

The Modernized King's Indian Defense

**Averbakh
Variation**

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Jan Boekelman

Thinkers Publishing 2022



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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Foreword

Dear Reader,

A few months ago I was contacted by a Dutch chess player and enthusiast, Jan Boekelman, with a message that he was about to finish a book on the Averbakh Variation of the King's Indian Defense. A new book on the Averbakh! That brought back some pleasant chess memories. Some 25 years have passed since I wrote my own book "King's Indian Defense: Averbakh Variation" (Cadogan Chess, 1996). Writing the book was very important to me as at the time, I was already leaving the chess world as a professional grandmaster. I wanted to finish my career by contributing something by writing a book. I remember defeating Norwegian GM Rune Djurhuus in quite a spectacular game in 1995 (the main line of chapter 38 in my book). The game was voted the fourth best in the Chess Informant that season. After the game, I thought: "Great, now I can write my book about the Averbakh Variation and leave chess with full dignity!" In the book, I managed to record many of my own games as the Averbakh was my main anti-King's Indian weapon from 1988 until I stopped playing professionally.

Yuri Averbakh, the founder of the variation himself was kind enough to write an extensive foreword to my book which gave it a certain grand historical perspective. I put all my best efforts into the book, and in the preface I justly claimed that I was not concealing anything in the book, as some grandmaster writers were suspected of doing in those days.

Last year, I was checking my book with the computer (not so much to do anyway due to the virus!) and it has held up remarkably well. Most conclusions look correct even now, 25 years later. I was in fact using a computer program when I wrote it. If I saw a very critical tactical position, I would let the program work on it overnight. It was mostly to test tactical solutions, but now opening books seem unthinkable without using programs. Probably mine was working about 1000 times slower than the programs today, but I thought I was on the cutting-edge of chess technology! How much has work on openings changed in a quarter of a century!

Why I started to play the Averbakh Variation

I took up the Averbakh Variation as I was invited as a "wild card" to the Reykjavik World Cup tournament in 1988 where I would face some of the strongest players

in the world – I was not even a professional at the time. I figured that my favorite Saemisch would hardly hold up against such great King’s Indian players as Garry Kasparov and John Nunn. It worked great – I managed to beat Nunn and drew with Kasparov after he clearly felt uncomfortable in the opening. Then I played the variation consistently, sometimes replacing it with other variations to avoid opening preparation. Fridrik Olafsson, Iceland’s first grandmaster, was of course the hero of every young player in Iceland and he sometimes played the variation. In the 70s as a young boy, I had studied all of his games and often copied his openings. So that’s how I got acquainted in the first place.

Comments on various lines

I managed to have a sneak preview into some key lines in this new book – some of them are lines which worried me most during my professional days. In my book, I tried to cover the variation as a whole so it could be useful for both sides – White or Black. In retrospect, I was of course biased for showing White’s chances. Jan has taken a different approach by creating a repertoire book, easing the work for players preparing to face the King’s Indian Defense with White.



Position after: 6. ♖g5

First, there is the relatively modern 6... ♘a6 (part IV of this book). The good thing about 6... ♘a6 is that White need not focus entirely on lines with short castling. One of the benefits of the Averbakh is that there are three good options for the white king until the middlegame, which keeps Black guessing about his target! I understand that all three options with the king are represented well in this part of the book.

The position after 6... ♘a6 7. ♔d2 e5 8. d5 c6 is an important crossroad in this

variation. Jan concurs with my conclusion that 9. f3 followed by 9... cxd5 10. cxd5 ♘d7 is the main line, when it is not so easy for White to decide. Jan recommends 11. ♘d1 – a move I did not consider at all, but it is quite logical (see Chapter 11).

For the endgame variation 6... h6 7. ♘e3 c5 8. e5, I lost interest after a loss to Kotronias in 1995. Having used it to beat Nunn in 1988, that game kind of closed the book for me (see Chapter 6). I see that Jan has come to the same conclusion and prefers to continue with 8. d5, which takes us into the 6... c5 variation.

It is very interesting how this new book deals with 6... c5, which up until recently has been quite a headache for me. I am sure Jan realizes that 7. dxc5 offers White nothing after 7... dxc5! and now 8. ♖xd8 ♗xd8 9. e5 would be easily met with 9... ♟g4! and Black may even already have the better chances. Also 9. e5 ♟fd7 10. f4 f6! is fine for Black.

I had a look into the chapters which show how Jan constructs the case for White after 7. d5 h6 8. ♘e3 (8. ♘f4 being the old move). They are in my book where the main game is Portisch – Nunn, World Cup 1988. I was only considering 8... e6 9. dxe6 ♘xe6 10. ♖d2 ♗h7. I see that various new ideas have popped up along the way – it's very interesting to see how nowadays the main line in this book runs! The book also shows a number of interesting online games Jan has played with Mark Hebden with this revitalized approach!

A bright future?

It has been 25 years since a new book on the Averbakh has been published – that is far too long! Obviously, it reflects the fact that there is not as much enthusiasm for the Averbakh nowadays as a few decades ago. When I recently checked Chessbase for my results with it during those professional days, it seemed that I really made a living out of beating the King's Indian players with the Averbakh! Looking at it seriously today, I really do not understand why the variation is not more popular! Since 2015, I have been playing competitive chess again in a new role as an amateur. Of course, the Averbakh is my main weapon against the King's Indian. With little training and hardly any practice, results have been almost as strong as they used to be before the turn of the century!

I would say: it is time for a renaissance of the Averbakh! With this book as your guide, take the opportunity and win as many King's Indian games as possible! By the way, please do not tell your chess colleagues and friends that you have found

this brilliant and strong response to the King's Indian. Let's keep it as our sophisticated surprise weapon!

It is great news to have this new book. It seems a worthy successor to my book written 25 years ago!

GM Margeir Petursson
Lviv, Ukraine
May 2021

Preface

Controlling the King's Indian Defense

Welcome to the wonderful world of the Averbakh Variation against the King's Indian Defense (KID). Who would not want to have a variation against the KID that keeps White's position completely under control, that is positional in nature and that stays away from dark and murky waters or messy tactical situations? Many players like to play a variation against the KID that bears the hallmark of strong grandmasters and has stood the test of time. This book examines such a variation with a repertoire for White and an in-depth analysis of all of Black's responses.



The Averbakh is a solid and respectable variation against the KID. It bears the name of the well-known Soviet grandmaster, theorist, and endgame specialist Averbakh (photo). Yuri Lvovich Averbakh is the oldest living grandmaster who recently celebrated his 99th birthday in Moscow on 8 February. In the

early 1950s, Averbakh was one of the first grandmasters to play the variation more than once. He contributed greatly to the development of its theory. Averbakh used the variation for several years, then changed course to other variations to fight the KID. Occasionally, he returned to his old love that by then bore his name.

The Averbakh Variation represents a shift in White's approach to the fight against the KID. Rather than focusing solely on the queenside while accepting a certain danger of being checkmated on the other side of the board, as happens in the KID in many lines, White uses a strategy of positional control, in which he uses the KID in a calm, positional way. Initially, the character of the battle is indeed relatively calm and positional, but not too calm to land in near-equal positions immediately. White's development schedules follow strategic logic. In the following parts of the game, White generally retains his first mover advantage, in positions where he retains control.

The Averbakh has always been one of the best choices against the KID. Over the years, it has been played by many strong grandmasters such as Lev Polugaevsky,

Vadim Milov, Evgeny Bareev, Yasser Seirawan, Tigran Petrosian, Artur Jussupow, Lajos Portisch, Wolfgang Uhlmann, and Margeir Petursson, many of whom played the Averbakh throughout their entire chess career. Magnus Carlsen used it to relatively easily beat Loek van Wely in Wijk aan Zee, 2013. Boris Gelfand has played it on many occasions with excellent results (80% in his games in Chessbase). Vassily Ivanchuk and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov have played the Averbakh, as do the current 2700+ players Yu Yangyi and Le Quang Liem.

Important theory



My analysis builds on the foundation laid by three grandmaster-authors, Petursson, Kornev, and Flear. The "King's Indian Defense – Averbakh Variation" (1996) by Margeir Petursson (photo) is a small, but very interesting monograph devoted to the Averbakh Variation. It is a comprehensive book and has significant theoretical value to this day. Glenn Flear wrote

two chapters in "Dangerous Weapons: King's Indian" (2009) with a summary and many new ideas in the Averbakh. "A Practical White Repertoire with 1. d4 and 2. c4 – The King's Fianchetto Defences" (2013) by Alexei Kornev is an interesting book, in which Kornev specifies a full repertoire for White against the KID based on the Averbakh Variation. Of course, I will go into detail on all the analyses and suggestions in the numerous KID repertoire books for Black – see the bibliography.

Engines do not like the King's Indian

It is a phenomenon that has also been identified by other authors: engines do not like the KID. Hence a caveat: they consistently overestimate White's odds, especially in closed positions. There are positions in so-called locked situations, where White has no chance of breaking through, where the engines are still claiming a winning advantage for White. There are positions that are supposedly "winning" for White while they are still closed. After opening the position in the only possible way, the engine judgement suddenly drops to a "better" for White. The conclusion of this is that the engine assessment should always be put in perspective. In this book, that has been carefully done. The engines are not followed strictly and personal judgement has been a strong a guide as well. More often than not, the engine's optimistic perspective has been changed into a more realistic one.

Acknowledgements

A thank you to Romain Edouard, Daniel Vanheirzele, and their colleagues at Thinkers Publishing for the opportunity to publish this book on the Averbakh Variation. Working on a book like this is very demanding. Their unremitting support and understanding have provided an excellent breeding ground for a very beautiful result. Much of this book is their product.

Another great thank you to Icelandic grandmaster and Averbakh connoisseur Margeir Petursson, who was so very kind to write the foreword to this book. He was the author of the first book exclusively on the Averbakh, more than 25 years ago. Despite its age, that book is still very relevant. Petursson's book led the way to many interesting options which have been examined further in this book.

Since we made contact earlier this year about the foreword, Petursson has had a look at some critical chapters in the draft manuscript. He came up with numerous challenges, suggestions and improvements. In particular, his contribution to the chapters about 6... ♘a6 7. ♖d2 e5 8. d5 ♗e8 are well-appreciated.



A special thanks to the English grandmaster Mark Hebden (photo). His continued use of the KID with Black in countless games we played online at the Internet Chess Club gave me an excellent opportunity to test my ideas in the Averbakh. In particular, the chapters on the Byrne Variation, 6... c6 and 7... a6, (Chapter 5) and the main line 6... c5 with 9. dxe6 (Chapter 14) have gained a lot from these games.

Enno Noordhoff, my chess companion, was so kind to assist me with a lot of technical issues and advice on texts.

Finally, I thank my beloved partner Leonoor, who supported me so kindly during the time I was working on this book.

Conclusion

The Averbakh Variation is a hidden gem in the variants against the KID. It is elegant, classic, and grandmasterly. It bears the history of many iconic names in chess who played it and still play it today. It is based on solid strategic principles. The opening

schedules are easy to learn. The opening often makes it possible to squeeze Black from the board, with positional power play, occasional quick king attacks and interesting endgames. It is one of the few KID variations without the standard pawn race, with White's king waiting to be mated on g1.



Picture of the author playing IM Manual Bosboom, an experienced KID player, during the Haarlem Masters Tournament, October 2019.

At the same time, the Averbakh is a demanding opening. Many different structures can develop after the opening. In my proposed repertoire, there are structures common for the KID Saemisch, the KID Makagonov, the KID Classical, the KID Exchange Variation, but also the Modern Benoni, the Slow Benoni, the Benko Gambit, and the Maroczy Bind. White will have to familiarize himself with all of these opening strategies and associated pawn structures.

Above all, the Averbakh is a very rewarding opening. White's piece development follows classical principles. In general, White is not lagging in development. Even without the theoretical knowledge of certain variations, he should be able to find his way. Best of all, the Averbakh promises you a head-start at the end of the opening, without the mess our KID opponents love to create on the board!

Best of luck with this opening. With the rigorous and engine-assisted analysis of old and new theory, this book presents a robust repertoire for White. There are many opportunities for White to improve upon well-known theory or grandmaster games. Recent developments and insights have significantly strengthened White's theoretical case. This has once again made the Averbakh one of the most challenging variations Black has to deal with when playing the KID. We can truly speak of The Modernized King's Indian Defense – Averbakh Variation!

Jan Boekelman
Overveen, May 2021

Theoretical Introduction

The Averbakh Variation against the KID begins with 1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 ♙g7 4. e4 d6 5. ♙e2 0-0 6. ♙g5. White develops his bishops before he completes the development of his kingside. The king is held in the middle for the time being. White remains flexible as to where he will move his king. With 6. ♘g5, White puts pressure on Black's position as a result of which standard KID moves and set-ups cannot be played, or at least not immediately. For example, playing the move 6... e5 at this moment is already a serious mistake. In the selection of subsequent variations, the classical Averbakh approach will be preferred, which generally starts with putting White's queen on d2, the typical Averbakh move. It aims to prevent Black's ...h6. In addition, it facilitates further smooth development by White. If appropriate, White may consider 0-0-0, with, among others, additional pressure along the d-file. If in the following stage of the opening Black plays ...e5, after some preparation or an immediate ...c5, White advances his d-pawn.

The analysis of Black's systems against the Averbakh Variation is structured as follows:

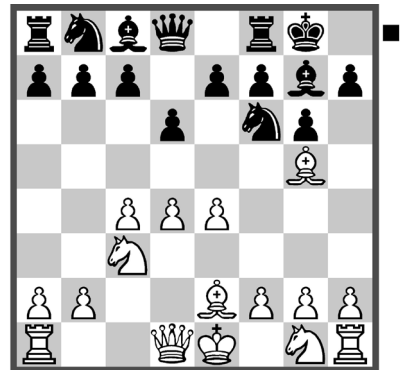
Part I – Black's 6th move alternatives

Part II – 6... ♘bd7; 6... c6; 6... a6

Part III – 6... h6

Part IV – 6... ♘a6

Part V – 6... c5



Part I of the book reviews all alternative 6th moves for Black. These moves are less challenging and generally promise White good prospects.

Part II focuses on three interesting, but less fashionable lines, i.e. 6... ♘bd7, 6... c6 and 6 ... a6. These are all serious options for Black, that require accurate responses from White to obtain an advantage.

In the early years of the Averbakh Variation, Black usually played the robust 6... h6, as analyzed in **Part III**. After the subsequent 7. ♖e3, Black would continue with his standard KID reply 7... e5. White would close the center with 8. d5, later gaining a development tempo with ♖d2. This has been played in many games. Results tend to be favorable for White. This is, to a significant extent, due to the weakening of the black pawn structure on the kingside. A fast h4-h5 by White often puts a lot of pressure on Black.

Part IV deals with 6... ♘a6, a modern response to the Averbakh. In the early 1990s, this move came to the fore, initially championed by the Russian grandmaster Igor Glek. Moving the knight to the rim has since established itself as one of Black's main theoretical responses to the Averbakh. Black aims to continue with 7... e5, keeping the character of the game strictly within the KID domain, yet without weakening his kingside pawn structure as we saw after 6... h6. This approach is recommended in many KID repertoire books.

Black's 6... ♘a6 will be responded with the classical 7. ♖d2, not one of the recently more fashionable moves such as 7. ♘f3 or 7. f4, which will be briefly looked at as well. In the main line, the critical 7... e5 8. d5 will be investigated. Here, Black has three major options. After 8... ♘c5 9. f3 a5, the move 10. 0-0-0 will be analyzed – the original continuation. This has already been played by Averbakh connoisseurs Lev Alburt and Evgeny Bareev in the 1980s. The move changes the character of the battle, with good attacking chances for White on the kingside and control in the center. Black will have his share of chances as well. 8... ♜8 is an approach introduced more recently. In true KID fashion, Black aims to play on two sides of the board. 8... c6 is the third option, most often played. It immediately opens the queenside, hampering any over-enthusiasm by White for pushing his kingside pawns forward. His king will soon be without a safe shelter. The repertoire prefers Saemisch-type positions for White with short castling, changing the character of the game and making good use of Black's poorly positioned knight on a6.

The dynamic 6... c5 of **Part V** has been the absolute main line against the Averbakh Variation for as long as it has existed. A significant body of theory has developed in the various main lines. Black puts the onus on White's queenside as White's dark-squared bishop has left its starting position. After White plays 7. d5, the traditional Averbakh move, the position takes on the character of a Benoni. An important line then continues with 7... e6, which recently, after years of obscurity, has made its comeback on the theoretical stage, supported by challenging analyses by Robin van Kampen on Chess24. After 7. d5 e6, instead of the normal 8. ♖d2, which will be

briefly looked into as well, the excellent, new move 8. ♖c1! will be investigated. This move was introduced into master practice by Chanda Sandipan in 2018. This move radically changes the evaluation of this line. White maintains the position's strategic plusses, but prevents many of the strong ideas recently developed for Black after 8. ♖d2.

Finally, the immediate 7... h6. This has been covered extensively by Vassilios Kotronias in his Quality Chess series on the KID. This book makes a case for the classical line 8. ♗e3 e6 and now 9. dxe6, an old-time favorite of chess icons Lajos Portisch and Wolfgang Uhlmann. This set-up was not that long ago re-introduced at the elite level by Boris Gelfand. Many new concepts and ideas have been developed in this line, which seriously challenge known theory. White is playing for two results.

In summary, it has been very rewarding to work on such a respectable variation as the KID Averbakh. The underlying development schemes and structures are natural and sound. The Averbakh provides White with excellent chances to maintain control, contain Black's aggression and leave the opening phase with a plus!

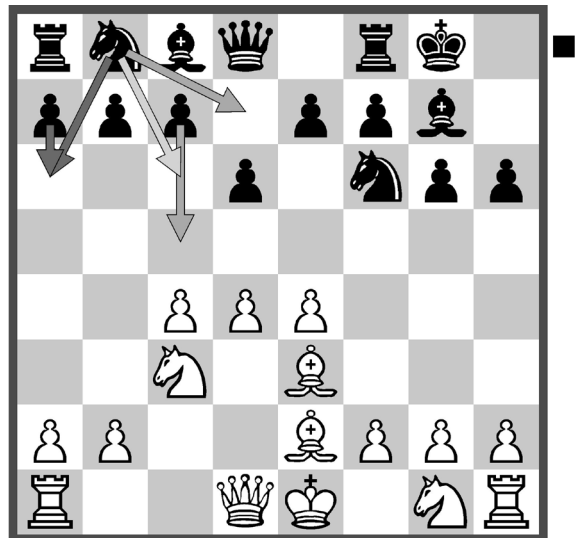


6...h6 7. ♖e3 --

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3. ♘c3 ♙g7

4.e4 d6 5. ♙e2 0-0 6. ♙g5 h6

7. ♖e3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 6 – 6...h6 7.♖e3 --

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0-0 6.♙g5 h6 7.♙e3

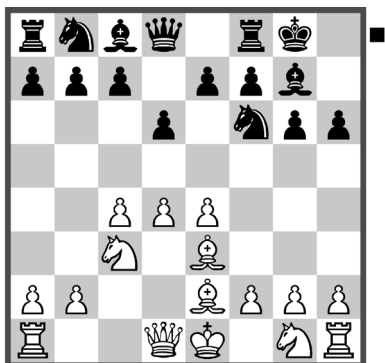
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a) 7...-- Others

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 ♖g7 4. e4 d6
5. ♖e2 0-0 6. ♖g5 h6

For many players with Black, 6... h6 is the easiest way to take the character of the game into the domain of the King's Indian. White's bishop is pushed away from its active post, allowing for a subsequent 7... e5. However, the pawn cover in front of Black's king has been weakened, which will have an impact on what he may be able to achieve on that side of the board. White will most likely win a tempo with ♖d2, increasing the pressure against h6. Black runs the risk of ending up in a locked-in situation if White plays h4-h5. It is for that reason that quite a lot of KID players refrain from 7... h6 and prefer a move such as 7... ♘a6, trying to achieve the same objectives without weakening their king-side.

7. ♖e3



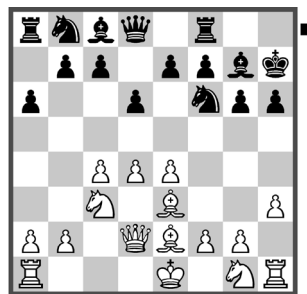
Position after: 7. ♖e3

The most popular moves now are 7... ♘bd7, 7... c5 and 7... e5. Here, I investigate all the alternatives, which often transpose to one of these main lines.

7... ♘c6!?

A provocative move, comparable to 6... ♘c6, although there are differences.

A) 7... a6 8. ♖d2 ♔h7 [8... h5 9. f3 e5 10. d5 This is treated under 7... e5.] 9. h3!±



Position after: 9. h3!±

Better than h2-h4 or f2-f3, now the center has not been closed and Black has not played ...e7-e5 yet. Unlike the situation after 7... ♘bd7, White's 9. h4 will be answered with 9... ♘g4. On 9. f3, Black plays 9... c5 10. d5 e6 and White has a clumsy Modern Benoni and has problems developing his g1-knight. 9... e5 [9... ♘c6 10. ♘f3 e5 11. d5 ♘e7 12. g4± Kovacs, J (2205) – Mesáros, J (1933) Trencianske Teplice 2005] 10. d5 White threatens to play an attractive KID

Makagonov with 11. g2-g4. 10... Nxe4! ? [10... Ng8 11. g4 f5 12. exf5 gxf5 13. gxf5 Qxf5 14. Qd3 Rf6 This was played in Askgaard, J (2115) – Arnarsson, H Copenhagen 1997. White should now continue with 15. Ne4! Rg6 16. Rc2 Ne7 17. Ne2+ .] 11. Nxe4 f5 12. h4! fxe4 13. h5 g5 14. Qd1 Nd7 15. Ne2 Nf6 16. $\text{Ng3}\pm$ White follows with 17. Qc2 and potentially 0-0-0.

B) 7... c6 8. Qd2 Here White has to play Qd2 in order to be able to transpose to the main lines where Black plays ...e7-e5. 8... Kh7 [8... Ra5 9. f3!] 9. h3!



Position after: 9. h3!

Again, I recommend this quiet move here, if not only for the fact that Yuri Averbakh has played it himself as well. As long as the center has not been closed with ...e7-e5, it does not make much sense to go berserk with h2-h4 or take the f3-square away from the knight with f2-f3.

B1) 9... a6 10. Nf3! d5 [10... b5 11. e5 Nfd7 12. $\text{Qd1}\pm$] 11. Qd3 With all the preparation, White is in a position

to keep his center in place. 11... dxe4 12. Nxe4 Nxe4 13. Qxe4 Qe6 14. h4± White is completely superior here, Averbakh, Y – Ragozin, V Lenin-grad 1956.

B2) 9... e5 10. d5 cxd5 11. cxd5



Position after: 11. cxd5

11... Nbd7 12. Nf3 Nh5 13. 0-0 a6 14. Nh2 Nhf6 15. b4± This was the game Ezat, M (2332) – Elgabry, M (2328) Cairo 2001.

C) 7... Kh7 8. h3! There is no need to put the queen on d2 now. The simple move h2-h3 makes a lot of sense. The database shows a 100% for White here. 8... c5 [8... e5 9. d5± with a favorable Makagonov] 9. d5

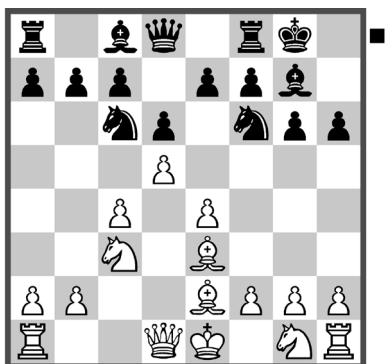


Position after: 9. d5

9... e6 10. ♖d3 ♜e8 11. ♘f3 exd5 12. exd5 ♘h5 13. 0-0± By not putting his queen on d2 immediately, White plays a very successful classical Averbakh, Portisch, L – Barczay, L Budapest 1965.

D) 7... ♘a6 This normally transposes with Black's next move. 8. ♔d2 ♙h7!? [The alternative 8... e5 9. d5 transposes to Part IV; 8... c5 9. d5 ♙h7 transposes to positions similar to those in part V.] 9. ♜d1! The characteristic move for White in those situations where Black postpones taking a position in the center. Here, White even abandons the bishop pair for it, and gets a strong positional plus in return. 9... ♘g4 10. ♙xg4 ♙xg4 11. ♘ge2! c5 [11... ♙xe2 12. ♘xe2 c5 13. 0-0±] 12. 0-0 ♙xe2 13. ♔xe2 ♔a5 14. d5!± [14. f4 cxd4± Laurusas, T (2419) – Drugov, P (2302) Panevezys 2017] 14... ♙xc3 15. bxc3 ♔xc3 16. f4+–

8. d5!



Position after: 8. d5!

White has to push the d-pawn, other

wise Black will achieve at least an equal game with 8... e5.

8... ♘e5

Black has to look for complications in the center.

8... ♘b8?! This loses two tempi, so White can afford himself some luxuries! 9. ♔d2 ♙h7 10. h3! White prevents 10... ♘g4 and waits to see how Black progresses in the center.

A) 10... e5 11. h4!±



Position after: 11. h4!±

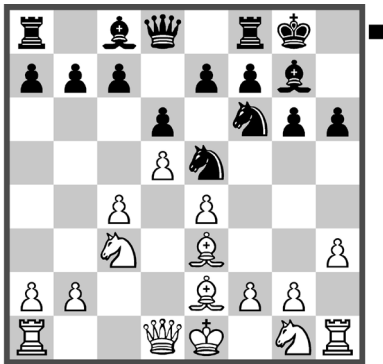
This is the main line after 7... e5 where Black has lost a tempo. Now the 11... ♘g4 maneuver is no problem anymore to White. 11... ♘xe4? 12. ♘xe4 f5 13. h5! f4 14. hxg6+ ♙g8 15. ♙d3+–

B) 10... a5 11. ♘f3 e5 12. g4± Polovodin, I (2435) – Stotika, V (2225) Leningrad 1983.

C) 10... c5 11. ♘f3± We have arrived in a 7... c5 Averbakh with two extra

tempi for White. White can choose a classical approach with a quick Qd3 .

9. h3!



Position after: 9. h3!

The most popular choice for White. White prepares 10. Nf3 . Black has lost time on his kingside, so it is not a bad idea to invest time in natural development moves.

9... c6

A) 9... $\text{a6}?! 10. \text{Qd2 h5}?! A few slow moves by Black and White already has a big advantage. 11. f4 \text{Ned7} 12. \text{Nf3 Nc5}$ This was played in Peng, Z (2455) – Ziogaite, J (2093) Beijing 2008. Here, White can already achieve a winning advantage with 13. $\text{Qxc5 dxc5} 14. \text{e5 Ne8} 15. \text{g4+-}$.

B) 9... $\text{e6} 10. \text{Qd2 exd5} 11. \text{cxd5 Qh7} 12. \text{f4!? Nde7} 13. \text{Nf3 Re8} 14. \text{Qd3 c6} 15. \text{dxc6 bxc6} 16. 0-0\pm$ Gareyev, T (2606) – Matinian, N (2470) Lichess.org 2021.

10. $\text{Nf3}!$

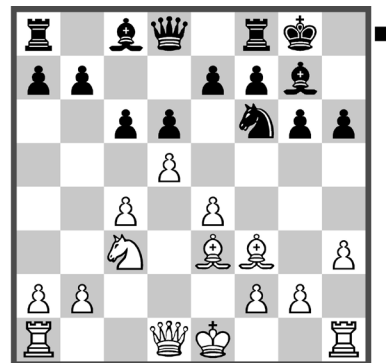
There is no need to put the queen on d2 right now after having played the slow 9. h3. Only in case we have a quick kingside pawn storm would that be needed.

10... Nxf3+

A) 10... $\text{cxd5} 11. \text{cxd5 Qd7}?! This gives White a very favorable pawn structure. 12. \text{Nxe5 dxe5} 13. 0-0\pm$ Lako, L (2199) – Valis, J (2113) Hungary 2005.

B) 10... $\text{Qa5} 11. \text{Qd2 cxd5} 12. \text{cxd5 Nxf3+} 13. \text{Qxf3 Qh7} 14. 0-0 \text{Qd7} 15. \text{a3 Rfc8} 16. \text{b4 Qd8} 17. \text{Rac1}\pm$ White has more space and a good initiative on the queenside, Traito, K – Poddubnyi, V Leningrad 1987.

11. Qxf3



Position after: 11. Qxf3

11... cxd5

11... $\text{Nd7} 12. \text{Qd2 Qh7}$ Here, White should play quietly with 13. $0-0\pm$ with

more space all over the board.

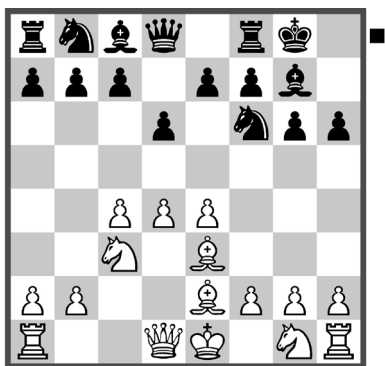
12. cxd5±

In this position, White has all the fun. Black is without serious counterplay, Lerner, K (2500) – Gufeld, E (2485) Ivano Frankivsk 1982.

Conclusion

b) 7... ♞bd7

1. d4 ♞f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♞c3 ♙g7 4. e4 d6
5. ♙e2 0-0 6. ♙g5 h6 7. ♙e3



Position after: 7. ♙e3

Black's most popular moves in this position are 7... e5, 7... c5 and 7... ♞bd7. 7... e5 will be dealt with in the following subchapters, and the other two in the current subchapter.

7... ♞bd7!?

A subtle waiting move, which was quite popular at the end of the previous century. Strong grandmasters have shown

Black's alternatives on move 7 tend to give White a good game. White has to bear in mind that as long as the center has not been closed with ...e7-e5, it does not make much sense to go berserk with h2-h4 or take the f3-square away from the knight with f2-f3. A considerate use of ♙d2, ♞f3 and h3, and generally not overextending on the kingside, is the ticket to success.

an interest in playing this, notably Alexei Shirov and Victor Bologan. Black develops a piece before further action. In general, Black's aim is to play ...c7-c5 with a Benko Gambit in mind. White's queen on d2 will not be optimally placed for the structures which arise. The positions after 7... ♞bd7 bear a lot of commonality with those analyzed after 6... ♞bd7 7. ♙d2 etc. The difference with the positions after 6... ♞bd7 is that Black's extra moves have weakened his kingside pawn structure and hence his king's defense. On the other side, White's dark-squared bishop is on a much less active square.

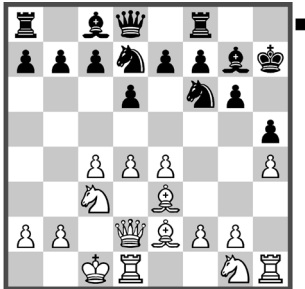
8. ♙d2 c5

Shirov's idea from the early 1990s.

8... ♙h7?! Interestingly enough, Black has no time for this. White immediately starts activities on the kingside giving him a serious plus. 9. h4! The white h-

pawn will assault Black's pawn structure on the kingside like a battering ram.

A) 9... h5 With the king on h7, this is hardly ever a good idea. 10. 0-0-0!



Position after: 10. 0-0-0!

White has good attacking chances on the kingside and in the center, so he can safely castle long. 10... c6 11. e5 ♞e8 12. f4 ♔a5 13. g4 b5 14. gxh5 gxh5 15. ♙d3+ ♕g8 16. ♔e2+ White's attack is very dangerous, Raetsky, A (2410) – Schneider, M (2185) Bad Ragaz 1994.

B) 9... c5 Trying to transpose to the main line of this chapter. 10. h5! Due to the weakness of the black kingside, White has this intermediate move. 10... g5 [10... cxd4 11. hxg6+! fxg6 12. ♙xd4 ♞e5 13. 0-0-0± Looking at Black's kingside; White need not worry that much about his own king's safety.] 11. ♞f3 With such weaknesses within Black's kingside, White should definitely not worry too much about a lack of chances in the Maroczy Bind. White may even consider 0-0-0 at some stage. 11... cxd4 12. ♙xd4±

White is better, for example: 12... a6 13. ♞d1!? ♔a5 14. 0-0 g4 15. ♞h4 ♙xh5 16. ♞f5±.

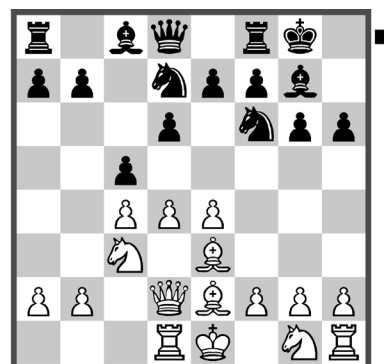
C) 9... e5



Position after: 9... e5

The emergency brake for Black after 9. h4. 10. h5! g5 11. d5± transposing to the main lines with 7... e5. Those lines are favorable for White, Polugaevsky, L – Norby, P Lugano 1968.

9. ♞d1!



Position after: 9. ♞d1!

White can best opt for the transposition to the Maroczy Bind, with the black knight positioned poorly on d7 and a

weakened black kingside. The latter consideration is unlike the situation without ...h6 and ♙e3 included, where d5 is recommended. The weakening of the kingside improves the Maroczy Bind for White significantly. This 9. d5 alternative here used to be a big battlefield for the Averbakh. It generally leads to complex Benko Gambit-inspired positions, where both White and Black have many pieces on suboptimal squares. Black has good opportunities for counterplay. Only a limited number of games have been played with 9. ♖d1, but they have made an impact. Two strong grandmasters with White used it to defeat Victor Bologan. Bologan's last games with this variation were in 2012: one where he played against 9. ♖d1 and the other against 9. dxc5. He lost both and has since chosen other weapons against the Averbakh.

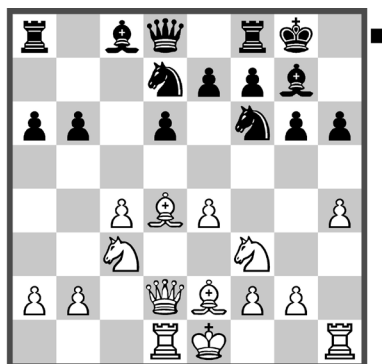
9. d5 ♙h7 followed by a quick ...b5 is the traditional main line here. This variation will not be further examined.

9... cxd4 10. ♙xd4 a6

10... b6 11. f3 ♙b7 12. ♘h3 ♖c8 13. 0-0 ♘e5 14. b3 g5 15. ♘f2 ♘h5 16. g3± Black's kingside is very much weakened, Mamedyarov, S (2726) – Bologan, V (2732) Astana 2012.

11. ♘f3 b6 12. h4!N

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 12. h4!N

This pawn march gives White promising play. There are more modern lines in the Maroczy Bind where White starts a kingside assault. That is particularly the case where Black has chosen a slow development scheme (...♘bd7, ...b6, etc.). In the current situation, there is the extra benefit of the weakened black kingside.

12. ♙e3 ♘g4!? [12... ♙b7?! 13. ♙xh6! ♘c5 14. ♙xg7 ♙xg7 15. ♘g5 ♘cxe4 16. ♘cxe4 ♙xe4 17. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 18. ♙d4± Kortschnoj, V (2633) – Bologan, V (2651) Birmingham 2002] 13. ♙d4 e5 14. ♙e3 ♙b7 15. 0-0 ♘df6 16. ♘e1 ♘xe3 17. ♙xe3±

12... ♙b7

12... h5 13. ♘g5 ♙b7 14. 0-0 ♖c8 15. f4± followed quickly by f4-f5.

13. h5

White sacrifices a pawn for the attack.

13... gxh5

13... g5?! 14. ♘xg5 hxg5 15. h6+–

14. ♙e3 ♘g4

14... ♙xe4 15. ♙xh6 ♙g6 16. ♘h4
♘e5 17. ♙xg7 ♙xg7 18. f4+–

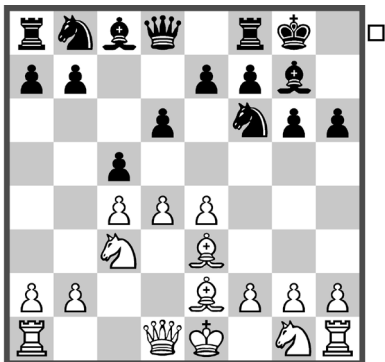
15. ♙f4±

White has excellent compensation for the pawn and will soon win it back with a strong attack.

Conclusion: The variation 6 ... h6 7. ♙e3 ♘bd7 8. ♙d2 c5 9. d5 followed by a quick ...b5 had its heyday in the last decade of the previous century. Grandmasters Shirov and Bologan scored many nice victories with it. The Benko Gambit with the white queen on d2 resulted in complex fights with good chances for Black. The invention of 9. ♙d1! has turned the tide for this variation. Interest in it has waned and the theoretical focus has shifted to other systems against the Averbakh.

c) 7...c5 – The Endgame Variation

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 ♙g7 4. e4 d6
5. ♙e2 0-0 6. ♙g5 h6 7. ♙e3 c5



Position after: 7... c5

A key continuation for Black.

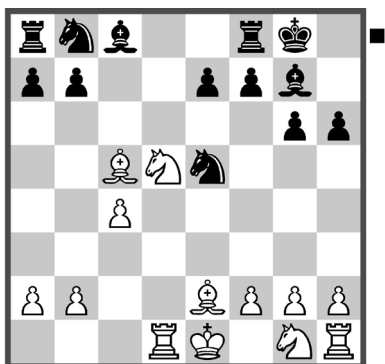
8. e5!?

This used to be a major battleground between the Averbakh icons and the KID gang, with Margeir Petursson and Ivan Farago leading the white side and Leonid Yurtaev and Vasilios Kotronias defending the black side.

This subchapter will show a high-level overview of the endgame variation, with a focus on its treatment in recent theoretical works.

8. d5! The traditional 8. d5 is this book's repertoire choice. The positions then reached are treated in Part V under the move order 6... c5 7. d5 h6 8. ♙e3 etc.

8... dxe5 9. dxe5 ♙xd1+ 10. ♙xd1 ♘g4
11. ♙xc5 ♘xe5 12. ♘d5



Position after: 12. ♘d5

This endgame has a lot in common with the famous KID Saemisch endgame, which arises after 5. f3 0-0 6. ♙e3 c5 etc. The compensation Black has is indeed similar. Black has more active pieces, in particular his g7-bishop is very strong. Comparing the Saemisch endgame with the present endgame, one would expect White to be in a better condition here. He has more pieces developed and the f3-square is available for further piece development. It was thought that White could by force reach a somewhat better endgame, effectively only playing for two results. Grandmaster Grivas still thinks so and provides extensive coverage of 8. e5 in his book. It is common knowledge that the music for this variation stopped more than 15 years ago. Petursson indicated that he lost interest in the endgame variation after his disastrous loss to Kotronias in 1995. That game effectively closed the book for him. The "somewhat better" endgame has been sorted out to a draw. If White is not careful, Black gets more than enough

compensation for the pawn. New methods have been established after 8. d5, which have renewed interest in that variation and allowed White to play that move again, making the once-so-proud endgame variation completely obsolete.

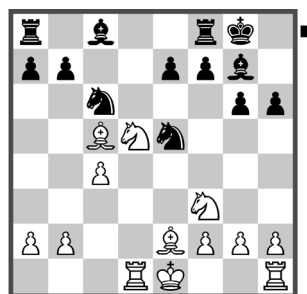
12... ♘bc6

12... ♘a6 The other main continuation. Two sample games: 13. ♙xe7 ♖e8 14. ♙a3 ♙e6 15. ♙f1 ♖ad8 16. b3 [16. f4? ♘xc4 17. ♙xc4 ♘c7 18. ♘e7+ ♙h7 19. ♖c1 ♙xc4+ 20. ♖xc4 ♘b5⚡ Petursson, M (2535) – Kotronias, V (2570) Gausdal 1995] 16... ♖d7 17. f4 ♘c6 18. ♘f3± Petursson, M (2530) – Nunn, J (2625) Reykjavik 1988.

13. f4!

The best chance for White.

13. ♘f3

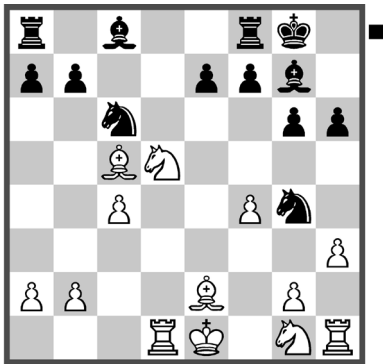


Position after: 13. ♘f3

This has been played between highly rated grandmasters. 13... ♘xf3+! [13... ♙e6 14. b3 ♖fd8 Black has finished his

development. 15. 0-0± White is a bit better, although margins are thin. 15... ♖d7 16. ♗xe5 ♙xe5 17. f4 ♙g7 18. ♙f3± with only slightly better chances on the queenside.] 14. ♙xf3 ♙xb2 15. 0-0 ♙f5= White still has a slight developmental lead, but Black's pawn structure is better.

13... ♗g4! 14. h3

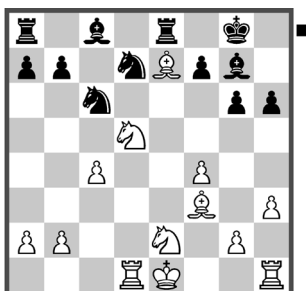


Position after: 14. h3

The most popular option for White.

14... ♗f6 15. ♙f3! ♙f5!

A) 15... ♗d7? This is simply too passive. 16. ♙xe7 ♖e8 17. ♗e2



Position after: 17. ♗e2

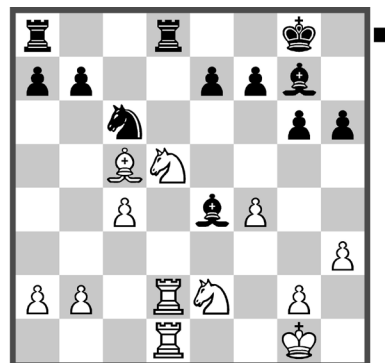
17... ♙xb2 [17... ♖xe7 18. ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 19. ♙xb7 ♙xb7 20. ♖xd7± White gains a piece back and keeps a much better position.] 18. ♙d6 ♗b6 19. ♗c7 ♙f5 20. ♗xa8 ♖xa8 21. g4± Shereshevski, M – Dementiev, O Minsk 1975.

B) 15... ♙e6 16. ♗c7 ♖ac8 17. ♗xe6 fxe6 18. ♙a3 e5 19. fxex5 ♗xe5 20. b3 ♖c7 21. ♙b2 ♗h7 [21... ♗xf3+ 22. ♗xf3± White's queenside pawn majority yields him the slight edge.] 22. ♙d5+ ♔h8 23. ♙e2± Grigorov – Banikas, Kavala 2005.

16. ♗e2! ♖fd8!

This is best, although Black may reach a draw with one of the alternatives as well.

17. 0-0! ♙c2 18. ♖d2 ♗e4 19. ♙xe4 ♙xe4 20. ♖fd1

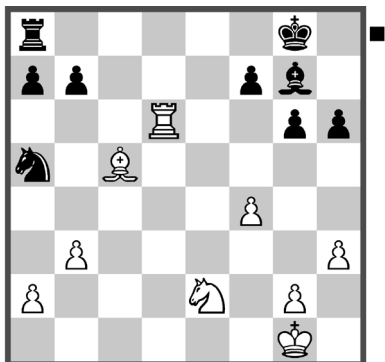


Position after: 20. ♖fd1

20... ♙xd5!

20... ♙f8 This is a cold-blooded defense. 21. ♘ec3 ♙xd5 22. cxd5 [22. ♘xd5 ♙g7= Norri, J (2375) – Kotronias, V (2545) Moscow 1994] 22... ♘a5 23. ♖e2 ♖d7 24. ♗de1 ♘c4=

21. cxd5 ♘a5 22. b3 ♖d7 23. d6 exd6
24. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 25. ♗xd6



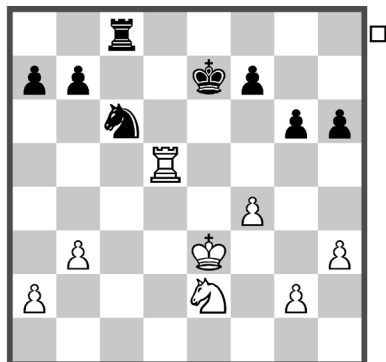
Position after: 25. ♗xd6

Grivas considers this position to be a bit better for White.

25... ♙f8!

Swapping pieces eases Black's defensive task.

26. ♖d5 ♙xc5+ 27. ♖xc5 ♘c6 28. ♖d5 ♙f8 29. ♙f2 ♖c8 30. ♙e3 ♙e7=



Position after: 30... ♙e7=

We are close to finishing the game with a handshake.

Conclusion

After 6... h6 7. ♙e3 c5 8. d5! White transposes into the last chapter of this book. There is no need to investigate 8. e5, one of the famous endgame variations of the Averbakh. It used to be an attractive line for White, a battleground for elite grandmasters. Nowadays, it is generally known that White has hardly any winning chances. With precise play, it is not that difficult for Black to maintain the balance. Sometimes he can even end up in a somewhat better position. It is for this reason that the grandmaster guild has lost its interest in this line. With the recent positive theoretical developments for White after 8. d5, it explains why this line is completely out of fashion.