is that the text move enables White to play ♖e2 at a favourable moment.



PUZZLE: 4. ♜gf3 is a natural and therefore popular development of the knight: 4... ♜f6 5. ♗d3 (5.e5 ♜fd7 transposes to the Universal System, Game 16) 5...c5 6.exd5 (6.dxc5 dxe4=) 6... ♖xd5!?, activating the queen as in the 'Scandinavian Hybrid'. This is

7.h4 – Games

Game 56 – Classical defence with the queen: 7...♙c7!?

(691 games = 43.3%; the best statistics for Black!)

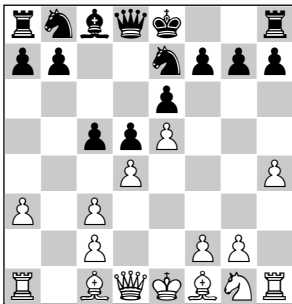
This ultra-short queen move is in accordance with a solid defensive set-up, but it is always less dynamic than the ‘long’ move ...♙a5.

Black temporarily prevents 8.♙g4? (8...cxd4!) and prepares the fundamental ‘sarcophagus’ scheme ...b7-b6 and ...♙a6.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2767
Ian Nepomniachtchi 2774

Yekaterinburg ct 2020 (7)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5
5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.h4!?



This move may look strange – why isn’t White developing his pieces? The idea of h2-h4 is to gain space on the kingside – the area where White is stronger (thanks to the e5-pawn) and where normally he should play.

7...♙c7!?

A very good option for solid French players. Straightaway 7...b6?! is

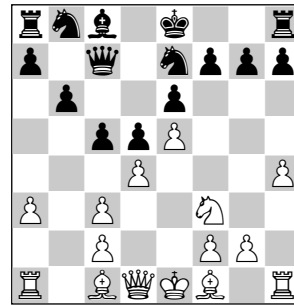
premature: 8.h5 h6 9.♙g4!. Black is too passive and he scores badly here; after 9...♙f8 10.a4! a nice miniature followed: 10...♙c7 11.♞h3! ♙a6 12.♞f3 (12..♙b5!?) 12...♙g8 13.♙f4 ♘ec6 14.♙b5! ♞h7 15.♘e2 ♘a5? 16.♙e8! 1-0 Nepomniachtchi-Shimanov, St Petersburg 2009.

8.h5!?

This attacking screw has become a popular plan recently.



PLAN: The quiet response 8.♘f3 leads us back to old classical lines: 8...b6!?



analysis diagram

9.♙b5+ ♙d7.

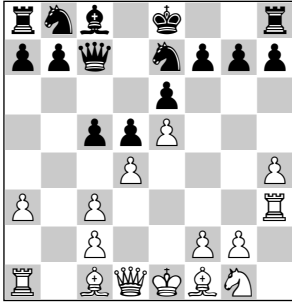


TRICK: 10.♙d3 is by far the main move, e.g. 10...♙a4! 11.h5? (see our Workshop): 11...cxd4! 12.cxd4 ♙c3+ 13.♙d2 ♙xd3! Caruana-So, chess.com blitz 2017.

10.♙e2 is rarely played. White avoids allowing ...c5-c4 with tempo, but fails to exert pressure on the kingside: 10...♙a4 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♙e3 h6! 13.♞a2 ♘f5 14.♙f4 ♙c6 (14...♘f6! was Nepo’s original idea) 15.♞b2 a6 with chances for both sides, Alekseenko-Nepomniachtchi, Yekaterinburg ct 2020.



WEAPON: The rook lift
8.♖h3 is too ambitious here.
Black has good counterplay
ideas:



analysis diagram

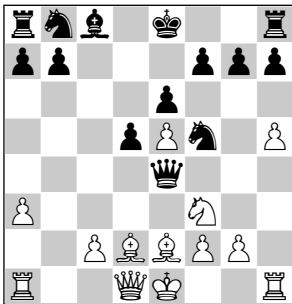
8...b6 (8...♗bc6!? also scores nicely
for Black: 9.h5 h6 10.♖g4 ♘f5!⇒)
9.h5 h6 10.♖g4 ♘f5! 11.♙d2
(11.♙d3?! cxd4!) 11...♙a6 12.♙xa6
♘xa6 with a strategic plus for Black,
Vocaturu-Sedina, Antalya 2009.

8...h6!?

Obviously, the solid option.



PUZZLE: Rustemov's sharp
line 8...cxd4 is highly unclear:
9.cxd4 ♖c3+ 10.♙d2 ♖xd4
11.♗f3 ♖e4+ 12.♙e2 ♗f5∞.



analysis diagram

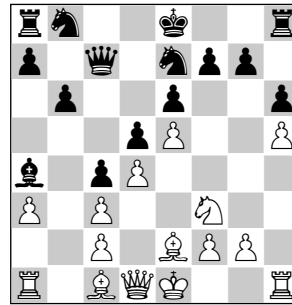
By transposition this is also a
possible sub-line after 7...♖a5, see
the notes to Game 57.

9.♖b1!?

After the present game, this became
White's most popular line in the
Winawer in 2020!

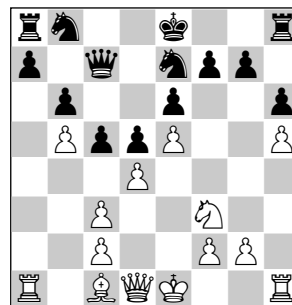


PLAN: 9.♗f3 is very similar
to the previous 8.♗f3: 9...b6!?.
Again, 10.a4 (10.♙b5+ ♙d7
11.♙d3 (11.♙e2 ♙a4! Rowson-
Psakhis, Port Erin 1999) 11...
c4 (11...♙a4!?) 12.♙e2 ♙a4=.



analysis diagram

This 'sarcophagus' set-up is a
nice alternative to Jussupov's
...♗d7/♖d8-g8-h7 manoeuvre)
10...♙a6 11.♙b5+ ♙xb5
12.axb5.



analysis diagram

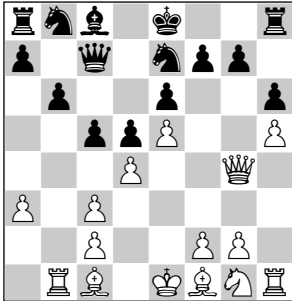
The chances are equal: 12...a5!?
(12...0-0!?, intending 13...♖c8,
Radovanovic-Drasko, Ulcinj 2014)
13.bxa6 (13.dxc5 bxc5 14.0-0 0-0=)

13...cxd4 (13...0-0!?!; 13...♖xa6=)
 14.cxd4 ♖xa6 15.♖xa6 ♗xa6 16.♖d3
 ♖c4= Böhm-Oberbarnscheidt,
 Germany tt 2013.

9...b6!?

♜ WEAPON: Another plan is
 9...♗bc6!? 10.♖g4 ♗f5 11.♗d3
 0-0!?!N intending 12...f6.

10.♖g4



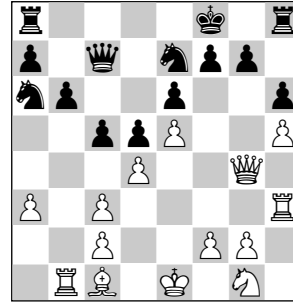
10...♖g8

This is a creative, but rare idea,
 so it's worth looking at the
 alternatives.

In his later online game versus
 Caruana, Nepomniachtchi played
 in more dynamic 'Poisoned
 Pawn' style: 10...cxd4 11.♖xg7 ♖g8
 12.♖xh6 ♖xe5+ 13.♗e2 (13.♗d1!?
 Motylev-Studer, Tallinn 2019) 13...
 dxc3 14.♖f4 ♖xf4 15.♗xf4 with
 an unbalanced ending, Caruana-
 Nepomniachtchi, chess24.com blitz
 2020.

♜ WEAPON: 10...♗f8!?! – the
 defence by the king (used in
 only a few games) has been
 very successful in practice, but
 this set-up is also very similar
 to the one in the next chapter!
 11.♖h3!?! (11.♗d3 cxd4!N
 12.cxd4 ♗a6 is balanced;

11.♖d1 ♗a6 12.♗e2 ♗bc6 13.g4
 ♖c8 14.♖h3 ♗a5⇒ H.Rudolf-
 Cuenca Jimenez, Germany
 Bundesliga B 2017/18) 11...♗a6
 12.♗xa6 (12.♖f3 cxd4 13.♗xa6
 ♗xa6 14.cxd4 ♖xc2 15.♗e2
 ♗g8∞ Toma-Osmak, Antalya
 2019) 12...♗xa6



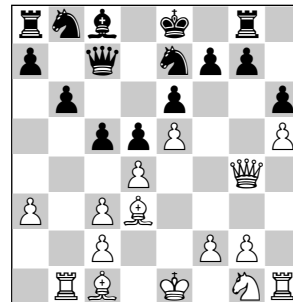
analysis diagram

13.♗e2!?! (13.♖e2?! ♗b8 Karjakin-
 Djordjevic, chess.com blitz 2020;
 13.♖f4 cxd4 14.♖f3 ♗f5!) 13...cxd4
 (13...♗g8!?) 14.cxd4 ♖xc2 with a
 sharp position. Black eventually
 won this blitz game, Dominguez
 Perez-So, St Louis 2017.

11.♗b5+!?

A slightly annoying check.

♜ WEAPON: 11.♗d3 can lead to
 extremely tactical play:



analysis diagram



Nepo was the sole leader of the Candidates Tournament 2020 (which had still not been finished while I was working on this book). His opponent was just one point behind. Perhaps this fact somehow influenced Black's play in this game. However, it should be noted that Vachier-Lagrave played the whole game brilliantly.

11...cxd4 (11...♙a6!? 12.♙h7 cxd4!)
 12.cxd4 ♙a6 13.♙h7 ♜f8!? 14.♙d2
 (14.♙xg8? ♚xc2) 14...♞h8⇌.

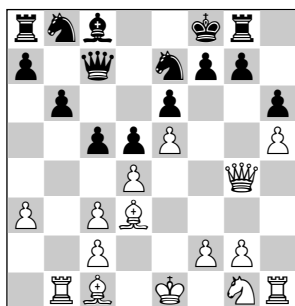
11...♜f8!



TRICK: Black is threatening ...c5-c4, trapping the bishop on b5.

11...♙d7?! 12.♙d3!± Bartel-Jaroch,
 Zgierz 2017.

12.♙d3



12...♙a6?!



WEAPON: First 12...cxd4!? 13.cxd4 and now 13...♙a6⇌ prevents White's plan in the game and should be considered.

13.dxc5!↑

Black cannot allow the position to be opened.

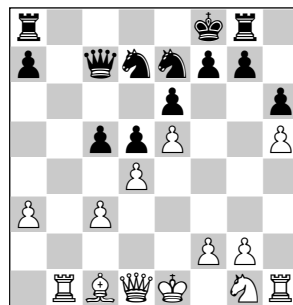
13...♙xd3 14.cxd3 ♞d7!?

14...♚xe5+ 15.♞e2!; 14...bxc5 15.♞f3
 ♞d7 16.0-0!.

15.d4

15.♞e2!?

15...bxc5 16.♚d1!?



Black has no weaknesses, but the king on f8 combined with the rook on g8 is a real liability.

In a later online game Vachier-Lagrave deviated with 16.♞e2!?

♞b8 17.♞xb8+ ♚xb8 18.0-0 ♚b5!?

(18...c4 19.♞d1!↑ Vachier-Lagrave-Nepomniachtchi, chess24.com blitz