

# **The Modernized King's Indian Defense**

## **Mar del Plata Variation**

First edition 2022 by Thinkers Publishing  
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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

Email: [info@thinkerspublishing.com](mailto:info@thinkerspublishing.com)  
Website: [www.thinkerspublishing.com](http://www.thinkerspublishing.com)

**Managing Editor:** Romain Edouard

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**Typesetting:** Mark Haast/Petra Schuurman

**Proofreading:** Conor O'Donnell

**Software:** Hub van de Laar

**Cover Design:** Iwan Kerkhof

**Graphic Artist:** Philippe Tonnard

**Production:** BESTinGraphics

**ISBN:** 9789464201406

D/2021/13730/8

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**Milos Pavlovic**

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## Key to Symbols

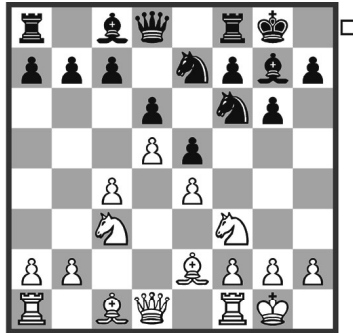
!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⊙	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White 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

The King's Indian Defense, and the Mar del Plata variation in particular, has played a huge role throughout my entire chess career. I started doing extensive analysis of the ensuing rich positions from a very young age. I believe what lured me to it was that it is an outlier among well-established openings in the sense that it gives Black a chance to attack right from an early stage of the game. This rather romantic approach to chess made a deep impression and stayed with me for a long time. The history of the line is well known – many big King's Indian experts used to play it frequently. It was Gligoric who managed to devise the perfect setup for simultaneous attack and defense, which completely revolutionized the King's Indian as a whole, not only the Mar del Plata variation. Thanks to that and also to significant theoretical contributions by other legends of the game such as Bronstein and Boleslavsky, and later on Stein, Fischer and Kasparov, the King's Indian was established as one of the key battlegrounds of opening theory right to this day. I consider the King's Indian to be one of the last remaining areas of classical chess where engines are not omnipotent over humans. The usual pattern is that engines will always strongly favor White from the beginning of the game, but the entire point of the King's Indian is to understand the deep nuances in closed positions. The positions are so rich with hidden dynamics, yet complex enough that the lines are never too forcing. The wealth of possibilities for both sides means that a strong understanding of chess is far more important than knowing how an engine evaluates the position. When the game finally opens up and the tactical fireworks erupt, it is essential that your pieces are correctly positioned for it. This intuition only comes after much study and experience. The Mar Del Plata is probably the single most comprehensive variation of the King's Indian in terms of the volume of possibilities and strategic richness. Even aside from players who wish to incorporate the King's Indian into their repertoire, I believe that study of these positions is essential for *all* chess players, as the attacking and defensive ideas on display are such a fundamental and universal part of playing chess. Learning how to evaluate and compare the strength of each side's attacking potential is a paramount skill which can be applied all throughout your chess career.



Position after: 8... Nxe7

This is the starting position of the line and this book. What makes the position so strategically rich and fascinating is that all the pieces currently remain on the board and both sides are actually playing on the entire board, which is not always typical in other openings. It would be a flawed oversimplification to explain the nature of the position by saying that White will play on the queenside while Black will attack on the kingside. In reality the situation is far more complicated than that.

I've noticed that some new ideas have emerged for both sides in recent times, and I must say that the popularity of this system is greater than ever. I think what attracts so many players to it is that it shows an obvious desire to play for a win with either color. This is in contrast to many other openings where the objectives are for White to try and gain a small edge, and for Black to try their best to equalize and secure a draw. I hope experienced King's Indian players who read this book will discover many new useful ideas to incorporate into their game, while players who are new to the opening will find that they have gained a new passion to add to their repertoires.

Milos Pavlovic  
Belgrade 2021

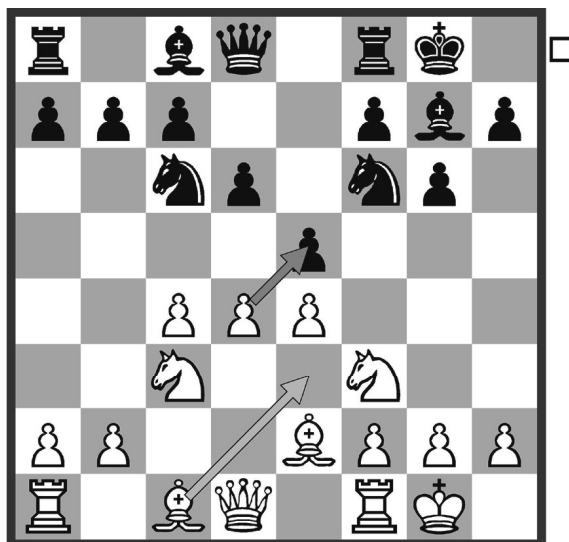






## Rare 8<sup>th</sup> Moves

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6  
3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6  
5.♘f3 0-0 6.♙e2 e5  
7.0-0 ♘c6



# Chapter Guide

## Chapter 1 – Rare 8<sup>th</sup> Moves

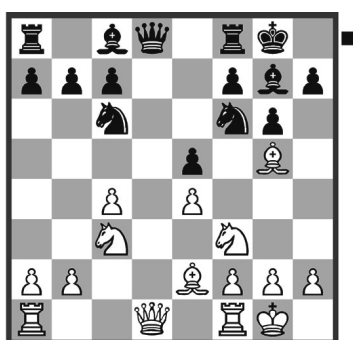
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♙e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6

a) 8.dxe5 ..... 11

b) 8.♙e3..... 13

## a) 8.dxe5

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 ♙g7 4. e4 d6 5. ♘f3 0-0 6. ♙e2 e5 7. 0-0 ♘c6 8. dxe5 dxex5 9. ♙g5



Position after: 9. ♙g5

This is a relatively popular try nowadays, but it is nothing that should worry Black. We are now in calm waters in complete contrast to the chaotic positions we will encounter later in the book.

### 9... ♘d4!?

I decided to give this rare but logical move a try instead of the more popular ones.

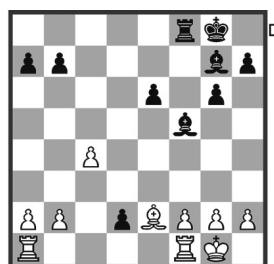
### 10. ♘xe5

Of course it is also very reasonable to make the other capture, but it should not bring any advantage. 10. ♘xd4 ♙xd4!?! (see analysis diagram next column) 11. ♙c2 [11. ♙xd4 exd4 12. ♘d5 ♘xe4 13. ♘xc7 ♘xg5 14. ♘xa8



Position after: 10... ♙xd4!?

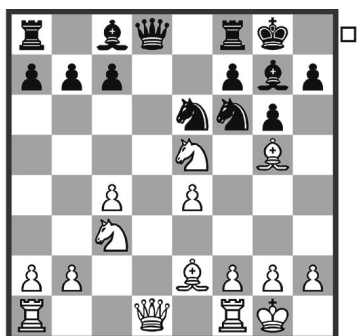
♙f5 15. ♘c7 d3 16. ♙d1 d2 17. ♙e2 ♘e6 18. ♘xe6 fxe6



Position after: 18... fxe6

Black has tremendous counterplay for the sacrificed exchange. The position is close to technically winning.; 11. ♘b5 ♙c5 12. ♙c2 c6 13. ♘c3 ♙e6 This is standard development. Black is fine.] 11... c6 12. ♗fd1 ♙c5 13. ♘a4 ♙e7 14. c5 h6 15. ♙e3 ♘g4 16. ♙xg4 ♙xg4 17. f3 ♙e6 18. ♗d6 ♗fd8 19. ♗ad1 b5! A clever tactical detail worth keeping in mind. Black is now satisfied with the bishop pair and ideas to expand on the queenside.

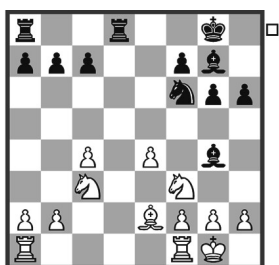
### 10... ♘e6



White has numerous sensible options here but none of them offers very much in terms of an advantage.

### 11. ♖h4

11. ♖xd8 ♜xd8 12. ♘f3 [12. ♖h4 ♜d2 13. f4 ♘d7 14. ♘xd7 ♖xd7 Black is doing well despite being temporarily down a pawn. The bishop will go to c6 next with strong pressure.] 12... ♘xg5 13. ♘xg5 h6 14. ♘f3 ♖g4

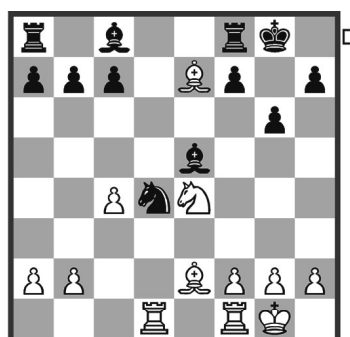


Position after: 14... ♖g4

15. ♜ad1 [15. h3 ♖xf3 16. ♖xf3 ♘d7 17. ♜ac1 ♘c5 18. ♜fd1 c6 19. ♖f1 h5 20. ♖e2 a5 Again Black has more than enough play for the sacrificed pawn. The bishop on g7 has fantastic scope and secures Black good play on the dark squares.] 15... ♜xd1 16. ♜xd1

♜e8 17. h3 ♘xe4 18. ♘xe4 ♜xe4 19. ♜d8+ ♖h7 20. ♖f1 ♖xf3 21. ♖xf3 ♜e7 22. ♖xb7 ♖xb2 Reaching a very drawish position.

11... ♖xd1 12. ♜axd1 ♘xe4 13. ♘xe4 ♖xe5 14. ♖e7 ♘d4



Position after: 14... ♘d4

### 15. ♖d3

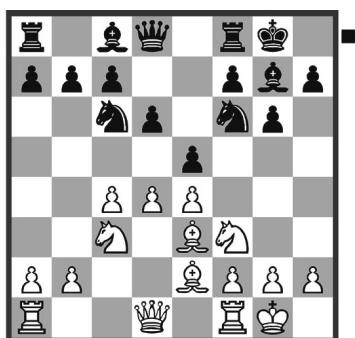
15. ♜fe1 ♜e8 16. ♘f6+ ♖xf6 17. ♖xf6 ♜xe2 18. ♖xd4 ♜xe1+ 19. ♜xe1 ♖e6 20. b3 ♜d8 Again the opposite-colored bishops mean this will certainly end in a draw.

15... f5 16. ♘c3 ♜f7 17. ♖a3 ♖d7 18. ♜fe1 ♜e8 19. ♘d5 c6 20. f4 ♖g7 21. ♜xe8+ ♖xe8 22. ♜e1 ♖d7 23. ♘e7+ ♖h8 24. ♘c8 ♖e6 25. ♘d6 ♜d7 26. ♘e8 b6! 27. b3 c5 28. ♘xg7 ♖xg7 29. ♖f2 a5 30. ♖b2 ♖f7

The position is equal, though there may still be a little bit left to play for. Black can try to maneuver the knight around or make a queenside break with ...a4.

## b) 8. ♖e3

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♗c3 ♘g7 4. e4 ♙... dxe5  
 d6 5. ♘f3 0-0 6. ♙e2 e5 7. 0-0 ♘c6 8.  
 ♙e3



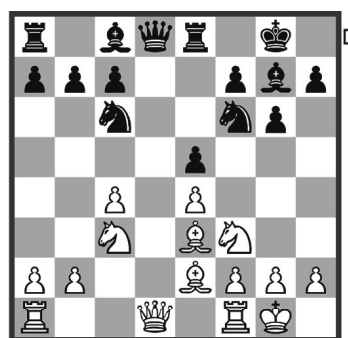
This is a well-known idea with the intention of avoiding the famous Mar Del Plata variation. White wants to play a much calmer game of chess. It has a very solid reputation and background and has been given quite a lot of attention recently.

8... ♖e8

The best choice in my opinion. Not being afraid to give White the choice to transition into an endgame is the right attitude to have.

9. dxe5

9. d5 ♘d4! 10. ♘xd4 exd4 11. ♙xd4 ♘xe4 This sequence of moves has illustrated the idea behind 8... ♖e8. Black is doing nicely now that the position has opened up somewhat.



Position after: 9... dxe5

10. ♙xd8

There are also some interesting alternatives worth examining: 10. h3

A) 10... b6!? 11. c5 ♙b7



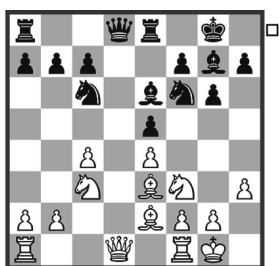
Position after: 11... ♙b7

A1) 12. ♙b5 a6 13. ♙xd8 [13. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 14. ♙c2 b5 15. ♙g5 ♙c8 16. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 17. ♖ad1 a5 18. ♘d5 The imbalance of two bishops versus two knights is notable. White can claim a slight edge although Black may be satisfied with the long-term

asset of the bishop pair. ½-½ (18) Lukacs, P (2490) – Popovic, P (2545) Austria 1995.] 13... ♖axd8 14. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 15. cxb6 cxb6 16. ♙xb6 ♖b8 17. ♙c7 ♖xb2 18. ♙xe5 ♗xe4 Black was fine. 0-1 (43) Antova, G (2263) – Lagno, K (2560) Caleta 2019.

**A2)** 12. ♙c4 ♖xd1 13. ♖fd1 ♗a5 14. ♙d3 ♗c6 15. ♖ac1 ♖ad8 16. a3 ♗d4 Playing actively. Black is okay.

**B)** 10... ♙e6



Position after: 10... ♙e6

**B1)** 11. ♖xd8 ♖exd8 12. ♖fd1 ♗e8 13. b3 ♗d4 It's always very natural to establish a strong knight in the center. Black has good play. ½-½ (53) Hakobyan, A (2565) – Dobrovolic, V (2309) Porto Carras 2018.

**B2)** 11. ♖e1 ♖xd1 [11... ♖c8!? 12. ♙f1 ♖xd1! 13. ♖axd1 h6 14. a3 ♗a5!? 15. c5 ♙b3 16. ♖c1 a6 17. ♗d2 ♙f8 18. f3 ♙g7 Reaching an unclear endgame where White can claim a small advantage.] 12. ♖exd1 The idea of this recapture is to keep the other rook for the useful c1-squa-

re. [12. ♖axd1 ♖ed8! leads to similar play.]



Position after: 12. ♖exd1

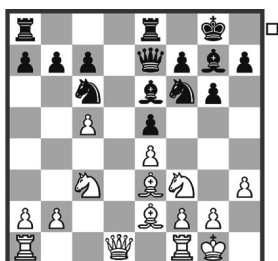
12... ♖ed8! [12... ♖ad8 13. ♗d5! allows White to exert some pressure as it is awkward to defend c7. ½-½ (50) Foord, D (2081) – Lewis, A (2288) England 2016.] 13. ♗b5 [13. ♗d5 ♗e8 shows the difference of recapturing with the e8-rook.] 13... ♗e8 14. ♗g5 ♙d7 15. ♖d2 h6 16. ♖ad1



Position after: 16. ♖ad1

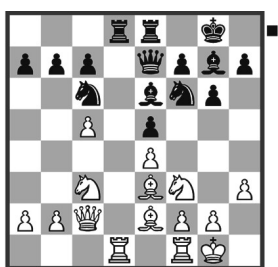
16... ♗d4 17. ♗xd4 exd4 18. ♙xd4 ♙a4 19. b3 ♖xd4 20. ♖xd4 ♙xd4 21. ♖xd4 c5 22. ♖d2 ♙c6 23. ♗f3 ♙xe4 24. ♗e5 ♗f6 White has no inroads into the Black camp so we can claim equality.

**B3)** 11. c5 ♖e7



Position after: 11... ♖e7

12. ♜c2 White's best way of clearing the d-file. [12. ♜a4 ♘d7! 13. ♘b5 ♜ec8! 14. ♜ac1 a6 15. ♘a3 ♜d8 Black has excellent play with better control of the central squares, while the c5-pawn can also become a target. Black has an edge.; 12. ♘b5 ♜ed8 13. ♜a4 ♘d4! 14. ♘d4 exd4 15. ♘xd4 c6 16. ♘e2 ♘xe4 17. ♘xg7 ♘xc5 18. ♜a3 ♘xg7 Black has better chances thanks to the extra pawn which White definitely doesn't have enough compensation for. 1-0 (58) Berczes, D (2519) – Jankovic, A (2559) Sarajevo 2010.] 12... ♜ad8 13. ♜ad1

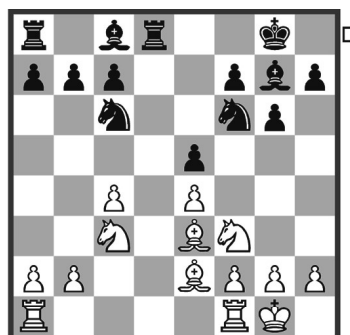


Position after: 13. ♜ad1

13... ♘d7!? [13... ♜xd1 14. ♜xd1 ♜d8 15. ♘b5 ♜xd1+ 16. ♜xd1 ♘d7 17. ♘c4 ♘e6 18. ♘d5 ♜d7 19. ♜b3 b6 20. ♘e6 fxe6 21. ♜c4

h6 22. b4 ♘h5 23. g3 ♜h7 24. ♜g2 ♘d4 25. b5 ♘xf3 26. ♜xf3 ♘f6 27. a4 h5 28. c6 ♜f7 29. ♜e2 ♘h6 30. ♘xh6 ♜xh6 31. h4 ♜e7 32. ♘b1 ♜d6 33. ♘d2 g5 34. ♜d3 ♜c5 35. ♜d8 1-0 (35) Speelman, J (2615) – Nunn, J (2585) Hastings 1987.] 14. ♘d5 ♘xd5! 15. exd5 ♘d4 16. ♘xd4 exd4 17. ♘b5 ♜e4 18. ♜b3 ♘xc5 19. ♜c4 c6 20. ♜fe1 ♜f5 21. ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 22. ♜xc5 cxb5 23. ♘d4 ♜c8 24. ♘xf5 ♜xc5 Black is fine. White must either simplify into an equal rook ending or else allow us to retain our powerful bishop.

## 10... ♜xd8

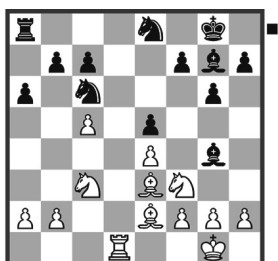


Position after: 10... ♜xd8

## 11. ♘g5

A) 11. ♜fd1 ♘g4 12. ♘d5 ♘xe4 13. ♘xc7 ♜xd1+ 14. ♜xd1 ♜c8 15. ♘d5 with a sharp endgame that is playable for both sides. 1-0 (58) Dlugy, M (2570) – Fishbein, A (2465) New York 1991.

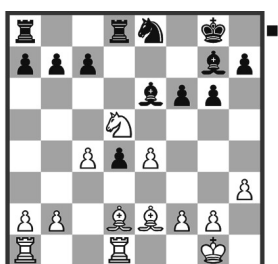
B) 11. ♘b5 ♘e8! 12. ♜fd1 ♜xd1+ 13. ♜xd1 ♘g4 14. c5 a6 15. ♘c3



Position after: 15. ♖c3

15... ♜d8 [15... ♙xf3 16. ♙xf3 ♘d4 17. ♘d5 c6 18. ♘b6 ♜d8 19. ♙xd4 exd4 20. ♜d3 ♘c7 21. ♙g4 ♜e8 22. f3 a5 Black is winning as White has no good way of simultaneously defending the pawns on a2 and c5. 0-1 (40) Jackelen, T (2368) – Polzin, R (2475) Germany 2000.] 16. ♜xd8 ♘xd8 17. ♘d2 ♙xe2 18. ♘xe2 ♙f8 White has a tiny pull, but Black should be able to hold this endgame. 1-0 (62) Suba, M (2560) – Gligoric, S (2495) New York 1987.

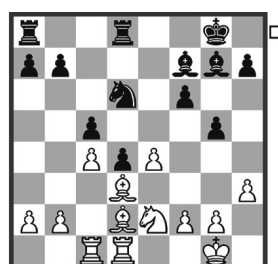
C) 11. ♘d5 ♘e8 12. h3 ♙e6 13. ♜fd1 ♘d4 14. ♘xd4 exd4 15. ♙g5 f6 16. ♙d2



Position after: 16. ♙d2

16... c6 [16... ♙f7 17. ♙d3 c6 18. ♘f4 a5 is also not bad for Black. 19. ♜dc1 ♙f8 20. c5 g5 21. ♘e2 ♘c7 22. a3 a4 23. ♘g3 ♘a6 24. ♙b4 ♘xb4 25. axb4

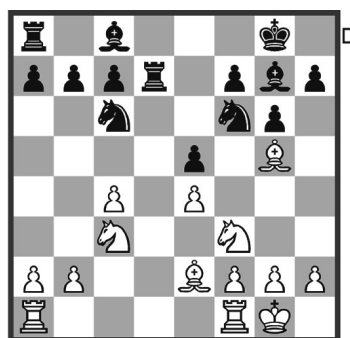
♙b3 26. ♘f1 ♜db8 27. ♘d2 ½-½ (27) Caessens, R (2225) – Bles, A (2350) Dieren 1988.] 17. ♘f4 ♙f7 18. ♜ac1 ♘d6 19. ♙d3 g5 20. ♘e2 c5



Position after: 20... c5

Black has good chances for an advantage thanks to the strong central control.

11... ♜d7!?



Position after: 11... ♜d7!?

12. ♙d1!?

A) 12. ♜ad1 ♘d4! [12... ♜xd1 13. ♜xd1 ♙g4 14. ♙e3 ♘e8 15. h3 ♙xf3 16. gxf3!? ♘d4 17. f4 ♘xe2+ 18. ♘xe2 ♘d6 Black can be happy. White has to be careful to maintain the balance. ½-½ (23) Doda, Z (2430)–Bednarski, J (2400)