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Countering the Queen's Gambit

**A Compact (but Complete) Black Repertoire for
Club Players against 1.d4**

New In Chess 2022

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Foreword

In general, a distinction is made between two types of openings. The first type includes variations that are taken from a bag of tricks in order to catch your opponent unprepared and thereby take him by surprise. Playing such variations can certainly bring success – in an individual game. But it would be foolish to keep playing such a surprise weapon for a long time.

The second type includes opening systems that will serve you faithfully for a lifetime. Openings that can withstand an opponent's preparation, even if your opponent is one of the best in his field and has a whole 'army' of analysts and the best hardware and software at his disposal.

A typical example of an opening system in the second category is the Queen's Gambit. In the first official World Championship match in chess history between Wilhelm Steinitz and Johannes Hermann Zukertort, which took place exactly 135 years ago, the two protagonists put this opening to the test several times. Since then, there has hardly been a duel for the chess crown without this opening classic making an appearance. José Raúl Capablanca and Alexander Alekhine took this to extremes. In their 34-game World Championship Match that took place in 1927, the Queen's Gambit was debated no less than 31 times!

In modern times also, world champions and challengers have both relied on the time-honoured Queen's Gambit. Magnus Carlsen (against Viswanathan Anand) and Fabiano Caruana (against Magnus Carlsen) defended this opening as Black by [declining with 2...e6](#).

The reasons for the eternal popularity of the Queen's Gambit [Declined](#) lie in the nature of this opening. It offers Black reliability without depriving him of winning chances and relies more on an understanding of the types of positions that arise than on memory.

My decision to write a book about a repertoire against the Queen's Gambit was not so much due to the continuing high esteem in which this opening is held, nor to the fact that it has served me as a faithful weapon for years. You've probably guessed it – it was inspired by the Netflix series of the same name. This series sparked off a genuine and wholly unexpected chess boom around the world, to the extent that chessboards sold out and chess mail-order companies reached their logistical limits. However, the series did not convey any knowledge of the eponymous opening and this gap had to be filled.

The book you are holding in your hands is a repertoire book. This means that all options for the White side are discussed, but only one line is recommended for the Black side. In some places, however, I deviated from this principle and offered two alternatives to choose from. This seemed to me to be particularly useful when a variation made the game extremely sharp or, conversely, turned it into a more or less forced draw. Both scenarios can be unsatisfactory, depending on your tournament situation.

The repertoire presented here has served me well at grandmaster level for decades – I trust it! Club players need only master a small number of the variations, these are summarised in the list of variations. The move orders analysed in the text will help you to understand the typical positions, plans and tactical ideas.

Of course, I checked all the variations in detail with modern engines. Sometimes, however, I took the liberty of making recommendations that deviate from the proverbial 'main line'. After all, not every position that the computer deems worth striving for is also easy for human players. Of course, I also let the engine 'give the nod' to these deviating variations.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part discusses general ideas and typical middlegame plans, in the second you will find concrete theoretical recommendations. These first two parts are limited to the Queen's Gambit, while the third part covers all other openings except 1.e4. My recommendation is not to skip the first part, as it will contribute significantly to your strategic understanding of the variations played.

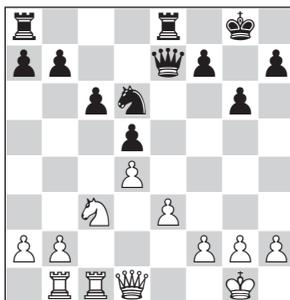
For reference and analysis, I have used ChessBase MegaBase 2021, ChessBase Correspondence Database, and the Stockfish 13 engine.

Finally, I would like to thank my good friend, the Israeli grandmaster and member of his country's national team, Evgeny Postny. He was the first person to read this manuscript and gave me valuable tips. But the biggest thanks go to my family who supported me while I worked at home during lockdown and showed enormous tolerance for my time-consuming work.

Michael Prusikin,
Parsberg, January 2022

Section 1.2: The Capablanca Formula

The term 'Capablanca Formula', which I have chosen as the title for this section, is taken from the book *Techniques of Positional Play*. The two authors Valery Bronznik and Anatoli Terekhin credit the Cuban World Champion with having provided important insights into the Carlsbad pawn structure: specifically, about the following pawn constellation:



The third World Champion is said to have been the first to discover that:

A) the knight on d6 is ideally positioned because, firstly, it slows down White's minority attack (control over b5), secondly, it is ready to jump to c4 and thus block the c-file, and thirdly, it can quickly join the attack on the kingside via e4;

B) the distribution of material shown in the diagram, 'major pieces + knights on both wings', also favours Black because it allows him to pose adequate threats against the white king.

I have slight doubts as to whether the said discoveries are really down to Capablanca. Nevertheless, I found the title so concise that I decided to use it without doing any further historical research. Let's move on to the practical examples.

Game 5

Milko Bobotsov
Tigran Petrosian

Lugano ol 1968 (2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.cxd5?!

With the knight on f3 instead of on c3, the early exchange on d5 makes no sense because in this case Black can develop his light-squared bishop to f5 without any problems; 4.♘c3 or 4.g3 are called for.

4...exd5 5.♘c3 c6

5...♗f5? is still too early because of 6.♙b3 and there is no convenient way to protect the pawn on b7.

Note: The move ...b7-b6 is always a bad idea when the light-squared bishop can no longer be developed to b7, as the move weakens the light squares on the queenside.

6.♗g5 ♗e7

6...♙f5 7.♖b3 ♗b6 8.♙xf6 ♖xb3
9.axb3 gxf6 is perfectly playable for
Black, but is not to everyone's taste.

7.♖c2

After 7.e3 Black can play 7...♙f5.



7...g6!

Black can easily hide the apparent
weakening of his dark squares with
his pieces; preparing ...♙c8-f5 is the
top priority.

8.e3 ♙f5 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♖xd3

♘bd7 11.♙h6 ♘g4 12.♙f4

12.♙g7 yields nothing: 12...♗g8

13.♙e5 (13.h3? ♘xf2!-+) 13...♘gxe5

14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♖b6

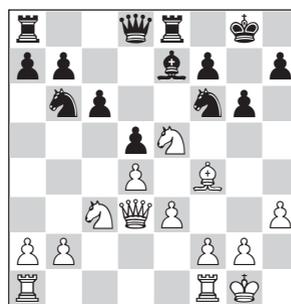
16.0-0-0 0-0-0 and Black stands

better due to his better pawn
structure and the better minor
piece.

12...0-0 13.0-0 ♗e8 14.h3 ♘gf6

15.♘e5 ♘b6

The knight makes its way to
d6, but perhaps it was better to
implement this idea somewhat
differently in order to anticipate
the consolidation of the white
knight on e5: 15...♘xe5!? 16.♙xe5
♘d7 17.♙f4 ♘b6, after which Black
exchanges off the bishops and
transfers his knight to the desirable
d6-square.



16.♙g5?!

This plays into Black's hands.

Advisable was 16.♙h6! ♘c8 17.f4

♘d7 18.e4! ♘d6! 19.♗a1 with
complicated play (19.exd5?! ♘f5).

16...♘e4?!

It's hard for me to criticise the
play of the then reigning World
Champion, but the possible change
in the pawn structure that this
knight move entails is rather
unfavourable for Black. More
precise therefore was 16...♘fd7!
which in all probability would have
resulted in a position similar to
that which ultimately occurred in
the game.

17.♙xe7 ♖xe7 18.♖c2?!

18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♖b3 would have
resulted in equality (19.♖xe4?? f6).



18...♘d6!

Mission accomplished!

19. ♖a4 ♜bc4

19... ♜xa4 20. ♖xa4 f6 was on a par with the game move.

20. ♜xc4 ♜xc4 21. ♖c5 ♖d6 22. ♖ac1 ♖g5 23. ♖d1



23...h5!

An important prophylactic move to prevent 24. ♖g4 and at the same time the start of the pawn storm. The next few moves need no explanation.

24. ♖h1 ♖e7 25. ♖d3 ♖e4 26. ♖c5 ♖d6 27. ♖d3 ♖f5 28. ♖e5 f6 29. ♖f3 29. ♖d3 seems more accurate.

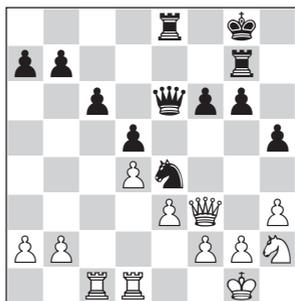
29... ♖g7 30. ♖h2 ♖e8!

Brings the last inactive piece into the game!

31. ♖g1 ♖e4 32. ♖f3 ♖e6!

Of course the queens must stay on the board. Finally Petrosian is working up to a mating attack after all!

33. ♖fd1



33...g5!?

It probably would have been more accurate to herald the beginning of the final pawn storm with 33...f5, then:

A) 34.h4 would have done nothing to dent the attack, e.g. 34..g5!

35.hxg5 ♖g6 36. ♖h1 ♖xg5 37. ♖f4 h4 38. ♖g1 ♖e4 39. ♖c2 ♖g3+ 40.fxg3 hxg3--;

B) 34. ♖f1 g5!--.

34. ♖xh5

Otherwise White would simply be overrun by the avalanche of pawns.

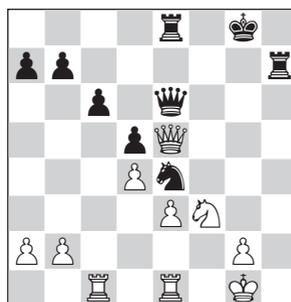
34...f5 35. ♖e1?

With 35. ♖f3! g4 36. ♖f4! gxh3 37.g3, Bobotsov could still have put up real resistance, e.g. 37... ♖g4! 38. ♖f3! (38. ♖xg4 fxg4 39. ♖c2 ♖f8 40. ♖e5 ♖g6 is hopeless in the long run) 38... ♖g5 39. ♖e2 ♖e4 40. ♖f1 and there is no breakthrough in sight.

35...g4

But now it's all over, albeit in a different way than one would have expected.

36.hxg4 fxg4 37.f3 gxf3 38. ♖xf3 ♖h7 39. ♖e5



39... ♖c8!

It's not the white king but the queen that is hunted down!

40. ♖f4 ♖f8 41. ♖e5 ♖f5 0-1

Game 6

Lajos Portisch

2600

Garry Kasparov

2775

Skelleftea 1989 (9)

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5?!

We've already explained in the comments to the first game in this section that this move order is imprecise.

4...exd5 5.♘c3 c6 6.♖c2



6...♘a6!?

This move is playable, but does not change much about the character of the position. I would prefer the direct 6...g6 7.♗g5 ♗e7 8.e3 ♗f5.

7.a3

Unnecessary prophylaxis, as 7...♘b4 wasn't a genuine threat. 7.♗g5 is stronger.

7...♘c7 8.♗g5 g6 9.e3 ♗f5 10.♗d3 ♗xd3 11.♖xc3 ♗e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.b4

The minority attack turns out to be less effective here. The 'centralisation' plan looks better:

13.♘e5 ♖g7 14.♞a1 ♘d7 15.♗xe7 ♖xe7 16.f4 f6 17.♘f3 f5 18.♘e5 ♘f6 19.h3 ♘ce8 20.g4 ♘d6=.

13...♘e4 14.♗f4 ♘xc3 15.♖xc3?!

15.♗xc7! ♖xc7 16.♖xc3 ♗d6 would still have preserved the balance.



15...♗d6! 16.♗xd6

Stockfish advocates 16.a4 ♗xf4 17.exf4 but as a human player it's difficult to accept such a worsening of the pawn structure with no apparent need to do so.

16...♘b5!

Tactics serving strategy! This is the quickest road for the knight to d6.

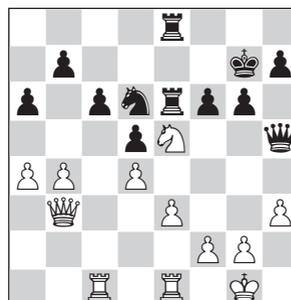
17.♖b3 ♘xd6 18.a4 a6

A position has now been reached that is practically identical to the one from the previous game. Kasparov now 'copies' Petrosian's plan (incidentally, the two world champions were good friends, as much as they could be with such a big age difference).

19.♘e5 ♞e8 20.♞fe1 ♖g5 21.h3

♖g7 22.♖c2 ♞e6 23.♞ac1 ♞ae8

24.♖b1 ♖h5 25.♖b3 f6



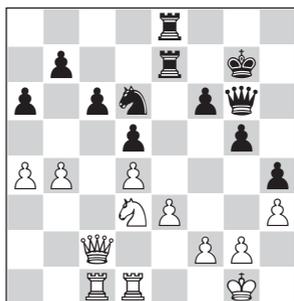
26.♘d3!

Portisch correctly retreats the knight to d3, which enables him to put up much tougher resistance, because in the event of the ...g6-g5-g4-pawn storm (and there is no other plan available to Black), the knight can occupy the key f4-square.

26...g5 27. ♖d1 ♗g6!

As discussed: the queens stay on the board!

28. ♜c2 ♖6e7 29. ♞e1 h5 30. ♜b1 h4 31. ♜c2



31...g4

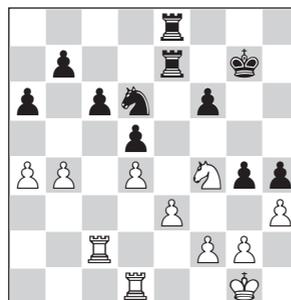
Kasparov is not the type for long, patient manoeuvring, but that was probably exactly what was needed. Objectively speaking, the attempt to crack open White's position is too early, but it is possible that the Hungarian was short of time and Garry wanted to take advantage of this fact by forcing the play. The aim of the aforementioned manoeuvring would be to play the ...g5-g4 breakthrough under more favourable circumstances, e.g. doubling the rooks on the g-file was an option.

32. ♜f4?

Tempting, but incorrect. Exchanging queens no longer solves White's problems. After the correct 32.hxg4

♜xg4 33. ♖h2, White would have had no concerns.

32... ♜xc2 33. ♞xc2



33...g3! –+

The crux of the matter! Now White is unable to defend the pawn on e3 in the long term, which Black can still attack with the knight. Funnily enough, however, the first pawn to fall is the one on a4!

34. ♞d3 ♖h6 35. ♖f1 ♖g5 36. ♜e2 ♜c4 37. ♞cc3 ♜b2 38. ♞d2 ♜xa4 39. ♞b3 ♜b6 40. ♜g1 ♜c4 41. ♜f3+ ♖h5 42. ♞dd3 a5 43. bxa5 ♞a8 44. ♞d1 ♞xa5 45. ♞e1 b5 46. ♞e2 ♞a1+ 47. ♞e1 ♞ea7 48. fxc3 ♞xe1+ 49. ♖xe1 ♞a1+ 50. ♖e2 hxc3 51. ♜e1 ♞a2+ 52. ♖d1 ♞d2+ 53. ♖c1 ♞e2 54. ♖d1 ♞xe3 55. ♞xe3 ♜xe3+ 56. ♖e2 ♜f5 57. ♜c2 ♜h4 58. ♜b4 ♜xc2 59. ♖f3 ♜h4+ 60. ♖xc3 ♜f5+ 61. ♖f4 ♜xd4 62. ♖e3 ♜f5+ 0-1

Game 7

Christian Toth 2305

Vladimir Kramnik 2480

Rio de Janeiro 1991 (4)

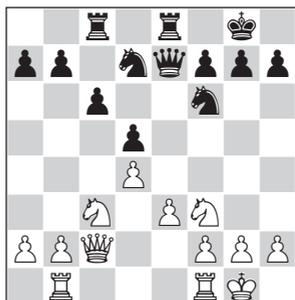
1. ♜f3 d5 2. d4 c6 3. c4 e6 4. cxd5?! exd5 5. ♜c3 ♖f5! 6. ♖g5 ♖e7 7. ♖xe7 ♜xe7!

This is the correct recapture; the knight belongs on f6. On e7, it would stand passively and would block the e-file.

8.e3 ♖f6 **9.♙d3** ♙xd3 **10.♚xd3**
♜bd7 **11.0-0** 0-0 **12.♚c2**

In order to reply to 12...♗e4 with capturing.

12...♜fe8 **13.♞ab1** ♞ac8



This prepares for the imminent minority attack. After this move, White can no longer readily allow himself to open the c-file.

14.♞fd1

14.b4 ♗b6! (14...b5!? 15.a4 a6 16.a5! is less clear, because the knight doesn't get to c4) 15.♗d2= (while 15.♗e5 does not reliably protect c4: 15...♗fd7 16.♗d3 ♗c4 17.♚e2 b5, 15.b5? is refuted by simply capturing the pawn).

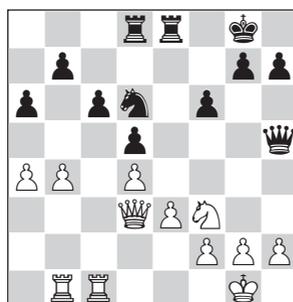
14...♗e4

I don't like this, because White can swap off the knight and thus force the black d5-pawn to e4, which means that the second player loses the opportunity to anchor the knight firmly on c4 in the event of b2-b4.

15.b4?!

15.♗xe4 dxe4 16.♗d2=.

15...♗df6 **16.♗xe4** ♗xe4 **17.♚d3** a6
18.a4 ♗d6 **19.♗d2** ♚g5 **20.♞dc1**
♞cd8 **21.♗f3** ♚h5 **22.♗e5** f6 **23.♗f3**

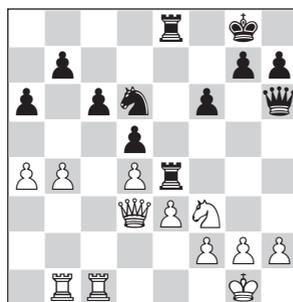


23...♞e4?!

A strange square for the rook. The rook is the only piece that is usually not well positioned in the centre. After the correct 23...g5! the young Kramnik would have had good chances to win in the style of his two illustrious predecessors.

24.♚d1 ♚h6 **25.♚d3** ♞de8?!

But this is simply reckless, Kramnik underestimates White's counterplay enormously. In order was 25...g5♣, still with better prospects for Black.



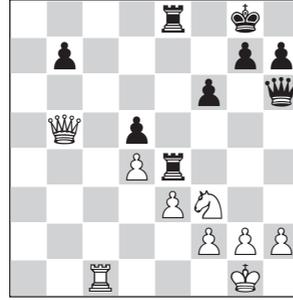
26.b5!

The fact that this move works is a moderate catastrophe from the point of view of the second player, because suddenly White

gets counterplay. In both of the previous games, on the other hand, Black was playing ‘for two results’ throughout.

**26...axb5 27.axb5 ♘xb5 28.♖xb5!
cxb5 29.♙xb5?**

Unfortunately White errs immediately and thereby nullifies the fruits of his defensive efforts. After 29.♙b3! ♙h5 (or 29...♗d8 30.♖c7 with sufficient counterplay for the sacrificed material) 30.♘e5!, White would have had excellent counter-chances or even chances to win, for example 30...♗d8? would run into 31.♙xd5+! ♗xd5 32.♖c8+--.



29...♗e3!--+

Toth must have overlooked this counter-riposte.

30.♙xd5+ ♔h8 31.♗b1 ♙g6

And White resigned.

0-1

CHAPTER 5

The 4.♘f3 variation: 4...a6!?

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6
3...a6!? is already a possible alternative, but this move order offers White a dangerous possibility that is not available to him after 4...a6: 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♖b3!...



... and now:

A) 5...♘f6 6.♗g5 c6 7.e4! is just a transposition of moves;

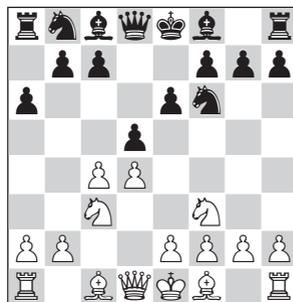
B) 5...c5 6.♖xd5 cxd4 7.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 8.♘d5 ♗e6 9.♘f4 ♗b4+ 10.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 11.♗xd2 ♘c6 12.g3 ♘f6 13.♗g2 ♗e7 14.♘xe6 fxe6 15.♘h3 was more pleasant for White in Urkedal-Haldorsen, Fagernes 2020;

C) And after 5...c6 6.e4! dxe4 7.♗c4 ♖e7 8.a4, Black seems to be under a lot of pressure. This position doesn't appeal to me.

4.♘f3 a6!?

This move was used for the first time in 1843 (!) by Howard Staunton and has become very popular again in recent years. The idea is to force the immediate pawn

exchange on d5 due to the threat of 5...dxc4 and 6...b5.

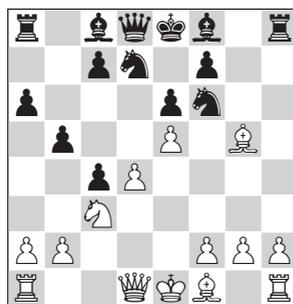


5.cxd5

There are two alternatives for White. The first (5.♗g5) is more likely to get him into trouble, but the second (5.c5) is certainly to be taken seriously.

A) 5.♗g5 dxc4! and now White has multiple options:

A1) 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♘bd7.



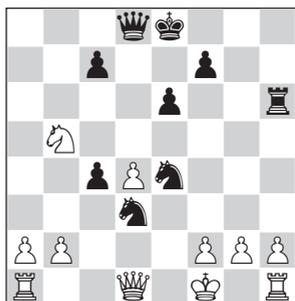
The resulting position is very similar to the basic position of the Botvinnik Variation in the Semi-Slav, but there is a small but

crucial difference: instead of ...c7-c6, Black has played ...a7-a6 in our variation, which represents an enormous improvement, because the light-squared bishop, which is immediately developed to b7, stands on an open diagonal instead of staring the c-pawn in the face: 11. ♖e2 ♘b7 and now:

A11) 12. ♘f3?



12... ♗xe5!! 13. ♘xb7 (13. dxe5 ♖xd1+ 14. ♖xd1 ♘xf3 15. gxf3 (15. ♘xf6 ♘xg2 16. ♘xh8 ♘xh1-+) 15... ♗d7 16. f4 ♗c5⌘) 13... ♗d3+ 14. ♖f1 ♖b8 15. ♘xa6 (15. ♘c6+ ♖e7 16. ♗e2 ♘h6 17. ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 18. ♘e4 ♗xb2 19. ♖c2 ♗a4⌘) 15... ♘h6 16. ♘xb5+ ♖xb5 17. ♘xh6 ♖xh6 18. ♗xb5 ♗e4.



The black knights dominate the position, Black is close to winning. The following correspondence

chess game almost ended with a smothered mate: 19. ♖a4 ♖f8 20. ♗c3 ♗g3+! 21. ♖g1 ♗xh1 22. ♖xh1 ♗xf2+ 23. ♖g1 ♖xd4 24. ♖a3+ ♖g7 0-1 Calkins-Schlosser, cr 2017;

A12) 12. exf6 ♘h6 13. ♘xh6 ♖xh6 14. ♘f3 ♘xf3 15. ♖xf3 ♖xf6 16. ♖e4 (16. ♖e3 ♗b6 17. h4 ♗d5 18. ♗xd5 (18. ♖e5? gave Black good chances in Berthier-Yakovich, Warsaw 2012) 18... ♖xd5 19. f3 0-0-0=) 16... ♗b6!?N (16... ♖f8 17. a4 ♖b8 ½-½ Krimbacher-Eldridge, cr 2017) 17. 0-0 b4 18. ♗d1 ♖d6.



The evaluation is not entirely straightforward here, because there is some imbalance in the position, but a closer look shows that all the risks lie with White: material is equal, the black pieces are incomparably more active, the d4-pawn is weak. The black king is comfortable in the middle, not least because the white rooks are not really in play. The concrete threat is 19... ♖f4. White will struggle to hold this position.

A2) 6. e3 leads to interesting complications in which White again walks the precipice but does not actually tumble over with best

play: 6...b5! 7.a4 c6! 8.axb5 cxb5
 9. ♘xb5 axb5 10. ♖xa8 ♘b4+ 11. ♘d2
 ♘b7 12. ♖a1 (12. ♘xf6 gxf6 13. ♖a1
 e5 14. ♖h5 ♘c6!N 15. ♖h4 exd4
 16. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 17.exd4 0-0 18. ♘e2
 ♖d8 19. ♖d1 ♖xd4 20. ♘f3 ♘xf3
 21.gxf3 ♘c6♣).



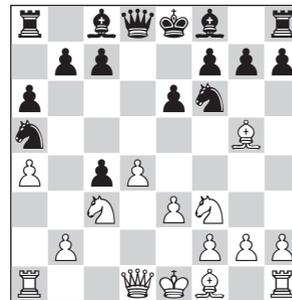
Now Black opens up the d-file: 12...
 e5!! 13.dxe5 (13. ♘e2?! ♖d5! 14.f3
 (14. ♘f3 e4 15. ♘xf6 exf3 16. ♘xg7
 fxg2 17. ♖g1 ♖g8 18. ♘e5 ♘c6--+) 14...
 exd4 15. ♘f4 0-0 16.e4 ♘xe4 17.0-0
 (17.fxe4 ♖xe4--+) 17...♘xd2 18. ♘xd2
 ♘c5--+ Satkar-Raja, Mumbai 2018)
 13...♖xd2+ 14. ♖xd2 ♘xd2+ 15. ♖xd2
 ♘e4+ 16. ♖c2 ♘xg5 Napalkov-
 Churkin, cr 2017. In this endgame
 White appears to be just surviving,
 but it's certainly no fun to be sitting
 on his side of the board;

A3) 6.a4 is clearly the lesser evil:
 6...♘c6! 7.e3 (7.e4 again leads to
 a kind of improved Botvinnik
 Variation: 7...♘a5 8.e5 h6 9. ♘h4 g5
 10. ♘xg5 hxg5 11. ♘xg5 ♘e7 12.exf6
 ♘xf6 13. ♘xf6 ♖xf6 14. ♖e2! (the
 only move and also a new one;
 14. ♘e4? ♖g6 15. ♖f3 ♖h4! Belov-
 Frolyanov, Irkutsk 2010, was very
 problematic for White and after
 14.g3? ♘d7 15. ♘g2 0-0-0 16. ♘e4

♖g7 17.0-0 ♘c6 White was losing in
 Van Wely-J.van Foreest, Amstelveen
 ch-NED rapid 2018) 14...♘b3 15. ♖d1
 ♘xd4 16. ♖xc4 ♖e5+ 17. ♘e2 ♘c6
 18. ♖c3 ♖xc3+ 19. ♘xc3



19...♖h4! – a powerful manoeuvre.
 On b4, the rook will exert pressure
 on the weakened white queenside:
 20.g3 ♖b4 21.h4 ♖e7♣) 7...♘a5.



From here, we consider two options
 for White:

A31) 8. ♘e5 ♘b4 9. ♘xf6 (9. ♘xc4
 ♖d5! 10. ♘xf6 ♘xc4 11. ♖b3 ♘xe3
 12. ♖xb4 ♘c2+ 13. ♖d2 ♘xb4
 14. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15. ♘xg7 ♖g8♣
 Kratochvil-Suder, Topolcany 2020)
 9...gxf6 10. ♘xc4 c5 11. ♖c2 (11. ♘xa5?
 ♖xa5 12. ♖b3 cxd4 13.exd4 e5 14.d5
 ♘d6 15.g3 h5 16. ♘g2 h4 17.0-0 f5♣
 Solar-Kamody, cr 2017) 11...♘d7
 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13. ♖d1 ♘xc4 (Black

was also fine after 13...♙e7 14.♘d6+ in Krimbacher-Zolochevsky, cr 2017) 14.♙xc4 ♖c7 15.♙e2 ♙d6=;

A32) 8.♘d2 8...c5 9.dxc5 ♙xc5 10.♙xc4 (10.♘xc4 ♖xd1+ 11.♖xd1 ♘xc4 12.♙xc4 ♙d7 13.♙e2 ♖c8♞ Krimbacher-Sherwood, cr 2017; the queenside weakened by a2-a4 causes White problems) 10...♙d7 11.0-0 ♙e7 12.♙e2 0-0 13.♘f3 h6 14.♙h4 ♙c6 15.♘e5 ♖b6 16.♖c2 ♖ac8 17.♘xc6 ♖xc6♞ Schmidt-Hassim, cr 2017.



Once again Black has a somewhat more pleasant position, as the b2- and b3-squares are weak;

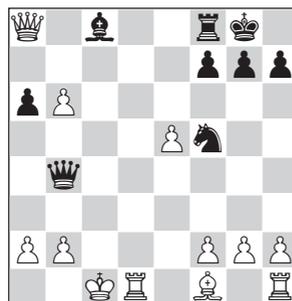
B) 5.c5!? reveals a small disadvantage of 4...a6: after Black has confronted the cheeky white pawn with 5...b6!, he cannot recapture with the a-pawn, which would be positionally desirable.



6.cxb6 (6.b4? a5 7.♖a4+ ♙d7 8.♖a3 ♘a6—+ Reyes-Rodriguez Sanchez, Bogota 2019) 6...c5! (6...cxb6 7.♙f4 leads to a position that is again reminiscent of the Exchange Variation of the Slav Defence, but here Black has ‘hemmed in’ his light-squared bishop behind the pawn chain, which leads to a solid but passive position in which White can exert pressure without taking any risks). We will consider two continuations for White:

B1) 7.♙f4 ♙d6 8.♙xd6 ♖xd6 9.dxc5 (9.♖b3 ♘bd7 10.e3 (10.b7?! ♙xb7 11.♖xb7? (after this the queen won’t escape alive) 11...♖b8 12.♖a7 0-0—+; 10.♘a4?! c4 11.♖a3 ♖xa3 12.bxa3 ♖b8 13.♖b1 ♙b7 14.e3 ♙e7 15.♙e2 ♙c6♞ Boyer-Favarel, Condom 2019) 10...♖b8=) 9...♖xc5 10.♖d4 ♖d6! and now:

B11) 11.e4!? leads to an almost forced draw after highly entertaining complications: 11...♘c6 12.♖e3 d4 13.e5 ♖b4 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.0-0 ♘f5 16.♖f3 ♘d5 17.♘xd5 exd5 18.♖xd5 0-0 (18...♖b8?? 19.♖d8#) 19.♖xa8



19...♘e3!! 20.fxe3 ♖c5+ 21.♔d2 (the king cannot move to a light square

because of the threat of discovered check!) 21... ♖b4+ 22. ♙c1 ♖c5+=;

B12) 11.e3 ♘c6 12. ♗d2 0-0 13. ♙e2 ♙d7 14.0-0 ♖fb8=.

B2) 7. ♖b3 ♙d7! 8.e4! c4 9. ♖c2



9... ♖xb6! N (this is simpler and safer than 9... ♘xe4 played in Bjerre-Grandelius, Chess24.com 2020) 10.exd5 (10.e5?! ♘g8♞ leads to a, for Black, pleasant version of the French Defence: the d4-pawn tends to be weak) 10...exd5 11. ♙g5 ♙b4 12. ♙e2 ♘e4 13.0-0 ♙xc3 14.bxc3 ♘xg5 15. ♘xg5 h6 16. ♘f3 ♘c6! 17. ♖ab1 ♖d8 18.g3! with the idea of 'harassing' the pawn on d5 with the knight via the route f3-h4-g2-e3: 18...0-0 19. ♘h4 ♘e7. The light-squared bishop takes an active part in the game, the weaknesses on d5 and c3 counterbalance one another: all in all, Black has no concerns in this position.

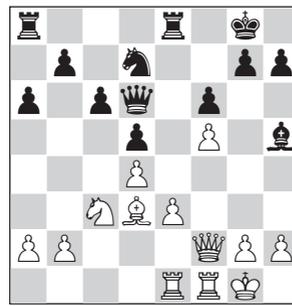
5...exd5 6. ♙g5

A) 6. ♙f4 doesn't pose any problems: 6... ♙d6! and now:

A1) 7. ♙g3 0-0 8.e3 ♙f5 9. ♖b3 ♙xg3 10.hxg3 ♖d6 11. ♘h4 (11. ♙e2N ♘bd7 12.0-0 c6=; as usual, the pawn on b7 is 'poisoned': 11. ♖xb7? ♘c6 12. ♖b3 ♖ab8 13. ♖a3 ♘b4-+)

11... ♙g4!N 12. ♙d3 ♖e8 13.0-0 ♘bd7=;

A2) 7. ♙e5!? c6 8.e3 0-0 9. ♙d3 ♙g4 10. ♖c2 ♖e8 11. ♙xd6 ♖xd6 12. ♘e5 ♙h5!N. This move looks risky, but an accurate examination of the variation reveals that the bishop cannot be trapped: 13.f4! (13.g4? ♘xg4 14. ♙xh7+ ♙f8 15. ♘xg4 ♙xg4♞; 13.h3 ♙g6 14. ♙xg6 hxg6=) 13... ♘bd7 14.0-0 ♙g6 15. ♘xd7 ♘xd7 16.f5 ♙h5 17. ♖f2 f6 18. ♖ae1



18...c5!∞ – the weakness on e3 is a signal for the lever ...c6-c5!;

A3) 7. ♙xd6 ♖xd6 8.e3 0-0 9. ♙d3 (9. ♙e2 is too tame to pose problems: 9... ♙f5 10.0-0 (10. ♖b3 ♘bd7 11.0-0 c6=) 10... ♘bd7 11.a3 c6 12. ♖c1 ♘e4 13. ♘xe4 ♙xe4 14. ♘d2 ♙g6= Florescu-Grandelius, Chess.com 2020) 9... ♙g4 10.h3 ♙h5 11.g4 (11.0-0 ♘bd7 12. ♖c1 c6= Tinjaca Ramirez-Pauwels, cr 2000) 11... ♙g6 12. ♘e5 (12.g5 ♘fd7 13.h4 ♙h5 14. ♙e2 ♘c6 15. ♘g1 ♙xe2 16. ♘gx2 ♘b6∞) 12... c5!N (by opening the centre, Black frustrates his opponent's ambitions on the kingside) 13. ♙xg6 hxg6 14.g5 ♘e4 15.h4 cxd4 16. ♖xd4 ♘xc3 17.bxc3 ♘c6 18. ♘xc6 bxc6 19.h5 c5 20. ♖h4 ♖e5∞ and the question as

to whose king is more in danger is open to debate;

B) 6. ♖b3!? leaves Black the choice of staying with the usual structures with 6... ♗e7 (or 6...c6) or entering into a forced variation with 6...c5, which leads to a complex but objectively balanced position. My recommendation would be the second option: 6...c5! (6...♗d6? is not to be recommended due to 7. ♗g5 c6 8.e4! dxe4 9. ♗xe4 ♗e7 10. ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 11. ♖e3+! ♗e6 12. ♗c4± Pillsbury-Janowski, London 1899. Note the year the game was played!) 7. ♗g5 c4 8. ♖c2 ♗b4 9.e4 dxe4 10. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 11. ♖xe4+ ♖e6 12. ♗e5 f6 13. ♗xc4 ♗xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖e7 15.f4 fxe5



16.fxe5 (16.0-0!? g6! (preparing ...♗f5) 17.fxe5 ♗f5 18. ♖e3 ♗c6 19.d5 ♗a5 20. ♗e2 0-0=) 16... ♖f8 17. ♖f1 (17. ♖xh7 ♖g5 18. ♗e2 ♗c6 19. ♖h5+ ♖xh5 20. ♗xh5+ ♗e7 21. ♗f3 ♗f5≠) 17... ♗d7 18. ♖xh7 ♖g5 19. ♖e4 ♖xf1+ 20. ♗xf1 ♗b6 21. ♗d3 ♗d7! 22. ♖b1 (22. ♖xb7? ♖e3+-+) 22... ♗b5. Again a position has been reached which the engine happily gives three zeros. But don't be fooled by this assessment: the position at hand

is by no means drawish, it is a complicated position that requires precise play from both sides. Since the white pawns couldn't make any headway and Black was able to occupy good squares with this pieces, Black seems to me to have the better practical chances.

6... ♗e6!?



As White's king's knight no longer has the option of ♗g1-e2-f4, this development of the bishop to e6 makes perfect sense.

7.e3

We will consider two alternatives:

A) 7. ♖b3 does not really pose a threat in this position either. After 7... ♗bd7 White's appetite for the pawn on b7 dissipates quickly:

A1) 8. ♖xb7?! ♖b8 9. ♖xa6 ♖xb2: A11) 10. ♖c1 ♗b4 11. ♗d2 c5!N 12.e3 0-0 13. ♗e2 cxd4 14.exd4 (14. ♗xd4 ♖xd2 15. ♗xd2 ♗e4+-+) 14... ♗e4+-+; A12) 10. ♗c1?! ♖b6 11. ♖d3 ♗b4 12. ♗d2 0-0 13.e3 ♖a8!N (improving over 13...c5 played in Pogromsky-Putilov, Nizhnij Tagil 2012) 14. ♗e2 g6 15. ♖c2 (15.0-0?? ♗f5+-+) 15... ♖c6 16. ♖b2 (16. ♗b5 ♖xc3 17. ♗xc3 ♖a5!+-+) 16... ♖b8 17. ♗b5 ♗xd2+ 18. ♗xd2 ♗f5 19. ♖c1 ♖a6 20. ♖c3

Index of variations

Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6



Carlsbad Variation

3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙g5 ♙e7 6.e3 0-0 7.♙d3 h6 72



Harrwitz Attack

3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.♙f4 c5 81



4. ♘f3 variation

3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. ♘f3 a6 85



Tartakower Variation

3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. ♖g5 ♖e7 5. e3 h6 6. ♖h4 0-0 7. ♘f3 b6 96



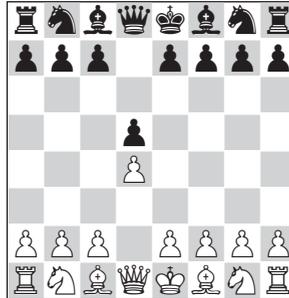
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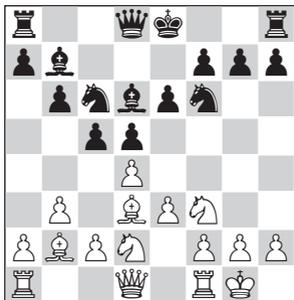
Colle Variation

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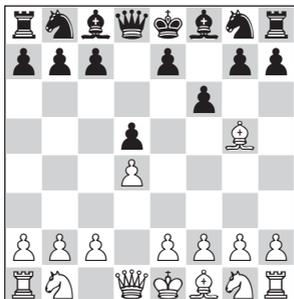
Zukertort Variation

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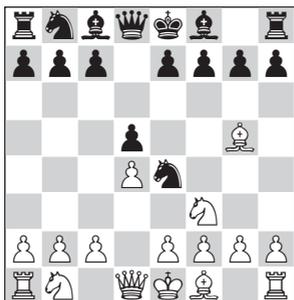
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1...

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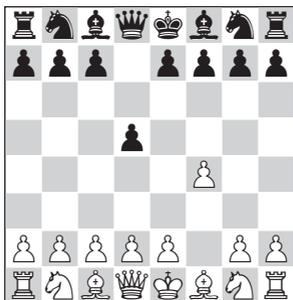
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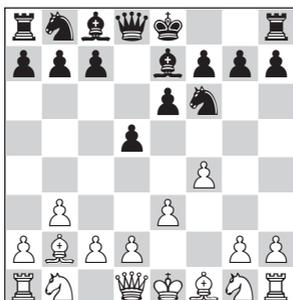
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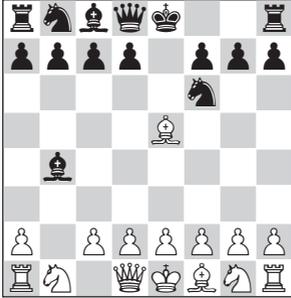
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