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by James Eade



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About the Author

Like many others, **James Eade** first got interested in chess thanks to legendary player Bobby Fischer. He played his first official tournament game in 1972, quickly became the top player at his high school, and represented the University of Massachusetts in the 1975 Pan-American Collegiate Games.

The United States Chess Federation (USCF) certified him as a chess master for over-the-board tournament play in 1981 and as a correspondence chess master in 1984. International organizations gave him the chess master title in 1990 (for correspondence chess) and in 1993 (for over-the-board tournament play). He represented the United States in a number of international correspondence chess team tournaments.

In the 1990s, he began to supplement his chess-playing career by writing about the game, organizing elite tournaments, and teaching. He has written several books on chess, including the bestselling *Chess For Dummies* (Wiley), now in its second edition, and *The Chess Player's Bible* (Barron's). He has written numerous articles for a wide variety of publications and has been the editor of two chess journals. He was elected president of the Chess Journalists of America in 1995.

James was also elected vice-president of CalChess (the Northern California Chess Association) in 1991 and became the CalChess president in 1995. In 1996 he was elected to be a member of the executive board of the USCF and served until 1999.

He was appointed zone president in 2000 to represent the USCF in Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE), the world governing body for chess, and served until 2002. He was elected to be a trustee of the U.S. Charitable Chess Trust in 2000 and became its treasurer in 2005, a capacity in which he continues to serve to this day.

Dedication

To Sheri, whose steadfast confidence in me has been amazing.

Author's Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Sheri Anderson for all her support and encouragement over the years. She may not be a chess player, but she puts up with one.

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Introduction

Chess openings have been written about for centuries, but new books on the subject appear all the time. The analysis of leading experts has been augmented recently by sophisticated software and blindingly fast processing power. New insights are causing reevaluations of even the oldest of chess openings.

Chess has so many possible move orders, even in the opening phase of the game, that it's humanly impossible to commit them all to memory. Most players become specialists on a very small number of openings in order to avoid unfamiliar territory.

I looked at all these dense, technical, highly specialized tomes on chess openings, and I decided I wanted to write a different kind of book. I wanted to give average chess enthusiasts a way to choose an opening that would suit their style of play.

But the question is always, which of the myriad chess openings should you adopt for yourself? This book is intended to help you find the right chess opening for you.

About This Book

No single book can comprehensively cover all the chess openings. Entire books have been devoted to a single variation on a single opening. You don't want to spend hours trying to memorize chess openings; you just want to be able to play them well and get to the type of game you enjoy.

What this book does provide is a guide to the general principles behind playing a chess opening well, and specific examples of practical play. I break down the openings into different types and include examples of wins and losses in the most common openings, which help you develop a feel for what type of game you'll be getting into if you decide to play one of them.

For each variation of an opening, I present a game in which White wins, followed by a game in which Black comes out on top. Throughout these games, I offer commentary that helps you see where a player's strategy succeeds or fails. Remember, no opening gives you a 100-percent success rate — you need to know the good and the bad in order to make an informed choice.

The great thing about this book is that *you* decide where to start and what to read. It's a reference work that you can jump into and out of at will. Just head to the table of contents or the index to find the information you want.

Conventions Used in This Book

I use the following conventions throughout the text to make things consistent and easy to understand:

- ✓ I use *italics* to define chess terms that you may not be familiar with.
- ✓ I use **bold** to indicate a move in a chess game. Bold type distinguishes the actual moves made in the game from moves that appear in my comments about the game.
- ✓ Web addresses appear in `monofont`.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If you come across a two-line Web address, rest assured that I haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So when you're using one of these Web addresses, just type exactly what you see on the page, pretending that the line break doesn't exist.

What You're Not to Read

You'll notice a few gray boxes that contain information or anecdotes that supplement the chapter text. These are called *sidebars*, and you can safely skip the information in them and not miss anything essential, although if you do read them, I think you'll find the info interesting.

Foolish Assumptions

I may be going out on a limb, but as I wrote this book, here's what I assumed about you:

- ✓ You've played chess before and are familiar with the game's terminology.
- ✓ You're familiar with chess notation. (In case this is a particularly bad assumption, I include a short primer in Chapter 1.)

- ✓ You want to better your game, whether that means being able to beat your nemesis, play in a chess league, or join your school's chess team.
- ✓ You own a reference work such as *Chess For Dummies*, 2nd Edition (Wiley). A reference is a great help for when you run into something unfamiliar.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into six parts. The first part helps you understand chess openings in general terms. The next four parts get down to specific chess openings grouped together by opening type. The last part is the Part of Tens — a *For Dummies* staple that watchers of David Letterman's show will be familiar with.

Part I: Principles of Play

In this part, I explain what an opening is, how openings vary from one another, and how they're classified. I also identify the type of player who enjoys playing the openings in each category so you can skip to the openings that sound like your style of play.

Part II: Winning with Open Games

Games that begin 1.e4 e5 open up lines for speedy mobilization of your pieces and allow you to attack quickly. The openings I describe in this part are some of the oldest in the game, but they're also some of the most popular because they allow players to attack early and often.

Part III: Having It Both Ways with Semi-Open Games

When you're playing Black and you want to shake things up, you can respond to 1.e4 with something other than 1...e5 and establish a semi-open game. These openings have fewer open lines, but they still feature plenty of piece mobility. The resulting games feature imbalanced positions in which White and Black are trying to achieve different goals, which leads to fighting defenses.

Part IV: Conquering with Closed and Semi-Closed Games

When White's first move is 1.d4 and Black responds with 1...d5, you've established a closed game. Closed games require a lot of strategy and planning. You do more maneuvering and have fewer tactical battles in the early stages of the game with these openings. I also include responses to 1.d4 other than 1...d5 in this part.

Part V: Advancing with Flank Openings

When you open with a flank opening, the pawns on the outer files make the first moves; you put the center pawns into play later in the game. The English Opening 1.c4 is by far the most popular flank opening, but there are others as well. These openings provide you with more flexibility in responding to your opponent's moves, and confrontations often come later in the game, after you've moved your pieces off of their starting positions.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

The last thing you want to do is make an error in an opening, so I include a chapter on ten mistakes not to make. I also offer chapters on ten ways to study chess openings and ten great Web sites.

Icons Used in This Book



To make this book easier to read and simpler to use, I include some icons that can help you find and fathom key ideas and information.

This icon appears next to ideas that can help you understand a chess opening, or the game in general, a little more easily.



Anytime you see this icon, you know the information that follows is so important that it's worth reading more than once.



This icon flags information that means a mistake is about to be made.



This icon lets you know what type of chess player typically likes the opening under discussion.

Where to Go from Here

This book is organized so that you can go wherever you want to find complete information. Want to know about the various types of chess openings? Go to Chapter 3. Want to know about the Sicilian Defense? Go to Chapter 9. You can use the table of contents to find broad categories of information or the index to look up more specific details.

If you're not sure where you want to go, you may want to start with Part I. It gives you all the basic info you need to understand chess openings, and it points to places where you can find more detailed information.

6

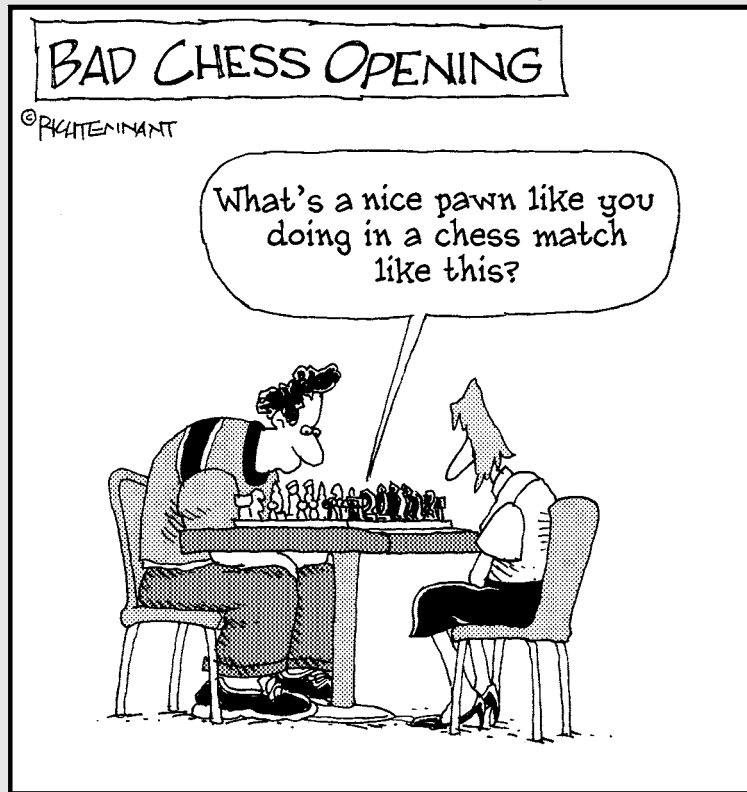
Chess Openings For Dummies

Part I

Principles of Play

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



In this part . . .

This part helps you understand what a chess opening is. First, I explain the various types of openings. Then I describe the style of play that's suited to each type of opening and provide a general overview of the principles of play in the opening phase of a chess game.

This part gives you the ammunition you need to understand specific opening strategies employed in different types of games. It helps you zero in on the opening that's right for you.

Chapter 1

Understanding Chess Openings

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding what a chess opening is
 - ▶ Choosing openings that fit your playing style
 - ▶ Getting familiar with chess notation
-

Chess is typically divided into three phases: the opening, the middle-game, and the endgame. Although the exact point of transition from one phase to another can sometimes be ambiguous, each phase of the game has properties that distinguish it from the others. The opening phase of the game is all about mobilizing your forces as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

In this chapter, I explain how you know when an opening has been established. I also ask you to sit back and think about your style of play, because how you play the game helps determine what type of openings you favor. Finally, I include a quick review of basic chess notation.

Identifying a Chess Opening

The first phase of a chess game is called the *opening*. Players concentrate on the rapid mobilization of their forces during this phase of the game.

In the following sections, I explain what makes an opening an opening, and I show you how one move turns into an opening.

Distinguishing “the” opening from “an” opening

In chess, *opening* can mean two different but related things, and it all depends on whether *the* or *an* comes before *opening*.

- ✓ The phrase *the opening* refers to the phase of the game when you get your pieces (by *pieces*, I'm referring to the rooks, bishops, knights, queen, and king — basically, everything but the pawns) off the back rank and reposition them where they can do the most good. (The other phases of the game are the *middlegame* and the *endgame*.)
- ✓ The phrase *an opening* refers to a specific sequence of moves. When a move or a specific sequence of moves, by pawns and/or pieces, is given a name, you have yourself a chess opening. These openings are what I cover throughout this book.



There are many, many chess openings. Some are named after players. Some are named after locations. But to be considered an opening, for the purposes of this book, a sequence of moves has to have a name. (I cover chess naming conventions, which are frequently a source of head-shaking, in Chapter 3.)

Chess players and scholars generally agree on what to call a particular opening, but sometimes it depends on where you are. For example, the *Ruy López*, which I cover in Chapter 7, is called the *Spanish Opening* in some parts of the world. Throughout this book, I refer to the generally accepted opening names as they're used in the United States.

Seeing how a move turns into an opening

Openings are defined and categorized by their pawn structure and piece placement. Although the pawns may not appear to have a lot of power when you're in the thick of a game, at the start of the game, they open lines for your pieces to take advantage of.

The most frequently played opening move is 1.e4 because it does the most to help you *develop* your pieces (or move the pieces off of their starting position). However, the move 1.e4 is not considered an opening (see Figure 1-1).

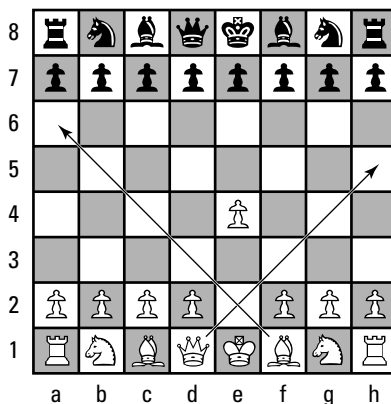


Figure 1-1:
An opening
move, but
not an
opening.

Ranks, files, and diagonals are collectively referred to as *lines*. The move 1.e4 opens a line for both the queen and the bishop. They're now free to move off of their starting positions.

If Black responds to the move 1.e4 with 1...e5, you have a position that can be classified as a *double king pawn*, which is a type of opening known as an *open game*. (I cover the variety of chess opening types in Chapter 3.) But these opening moves are not yet an opening, because they don't have a name.

If now, however, White continues with 2.Bc4, you have yourself a named opening! This position is called the *Bishop's Opening*, which I cover in Chapter 5 (see Figure 1-2).

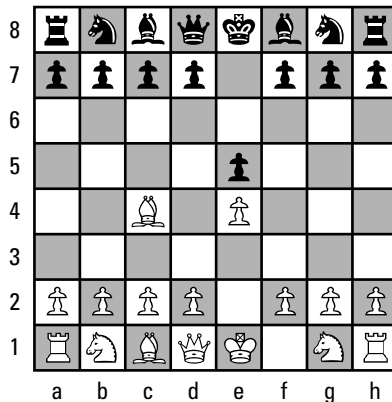


Figure 1-2:
The
Bishop's
Opening.

Watching an opening transform right before your eyes

According to Wikipedia, *The Oxford Companion to Chess* lists 1,327 named chess openings and variations. A *variation* is an alternate line of play within a particular opening.

It's also possible to arrive at a particular opening or variation by different move orders, or to start out in one opening and end up in another, which is called *transposing*. Many opening systems offer the possibility of transposing from one opening into another, and top-notch players use this possibility to keep their opponents guessing.



It's not so much the exact sequence of moves that matters, but the position you arrive at. As long as you understand the general ideas behind that position, you'll be able to navigate through the maze of possibilities at your disposal.

Finding an Opening That's Right for You

People have different styles of play when it comes to chess. Your style doesn't necessarily have anything to do with how you behave in real life. You may be shy and retiring in your everyday encounters but a real tiger when it comes to chess, or vice versa.

I first became serious about chess when Bobby Fischer challenged Boris Spassky for the World Championship in 1972. I had suffered a skiing injury and spent some of my enforced downtime with a chess book that featured a lot of Nimzo-Indian Defenses (see Chapter 16) and French Defenses (see Chapter 10). They became the openings that I chose to play in tournaments.

I noticed, however, that the majority of players in those tournaments played Sicilian Defenses (see Chapter 9) and King's Indian Defenses (see Chapter 17). It became clear to me that this was because Fischer played those openings. Fischer was a trendsetter.

But what about you? Do you want to play something that's in fashion now, or do you want to go your own way? Out of all the available openings that exist in chess, which ones are right for you?

There is no right or wrong chess style. Two great players became World Champions in the 1960s, and their styles could not have been more different. Mikhail Tal (1936–1992) became World Champion in 1960 and was one of the fiercest attacking players of all time. On the other side of the ledger was Tigran Petrosian (1929–1984), who became World Champion in 1963. He was a staunch defender who was extremely difficult to beat.

Ask yourself what appeals to you the most about chess. Do you always want to be the aggressor and go on the attack at all costs? Check out the openings in Chapter 4. They may be right up your alley.

The different openings can be grouped together by type, as I explain in more detail in Chapter 3. In general terms, openings that feature open lines and easy piece development are grouped together in Part II of this book. Openings with closed lines and more limited piece mobility are grouped together in Part IV.

You may already know what type of player you are, and the organization of this book will steer you toward the type of opening that suits you best. If you don't know what type of chess player you are, browse through openings from each type and see which one appeals to you the most.

Chess fashion sense

A chess opening can become popular simply because a famous player uses it. Another opening can become unpopular if a move is discovered that seems to give the advantage to one player over the other. Openings can be rehabilitated, too — sometimes, even newer moves are discovered that change the evaluation yet again.

Chess openings have been exposed to enormous scrutiny, but there still are no final answers as to which variations are best. I always felt that the “latest and greatest” wasn’t for me. I wanted to play something I understood, and it was fine by me if it wasn’t popular with other players. Play what you like, and don’t worry about chess fashion.

After you figure out the type of opening you like, take a closer look at some of the specific openings in that section. You’ll find games where White’s strategy succeeds and games where Black’s strategy comes out on top. If you feel an intuitive attraction to any particular opening, pay attention to that feeling!

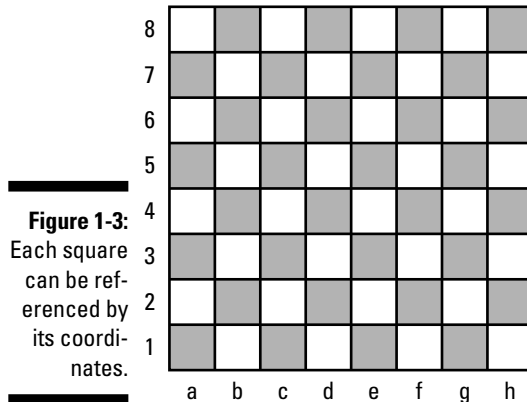
If an opening seems too complicated, or if it just doesn’t feel right to you, keep looking. Matching the right opening to your style of play makes you a better player, and it guarantees you more playing pleasure in the long run.

Reviewing Chess Shorthand

Throughout this book, I use game scores from notable games to explain how an opening influenced the outcome of a match. These game scores use standard chess notation. Unless you’re a chess novice, you’re probably familiar with chess shorthand, but I include the main points in the following sections just in case you need a quick refresher.

Describing the board and pieces

Chess players use an alpha-numerical system to record chess moves. Each *file* (column) is given a letter from *a* to *h*. Each *rank* (row) is given a number from *1* to *8* (see Figure 1-3). So the lower left-hand square is *a1*, the upper right-hand square is *h8*, and so on.



The pieces are described as follows (note that capital letters are used to distinguish these abbreviations from the letters that describe the files):

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Piece</i>
K	King
Q	Queen
R	Rook
B	Bishop
N	Knight

If the only designation is a square, such as 1.e4, that implies a pawn move. If on White's second move the bishop moves in front of the king, it would be written as 2.Be2. If you're not comfortable with chess notation, find someone who is, and ask the person to explain it to you. It's much easier than it looks!

Describing the action

Chess is an action-packed game. Those who've played enough often comment on whether a move is good, bad, or fatal when writing about a game. The following chess symbols are the shorthand for conveying these ideas:

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Definition</i>
?	A bad move
??	An extremely bad move
?!	A dubious move
!?	An interesting move containing some risk

!	A very good move
!!	A brilliant move
0-0	Kingside castling
0-0-0	Queenside castling
x	A capture has taken place
+	Check
++	Double check
#	Checkmate
1-0	White wins the game
0-1	Black wins the game
1/2-1/2	The game is drawn

If the only designation is a square, such as 1.e4, that implies a pawn move. If on White's second move the bishop moves in front of the king, it would be written as 2.Be2. If you're not comfortable with chess notation, find someone who is, and ask the person to explain it to you. It's much easier than it looks!

Chapter 2

Exploring the Elements of Chess

In This Chapter

- ▶ Increasing the mobility of your pieces
 - ▶ Gaining an advantage in space
 - ▶ Winning the battle for material
 - ▶ Examining some common pawn structures
 - ▶ Making sure the king is secure
-

Chess openings may seem to veer off in a million different directions, but they all share certain fundamental characteristics: time, space, material, pawn structure, and king safety.

Army generals know that getting their forces someplace fast can be more important than the magnitude of the force itself. They know that if they have more room to maneuver, they may be able to outflank the opposition. These military teachings apply to the game of chess as well. In this chapter, I break down the fundamental elements of the game and help you understand how you can use these concepts to your advantage and to avoid mistakes.



Every rule has an exception, and most rules are really only guidelines meant to steer you very generally in the right direction. However, you better have a good reason for violating the basic principles of chess openings, or you may find yourself wishing that you hadn't.

Getting Time on Your Side

The element of time in chess is called *development*. Development doesn't refer to the speed at which the game is played, or how long it takes to complete a game. It refers to how quickly and effectively you deploy your forces. Each side takes a turn making a move, and each turn is important. You want to spend this time increasing the mobility of your pieces. A move that increases their mobility is called a *developing move*.



The power of the pieces is tied to their mobility. The player who develops his pieces to effective squares most efficiently has more power to command. If you make a move that doesn't increase your mobility, you may be wasting time. Because White has the first move, White starts out with a slight advantage in time.

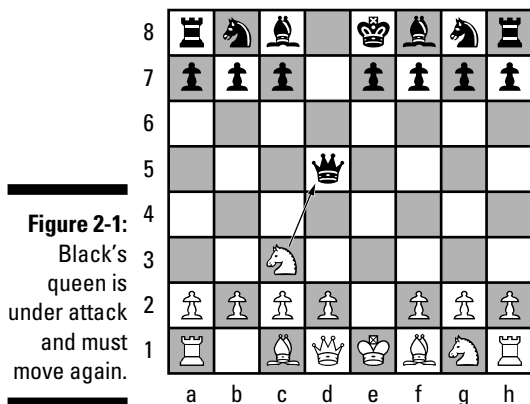


Here are some points to keep in mind to maximize your mobility:

- ✓ Make only as many pawn moves as are necessary to get your pieces out.
- ✓ Move your knights toward the center.
- ✓ Put your pieces on active squares that are also safe from enemy attack.
- ✓ Avoid moving one or two pieces multiple times. Get everyone into the act.

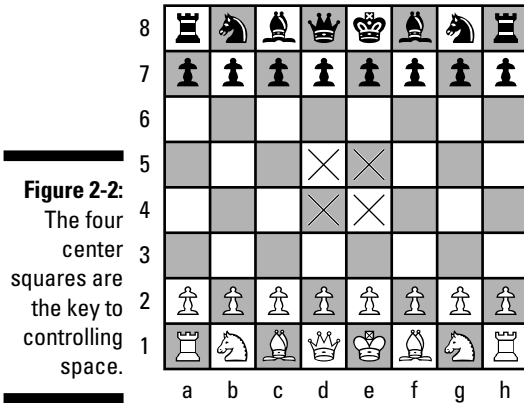
Chess players use the Italian word *tempo* to refer to a single unit of time. They speak of winning or losing a tempo, meaning that they've either gained or lost time. Winning a tempo is like getting a free move, and losing a tempo is like giving your opponent an extra turn.

In the Scandinavian Defense, Black eliminates White's center pawn, but at the cost of a tempo following the moves 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3. White develops the knight to c3, where it attacks the Black queen on d5. The queen must move for a second time, and White gains a tempo (see Figure 2-1).

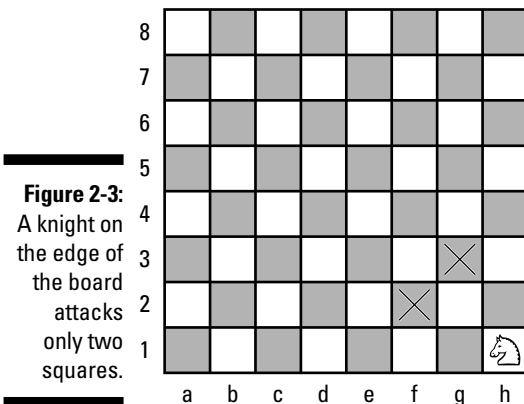


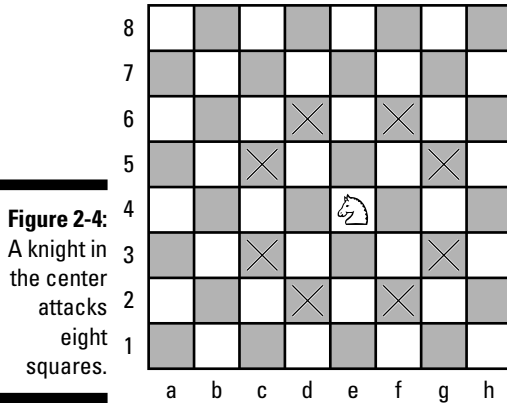
When Spacing Out Is Good

In many ways, chess is a game of spatial conquest. All things being equal, the player who controls the most space controls the game. In the opening, the quest for space usually involves a fight for the center (see Figure 2-2).

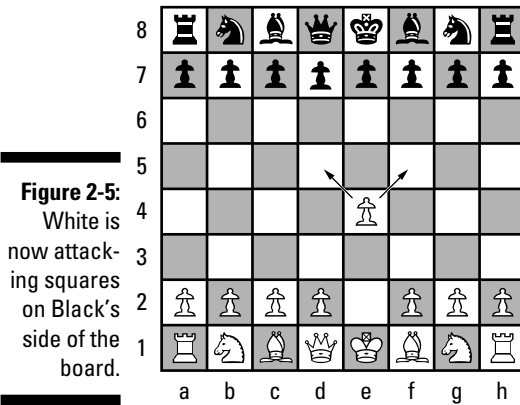


If you gain an advantage in space, you have more freedom of movement for your pieces. Most pieces gain more mobility when you move them toward the center, which is called *centralization*. A knight, for example, has significantly less mobility on the edge of the board than it does in the center. (See Figure 2-3 and Figure 2-4.)





The most popular opening move is 1.e4. It opens a line for the queen and the light-squared bishop, but it also grabs space (see Figure 2-5).



The most common opening strategy is to use the center pawns and *minor pieces* (the bishops and knights) to control the four center squares. If these pieces are centralized and your opponent's pieces are not, you'll generally have more space, which means more mobility and more power.

Here are some other points to keep in mind regarding space:

- ✓ Control the center prior to initiating attacks on the wing.
- ✓ Avoid locking your bishops behind your own pawns.

- ✓ If you have less space, try to exchange pieces of equal value.
- ✓ If your opponent launches a flank attack, strike back in the center.
- ✓ Keep the king away from the center until the endgame.

Making the Most of Your Material

The collective force of the pieces is referred to as *material*. Not all material is created equal, however. Some pieces are more mobile than others. The more mobile a piece is, the more powerful it is. The queen has the most mobility and is the strongest piece on the board. Table 2-1 shows the relative value of the pieces. The table doesn't include the king, because there's no way to value the king — its loss means the game is over!

<i>Piece</i>	<i>Value</i>
Pawn	1
Knight	3
Bishop	3.25
Rook	5
Queen	9



All things being equal, you don't want to give up a powerful piece for one of lesser value. That's why in the Scandinavian Defense (refer to Figure 2-1), the queen is forced to move a second time after it's attacked by the White knight. If Black allows the knight to capture the queen, Black faces a significant material deficit and will almost certainly lose the game.

It's common in various chess openings to use the threat of winning material to gain time or space. Advantage in time or space may be temporary, but material advantages tend to be more lasting. The exception to this rule is the gambit (see Chapter 4), where material is sacrificed in order to gain time. Even then, one idea behind the gambit is to eventually recover the material investment by winning it back while retaining an edge in either space or time.

A developing move that also threatens to win material can be very powerful. If your opponent has to spend time guarding against material loss, you may be able to dictate the action. This ability is referred to in chess as the *initiative*.



Whenever you see your opponent's king and queen on the same rank or file, try to attack them with a rook.



Here are some terms to keep in mind related to material:

- ✓ A knight attack on two pieces of greater value is called a *fork*.
- ✓ A bishop attack on a piece that can't move away without exposing a piece of greater value to capture is called a *pin*.
- ✓ A bishop attack on a piece of greater value that can't move away without exposing another piece of greater value to capture is called a *skewer*.

Structuring Your Pawns

The strategy involved with many chess openings can only be understood by considering the pawn structure. If your pawn structure is solid and you can damage your opponent's structure, you gain an advantage out of the opening.

At the start of the game, the pawn structure is rock solid as the pawns stand shoulder to shoulder on their rank in front of the pieces. The pawns do, however, have to be disturbed in order to develop the pieces. Pawns can't move backwards, so every advance is a commitment, but one that must be made. In the following sections, I explain some common pawn structures.

Doubled pawns: Trouble on the horizon

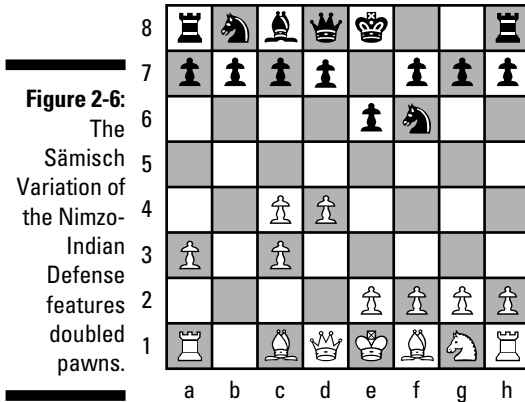
When two pawns of the same color are on the same file, they're referred to as *doubled*. This is normally a positional weakness. The mobility of the pawn in back is compromised; you can't use it to protect the pawn in front.

Some openings are designed to afflict the opposition with doubled pawns. The Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense (see Chapter 16) is one such opening (see Figure 2-6).

The pawns on c3 and c4 are doubled. Black's subsequent opening strategy is to attack the pawn on c4 and to tie White's pieces down in defense. Pieces that get stuck doing guard duty may drift into passivity.



All things being equal, doubled pawns represent a weakness. If you can exchange one of them for one of your opponent's healthy pawns, by all means do so.

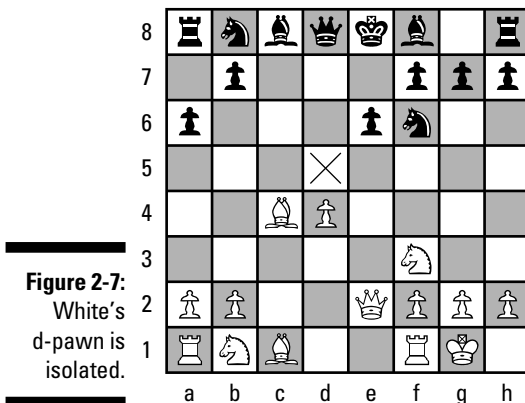


Isolated pawns: 1 is a lonely number

If there are no pawns of the same color on a pawn's adjacent files, the pawn is referred to as *isolated*. An isolated pawn can be a positional weakness because you can only defend it with pieces. Another drawback is that the square in front of an isolated pawn can't be attacked by other pawns.

If an enemy piece is positioned in front of an isolated pawn, driving it away may be impossible. In that case, the isolated pawn's mobility is halted. The term chess players use for such a situation is *blockade*.

The fight for control over the square in front of an isolated pawn can be the main strategy in certain openings. In the Queen's Gambit Accepted (see Chapter 14), White is often saddled with an isolated d-pawn (see Figure 2-7).



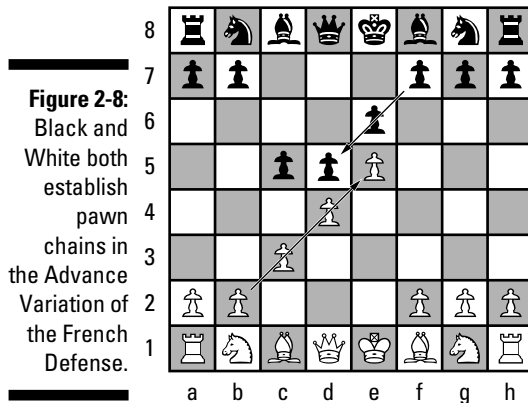
White tries to execute the advance d4-d5, and Black tries to prevent it. If White succeeds, the isolated pawn will be eliminated or used to disrupt the organization of Black's pieces. If Black succeeds in blocking the pawn, however, White's position may become weak.



If you have an isolated pawn, try to advance it and exchange it for a healthy one of your opponent's. If your opponent has an isolated pawn, try to prevent its advance.

Pawn chains: Only as strong as their weakest link

A diagonal set of pawns that protect one another is called a *pawn chain*. The strategic battle in some openings is whether one side's pawn chain can be preserved. Such a battle occurs in the Advance Variation of the French Defense (see Chapter 10), for example (see Figure 2-8).



This position has two pawn chains. White's starts on b2 and ends on e5. Black's starts on f7 and ends on d5. Black tries to destroy White's pawn chain, and White tries to preserve it, or allows it to be destroyed only under conditions favorable to White.

You destroy a pawn chain by attacking it with pawns and pieces. You preserve it by propping it up with pawns and pieces. Sometimes, the question of whether a pawn chain will be preserved or destroyed can be answered by counting!



Pawn chains make it difficult to maneuver from one side of the board to another. They also provide a clue as to where both players will undertake future operations. White's pawn chain points to the kingside, and that's where White's advantage is. Black counters with operations on the queenside.

Moves that may otherwise seem inexplicable can sometimes be understood when the fight to maintain or destroy a pawn chain takes place. The pawn structure often serves as a guide to what the opening strategy should be.

Securing Your King

Most chess openings feature castling, which provides a certain measure of security for the king and frees up the rest of the pieces for action. You want to invest the minimum amount of material possible to defend the king so that you can go on the attack with as much force as possible.



However, when it comes to the king's safety, being too stingy isn't wise.

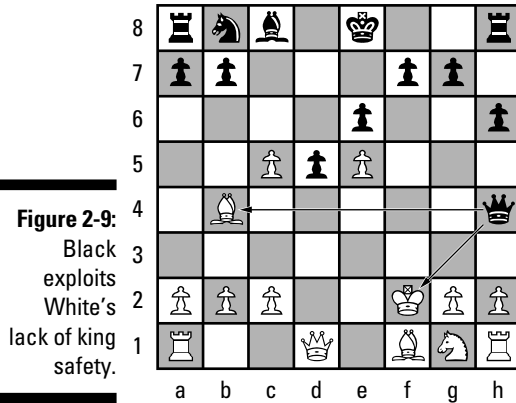
I had the Black pieces in 1981 in a tournament in San Jose, California, and I was able to exploit my opponent's lack of king safety.

1.e4 e6	2.d4 d5	3.Nc3 Nf6	4.Bg5 Bb4
5.e5 h6	6.Bd2 Bxc3	7.Bxc3 Ne4	8.Bb4 c5!
9.dxc5 Nxf2!	10.Kxf2		

The king must capture the knight or White will lose more material.

10....Qh4+

The queen move exploits White's lack of king safety and then captures the bishop on b4. Black went on to win. (See Figure 2-9.)



Check is not checkmate, so you don't have to worry about protecting your king from all possible checks. It's important, however, to safeguard against checks that win material or force you to move your king before you want to. That's why so many chess openings feature an early castling. Your king safety issues aren't over after you castle, but they are less pressing.

Chapter 3

Picking the Right Type of Opening

In This Chapter

- ▶ Explaining the naming conventions for chess openings
 - ▶ Looking at the various chess opening types
-

I begin this chapter by describing chess opening naming conventions. These conventions aren't uniform throughout the world, so in this book I stick to the conventions used in the United States.

In the second part of this chapter I describe the various types of chess openings. I group them into types according to their pawn structure and the relative freedom of movement for the pieces. *Open games*, for example, refer to the types of openings that have good piece mobility. *Closed games* imply pawn structures that make it more difficult for the pieces to get around the board.

Considering Naming Conventions

I'll let you in on a little secret: Chess players stink at naming conventions. Chess players are supposed to be logical and capable of cogent reasoning and systematic thought, but you'd never know it if you judged them by the way they name their openings.

A given opening may be named after a person, place, or thing (there's actually an opening called the Stonewall Attack). Some openings are named after animals, but as far as I know, none are named after minerals or vegetables.

Naming conventions vary from country to country, but even if you stick to just the opening names used in the United States, you'll have difficulty figuring out the rhyme and reason behind them. Sometimes an opening is named after the player who first played it; sometimes it's named after the player who popularized it; and sometimes it's named after the town, city, or country where it first appeared in tournament practice.

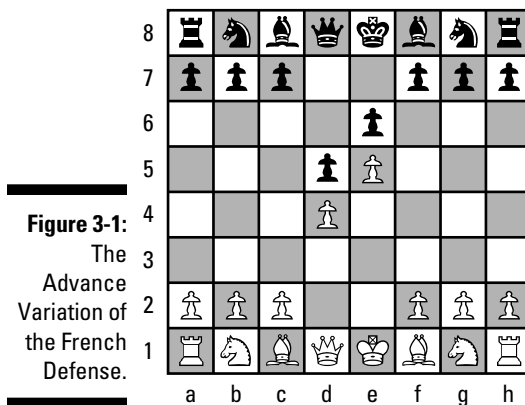
Consider the case of the so-called Indian openings. English players in Calcutta came into contact with an Indian player by the name of Bannerjee Moheschunder sometime in the mid-18th century. He wasn't familiar with European rules at first, although he apparently became a relatively strong player in a short amount of time. He had been used to playing a more ancient game, where the pawns could move only one square at a time.

He would defend against 1.d4 with 1...Nf6, followed by either 2...g6 (which became known as the *King's Indian Defense*) or 2...b6 (which became known as the *Queen's Indian Defense*). You now also have the *Nimzo-Indian* (2...e6) and the *Old-Indian* (2...d6) defenses.

These moves didn't fit in with the classical theory of opening play that dominated the latter half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. When, in the 1920s, a talented group of players started to feature these ancient moves in their games, they were dubbed the *Hypermodern School*.

Sometimes, an opening's name is based on a move by White. For example, 1.c4 is called the *English Opening*. Sometimes, an opening's name is established by a Black move. For example, 1.e4 e6 is called the *French Defense*. Regardless of the opening's name, all openings can branch out in different ways. These branches are referred to as *variations*, and they're often given names as well.

Variations are subsets of the opening in question. The moves 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5, for example, constitute the *Advance Variation* of the French Defense. The variation is called the Advance, but the opening itself is still called the French (see Figure 3-1). To further complicate matters, the same variation name may be used in more than one opening, although the positions are different in different openings.



Coded names: Convenient or confusing?

Some people advocate using codes for chess openings instead of names in order to be universally understood, but you won't run into too many people who've committed these codes to memory.

In the late 1960s, a coded classification system was developed that entirely dispensed with names. Opening move sequences were classified by an alpha-numeric scheme, from A01 through E99. This system proved very useful for grouping together games that were structurally alike, but it proved difficult in terms of conversation. I

know, for instance, that C12 refers to my favorite variation of the French Defense, but if you asked me about A12, B12, D12, or E12, I'd have to look them up.

So I still rely on good old-fashioned names for the openings, in deference to my less than encyclopedic memory, and so do most other chess players. This results in some difficulties to overcome — the Scandinavian Defense, for example, and the Center Counter Defense both refer to the moves 1.e4 d5. But by and large, naming the openings has proven to be useful.



Throughout this book, I attempt to explain the origin of the opening names under consideration. I use what constitutes the general consensus in the United States today. Just be aware that there's no final judge or ruling body that decides these things. Besides, you don't usually choose to play a certain opening because of its name — you usually decide based on its type.

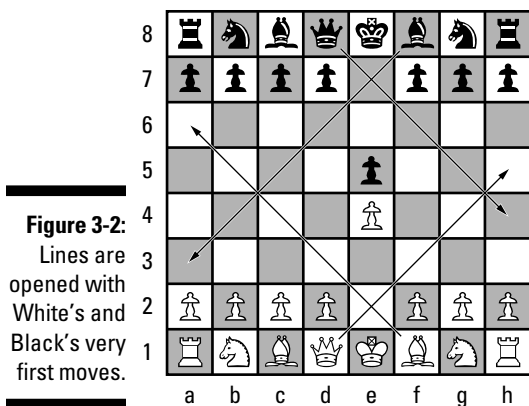
Examining Opening Types

Opening types are used to group openings that have certain similarities. Such classifications are based on pawn structure and piece mobility. However, chess is a dynamic game, and what starts out as one type can suddenly morph into another.

It's still useful to sort these types of games into general categories, where they more often than not share certain characteristics. It helps provide you with a perspective from which you can begin to build an appreciation for both the similarities and differences in the myriad chess openings. The following sections describe the different categories of openings and reveal what type of player may enjoy the openings in each category.

Breaking open the board with open games

The term *open* applies to openings that begin 1.e4 e5 (see Figure 3-2).



Both sides open lines (the term *line* applies to ranks, files, or diagonals) for their queen and one of their bishops on the very first move. These lines are closed at the start of the game. Opening them increases a piece's mobility, and a piece's power is directly tied to its mobility.



Open games can lead to the rapid development of pieces and to swift attacks and exciting tactical combinations. Or they can lead to a bunch of piece exchanges that simplify the game and accelerate the onset of the endgame.

There are no guarantees in chess, and part of the game within the game is that your opponent may not want to play the same type of game that you do. I've seen too many games to count where one side desperately tries to open lines while the other just as desperately tries to keep them closed.



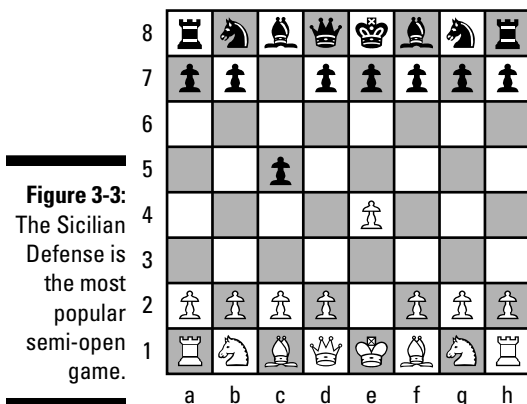
Generally speaking, if you like to go on the attack quickly, you want open lines. The openings I cover in Part II of this book are the types of openings that will appeal to you.

Counterattacking with semi-open games

The term *semi-open* applies to games where White opens with 1.e4 and Black replies with anything except 1...e5. By definition, these games are *defenses* or *counterattacks*. The semi-open type of game disturbs the symmetry that exists at the game's start or that's maintained by answering 1.e4 with 1...e5.

Many of the semi-open games are designed to attack the pawn that White has moved onto e4. The *French* and *Caro-Kann* defenses prepare to play the move ...d5 with 1...e6 and 1...c6, respectively, while the *Scandinavian* (1...d5) and *Alekhine's* (1...Nf6) defenses attack White's pawn on Black's first move.

The most popular semi-open game is the *Sicilian Defense* (see Chapter 9), when Black plays 1...c5 (see Figure 3-3). Black's intention is to create an imbalanced game. Symmetrical games can make it relatively easy to formulate plans. Asymmetrical games can make it more difficult to do so.



In either case, whether you intend to attack White's pawn on e4 or try to create an unbalanced position, you're serving notice that you intend to mix things up. You find very little of the "you go your way and I'll go mine" sort of mind-set in players who adopt semi-open defenses.

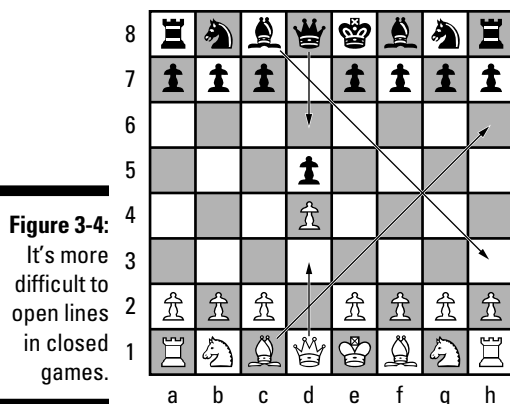


Semi-open games appeal to players who don't mind giving something up in order to make things interesting. In the French Defense, for example, the bishop on c8 often has limited mobility. Nevertheless, it's quite the ornery opening. Its first move, 1...e6, contests White's control over d5. Its second move, 2...d5, contests White's pawn on e4!

You usually have to give up something to get something in chess. If that's your attitude, then one of the openings in the section on semi-open games may be just what you're looking for.

Shutting down your opponent with closed games

The term *closed* refers to games that begin 1.d4 d5 (see Figure 3-4). Black's opening move makes it difficult for White to play e2-e4. If White can somehow manage it, the game may open up. If not, then fewer lines are available for the pieces to maneuver on.



The emphasis in closed games isn't so much on rapid development of the pieces but on effective development. With fewer squares available to the pieces and fewer ways of getting to the best squares, a premium is placed on getting the pieces to their proper posts as efficiently as possible. This sometimes calls for rather subtle maneuvering, and it may take some time to develop a feel for how to go about it. (See Chapter 2 for more on making the most of space and development in chess.)

For this reason, many chess teachers advise new players to start with open games. The objectives tend to be clearer, and the piece movements are more understandable. Hey, f7 is Black's weakest square (defended at the start only by Black's king), so let's attack it with a bishop on c4!



Closed games reward patience, so if you're the type of player who can postpone immediate gratification in order to accomplish your ultimate objective, then closed games may be for you. Openings such as the *Queen's Gambit Declined* (see Chapter 14) and the *Slav Defense* (see Chapter 15) are rich in ideas and strategically complex, and they appeal to the long-term planner type of player.

Playing coy with semi-closed games

The term *semi-closed* refers to all responses to 1.d4 except 1....d5. These include the Indian defenses that I mention earlier in the chapter. The typical first move for Black is 1....Nf6 (see Figure 3-5).

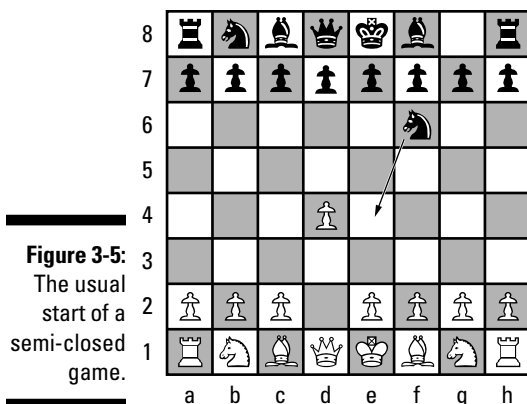


Figure 3-5:
The usual
start of a
semi-closed
game.



Black discourages White from playing an early e2-e4 but may allow it later on. What the semi-closed games have in common is Black's willingness to allow White to occupy the center with pawns with the intent of targeting them later for destruction.

The idea of delaying the occupation of the center with pawns and the attempt to control the center from a distance were at the heart of what became known as the *Hypermodern School* of thought in the 1920s.



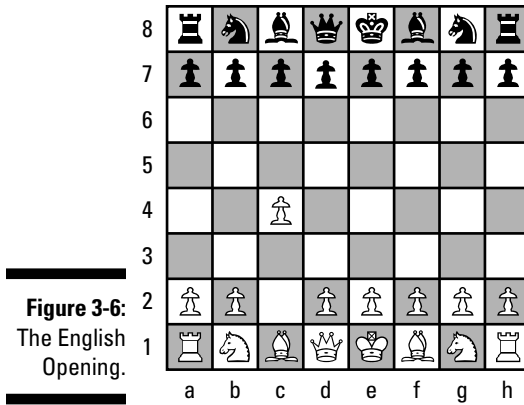
Semi-closed games can be difficult to master, and they always pose the danger that you'll simply be overrun by White's advancing pawns. However, if you like to counterpunch, these openings may be the perfect fit for you. When it comes to pawn centers, your attitude is, the bigger they are, the harder they fall!

Playing on the sidelines with flank games

The term *flank* refers to any opening that doesn't advance either the e-pawn or d-pawn on the first move. The *English Opening* with 1.c4 is by far the most popular flank opening (see Figure 3-6).



White usually fianchettoes at least one of the bishops. The term *fianchetto* is a diminutive of the Italian word *fianco*, which means "flank." White attacks the center with either the c- or f-pawn and attacks from a distance with pieces. This allows Black to establish a strong pawn center, but White is intent on destroying it.



Although the occupation of the center is delayed in flank openings, it's not abandoned. White simply prefers to get some pieces developed and get safely castled before engaging in hostilities in the center.



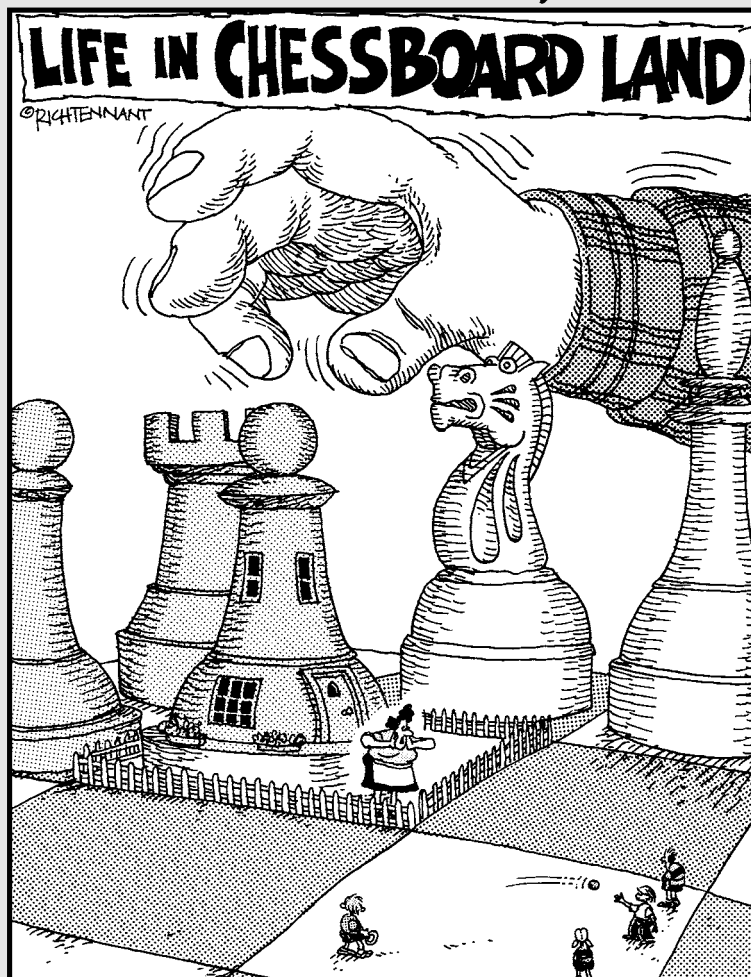
The flank games appeal to the type of player who values what feels safe and familiar, because White usually goes about the same sort of development, regardless of what Black does.

Part II

Winning with Open Games

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Come on, kids! It looks like we're moving!"

In this part . . .

This part covers chess openings that begin with the moves 1.e4 e5. Some of these openings are among the oldest chess openings on record. The open games lend themselves to the rapid mobilization of each side's forces and to early attacks. If you like to attack early and often, the open games may be the right types of openings for you.

The Ruy López is in this part. It has proven to be one of the most popular chess openings of all time.

Chapter 4

Gambling with Gambits

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding gambits
 - ▶ Accepting or declining the King's Gambit
 - ▶ Attacking with the Danish Gambit
 - ▶ Trapping your opponent with the Latvian Gambit
-

In this chapter you see gambits played by both White and Black. The majority of gambits are played by White because White has the first move and, by definition, has a slight advantage in development. Though all gambits involve some element of risk, those initiated by Black tend to be riskier than those initiated by White. You're trading speed for material, and it's harder to do so successfully when you have the Black pieces.

Why Gamble with a Gambit?

A *gambit* is an opening where one player gives up material (usually a pawn) with the intention of securing an advantage in time or space or some other aspect of the game. The word is derived from the Italian *gambetta* and was first used in the chess sense by Ruy López in 1591.

Prior to the mid-19th century, attack was the name of the game. One didn't worry so much about material. As defensive capabilities matured, sacrificing material for the sake of an attack became riskier. Gambits still constitute a big part of chess-opening theory, and although they're not employed as frequently as they once were at the highest levels of play, they still figure prominently at coffeehouses and clubs around the world.



You can use gambits with any opening type, but they're most frequently used in open games. That's because open games allow for maximum piece mobility, and sacrificing a small amount of material to fully activate your pieces makes a good deal of sense. Some of the once fiercest gambits have been defanged over time after being subjected to a great deal of scrutiny. Most of them still demand tightrope-walking from both sides, because the slightest misstep can spell disaster.



Gambits sacrifice material for sometimes dubious compensation. However, if you lose material because of an oversight, that's not a gambit — it's a mistake. Material matters, but as with everything in chess, it's only one element of the game, and it needs to be balanced with the others.

Trotting Out the King's Gambit

One of the oldest openings in chess, the *King's Gambit* begins with 1.e4 e5 2.f4 (see Figure 4-1), when White's f-pawn is used to try and weaken Black's hold on the center. If Black takes the pawn (called *accepting the gambit*), White tries to regain the pawn later on, after having first secured a permanent advantage in the center.

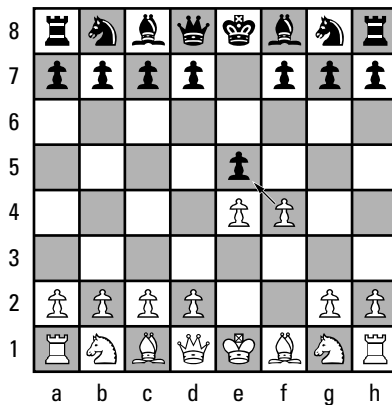


Figure 4-1:
White uses
the f-pawn
to attack
Black's
pawn on e5.

When White plays the King's Gambit, Black has three choices:

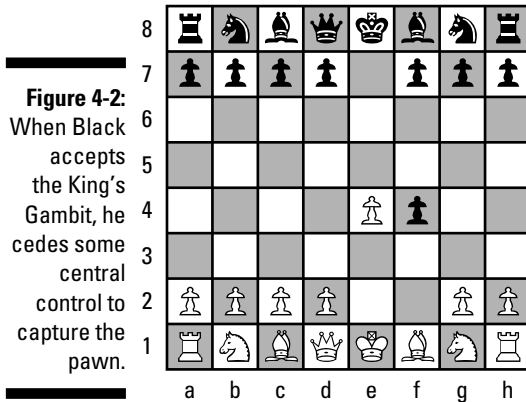
- ✓ He can accept the gambit and the complications that go along with it.
- ✓ He can decline the gambit and attempt to steer the game back along more strategic pathways with normal developing moves.
- ✓ He can mount a counterattack. The moves 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 lead to what's called the *Falkbeer Counter-Gambit*, a risky attempt to turn the tables on White. (See "The King's Gambit declined" section later in the chapter.)



The King's Gambit appeals to the attacking player who's unafraid of complicated positions, where the ability to calculate accurately often outweighs skills such as long-range planning.

The King's Gambit accepted

By accepting the gambit, Black gains an extra pawn, at least temporarily. Black's e-pawn, however, moves over to the f-file and loses contact with the center (see Figure 4-2).



Black's e-pawn was helping in the fight to control the d4 square. After capturing White's f-pawn, however, it can no longer do so.

When things go White's way

White establishes superiority in the center. White castles, placing the h1 rook on the half-open (White's f-pawn is gone) f-file. The rook on the f-file combined with central control facilitate a sharp attack against Black's position.

In the following game, White was played by Boris Spassky and Black was played by Ratmir Kholmov. It was contested in the former Soviet Union in 1964.

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4

Now White has an open f-file, but his king can easily become exposed.

3.Nf3

This move prevents 3...Qh4+.

3...Be7

Black toys with the idea of ...Bh4+.

4.Nc3 Nf6!?

A provocative defense. Black doesn't mind having his knight kicked around if he can castle. He decides against the idea of 4...Bh4+, because even though White can't castle after 5.Ke2, it's not easy for Black to get his pieces out, and White is developing quickly. In that case, White's immediate idea would be d4 and Bxf4. Nevertheless, White's odd king position would make this position unclear.

5.e5 Ng4

6.d4

An intimidating center.

6...Ne3

Black justifies his 5...Ng4 move by compelling White to part with one of his bishops. However, this is very slow and leaves White with a substantial lead in development.

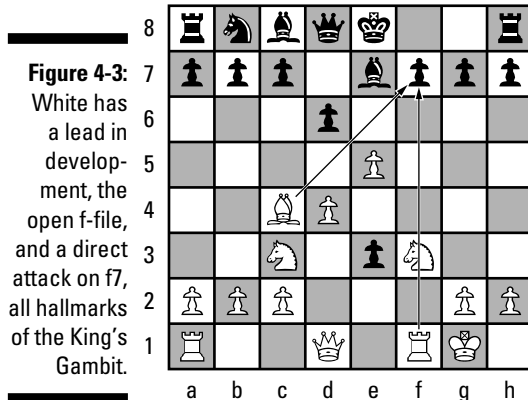
7.Bxe3 fxe3

8.Bc4 d6

9.0-0



Black has the bishop pair and is temporarily a pawn ahead but must be careful not to get blown away (see Figure 4-3).



9...0-0

10. Qd3 Nc6

11.exd6 cxd6 12.Rae1

Here, White has all his pieces out and his rooks on open files. With his next move, Black begins to catch up in development, but his pieces aren't so active, and his king is vulnerable.

12....Bg4

13.Rxe3 Kh8

Black unpins his f-pawn, but it's still a target.

14.Nd5 Bg5

Upon a slow move such as 14....Rc8?, White can carry out his threat of 15.Nxe7 Nxe7 16.Ng5, threatening checkmate and winning material.



15.Nxg5 Qxg5
19.Rxf5 Qh4

16.Rg3 Qh5
20.c3

17.Ne3! Bd7 18.Nf5! Bxf5

White defends d4. Now, if White can play Rh3, Black's king won't survive.



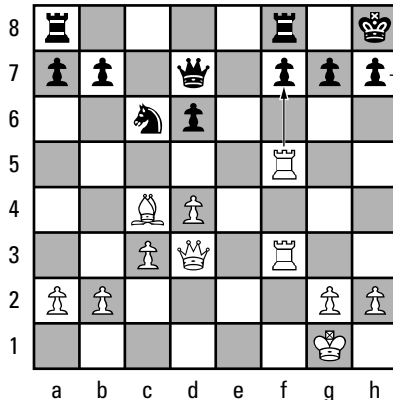
20....Qe7

Black would lose after 20....f6 21.Rh3 Qg4 22.Rxh7+ Kxh7 23.Rh5#.

21.Re3 Qd7

22.Ref3

Finally, the game returns to the attack on f7, with White using the file that he pried open on his second move! But Black's h7 is also vulnerable (see Figure 4-4).



h7 is vulnerable.

Figure 4-4: White is still attacking f7 but is also eyeing h7.

22....Nd8

Black is protecting the key f7 square, but now, all his pieces are passively placed, and White takes direct aim at the king:



23.Qe4 g6

White would win with the sequence 23....Rc8 24.Rh3 h6 25.Rfh5 Rxc4 26.Rxh6+ gxh6 27.Rxh6+ followed by 28.Qh7#.

24.Qh4! Rg8

If instead Black tried 24....gxf5 then White would win by 25.Qf6+ Kg8 26.Rg3#

25.Rxf7! 1–0

The f7-point turns out to be the fatal weakness after all. If after 25.Rxf7 Black tried 25....Nxf7, White would play 26.Rxf7, and White threatens both the queen and checkmate on h7.

When things go Black's way

Black either hangs on to the pawn or returns it at an opportune time and inconveniences White in some way. White's early move of the f-pawn exposes his king to checks along the e1-h4 diagonal, which results in a slight drop in king safety. If the king is forced to move early, White's position can become uncoordinated, and Black becomes the hunter and not the hunted.

In the following game, White was played by Jakob Rosanes and Black by Adolf Anderssen. It was played in Breslau, in present-day Poland, back in 1863.



1.e4 e5

2.f4 exf4

3.Nf3 g5

This is Black's most aggressive move. He protects the pawn on f4 but would also like to launch a kingside attack by ...g4 and ...Qh4+.

4.h4

White attacks Black's pawn on g5 and breaks his hold on f4.

4....g4

5.Ne5

White's move is a variation of the King's Gambit called the *Kieseritzky Gambit*. White attacks g4 and f7. Notice that the move h4 prevents ...Qh4+. On the other hand, the pawn on h4 is a target, and White has weakened his own g3 square.

5....Nf6 6.Bc4

White is attacking f7.

6....d5

Black blocks the bishop.

7.exd5 Bd6

7....Nxd5 wins a pawn, but after 8.Qe2 or 8.Nc3, Black has a hard time defending. With 7....Bd6, he develops a piece, prevents d6, and attacks White's knight.

8.d4

This move is logical. White is trying to control the center.

8....Nh5

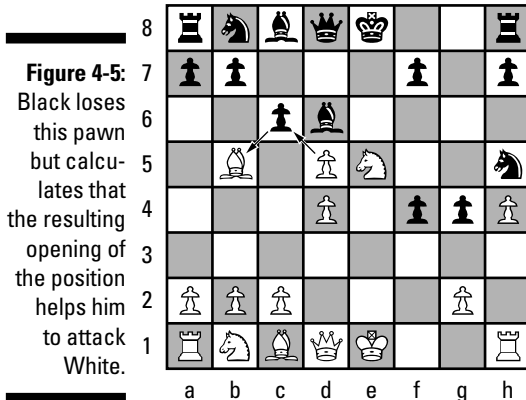
Black's knight protects f4 and intends to sink into g3.

9.Bb5+

With this check, White expects to force Black's king to move.

9....c6!

Black plays in the style that White often uses in the King's Gambit: sacrifice of material in return for initiative and attack. (See Figure 4-5.)





10.dxc6 bxc6

11.Nxc6 Nxc6

12.Bxc6+ Kf8!?

This rook sacrifice is more ambitious (and crazier) than 12...Bd7 13.Bxd7+ Qxd7 14.0-0 0-0-0 15.Qd3 Bc7 16.c3 f3 with an attack. Notice the theme of pawn advances on the kingside in order to open lines.

13.Bxa8 Ng3

Black is attacking the rook, and White's king is wide open to attack, while the pawns on f4 and g4 cover all the key squares on the third rank that White may want to go to.

14.Rh2

White decides to save his rook.

14...Bf5

15.Bd5 Kg7!

Bringing Black's remaining rook into play.

16.Nc3 Re8+

17.Kf2 Qb6

Black is a rook and a pawn behind in material, but look at his active pieces! He threatens the move 18...Be5!, followed by capturing the d-pawn with check. (See Figure 4-6.)

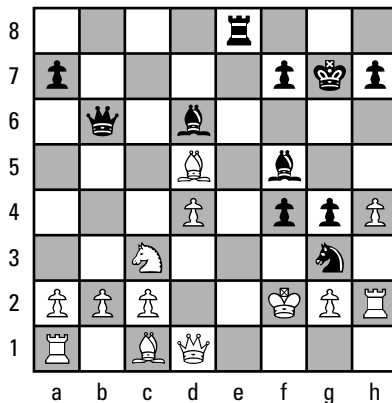


Figure 4-6:
Black is significantly behind in material but is attacking furiously.

18.Na4 Qa6

19.Nc3



If White instead tries 19.c4, then Black would play 19...Qxa4!! 20.Qxa4 Re2+ 21.Kg1 Re1+ 22.Kf2 Rf1#.

19...Be5!

20.h5

Black has yet another master stroke:

20...Qf1+!

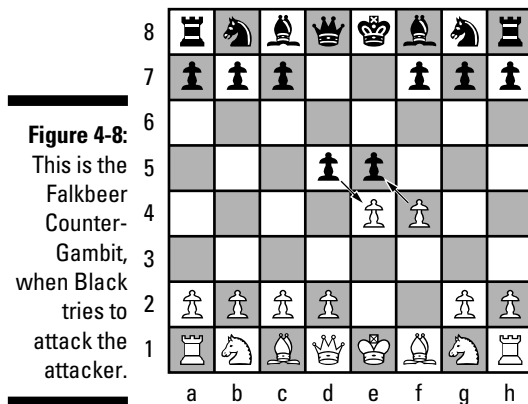
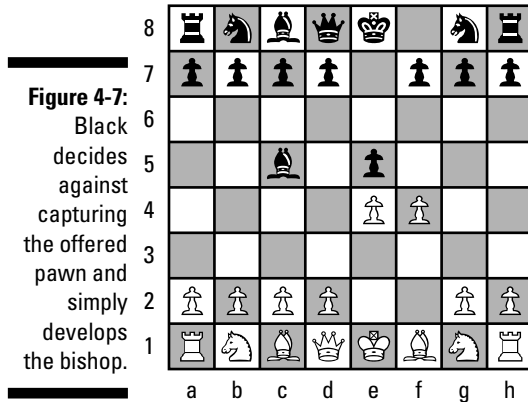
21.Qxf1 Bxd4+

22.Be3 Rxe3! 0-1

Black threatens 23...Re2 with double check and mate; White can't do anything about it: 23.Kg1 Re1#.

The King's Gambit declined

Two different types of chess players may benefit from declining the King's Gambit. If you're the type of player who dislikes complications, you may decline the gambit and try to steer the game along a more strategic-oriented course with 1.e4 e5 2.f4 Bc5 (see Figure 4-7). Or, if you dislike defending and greatly prefer to be the one attacking, you can try a counter-gambit, such as the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit with the moves 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 (see Figure 4-8).



When things go White's way

White controls the center and attacks along the f-file. Those are the basic goals for White in every variation of the King's Gambit. Following is a game from an 1895 tournament in Hastings, England, between Mikhail Chigorin, as White, and Harry Nelson Pillsbury, as Black.

1.e4 e5 2.f4 Bc5

The King's Gambit declined.

3.Nf3 d6 4.Bc4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.d3 Bg4 7.h3

White's pawn move is called *putting the question* to the bishop. Will the bishop capture the knight or retreat?

7...Bxf3 8.Qxf3 Nd4 9.Qg3!

Pillsbury had previously called this move by the queen a mistake. Chigorin was almost certainly trying to prove a point by playing it.

9...Nxc2+?! 10.Kd1 Nxa1

Black has won material, but at the cost of his king's safety.

11.Qxg7 Kd7 12.fxe5 dxe5

White's center is strong.

13.Rf1

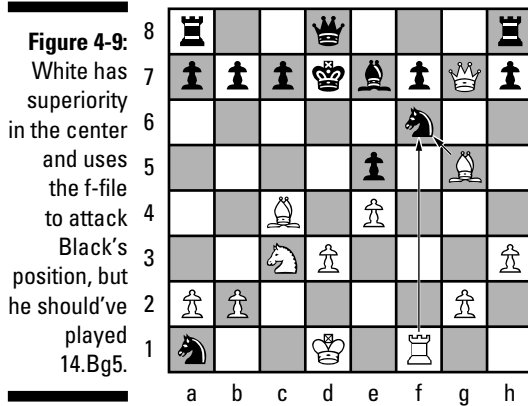
White makes use of the f-file by placing his rook on it.

13...Be7 1-0



Although Chigorin won in 51 moves, he missed a winning move early on. He played 14.Qxf7, but he should've played 14.Bg5, which would win him material (see Figure 4-9).





When things go Black's way

Psychology sometimes plays a role in chess. A player who plays the King's Gambit usually likes to attack and may be uncomfortable when defending. In order to turn the tables on an attacker, you have to take some risks yourself. The Falkbeer Counter-Gambit may not be the best approach to declining the King's Gambit, but it does have the merit of aggression. You must be willing to sacrifice material for rapid development.

Rudolf Spielmann tried the King's Gambit against Siegbert Tarrasch in a game from 1923. Tarrasch answered with the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit.

1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5

This is the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit.

3.exd5 e4

White has an extra pawn for now but can no longer open the f-file.

4.d3 Nf6 5.dxe4 Nxe4 6.Nf3 Bc5

Black quickly mobilizes his kingside pieces.

7.Qe2 Bf5 8.g4?



White's move is a mistake. Usually, White is willing to sacrifice material for the sake of an attack. In this case, the tables are turned, and it's Black who values quick development over material.

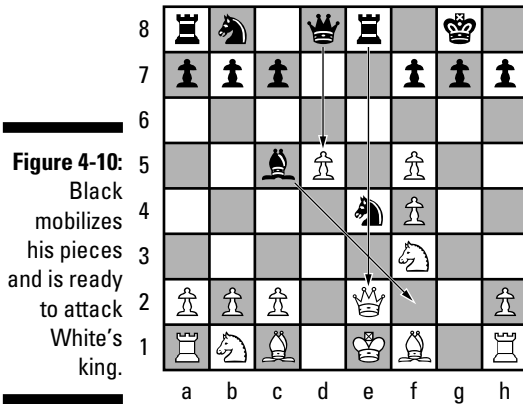
8...0-0 9.gxf5 Re8

The Black rook moves on to the same file as White's king and queen. This is a sure sign of trouble for White (see Figure 4-10).

10.Bg2 Nf2

11.Ne5 Nxh1

Black wins back some of the sacrificed material.



12.Bxh1 Nd7
16.fxe5 Qh4+

13.Nc3 f6

14.Ne4 fxe5

15.Nxc5 Nxc5

White's king is no longer safe and can't find safe haven for the rest of the game.

17.Kf1 Rf8
21.Qc4 Kh8
25.Bxf6 gxf6

18.Kg1 Qd4+
22.Be4 Rae8
26.h3 Rg8+ 0-1

19.Be3 Qxe5
23.Bd4 Qf4

20.Re1 Nd7
24.Re2 Nf6

Delving into the Danish Gambit

The *Danish Gambit* was heavily analyzed by a group of Danes in the first half of the 19th century and was introduced into international tournament practice in Paris in 1856 by the Danish player Martin From. (Interestingly enough, in Denmark, the Danish Gambit is known as the *Nordic Gambit*.) The Danish Gambit is characterized by the moves 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 (see Figure 4-11).

White is willing to sacrifice one pawn, or even two, to gain control of the center and aggressively position the two bishops. Gradually, by the end of the 19th century, Black's defensive technique had improved to the point of nullifying the punching power of the Danish.



If you like to attack, however, you really ought to try playing this gambit to see what works and what doesn't. The battle of space and speed versus material is rarely so evident as it is in this opening.

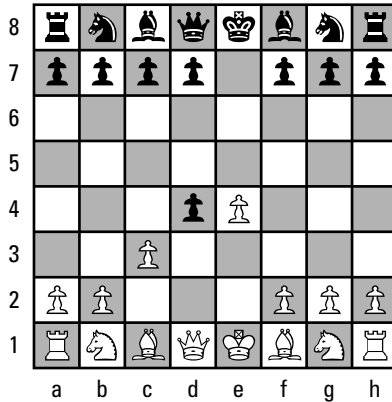


Figure 4-11:
The starting
position for
the Danish
Gambit.

When things go White's way

White attacks, attacks, and then attacks some more. White deploys his pieces rapidly and forces weaknesses in Black's position. White recovers the sacrificed material with dividends. In the game between Jacques Mieses and Frank James Marshall played at Monte Carlo in 1903, things went White's way.

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3

The Danish Gambit.

3...dxc3 4.Bc4

White's move is a common continuation, but it leads to the sacrifice of another pawn.

4...cxb2 5.Bxb2 d6

It has been demonstrated that 5...d5 is a safer way to proceed.

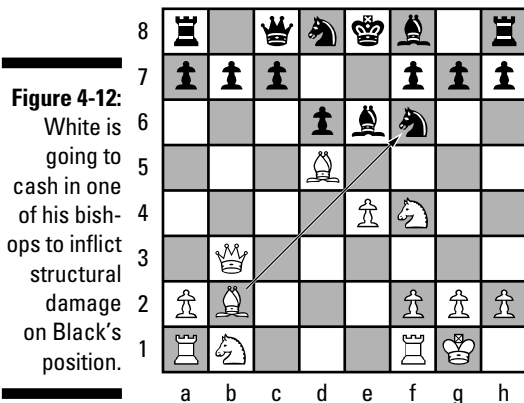
6.Ne2 Nc6 7.0-0

It's important to note that White has developed three minor pieces and castled, while Black's kingside remains completely undeveloped.

7...Be6

Hoping to exchange one of White's powerful bishops (see Figure 4-12).





8.Bd5 Nf6 9.Qb3 Qc8



Black's move defends the pawn on b7 and the bishop on e6, but Black is starting to become passive, which is rarely a good thing against the Danish.

10.Nf4 Nd8 11.Bxf6 gxf6 12.Nh5 c6 13.Re1

White's move is a tactical trick. If Black captures on d5, White recaptures with the e-pawn and pins the bishop on e6 to the king.

13...Be7 14.Qf3

White is applying more pressure to the damaged pawn structure, which can no longer be defended.

14...Rg8 15.Nxf6+ Bxf6 16.Qxf6 cxd5 17.exd5 Rg6

Black's moves are probably played with the hopes of evicting the dangerous queen, but the attack is relentless.

18.Qh8+ Kd7 19.Nc3 Bxd5 20.Qe8+ Kc7 21.Nxd5+ Kb8
22.Rac1 Nc6 23.Rxc6 bxc6 24.Rb1# 1-0

When things go Black's way

It may not be as exciting, but there's no shame in winning by a preponderance of force. When offered a gambit — any gambit — an old saying advises, "Take first and look later." Another expression says, "You refute a sacrifice by accepting it." The principle underlying these sayings is that, if you capture

the offered material and then defend adequately, you should be left with a winning position. In a tournament game played in Baden Baden, Germany, in 1914, Gustaf Nyholm, playing White, turned in a feeble effort against Richard Reti, who played Black.

1.e4 e5

2.d4 exd4

3.c3 dxc3

4.Bc4 d5



Black can, of course, also capture on b2 immediately. The idea behind Black's early d5 is to return one of the pawns in exchange for easier development. This idea took most of the sting out of the Danish.

5.Bxd5 cxb2

6.Bxb2 Nf6

7.Nf3 Bb4+



White can't block this check with a pawn, and any piece intervention leaves Black with a comfortable game and an extra pawn. Nevertheless, White's decision to move his king isn't a good one.

8.Kf1 0-0

9.Qb3 Nc6

Black is exploiting White's lack of king safety.

10.Nc3

If instead White tries 10.Bxc6, then Black would play 10...bxc6. Then, 11.Qxb4 can be answered by 11...Rb8!, and if 12.Qxb8 follows, then 12...Qd1+ 13.Ne1 Ba6+ checkmates in two more moves.

10...Qe7

Black is protecting the bishop directly. Black's development is unhindered, and he retains a healthy extra pawn. White's king is awkwardly placed and interferes with the cooperation of his pieces (see Figure 4-13).

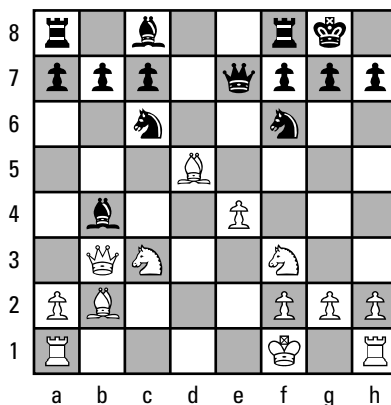


Figure 4-13:
White's king is in a tight spot, while Black has lots of options.

11.a3 Bd6 12.Re1 Ne5 13.Nxe5 Bxe5

Exchanges ease the burden of defense by reducing the attacker's firepower.

14.Bc4 c6 15.h4 b5

Black forces White's bishop to retreat.

16.Be2 Be6

Black forces White's queen to retreat.

17.Qc2 Qc5

Now, Black becomes the aggressor.

18.Rc1 Rfd8 19.g3 a5 20.Qb1 Rd2 21.Nd5 Rxb2
22.Qxb2 Qxd5 23.exd5 Bxb2 24.Rc2 Bxd5 0-1

Lying in Wait with the Latvian Gambit

The *Latvian Gambit* acquired its name after a group of Latvians subjected it to intensive study in the early 20th century and published some of their analysis. It's sometimes called the *Greco Counter-Gambit*.

The Latvian Gambit can lead to some pretty complicated positions where it's easy to lose track of events. If you're comfortable in these types of positions and your opponent is not, things are likely to go your way. You arrive at the initial position for the Latvian Gambit after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 f5 (see Figure 4-14).

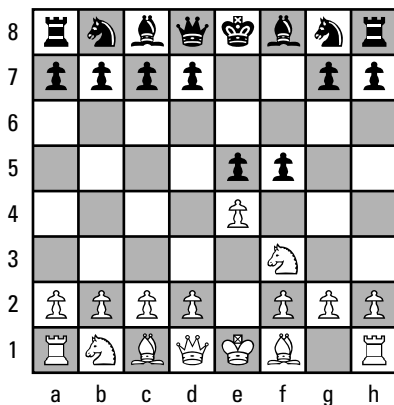


Figure 4-14:
The starting
position for
the Latvian
Gambit.



As with all gambits, the Latvian Gambit will appeal most to the chess player who likes to attack. It strives for immediate complications but carries a significant amount of risk. After 2...f5, Black's position looks like a King's Gambit with the colors reversed. If the King's Gambit is risky for White, it has to be somewhat dubious for Black. The Latvian Gambit has a lot of tricks and traps to spring on the unwary, and that, more than any objective analysis, may explain its lingering appeal.

When things go White's way

White enjoys superior development and simply overruns Black's position when the Latvian Gambit goes White's way. White is able to open the game up before Black can castle. That's what occurred in the game between Vasily Smyslov, as White, and Mikhail Kamishov, as Black, in Moscow in 1945.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 f5

This move initiates the Latvian Gambit.

3.Nxe5 Qf6 4.Nc4 fxe4 5.Nc3 Qg6

Black wants to maintain the pawn on e4, but with his next move, White seeks to eliminate it.

6.d3 Bb4 7.Bd2 Bxc3 8.Bxc3 d5

Black's attack on the knight doesn't gain time for Black, because the knight simply moves to a more aggressive square and attacks Black's queen.

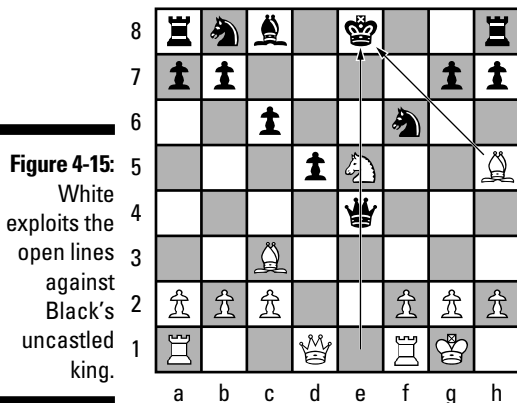
9.Ne5 Qf5 10.dxe4 Qxe4+

Black's move of the queen is his fourth already. That's usually a sign that you're neglecting your development.

11.Be2 Nf6 12.0-0 c6 13.Bh5+

The bishop move clears the way for the White rook on f1 to transfer to the e-file. Whenever you see the king and queen on the same line (rank, file, or diagonal), look for a way to exploit it. (See Figure 4-15.)





13...Kf8

If instead Black tries 13...Nxh5, White would also play 14.Re1 in response.

14.Re1 Qh4 15.Bg6 Na6

The bishop can't be captured, because 16.Nxg6 would fork the king and queen.

16.Qe2 Bh3 17.Nf3 1-0

White threatens 18.Qe7+ and 19.Qf7#, as well as 18.Nxh4.

When things go Black's way

Black creates serious complications, and it's easy for White to go astray. The positions are difficult to assess accurately, and calculating correctly is extremely important. The game between Rudolph Kobs, as White, and Peter Hammer, as Black, played in Wuerzburg, Germany, in 1987, is a good example of how wild things can get.



1.e4 e5

2.Nf3 f5

3.Bc4

Although this is playable, it seems that 3.Nxe5 may be best.



3...fxe4 4.Nxe5 d5 5.Qh5+

White's move forces Black to lose material but also produces a difficult position, where White has to tread carefully.

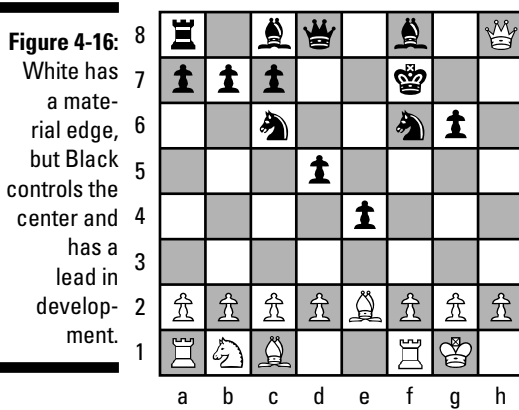
5...g6 6.Nxg6 hxg6 7.Qxh8 Nf6 8.Be2 Kf7



In most openings it's very unusual to move your king voluntarily in the manner that Black does in the preceding move. Black can get away with it here, however, because White's pieces remain undeveloped. They're unable to mount an attack against Black's king.

9.0-0 Nc6

Black must develop quickly and hope that White can't catch up (see Figure 4-16).



10.c3

This move is too slow. White needs to try and catch up in development.

10....Qd6

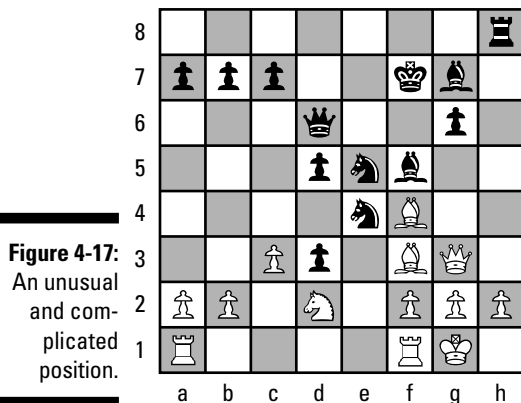
Black wants to develop his f8 bishop but doesn't want to trade queens, so he first relocates the queen.

11.Qh4 Bf5 12.d4 exd3 13.Bf3 Bg7 14.Bf4 Ne5

Black's pieces are well-posted.

15.Nd2 Rh8 16.Qg3 Ne4

Black has mobilized his forces and is willing to sacrifice more material in order to increase the pressure on White's position. Such positions are difficult to evaluate properly. (See Figure 4-17.)



17.Bxe4 dxe4

18.Nc4 Nxc4

Black is even willing to sacrifice his queen in order to sustain the attack. He will have only three pieces in return for a queen and rook.

19.Bxd6 cxd6

20.Rfe1 Be5

Black's move forces 21.f4 (21.Qg5 Bxh7+ 22.Kf1 Bf4!) and gives Black connected passed pawns in the center. They prove to be unstoppable.

21.f4 Bf6

22.Qf2 Bd8

23.Kh1 Bb6

24.Qg3 e3

25.Qf3 d2

26.Qd5+ Be6

27.Qxb7+ Kf6

28.Rg1 e2

29.g4 Bxg1

30.g5+ Kf5

31.Rxg1 e1Q

32.Qg2 Ne3 0-1

Chapter 5

Opening Softly with a Big Stick: The Bishop Makes Its Move

In This Chapter

- ▶ Kicking things off with the Bishop's Opening
 - ▶ Playing it quiet with the Giuoco Piano
 - ▶ Gambling with the Evans Gambit
-

This chapter focuses on openings that feature an early move of the f1 bishop to c4. These are some of the oldest openings in chess, and they were the favorites of old masters such as Luis Ramirez de Lucena and François-André Danican Philidor. Until the middle part of the 19th century, the a2-g8 diagonal was considered the best, most aggressive diagonal for the bishop.

Later on, the popularity of these openings diminished because the Ruy López came into fashion, and the bishop was moved from c1 to b5 instead of c4. Nowadays, these openings are used mostly for their surprise effect. It's still important, however, to be familiar with these openings and to understand why they're no longer in fashion.

Preying with the Bishop's Opening

You arrive at the *Bishop's Opening* after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 (see Figure 5-1). The idea is to place the bishop so that it attacks a center square (d5) and the f7 square as well. This is the weakest point in Black's initial position because it's defended only by Black's king.

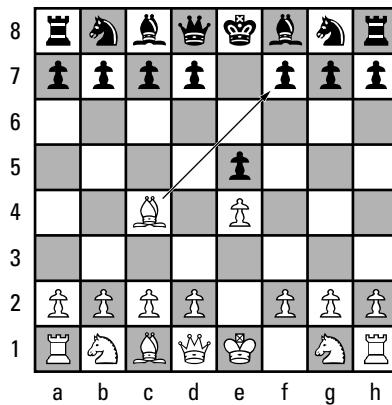


Figure 5-1:
The start of
the Bishop's
Opening.

This opening has little independent significance; it often changes into the King's Gambit if White soon plays $f4$ (see Chapter 4) or the Giuoco Piano (which I explain later in this chapter). Nevertheless, the opening is worth playing in the following game to give you a sense of what it was like in the old days before better defensive techniques were developed.



This opening appeals to players who want a solid position in the opening but one that gives them the flexibility to choose between remaining secure or mixing it up at some point in the game.

When things go White's way

In the following game, played in London in 1788, Thomas Bowdler played White, and Henry Seymour Conway played Black. White unleashes an all-out attack against the $f7$ square and ends up sacrificing both of his rooks along the way.

1.e4 e5 2.Bc4

This is the start of the Bishop's Opening.



2....Bc5

Nowadays, $2....Nf6$ is considered best.

3.d3 c6 4.Qe2 d6 5.f4 exf4



It would've been better for Black to keep the pawn on e5. White now recaptures the pawn and develops the c1 bishop at the same time.

6.Bxf4 Qb6 7.Qf3 Qxb2

Black is perhaps overlooking White's next move.



8.Bxf7+ Kd7

If Black tries 8....Kxf7 instead, then 9.Be5+ wins Black's queen.

9.Ne2 Qxa1

Black captures the first rook.

10.Kd2 Bb4+ 11.Nbc3 Bxc3+ 12.Nxc3 Qxh1

Black captures the second rook. In the early days of chess, however, players wanted to attack at almost any cost. (See Figure 5-2.)

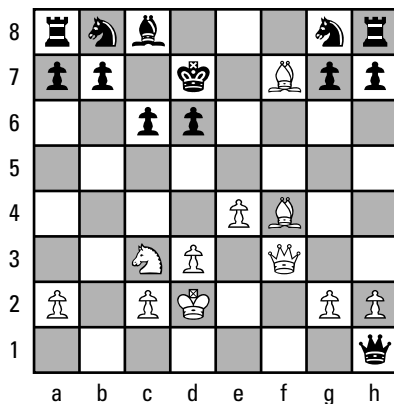


Figure 5-2:
White is down two rooks and is objectively lost.

13.Qg4+ Kc7 14.Qxg7 Nd7 15.Qg3 b6 16.Nb5+ cxb5

Black accepts yet another sacrifice, but it would've been better to play 16....Kd8.

17.Bxd6+ Kb7 18.Bd5+ Ka6

Black's moves have been forced.

19.d4 b4

Black's last chance was to return some of the material with 19...Nc5.

20.Bxb4 Kb5

21.c4+ Kxb4

22.Qb3+ Ka5

23.Qb5# 1-0

When things go Black's way

Fast forward to modern times to see things go Black's way. This game was played by two of the world's best players — Alexei Fedorov as White and Alexei Shirov as Black — in León, Spain, in 2001.

1.e4 e5

2.Bc4 Nf6

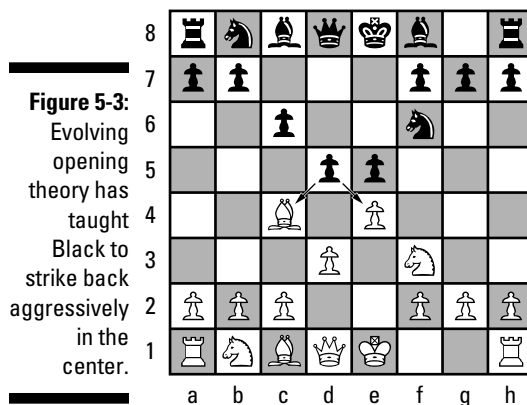
This is the modern response to the Bishop's Opening, causing White to take time to defend the e4 pawn.

3.d3 c6

4.Nf3 d5



Another modern concept is to aggressively challenge White's control over the center (see Figure 5-3). In the old days, Black would all too often allow White to establish too much control in the center.



5.Bb3 Bd6

6.Nc3 dxe4

7.Ng5 0-0

8.Ncxe4 Nxe4

9.Nxe4 a5

10.Qh5 Bb4+

11.Kf1 Be7

12.a4 Nd7

13.h4 Nc5

Black decides to sacrifice a pawn in order to activate his pieces.

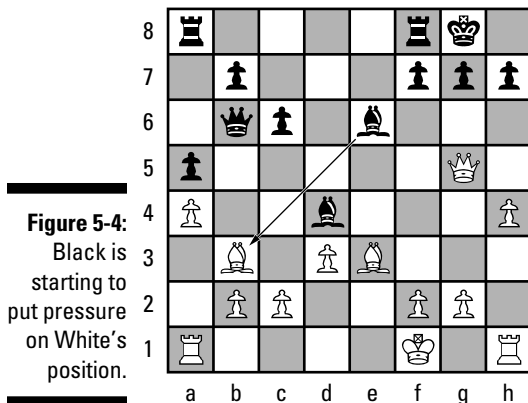
14.Nxc5 Bxc5

15.Qxe5 Bd4

16.Qg5 Qb6

17.Be3 Be6

Black clearly has some compensation for the pawn, but is it sufficient? (See Figure 5-4.)



18.Ra3 Rfe8 19.Kg1 h6 20.Qf4 Rad8 21.Rh3 Qb4

If Black tries 21...Bxh3 instead, White would play 22.Bxf7+ winning.

22.Bxe6 Rxe6 23.Bxd4 Rxd4

Black is still down a pawn, but his pieces are more aggressively placed. He can now win back his sacrificed pawn and keep the pressure on to boot.

24.Qb8+ Kh7 25.Rb3 Qe1+ 26.Kh2 Qxf2 27.Qg3 Qxc2
28.Rc3 Qxb2 29.Rc4 Rg6 30.Qf3 Rxd3 0-1

White can't play 31.Qxd3 because of 31...Qxg2#.

Keying Up for the Giuoco Piano

The opening position for the *Giuoco Piano* occurs after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 (see Figure 5-5). The name means “quiet game” in Italian. In the old days, any opening that didn't sacrifice material was considered quiet.

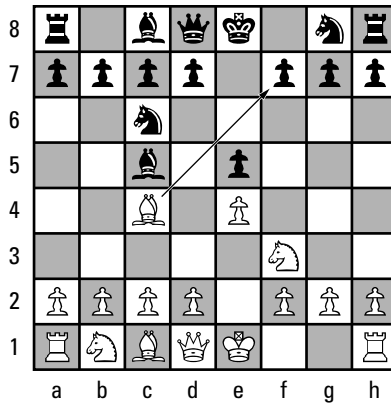
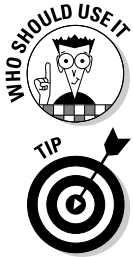


Figure 5-5:
The starting
position for
the Giuoco
Piano.

The saying “knights before bishops” was coined because it’s fairly clear that the g1 knight belongs on f3. It’s not as clear that the f1 bishop belongs on c4, although, back in the early days of modern chess, conventional wisdom said that it did.



This opening appeals to players who aren’t looking to initiate wild attacks but prefer to complete their development prior to initiating complications. The early development of White’s kingside pieces allows White to castle quickly.

Early castling is often desirable in open games, because the king tends to be safer in the corner than in the center.

When things go White’s way

Wilhelm Steinitz, who played White in this game, was one of the greatest strategic thinkers of the 19th century. He put many of his theories down in writing, which helped to teach the principles of correct play to later generations. Here he’s at his best in one of the most famous games in chess history, played against Curt von Bardeleben in Hastings, England, in 1895.

1.e4 e5

2.Nf3 Nc6

3.Bc4 Bc5

The Giuoco Piano.

4.c3

White plans to set up the ideal center by 5.d4.

4....Nf6

5.d4 exd4

6.cxd4 Bb4+

7.Nc3 d5

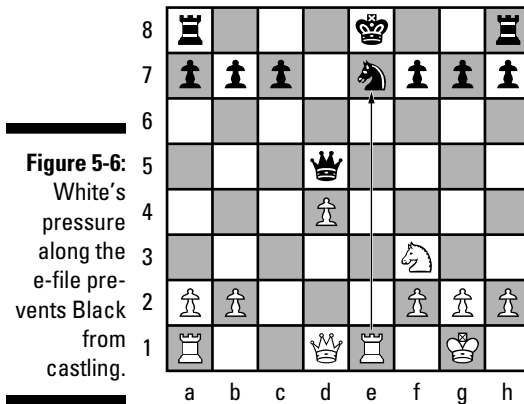
Generally speaking, this counterattack in the center is ideal, before White's pawns roll forward and attack the knights. But in this particular case, Black doesn't get castled.

8.exd5 Nxd5 9.0-0 Be6 10.Bg5!

White doesn't let Black catch his breath.

10....Be7 11.Bxd5 Bxd5 12.Nxd5 13.Bxe7 Nxe7
14.Re1

White's rook now attacks the black knight on e7. This attack prevents Black from castling and keeps Black's king in the center (see Figure 5-6).



14....f6 15.Qe2 Qd7 16.Rac1 c6

Black may think he's now protected against the threat of 17.d5, but he isn't.

17.d5! cxd5 18.Nd4 Kf7 19.Ne6

The knight settles in on Black's most important weakness, and White shifts his attention to a direct attack on Black's king.

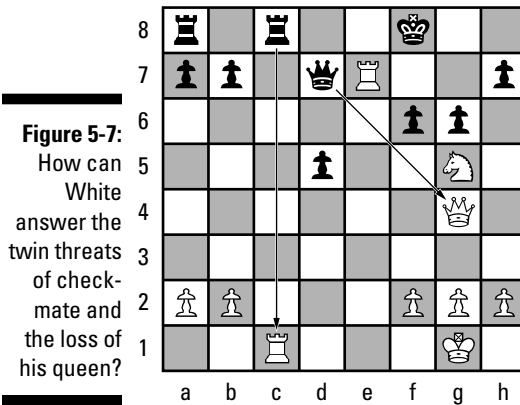
19....Rhc8 20.Qg4 g6 21.Ng5+!

Black's queen is attacked, forcing his replay.

21....Ke8 22.Rxe7+! Kf8



Everything looks hunky-dory for Black, even though he's a piece down. The problem is that if White captures Black's queen with his queen or his rook, Black will play ...Rxc1 and get a back-rank checkmate! In the meantime, White's queen is attacked. What is White to do? (See Figure 5-7.)



23.Rf7+! Kg8

24.Rg7+!!

Amazing. Now, if Black were to play 24...Kxg7, White would answer with 25.Qxd7+, capturing the queen with check! So Black plays the king to h8 instead.

24....Kh8

25.Rxh7+ Kg8 26.Rg7+! Kh8

The White rook's work (say that three times fast!) is finally done, and the queen takes over.

27.Qh4+! Kxg7

28.Qh7+ Kf8

29.Qh8+ Ke7

30.Qg7+ Ke8

31.Qg8+ Ke7

32.Qf7+ Kd8

33.Qf8+ Qe8

34.Nf7+ Kd7

35.Qd6# 1-0

When things go Black's way

White is often left with an isolated queen pawn. This isn't a problem if White can keep an active position, but if Black can *blockade* the pawn (Aron Nimzowitsch's term for preventing it from moving), White can sometimes drift into passivity.



The more pieces that are exchanged, the closer Black will get to the endgame, where an isolated pawn is more of a liability. That's just what happened in the following game between Konstantinos Kokolias, as White, and Konstantinos Moutousis, as Black, in a tournament in Athens from 2005.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6
 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb4+ 7.Bd2 Bxd2+ 8.Nbxd2 d5!



This move by Black is the right idea, striking back in the center before White can advance his pawns and drive Black's pieces back.

9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Qb3 Nce7 11.0-0 0-0 12.Rfe1 c6

This configuration is a standard position with an isolated queen's pawn, which arises in many openings. White has active pieces, but because he's blocked from playing d5, he can't break down Black's solid pawn structure (see Figure 5-8).

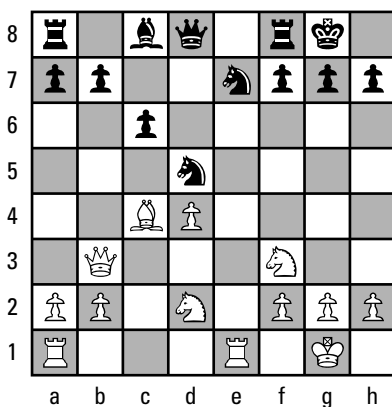


Figure 5-8:
 Black has successfully blockaded White's d-pawn.

13.Ne4 Nb6 14.Bd3 Ned5 15.Nc5 Nf6 16.Bc2 Rb8
 17.Qd3 Nbd5

The d5 square is called an *outpost* because Black can put a piece there and it can't be driven away by a White pawn.

18.Ne4 Nxe4



Exchanging pieces helps the player who's playing against the isolated pawn. You'll see Black trying to exchange more pieces next. After the number of pieces are reduced, he can begin to put pressure on White's isolated pawn.

19.Qxe4 g6 20.Bb3 Be6 21.Qe5 Nc7! 22.Bxe6 Nxe6
 23.Rad1 Nc7 24.Qf4 Nd5

Black occupies the outpost again.



25.Qh6 Qf6

26.Ne5 Rbd8

It's good to put rooks on open files, especially when the rook indirectly attacks an isolated pawn.

27.Qh3 Rfe8

28.Qb3 Re7

29.Qa4 a6

30.Qc4 Qf5

31.Nf3 Rxe1+

32.Rxe1 Kg7

33.b4 Rd7

34.a4 Nf4

35.Ne5 Rxd4!!

The isolated pawn falls after all! If White now plays 36.Qxd4, then 36...Ne2+ wins White's queen, because 37.Rxe2 Qb1+ leads to a back-rank checkmate (see Figure 5-9).

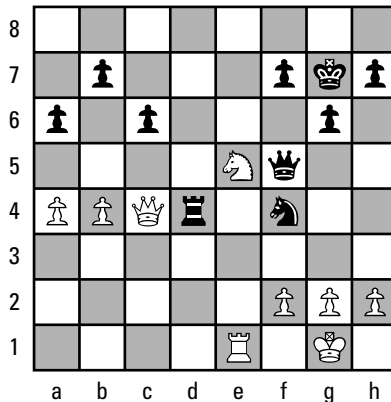


Figure 5-9:
The isolated pawn finally falls thanks to a tactical trick.

36.Qc3 f6
40.Qc2 Rc3!

37.g4 Qxe5

38.Rxe5 fxe5

39.Qb3 Rd3

This sequence wins for Black, because 41.Qxc3 allows 41...Ne2+, and otherwise Black's rook comes to the last rank.

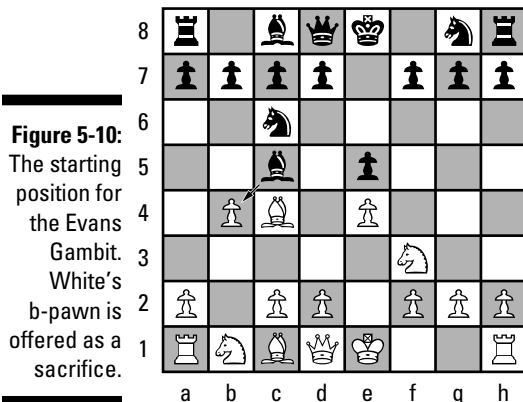
41.Qd2 Rc1+! 0-1.

After 42.Qxc1 Ne2+, Black ends up with an extra piece and pawn.

Attacking with the Evans Gambit

The *Evans Gambit* is named after William Davies Evans (1790–1872), who invented it in the first half of the 19th century. It proved to be, for many years, a fearsome attacking system. Although good defensive systems

neutralized the gambit's effect as time went on, the opening enjoyed a comeback at the end of the 20th century. It has been used by no less a player than Garry Kasparov. You reach the Evans Gambit after the following moves: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 (see Figure 5-10).



The Evans Gambit appeals to chess players who like to attack and who aren't afraid of a slight material deficiency. Accepting the gambit by playing 4.Bxb4 is by far the most common move by Black, but declining it by playing 4...Bb6 is also playable.

When things go White's way

White launches a successful attack against Black's king. If Black makes a serious mistake, the games are often short and one-sided. White can build up a commanding center and limit Black's opportunities to achieve counterplay.

The following game was played in Lucerne, Switzerland, in 1952. Heinz Lehmann played White against Hans Müller.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4!?

This introduces the Evans Gambit.

4...Bxb4 5.c3 Ba5 6.d4 dxe4 7.0-0 Bb6
8.cxd4 d6 9.Nc3 Nf6? 10.e5 dxe5 11.Ba3!

Black's king is stuck in the center, regardless of how many pawns he wins. This scenario is the essence of the Evans Gambit! (See Figure 5-11.)

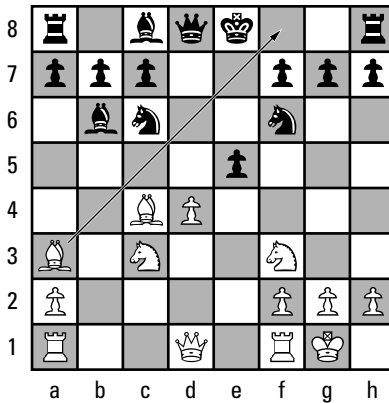


Figure 5-11:
White's
bishop on
a3 prevents
Black from
castling.

11...Na5 12.Nxe5 Nxc4 13.Qa4+ Bd7 14.Qxc4 Be6
15.d5!

White offers more pawns in return for open lines!

15...Bxd5 16.Qa4+ c6 17.Rad1 Nd7 18.Nxd7 Qxd7
19.Nxd5 cxd5 20.Rxd5! 1-0.

Black resigns, because 20...Qxa4 21.Re1+ leads to checkmate.

When things go Black's way

Black prevents White from establishing either a dominant center or a lead in development. Black either retains the extra pawn or returns the pawn at an appropriate time to discombobulate White's forces.

In the following game, two strong grandmasters squared off in Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands, in 2001. Alexander Morozevich had the White pieces, while Michael Adams played Black.

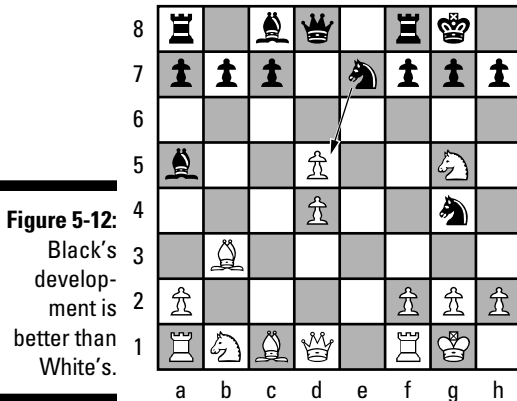
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4
5.c3 Ba5 6.d4 exd4 7.0-0 Nge7



This sequence is a logical way for Black to defend. He develops quickly and shies away from grabbing too many pawns. By placing the knight on e7 instead of f6, he avoids getting attacked by e5.

8.Ng5 d5 9.exd5 Ne5 10.Bb3 0-0 11.cxd4 Ng4

The material is even, but Black has more pieces developed than White, which is unusual in an Evans Gambit. Furthermore, White's pawn on d5 is weak. (See Figure 5-12.)



12.Qf3 Nf6 13.Ba3

White's move is the only way to stop Black from capturing on d5.

13...h6 14.Ne4 Nxe4 15.Qxe4 Re8

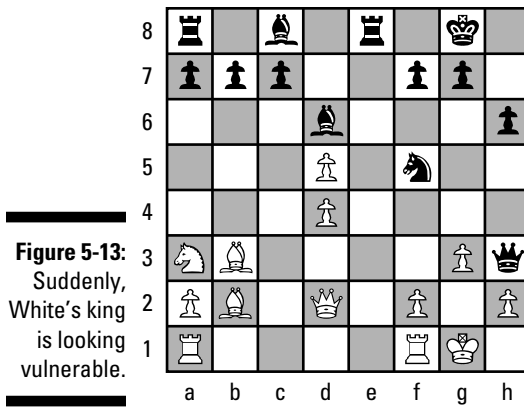
Black has in mind a discovered attack against White's queen. In the meantime, the knight on b1 can't move without being captured.

16.Bb2 Nf5 17.Qf4 Bb4!

Black gets his bishop back into play; now, ...Bd6 will harass White's queen.

18.Na3 Bd6 19.Qd2 Qh4 20.g3 Qh3

Black is able to invade via White's weakened light squares on the kingside. (see Figure 5-13).



21.Nc4 b5

22.Ne5 Bb7

23.Rae1 a5

Black's move threatens not only ...a4 but also ...Bb4.

24.a3 b4!

25.axb4? Bxb4

26.Bc3 Bxc3

27.Qxc3 Nh4! 0-1

Black threatens mate on g2, and 28.gxh4 loses the queen to 28....Qxc3.

Chapter 6

Workin' on Some Knight Moves

In This Chapter

- ▶ Maxing out with the Four Knights Opening
 - ▶ Hopping to the Two Knights Defense
-

If you stick to the principle of “knights before bishops,” prepare for the knights to dominate the game. Two openings employ the silent knights: the Four Knights and the Two Knights.

These openings apply somewhat opposite approaches to the game. Though the Four Knights may lead to symmetrical positions, the Two Knights is often quite tactical. Black frequently sacrifices material in order to go on the attack.

Calling in the Calvary: The Four Knights

Although chess-naming conventions can sometimes seem fairly eccentric, a glance at Figure 6-1 leaves you with little doubt as to how the *Four Knights Opening* acquired its name. All four knights get in on the action early in the game with the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6. This opening was quite popular in the early part of the 20th century. It nearly disappeared from play later on, only to be revived again in the century's last decade.

Players have been mining these older openings for many years, but you may still find a gem here or there. As with many openings that go out of fashion, this one remains completely satisfactory.



This opening appeals to players who like balanced positions. If you like to maintain the balance, or you want to choose when to upset it, this may be the right opening for you.

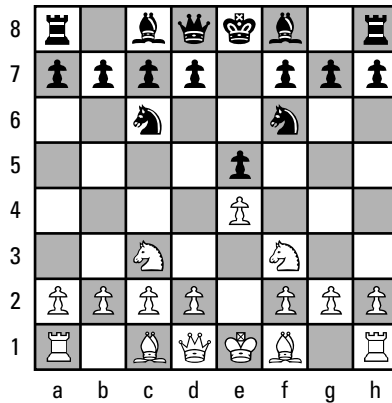


Figure 6-1:
The starting
position for
the Four
Knights.

When things go White's way

The game between Petar Trifunovic as White and Theo Daniel van Scheltinga as Black was played in Amsterdam in 1950. Black's opening moves are still considered sound today, but he made a couple of second-rate moves, and White was able to take advantage.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6

The start of the Four Knights Opening.

4.Bb5 Bb4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6



Black is using a copycat type of strategy, but it can't be sustained.

7.Bg5 Bxc3

A good decision by Black. Trying to keep up the copycat strategy with 7...Bg4 runs into problems after 8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.Nd5 Bc5 10.Qd2.

8.bxc3 Qe7 9.Re1 Nd8

Black will reroute the knight to e6.

10.d4 Ne6 11.Bc1 c5 12.Bf1

Curiously, White has undeveloped both bishops in order to preserve them.

12...Rd8 13.d5 Nf8 14.c4 Ne8

Even more strangely, Black retreats both knights to the back rank. Usually, chess players try to get their pieces off of their original squares — not back on them!

15.g3 f5?



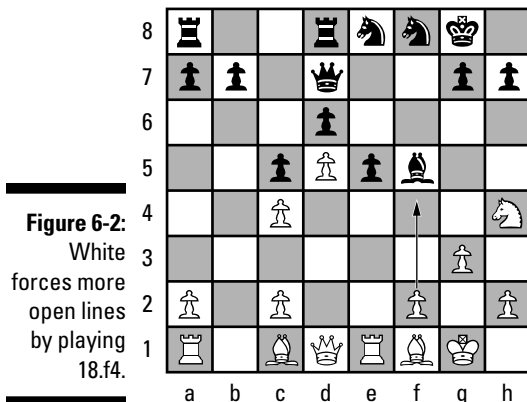
This move appears to be a serious mistake. In general, it's not a good idea to open up the position when your opponent has the two bishops. The bishops love open lines.

16.exf5 Bxf5

17.Nh4 Qd7

18.f4!

Now, it's White's turn to open up the position even more with the pawn break f2-f4 (see Figure 6-2).



18....exf4

22.Bxg6 hxg6

19.Bxf4 Ng6

20.Nxf5 Qxf5

21.Bd3 Qf6



If, instead, Black plays 22....Qxg6, then White would play 23.Re6, winning the pawn on d6.

23.Rb1 g5

27.Rxf7 Qxf7

24.Be3 Rd7

28.Bxg5

25.Qg4 Rf7

26.Rf1 Qg6

White finally converts his positional advantage into a material advantage. Black eventually resigned after White's 41st move.

When things go Black's way

Much like the lines in the Nimzo-Indian (see Chapter 16), Black cedes the bishop pair but damages White's pawn structure on the queenside. Piece exchanges generally favor Black because a weak pawn structure becomes more significant as the endgame approaches.

Nigel Davies, playing Black, defeated Ran Shabtai in a tournament game in Tel Aviv in 1993. He was able to generate enough activity for his pieces to put White on the defensive.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6

Arriving at the starting position of the Four Knights.

4.Bb5 Bb4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.Bg5 Bxc3
8.bxc3 Qe7 9.Re1 Nd8 10.d4 Bg4 11.Bh4 Ne6

The Nc6-d8-e6 maneuver is a reoccurring theme in this opening.

12.dxe5 dxe5 13.h3 Bh5 14.g4 Bg6 15.Nxe5 Qc5

Black is able to simultaneously attack multiple points in White's position (see Figure 6-3).

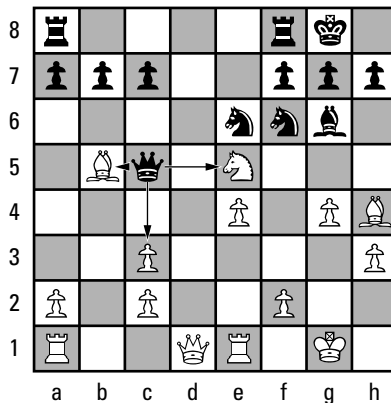


Figure 6-3:
Black has
multiple
threats.

16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.Nxg6 hxg6 18.Rb1 Qxc3 19.Re3 Qe5
20.Qd5 Qf4

White's play has weakened the dark squares around his king.

21.Be2 c6 22.Qc4 Rab8 23.Rd1 Rbd8 24.Rxd8 Rxd8
 25.Qb4 Rd7 26.Qe1 Ng5 27.Kg2 Nxe4

Black cashes in on his advantage by winning the pawn. He won the game after 40 moves.

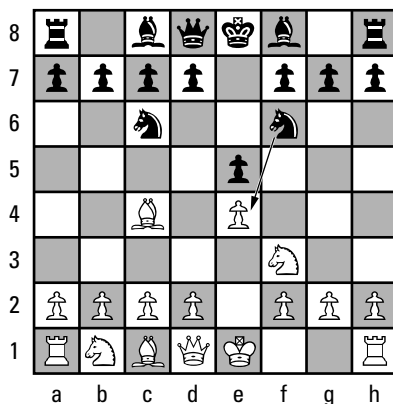
Ambitious but a Bit Ambiguous: The Two Knights Defense

The *Two Knights Defense* is reached after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 (see Figure 6-4). It's considered more ambitious than 3...Bc5 and can lead to a highly tactical kind of game.



These types of games are often unbalanced, with one side having a lead in development and the other having a material advantage. These games can be difficult to assess accurately, so this opening appeals to the type of player who doesn't mind playing unclear positions.

Figure 6-4:
The beginning position of the Two Knights Defense.



When things go White's way

White can proceed a couple of very different ways. The move 4.Ng5 often ends up winning a pawn, but Black develops dangerous compensation in return. The quieter 4.d4 allows White to play for an edge in a more positional and less tactical way. The game between Vladimir Okhotnik, as White, and

Andrei Sokolov, as Black, played in the former Soviet Union back in 1980, is one example of that type of approach.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6

The Two Knights Defense.

4.d4 exd4 5.e5 d5 6.Bb5 Ne4 7.Nxd4 Bd7



The sharper alternative is 7...Bc5!? It's the more confrontational of the two alternatives.

8.Bxc6 bxc6

Black adopts doubled pawns, but he has the bishop pair to compensate him.

9.0-0 Bc5 10.f3 Ng5 11.f4 Ne4 12.Be3

White begins a plan to win control over the dark squares.

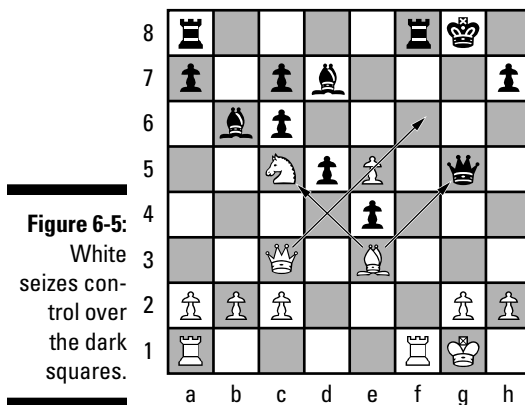
12...0-0 13.Nd2 f5 14.Nxe4 fxe4 15.Qd2 Qe7
16.Nb3! Bb6!



An inferior move would be 16...Bxe3+ 17.Qxe3, because that would give White command of d4 and c5 and leave Black with a bad bishop.

17.Qc3 g5 18.fxg5 Qxg5 19.Nc5!

White's plan to dominate the dark squares has come to fruition (see Figure 6-5).



19....Rxf1+ 20.Rxf1 Bxc5 21.Bxc5 Re8 22.b3 a6
 23.a4 h5 24.h3 h4 25.e6!?

A clever, practical move by White that frees the long diagonal for attack by White's bishop and queen.



A famous chess maxim says, "Bishops of opposite colors favor the attacker."

25....Bxe6 26.Ba3! Bd7 27.Bb2 Qh6 28.Rf6 Qg7
 29.Rf8+!

A pretty finishing stroke.

29....Qxf8 30.Qh8+ Kf7 31.Qf6+ 1-0

If Black had played 31....Kg8, then 32.Qg6+ Qg7 33.Qxg7# would follow.

When things go Black's way

Black develops tremendous piece activity and uses the open lines to attack White's position. The American grandmaster Arthur Bisguier was always known for his love of attacking, so it's no surprise that, as Black, he used the Two Knights Defense against Enrico Paoli in this game from 1973 played in Norristown, Pennsylvania.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5



White's move is more aggressive than 4.d4 and often leads to the win of one of Black's pawns. In return, Black gets excellent piece activity, which is what a player such as Bisguier wants.

4....d5 5.exd5 Na5 6.Bb5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6

White wins a pawn.

8.Be2 h6 9.Nf3 e4 10.Ne5 Bd6

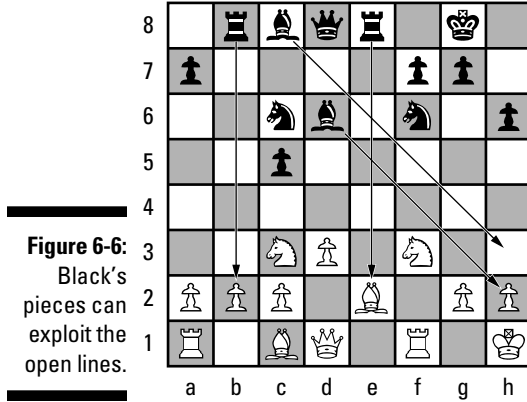
Black continues to attack White's knight while putting his pieces on active squares.

11.f4 exf3 12.Nxf3 0-0 13.0-0 c5

Black wants to get the a5 knight back into the game.

14.Nc3 Nc6 15.Kh1 Re8 16.d3 Rb8

Black's pieces are actively placed, and he can exploit the open lines to attack White's position (see Figure 6-6).



17.Qe1 Nd4 18.Nxd4 cxd4 19.Ne4 Nxe4 20.dxe4 Rxe4

Black wins back the pawn while maintaining the attack.

21.Qf2 Qc7 22.h3 Bg3 23.Qf3 Bb7 24.Qd3 Re6
 25.Bg4 Rg6 26.Qd1 Be4 27.Qxd4 Qxc2 28.Qd2 Rxb2
 29.Qxc2 Rxc2 30.Bf3 Bxf3 31.Rxf3 Be5 0-1

The simultaneous attack on the rook on a1 and the pawn on g2 is decisive.

Chapter 7

Employing the Royal Ruy

In This Chapter

- ▶ Explaining the Ruy López
 - ▶ Getting tactical with the Open Variation
 - ▶ Diversifying with the Closed Variation
 - ▶ Mastering the Marshall Attack
 - ▶ Executing the Exchange Variation
-

The *Ruy López* is the most famous of all the chess openings. It's named after a Spanish clergyman, who systematically studied it in the mid-16th century. Also called the Spanish Opening in many countries, it involves a sophisticated and intricate method of play that can make the defender feel as though Black is slowly but surely being squeezed to death. This accounts for its nickname of the "Spanish Torture."

Running with the Ruy López

You arrive at the Ruy López after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 (see Figure 7-1). You can't deny the logic behind the decision to attack the knight on c6, because it's guarding the pawn on e5. In the Exchange Variation, which I present later in this chapter, White actually does capture this knight, but other variations are more subtle.



The Ruy López is a complicated opening, with many variations that run many moves deep. It should appeal to the serious student of the game. Casual players may benefit from choosing one particular variation to concentrate on.

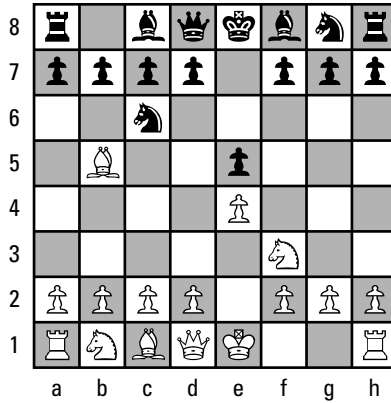


Figure 7-1:
The Ruy
López.

Closing the Deal with the Open Variation

As you might expect from its name, the *Open Variation* often leads to the sharpest play. White allows the e-pawn to be captured but gets quick development and open lines in return. You reach the Open Variation of the Ruy López after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 (see Figure 7-2).

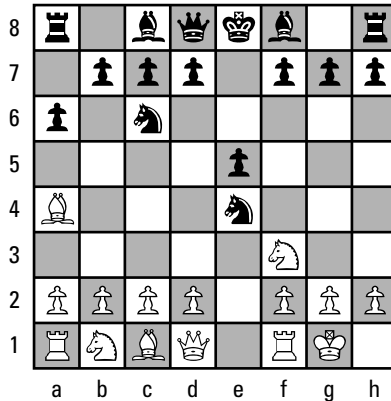


Figure 7-2:
The Open
Variation
of the Ruy
López.

When things go White's way

White castles quickly and exploits the open nature of the position to attack Black. The game is dynamic, but White has a number of opportunities to switch from sheer aggression and play for a positional advantage.

The 1984 game between John Nunn and Hans Karl in Lugano, Switzerland, was all fireworks from the start. Nunn, playing White, was able to break down the Black position in a very forceful manner.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6
5.0-0 Nxe4

This is the Open Ruy López. Black eliminates the keystone of White's center — his e-pawn — but falls behind in development and allows White to open lines rapidly.

6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5

Black grabs his share of the center. The move 7...exd4 would be less accurate. It's risky to be greedy when you only have a few pieces developed.

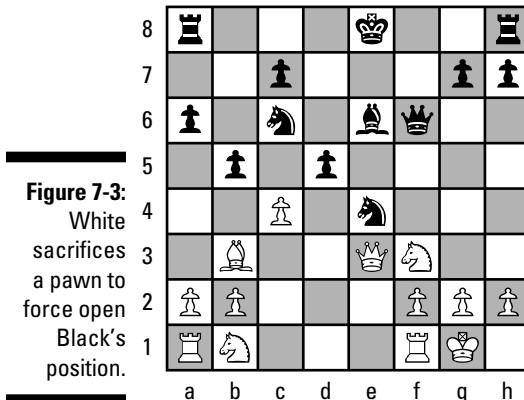
8.dxe5 Be6 9.Be3 Bc5 10.Qd3 Bxe3



Black's move is not the best idea, because now White's queen on e3 will attack the key squares d4 and c5, while Black has no bishop to contest those dark squares.

11.Qxe3 f5? 12. exf6 Qxf6 13.c4!

With this dynamic pawn sacrifice, White breaks down Black's defenses before he can get castled. (See Figure 7-3.)



13....bxc4 14.Ba4 Bd7 15.Nc3 Qh6

Black has no defense against Nxd5. For example, in the sequence 15...Qe6 16.Nxd5! Qxd5 17.Rad1 Qe6 18.Rxd7! Kxd7 19.Bxc6+, White would win Black's

queen by a knight fork, a simultaneous attack on two pieces, whichever way Black captures on c6. Beautiful!

16.Qxh6 gxf6 **17.Nxd5 0-0-0** **18.Bxc6 Bxc6** **19.Ne7+ Kb7**
20.Nxc6 Kxc6 **21.Ne5+ 1-0**

The last of many forks in this game is 22.Nf7, winning material. Note how all Black's pawns are isolated, and four of them are doubled!

When things go Black's way

Black achieves an advantage in the center by controlling more squares and is able to make pawn advances into White's territory. Black catches up in terms of development and takes control of more space.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, as Black, was able to do just that in this game from 2002, played in Kocaeli, Turkey, against Jaan Ehlevest.

1.e4 e5 **2.Nf3 Nc6** **3.Bb5 a6** **4.Ba4 Nf6**
5.0-0 Nxe4

By capturing the e-pawn, Black enters the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez.

6.d4 b5 **7.Bb3 d5** **8.Nxe5**

Normally, White plays 8.dxe5, which keeps Black's c-pawn blocked by a knight. But this isn't a bad move.

8...Nxe5 9.dxe5 **Be6** **10.c3**

A good option would be 10.Be3, a move that's used in the Nunn-Karl game in the preceding section.

10...Bc5 11.Nd2 **0-0** **12.Nf3!**

White is controlling d4.

12...f5?!

The alternative 12...Bb6! would prepare ...c5.

13.Nd4 Bxd4 14.Qxd4?!



TIP



White's move isn't a losing one, but it allows Black to contest c5 and d4. Instead, 14.cxd4! is very strong.

14....c5 15.Qd1 f4 16.f3 Ng5 17.a4 c4
 18.Bc2 Bf5 19.b3 Bxc2 20.Qxc2 d4!



In the Open Ruy López, if Black can make this advance (d5-d4) safely, it's a sure sign that things are going his way. (See Figure 7-4.)

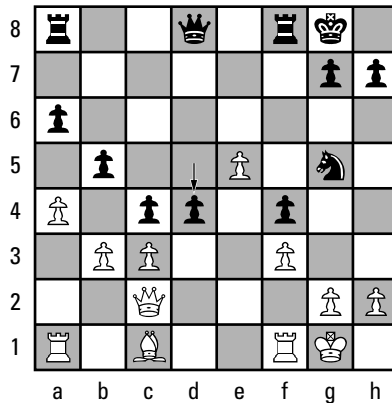


Figure 7-4:
 Black is making headway in the center.



21.axb5 d3

Watch out for any protected, advanced pawns!

22.Qa2 axb5 23.Qxa8 Qxa8 24.Rxa8 Rxa8 25.bxc4 bxc4
 26.Bxf4 Ne6 27.Be3

Okay, White has won a pawn, but his bishop is in a bad position because he's restricted by his own pawns, and Black gets the 7th rank for a rook in support of his passed pawn.

27....Ra2 28.Re1 Rc2 29.f4 Nc7!

Black's knight is heading toward d5. Black's d-pawn is too strong for White to mount a defense.

30.Kf1 Nd5 31.e6 Nxe3+ 32.Rxe3 Rc1+ 33.Kf2 Kf8! 0-1

Black prevents e7-e8(Q) and will play ...d2-d1(Q) next.

Staying Open-Minded with the Closed Variation

If Black plays 5...Be7 (see Figure 7-5) instead of 5...Nxe4, it's referred to as the *Closed Variation*. There are so many different methods of playing the Closed Variation, and the ideas are so strategically diverse, that it isn't possible to choose only one or two representative games.



If you enjoy playing over multiple games in these variations, dig in! You'll find it very rewarding. If it feels too much like work, however, by all means play a different opening!

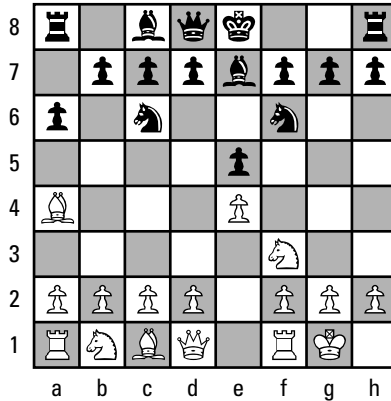


Figure 7-5:
The Closed
Variation
of the Ruy
López.

When things go White's way

White outmaneuvers Black and forces some sort of strategic compromise. Often, it's something as simple as an important square that Black can't defend adequately. White's control over that square forces Black into a passive, defensive posture that ultimately proves undefendable.

The 2008 game between Gata Kamsky (who played White) and Michael Adams in Baku, Azerbaijan, is a good introduction to the Closed Variation. The game featured quite a bit of positional maneuvering on White's part before he could cash in the victory.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6
5.0-0 Be7

Black's last move is a safe one. 5...Nxe4 is the Open Ruy López, which I cover in the preceding section.

6.Re1

Notice how White protects his pawn but avoids Nc3, which would block his plan to advance in the center, with c3 followed by d4. He's now finally threatening to win Black's e-pawn with 7.Bxc6 dxc6 8.Nxe5.

6...b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3

White stops the potential pin ...Bg4.

9...Bb7



Black's development of the bishop on the wing is called the *fianchetto*. It's more typical of the closed openings and the flank openings, but it's perfectly logical here, because it indirectly controls the key squares e4 and d5.

10.d4 Re8 11.Nbd2 Bf8

Notice how Black has defended his strong point on e5 three times so White can't make anything out of attacking it.

12.d5

White is restricting Black's pieces while gaining space.

12...Nb8 13.Nf1



White's move is a typical Ruy López knight maneuver, invented by the first World Champion, William Steinitz, in the 19th century! White's knight gets out of the way of his bishop and will be transferred to the kingside.

13...Nbd7 14.N3h2 Nc5 15.Bc2

White wants to hang on to his bishop pair.

15...c6 16.b4 Ncd7 17.dxc6 Bxc6 18.Bg5!

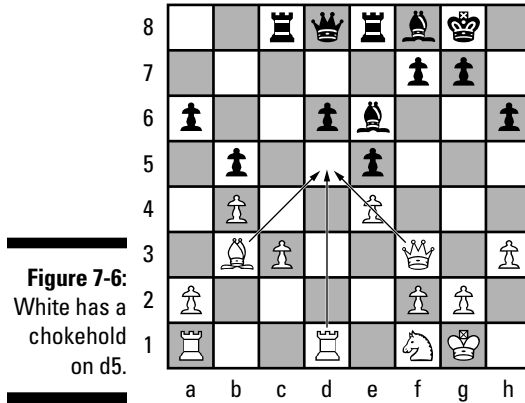
With this pin, White begins to systematically increase his control over the outpost on d5.

18...h6 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Ng4!

White diverts another piece from d5.

**20...Nxc4 21.Qxc4 Rc8 22.Bb3 Bd7 23.Qf3 Be6
24.Red1**

White's last three moves aim at d5. Now he's ready to double his rooks and play Ne3. (See Figure 7-6.)



24....Qg5 25.Rd3 Qf4 26.Qe2! Bxb3 27.axb3

Now, White has another open file and attacks a6.

27....d5

Black feels that he has to sacrifice a pawn in order to get his pieces out, especially the bishop on f8.

28.exd5 e4 29.Re3 Qe5 30.Rxa6 f5 31.Ng3 Qxd5
32.Qh5 Re5 33.Qg6! Qf7



If Black plays 33....f4 instead, White's clever idea is 34.Nxe4! fxe3 35.Nf6+ Kh8 36.Qh7#.

34.Qxf7+ Kxf7 35.Ra7+ Be7 36.Ne2 Ke8 37.Rb7 Rd5
38.Nd4 Bg5 39.Rxb5! Rxb5 40.Nxb5 Rb8 41.Nc7+ Kd7
42.Na6 Ra8 43.Nc5+ Kc6 44.Re2 Ra1+ 45.Kh2 1-0

Once again, White has three passed pawns. He went on to win easily.

Peter Leko, playing White, used a slightly different strategy in his 2005 game against Lazaro Bruzon in Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands. He managed to find a new move (termed a *theoretical novelty*) in a well-known position on the 21st turn!

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6
5.0-0 Be7

Black chooses to keep the position closed.

6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5

The knight move not only attacks White's bishop but also clears the way for the c-pawn to advance and to help fight for control in the center.

10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 cxd4 13.cxd4 Bd7
14.Nf1

Again we see a typical Ruy López knight transfer from the queenside to the kingside via d2, f1, and g3.

14...Rac8 15.Re2 Nc6 16.a3 exd4 17.Nxd4 Rfe8
18.Ng3 d5

After this game, the wisdom behind this advance by Black was called into question.

19.Nxc6 Bxc6 20.e5 Ne4 21.Bf4!

This was the new move. Previously, White had captured the knight on e4 with 21.Bxe4, but that had never given Black any problems. (See Figure 7-7.)

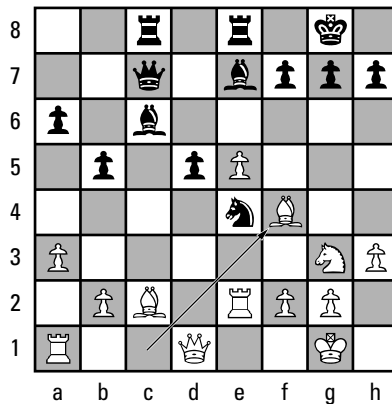


Figure 7-7:
A new move
in an old
position.

21....g5?

Black's move is a mistake. It creates too many weaknesses around his king.

22.Nf5 gxf4 23.Rxe4 Kh8 24.Re1 Bd7 25.e6! 1-0

Black can't deal with the threat of Qd4+.



When things go Black's way

Black maneuvers for extended periods in order to reposition pieces onto their optimal squares. Black often expands on the queenside and gains a significant edge in space.

Svetozar Gligoric, as Black, outmaneuvered Antonio Angel Medina-Garcia in this 1968 game from Palma de Mallorca in the Spanish Balearic Islands.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6
5.0-0 Be7

This is the Closed Variation.

6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 h6

It's not strictly necessary for Black to prevent one of White's pieces from reaching g5, but the move is useful in any case.

10.d4 Re8 11.Nbd2 Bf8 12.Nf1 Bb7 13.Ng3

White decides not to play d5 but rather keeps the tension in the center.

13....Na5 14.Bc2 Nc4 15.Bd3

White's subtle move is the fourth by his light-squared bishop. The idea is to play a4 followed by b3 in order to break up Black's queenside. This explains Black's next move:

15....Nb6! 16.Bd2 c5 17.d5 Bc8 18.b3 c4
19.Bf1 Bd7 20.Nh2 Rc8 21.b4 Na4



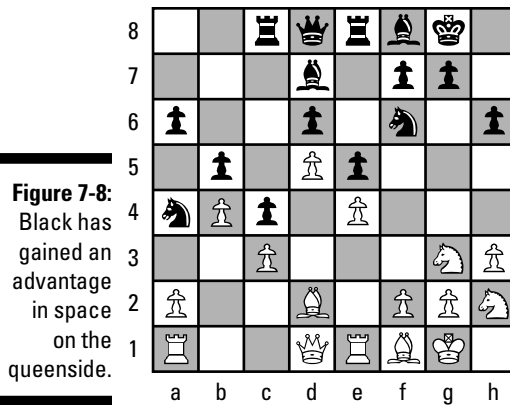
Having successfully gained space on the queenside, Black begins a reorganization of his kingside (see Figure 7-8).

22.Qf3 g6 23.Be2 Bg7 24.h4 Nh7 25.h5 Ng5
26.Qe3 f5 27.Qa7 f4 28.Ngf1 Ra8 29.Qb7 Re7 0-1

White's queen will be trapped after Black's next move, 30....Be8, and White can't do anything about it. Notice that in this game, no piece or pawn was ever exchanged! In fact, this may be the longest master game in which that happened.



A general lack of exchanges is typical of the Closed Variation, in which the two sides maneuver for lengthy periods without making contact with each other's forces.



Artur Yusupov, playing Black, outmaneuvered Stefan Kindermann in this game from Hamburg, Germany, in 1991.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6
5.0-0 Be7

This is the Closed Variation.

6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5
10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 Rd8 13.d5 c4

Black gains space on the queenside but also prepares to reposition the knight to c5.

14.Nf1 Nb7 15.Ng3 a5 16.Nh2 Nc5

After successfully occupying the outpost on c5, Black will continue to expand on the queenside.

17.f4 b4 18.Nf3 Rb8 19.cxb4 20.b3 c3

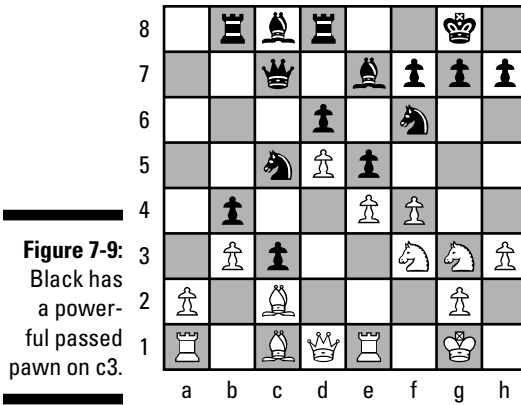
Black has gained a powerful passed pawn, one that has passed all of its enemy counterparts, on c3 (see Figure 7-9).

21.f5 Ba6 22.Nh1 Rdc8 23.Nf2 Qa7 24.g4?

White is probably overlooking Black's response.

24....Nfxe4! 25.Bxe4 Nxe4 26.Rxe4 c2 27.Qe1 Qc5.

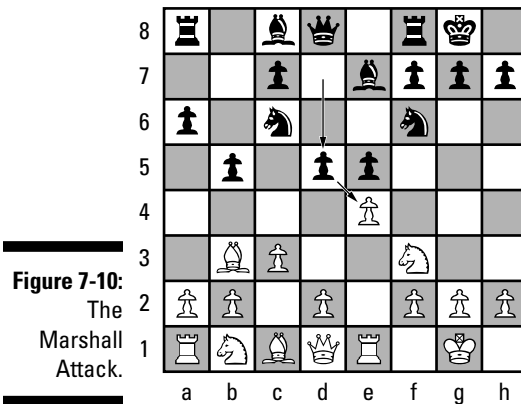
After this the d-pawn also falls. Black went on to win in 41 moves.



Marshalling Your Forces with the Marshall Attack

The *Marshall Attack* is so unlike the majority of closed variations that it deserves some special attention. Instead of positional maneuvering, which typifies most closed games, this variation can turn into a tactical melee.

You reach the Marshall Attack after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5 (see Figure 7-10).



When things go White's way

White fends off Black's attack and enjoys a material advantage. The Marshall Attack is named after the American Frank Marshall, who employed it as Black in this game against José Raúl Capablanca in a 1918 tournament in New York. The great Cuban player defended with seeming ease, and the opening was placed in mothballs for many years. When it was revived later on, players developed anti-Marshall systems such as 8.a4 and 8.h3.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6
 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5

This is the Marshall Attack.

9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5

White wins a pawn, but now Black initiates a strong attack against White's king position.

11....Nf6 12.Re1 Bd6 13.h3 Ng4 14.Qf3 Qh4



Black's pieces are taking aim at some vulnerable squares on White's kingside. (See Figure 7-11.)

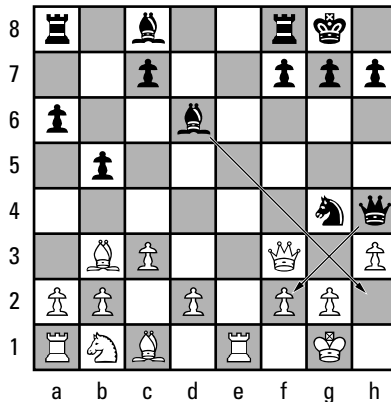


Figure 7-11:
 Black is willing to sacrifice more material to attack the king.

15.d4 Nxf2 16.Re2

White is able to defend successfully against Black's threats. 16.Bd2 may be even better.

16....Bg4 17.hxg4

White can't play 17.Qxf2 because of 17....Bg3 18.Qf1 Bxe2 19.Qxe2, when 19....Rae8 gives Black a winning position.

**17....Bh2+ 18.Kf1 Bg3 19.Rxf2 Qh1+ 20.Ke2 Bxf2
21.Bd2 Bh4 22.Qh3**

White would love to exchange queens. It would greatly reduce Black's attacking power. Black wisely declines to trade.

**22....Rae8+ 23.Kd3 Qf1+ 24.Kc2 Bf2 25.Qf3 Qg1
26.Bd5 c5 27.dxc5 Bxc5 28.b4 Bd6 29.a4**

White is finally able to get his queenside untangled. After the remaining undeveloped White pieces get into the game, it spells the beginning of the end for Black.

**29....a5 30.axb5 axb4 31.Ra6 bxc3 32.Nxc3 Bb4
33.b6 Bxc3 34.Bxc3 h6 35.b7 Re3 36.Bxf7+ 1-0**

If Black tries 36....Rxf7, then White gets an extra queen with 37.b8=Q+, and 36....Kh7 loses to 37.Qf5+ Kh8 38.Rxh6+ gxh6 39. Qf6+ Kh7 40.Qg6+ Kh8 41.Qh6#.

When things go Black's way

Although the jury is still out on its soundness, the Marshall does give Black a strong attack in return for a single pawn. White's queenside lags behind in development, and Black launches a powerful attack against White's king.

Peter Svidler, playing Black, was able to strike out with just such an attack against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in their game from Donostia, Spain, in 2009.

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6
5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5**

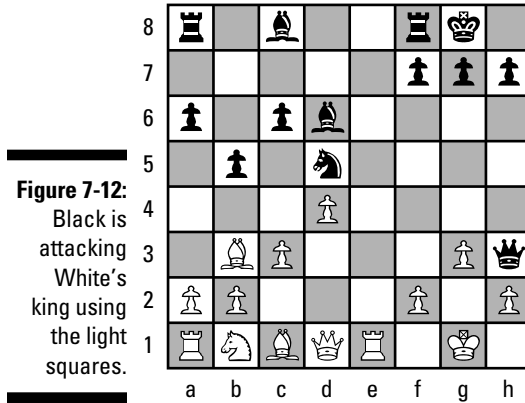
This is the Marshall Attack.

9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6

Note how White's queenside is lacking development. Black will quickly organize a kingside attack with ...Bd6 and ...Qh4. Is it worth a pawn? The jury is still out.

12.d4 Bd6 13.Re1 Qh4 14.g3 h3

White stops the attack against h2 but weakens the light squares around his king (see Figure 7-12).



15.Re4 g5!

Black's move is unusual, but it prevents 16.Rh4, and if White were to play 16.Bxg5, then 16...Qf5 would fork the rook and bishop.

16.Qf1 Qh5 17.Nd2 f5 18.Re1 f4

In this kind of pawn advance by Black, the g- and f-pawns are said to be *rolling*. Black's operation can also be referred to as a *pawn storm*.

19.Bd1 f3 20.Ne4 Bh3 21.Qd3 Rae8 22.Bd2? Rxe4!!

Now, Black unleashes a series of sacrifices that break down White's defenses. This is rather typical of a successful attack in the Marshall.

23.Qxe4 Bxg3 24.Bxf3 Bxh2+ 25.Kxh2 Bg4+ 26.Kg1 Bxf3
27.Qe6+ Kg7 28.Qe5+ Rf6! 29.Qh2 Rh6! 0-1

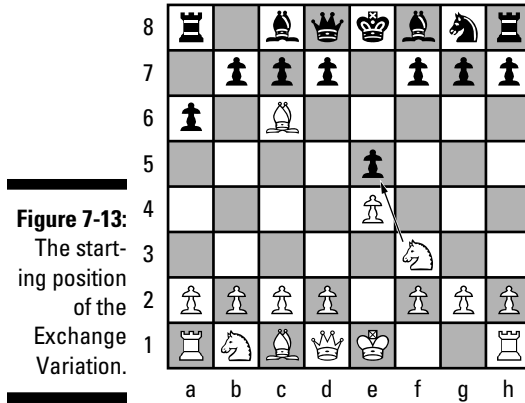
Black will deliver checkmate on h1.

Stocking Up with the Exchange Variation

The *Exchange Variation* was employed a number of times by the former World Champions Emanuel Lasker and Bobby Fischer, so it must have

something going for it. Many players, however, are uncomfortable giving up one of their two bishops, as White does in this variation, so early in the game.

You reach the Exchange Variation following the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 (see Figure 7-13).



When things go White's way

White enjoys a pawn majority on the kingside, and it's easier for White to create a passed pawn in most endgames. The more piece exchanges that take place, the closer to the endgame White will get. Sometimes, White gets a nice lead in development and can mount a quick attack.

That's just what Bobby Fischer did against Boris Spassky in their 1992 match played in Belgrade, Serbia. Fischer, playing White, developed quickly and initiated an attack that resulted in a winning material advantage.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6

This is the Exchange Variation.

4....dxc6 5.0-0

If White takes the pawn by 5.Nxe5, then Black wins one right back by 5....Qd4 with a double attack.

**5....f6 6.d4 exd4 7.Nxd4 c5 8.Nb3 Qxd1
9.Rxd1**



The queens are often exchanged in this manner in this variation, but Fischer still goes on the attack.

9...Bg4 10.f3 Be6 11.Nc3 Bd6 12.Be3 b6

White is ahead in development and undertakes action on the queenside.



13.a4 0-0-0 14.a5 Kb7 15.e5!

When you're ahead in development, open lines! (See Figure 7-14.)

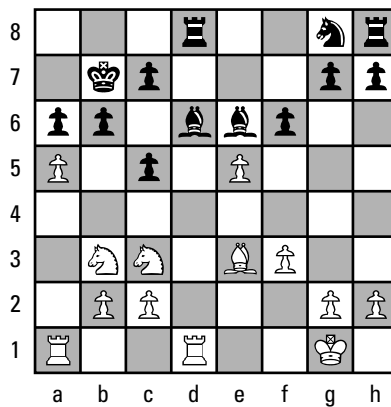


Figure 7-14:
By advancing the pawn, White frees the e4 square for his knight.

15....Be7 16.Rxd8 Bxd8 17.Ne4 Kc6?



Black should've played 17...Bxb3 with a level position. After 17...Kc6? Black's position falls apart.

18.axb6 cxb6 19.Nbxc5 Bc8



If Black plays 19...bxc5 instead, 20.Rxa6+ is winning.

20.Nxa6 fxe5 21.Nb4+ 1-0

When things go Black's way

Black has the greater piece activity and initiates an attack against White's king. In that case, the pawn structural weakness on the queenside proves meaningless. Black's possession of the two bishops enhances the attacking chances.

Zdenek Pokorny played the Black side against Ralf Schnabel in this game from 2000 in the Czech Republic. He got great piece activity and converted it into an easy win.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6

This is the Exchange Variation.

4...dxc6 5.0-0 Bg4 6.h3 h5!



This is the point! White can't get rid of Black's bishop without opening the h-file. (See Figure 7-15.)

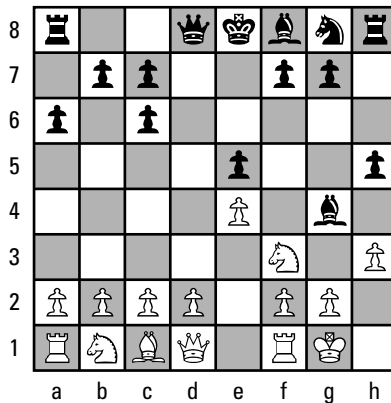


Figure 7-15:
A common
piece
offer in the
Exchange
Variation.

7.d3



If White chooses to capture the bishop with 7.hxg4, Black will play 7...hxg4. Then 8.Nxe5?? Qh4 leads to a quick checkmate for White. For example, 9.f4 would be answered by 9...g3! This is basically the reason that White doesn't capture Black's bishop for the next several moves.

7...Qf6 8.Nbd2 Ne7!

Black brings this knight into attacking position on the kingside.

9.Re1 Ng6 10.d4 Bd6 11.c3 Nf4 12.Re3

Once again, 12.hxg4? hxg4 13.Nh2 loses to 13...Rxh2! 14.Kxh2 Qh4+ 15.Kg1 0-0-0, and ...Rh8 will be too strong.

12....Qg6! 13.hxg4 hxg4 14.Nh2 Rxh2! 15.Kxh2 Ke7!

Black brings his last piece, the rook, into attack, and White is helpless.

16.Kg1 Rh8 17.Nf1 Qh7 18.Ng3 Qh2+ 19.Kf1 Qh1+! 0-1

Checkmate follows 20.Nxh1 Rxh1.

Chapter 8

The Best of the Rest of the Open Games

In This Chapter

- ▶ Sampling a taste of the Scotch Opening
 - ▶ Grabbing glory with the Göring Gambit
 - ▶ Practicing Petroff's Defense
-

The openings in this chapter have traditionally been played less frequently than the open games I cover in previous chapters. That doesn't mean that the Scotch, Göring, and Petroff openings are necessarily weaker — they just aren't played as much.

These openings still generally feature pawn exchanges that lead to open ranks, files, and diagonals and make for easy piece development. The easy piece development can sometimes lead to early piece exchanges and some simplified positions. Because most players prefer complicated positions, subtle openings such as the Ruy López (see Chapter 7) have had more consistent followings over the years.

Pouring on the Scotch

The *Scotch Opening's* name is derived from a correspondence match between London and Edinburgh in 1824. It was all the rage for the next couple of decades but then faded to relative obscurity. What was old became new again when Garry Kasparov revived the Scotch and featured it in successive World Championship matches.

You arrive at the Scotch after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 (see Figure 8-1). This opening leads to an early exchange of center pawns and guarantees that some lines will remain open for easy piece development.

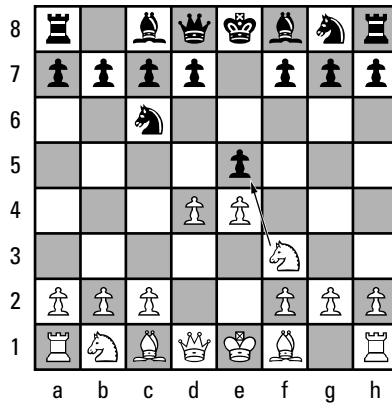


Figure 8-1:
The starting
position of
the Scotch
Opening.



The type of player who tends to prefer the Scotch is one who doesn't try to be too ambitious in the opening. The hope is to avoid complications early and reach a satisfactory middlegame.

When things go White's way

White uses an advanced e-pawn to cramp Black's game and then turns to attacking Black's king. In a game from 1997 played in Linares, Spain, Garry Kasparov played White against Predrag Nikolic and piled on the pressure until Black's position cracked.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4

This is the Scotch Game. White breaks up the center right away to gain open lines and to eliminate Black's strong e-pawn.

3...exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nxc6

White responds to the attack on his e4 pawn by preparing to advance it to e5.

5...bxc6 6.e5 Qe7 7.Qe2 Nd5 8.c4 Ba6
9.b3 g5

A strange-looking move by Black, but he wants to prevent f4 and prepare ...Nf4. White stops that idea with his next move.

10.g3 Bg7 11.Bb2 0-0 12.Nd2

White has gotten what he wants in terms of grabbing space and cramping Black's game. Now he prepares to play Bg2 (a *double fianchetto*) followed by castling. So Black tries to undermine White's most important pawn.

12....f6 13.Qh5! Nb4 14.h4!



Now that Black has weakened his kingside by moving two pawns in front of his king, White's attack shifts to that sector. He threatens to open the h-file with the move hxg5 (see Figure 8-2).

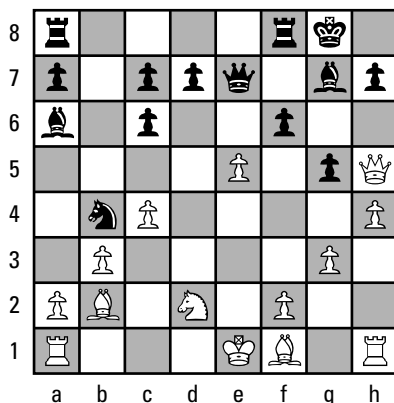


Figure 8-2:
White wants to open lines against Black's king.

14....g4 15.Kd1 c5 16.a3 Nc6 17.Bd3

Just as Black has finally gotten ready to destroy White's e-pawn, his kingside falls victim to attack.

17....f5 18.Bxf5 Bxe5 19.Re1

This pin in combination with White's next move overloads Black's defenses.

19....d6 20.Be4! Bb7 21.Qxg4+ Qg7 22.Bd5+ Kh8
23.Bxe5 dxe5 24.Qxg7+ Kxg7 25.Ne4



A knight on the square in front of an isolated pawn can be a very powerful piece because it can't be driven away. Here, Black's pawn on c5 can't be defended.

25....Rad8 26.Nxc5 Bc8 27.Ra2 1-0

Black gives up because White is two pawns ahead with the better game; besides, he's playing against the World Champion!

When things go Black's way

Black uses the open lines to place the pieces on active squares and to force White into a defensive posture. In the game between Odondoo Ganbold, playing Black, and Daniel Vesterbaek Pederson from the World University Chess Championship in 2000, Black was able to shift a rook from the queenside to the kingside and overpower White's defenses.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6
5.Nc3



More forcing would've been 5.Nxc6, as played in the Kasparov game from the preceding section.

5...Bb4 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 d5

Black has already achieved equality.

8.exd5 cxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.Bg5 c6 11.Qf3 Bd6
12.Rfe1 Rb8

Black initiates a rather unusual method of transferring the rook from one side of the board to the other.

13.Na4?

White's move just plays into Black's hand.

13...Rb4 14.b3 Rg4

Black completes the rook transfer and now has a material superiority on the kingside (see Figure 8-3).

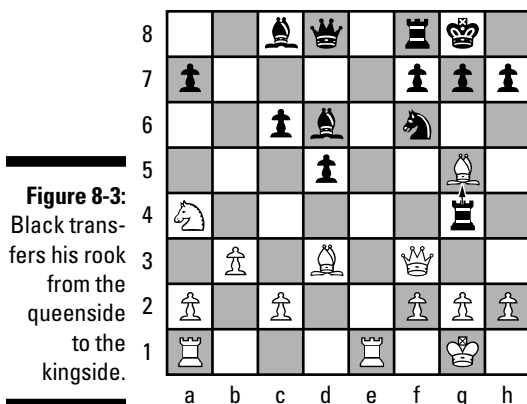


15.Bd2 Ne4 16.Be3 Rg6 17.g3

Pawn advances in front of the king often create a target to be aimed at.

17....f5

Black goes right after the target by threatening to play f5-f4 on the next move.



18.Bf4 Rg4 19.Bxd6 Qxd6 20.Qg2 Rg6 21.Rad1 h5

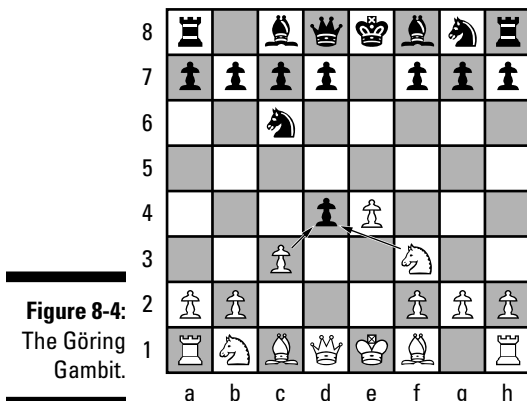
Black is now considering h5-h4, again targeting White's pawn on g3.

22.Re3 h4 23.Rf3 Ng5 24.Re3 f4 25.Ree1 Bh3 0-1

White can't defend after 26.Qh1 fxe3, when Black threatens Ng5-f3+.

Getting Gory with the Göring Gambit

The *Göring Gambit*, a variation of the Scotch, was played by Carl Göring in Leipzig in 1877. You arrive at it following the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.c3 (see Figure 8-4). White offers a pawn in order to accelerate development.





If you enjoy attacking chess and you don't mind a slight material deficit, the Göring may be for you. You must always consider the fact that Black doesn't have to accept the offered pawn; gambits declined often result in very different types of games from gambits accepted.

When things go White's way

White gets a quick lead in development and turns it into a potent attack. That's what Alexander Chudinovskikh did as White against Alexander Mikhailov-Nogovitsyn in this correspondence game from 1964.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.c3 dxc3

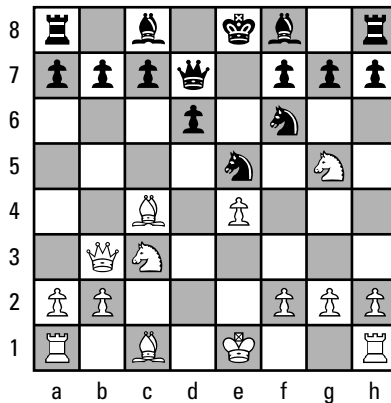
Black accepts the offered pawn. Declining the gambit with 4...d5 is also perfectly sound.

5.Nxc3 d6 6.Bc4 Nf6 7.Qb3 Qd7 8.Ng5 Ne5



This is a typical position in this opening, where White is piling up on f7 and Black is barely defending it at the expense of some awkward piece placement. Notice how Black's queen on d7 blocks the bishop on c8. (See Figure 8-5.)

Figure 8-5:
White's attacks on f7 are barely fended off.



9.Bb5 c6 10.f4 cxb5?

Black should've played 10...Neg4. After the actual move in the game, White's attack crashes through.

11.fxe5 dxe5 12.Be3 h6 13.Rd1 Qe7 14.Bc5! Qc7

A sturdier defense would've been offered by playing 14...Be6, but White's attack is nevertheless very strong.

15.Nxb5 Qa5+ 16.Kf1 hxc5 17.Qa4!!

What a surprising and pretty move! It threatens both 18.Nc7 checkmate and 18.Qxa5.

17....Qxa4 18.Nc7# 1-0

When things go Black's way

Black either fends off the attack and holds on to his extra pawn or returns it at an opportune time. White is sometimes so focused on the attack that a successful defense leaves his forces overextended or disorganized.

The following game was played at the Munich Olympiad of 1958 in a match between the Soviet and English teams. Vassily Smyslov, playing Black, outplayed Jonathan Penrose and won a point for the Russian squad.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.c3 dxc3

The opening moves of the Göring Gambit.

5.Nxc3 Bb4 6.Bc4 d6 7.0-0 Bxc3 8.bxc3 Nf6
9.Ba3!? Bg4!

By pinning the knight, Black both develops and contests control of the e5 square (see Figure 8-6).

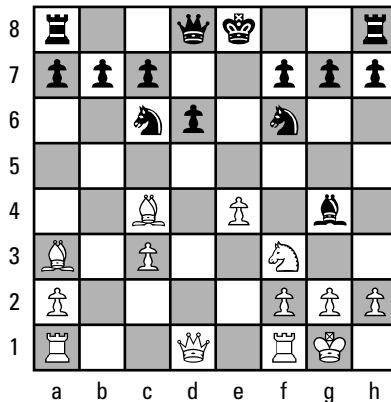
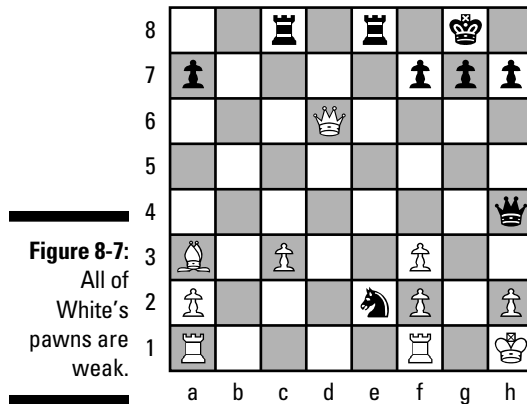


Figure 8-6:
Black pins the knight on f3 to the queen.

10.Bb5 0-0 11.Bxc6 bxc6 12.e5 Nd5 13.Qd3 Re8
 14.exd6 Nf4! 15.Qc4 Ne2+ 16.Kh1 Bxf3 17.gxf3 cxd6
 18.Qxc6 Rc8 19.Qxd6 Qh4

White is a pawn ahead, but every one of his pawns is isolated, and his king is very vulnerable. In fact, it's very hard to meet the threat of 20....Qh3 (see Figure 8-7).



20.Rfd1 Qxf2 21.Rf1 Qh4 22.Rad1 Re6! 23.Qd7 Ng3+
 24.Kg1 Rce8 25.Rf2 Ne2+ 0-1

Dabbling with Petroff's Defense

Named after Alexander Petroff (1794–1867), who was considered the best Russian player of his time, *Petroff's Defense* was often used to avoid the Spanish Torture (Ruy López; see Chapter 7). Petroff demonstrated the soundness of the defense, but it didn't catch on at first. Nowadays, many of the world's best players use it. You achieve the opening after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 (see Figure 8-8).



Players who play Petroff's Defense are mostly looking for balanced positions that have been less analyzed than some others. It did have a reputation for being somewhat unexciting and often leading to draws, but lately, top players are using it as part of their repertoire.

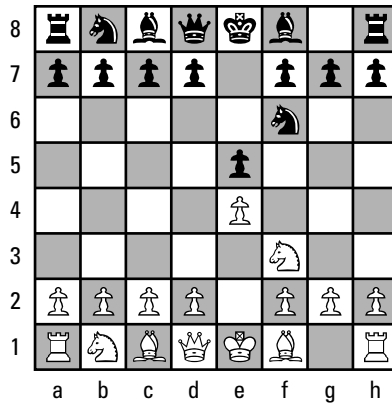


Figure 8-8:
Petroff's
Defense.

When things go White's way

White wins the battle for the center and uses the resultant spatial superiority to launch an attack against Black's king. Ashot Nadanian played White against Karine Altunian in this game from Armenia in 1992 and managed to win the battle for control of the center.



1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6

Black should be careful not to fall for 3...Nxe4 4.Qe2 Nf6??, when 5.Nc6+ wins the queen!

4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Bd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.c4

White attacks the center, and Black defends it.

8...c6 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.Nc3 Nxc3 11.bxc3 Bg4
12.Rb1 b6 13.Rb5! Bc7 14.h3 a6

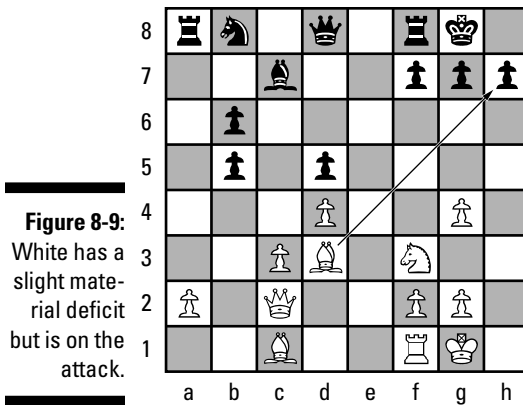
Black counterattacks because 14...Bxf3 15.Qxf3 loses his d-pawn.

15.hxg4! axb5 16.Qc2



White is an exchange (rook for bishop) down but has the bishop pair and an attack. This is a typical trade-off. (See Figure 8-9.)

16...g6 17.Bh6 Re8 18.Bxb5 Re4 19.c4 Qc8
20.g3 Bd 21.Ng5! Re7 22.Qd1!



White would like to play Qf3, Qf6, and mate!

22...Ra3 23.cxd5 Qc7 24.Re1 Bxg3! 25.Rxe7 Qxe7
 26.Qc1! Bc7 27.Be8! Qd6? 28.Qxa3!! Qh2+



White would win if Black had instead tried 28...Qxa3 because 29.Bxf7+ Kh8 30.Ne6! threatens 31.Bf6#, and there's no good reply.

29.Kf1 Qxh6 30.Bxf7+ Kh8 31.Qe7! 1-0

Black can't stop both Qxc7 and Qe8+; for example, 31...Bf4 32.Qd8+ Kg7 33.Qg8+ Kf6 34.Ne4+ Ke7 35.Qe8#.

When things go Black's way

Black develops actively and gains more piece activity. White drifts into a passive position, allowing Black to initiate an attack. In a game played in Copenhagen in 1934, Erik Andersen, playing Black, defeated Holger Norman-Hansen by creating weaknesses around White's king.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4

The opening of Petroff's Defense.

5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Bd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.c4 Bg4

The alternative 8...c6 would've been safer, but Black is in an aggressive mood.

9.cxd5 f5 10.Nc3 Nd7 11.h3 Bh5

Now, White wins a second pawn. Objectively, Black has insufficient compensation for the material deficit. Subjectively, Black gets excellent piece play, and White must go on the defensive.

12.Nxe4 fxe4 13.Bxe4 Nf6 14.Bf5 Kh8



Black is securing his king position in preparation for launching an all-out attack on White's kingside.

White's next move is probably a mistake. 15.g4 may have been a better try.

15.Be6 Ne4 16.g4 Bg6 17.Kg2 Qf6 18.Be3 Rae8

Notice how all Black's pieces are poised for the attack. Black's king is tucked away safely in the corner, while White's is much more vulnerable (see Figure 8-10). Black polishes White off with a series of forcing moves.

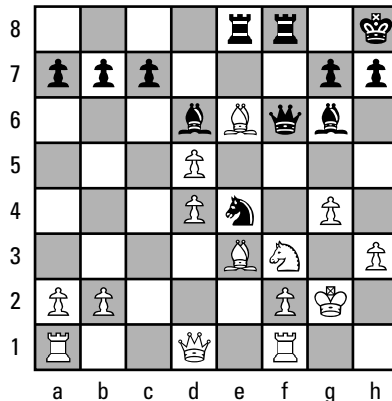


Figure 8-10:
Black is poised to launch his attack.

19.h4 Rxe6! 20.dxe6 Nc3!



Such moves are called *clearance sacrifices* because the sacrificed piece clears the way for another, more devastating piece to take its place.

21.bxc3 Be4 22.Kh3 Qxf3+

What follows is a forced mating sequence. White will be mated no matter what he does.

**23.Qxf3 Rxf3+ 24.Kg2 Rg3+ 25.Kh2 Rg2+ 26.Kh1 Rh2+
27.Kg1 Rh1#**

A very nice finish!

Part III

Having It Both Ways with Semi-Open Games

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I'm pretty sure it's just a sprain. He castled pretty hard at the end of that last round."

In this part . . .

This part covers Black's responses to 1.e4 other than 1...e5. These games tend to avoid symmetrical structures and often feature imbalanced positions, where both sides are trying to achieve completely different objectives. Most of the semi-open games are fighting defenses, and if that describes your style of play, you may find the opening for you in this part.

Among the openings I consider in this part is the Sicilian Defense, which is considered one of the sharpest of all chess openings. Both sides have a razor-thin margin for error.

Chapter 9

Sharpening the Sicilian

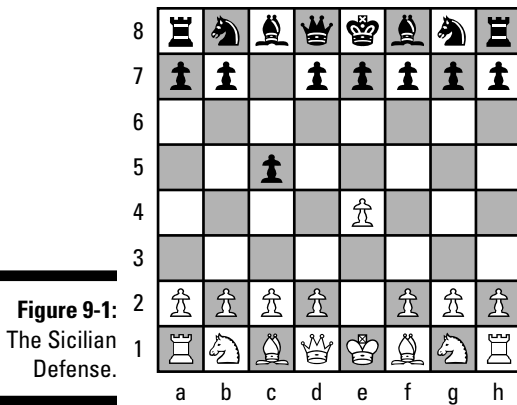
In This Chapter

- ▶ Exploring the popular Sicilian Defense
 - ▶ Digging the Dragon
 - ▶ Getting complicated with the Najdorf
 - ▶ Showing off the Scheveningen
 - ▶ Keeping up with the Four Knights
-

The *Sicilian Opening* is one of the most popular in all of chess because it offers so many variations. Entire books have been written about single variations of the Sicilian, and more come out every year. The representative sampling I provide in this chapter should give you an idea of the opening's complexity.

The People's Choice

A Sicilian priest named Pietro Carrera (1573–1647) published an analysis in 1617 of the opening moves 1.e4 c5, and the opening has been called the *Sicilian Defense* ever since. By the middle of the 20th century, the Sicilian had become the most popular response to 1.e4. There's no accounting for taste, but the opening is likely to retain its popularity, in part because there's almost no end to the variety of positions that can emerge after the simple 1.e4 c5 (see Figure 9-1).



Like 1...e5, the Sicilian seeks to control the d4 square, but unlike 1...e5, it also seeks to establish an immediate imbalance in the game (see Part II for more on openings that feature 1.e4 e5). By avoiding symmetry, the move essentially announces right away that Black's intention is to play for a win at all costs.



The enthusiasm some players have for the opening can be downright spooky. Their reverence for the opening takes on the sense of religious fervor. Some Sicilian players have been known to make snooty comments about other openings, which are simply uncalled for. You don't have to be haughty to play the Sicilian, but it helps to have a healthy self-confidence. Both sides often walk a tightrope between victory and defeat. To play the Sicilian well, you must relish complicated positions where evaluations are rarely clear-cut. The rest of this chapter is devoted to some of the Sicilian's most popular variations, but keep in mind that there are many others.

Entering the Dragon

The main characteristic of the classic *Dragon Variation* is the kingside fianchetto and flank development of the dark-squared bishop by Black. Black plays to control the dark squares in the center and to develop rapidly. You arrive at the Dragon following the moves 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 (see Figure 9-2).

Some think that the Dragon is named for the constellation Draco because the Black pawn formation vaguely resembles it. Others think that the name derives from the serpent-like appearance of the Black pawn structure. Still others say that the name is merely a reflection of the fierceness that typically characterizes Black's play.

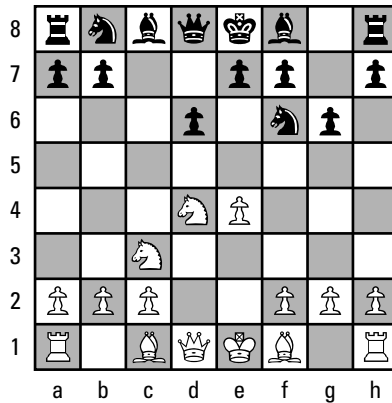


Figure 9-2:
The Dragon
Variation of
the Sicilian
Defense.



The Dragon is not for the faint of heart. You must be willing to attack and be attacked in return.

When things go White's way

White opens lines against Black's castled king. The "Dragon bishop" on g7 is eliminated, weakening the dark squares around Black's king. White usually wraps up the game with some flashy sacrifices and a mating attack.

The 1974 match between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi was of critical importance. Karpov would go on to become World Champion. Many consider Korchnoi to have been one of the strongest players in history who never became champion. Karpov, playing White, carved up Korchnoi in the following game.

1.e4 c5

This is the Sicilian Defense.

2.Nf3 d6

3.d4 cxd4

4.Nxd4 Nf6

5.Nc3 g6

And this is the Dragon Variation.

6.Be3 Bg7

7.f3 Nc6

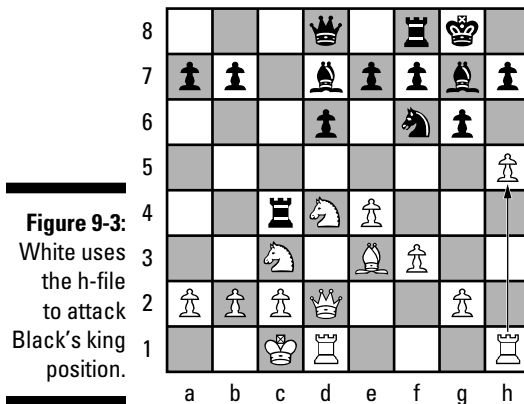
8.Qd2 0-0

9.Bc4

White's move establishes a formation called the *Yugoslav Attack*. White plans to castle queenside and attack on the kingside. Black wants to move the rooks onto the c-file and clear a path for the bishop on g7 to attack the enemy king.

9...Bd7 10.h4 Rc8 11.Bb3 Ne5 12.0-0-0 Nc4
 13.Bxc4 Rxc4 14.h5!

A typical sacrifice designed to open lines against Black's king (see Figure 9-3).



14....Nxh5 15.g4 Nf6

Black wins a pawn, but White can now attack along the open h-file.

16.Nde2!

White's move defends against one of Black's major themes in the Dragon, which is to sacrifice a rook on c3, smashing open White's queenside. The knight also begins to drift toward the kingside.

16....Qa5 17.Bh6

Swapping off Black's bishop is an important achievement for White because it's used to both attack White's king and defend Black's.

17....Bxh6 18.Qxh6 Rfc8 19.Rd3

White defends c3 again versus sacrifices on that square.

19....R4c5

Black wants to stop White from playing g5 and driving the knight away, because that piece is the last defender of the kingside.

20.g5!

Karpov plays it anyway!



20....Rxc5 21.Rd5!

This is the point of White's play. White attacks the queen and rook.

21....Rxd5



Notice that 21....Nxd5 22.Qxh7+ Kf8 23.Qh8# is checkmate. This is a threat that comes up a lot in the Dragon.

22.Nxd5

White attacks e7 and has the idea of playing Nf6+ to get rid of the last defender of Black's king.

22....Re8 23.Nef4

White brings his last piece into the attack. The threat is 24.Nxf6+ exf6 25.Qxh7+ Kf8 26.Nd5!, cutting off the king's escape.

23....Bc6 24.e5!

White is attacking the knight again, but the real point is to prevent Black's queen from coming to the rescue, which would happen after 24.Nxf6+ exf6 25.Nh5 Qg5+!

24....Bxd5 25.exf6 exf6 26.Qxh7+ Kf8 27.Qh8+ 1-0

Black resigns because 27.Qh8+ Ke7 28.Nxd5+ Qxd5 29.Re1+ wins either the rook or the queen.

When things go Black's way

Black attacks on the queenside and sometimes in the center as well. Black uses the combination of the bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal and play along the c-file in order to pressure White's queenside.

In this game from the U.S.S.R. Championship of 1933, Vsevolod Rauzer, as White, played rather passively, and Mikhail Botvinnik made him pay.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6
5.Nc3 d6 6.Be2 g6

Arriving at the Dragon through *transposition*, or a different move order.

7.Be3 Bg7 8.Nb3 Be6 9.f4 0-0 10.0-0 Na5

This last move is a typical maneuver for Black, as the knight wants to go to c4. White probably shouldn't take this knight because it just facilitates Black's development.

11.Nxa5 Qxa5 12.Bf3 Bc4 13.Re1 Rfd8 14.Qd2 Qc7

Black doesn't want to exchange queens in case the knight moves from c3, so he repositions the queen where it still influences the center and also exerts queenside pressure.

15.Rac1



This is an oddly passive move by White that allows Black a free hand in the center. White probably should've played 15.Qf2 instead.

15...e5 16.b3 d5

This move must've come as a shock to Rauzer because he has positioned his pieces in order to prevent Botvinnik from playing it!



Whenever you have a piece on the same line as your opponent's queen, look for some tactical trick that may exploit it. (See Figure 9-4.)

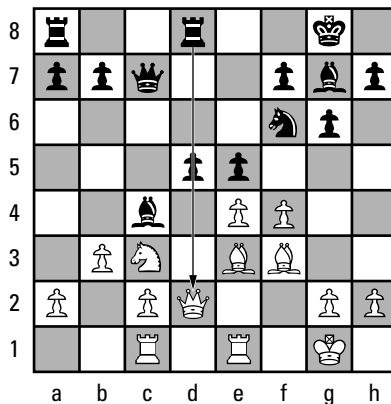


Figure 9-4:
Black goes
on the
attack.

17.exd5 e4 18.bxc4 exf3 19.c5 Qa5 20.Red1 Ng4!
21.Bd4 f2+ 22.Kf1 Qa6+ 23.Qe2 Bxd4 24.Rxd4 Qf6

After this move, Black is able to come crashing through on the kingside.

25.Rcd1 Qh4 26.Qd3 Re8 27.Re4 f5
28.Re6 Nxh2+ 0-1

Accelerating the Dragon

The *Accelerated Dragon*, sometimes called the *Accelerated Fianchetto*, omits the move of the d-pawn in favor of speeding up the fianchetto of Black's dark-squared bishop. This sequence can transpose into lines similar to the Dragon, or it can lead to a completely different type of game. This variation on the Sicilian opens with the moves 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6.



If you want to play the Accelerated Dragon, you must be willing to play against the *Maróczy Bind*, a pawn formation that clamps down on the d5 square and virtually assures White a spatial advantage (see Figure 9-5). Black has adequate resources to combat the Maróczy Bind, but the game is one of careful maneuvering and is very different from the tactical melees that the classical Dragon player tends to prefer.

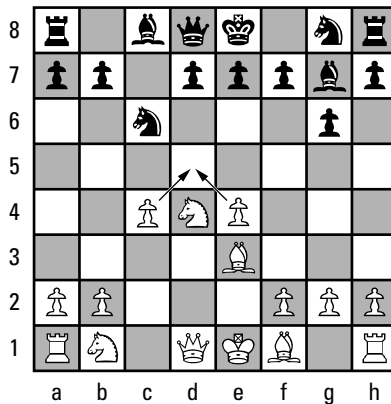


Figure 9-5:
The pawn
formation
called the
Maróczy
Bind.

When things go White's way

White gains a significant advantage in space. An advantage in space means greater piece mobility, and White can use this to create threats that Black has difficulty meeting.

In a game from 1966 between Bent Larsen, who was White, and Tigran Petrosian, played in Santa Monica, California, Black was unable to gain sufficient space. Larsen launched a direct attack that Black was unable to fend off.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6
5.Be3 Bg7 6.c4

This is the Maróczy Bind, which usually arises by a slightly different move order when c2-c4 is played on the fifth move. White's bind prevents Black from playing his two favorite freeing moves: ...d5 and ...b5.

6....Nf6 7.Nc3 Ng4

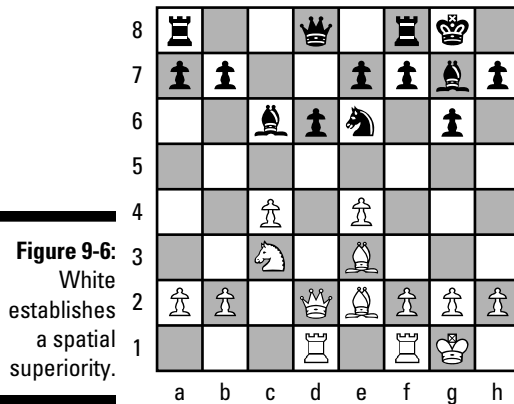
An interesting way to swap pieces by Black, who would love to play ...Nxe3.

8.Qxg4 Nxd4 9.Qd1 Ne6

From here, Black's knight hopes to go to c5 someday.

10.Qd2 d6 11.Be2 Bd7 12.0-0 0-0 13.Rad1 Bc6

A typical position from this opening has arisen: Black has all his pieces out, but White commands more space, and his pawns are free to advance (see Figure 9-6). Now, White makes his first aggressive move in the center.



14.Nd5 Re8 15.f4!

A direct attack is more likely to succeed when you control a lot of territory.

15....Nc7 16.f5 Na6 17.Bg4 Nc5 18.fxg6 hxg6
19.Qf2

White is shifting all his pieces toward the kingside.

19....Rf8 20.e5!

White sacrifices a pawn and continues the attack.

20....Bxe5 21.Qh4 Bxd5 22.Rxd5 Ne6 23.Rf3!

White's rook is heading for h3 to set up a mating attack.

23....Bf6 24.Qh6 Bg7

It looks like everything is holding together, but Black doesn't account for White's surprising next move.

25.Qxg6!! Nf4

White's point is that taking the queen is disastrous: 25....fxg6 26.Bxe6+ Kh7 27.Rh3+ Bh6 28.Bxh6 (threatening Bxf8 with checkmate) 28....Rf5 29.Rxf5 gxf5 30.Bf7 Qb6+ 31.Kh1. And what is Black to do about 32.Bf8?

26.Rxf4 fxg6 27.Be6+ Rf7 28.Rxf7 Kh8
29.Rg5! b5 30.Rg3 1-0

When things go Black's way

Black succeeds in countering White's spatial advantage and expands on one side of the board or the other, creating and then exploiting weaknesses in White's position. This usually takes a number of moves on Black's part, and the advantage sometimes doesn't manifest itself until the endgame.

In the game that Tom Wedberg played White against Shimon Kagan in 1982, Black was able to expand first on the queenside and then later on the kingside. This situation left Black with the better endgame prospects, and he was eventually able to convert his advantage into a win.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.c4

This is the Maróczy Bind.

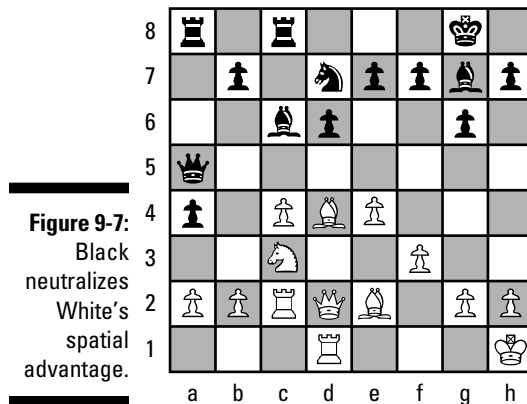
5....Bg7 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 0-0 8.Be2 d6 9.0-0



This is a basic position in the Maróczy Bind. White simply wants to clamp down on Black's position and keep his advantage in space, because that allows him to attack more easily on either wing. Black will try to get his pieces out as quickly as possible and take over some territory of his own on the queenside.

9....Bd7 10.Rc1 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 Bc6 12.f3 a5!
13.Kh1 a4 14.Qd2 Qa5 15.Rfd1 Rfc8 16.Rc2 Nd7!

White still commands the important central squares, and with this knight move, Black wants to trade off White's d4 bishop and exert control over the dark squares. At the same time, Black's knight can take up an active and influential post on c5. (See Figure 9-7.)



17.Bxg7 Kxg7 18.Rdc1

The worst thing about White's position is his "bad" bishop on e2, which is hemmed in by his own pawns. So maybe the move 18.f4 would be better, guarding the dark squares e5 and g5.



18....Nf6 19.Qd4 Qg5 20.Rf1 Ra5! 21.Bd3 Qc5!

This is the point of Black's previous move: He eliminates White's defender of the dark squares and leaves him with the awful bishop on d3.

22.Qxc5 Rxc5 23.Rfc1 g5!

Black's move prevents White from playing 24.f4.

24.Nd5 Bxd5! 25.cxd5 Nd7 26.Kg1 Kf6

In the endgame, Black's king is perfectly safe strolling into the center and furthering Black's control of d4 and f4. Notice how restricted White's bishop is by his center pawns.

27.Kf2 Ke5 28.Ke3 Rxc2 29.Rxc2 Rxc2 30.Bxc2 Nb6 31.Kd3 f5!

Now, Black attacks White's pawn chain.

32.Kc3 h5 33.Kb4 fxe4 34.fxe4 Kd4 35.Kb5 Nc4
 36.Bxa4 Nxb2 37.Bb3 Nd3 38.Bd1 h4 39.Bf3 Ke3
 40.h3 Ne5 0–1

White resigns, because after Black wins a kingside pawn, his pawns will promote quickly; for example: 40....Ne5 41.Kb6 Nxf3 42.gxf3 Kxf3 43.Kxb7 g4!

Knocking Around the Najdorf



The *Najdorf Variation* may be the most complicated opening variation in all of chess.

This variation is named after Miguel Najdorf (1910–1997), a Polish-born grandmaster who was in Buenos Aires when World War II broke out and who remained in Argentina after the war ended. The list of great players who have used this variation is both stellar and long. Bobby Fischer loved it, as did Garry Kasparov.



The Najdorf Variation has passionate fans at all levels. People are attracted to the complicated positions that often flow out of the opening moves: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 (see Figure 9-8).

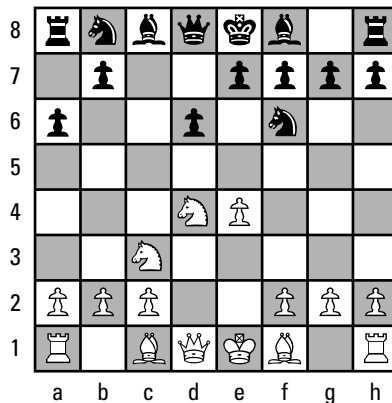


Figure 9-8:
The Najdorf
Sicilian.

By simply moving the a-pawn instead of the g-pawn one square forward, you change the nature of the game. Most openings are readily identifiable, but the Najdorf can look like an explosion caused the pieces to drop onto random squares. Although the Najdorf offers a bewildering array of possibilities, many players like playing it with either color.

When things go White's way

White goes king hunting, and the Black king is easy prey. When a Najdorf goes wrong for Black, it's usually fodder for diagrams whose caption reads: "White to play and win."

India's Viswanathan Anand is just one example of a player who likes either side in this variation. He was White in this game against Lubomir Ftacnik from the 1993 Biel Interzonal tournament in Switzerland.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6
5.Nc3 a6

This is the Najdorf Sicilian.



6.Be3 e6 7.f3 b5 8.g4 h6 9.Qd2 Bb7

An improvement for Black may be 9...Nbd7 instead.

10.h4 b4 11.Nce2 d5 12.e5 Nfd7 13.f4 Nc5
14.Bg2

White keeps the knight from securing e4. He's ready to castle queenside and continue with his expansion on the kingside (see Figure 9-9).

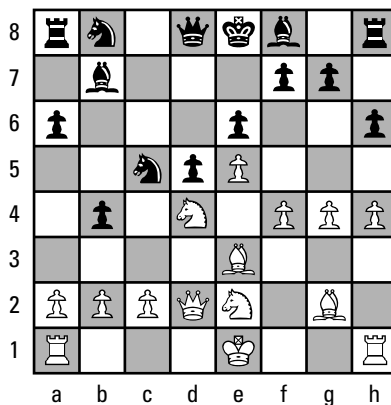


Figure 9-9:
White
expands on
the kingside.

14....Nbd7 15.0-0-0 Be7 16.g5 h5 17.f5 Nxe5

If instead Black plays 17...exf5, 18.Nxf5 threatens 19.Nxg7+.

18.Nf4 Nc4 19.Qe2 Qa5 20.Kb1 Nxb2



These are the kinds of messy complications that are characteristic of the Najdorf. Whose king is safer?

21.fxe6 0–0–0

22.Kxb2 Na4+

23.Kc1 b3

Anand is one cool customer under fire. His king may have only one safe square, but sometimes, one square is enough.

24.Nxb3 Ba3+

25.Kb1 Nc3+

26.Ka1 Qa4 1–0

Black's attack peters out, and White is left with a much better position. White wins after 37 moves.

When things go Black's way

Sometimes, Black simply survives an attack and ends with a surplus of material. Other times, Black seizes the moment to strike and turns the attacking tables. That's what Viswanathan Anand did to Joel Lautier in their game from Biel, Switzerland, in 1997.

1.e4 c5
5.Nc3 a6

2.Nf3 d6

3.d4 cxd4

4.Nxd4 Nf6

This is the Najdorf Sicilian.

6.Bc4 e6

7.Bb3 b5

8.0–0 b4

Black's immediate aggression on the queenside is slightly unusual and double-edged.

9.Na4 Bd7

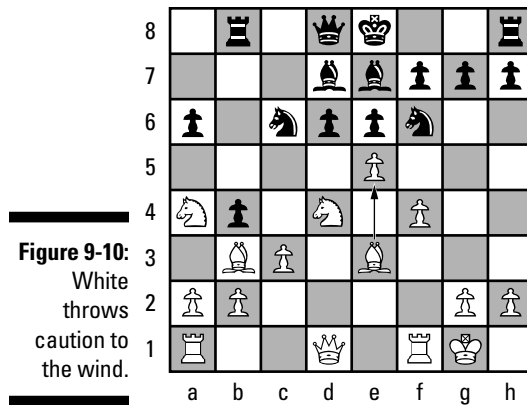
10.f4 Nc6

11.Be3 Rb8

12.c3 Be7

13.e5

As so often happens in the Najdorf, White must try to crack this nut violently by wrenching the position open. (See Figure 9-10).



13...dxe5 14.fxe5 Nxe5 15.Bf4 Ng6 16.Bxb8 Qxb8

White gains a slight edge in material, but his forces are poorly coordinated. In the meantime, Black eliminates White's center, and by trading off White's bishop, he increases his influence over the dark squares.

17.cxb4 Bxb4 18.Rc1 0-0 19.Kh1 Rd8 20.Nc5 Bxc5
21.Rxc5 Bb5 22.Rxf6 gxf6

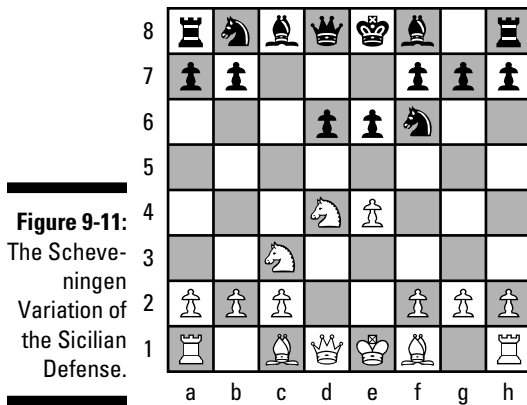
Black regains his sacrificed material and is now simply a pawn to the good.

23.Qg1 Be8 24.Nc6 Bxc6 25.Rxc6 a5
26.Qf2 Kg7 27.h3 Rd7 28.Rc5 Qd8
29.Qe3 Rd3 30.Qe1 Qd4 31.Rxa5 Re3
32.Qc1 Qe4 33.Kh2 Qf4+ 34.Kg1 Qg3 0-1

Shenanigans in the Scheveningen

The *Scheveningen Variation* takes its name from the Dutch city in which the opening was played in 1923. Black sets up a solid, if unpretentious, center with pawns on d6 and e6 and aims to develop simply and modestly before undertaking anything ambitious.

You can arrive at the Scheveningen through different move orders. The most straightforward avenue is 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 (see Figure 9-11).



As with most variations of the Sicilian, White tries to secure an advantage in the center and attacks on the kingside. Black usually launches a counterattack on the queenside. Any slip-up or waste of time can prove fatal for either side.

When things go White's way

White is able to grab more space in the center and on the kingside. White's expansion on the kingside provides for greater mobility for White's pieces, which translates into greater attacking chances.

In the Soviet Championship of 1945, Vasily Smyslov played White against Iosif Rudakovsky. He conducted a clinic on how to play against the Scheveningen.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6
5.Nc3 d6

This is the Scheveningen Variation of the Sicilian Defense.

6.Be2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Be3 Nc6
9.f4 Qc7 10.Qe1 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 e5

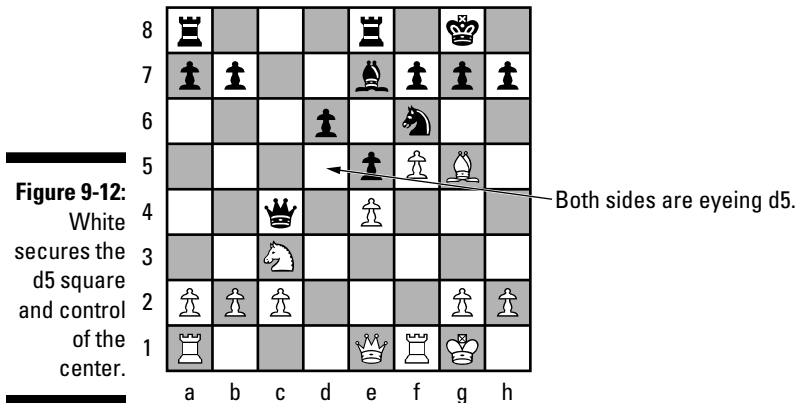
Black's central advance has the positional drawback of weakening the d5 square.

12.Be3 Be6 13.f5

White's expansion on the kingside also has the fringe benefit of eliminating one of the pieces Black is using to fight for the d5 square.

13...Bc4 14.Bxc4 Qxc4 15.Bg5 Rfe8

Black's knight is still guarding the d5 square, so White simply eliminates it with his next move (see Figure 9-12).



16.Bxf6 Bxf6
19.b3 Qc5+
22.f6

17.Nd5 Bd8
20.Kh1 Rc8

18.c3 b5
21.Rf3 Kh8

A nice pawn sacrifice by White breaks down Black's defenses.

22....gxf6
25.Rg3 Bxf6
28.Rxg7 1-0

23.Qh4

Rg8
26.Qxf6 Rcg8

24.Nxf6

Rg7

27.Rd1 d5

If Black tries 28....Rxg7, then 29.Rxd5 and 30.Rd8 would be curtains, so he resigns.

When things go Black's way

Black expands on the queenside and forces White into a defensive posture. Black is then able to create threats that White can't respond to without creating further weaknesses. Vlastimil Jansa played Black against Nikola Padevsky in this game from 1978 and used the so-called *minority attack* (advancing two pawns against three) to compromise White's queenside.

1.e4 c5
5.Nxd4 e6

2.Nf3 d6

3.d4 Nf6

4.Nc3 cxd4

This is the Scheveningen Variation.

6.Be2 Be7 7.0-0 Nc6 8.Be3 0-0 9.f4

White advances with the ideas of e5, f5, or g4-g5, depending on how Black sets up.

9...a6 10.Qe1 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 b5 12.a3 Bb7



Black is playing a minority attack in which he advances with his two pawns on the queenside, where White has a majority of three pawns. Black can supplement this attack by using the open c-file, and his bishop on b7 puts pressure on White's center. (See Figure 9-13.)

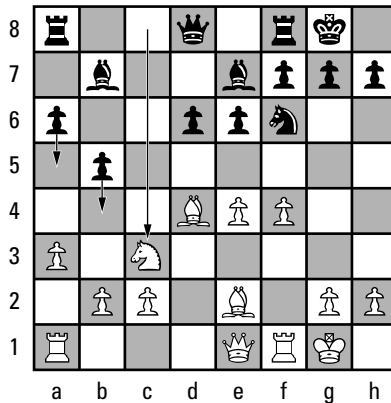


Figure 9-13:
The minority attack in action.

13.Qg3 g6 14.Bf3 a5! 15.e5



If White plays 15.Nxb5 instead, Black would play 15...Nxe4, winning a center pawn in return for a flank pawn, which is usually a good trade-off in the Sicilian Defense.

15...dxe5 16.Bxe5 b4 17.axb4 axb4 18.Na4 Ne4

Black uses his minority attack to chase White's knight away from the center, allowing his own knight to take up residence in that sector.

**19.Qe1 f5 20.Kh1 Qd7 21.b3 Rfd8 22.Rd1 Qc6
23.c4 Rxd1 24.Qxd1 Rd8 25.Qe2 Qd7**

Black seizes control of the d-file. His knight on e4 is much stronger than White's on a4.

26.Re1 Qd3 27.Qb2 Bh4! 28.Bxe4 Qxe4! 29.Rf1 Qe3

Black has the bishop pair and an active rook and queen.

30.Bh8 Rd7 31.c5 Qd2 32.Kg1 Qe3+ 33.Kh1 Qd2
34.Kg1 Qxb2 35.Bxb2 Rd2 36.Rc1 Rxb2+ 0-1

After this win of material, the rest is easy. White resigned after his 41st move.

Fooling Around with the Four Knights

Black usually falls behind in development in most variations of the Sicilian, in return for a strong center. The Four Knights is a little different because Black develops more quickly.

You reach the *Four Knights* after the moves 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 (see Figure 9-14).

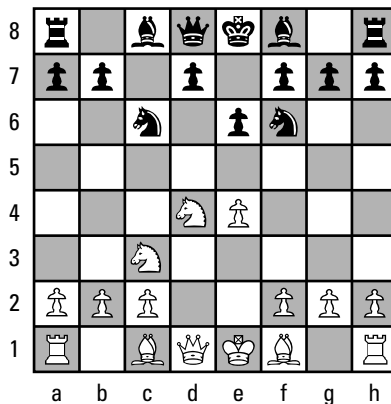


Figure 9-14:
The starting
position for
the Four
Knights
Variation.



You have to give up something to get something in chess. Black can't keep pace in development without incurring some kind of structural weakness. In this variation, the d6 square often causes Black some problems.

When things go White's way

White exploits dark-square weaknesses in Black's position. White's pieces invade along the dark squares and put a serious crimp in Black's game.

In a game from 2000, Zoltán Varga played White against Anton Filippov and put a serious hurt on the d6 square. This served to effectively divide Black's forces in two.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6
5.Nc3 Nc6

This is the beginning position of the Sicilian Four Knights Variation.

6.Nxc6

At first glance, this third move of White's knight seems to strengthen Black's center, but White wants to attack Black's weakness on d6.

6...bxc6 7.e5 Nd5 8.Ne4



The basic idea of the opening is to attack on the dark squares. White also prepares c4 to drive Black's knight away (see Figure 9-15).

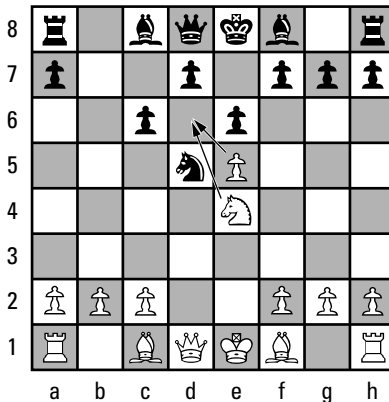


Figure 9-15:
White wants to exploit the weakness on d6.

8...Qc7 9.f4 Qa5+ 10.Bd2 Qb6

Black's queen moves to attack the pawn on b2, but he also has an eye on weakening and attacking the e3 square.

11.Bd3 Be7 12.Qe2 a5 13.c4 f5 14.Nd6+!

Establishing a cramping pawn on d6. This makes it hard for Black's pieces on the queenside to come to the defense of their king.

14....Bxd6 15.exd6 Nf6 16.Bc3 0-0 17.0-0-0 c5
 18.Be5 Ng4 19.h3 Nxe5 20.Qxe5 Ra6 21.Bc2 Qb4
 22.g4! Qxc4 23.Rhg1

The smoke has cleared, and White has an overwhelming attack down the g-file. This happened because the pawn on d6 cut off Black's forces from defending his kingside.

23....Qxa2 24.gxf5 Rf7 25.Rg3!

White threatens Rdg1, when g7 can't be defended.

25....Qa1+ 26.Kd2 Qa2 27.Bb3 Rxd6+ 28.Kc2! 1-0.

Black's queen is trapped.

When things go Black's way

Black rapidly mobilizes his pieces and deploys them in a counterattack. Black often has to sacrifice material to keep the pressure on. In the 1994 game between Fernando Martinez, who had White, and Igor Khenkin, Black was able to seize the initiative and mount a successful counterattack.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6
 5.Nc3 Nc6

The opening of the Four Knights.

6.Ndb5



This is a very popular move. White has two ideas — either plop the knight on the weakness on d6 or put a bishop on f4 and threaten Nc7+. Both of these moves emphasize the dark-square weaknesses that Black has created by playing ...e6. The main drawback is that 6.Ndb5 moves a piece twice, which costs White some time.

6....Bb4

Black's primary theme in the Sicilian Four Knights is rapid development and counterattack.

7.Bf4



If White plays 7.Nd6+ instead, Black would play 7...Ke7! 8.Nxc8+ Rxc8, leaving Black with four pieces actively developed versus White's lone, pinned knight.

7...Nxe4

Black plays ambitiously, attacking c3 and defending d6.

8.Qf3

White attacks e4 and guards c3. The tempting win of a rook by 8.Nc7+ Kf8 9.Nxa8 allows Black a terrific attack following 9...Qf6!, which attacks c3, f4, and, indirectly, f2.

8...d5 9.Nc7+ Kf8 10.0-0-0

White would like to play 11.Qxe4 dxe4 12.Rxd8+ Nxd8 13.Nxa8. So Black starts capturing and attacking pieces himself. If White instead plays 10.Nxa8, then 10...e5 11.Bd2 Nd4 would launch a fearsome attack.

10...Bxc3 11.bxc3 e5!

This move brings the tension to a maximum. If White plays 12.Nxa8, Black can start a huge attack with 12...Qa5!. So White smartly declines the offer and grabs a key center pawn. (See Figure 9-16.)

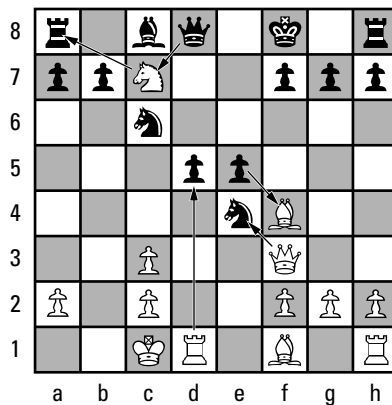


Figure 9-16:
Threats are everywhere.

**12.Nxd5 Ng5
15.h4 Qg4**

13.Bxg5 Qxg5+

14.Kb1 h5

Black offers the exchange of queens because White's weak c-pawns will make it hard for him to defend an ending. When White declines the invitation, Black gets to develop while making threats.

16.Qd3 Bf5 17.Qd2 Rd8! 18.f3 Qa4 19.Qf2 Nd4!

Black is attacking c2 and d5.

20.cxd4 Rxd5

Black's rook joins the attack. To make matters worse, his other rook threatens to come to h6 and then b6!



21.Bd3 Qb4+ 22.Ka1 Qc3+ 23.Kb1 Rh6 24.Bxf5 Rb6+ 0-1

The easiest win after 25.Kc1 is 25...Rdb5 and mate on b1 next.

Chapter 10

Parlez-vous the French?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting confrontational with the French Defense
 - ▶ Advancing the Advance Variation
 - ▶ Using the Classical Variation
 - ▶ Whipping out the Winawer
 - ▶ Trading on the Tarrasch
-

Black accepts some strategic difficulties right off the bat in the French Defense. Black often suffers a spatial inferiority and almost always has trouble developing the light-square bishop. Nevertheless, the French Defense can lead to extremely complicated positions, and it was often used by Victor Korchnoi, who has always been known for his great fighting spirit.

Nothing Diplomatic Here

The *French Defense* arises after the moves 1.e4 e6 (see Figure 10-1). Known since the time of Lucena (15th–16th centuries), the French Defense acquired its name when a Paris team used it successfully in a correspondence match against a team from London in 1834.

After 1.e4, White occupies the e4 square with a pawn and attacks the d5 square. With 1...e6, Black attacks the d5 square and prepares 2...d5, fighting White for the e4 square.



This opening appeals to players who like to be confrontational right off the bat.

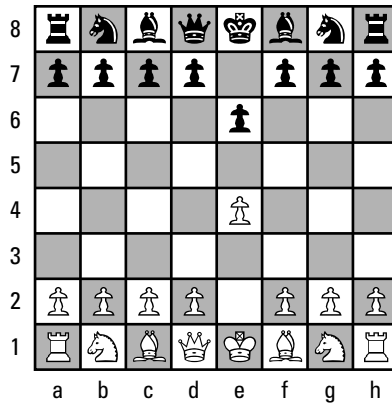


Figure 10-1:
The French
Defense.

Charging the Advance

The *Advance Variation* of the French Defense occurs after the moves 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 (see Figure 10-2).

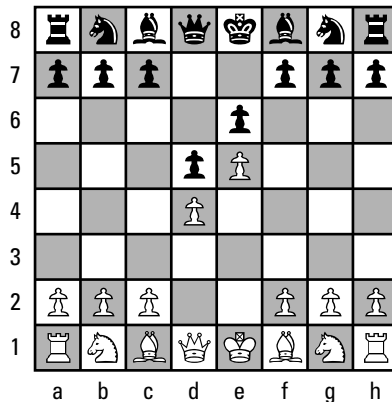


Figure 10-2:
The
Advance
Variation of
the French
Defense.

With the move 3.e5, White obtains a spatial advantage, but at the cost of a unit of time (a move), or what chess players call a *tempo*. Black usually uses the time to initiate a counterattack against White's center. The tension revolves around whether White can maintain control in the center (and keep the spatial advantage) or Black can somehow break through and leave White's forces scattered and uncoordinated.

In this variation, White establishes a pawn chain along dark squares, and Black establishes a pawn chain along white squares. A *pawn chain* refers to pawns that are united along a diagonal. Because they can't capture one another, they may remain in place for a very long time. Sometimes, Black is forced to take extreme measures to break White's pawn chain apart.



Black's pawn chain restricts the mobility of his light-squared bishop. This bishop is sometimes referred to as the *French bad bishop*, although this problem is by no means restricted to the French Defense. Coping with the bad bishop is just one more thing that the determined French player must contend with.

When things go White's way

White assumes control in the center and restricts the mobility of Black's pieces. Control of the center gives White a spatial advantage, which can often mean that White has better attacking chances.

In a game played in 1984 in Brighton, England, Julian Hodgson, as White, used the Advanced Variation against Jonathan Speelman. White got a chokehold on the center and never let Black achieve any meaningful counterplay.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

This is the Advance Variation. White concedes a bit of time by moving the e-pawn a second time, but he acquires an advantage in space.

3...c5

As usual, Black attacks d4, the base of the pawn chain.

4.Nf3!?

White's move is an interesting decision. White figures that it's all right to let his center be broken up if he can develop quickly and control the e5 square. 4.c3 is more frequently played.

4...cxd4 5.Bd3 Nc6 6.0-0 f6

Black pursues the usual plan of breaking up White's center. Or he can play 6...Nge7 with the idea that ...Ng6 is another standard solution.

**7.Qe2 fxe5 8.Nxe5 Nf6 9.Bf4 Bd6 10.Nd2 0-0
11.Ndf3**



This position expresses the themes of this variation. Both sides are fighting over control of e5, which is a beautiful outpost for White's pieces. With e5 under White's control, Black can't play ...e5 and free his queen's bishop. On the other hand, Black has an extra pawn and may develop pressure along the f-file. (See Figure 10-3.)

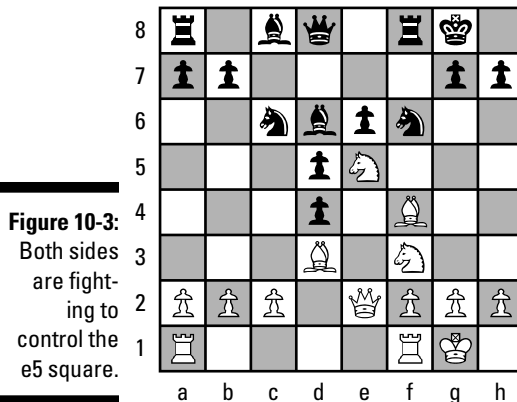


Figure 10-3: Both sides are fighting to control the e5 square.

11....Qe8!?

Black has in mind the move ...Qh5, or perhaps ...Nh5. The other moves to directly challenge e5 are 11....Qc7 and 11....Ng4.

12.Bg3 Bd7?

Black's move gives White just enough time to take over the dark squares, but it would've been better to play 12....Nh5 to get rid of White's bishop.



**13.Nxc6! Bxg3
16.h3**

14.Ncxd4 Bd6

15.Rae1 Qh5

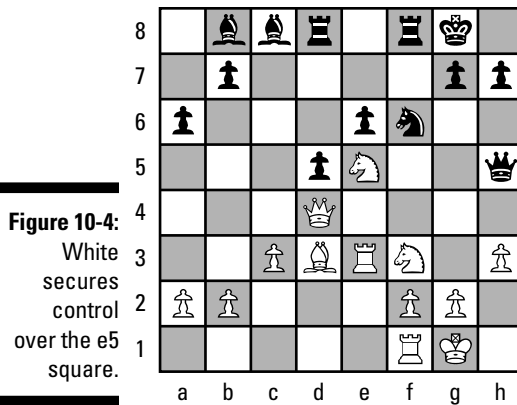
Not 16.Nxe6?? because of 16....Rfe8.

16....Rae8 17.Ne5

White's next seven moves either control or occupy dark squares! Many games are won by dominating a "color complex."

**17....Qh4 18.c3 Bc8 19.Ndf3 Qh5 20.Qe3! a6
21.Qb6 Bb8 22.Re3 Rd8 23.Qd4**

Because of the knight on the e5 outpost, Black simply can't develop his queen's bishop to an active square (see Figure 10-4).



23....Bc7 24.a4 Rd6 25.Qc5 Ne8
 26.Rfe1 b6 27.Qd4 b5 28.Qb4! bxa4
 29.Qxa4 Rb6 30.Nd7! Bxd7 31.Qxd7 Bb8
 32.b4!

White controls still more dark squares. Soon, Nd4 will win the e-pawn.

32....Nf6 33.Qe7 Rc6 34.Nd4 Re8 35.Nxc6! Rxe7
 36.Nxe7+ Kf7 37.Nc6

With two rooks for the queen and a strong attack, the game is soon concluded.

37....Bf4 38.Rxe6 Bd2 39.Re7+ Kf8 40.R1e6 Qd1+
 41.Bf1 Bxc3 42.Rd6 1-0

Rd8 will follow, with checkmate or massive material gain.

When things go Black's way

White's center is demolished, and Black's center pawns become mobile. Aron Nimzowitsch suffered such a fate against Efim Bogoljubov in this 1920 game from Stockholm, Sweden.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

The Advanced Variation of the French Defense.

3....c5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.c3 Qb6

The familiar attack by Black against the pawn on d4.



6.Be2 cxd4 7.cxd4 Nge7 8.Nc3

Nowadays, White often plays 8.Na3 followed by 9.Nc2 in order to support the d4 pawn. Nimzowitsch's plan gets him into hot water.

8....Nf5 9.Na4 Bb4+ 10.Kf1 Qd8 11.a3 Be7

Black's position is solid, but White's king position is a little shaky.

12.b4 0-0 13.Rg1 f6 14.g4? Nfxd4!

White surely didn't think that Black could make this capture, but it's a good example of how Black must play with great energy in order to destroy White's center (see Figure 10-5).

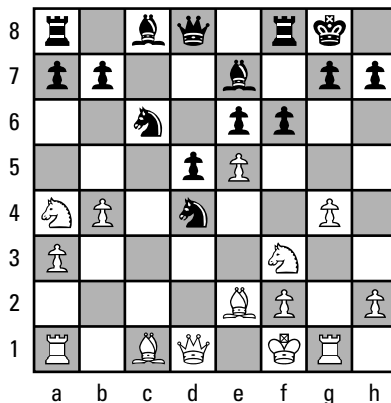


Figure 10-5:
Black
demolishes
White's
center.

15.Nxd4 Nxd4 16.Qxd4 fxe5 17.Qd2

White can't play 17.Qxe5 because 17....Bf6 wins material.

17....b6 18.g5 d4 19.Bc4 b5



Black makes an excellent pawn sacrifice that allows him to support the advance of the center pawns.

**20.Bxb5 Qd5 21.Qe2 e4 22.Bc4 d3 23.Qa2 Qd4
24.Rg4 d2**

This last central advance proves decisive.

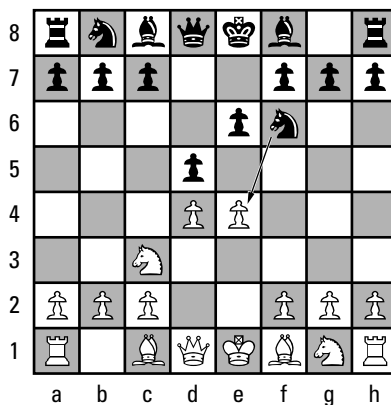
25.Qxd2 Qxc4+ 26.Qe2 Qb3 27.Nc5 Bxc5 28.bxc5 Ba6 0-1

If White tries 29.Qxa6, then 29...Qd1+ 30.Kg2 Qxg4+ is curtains.

Staying Classical

The *Classical Variation* of the French Defense arises after the moves 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 (see Figure 10-6). Black's third move puts additional pressure on White's pawn on e4. White can advance the pawn (a plan favored by William Steinitz, among others) or maintain the tension with 4.Bg5, pinning the Black knight on f6.

Figure 10-6:
The
Classical
Variation of
the French
Defense.



White tries to get and keep an advantage in the center and expand on the kingside. Black tries to undermine White's center and usually expands on the queenside.

When things go White's way

In a game between Tom Wedberg and Viktor Korchnoi in Sweden in 1988, White (Wedberg) was able to establish and secure his advantage in the center. He then turned his attention to the Black king by advancing the kingside pawns until lines were opened, when his pieces could swoop in to finish the job.

1.d4 e6 2.e4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6

The Classical Variation of the French Defense.

4.Bg5 Be7 5.e5 Nfd7 6.Bxe7 Qxe7 7.f4 0-0
8.Nf3 c5 9.Qd2 Nc6 10.dxc5 Qxc5 11.0-0-0



When the kings have castled on opposite sides of the board, it's logical for both players to try to open lines against the enemy king and attack. This is most easily accomplished by advancing pawns on the side of the board where the enemy king is positioned, but to do that successfully, you need to have a solid position in the center. In this game, White controls the center. (See Figure 10-7.)

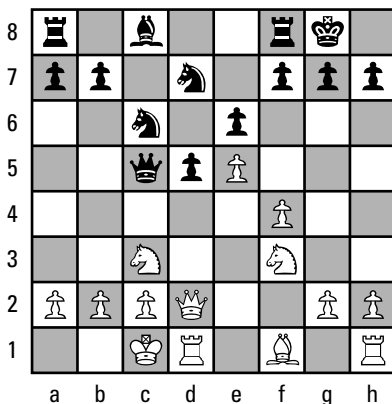


Figure 10-7:
White
secures an
advantage
in the
center.

11...Nb6 12.Nd4 Bd7 13.Kb1 Rac8 14.Be2 Nxd4
15.Qxd4 Qa5

Black wants to create some mischief on the queenside, but White's king is secure.

16.Rhf1 Nc4 17.Rf3 b5 18.Bxc4 Rxc4

Following this exchange, White's knight is a better piece than Black's bishop. This is a recurring theme in the French Defense.

19.Qd2 b4 20.Ne2 Rfc8 21.Nd4

White repositions the knight, maintains his advantage in the center, and is just a few moves away from launching a kingside advance.

21...Qc7 22.Rd3 a5 23.Re1 a4 24.g4 h6
25.h4 Qa7 26.h5 Ra8 27.g5 hxg5 28.f5 exf5

Black's defenses quickly collapse.

29.Qxg5 Rxd4 30.Rg3 g6 31.hxg6 Rg4 32.Rxg4 fxg4
33.gxf7+ Kf8 34.Qh6+ Kxf7 35.Qf6+ 1-0

Black will soon be mated, after 35...Ke8 36.Rh1.

When things go Black's way

Black is able to destroy White's center and go on the attack. White's position is overextended, leading to weaknesses that Black can exploit. In the game between Bartłomiej Macieja and Vassily Ivanchuk from Moscow in 2001, Black (Ivanchuk) was able to crack open White's position, even though he had to sacrifice material to do it.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6

Establishing the Classical Variation.

4.e5 Nfd7

In this line of play, White tries to establish a dominant advantage in the center, and Black is equally committed to undermining it.

5.Nce2 c5 6.f4 Nc6 7.c3 Be7 8.Nf3 0-0
9.a3 a5 10.h4 f6

Now, Black is attacking both the base of White's pawn chain at d4 and the front of it at e5.

11.Neg1 cxd4 12.cxd4 Qb6 13.Bd3 fxe5
14.fxe5 Ndx5 15.dxe5 Nxe5



Black sacrifices a knight for two pawns, which would be insufficient compensation if all things were equal. In this position, however, White's center is destroyed, he can't castle, and his pieces are awkwardly placed. (See Figure 10-8.)



Notice that 16.Nxe5 would lose to 16...Qf2#.

16.Bc2 Bd7 17.Qe2 Rac8 18.Bxh7+ Kxh7 19.Qxe5 Bd6
20.Be3 Qb3 21.Nd2 Rf1+

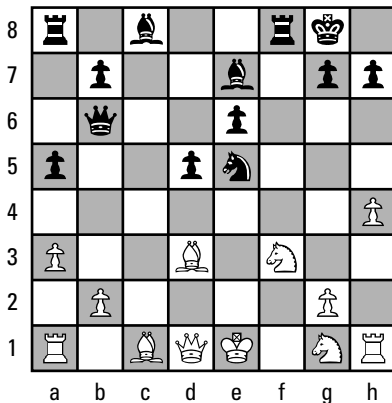
Black finishes with a flurry of powerful moves.

22.Kxf1 Qd3+
25.Rab1 Rc2

23.Kf2 Bxe5
26.Rhd1 e5

24.Ngf3 Bxb2
27.g3 Bg4 0-1

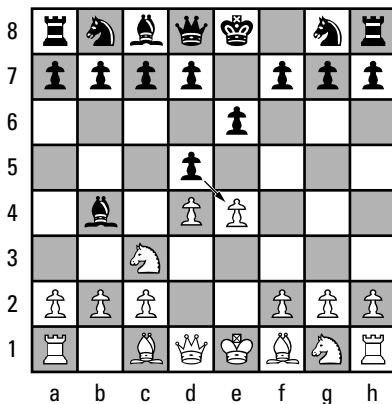
Figure 10-8:
Black eliminates White's center but is behind in material.



Winning with the Winawer

If, instead of playing the Classical Variation's 3...Nf6, Black plays 3...Bb4, the variation is called the *Winawer* (see Figure 10-9). The variation takes its name from the Polish player Szymon Winawer (1838–1920).

Figure 10-9:
The Winawer Variation of the French Defense.



The Winawer is a very sharp opening in which Black often inflicts structural weaknesses on White's queenside but has to endure kingside pressure in return. As with most variations of the French Defense, White tries to obtain and maintain an advantage in space, while Black counterattacks against the center.

When things go White's way

White goes on the attack and looks to make tactical threats that Black has difficulty responding to. These games often have a razor-thin margin for error, with both sides walking a tightrope over immediate defeat.

Jean-Rene Koch, as White, mounted an overwhelming attack against Manuel Apicella in this 1988 game in Pau, France. Black was a little too greedy in snapping up pawns when he should've been protecting his king.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4

This is the Winawer Variation. Black pins White's knight to the king and threatens to capture the pawn on e4.

4.e5 Ne7 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5

Here we have the usual French Defense themes but with some twists. White has space and his usual pawn chain, but he also has doubled pawns, which can be a weakness.

On the other hand, the pawn on c3 protects against Black's attack against d4, and if Black plays ...cxd4, then after cxd4, White has his extra pawn on c2 ready to move to c3 and reestablish the pawn chain. (See Figure 10-10.)

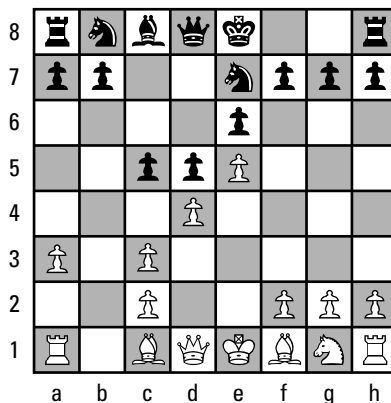


Figure 10-10:
The usual
French
suspects.



Another important feature of the position is that Black has traded a bishop for a knight. Although bishops are often superior to knights, the static pawn structure makes this trade-off unclear. In White's favor, the absence of Black's dark-squared bishop makes him vulnerable on the kingside. Often, however, Black can get pressure on White's queenside and center.

Suffice it to say that things can get pretty tricky in the Winawer.

7.Qg4

White immediately attacks g7, a square no longer defended by the bishop that Black traded off on move 5.

7...0-0 8.Bd3 Nbc6 9.Bg5

White shifts his pieces to the kingside. Now, Black gets out of the pin and attacks c3.

9...Qa5 10.Ne2 cxd4



Black's pawn capture is greedy, and rather risky. At first, it appears that 10...c4 traps the bishop on d3, but White wins a pawn by playing 11.Bxe7 Nxe7 12.Bxh7+! Kxh7 13.Qh4+ Kg8 14.Qxe7. Black should have defended by playing either 10...Ng6 or 10...Qa4 instead of the move he made.

11.f4!

White will sacrifice two pawns to protect his key pawn on e5 and accelerate his attack.



11...Bd7

Another possibility for Black would've been 11...Ng6 12.h4 f5.

12.0-0 dxc3 13.Rf3!

White shifts another piece to take aim at the king.

13...Ng6 14.Rh3 Nb4

Black's move looks clever, trying to eliminate White's dangerous bishop on d3, but Black's pieces are cut off from defending his king.

15.Qh5 h6 16.axb4!

White gives up his rook to save his bishop!

16....Qxa1+ 17.Kf2

Now, Bxh6 and Bxg6 together are too strong to resist. The end comes quickly.

17....Kh7 18.Bxh6 Rh8 19.Bxg6+ fxg6 20.Qg5! Kg8
21.Qxg6 Rh7



If Black tries 21....Rxb6 instead, 22.Rxb6 would give White the simple threat of Rh7, and Black wouldn't be able to do anything about it.

22.Rg3 Be8 23.Qf6 1-0



Black resigns because the threat of Rxb6+ is too strong.

This game demonstrates what Black must *not* do: pursue material gain on the queenside while the king is left defenseless.

When things go Black's way

While White is attacking, Black does what the player of the French Defense does best: counterattacks! Black exploits a lead in development in order to discombobulate White's pieces. Black's coordinated forces overwhelm White's.

In a game between Eldis Cobo Arteaga (White) and Borislav Ivkov (Black) played in Havana in 1963, Black was able to counterattack and break through White's defenses. Even though this variation has been played many, many times and analyzed many more, a final assessment still proves elusive.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4

Opening with the Winawer Variation.

4.e5 Ne7 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.Qg4 Qc7

In the preceding game, Black protected his pawn by castling. That isn't a bad move, but it opens up a potential attack on his king. In this game, Black uses a common French Defense strategy: when attacked, counterattack.

8.Qxg7 Rg8 9.Qxh7 cxd4

Black gets one of his two pawns back and threatens ...Qxc3+, winning a rook.

10.Ne2 Nbc6 11.f4!

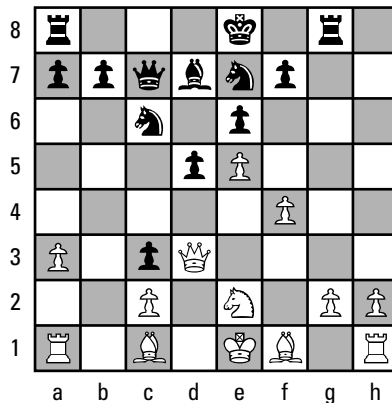
White protects his most important pawn against capture.



11....dxc3 12.Qd3 Bd7

This basic position has been the starting point for hundreds of grandmaster games (see Figure 10-11).

Figure 10-11:
A common position in the Winawer Variation of the French Defense.



White has several advantages: He has a passed h-pawn that can rush down the board, supported by the rook; he has a pair of bishops; and it appears that he can win Black's c-pawn and gain a material advantage.

Black in turn has some important factors in his favor: He has all but one of his pieces developed (whereas White's rooks and bishops haven't moved); he is about to castle, and White isn't close to finding a safe place for his king; and his knights will be very well-placed after ...Nf5, controlling vital central squares.

13.Be3

White wants to get his pieces out. However, it's more common to capture the c-pawn by 13.Nxc3 or 13.Qxc3, when many games have shown that there's a dynamic balance between Black's greater activity (he can now attack down the c-file, for example) and White's extra pawn and long-term kingside advantage.

13....Nf5! 14.Bf2

White doesn't want to surrender the advantage of the bishop pair, but he's still not developing his kingside.

14....d4! 15.Ng3

If White instead captures the pawn with 15.Nxd4 Ncxd4 16.Bxd4, Black will play 16....0-0-0 with great pressure down the d-file.

15....0-0-0 16.Nxf5 exf5 17.Bh4

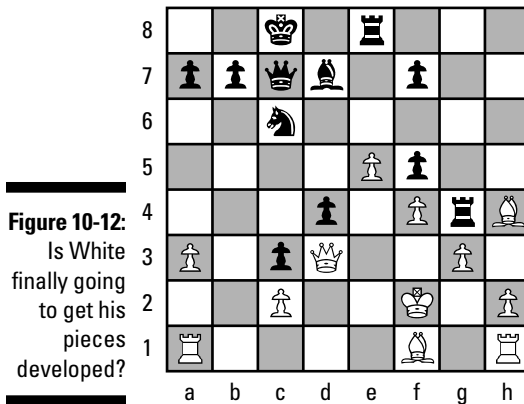
White still can't develop his bishop to e2 because of ...Rxc2.

17....Rde8 18.Kf2 Rg4!

This forks f4 and h4.

19.g3

Can White get his pieces out by Bg2 or Bh3? (See Figure 10-12.)



19....Rxe5!



Black is breaking down White's mighty center by sacrificing a whole rook! The player of the French Defense must be prepared to make this kind of move.

20.fxe5 Nxe5 21.Qd1 Rxc4!

Another sacrifice by Black. White's king is too exposed now that his pawn center has disappeared.

22.gxh4 Ng4+ 23.Ke1 Qf4 24.Qe2 Bb5!

Black's final piece leaps into play. If White plays 25.Qxb5, then 25....Qd2 is checkmate.

25.Qg2 Qe3+ 0-1

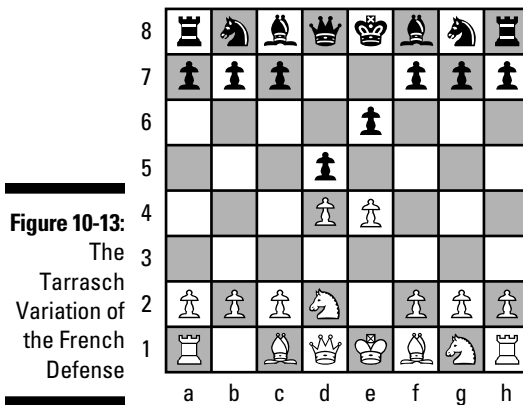


White gives up because after 26.Be2 (or after 26.Kd1 Nf2+ 27.Qxf2 Qxf2 28.Be2 Qe3!, followed by ...Qd2 checkmate) 26....Qd2+ 27.Kf1 Ne3+ 28.Kg1 Nxb2 29.Bxb5 Nxb4, White can't stop all the threatened checkmates.

This game shows a typically dynamic French Defense counterattack. White absolutely has to get the pieces out more quickly than this.

Taking Out the Tarrasch

The *Tarrasch Variation* of the French Defense is named after the great German player Siegbert Tarrasch (1862–1934) and occurs after the moves 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 (see Figure 10-13).



With 3.Nd2, White develops a piece and protects e4. This has two advantages over 3.Nc3: It avoids the Winawer Variation (because after 3.Nd2, ... Bb4? loses a tempo to 4.c3), and White can still play the move c3, which will protect his center. On the negative side, 3.Nd2 is a rather passive move that blocks off his bishop and queen.

When things go White's way

White often establishes a hammer lock on the dark squares. White's pieces eventually use these squares as invasion points into Black's position. White then delivers a series of threats that Black is eventually unable to answer.

Eduardas Rozentalis played White against Andres Rodriguez Vila in this game from 2000 in a tournament played in Malaga, Spain. White dominated the dark squares to his advantage.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2

The Tarrasch Variation of the French Defense.



3...Nf6

Black can also attack White's center by either 3...c5 or 3...Nc6.

4.e5 Nfd7 5.Bd3 c5 6.c3 Nc6 7.Ne2

This is the typical pawn chain of the French Defense. White's pawns cramp Black, but Black is attacking the base of White's center by ...c5 and will attack the head of the chain with ...f6.

7...cxd4 8.cxd4 f6 9.exf6 Nxf6 10.Nf3 Qc7

Black doesn't play 10...Bd6 because he wants to avoid the exchange of his good bishop, which would happen after 11.Bf4.

11.0-0 Bd6 12.Nc3 a6

White was ready to play Nb5, so Black takes that move away.

13.Bg5 0-0

This is a typical position (see Figure 10-14). White has the semi-open e-file, on which he can attack Black's backward e-pawn. Black has the semi-open f-file and is fighting for control over the critical e5 square.

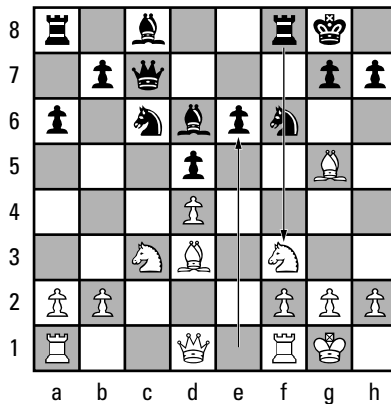


Figure 10-14:
A position
with
chances for
both sides.



14.Bh4!

White is willing to take some time to prepare the move Bg3 because he'll then exchange Black's strong bishop on d6 and increase his control over e5.



14....g6?

Black should contest White's idea by playing 14....Nh5! instead.

15.Rc1 Ng4 16.Bg3 Bxg3 17.hxg3 Qg7

Black attacks White's isolated d-pawn and considers attacking by ...Qh6. However, White neutralizes these plans.

18.Be2 Bd7 19.Qd2 Rf6 20.Na4! Raf8 21.Nc5 Bc8
22.Nd3

White's knight is aiming at e5.

22....Bd7 23.Ng5! Nh6 24.Ne5! Nxe5 25.dxe5 Rf5 26.f4



White's play has led to exactly what Black fears most: a lack of space, a bad bishop, and no protection for his dark squares. Watch how White effortlessly uses these advantages to secure a quick victory.

26....Rc8 27.Rxc8+ Bxc8 28.Rc1 Rf8 29.Qa5 Nf5
30.Qc7



Instead, 30.Rc7! is even stronger, because 30...Ne7 31.Bg4 wins.

30....Qh6 31.Qc3 d4 32.Qb3 Ng7 33.Bg4 1-0

Black gives up. His queen can't move, and 34.Rxc8 followed by Bxe6+ is threatened. Yet 33....Bd7 34.Rc7! is utterly hopeless for him.

When things go Black's way

Black destroys White's center and launches a devastating attack on White's exposed king. This is one of the basic ideas behind the French Defense — you allow White to establish what appears to be a dominating center and then attack it. If you destroy it, you usually win. If you don't . . .

Edvins Kengis didn't secure the center in his game against Rune Djurhuus from Gausdal, Norway, in 1991, and Black made him pay the price. After White's center is ripped apart, Black's pieces go looking for White's king.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2

Establishing the Tarrasch Variation.

3....Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4

In this variation, White bolsters his pawn on e5 so that Black will have a hard time getting rid of it.

5...c5



Black attacks the base of White's pawn chain at d4. If he can get rid of that pawn, he can then attack with ...f6 and have a good chance of removing the pawns, which cramp his position. Over the next three moves, White shores up d4 while Black attacks it.

6.c3 Nc6 7.Ndf3 Qb6 8.Ne2 cxd4 9.cxd4 Be7 10.a3

Somewhere along here, White needs to develop his kingside pieces and castle.

10...0-0 11.Ng3

White is ready to bring his bishop out and get castled. His center is firm and apparently unassailable.



On the other hand, White has made seven pawn moves versus Black's four and moved both of his knights twice. The result is that he has only two pieces out, whereas Black has four out and has castled. That's a recipe for trouble.

11...f6 12.Bd3 fxe5 13.fxe5

This is a key position (see Figure 10-15). White still has his cramping center, and Black's queenside pieces can't move. This all changes in a flash.

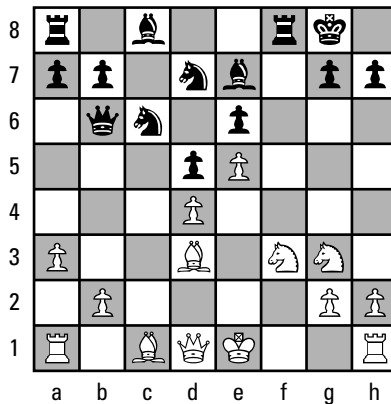


Figure 10-15:
What can Black do against White's big center?

13....Ndx5! 14.dxe5 Nxe5



Black sacrifices a piece for two pawns in order to destroy White's mighty center and stop him from castling. Now, White can't play 15.Nxe5?? because of 15....Qf2#.

15.Be2 Bd7 16.Nxe5?

White could try to weather the storm with a move such as 16.Rf1, but even then, Black keeps attacking by 16....Ng4.

16....Qf2+ 17.Kd2 Rac8 18.Qb3 Bg5+ 19.Kd3 Rf4!

Black is threatening checkmate on d4.

20.Nf3 Be8! 0-1

The French bad bishop is free at last, and White can do nothing against the devastating threat of ...Bg6+, so he resigns. Notice how every last piece is involved in Black's attack.



The lesson of this game is not that White shouldn't build up a powerful center but that he has to develop and get his king to safety, too.

Chapter 11

Anyone Can Caro-Kann

In This Chapter

- ▶ Mining the Main Line of the Caro-Kann
- ▶ Checking out the Classical Variation
- ▶ Summing up the Smyslov Variation
- ▶ Going forward with the Advance Variation

The *Caro-Kann* is a very solid defense to 1.e4. Former World Champion Anatoly Karpov used the Caro-Kann extensively. The Caro-Kann has a number of variations; this chapter concentrates on the most common ones.

Caring about the Caro-Kann

The Caro-Kann occurs after the moves 1.e4 c6 (see Figure 11-1). The name refers to the British player Horatio Caro (1862–1920) and the Viennese player Marcus Kann (1820–86), who published their analysis of this opening in the late 19th century.

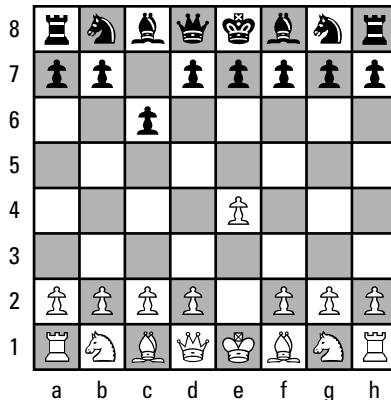


Figure 11-1:
The
Caro-Kann
Defense.



Like the French Defense, which I cover in Chapter 10, Black's first move is designed to prepare $2\dots d5$. One advantage to this move order is that Black's light-square bishop isn't trapped behind a pawn chain on f7, e6, and d5, as it can be in the French. A drawback, however, is that Black's c-pawn isn't as aggressively placed in the Caro-Kann as it is in the French, and it gets in the way of the natural developing move $\dots Nc6$.



There are some sharp lines in the Caro-Kann, but the opening is more likely to appeal to the player whose goal is to develop as rapidly and harmoniously as possible prior to initiating confrontations. The Caro-Kann's overall reputation is a solid one.

The *Main Line*, the most common move order, occurs after the moves 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 (or 3.Nd2) 3....dxe4 4.Nxe4 (see Figure 11-2). White usually obtains a spatial advantage (based on the pawn on d4) but can find it difficult to attack a Black position that's usually devoid of weaknesses.

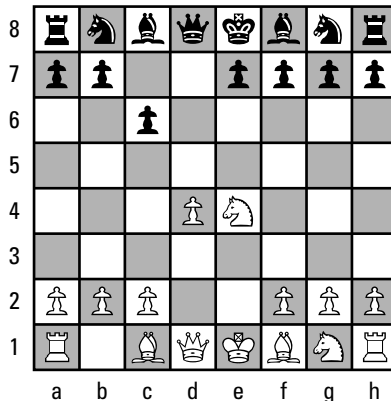
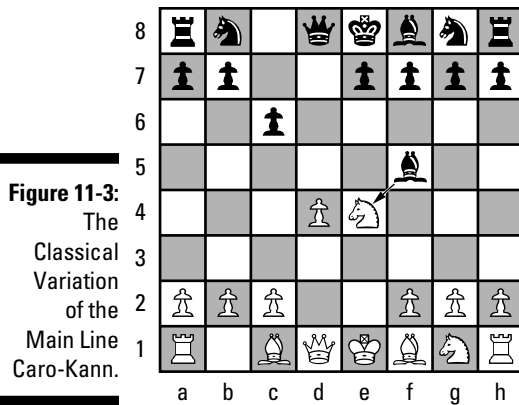


Figure 11-2:
The Main
Line of the
Caro-Kann
Defense.

After 4.Nxe4, the Main Line splits into either the Classical Variation or the Smyslov Variation (see the next two sections).

The Classical Variation

After 4.Nxe4 in the Main Line, Black can play 4....Bf5, which is the *Classical Variation* (see Figure 11-3). Black tries to develop quickly and to avoid structural weaknesses. White usually expands on the queenside and to get some counterplay there.



If you're looking for relatively easy development and are willing to defer direct confrontation for a while, the Classical Variation may be for you.

When things go White's way

White establishes and exploits a spatial advantage. An advantage in space gives you better attacking chances, but you must attack or your advantage may disappear. In the French Championship of 2003, Manuel Apicella, playing White, got the better of Christian Bauer.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3

White attacks the d5 square and keeps open lines for his pieces.

3...dxe4



This capture is almost always played because it's better than the alternatives. If Black instead played 3...Nf6, White would gain a crucial tempo by 4.e5. And if Black instead played 3...e6, then Black's bishop on c8 would become immobile.

4.Nxe4

This capture establishes the Main Line of the Caro-Kann.

4...Bf5

With this bishop move, Black enters the Classical Variation of the Main Line. Black develops while simultaneously attacking White's knight on e4. The knight retreats, but also, in turn, attacks Black's bishop.



5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.h4 h6

If Black doesn't play 7...h6, then 8.h5 would win the bishop.

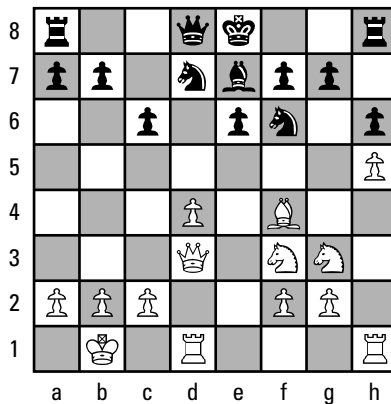
8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3

Black's bishop has moved four times and then been traded for White's. This seems like a waste of time, but Black's position is still solid.

10...e6 11.Bf4 Ngf6 12.0-0-0 Be7 13.Kb1

This is a position typical of the Main Line. White tucks his king away for defensive reasons. He has ideas of c4 and Ne5, depending on what Black does. In general, the extra space he commands, based on the pawn on d4, leaves Black cramped and working to find counterplay. On the other hand, it's difficult to attack Black's solid position, which has no weaknesses. (See Figure 11-4.)

Figure 11-4:
A typical
position
in the
Main Line
Caro-Kann.



13...0-0 14.Ne4 Qa5 15.Nxf6+ Nxf6 16.Ne5

White's knight is now strongly placed.

16....Rad8 17.Qg3

White threatens 18.Bxh6, so Black moves his king.

17....Kh8 18.Rd3 Nd5

Perhaps Black's knight should've remained where it was, defending his kingside.

19.Bd2 Qb6 20.c4 Nf6

The knight is back again, but White has gained some extra space.

21.Be3 Qa5 22.Rb3 Qa6 23.Qf3!



A very simple idea: White steps out of the way of his g-pawn, which he uses to launch a flank attack.

23....Kg8 24.g4 Nd7 25.g5!

White sees that with Black's queen cut off from the kingside, sacrificing a pawn is not a major investment.

25....Nxe5 26.dxe5 hxg5 27.h6 Qxc4 28.hxg7 Kxg7

Black thinks he's defending, but now comes the cruel blow:

29.Bxg5! Bxg5 30.Qf6+!! 1-0

What a nice finish. Black resigns because it's checkmate after 30....Bxf6 31.Rg3+ Bg5 32.Rxg5.

When things go Black's way

Black counters White's kingside expansion with advances on the queenside. Sometimes, lines open against White's king, and Black's attack comes crashing through. That's what happened in the 2007 game in the Netherlands between Daniel Stellwagen and Herman Grooten, with Grooten playing Black.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5

This is the Classical Variation. Black develops his bishop to a good square and attacks White's knight.

5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4



White strikes out to gain space. Incidentally, Black may miss the threat of 7.h5, which wins a piece!

6....h6 7.Nf3 Nd7

Black stops the move 8.Ne5, which can be a real problem.

8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 e6 11.Bf4

White develops rapidly. He intends to castle queenside and attack.

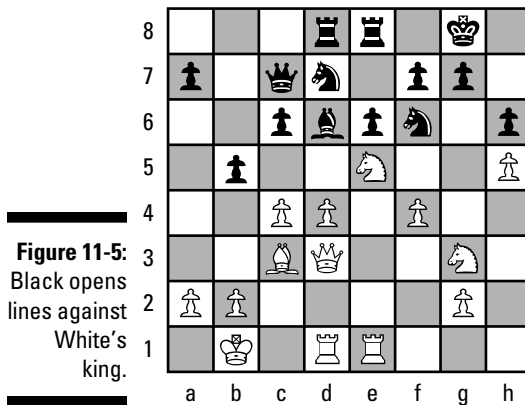
11....Qa5+ 12.Bd2 Bb4

Black's move is odd-looking but logical. Black encourages White to play c3 because White wants to castle queenside, and moving the c-pawn will weaken that sector.

**13.c3 Be7 14.c4 Qc7 15.0-0-0 Ngf6 16.Kb1 0-0
17.Rhe1 Rfe8 18.Ne5 Bd6 19.f4 Rad8 20.Bc3 b5!**



Black's preceding move is the key move of the game. At the cost of a pawn, Black wins the light squares, gets open queenside files, and gains a mighty outpost on d5. To make things worse, because White isn't able to play d5, his bad bishop on c3 is very restricted. (See Figure 11-5.)



21.cxb5



The tempting 21.c5? loses a pawn to 21....Nxc5! 22.dxc5 Bxe5 23.Bxe5 Rxd3 24.Bxc7 Rxc7, and White's h- or g-pawn is about to be lost as well.

21....cxb5 22.Qxb5 Rb8 23.Qa5

White defends against 23....Qxc3, but now Black quickly builds up his attack.

23....Rb6 24.Rc1 Reb8 25.Ka1 Qb7

Black threatens 26....Rxb2.

26.Nc4?



This is a mistake, but it's very hard to defend. For example, 26.Rc2?? loses to 26....Ra6!, trapping White's queen.

26....Bxf4 27.Nxb6 axb6 28.Qb5 Bxg3



Black has two pieces for a rook and positional advantages like the wonderful outpost on d5. The rest of the game is entertaining, but Black never loses his grip.

29.Rf1 Qd5 30.Qxd5 Nxd5 31.Bd2 N7f6 32.Rf3 Bd6
33.Rc6 Be7 34.Rh3 Ne4 35.Be1 f5

Black is inviting White to play 36.Rxe6 because then Black would win after 36....Rc8 37.Kb1 Bg5.

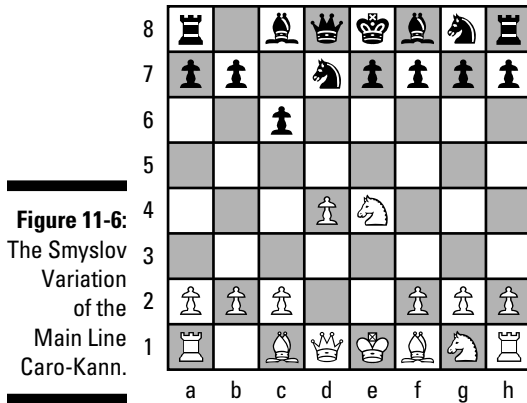
36.Bg3 f4 37.Bh2 Kf7 38.Rf3 Bg5 39.a3 Ra8
40.Rf1 Ra4 41.Bg1 Ke7 42.Rc8 Ne3 43.Rc7+ Kd6
44.Rfc1 Nc5! 0-1

White resigns because his rook on c7 is attacked, yet if it moves, ...Nb3+ forks king and rook.

The Smyslov Variation

The *Smyslov Variation* arises after the moves 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 (see Figure 11-6).

In this variation, Black wants to play the knight on g8 to f6. To do so right away with 4....Nf6, however, would allow White to damage Black's pawn structure with 5.Nxf6+. In the Smyslov Variation, Black can recapture on f6 with the knight on d7.



When things go White's way

White often castles on the queenside and attacks Black on the kingside. Judith Polgar used straightforward attacking moves in her game against Vladimir Epishin played in Geneva in 1996. Polgar opened lines up against his king and then delivered a crushing blow to end the game.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7

This is the Smyslov Variation.

5.Bc4 Ngf6 6.Ng5

White's move is played with the not-so-subtle threat of 7.Bxf7#.

6...e6 7.Qe2

Now Black has to watch out for the sacrificial moves Nxf7 and Bxe6.

7...Nb6 8.Bb3 h6 9.N5f3 c5

This is Black's standard counterattack in the center. White wastes no time defending, preferring to develop and castle.

**10.Bf4 Bd6 11.Bg3 Qc7 12.dxc5 Qxc5 13.0-0 Bxg3
14.hxg3 Bd7 15.Rh4!**

Black gets his pieces to reasonable squares, but White's rooks are both more active (see Figure 11-7), as shown by the next move.



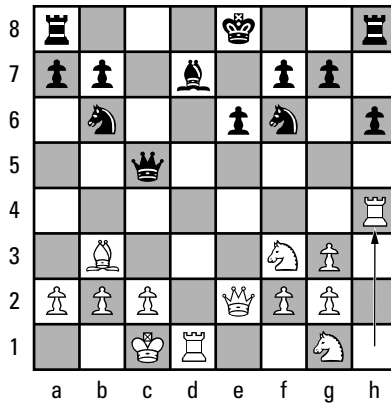


Figure 11-7:
White is able to activate his rooks in an unusual way.

15...Rc8 16.Ne5 Bb5 17.Qe1 0-0 18.Ng3 Nbd5
19.Kb1 Bc6 20.Qd2 Rfe8 21.Rdh1! Qf8 22.g4!



When kings are castled on opposite sides of the board, you often see pawn advances to break down the opponent's defenses.

22....Ne4 23.Qe1 Nd6 24.g5 Nf5 25.gxh6!

White sacrifices a rook for a knight and a pawn with the effect that Black's king is rendered helpless in the face of a combined attack by White's pieces.

25....Nxb4 26.h7+ Kh8 27.Nxb4

White's move threatens 28.Nhg6+! fxc6 29.Nxc6#.

27....Nf4 28.Qb4!! g5

Black can't play 28....Qxb4 because of 29.Nhg6+ Nxc6 30.Nxf7#.

29.Qd4 Kg7

If instead Black tries 29....Qg7, then White would play 30.Nhg6+ fxc6 31.Nf7#.

30.Nf5+! exf5 31.h8Q+ Qxh8 32.Nxf7+ 1-0

Black resigns because White will win a queen and then pick up more material afterward.

When things go Black's way

Black survives any attacking attempts by White and emerges with a more structurally sound position. Black exploits any weaknesses in White's position that result from overly ambitious expansion.

Anatoly Karpov was Black in this 1999 game from Hoogeveen, the Netherlands, against Darmen Sadvakasov. Black shows a firm grasp of the Smyslov Variation by dodging White's attacking attempts and then grinding White down in the end.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7

This is the Smyslov Variation.

5.Ng5!?

It's generally not good to move a piece twice in the opening, but this move (which is played by World Champions) actually helps White reorganize his pieces to control e5.



5....Ngf6

White would punish Black after the alternative 5....h6, with 6.Ne6! hoping for 6....fxe6?? 7.Qh5+ g6 8.Qxg6#.

6.Bd3 e6 7.N1f3 Bd6 8.Qe2 h6 9.Ne4 Nxe4
10.Qxe4 Qc7

Black ignores the chance to win a tempo with 10....Nf6 because that would lessen his control of the key square e5.

11.Qg4 Kf8!

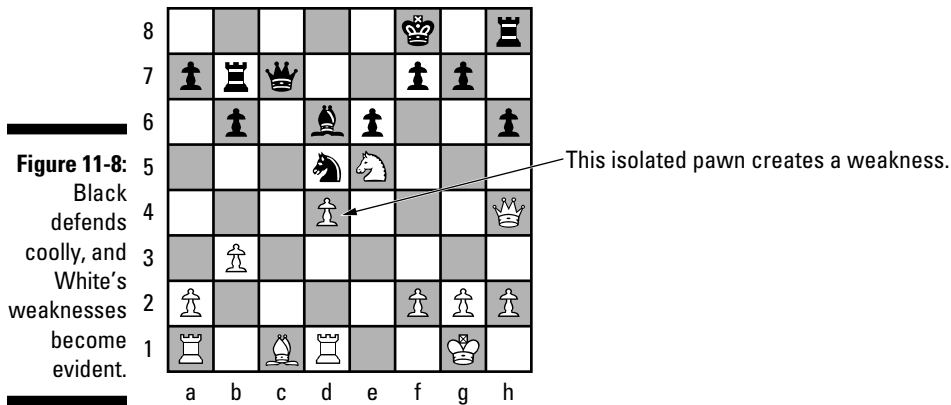
Black's move is a modern way of setting up that Karpov invented. Black refuses to create weaknesses and will continue to develop. His king isn't well-placed on f8, but White's queen on the kingside is exposed to attack.

12.0-0 c5 13.Qh4 b6 14.Be4 Rb8 15.Rd1 c4

Black secures a spot on d5 for his knight.

16.Ne5 Nf6 17.Bf3 Bb7 18.Bxb7 Rxb7 19.b3 cxb3
20.cxb3 Nd5

White is playing for attack against Black's uncastled king. On the other hand, a single knight located on an outpost on d5 is a mighty force. White's isolated pawn and bad bishop are long-term weaknesses if White's attack fails. (See Figure 11-8.)



21.Bf4 Qe7 22.Qg3



Normally, the side with the isolated pawn wants to avoid the exchange of queens. In fact, all exchanges tend to help his opponent, which explains the next move.

22....Bxe5! 23.Bxe5 Qg5! 24.Qd3 Rd7 25.Rac1 Qd8
26.Qa6 Ne7 27.Qc4 Kg8

Finally, Black's king shuffles over to h7 to free his imprisoned rook.

28.Bc7 Qa8 29.Qa4 Qe8 30.Bb8

White begins to drift, wasting moves with this bishop.

30....Kh7 31.Bc7

White would like to play 31.Bxa7, but the bishop would get trapped after 31....Rb7! 32.Qa6 Qa8 33.Qd3+ f5.

31....Nd5 32.Be5 Qe7 33.Qc4 Qg5 34.Qd3+ Qg6
35.Qe2 Rhd8

Now Black is ready to chase White's bishop away from e5, followed by attacking and winning the pawn on d4.

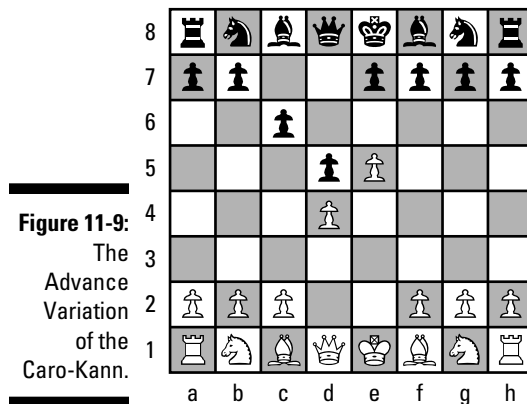
36.h4 h5 37.Rd3 Qg4! 38.Qd2 f6 39.Bg3 Ne7!
40.Qe3 Rxd4 0-1

Black wins the pawn according to plan; he went on to win the game. In fact, 40....e5! would be even more convincing, gaining a central pawn for nothing while shutting out White's weak bishop from play. This game is a superb

illustration of how a simple positional advantage can overcome what seems to be a passive position.

Being Advanced

You reach the *Advance Variation* of the Caro-Kann after the moves 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 (see Figure 11-9).



This is a very interesting idea that shares some of the ideas of the Advance Variation of the French Defense that I consider in Chapter 10. Establishing and maintaining a pawn on e5 gives White an advantage in terms of space.

The classic idea in the French is to strike at the White center with ...c5. In the Caro-Kann, however, this would result in a loss of time because Black has already played 1....c6.

When things go White's way

White gets active development to go along with the spatial superiority established by the pawn on e5. White utilizes his greater maneuverability to make threats that Black has difficulty responding to.

In the game between Nigel Short and Yasser Seirawan played in Manila, the Philippines, in 1990, Short, who played White, was able to take advantage of his spatial advantage. He got superior piece mobility, cashed that in to get

the advantage of the two bishops, and then penetrated into Black's position via the open c-file.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

The Advance Variation of the Caro-Kann.

3...Bf5 4.c3 e6 5.Be2 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6
7.0-0 h6 8.Be3

White intends to capture on c5 with 9.dxc5. Black captures on d4 instead, but this opens the c-file, and White is the first to exploit it.



8...cxd4 9.cxd4 Nge7 10.Nc3 Nc8 11.Rc1

Rooks belong on open files.

11...a6 12.Na4 Nb6 13.Nc5 Bxc5

Now, Short also has the advantage of the two bishops, which usually work better in tandem than the combination of a bishop and a knight.

14.Rxc5 0-0 15.Qb3 Nd7 16.Rc3 Qb6 17.Rfc1 Qxb3
18.Rxb3 Rfb8 19.Nd2 Kf8

White controls the c-file, has a spatial advantage in the center, and has the two bishops, but how is he to proceed? (See Figure 11-10.)

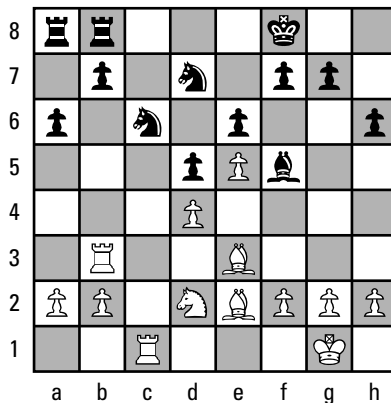


Figure 11-10:
White's advantages include two bishops and control of the c-file.

20.h4!

White continues by seizing space on the kingside. If White can open lines there it may be impossible for Black, whose pieces have less mobility, to respond to threats made on both sides of the board.



20...Ke8 21.g4 Bh7 22.h5 Nd8

Black's move is probably a mistake. Black ought to continue the king's march to the c-file with 22...Kd8.

23.Rbc3 Nb6 24.Nb3 Na4 25.Rc7 Nxb2 26.Nc5 b5 27.g5

Now, Black can't prevent White from opening up a second front.

27...Nc4 28.gxh6 gxh6 29.Nd7 Nxe3 30.fxe3 Bf5
31.Kf2 Rb7 32.Nf6+ Kf8 33.Rg1 1-0

The threat is 34.Rg8+ and 35.Re8#. White's g4-g5 advance came in handy after all.

When things go Black's way

Black neutralizes White's spatial advantage in the center and kingside and exploits White's weaknesses on the queenside. In the game between Aron Nimzowitsch and José Raúl Capablanca from New York in 1927, Capablanca (Black) forced Nimzowitsch to close lines on the kingside. Capablanca's king sat in relative safety from that point on, and Black was able to prod White into making additional concessions.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

The Advance Variation of the Caro-Kann.

3...Bf5 4.Bd3 Bxd3 5.Qxd3 e6

Black enters a French-like game, when he has already exchanged what would normally be a problem bishop.

6.Nc3 Qb6 7.Nge2 c5

This is a typical French counterattacking idea. The extra move it takes to play it (...c6 and ...c5) is balanced by the exchange of light-square bishops.

8.dxc5

This is a strategy Nimzowitsch employed in similar positions throughout his career. He'll attempt to use the d4 square as a base for his pieces.



8...Bxc5 9.0-0 Ne7 10.Na4

White would've been better off playing 10.a3, which threatens 11.b4, trapping the bishop.

10...Qc6 11.Nxc5 Qxc5 12.Be3 Qc7 13.f4 Nf5
14.c3 Nc6 15.Rad1 g6 16.g4

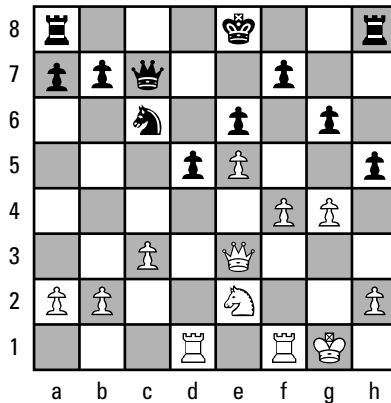


In his desire to drive the knight away from its post on f5, Nimzowitsch commits a strategic error. Capablanca can now close the kingside.

16...Nxe3 17.Qxe3 h5

Black's move forces White into a dilemma between 18.gxh5 Rxh5, where the h-file will belong to Black, 18.h3 hxg4 19.hxg4, where Black again owns the h-file, or the move actually played (see Figure 11-11).

Figure 11-11:
White has his choice of which bad move to make.



18.g5

But now Black can castle kingside in safety.

18...0-0 19.Nd4 Qb6 20.Rf2 Rfc8

Black often has control along the c-file in these types of games.

21.a3 Rc7 22.Rd3 Na5 23.Re2 Re8

Black defends against the possibility of 24.f5 exf5 25.e6, where White goes on the attack.

24.Kg2 Nc6 25.Red2 Rec8 26.Re2 Ne7

Black can improve his position at his leisure because White can't undertake any active plan.

27.Red2 Rc4 28.Qh3 Kg7 29.Rf2 a5 30.Re2 Nf5
31.Nxf5+ gxf5 32.Qf3

White can't capture the pawn with 32.Qxh5 because after 32....Rh8 33.Qf3 Rh4, the f-pawn will fall.



32....Kg6 33.Red2 Re4 34.Rd4 Rc4 35.Qf2

White should've played 35.Rxc4 while the game remained fairly balanced.

35....Qb5 36.Kg3? Rcx4 37.cxd4 Qc4

Black's move gives him control over the only open file.

38.Kg2 b5 39.Kg1 b4 40.axb4 axb4 41.Kg2 Qc1
42.Kg3 Qh1 43.Rd3 Re1 44.Rf3 Rd1 45.b3 Rc1
46.Re3 Rf1 0-1

White resigns because 47.Qg2 loses to 47....Rg1, while any other queen move along the second rank falls to 47....Qg1+, with the dual threat of 48....Qxe3+ if White's king doesn't move, and 48....Qg4# if it does.

Chapter 12

Rope-a-Dope with the Pirc and Modern Defenses

In This Chapter

- ▶ Honing your knack for the Austrian Attack
- ▶ Practicing the Pirc Classical
- ▶ Getting flexible with the Modern Defense

The Pirc and Modern Defenses both feature a kingside fianchetto by Black. They allow White to set up a strong pawn center, but Black fully intends to batter it down later. Black allows White to punch himself out before he starts throwing haymakers of his own.

Picking the Pirc

The *Pirc Defense* (pronounced “peerts”) is named after the Yugoslav player Vasja Pirc (1907–1980). You arrive at the Pirc after the moves 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 (see Figure 12-1).

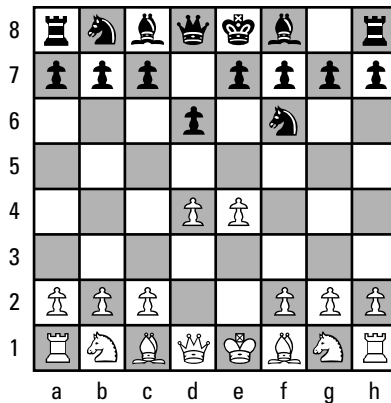


Figure 12-1:
The Pirc
Defense.

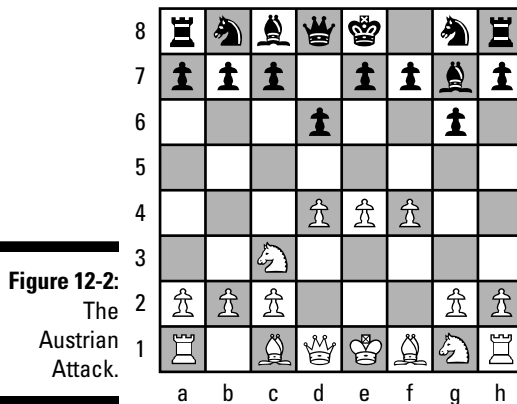


Black continues with a kingside fianchetto, followed by castling. At some point Black strikes out at White's center, usually with either ...c5 or ...e5.

The games can go in many different directions, but generally, the Pirc appeals to the chess player who likes to counterpunch.

The Austrian Attack

The *Austrian Attack*, a system of attack against the Pirc, was developed by the Viennese players Hans Müller (1896–1971) and Andreas Dückstein (1927–) but was first played in an international tournament in 1896 in Nuremberg. White essentially tries to overrun Black's position with center pawn advances. The Austrian Attack commences after the moves 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.f4 (see Figure 12-2).



The Pirc belongs to the *Hypermodern School* of thought (see Chapter 3), which maintains that you don't have to occupy the center in order to control it. The Austrian Attack is a direct challenge to that thinking. White occupies the center with pawns and seeks to roll Black right off the board.

When things go White's way

White expands in the center and on the kingside. White's attack on the kingside outpaces Black's counterattack on the queenside, and White wins material or delivers a mating attack.

The game between Darmen Sadvakasov (as White) and Marat Dzhumayev played in 2005 in Hyderabad, India, reached the Austrian Attack formation

by transposition. The move order was slightly different from normal, but the players arrived at the starting position of the Austrian Attack all the same.

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 g6

This fianchetto is Black's main idea — to exert indirect pressure on White's d4 while contesting e5.

4.f4 Nf6

The game has reached the starting point of the Austrian Attack. 4.f4 is White's most ambitious move, stopping ...e5 and getting ready to play e5 at some point.

5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be3 b6 7.Qd2 c5 8.d5

White doesn't want Black to play ...cxd4 and open his c-file, as he does in the Sicilian Defense.

8...Bb7 9.0-0-0 Na6

Black can't stop e5, after which White's center becomes a monstrous force.

10.e5 Ng4 11.h3 Nxe3 12.Qxe3 c4 13.h4! b5 14.h5

Both sides have flank attacks, but White's advanced center helps his attack and blocks Black's bishops.

14...b4 15.Ne4 c3 16.hxg6 fxg6



If Black instead tries 16...hxg6, then 17.Nfg5! threatens both Qh3 and e6.

17.Rxh7!!

White's sacrifice is justified, as you can see by 17...cxb2+ 18.Kb1 Kxh7 19.Nfg5+ Kg8 20.Qh3 with a mating attack. (See Figure 12-3.)

17....Qb6 18.Qd3 Qa5 19.Nf6+!

A beautiful move by White. By opening the queen's path to g6, White wins right away.

19....exf6

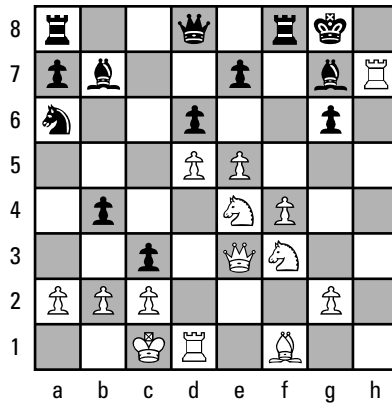


Figure 12-3:
White offers
a rook on h7
that Black
dare not
take.



If instead Black tries 19....Rxf6, then 20.exf6 cxb2+ 21.Kb1 Kxh7 22.Ng5+ Kg8 23.Qxg6 mates quickly.

20.Qxg6 Qc7

21.Bd3 1-0

Black has to deal with too many threats, including the pretty 22.Rh8+! Kxh8 23.Qh7#.

When things go Black's way

Black counterattacks and demolishes White's center. White gets overextended, and Black's pieces are better coordinated. In a 1979 game from Dortmund, Germany, John Nunn, playing Black, survived Lazlo Percz's ambitious attempt to overrun his position and struck back with a vengeance.

1.e4 g6

2.d4 Bg7

3.Nc3 d6

4.f4 Nf6

Arriving back to the Austrian Attack by transposition.

5.Nf3 0-0

6.e5 Nfd7

7.h4

White's move is about as direct an attack as there is! First White drives away the knight, which defends the kingside, and then he charges forward on that front.

7....c5



But Black has his own idea: Flank attacks are often less effective than central attacks.

8.h5 cxd4 9.hxg6!

White sacrifices a piece to rip apart the kingside. The point of Black's strategy is shown if White instead tried 9.Nxd4 dxe5 or 9.Qxd4 dxe5 10.fxe5 Nxe5!

9...dxc3 10.gxf7+ Rxf7 11.Bc4 e6! 12.Ng5

If White plays 12.Bxe6, then 12....Nxe5! attacks White's bishop on e6. After 13.Bxf7+ Nxf7, Black has two pieces for a rook and threatens ...cxb2 with the better game.

12....Nxe5!

Black's play always depends on destroying White's center (see Figure 12-4).

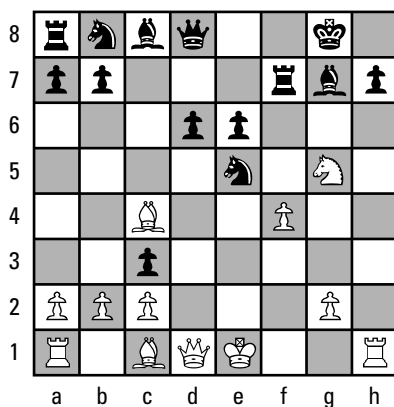


Figure 12-4:
Black
demolishes
White's
center.

13.Qh5



If White tries 13.fxe5, then 13....cxb2 14.Bxb2 Qxg5 is much better for Black.

13....h6 14.fxe5 hxg5 15.Qh7+ Kf8 16.Qh8+!

White's move is the only way to get back his sacrificed piece.

**16....Bxh8 17.Rxh8+ Kg7 18.Rxd8 Nc6 19.Rxd6 Nxe5
20.Be2 Rd7**

A tricky idea by Black.



21.Rxe6 Rd1+

22.Kxd1 Bxe6

23.Bxg5?

Just when he was getting out of trouble, White blunders.

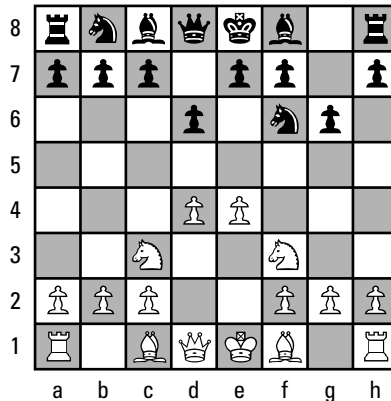
23....Rh8! 0-1

White can't do anything about the threat of ...Rh1+ without losing a whole piece. For example, with the move sequence 24.Bf1 Rh1 25.Ke2 Bc4+ 26.Kf2 cxb2 27.Rb1 Rxf1+! 28.Rxf1 Bxf1, then Black's pawn queens.

Picking the Pirc Classical

The term *classical* refers to the method of development employed in this variation of the Pirc Defense. The moves 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 are in accordance with classical theory as it was understood in the 19th century (see Figure 12-5).

Figure 12-5:
The
Classical
Variation
of the Pirc
Defense.



By bringing the knight to f3, White supports a later pawn advance from e4 to e5 while simultaneously making e7-e5 more difficult for Black. All is well from a traditional point of view. The center pawns are where they should be, as are the knights. From Black's perspective, the center pawns are targets to be attacked, and it remains to be seen whether White's center will be maintained or undermined.

When things go White's way

Even if Black succeeds in eliminating White's center pawns, White retains control in the center and has a lead in development. White attacks vigorously to prevent Black from catching up in development and overwhelming Black's defenses.

In the game between former World Champions, played in 1974 in Moscow, Tigran Petrosian made a rare (for him) defensive error, and Mikhail Tal launched a direct attack against the Black king. When Tal was on the attack, things often went his way.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3

Arriving at the Classical Variation of the Pirc Defense.

4...Bg7 5.Be2 0-0 6.0-0 Nc6 7.d5 Nb8
 8.Re1 e5 9.dxe6 Bxe6 10.Bf4 h6 11.Nd4 Bd7
 12.Qd2 Kh7 13.e5 dxe5 14.Bxe5 Ne4?



Black acquires the two bishops, but it's very time-consuming. He should've brought his queen's knight into play instead.

15.Nxe4 Bxe5 16.Nf3 Bg7 17.Rad1 Qc8 18.Bc4

Now every White piece is actively placed (see Figure 12-6).

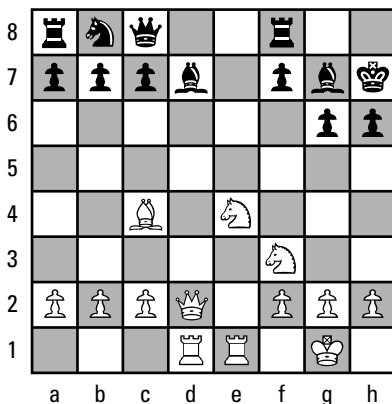


Figure 12-6:
 White is ready to launch a kingside offensive.

18....Be8 19.Neg5+! hxg 20.Nxg5+ Kg8 21.Qf4

White's idea is simple: Move the queen to h4 and then h7.

21....Nd7

Perhaps Black was counting on 21....Bh6, but 22.Rxe8! (and not the obvious 22.Qf6 because of 22....Qf5) 22....Qxe8 23.Qf6 and Qxg6+ can't be stopped. For example, with the move sequence 23....Bxg5 24.Qxg6+ Kh8 25.Qh5+ Kg8 26.Qxg5+ Kh7 27.Rd4 Qe1+ 28.Bf1 and Rh4, checkmate is soon to follow.

22.Rxd7! Bxd7

If Black instead plays 22....Qxd7, then White plays 23.Qh4, with mate coming quickly.

23.Bxf7+! 1-0

The finish would be 23.Bxf7+ Rxf7 24.Qxf7+ Kh8. White can win in many ways. You can take your pick, such as 25.Qxg6 Bf5 26.Nf7+ Kg8 27.Nh6+ Kh8 28.Nxf5, after which Black won't survive long.

When things go Black's way

Black's pieces find active posts and take advantage of weaknesses in White's position. White gets overextended and is unable to defend against every Black threat.

In the game Martin Martens versus Curt Hansen from Amsterdam in 1990, Black (Hansen) was able to get his pieces to active squares. From that point on, Black was the attacker, and White eventually couldn't deal with all the various threats.

1.e4 d6

2.d4 Nf6

3.Nc3 g6

4.Nf3

Establishing the Pirc Classical.

4....Bg7 5.h3

White prevents 5....Bg4, which is a standard Pirc Defense move. Now, Black's bishop on c8 has no obvious squares to go to.

5....0-0 6.Be3 a6!

Instead of playing for ...e5, Black wants to play ...b5 and ...Bb7. White stops this idea with his next move.

7.a4 b6 8.Bc4 e6 9.0-0 Bb7 10.d5

White has to defend e4, and if he had instead tried 10...e5, then 10....dxe5 11.dxe5 Qxd1 12.Rfxd1 Nfd7 threatens both ...Nxe5 and ...Bxf3.

10...exd5 11.exd5 Re8 12.Re1 Nbd7 13.Nd4?



Apparently a good centralizing move, but it would've been better to oppose bishops and cover e4 by playing 13.Bd4 instead.

13...Ne4!

This move opens up paths for Black's queen and bishop on g7 (see Figure 12-7).

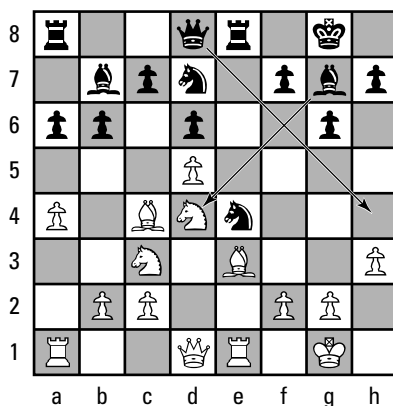


Figure 12-7:
Black's pieces now have open lines.

14.Nde2 Qh4

Now, the queen is indirectly attacking the bishop on c4.

15.Ba2 Ndc5



Suddenly, all Black's pieces are active. This shows how it's not necessary to have a pawn on the 4th or 5th rank if you can find good posts for your forces.

16.a5 b5 17.Nxe4 Rxe4 18.c3 Rae8 19.Qd2?

But White's position was too passive anyway.

19....Rxe3! 20.fxe3 Ne4 21.Qc1 Qf2+ 22.Kh1 Be5! 23.c4

White's move loses immediately, but he has no defense against the kingside attack; for example, 23.Nf4 Ng3+ 24.Kh2 g5, and so on.

23....Qxe2! 0-1

A cute finish. Black resigns in view of 24.Rxe2 Ng3+, and wherever White's king goes, ...Nxe2+ and ...Nxc1 follow.

Thoroughly Modern Maneuvers

Closely related to the Pirc, the *Modern Defense* opening seeks to benefit by delaying or forgoing a move of the g8 knight to f6. The idea is still to allow White to set up what appears to be an imposing pawn center and to try to prove that it isn't so imposing after all. You arrive at the Modern Defense after the moves 1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 (see Figure 12-8).

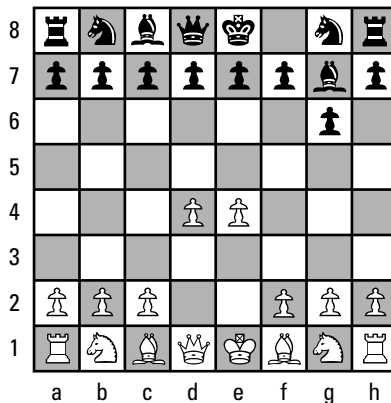


Figure 12-8:
The Modern
Defense.

By skipping the move Ng8-f6, Black allows White the option of playing the c2-pawn to c4. This can take the game into different channels from the Pirc, but many of the ideas are still the same.



The Modern Defense appeals to players who want to have maximum flexibility in their choice of moves.

When things go White's way

White uses pawn advances in the center and on the kingside to secure an advantage in space. White uses that spatial advantage to launch an attack, frequently sacrificing material to open lines against Black's king.

In a 1993 game against Miodrag Todorcevic, played in Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, Viktor Bologan had White. He established a strong center and then attacked on the kingside. His attack came crashing through before Black could muster any serious threats on the queenside.

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7

This is the Modern Defense.

3.Nc3 d6 4.f4

White takes over more of the center and will try to steamroll Black with his pawns.

4....c6

Here, Black can play 4...Nf6, transposing into a Pirc Defense, which usually arises after 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6. The noncommittal 4...c6 is typical of the Modern Defense. Black waits to see how White will develop his pieces and intends to play ...b5 with queenside expansion at some point.

5.Nf3 Bg4

Notice how this pin indirectly weakens White's protection of d4.

6.Be3 Qb6!?

This is also typically modern play: Black brings his bishops and queen out right away to exert pressure on the dark squares b2 and d4.

7.Qd2! Bxf3 8.gxf3 Nd7

If Black had taken the b-pawn instead by 8...Qxb2, then 9.Rb1 Qa3 10.Rxb7 would win back the pawn and leave White with a much more active rook.

9.0-0-0 Qa5 10.Kb1 b5! 11.h4!

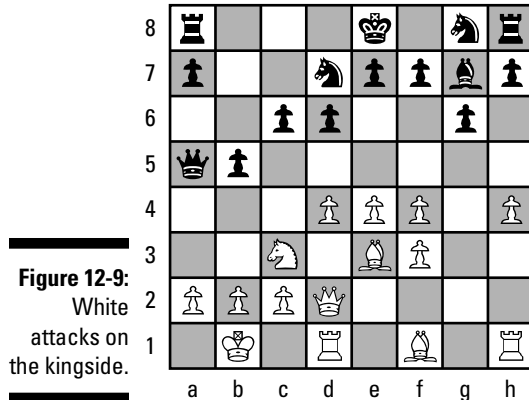
Black initiates a flank attack, and in return, White does the same. White controls the center, however, which means that his position is hard to attack. (See Figure 12-9.)

11....Nb6 12.h5 b4 13.Ne2 Nc4 14.Qd3 Nxe3
15.Qxe3



Usually, if Black can get rid of White's dark-squared bishop, his bishop on g7 becomes more powerful. But here he has trouble getting his kingside pieces developed.

15....Nf6 16.h6 Bf8 17.d5! cxd5 18.e5 Nd7
19.e6 fxe6 20.Qxe6



The light squares around Black's king are very weak, and it only takes a few moves for White to take over.

20....Rb8 21.Nd4 Qc5 22.Bh3 Rb7 23.Rhe1 Nb6
24.f5! gxf5 25.Qxf5 1-0

White threatens 26.Qh5+ Kd8 27.Ne6+, forking king and queen. Black can't defend against the attack.

When things go Black's way

Black advances pawns on the queenside, creating weaknesses in White's position. Black lags behind in development but starts to catch up and then exploit those weaknesses.

Laszlo Barczay played White in a 1967 game in Tunisia against Duncan Suttles and got the usual lead in development White expects. Black, however, struck out on the queenside and simply gashed White's position there.

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nf3

White develops calmly. If he doesn't want to use up time setting up a big center with c4 and f4, then this is a sound alternative.

3...d6 4.Bc4 c6

There's that modest Modern Defense move, 4...c6. In response, White stops Black from playing ...d5.

5.Nc3 b5!? 6.Bb3 b4 7.Ne2 a5

Black is simply lashing out on the queenside; that's his fifth straight pawn move!

8.c3 Nf6 9.e5 dxe5 10.Nxe5 0-0 11.0-0



White is better developed and has more pieces out. But in the Modern Defense, that sometimes isn't as important as the pawn structure.

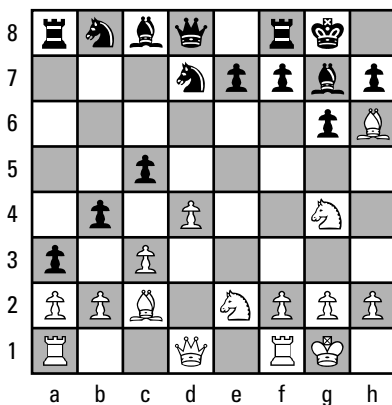
11....Nfd7 12.Ng4 a4! 13.Bc2

If White had instead played 13.Bxa4, then 13...Nb6 attacks pieces on a4 and g4.

13....c5 14.Bh6 a3!

Quite a picture! Black has completely undermined White's center by attacking its base on b2. Of course, anyone who makes 10 pawn moves out of his first 14 (and has moved one piece twice) risks getting blown off the board. But here it turns out that Black's pawn advances make up for his other problems. (See Figure 12-10.)

Figure 12-10:
Black is hyper-aggressive on the queenside.



15.Bxg7 axb2 16.Rb1 Kxg7 17.cxb4 Nb6!

Black attacks the knight on g4.

18.Ne5 cxd4 19.Bb3 f6 20.Nd3 e5 21.Rxb2 Nc6



The material is even, but White has some problems protecting his own pawns. Mobile center pawns are almost always better than flank pawns, and in this game they triumph.

22.a4?! Qd6! 23.Qc2

The alternative try, 23.b5, is met by 23...Na5 24.Bc2 e4 25.Nb4 d3, which is an example of the power of Black's pawns, because 26.Nc3 fails to 26...Qd4.

23....Bf5	24.Ng3	Bxd3	25.Qxd3	Nxb4
26.Qb5 Rfb8		27.Ne4 Qe7		28.a5 Nd7
29.Qc4 f5		30.Ng5 Qxg5		31.Qf7+ Kh6
32.Qxd7 Nd3		33.Rbb1 Nc5		34.Qd5 Rxa5
35.Bc4 Rxb1		36.Rxb1 Qe7		37.Bf1 Ra7
38.Re1 Rd		39.Qg8 e4 0-1		

The center pawns will finish the job; for example, 40.Qa2 d3 41.g3 d2 42.Rd1 e3 43.Be2 Ne4.

Chapter 13

The Best of the Rest of the Semi-Open Games

In This Chapter

- ▶ Courting risk with Alekhine's Defense
 - ▶ Simplifying things with the Scandinavian Defense
-

Semi-open games often introduce some kind of imbalance to avoid the symmetry that can characterize certain open games. Black often incurs a disadvantage in some aspect of the position to try to obtain an advantage in another.

Both Alekhine's Defense and the Scandinavian Defense immediately attack White's pawn on e4. But after that, these defenses may have very little in common with each other.

Analyzing Alekhine's Defense

Alekhine's Defense is named after the former World Champion Alexander Alekhine (1892–1946). It occurs after the moves 1.e4 Nf6 (see Figure 13-1).

Black wants to lure White's pawns forward in the hopes that White will become overextended and vulnerable to counterattack. It's a risky strategy that looks great when it works and looks ugly when it doesn't. This defense has plenty of dynamic possibilities, which makes it attractive to aggressive players.

The defense appeals to players who have a provocative nature and who enjoy complications, even if they lead to difficulties.



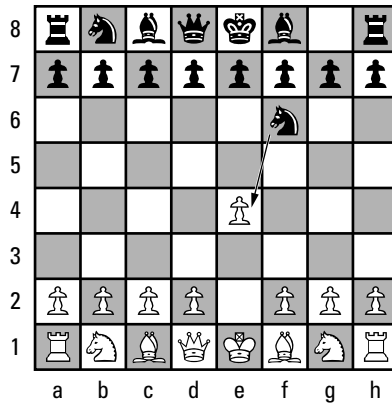


Figure 13-1:
Alekhine's
Defense.

When things go White's way

White obtains a spatial advantage in the center and maintains it despite Black's best efforts to undermine it. White then has greater room to maneuver pieces and generate threats that Black will have an increasingly difficult time finding adequate defenses for.

Garry Kasparov played White in a 1978 game against Semon (Sam) Palatnik and developed an overwhelming attacking formation. He finished the game with a series of powerful strokes that ultimately broke down Black's defenses.

1.e4 Nf6

This is Alekhine's Defense. Black wants to lure White's center forward and then attack it.

2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.Nf3

This simple setup, taking space but not moving too many pawns, is called the *Modern Variation*.

4....g6

In the Alekhine, Black tries to break up White's center by playing moves such as ...c5, ...cxd4, and ...dxe5. A bishop on g7 assists by attacking both d4 and e5.

5.Bc4 Nb6 6.Bb3 a5 7.a4 Bg7 8.Ng5

White's knight is attacking f7, and White is also threatening 9.e6.

8...e6

The problem for Black is that 8...d5 releases Black's pressure on e5.

9.f4 dxe5 10.fxe5 c5 11.0-0 0-0

Black castles to provide protection for the f7 square.

12.c3 Nc6



A better move for Black would have been 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.Nf3 f6, which is a more direct way to tear down White's center.

13.Ne4! Nd7

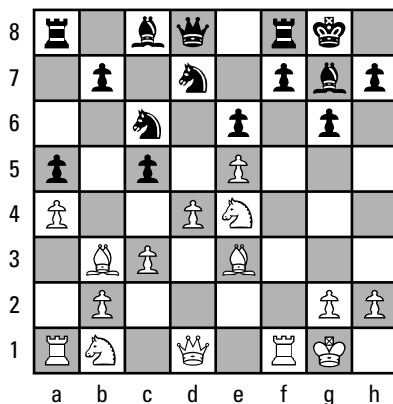
13...cxd4 would allow 14.Bg5 and Nf6+, launching a big attack on Black's king.

14.Be3



Here, White's strategy has beaten Black's: His advanced center is intact, and Black has dark-square weaknesses on d6, f6, and h6 (see Figure 13-2).

Figure 13-2:
White's center is intact, and Black has dark-square weaknesses.



14....Ne7 15.Bg5 cxd4 16.cxd4 h6 17.Bh4 g5
 18.Bf2 Ng6 19.Nbc3 Qe7 20.Bc2 b6 21.Be3 Ba6
 22.Rf2 Nh8

A funny-looking move by Black, tucking the knight into a corner, but by protecting the knight, Black is ready to play ...f6 or ...f5. Unfortunately, it's too late, and the World Champion unleashes a typical sacrificial attack.



23.Bxg5! hxg5 24.Qh5 f5 25.Nxg5 Rf7

White threatens 26.Qh7#. Black can give himself an escape square on f8 with 25...Rfd8, but then 26.Rxf5! exf5 27.Bb3+ Kf8 28.Nh7# is mate!

26.Bxf5!! Rxf5

Or, if Black's move is 26...exf5, then 27.Nd5 Qe8 28.e6 is too much to handle.

27.Rxf5 exf5 28.Nd5 Qe8 29.Qh7+ Kf8 30.Qxf5+ Kg8
31.Qh7+ Kf8 32.Ra3!



Good players use every single piece in the attack.

32....Rc8 33.Rf3+ Nf6 34.h3!

White gives himself a square on h2 in case of checks.

34....Qg6 35.Rxf6+ Bxf6 36.Ne6+ Ke8 37.Nxf6+ 1-0

When things go Black's way

Black allows White to establish an impressive-looking pawn structure, only to tear it down later. White often drifts into a passive position because of the need to defend the advanced central pawns.

In the game between Marius Moraru (who was White) and Mihai Grunberg from Bucharest in 1999, White tried to set up a dominating pawn center, but Black was having none of it.

1.e4 Nf6

Putting Alekhine's Defense into play.

2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 Nb6 5.f4

This is the *Four Pawns Attack*, White's most ambitious way to dominate the play with his pawns.

5....dxe5 6.fxe5 c5 7.d5 g6 8.Nc3 Bg7



This is the Alekhine theme: Lure White's pawns forward and then attack them.

9.Bf4 0-0 10.Be2

This is a passive move by White, but White wants to avoid the pin after the alternative 10.Nf3 Bg4.

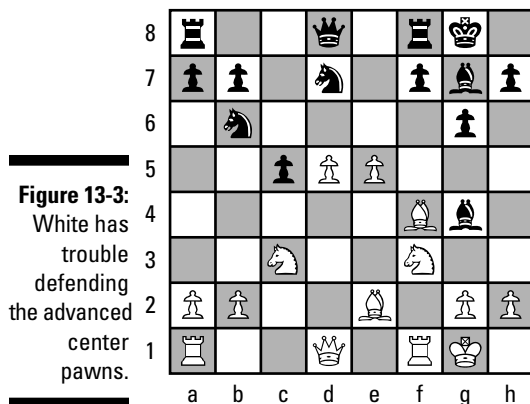
10....e6 11.Nf3



Although 11.d6 looks tempting, Black can reply 11....g5! 12.Bg3 Nc6, and White will lose his e-pawn after 13.Nf3 g4 followed by ...Nxe5.

11....exd5 12.cxd5 Bg4 13.0-0 N8d7

Black loads up on the e5 pawn, which is difficult to defend. (See Figure 13-3.)



14.Qe1 Bxf3 15.Bxf3 Nxe5! 16.Bxe5 Re8

Black recovers his piece and leaves White with only one center pawn. For a master, this position is pretty easy to win.

17.Qf2 Bxe5 18.Qxc5 Rc8 19.Qf2 Bxc3 20.bxc3 Rxc3
21.Rad1 Qd6 22.Rd4 Re7 23.Bg4 Nc4



Instead, 23....h5! 24.Bd1 Nc4 is a better way to win, with the idea ...Ne3. The next few moves aren't perfect, but they allow a nice finish.

24.Be6 Ne3 25.Qd2? Qxh2+! 0-1

After 26.Kxh2, 26....Nxf1+ forks the rook and queen.

Striking Back with the Scandinavian

The *Scandinavian Defense* (also known as the *Center Counter*) begins with the moves 1.e4 d5 (see Figure 13-4). It's a direct challenge to the White pawn on e4. The main drawback to the move is that there may be a slight loss of time following the moves 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3, when the Black queen is obliged to move again.

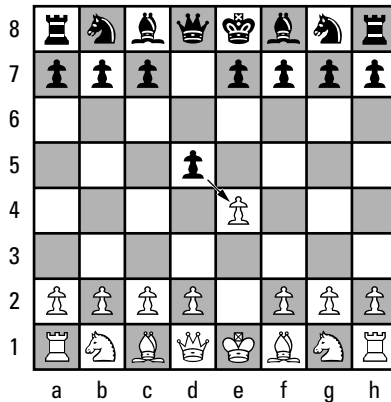


Figure 13-4:
The Scandi-
navian
Defense.

By eliminating the White e-pawn, Black has some space and can develop pretty easily.



The Scandinavian Defense appeals to players who don't want to spend a lot of time learning a bunch of complicated variations.

When things go White's way

White has a lead in development and more space in the center and on the kingside. White initiates threats that Black, with a more cramped position, finds difficult to counter.

In this game between Anatoly Karpov (who was White) and Ian Rogers played in Bath in 1983, Black preferred e7-e6 to c7-c6 and found himself in trouble because his queen had few possible retreats. Later, he played c7-c6 anyway, but this lost time, which is probably why this line hasn't been so popular in recent practice.

1.e4 d5

This is the Scandinavian Defense.

2.exd5 Qxd5

Black brings his queen out early, which is usually a bad idea. In this case, the open lines created by 1...d5 (for the bishop on c8 and a rook on the d-file) somewhat make up for the loss of time in having to move the queen twice.



3.Nc3 Qa5 4.d4 Nf6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.h3 Bh5

If Black had instead played 6...Bxf3, then 7.Qxf3 would give White the bishop pair.



7.g4 Bg6 8.Ne5 e6 9.h4!

This advance is typical in the Scandinavian. White wants to kick Black's bishop around.

9...Bb4 10.Rh3 c6 11.Bd2 Qb6 12.h5 Be4 13.Re3

White is threatening g5.

13....Bxc3

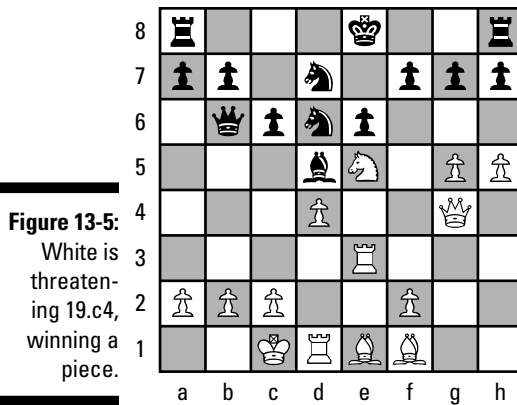
After the alternative 13...Qxd4, 14.g5 wins a piece for White, and even after White's next move, g5 is threatened.

14.Bxc3 Bd5 15.g5 Ne4 16.Qg4 Nd6 17.0-0-0 Nd7

Finally, Black has developed his queen's knight, but he's faced with another problem.

18.Be1!

A tricky and very strong move by White. White threatens with 19.c4, and the next exchange only delays matters (see Figure 13-5).



18....Nxe5 19.dxe5 Nf5 20.Rh3!

White is again threatening with 21.c4. Black has no real escape because 20....c5 loses to 21.Rxd5! exd5 22.Qxf5.

20....0-0-0 21.c4 Qc5 22.b4 Bxf3

That's why White's rook didn't retreat to a3 — it would be hanging after 22....Qxb4.

23.Rxd8+ Rxd8 24.Qxf3 Qxe5 25.Bc3

White is a piece to the good.

25....Qd6 26.Bd3 Nd4 27.Qxf7 Nf5
28.Bxf5 Qf4+ 29.Re3 1-0

When things go Black's way

Black develops simply and effectively. White's center comes under pressure, and Black's pieces become more active than White's, which are reduced to a passive defense.

Artur Kogan, in a game against Sergei Movsesian from 2000, was able to achieve an ideal setup for Black. After his development was complete, he turned his attention to attacking the White king.

1.e4 d5

Setting up the Scandinavian Defense.

2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qa5 4.d4 Nf6 5.Bc4 Bg4

Black rushes his pieces out. He would be happy to see 6.Nf3 Nc6, with White's d-pawn attacked further by ...0-0-0. In fact, he pursues that strategy in the game.

6.f3 Bf5 7.Nge2 e6 8.Bd2 Qb6 9.g4

White begins the common strategy of hunting down Black's bishop in order to provoke weaknesses.

9...Bg6 10.h4 h6 11.Bb3 Nc6!

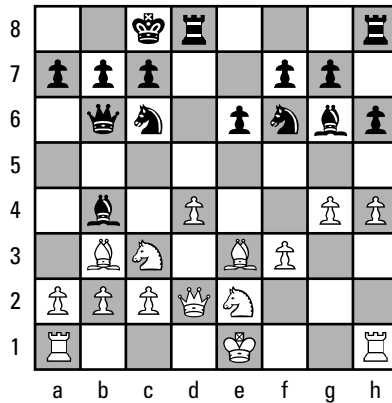
The Black knight is attacking the pawn on d4. It's dangerous for Black to leave the queen on b6 without many squares to run to, but here, there's no way to trap it.

12.Be3 0-0-0 13.Qd2 Bb4



Black has achieved an ideal Scandinavian Defense position: All his pieces are out and actively placed. Next, he turns his attention to harassing White's king. (See Figure 13-6.)

Figure 13-6:
Black's pieces are all developed actively.



14.0-0-0 Nd5 15.Bf2 Na5 16.h5 Bh7 17.g5 Nxb3+
18.cxb3



Now, White's king is cut off from safety by the bishop on h7. Unfortunately, capturing toward the center by 18.axb3 allows a winning attack of 18...Qa5 19.Kb1 Rd6 and ...Ra6.

18...hxc5 19.Qxc5 Qa5 20.Nxd5 exd5 21.a4 Rhe8
22.Qxc7

White is in desperate straits, but if the knight moves, Black has ...Rd6 and ...Rc6+.

22....Rxe2 23.Qxh7 Rxf2 24.Qf5+ Kb8 25.Qf6 Rc8
26.Rd3 Qb6 0-1

Black is a piece ahead, and with the queens about to be exchanged, White has no reason to play on.

Part IV

Conquering with Closed and Semi- Closed Games

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Interesting countermove. He's putting hotels
on d4 and d5."

In this part . . .

This part covers closed games where White's first move is 1.d4 and Black responds with 1...d5. These games favor strategic planning and maneuvering. If that's your style, then the openings in this part may appeal to you.

This part also covers responses to 1.d4 other than 1...d5, including the so-called Indian defenses that are at the leading edge of chess thinking today. If you can postpone immediate gratification in order to achieve your ultimate objective, you may want to check out these openings.

The Queen's Gambit is in this part. It's in the repertoire of most players who open with 1.d4.

Chapter 14

Offering the Queen's Gambit

In This Chapter

- ▶ Exploring the Queen's Gambit
- ▶ Playing it straight with the Orthodox Variation
- ▶ Competing vigorously with the Tartakower Variation
- ▶ Excelling at the Exchange Variation

The Queen's Gambit is one of the game's oldest openings. Whether Black accepts or declines the gambit, White has good chances to secure an advantage in the center. This opening has a large number of variations; this chapter examines some of the more important ones.

Considering the Queen's Gambit

The *Queen's Gambit* occurs after the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 (see Figure 14-1). It isn't entirely correct to characterize White's second move as a gambit because Black really can't hang on to the pawn. If Black does capture the pawn on c4, it's usually with the intention of allowing White to recapture it later.

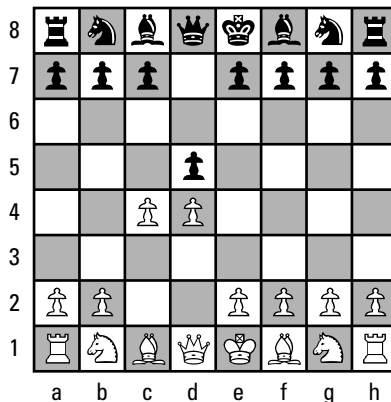


Figure 14-1:
The Queen's
Gambit.

White tries to gain an advantage in the center by attacking Black's pawn on d5. If the pawn is removed, the advance e2-e4 is facilitated, giving White a potentially powerful pawn center. Black can decline the gambit in a variety of ways, or simply capture the pawn.

If Black captures the pawn, the opening is referred to as the *Queen's Gambit Accepted*. If Black doesn't take the offered pawn and protects the d-pawn with e7-e6, the opening is called the *Queen's Gambit Declined*. The Queen's Gambit Declined can lead to a rich variety of strategically complex variations.

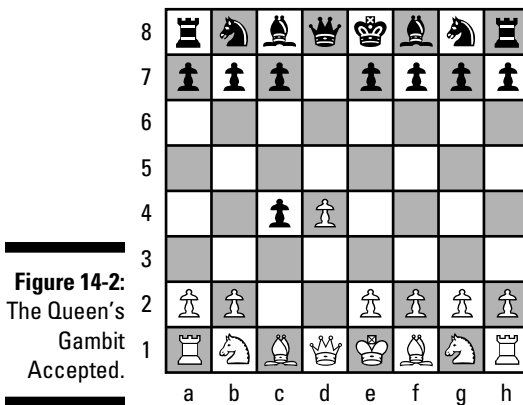
Many openings can be arrived at via different move orders, which is referred to as *transposition*. The most likely move order for the Queen's Gambit is 1.d4 d5 2.c4, for example, but 1.c4 d5 2.d4 amounts to the same thing.



The Queen's Gambit appeals to players who enjoy games that require long-term strategic planning. If you enjoy applying subtle pressure until your opponent finally cracks, this opening may be right for you.

The Queen's Gambit Accepted

The *Queen's Gambit Accepted* arises following the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 (see Figure 14-2).



It isn't normally recommended for Black to try to hold on to this pawn. The basic idea is to develop rapidly and try to saddle White with an isolated d-pawn by playing ...c5 and ...cxd4. The isolated d-pawn is an intriguing structure in chess. If it can be *blockaded* (prevented from advancing), it may turn into a weakness and have to be defended by pieces. Pieces don't like performing guard duty for pawns!

However, if it can advance, it can often break down Black's defenses and pave the way for a winning attack. Grandmaster games over the years have featured many a delicate dance with an isolated d-pawn.

When things go White's way

White is able to advance the d-pawn from d4 to d5 and disrupt the coordination of Black's pieces. It's surprising to see how rapidly Black's position can crumble.

In a 1995 game in Sweden between Ulf Andersson (as White) and Anatoly Karpov, Black gave White an isolated d-pawn and then tried to prevent its advance. It must've been a shock to Karpov when Andersson advanced the pawn anyway.

1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 dxc4

Reaching the Queen's Gambit Accepted through a transposition of moves. The same position occurs more often by the move order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6.

4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.Qe2 cxd4 8.exd4

Now, White has an isolated d-pawn.

8...Be7 9.Nc3 b5 10.Bb3 0-0 11.Bg5 Bb7
12.Rad1 Nc6 13.Rfe1 Nb4?



Black's move is a serious mistake. Obviously, Black figured he was preventing White from playing 14.d5.

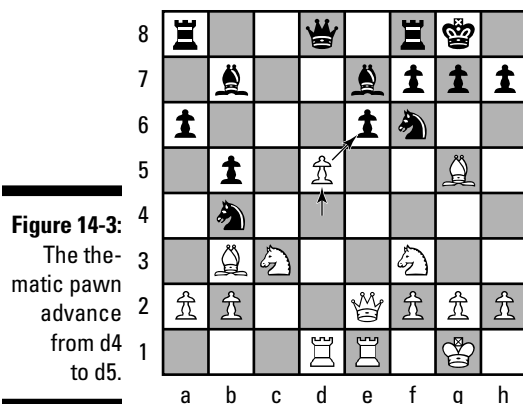
14.d5!



This is the thematic break in isolated d-pawn type of formations. When it can be safely played, things usually go White's way (see Figure 14-3).

14....Nfxd5 15.Nxd5 Bxg5 16.Nxb4 Qe7 17.Nd5 Bxd5
18.Bxd5 1-0

White wins a piece, and Black has no compensation for it. It's amazing that a player of Karpov's status can lose so quickly.



When things go Black's way

Black is able to saddle White with an isolated d-pawn and prevent it from advancing from d4 to d5. The pawn becomes weak and gets in the way of White's pieces. As the endgame approaches, the d-pawn's weakness grows more and more pronounced.

In a game from 1997 played in San Francisco between Guillermo Rey (White) and Alexander Baburin, Black was able to isolate White's d-pawn and prevent it from advancing. Baburin then attacked it repeatedly, causing White's pieces to become passive in defense. Eventually, White couldn't meet Black's threats, and the d-pawn fell.

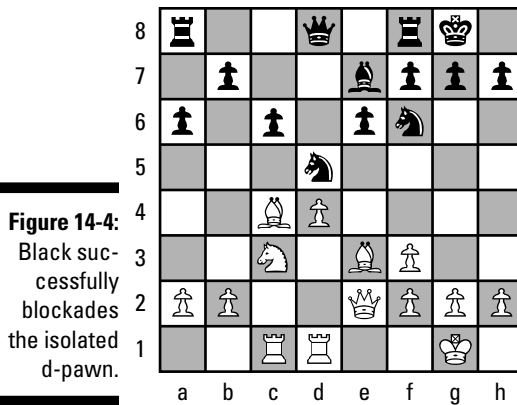
1.d4 d5	2.c4 dxc4	3.Qa4+ Nc6	4.Nf3 Bg4
5.Nc3 Bxf3	6.exf3 e6	7.Be3 Nf6	8.Bxc4 a6
9.Qd1 Nb4	10.0-0 Be7	11.Rc1 0-0	12.Qe2 c6
13.Rfd1 Nbd5			

Black occupies the d5 square with his knight, and White has no way to dislodge it (see Figure 14-4). If White captures on d5, it's important for Black to recapture with a piece rather than a pawn in order to maintain the blockade.

14.a3 Nxc3	15.Rxc3 Nd5
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The Black knight takes up the blockade by moving in front of the isolated pawn.

16.Rcd3 Bf6	17.g3 Qd7	18.Ba2 Rad8	19.Qc2 Qc7
20.Kg2 Rd7			



Black intends to eventually move the rook on f8 to d8. When two rooks are placed on the same file, it's called *doubling* them.

21.h4 h5 22.Bb1

When the bishop is placed behind the queen along a diagonal like White did in the preceding move, the two pieces are referred to as a *battery*.

22....g6 23.Qd2 Rfd8

Black doubles his rooks on the d-file.

24.Bg5 Bxg5

Although the exchange of bishops leaves Black with some dark-square weaknesses around his king, White has no way to exploit them.

25.Qxg5 Ne7 26.R3d2 Rd5 27.Qe3 Nf5 28.Bxf5 Rxf5

Black captures with the rook in order to preserve his pawn structure. The rook will head back to the d-file soon enough.

29.b4 Rfd5 30.Qc3 R8d6 31.f4 a5 32.Rb1 Qb6
33.Rbd1 axb4

Black is creating a second weakness in White's position (the pawn on b4), which he will then attack. White won't be able to guard both weak pawns.

34.axb4 Rd8 35.Qa3 Rb5 36.Rb1 Rxd4

Finally, the d-pawn falls, and it's a simple win — at least for a grandmaster!

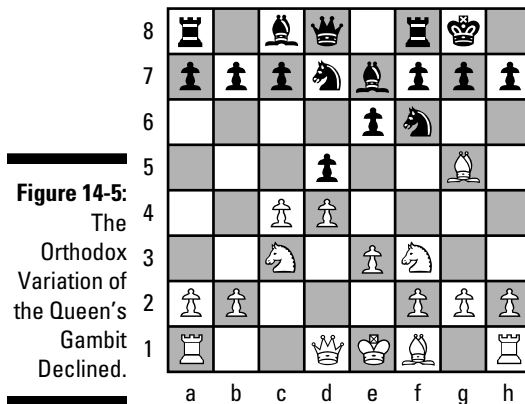
37.Qa8+ Kg7
40.Rxd4 Rxd4
43.Qf6 c4

38.Rbd1 Rbxb4
41.Ra1 Rd8
44.f5 Qd4 0-1

39.Qb8 c5
42.Qe5+ Kg8

Remaining Orthodox

In the *Orthodox Variation* of the *Queen's Gambit Declined*, Black completes the development of the kingside pieces and castles prior to initiating additional play in the center. After he safely castles, Black's basic idea is to capture on c4 and then strike out in the center with either ...c5 or ...e5. You usually reach the Orthodox Variation after the following moves: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Nbd7 5.Nf3 Be7 6.e3 0-0 (see Figure 14-5).



Black often delays making the capture ...dxc4 until White moves the f1-bishop so that it ends up on c4 after moving twice instead of just once. Chess openings often revolve around saving yourself time — or costing your opponent time.

When things go White's way

White gains control of the center and uses that as a springboard to attack. White's pieces have greater mobility and land on more active squares. Black's defense ultimately breaks down under White's relentless pressure.

In a 1934 game from Hastings, England, Max Euwe had White against George Alan Thomas and opened with the Queen's Gambit via transposition. Thomas didn't quite gain equality after the opening, and Euwe finished him off quickly.

**1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e3 0-0
6.Nf3 Nbd7**

Arriving at the Orthodox Variation by transposition.

7.Rc1



This is a useful move, and White is delaying the development of the f1-bishop, hoping to get to c4 in one move.

7...c6 8.Bd3

However, the bishop has to move at some point.

8...dxc4

That's the signal for Black to capture on c4.

9.Bxc4 Nd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.0-0 Nxc3 12.Rxc3 e5

Black was counting on this move in order to free his game. However, White still has a couple of trumps up his sleeve. His development is better, and the bishop on c4 is much stronger than its counterpart on c8. (See Figure 14-6.)

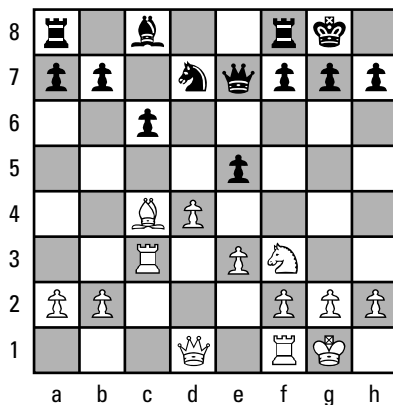


Figure 14-6:
White is better developed and is set to launch an attack.

13.Nxe5 Nxe5

14.dxe5 Qxe5

15.f4

The f-pawn advances with a gain of time because of the attack on the queen, and not for the last time!

15...Qe7
18.f6 gxf6

16.f5

b5 17.Bb3

b4

Now, Black's king protection has been compromised.

19.Rxc6 Qxe3+

20.Kh1 Bb7

21.Rcxf6 Qe4

Played with the threat of 21...Qxg2#, but the threat is easily parried.



22.Qd2 Kh8

23.Bxf7

The bishop now covers the g8 square, preventing Black's rooks from joining the attack down the g-file.

23...Rac8
26.Bd5 1-0

24.R6f2

Rcd8

25.Qg5

Rd6

White presents too many threats for Black to parry them all. 26...Rxf2 allows 27.Qg8#, and Black can't defend against the simultaneous attacks on his rook on f8 and his queen.

When things go Black's way

Black achieves equality in the center with either ...c5 or ...e5 and has an easy time developing. Black's pieces end up working well together; White's pieces aren't as well-coordinated. Black invades White's territory, and White is unable to repel him.

In the World Championship match of 1927 in Buenos Aires, the Queen's Gambit was the workhorse opening for both José Raúl Capablanca and Alexander Alekhine. In their 21st match game, Alekhine played a model game demonstrating how Black is to play against the Queen's Gambit.

1.d4 d5
6.Nf3 0-0

2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6

4.Bg5 Nbd7 5.e3 Be7

The starting position of the Orthodox Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined is established through transposition.

7.Rc1 a6

8.a3

White is delaying the development of the f1-bishop for reasons I mention in the preceding section, but 8.a3 isn't a particularly useful move.



8...h6 9.Bh4 dxc4 10.Bxc4 b5 11.Be2

The bishop would be more actively posted if Capablanca had played 11.Ba2 instead.

11...Bb7 12.0-0 c5

This is the typical freeing move in these types of positions.



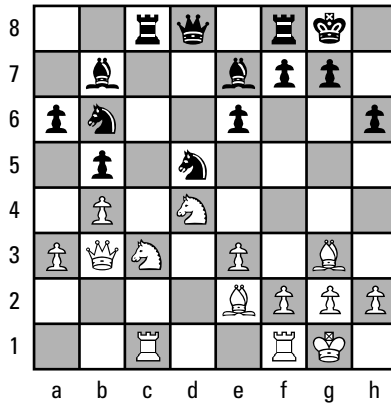
13.dxc5 Nxc5 14.Nd4 Rc8 15.b4 Ncd7 16.Bg3?

It appears that White playing 16.Bf3 would be an improvement.

16...Nb6 17.Qb3 Nfd5

Black's pieces are more actively placed than White's. Black is about to invade White's territory utilizing the c-file. (See Figure 14-7.)

Figure 14-7:
Black's pieces are more actively placed.



18.Bf3 Rc4 19.Ne4 Qc8 20.Rxc4 Nxc4

Notice how White has no pawn left that can drive the Black knight away from its post on c4. Chess players use the term *outpost* to describe a knight in enemy territory that's protected by one of its pawns.

21.Rc1 Qa8 22.Nc3 Rc8 23.Nxd5 Bxd5 24.Bxd5 Qxd5

Normally, trading pieces eases the burden of defense, but in this case, Black maintains a stranglehold on the position.

25.a4 Bf6

26.Nf3 Bb2

27.Re1 Rd8

The knight is secure on c4, so Black turns his attention to the d-file.

28.axb5 axb5

29.h3 e5

30.Rb1 e4

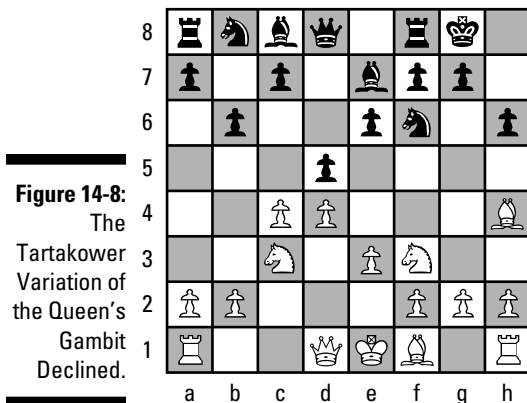
31.Nd4 Bxd4

32.Rd1 Nxe3 0–1

It would be pointless to continue with 33.Qxd5 Rxd5 34.fxe3 Bxe3+ when Black is winning easily.

Testing the Tartakower

You arrive at the *Tartakower Variation* following the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e3 0–0 6.Nf3 h6 7.Bh4 b6 (see Figure 14-8). The move 7...b6 has the twin virtue of allowing the light-square bishop to be developed via b7 or a6, and preparing a possible c7-c5 by Black later on.



This variation is named after Saviely Tartakower (1887–1956). It can produce complicated positions that need to be played with great energy.

This variation appeals to players who like dynamic chess.



When things go White's way

White gives Black *hanging pawns* (two pawns that are together but isolated from any other pawn) and manages to restrain them. White attacks them, causing Black to adopt a passive defensive posture, at which point White goes on the attack.

In their famous World Championship match of 1972 in Iceland, Bobby Fischer, who played White, defeated Boris Spassky in this Tartakower game. White used a combination of restraining and attacking moves in order to develop an overwhelming position at the end.

1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 Be7
5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 b6

Arriving at the Tartakower Variation via a different move order, or as chess players refer to it, *transposition*.

8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Bxe7 Qxe7 10.Nxd5 exd5 11.Rc1 Be6
12.Qa4 c5 13.Qa3



The queen a4-a3 maneuver is designed to restrain the pawn on c5. It is pinned, at least temporarily, to the queen.

13...Rc8 14.Bb5 a6 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.0-0

White completes his development and is putting pressure on the pawn on c5. If the pawn advances, White can then work to control the dark squares in front of the pawns (see Figure 14-9).

16...Ra7 17.Be2 Nd7 18.Nd4! Qf8?

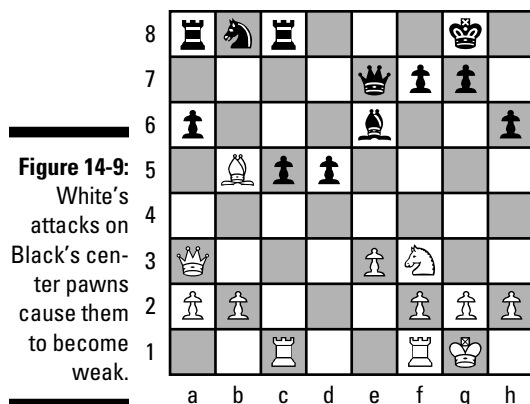


Now, White can strike out at Black's center. A move such as 18...Nf6 would probably be better.

19.Nxe6 fxe6 20.e4 d4 21.f4 Qe7 22.e5

White shifts his attention to the kingside after securing this spatial advantage in the center.

22...Rb8 23.Bc4 Kh8 24.Qh3 Nf8 25.b3 a5
26.f5



White now eliminates Black's e-pawn, turning White's e-pawn into a *passed pawn* — one that no enemy pawn can challenge. The move also helps to open the f-file for White's rooks to invade along.

26...exf5 27.Rxf5 Nh7 28.Rcf1 Qd8 29.Qg3 Re7
 30.h4 Rbb7 31.e6 Rbc7 32.Qe5 Qe8 33.a4 Qd8
 34.R1f2 Qe8 35.R2f3 Qd8 36.Bd3



White sets up a battery where the bishop supports the queen along a diagonal. This positioning can be very dangerous because any invasion by a queen can quickly turn lethal.

36...Qe8 37.Qe4 Nf6 38.Rxf6

The decisive breakthrough. Black can't defend against all of White's threats.

38...gxf6 39.Rxf6 Kg8 40.Bc4 Kh8 41.Qf4 1-0

The combined threats of Rf8+ and Qxh6+ are too strong.

When things go Black's way

Black gains a spatial advantage in the center and disrupts White's piece organization. Black opens lines for the rooks and bishops to attack from long range. In the first game played in the World Championship in Italy in 1981, Viktor Korchnoi was too passive with the White pieces, and Anatoly Karpov made him pay for it.

1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Be7 4.Nf3 Nf6
 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.e3 b6

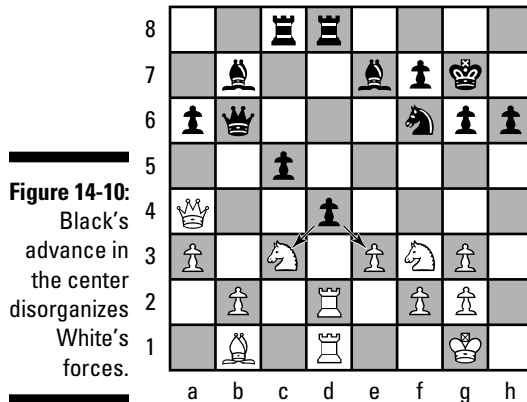
Transposing into the Tartakower Variation.

8.Rc1 Bb7 9.Be2 Nbd7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.0-0 c5
12.dxc5 bxc5

Black now has hanging pawns on c5 and d5. These pawns can come under pressure and become weak, as in the preceding game. In this game, Black has counterplay thanks to the half-open e- and b-files, and he times his central advance well.

13.Qc2 Rc8 14.Rfd1 Qb6 15.Qb1? Rfd8 16.Rc2 Qe6
17.Bg3 Nh5 18.Rcd2 Nxc3 19.hxg3 Nf6 20.Qc2 g6
21.Qa4 a6 22.Bd3 Kg7 23.Bb1 Qb6 24.a3? d4!

This central advance completely disrupts White's position (see Figure 14-10).



25.Ne2

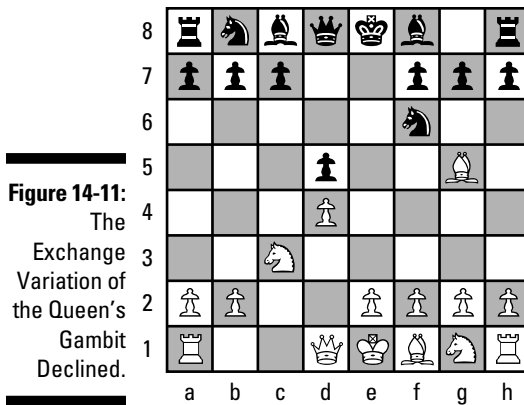
The alternative 25.exd4? would lose to 25....Bc6! 26.Qc2 Bxf3 27.gxf3 cxd4, when the knight is pinned.

25....dxe3 26.fxe3 c4 27.Ned4 Qc7 28.Nh4 Qe5
29.Kh1 Kg8! 0-1

Black will win a pawn and keep the better position. He went on to win on his 43rd move.

Trading on the Exchange

The *Exchange Variation* of the Queen's Gambit Declined usually arises after the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 (see Figure 14-11).



White can use the c-file for operations, but Black can do the same with the e-file. The early clarification in the center by the exchange of pawns on d5 apparently frees Black's bishop on c8. However, it's often difficult to find a useful square for this bishop despite its apparent freedom.

When things go White's way

White gains a spatial advantage in the center. Spatial advantages allow easier piece movement and provide the impetus to attack. The power of a piece is tied to its mobility, so White's pieces gradually become stronger than Black's.

In a 1952 game played in Moscow, Mikhail Botvinnik, as White, used the Exchange Variation to defeat Paul Keres. Botvinnik was able to achieve a powerful pawn center, which in turn led him to attack on the kingside. Eventually, Keres's defenses failed him.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5

Arriving at the Exchange Variation via a different move order.

5...Be7 6.e3 0-0 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.Qc2 Re8
9.Nge2 Nf8 10.0-0 c6 11.Rab1 Bd6 12.Kh1

White avoids the tactical trick 12...Bxh2+ followed by ...Ng4+.

12...Ng6 13.f3 Be7 14.Rbe1 Nd7 15.Bxe7 Rxe7
16.Ng3 Nf6 17.Qf2 Be6 18.Nf5 Bxf5 19.Bxf5 Qb6 20.e4



White achieves a powerful position in the center. Black can't prevent White from eventually playing e4-e5, driving the knight away from f6. The knight's absence reduces Black's defensive resources. (See Figure 14-12.)

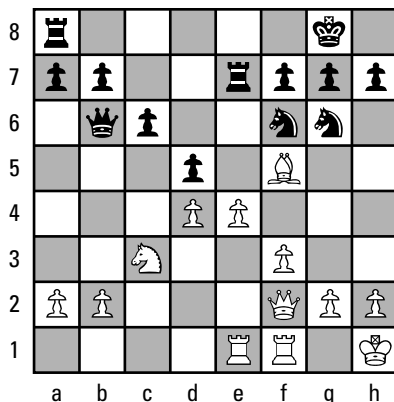


Figure 14-12:
White builds
a powerful
center.

20...dxe4	21.fxe4 Rd8	22.e5 Nd5	23.Ne4 Nf8
24.Nd6 Qc7	25.Be4 Ne6	26.Qh4 g6	27.Bxd5 cxd5
28.Rc1 Qd7	29.Rc3 Rf8	30.Nf5 Rfe8	



If Black instead tries 30...gxf5, then 31.Rg3+ Ng7 32.Qf6 is curtains for Black.

31.Nh6+ Kf8

Black can try 31...Kg7, but then 32.Qf6+ Kxh6 33.Rh3# follows.

32.Qf6 Ng7	33.Rcf3 Rc8	34.Nxf7 Re6	35.Qg5 Nf5
36.Nh6 Qg7	37.g4 Qxh6	38.Qxh6+ 1-0	

The knight is pinned to the king and can't recapture the queen.

When things go Black's way

Black secures the center and launches a direct attack against White's king. This result is especially likely if White gets optimistic and castles on the queenside. That's what happened in a 1982 game between Krunoslav Hulak and Boris Spassky in Toluca, Mexico, when Spassky first opened lines against White's king and then infiltrated with his pieces.

1.d4 Nf6	2.c4 e6	3.Nc3 d5	4.Bg5 Be7
5.cxd5			

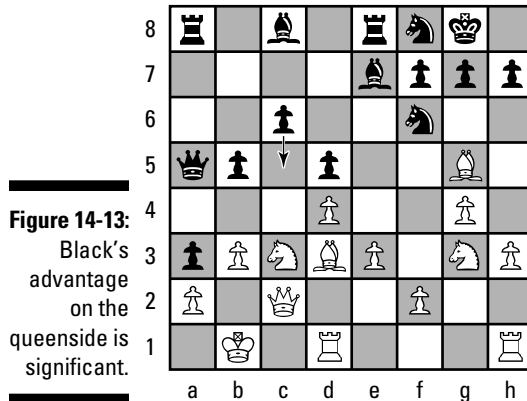
This pawn capture triggers the Exchange Variation.

5...exd5	6.e3 0-0	7.Bd3 Nbd7	8.Qc2 Re8
9.Nge2 c6	10.h3 Nf8	11.0-0-0 a5	

The beginning of Black's operations on the queenside.

12.Kb1 b5 13.g4 a4 14.Ng3 a3 15.b3 Qa5

Black has already created weaknesses around White's king and begins a mobilization of his forces designed to create more (see Figure 14-13).



16.Rhg1 Kh8 17.Nce2 Bd7 18.Nf5 Bxf5 19.gxf5 Rac8
20.Nf4 N8d7 21.Qe2 c5 22.dxc5 Nxc5 23.Bxf6 Bxf6

Notice how the dark squares around White's king are firmly within Black's control.



24.Nxd5 Na4 25.Rc1

If White had captured the knight with 25.bxa4, a likely continuation would be 25...bxa4 26.Nxf6 Rb8+ 27.Ka1 Qe5+, with a win for Black.

25...Nc3+ 26.Nxc3 Rxc3 27.Rgd1 Qb4 28.Bc2 Rcx3
29.Qd2 Rc3 30.Re1 Rxe1 31.Qxe1 h6

Black calmly secures his king against any back-rank threats and then finishes mopping up.

32.Rd1 Kh7 33.Qe2 Rxh3 34.Qe1 Qc5 35.Kc1 Rxb3
36.axb3 a2 37.Kd2 Bc3+ 0-1

Chapter 15

Declining with the Slav and Semi-Slav

In This Chapter

- ▶ Moving along the Main Line
 - ▶ Trying out the Meran Variation of the Semi-Slav
 - ▶ Breaking out the Botvinnik
-

The Slav and Semi-Slav are defenses to the Queen's Gambit (see Chapter 14). In both cases, Black uses the c-pawn to defend the d-pawn to avoid hemming in his light-square bishop. In the Slav, the bishop generally develops to f5, or sometimes g4, whereas in the Semi-Slav, the bishop often develops on the flank. This chapter covers a few of the most popular variations.

Declining or Delaying?

The *Slav Defense* occurs following the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 (see Figure 15-1). It became popular during the 1930s World Championship matches between Max Euwe and Alexander Alekhine and remains popular today.



The Slav is a tricky opening with many twists and turns. Is Black declining to capture the pawn on c4, or is the intent to capture it later? The games can become tactical dogfights or slow-maneuvering marathons. If you like complicated positions with lots of variety, the Slav may be a good choice for you.

Is 2...c6 better or worse than 2...e6 against the Queen's Gambit? Such questions have no easy answer. It's often a matter of taste. 2...c6 doesn't block in the c8 bishop like 2...e6 does, but the move ...c5 is often useful in the Queen's Gambit type of games. Playing ...c5 in the Slav would mean spending extra time moving the c-pawn twice. The move ...c6 also robs the b8 knight of what may be its best square. Chess is all about making such trade-offs.

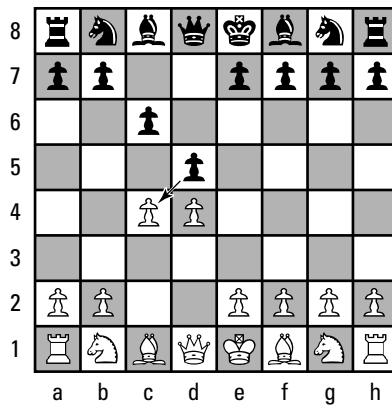


Figure 15-1:
The Slav
Defense.

Going Down the Main Line

The *Main Line* of the Slav Defense arises after the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 (see Figure 15-2).

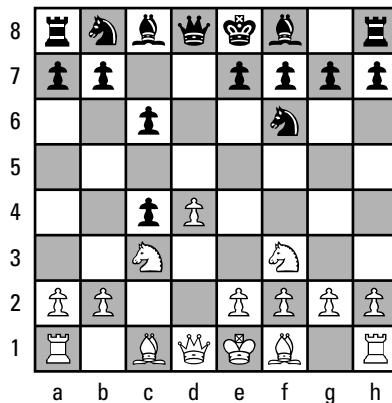


Figure 15-2:
The Main
Line Slav
Defense.

Why does Black choose to capture now rather than earlier or not at all? The answer is that Black would like to play ...Bf5 followed by ...e6, but the immediate 4...Bf5 is met by 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Qb3, putting Black's queenside under stress.

After 4...dxc4, Black may try to hold on to the pawn with 5...b5. White's most frequent reply is 5.a4 in order to stop this idea. It's clear already that this is a very different type of game than the Queen's Gambit I examine in Chapter 14.

When things go White's way

White achieves superiority in the center and uses this advantage to launch an attack. Unless Black is very vigorous in defense, White wins material or launches a mating attack against Black's king.

In the 1994 game from Germany between Larry Christiansen and Miron Sher, White (Christiansen) was able to set up the pawn duo on d4 and e4 and then cramp Black's game further with the maneuver e4-e5. Christiansen then used his spatial advantage to start a successful attack against Black's kingside.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6

The Slav Defense.

3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4

This introduces the Main Line of the Slav. Black gives up on the idea of preventing White from playing e4, which is always dangerous. But while White goes about recovering his pawn on c4, Black can develop the c8 bishop outside of the pawn center (usually by ...Bf5 and ...e6), quickly finish developing, and castle. The center pawns on c6 and e6 are effective at preventing the move d5 and holding back White's center pawns.

5.a4

If White wants to get his pawn back, he has to prevent ...b5.

5...Bf5 6.e3 e6 7.Bxc4 Bb4

Black's move is played with the idea of reducing White's influence over the e4 and d5 squares.

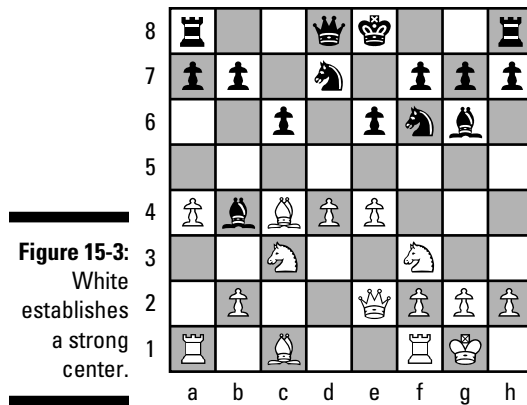
8.0-0 Nbd7 9.Qe2

White's biggest advantage is in the center, so he decides to prepare the move e2-e4.

9...Bg6 10.e4



The basic ideas of the Main Line Slav are illustrated in this position: White's ideal center versus Black's good piece play and attack on the center. (See Figure 15-3.)



10...0-0

It's very risky to instead try to grab a pawn by 10...Bxc3 11.bxc3 Nxe4 because 12.Ba3 prevents Black from castling and hits the weak d6 square.

11.Bd3 a6 12.Bf4 Re8 13.h3 h6 14.Rfd1 Qb6 15.e5

Black's moves have been a little slow, so White decides that it's time to attack.

15...Nd5 16.Nxd5 cxd5 17.Nh4 Qxd4?!



Black is too greedy with this last move. Black should've exchanged bishops by playing 17...Bxd3 instead.

18.Nxg6 fxd6 19.Bg3 Qb6

Black has to get out of the discovered attack (if the d3 bishop moves, a discovered attack from the d1 rook is made against Black's queen) and give back his extra pawn. However, his pieces aren't defending his king, so White turns his attention there.

20.Bxg6 Rec8 21.Kh2 Nf8 22.Bd3 Rc7 23.f4! g6
24.Rf1 Be7 25.a5 Qc6 26.Bf2 Qe8 27.g4!

White intends to force open lines with f5.

27...Bc5 28.Bxc5 Rxc5 29.f5 exf5 30.gxf5 d4

If Black tries 30...gxf5 instead, then 31.Rxf5 brings every White piece into the attack following Rg1+ and Qg4.

31.fxc6 Rxe5?

A better play would've been 31...Qxe5+ 32.Qxe5 Rxe5, but 33.Rae1 Rxe1 34.Rxe1, with the idea of Re7, is much better for White. Black's knight on f8 has no good moves.

32.Bc4+ Kg7 33.Rf7+ Qxf7 34.Qxe5+ Qf6 35.Qc7+ Kh8
36.Rf1 Qg7 37.Rf7 1-0

If Black tries 37...Qxg6, then 38.Qe5+ Kg8 39.Rg7++ is murderous.

When things go Black's way

Black undermines White's center and leaves White with weaknesses that Black can exploit. Black's pieces infiltrate White's position and create threats that White is unable to counter.

In a 1953 game in the former Soviet Union between Mark Taimanov, who played White, and Vasily Smyslov, Black was able to take control over the center. If Black can do that in the Slav, things usually go Black's way.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4

Establishing the Main Line of the Slav Defense.

5.a4 Bf5 6.e3 e6 7.Bxc4 Bb4 8.0-0 0-0
9.Qe2 Bg4!?

A second move of the bishop, but it serves a purpose. 10.e4 is prevented at least temporarily.

10.h3 Bh5 11.g4!?



It's understandable that White wants to get rid of the pin on his knight, but this move weakens his kingside and will later come back to haunt him.

11...Bg6 12.Ne5 Nbd7 13.Nxg6 hxg6



Now, White has the advantage of two bishops, and Black is ready to challenge the center with ...c5 or ...e5. This is a typical situation in the Slav (see Figure 15-4).

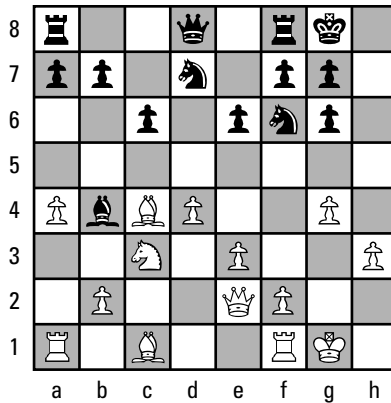


Figure 15-4:
A typical
trade-off in
the Slav.

14.Rd1 Qe7 15.Qc2 Rfd8

Not 15...e5? because of 16.Qxg6.

16.Na2



White expanding on the queenside with Na2 and b4 is a good idea, but this is bad timing. White should shore up his kingside defenses with 16.Bf1, followed by Bg2.

16....Bd6 17.b4? Nd5! 18.Bd2 Qh4 19.Bf1 e5!

Black's advance crops up a lot in the Slav Defense.

20.Bg2 exd4 21.exd4 Nf8 22.b5 Ne6!



Black gives up a pawn to dominate the outpost on f4. Notice how White's weak squares on h4 and f4 both came about because of the move 11.g4.

23.bxc6 bxc6 24.Qxc6 Rac8 25.Qa6 Ndf4

Black attacks h3 and gets his pawn back.

**26.Qf1 Nxd4 27.Bxf4 Bxf4 28.Nb4 Qg5 29.a5 Bb8
30.Qa6 Qe5**

Black sets up the standard battery for attacking the kingside. This wasn't easy to prevent.

31.Kf1 Nb3! 32.Nd5 Nd2+ 33.Rxd2

Not 33.Kg1, when 33...Qh2 is mate.

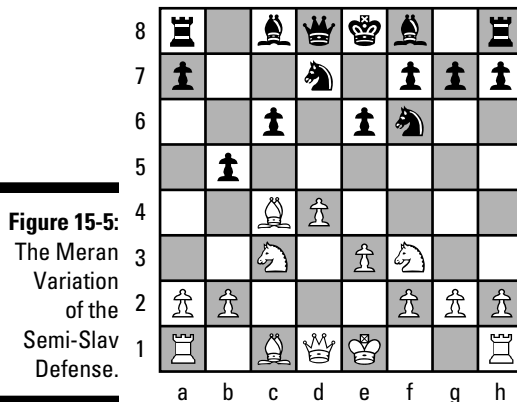
33...Qxa1+ 34.Ke2 Qe5+ 35.Kd1 Qa1+ 36.Ke2 Re8+
37.Ne3 Rc1

Black is ahead in material, and his pieces are swarming over White's king.

38.Bd5 Re1+ 39.Kf3 Qe5 40.Nf1 Qf4+ 41.Kg2 Rxf1
42.Re2 Rxe2 43.Qxe2 Rc1 44.Qe8+ Kh7 45.Bxf7 Qh2+ 0-1

Meeting the Meran Variation in the Semi-Slav

In the *Semi-Slav*, Black plays ...e6, as well as ...c6. In the *Meran Variation* of the Semi-Slav, Black hopes to delay capturing the pawn on c4 until the circumstances are just right. You arrive at this variation after the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc 7.Bxc4 b5 (see Figure 15-5).



White attempts the familiar strategy of establishing and securing an advantage in the center. Black advances on the queenside with moves such as ...b4-b5 and ...c6-c5 and develops the c8 bishop along the long h1-a8 diagonal.



The Semi-Slav can lead to explosive tactical positions. If you like complicated games that are difficult to evaluate properly, the Semi-Slav may be a good choice for you.

When things go White's way

White gets a strong center and more room for piece maneuvers. Black's position is more cramped, and at some point, White makes a threat that Black has no adequate response for.

In the 1939 game played in Amsterdam between Max Euwe (White) and George Fontein, White was able to develop quickly and aggressively. Black didn't respond with enough vigor, and Euwe cashed in the point.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6

This is the Semi-Slav; Black plays solidly and dares White to come after him.

5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4

Often in the Semi-Slav, Black plays the moves ...Bd6 and ...e5. But in this case, White was ready to play e4, so Black decides to win time and space by attacking White's bishop.

7.Bxc4 b5

This is the Meran Variation.

8.Bd3 a6

By defending the pawn on b5, Black is ready to attack the center with ...c5. Then his bishop will have a beautiful diagonal from b7 toward White's king.

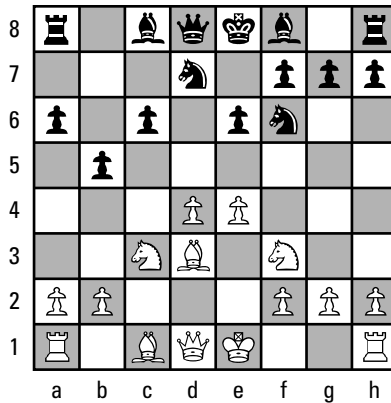
9.e4

White establishes the classic center with pawns on e4 and d4. Black has to counterattack quickly. (See Figure 15-6.)

9....b4 10.Na4 c5 11.e5 Nd5 12.0-0 cxd4

Black wins a pawn, but he has only two pieces developed. Time is of the essence!

13.Re1 Nc5 14.Bg5 Qa5 15.Nxc5 Bxc5 16.Nd2!

**Figure 15-6:**

White establishes a powerful, classic center.



The key move of the game. White's knight looks good on f3, but it can't advance, so he brings it to c4, forces the queen to retreat, and aims at Black's weak square on d6.

16....Bd7 17.Rc1 Be7



Not a very good move by Black because it exchanges the best defender of the dark squares. But castling kingside would run into a devastating attack if White followed up with Qh5.

**18.Nc4 Qd8 19.Nd6+ Kf8 20.Bxe7+ Nxe7 21.Be4 Rb8
22.Qxd4**

White gets his pawn back, and his pieces radiate strength.

22....g6 23.Nb7 Qe8 24.Rc7 Bc8 25.Qd6 1-0

Black can hardly move because of the pin on the knight, and Bc6 is threatened, winning massive material. So the only serious try is 25....Bxb7 26.Bxb7 Rd8 27.Qxb4, but then Bc6 is threatened again, and Black can't get out of the pin.

When things go Black's way

Black gets rid of White's center pawns, catches up in development, and then goes on the attack. Both sides try to exploit the other's weaknesses, and the player who makes the most serious misstep will go down in defeat.

It was a matchup of heavyweight title contenders when Vladimir Kramnik played White against Viswanathan Anand in this game from 2008 in Bonn, Germany. Both players were throwing haymakers, but it was Black who threw the last one.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6
5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5

Setting up the Meran Variation.

8.Bd3 a6 9.e4 c5

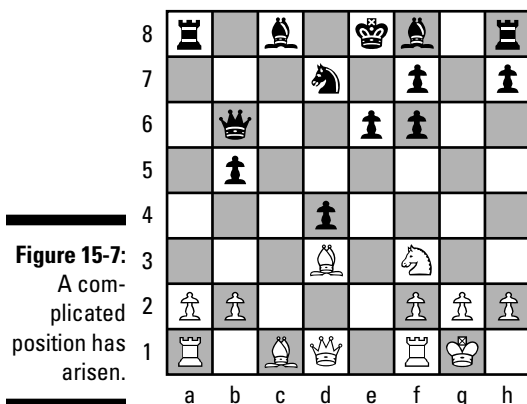
An immediate attack on the center by Black.

10.e5

The other central advance is 10.d5

10....cxd4 11.Nxb5 axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.0-0 Qb6

This is a very complicated position. Black is temporarily a pawn ahead, and he has good squares for his bishop on b7 and his rook on g8. On the other hand, White is ahead in development, castled, and centralized. (See Figure 15-7.)



14.Qe2 Bb7

Black gives back his pawn to develop quickly and attack White's king.

15.Bxb5 Bd6 16.Rd1 Rg8

The two rooks and bishops take aim at White's king. Of course, now Black has no pawn protection to castle behind, and in fact, White can keep Black's king in the center by capturing on d7. There's also the interesting trade-off of Black's powerful extra center pawns and White's two dangerous passed pawns on the queenside.

17.g3 Rg4!

Black protects the pawn on d4 and prepares to double rooks on the g-file.

18.Bf4 Bxf4 19.Nxd4 h5 20.Nxe6! fxe6 21.Rxd7 Kf8
22.Qd3 Rg7 23.Rxg7 Kxg7 24.gxf4 Rd8 25.Qe2

Not instead 25.Qg3+? because it loses to 25...Kh8! when ...Rg8 follows.

25...Kh6 26.Kf1 Rg8 27.a4 Bg2+ 28.Ke1 Bh3!
29.Ra3 Rg1+ 30.Kd2 Qd4+ 31.Kc2 Bg4!?! 32.f3?

The best try was instead 32.Rd3!, when 32...Bf5 33.Kb3 Bxd3 34.Bxd3 would lead to complicated play.

32...Bf5+! 33.Bd3

This is losing at once.

33...Bh3

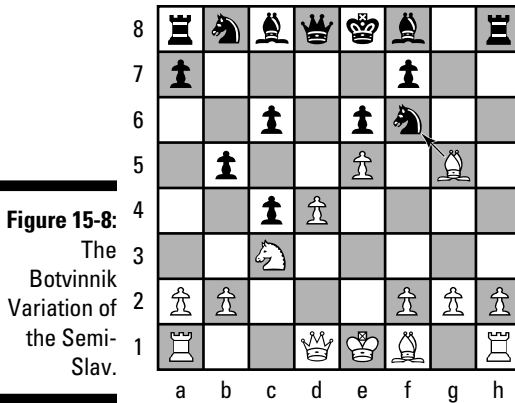
This wins, but 33...Bxd3+! is faster, one line going 34.Rxd3 Qc4+ 35.Kd2 Qc1#.

34.a5 Rg2 35.a6 Rxe2+ 36.Bxe2 Bf5+ 37.Kb3 Qe3+
38.Ka2 Qxe2 39.a7 Qc4+ 40.Ka1 Qf1+ 41.Ka2 Bb1+ 0-1



Betting on the Botvinnik Variation

One of White's more aggressive options when playing the Semi-Slav is to allow Black to keep the pawn on c4 and simply go on the attack. Such a mindset can lead you to the *Botvinnik Variation*, which arises after the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 (see Figure 15-8).



In the Botvinnik Variation, White gives up a pawn but usually has control over the center and good attacking prospects.



The games in this variation can be difficult to evaluate properly because both sides have their pluses and minuses. If you don't mind playing positions where the evaluation is unclear, then this variation will be right up your alley.

When things go White's way

White goes king-hunting whether Black decides to castle kingside, queenside, or leave the king in the center. White gains space and opens lines for active piece maneuvers, which Black is unable to match.

In a 2010 game from Wijk aan Zee in the Netherlands, Magnus Carlsen had the White pieces against Jan Smeets and transposed into the Botvinnik Variation of the Semi-Slav. He then played aggressively in order to go on, and stay on, the attack.

1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5

This is White's most aggressive move. He gives up a pawn but launches an attack.

5...dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5
9.Nxc4 hxc4 10.Bxc4

We've arrived at the Botvinnik Variation. White gets his piece back, but the resulting position is totally unclear.

10...Nbd7 11.exf6 Bb7



Here's the basic position. White feels that Black's king will be exposed on either side of the board, and he has advantages such as his passed h-pawn. Black has caught up in development and has ideas such as putting a rook on d8 opposing White's d-pawn and, at the right moment, advancing his queen-side pawn mass.

12.g3 c5 13.d5

White comes up with a radical solution. By playing d5 and Bg2, he intends to neutralize Black's pressure on the long diagonal.

13...Qb6 14.Bg2 0-0-0 15.0-0 b4 16.Na4

Although 16.dxe6 Bxg2 17.e7 looks strong, Black has enough material and play after 17...Bxf1 18.exd8Q+ Kxd8 19.Nd5 Qe6 20.Kxf1 Rxh2.

16...Qb5 17.a3!



A clever move to crack open a queenside file on the side of the board where Black's king resides (see Figure 15-9).

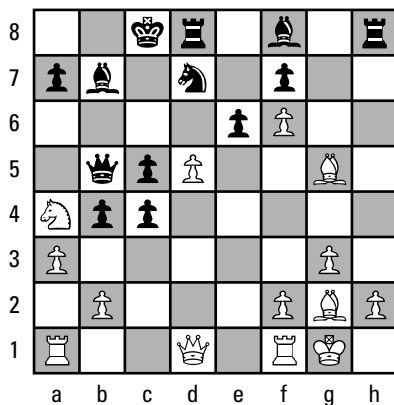


Figure 15-9:
White pries
open lines
on the
queenside.

17...Nb8

White's d-pawn is now pinned and attacked three times. The tension is mounting.

18.axb4 cxb4 19.Qd4

White aims at the a-pawn.

19...Nc6 20.Nb6+! axb6

The move 20...Qxb6? actually loses a piece after 21.Qxb6 axb6 22.dxc6 because Black's bishop is trapped.

21.dxc6 Bxc6 **22.Bxc6 Qxc6** **23.Qg4 Bc5**
24.Ra7 Rd7

Black can't simply sit around while White doubles rooks.

25.Rxd7 Kxd7 **26.h4 Kc7** **27.h5 e5** **28.h6 Bd4**
29.Qe2 b3



The alternative 29...c3 would create a passed pawn.

30.Be3 Qd5 **31.Rd1 Kc6?** **32.Qg4**

Because of the pin on d4, Black loses a pawn, and worse, his king becomes very exposed.

32...b5 **33.Bxd4** **exd4** **34.Rxd4** **Qe5**
35.Qd7+ Kc5 **36.Qa7+ Kc6** **37.Qd7+ Kc5**
38.Rf4 Qxb2? **39.Rf5+ Kb4** **40.Qxb5+ Kc3**
41.Rf3+ 1-0

Black loses at least his queen after 41...Kd2 42.Qd5+ Kc1 43.Qxc4+ Qc2 44.Rc3.

When things go Black's way

Black is the one to open lines and attack the White king. Black usually gets excellent pressure along the long diagonal a8-h1. White's pieces become disorganized, and Black's attack comes crashing through.

In the famous radio match of 1945 between the United States and the USSR, Mikhail Botvinnik himself played Black against Arnold Denker of the U.S. team. The two castled on opposite sides of the board, but Denker never got anything going against Botvinnik's king. Conversely, Botvinnik was relentless in his attack on Denker's king.

1.d4 d5 **2.c4 e6** **3.Nc3 c6** **4.Nf3 Nf6**
5.Bg5 dxc4 **6.e4 b5** **7.e5 h6** **8.Bh4 g5**
9.Nxg5 hxg5 **10.Bxg5**

The starting position for this variation.

10...Nbd7 **11.exf6** **Bb7** **12.Be2**



As with the Carlsen game in the preceding section, developing the bishop to g2 instead of e2 is a better idea.

12....Qb6 13.0-0 0-0-0



The players castle on opposite sides of the board, which often signals the onset of fireworks.

14.a4 b4 15.Ne4 c5

Black's move unleashes the power of his bishop on b7 (see Figure 15-10).

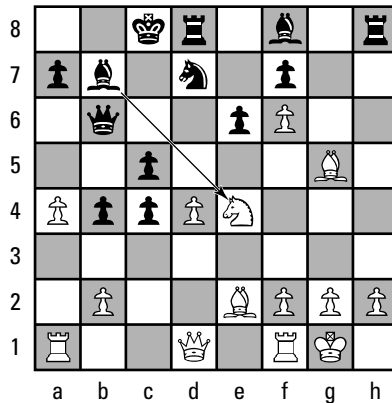


Figure 15-10:
The power
of the
bishop is
unleashed.

16.Qb1 Qc7 17.Ng3?

White had to try 17.g3 with the hopes of playing Bf3 later to counter Black's pressure along the diagonal.

17....cxd4 18.Bxc4 Qc6 19.f3 d3 20.Qc1 Bc5+

Black gets another piece into the action against White's king. Black puts White away with a series of forcing moves.

**21.Kh1 Qd6 22.Qf4 Rxh2+ 23.Kxh2 Rh8+ 24.Qh4 Rxh4+
25.Bxh4 Qf4 0-1**

There's no saving the bishop on h4.

Chapter 16

Getting Hypermodern with the Nimzo-Indian

In This Chapter

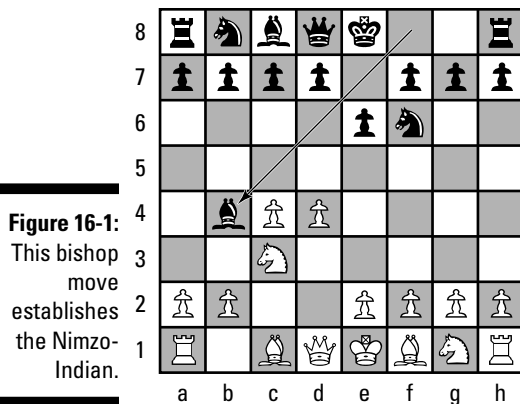
- ▶ Identifying the Nimzo-Indian's starting position
 - ▶ Discovering the ideas behind the Nimzo-Indian
 - ▶ Understanding the basic strategies of the main variations
-

The *Nimzo-Indian* is an excellent opening for players who enjoy strategic struggles. Black wants to damage White's pawn structure, fix it in place, and then attack the weaknesses. White usually gets the advantage of the two bishops and often has a strong center, which White can use to launch a king-side attack. Although White has several ways of playing against the Nimzo-Indian, no one has developed any sure way to secure an advantage.

What Is the Nimzo-Indian?

The name of this opening is a contraction of *Nimzowitsch-Indian* (which is further shortened to just *Nimzo*; I describe the Indian naming convention in Chapter 3). It's named after Aaron Nimzowitsch (1886–1935), a brilliant, eccentric strategist who helped to usher in what became known as the *hypermodern* (see Chapter 3) era of chess.

The 1920s saw a great deal of innovation in chess, and Nimzowitsch was behind much of it. One of the pieces of conventional chess wisdom that he challenged was the idea that occupation of the center equated to control. The Nimzo's basic strategy is pretty straightforward: Damage White's central pawn structure, constrain (or blockade) the pawns, and then attack them in order to destroy them. The opening consists of the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 (see Figure 16-1).



The purpose of Black's first three moves is to control the light squares in the center. All three moves directly or indirectly influence the d5 square, and two of them fight to control the e4 square. If things go Black's way, Black often gains an advantage in development, leading to better attacking chances for Black or other kinds of concessions from White.

After players figured out what Nimzowitsch was up to, they began to devise systems to thwart his plan. (None of these systems refutes the opening — it's still widely used today.) In many cases, Black cedes the bishop for the knight, and White is able to use the two bishops to advantage.



The Nimzo is well-suited for players who enjoy long, strategic struggles. If you enjoy quick, tactical melees, the Nimzo isn't for you.

Playing Differently with the Sämisch

The *Sämisch Variation* is named after Friedrich Sämisch (1896–1975) and features an early challenge to the bishop (see Figure 16-2). This type of challenge to the bishop is often called *putting the question* to it — it forces the bishop to retreat or exchange itself for the knight. The Sämisch is established by the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.a3. The a-pawn move to a3 forces the bishop to retreat or exchange itself for the knight.



Many players consider having two bishops an advantage over having a bishop and a knight, and it often is. However, Nimzowitsch was able to demonstrate that the bishop/knight situation is only one of the factors you must take into account when evaluating a position.

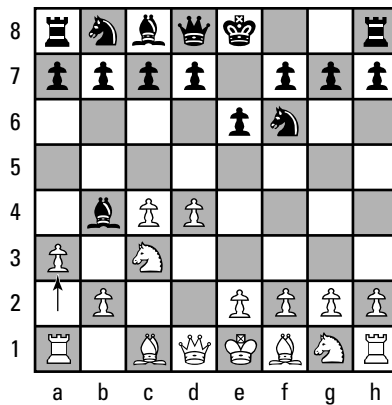


Figure 16-2:
The
Sämisch
Variation.

When things go White's way

White gains control of the center and is able to attack on the kingside. The kingside pawns may advance, creating problems for Black. At the proper time, White can open the position and exploit the power of the two bishops through direct attacks on Black's position.

White advances his kingside pawns and breaks open the position at his leisure, and Black is unable to resist. In the game between Vitali Golod (White) and Slobodan Martinovic from Bad Wiessee, Germany, in 2000, White was able to initiate a successful attack on the kingside, while his crippled queenside pawns played no role at all.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 c5
5.d5 Bxc3+

This sequence arrives at the Sämisch Variation by transposition. Black damages White's queenside pawn structure, but White gets a spatial advantage in the center and on the kingside in return.

6.bxc3 d6 7.e4 Qe7 8.Ne2 Nbd7 9.Ng3 Nf8
10.Bd3 e5

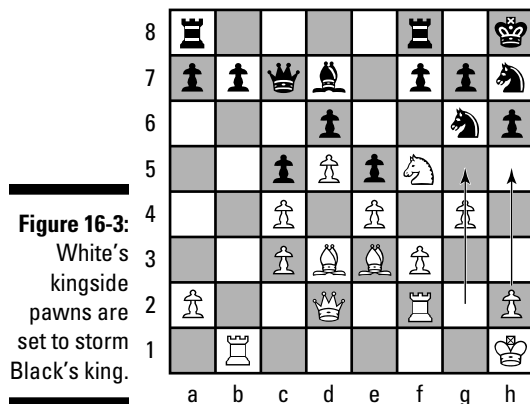
Black decides to close the center and avoid exchanges, but White is able to establish pressure on the kingside.

11.0-0 h6 12.Rb1 Qc7 13.Rf2 Ng6 14.Nf5 0-0

Now that Black's king has committed itself to one side of the board, White prepares to attack it.

15.Be3 Kh8 16.Qd2 Nh7 17.Kh1 Bd7 18.g4

White advances the kingside pawns in order to open lines for his pieces (see Figure 16-3).



18...Rae8 19.Rg1 f6 20.h4 Ne7 21.Rh2 Rf7
22.g5 fxg5 23.hxg5 hxg5 24.Rxg5 Ref8 25.Rxh7+ 1-0

If Black tries 25....Kxh7, then the moves 26.Qh2 and 27.Nh6+ are crushing.

When things go Black's way

Black gains superior development and uses piece play to put White under pressure. White is tied down defending against Black's moves and is unable to generate any counter-threats.



Black damages White's pawn structure and then attacks it. This is one of the basic ideas behind the Nimzo-Indian.

In the game between Glen Rudelis (White) and John Donaldson from Stillwater, Oklahoma, in 2002, things go Black's way.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.a3

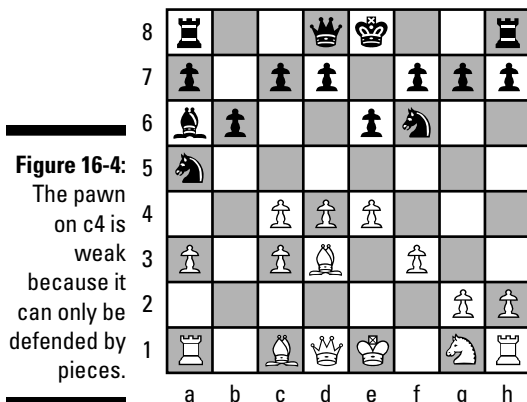
This is the normal move order in the Sämisch Variation.

4...Bxc3+

Black's move fractures White's queenside pawns. Black considers the pawn on c4 a weak spot, and his strategy is to target it for attack.

5.bxc3 b6 6.f3 Nc6 7.e4 Ba6 8.Bd3 Na5

Black attacks the pawn on c4 for a second time (see Figure 16-4).



9.e5 Ng8 10.Qa4 Qc8 11.Be4 c6 12.c5 f5

White manages to move the pawn off the c4 square, but the positional weakness there remains.

13.exf6 Nxf6 14.cxb6 axb6 15.Qc2 0-0 16.Ne2 Bc4
17.0-0 Qa6 18.Re1 d5

Black traps the bishop.

19.Bxh7+ Nxh7 20.Nf4 Nb3 21.Nxe6 Nxa1 22.Qg6 Qb7

Black guards against the threatened mate on g7.

23.Bh6 Rf6

Black's move forces further exchanges, leaving White in a hopeless position.

24.Qxg7+ Qxg7 25.Bxg7 Rxe6 26.Rxe6 Kxg7 0-1

Kicking Off with the Classical Variation

White can reach the *Classical Variation* by playing 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 (see Figure 16-5). The logic of the move is undeniable. Nimzowitsch wanted to cripple White's pawn structure, fix it into position, and then attack it. However, if Black captures the knight now, White will recapture with the queen, preserving White's pawn structure.



Two other aspects of the move deserve mention. The queen is now reinforcing White's designs on the e4 square. The queen is no longer defending the d-pawn, however, and Black may attempt to exploit that fact.

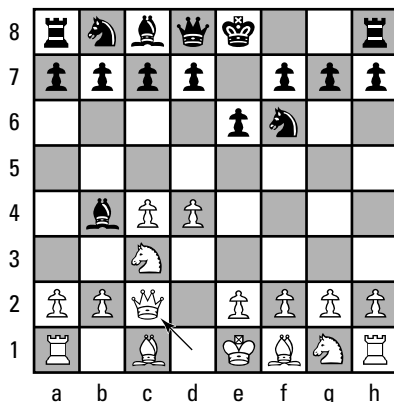


Figure 16-5:
The
Classical
Variation.

When things go White's way

White generally has a strong center and the two bishops, which leads to favorable attacking chances.

In the 1937 World Championship match between Alexander Alekhine and Max Euwe, Alekhine (White) used the Classical Variation in response to Euwe's Nimzo-Indian Defense. White was able to prevent Black from castling to safety and pretty much had his way afterward.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2

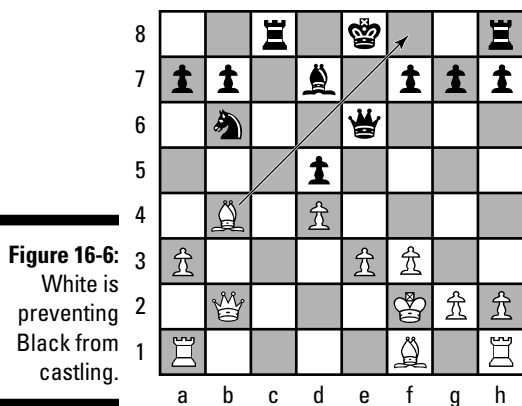
Arriving at the Classical Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense.

4...d5 5.cxd5 Qxd5 6.e3 c5 7.a3 Bxc3+
8.bxc3 Nbd7 9.f3 cxd4 10.cxd4

Notice that White maintains a strong pawn center and that Black fails to damage it.

10...Nb6 11.Ne2 Bd7 12.Nf4 Qd6 13.Bd2 Rc8
14.Qb2 Nfd5 15.Nxd5 exd5 16.Bb4 Qe6 17.Kf2

The bishop on b4 is preventing Black from castling. White's king can remain in the center in safety, but Black's king swiftly comes under attack. (See Figure 16-6.)



17....Na4 18.Qd2 b6 19.Ba6

White uses the two bishops to wreak havoc on Black's position. White now opens the position so the rooks can get into the game with decisive effect.

19....Rb8 20.e4

White is able to open lines against Black's king, hastening Black's downfall.

20....b5 21.Qf4

White can ignore the attack on the bishop on a6 because of his own threat against the rook on b8.

21....Rb6 22.exd5 Qxd5 23.Rhe1+ Be6 24.Rac1 f6

Black is creating an escape route via f7.

25.Rc7

White immediately takes away the escape.

25....Kd8 26.Rxa7 1-0

The threats of 27.Ra8+ or 28.Qc7+ are too much to deal with.

When things go Black's way



I often caution against moving the queen too early in the game because it may become subject to attack. Another reason is that developing your *minor pieces* (knights and bishops) can clear the path for castling. Castling kingside is usually considered safer than castling queenside.

In the 1941 game between Paul Keres (White) and Mikhail Botvinnik played in Leningrad, White does castle queenside and also neglects the development of his kingside pieces. The result? Things don't go White's way.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2

The Classical Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense.

4...d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 c5 8.0-0-0



Queenside castling is more aggressive but also riskier than castling on the kingside.

8...Bxc3 9.Qxc3 g5 10.Bg3 cxd4

Black opens the c-file in order to exploit White's king placement.

11.Qxd4 Nc6 12.Qa4 Bf5

The bishop is cutting off the king's escape route. Notice the lack of development on White's kingside. Black's minor pieces are poised to cause trouble. (See Figure 16-7.)

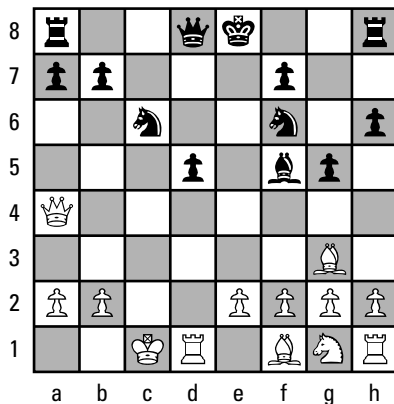


Figure 16-7:
White's king
is in danger.

13.e3 Rc8 14.Bd3 Qd7 15.Kb1 Bxd3+ 16.Rxd3 Qf5

The queen is pinning White's rook on d3.

17.e4 Nxe4

A small gain of material for Black, but the attack is what matters, and it's unrelenting.

18.Ka1 0-0 19.Rd1 b5 20.Qxb5 Nd4

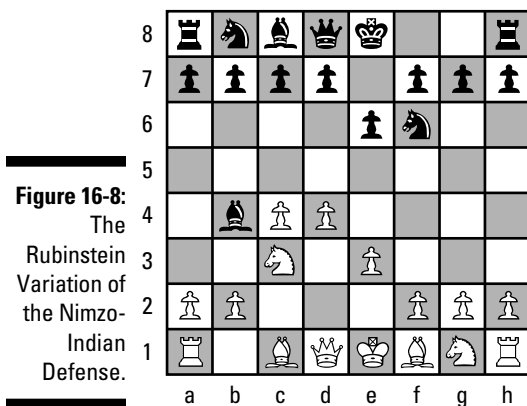
White's rook can't capture the knight on d4 because of the threat of mate on c1.

21.Qd3 Nc2+ 22.Kb1 Nb4 0-1

If the attacked queen moves, then Black wins by playing 23...Nxc3 with a discovered check by the Black queen on f5.

Running with the Rubinstein

The *Rubinstein Variation* is named after Akiba (or Akiva) Rubinstein (1882–1961), one of the world's greatest players in the first couple of decades of the 20th century. White triggers the Rubinstein Variation by playing 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 (see Figure 16-8).



The move 4.e3 isn't ambitious, but it is flexible. Black can't yet determine how White will develop the rest of his kingside pieces. This move is, after 4.Qc2, White's most popular choice in response to the Nimzo.

When things go White's way



If Black isn't sufficiently aggressive, White can build a strong center and use that to launch a kingside attack. Black's big mistake in the next game is 13...c4, which removes the pressure from White's center. Chess players call this *releasing the tension*, and you should do it only after careful consideration. Without any worries in the center, White is able to launch a devastating kingside attack.

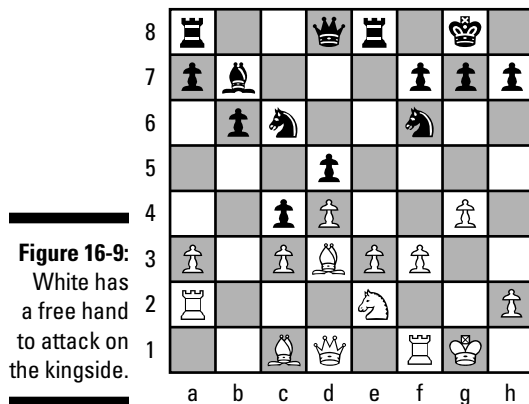
That's what Giorgi Kacheishvili did to Florian Jenni in their 2001 game played in Linares, Spain.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3

Establishing the Rubinstein Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense.

4...0-0 5.Bd3 c5 6.Nge2 Nc6 7.0-0 d5
8.cxd5 exd5 9.a3 Bxc3 10.bxc3 Re8 11.f3 b6
12.Ra2 Bb7 13.g4 c4

This releases the tension in the center and frees White to attack on the kingside and in the center (see Figure 16-9).



14.Bb1

Although the bishop is forced to retreat, it's a long-range attacking piece, and it retains its effectiveness on b1.

14...Na5 15.Ng3 Nb3 16.g5 Nd7 17.e4 Nxc1

The knight maneuver is time-consuming and largely ineffective.

18.Qxc1 b5 19.e5 a5 20.Nh5 Qb6 21.Nf6+

The knight sacrifice on f6 rips open Black's kingside.

21...gxf6 22.gxf6 Kh8 23.Qh6 Rg8+ 24.Kh1 Nf8
25.Rg1 Ng6 26.Rg5 1-0

White is threatening 27.Qxh7+ and 28.Rh5#.

When things go Black's way

White has a damaged pawn structure with little or no mobility. After having fixed the damaged pawns in place, Black employs subtle maneuvering to attack and eventually capture the weakened pawns. This process requires patience but provides excellent winning chances.

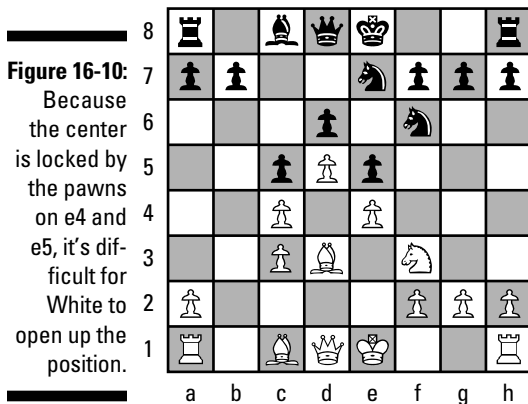
Nigel Short played a long game against Rafael Vaganian in Horgen, Switzerland, in 1995, where his persistent maneuvering finally broke down White's defense.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3

Introducing the Rubinstein Variation of the Nimzo-Indian.

4...c5 5.Bd3 Nc6 6.Nf3 Bxc3+ 7.bxc3 d6
8.e4 e5 9.d5 Ne7

Black is using just three center pawns to restrain four of White's. White has *doubled pawns* on the c-file (two pawns on the same file are usually weak because, by definition, they can't defend each other). The position is closed, which limits the range of White's bishops. (See Figure 16-10.)



10.Nh4 h6 11.0-0 g5

Such advances on the wing are usually safe when the center is locked.

12.Qf3 Nh7 13.Nf5 Nxf5 14.exf5 Bd7 15.Rb1 b6
16.Bc2 Rb8 17.a4 a5

Black's pawn move locks up the queenside so that White can't generate counterplay there.

18.h4 Qf6 19.hxg5 hxg5 20.Qg4 Qh6 21.f3

White's pawn move gives his king a flight square.

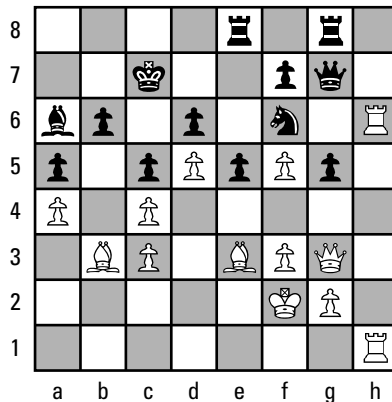
21....Nf6 22.Qg3 Rg8 23.Be3 Kd8 24.Kf2 Kc7
25.Rh1 Qg7 26.Rh2 Bc8 27.Rbh1 Ba6 28.Bb3

White's bishop is forced into guarding the weak pawn on c4 (see Figure 16-11).

28....Rbe8 29.Rh6 g4

Black is finally poised to open up the game. Black went on to win on the 64th move.

Figure 16-11:
Again,
Black is
attacking a
weak pawn
on c4 that
White must
defend.



Chapter 17

Fighting Back with the King's Indian

In This Chapter

- ▶ Introducing the King's Indian
 - ▶ Playing it close with the Classical Variation
 - ▶ Serving up the Sämisch Variation
 - ▶ Harnessing the Four Pawns Attack
-

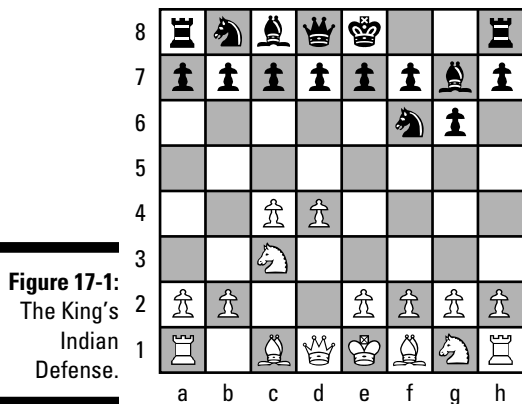
Black castles quickly in the King's Indian and then strikes out at White's center. The center pawns often become locked together in this opening, allowing both sides to initiate flank attacks. Quite often, White attacks madly on the queenside, and Black is just as determined to attack on the kingside. Whichever side achieves a breakthrough first is the likely winner.

The Center Can Wait

The *King's Indian* is a provocative opening that initially cedes the center to White, only to attempt to later undermine White's control. It arises after the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 (see Figure 17-1).

Black invariably follows up with 4...d6 and 5...0-0 against almost anything White chooses to play. He makes no piece or pawn moves past the third rank for at least five moves, which allows White to establish what appears to be a powerful grip on the center.

Black's plan, however, is to play ...e5, or, less frequently, ...c5, in order to contest White's apparent control. This method of counterattack was refined by Soviet theorists back in the 1940s and 50s.



If White chooses to advance d4-d5, the center can become locked, freeing both sides to launch wing attacks. Quite often, the result boils down to whose attack arrives first.



The King's Indian appeals to the type of player who's a deep strategic thinker with a taste for tactical melees. It has been the favorite opening of great champions, such as Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov, and remains popular at all levels of play.

Getting Classical

White usually attacks on the queenside and Black on the kingside in the *Classical Variation*, which arises after the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0–0 6.Be2. These types of games feature a dynamic equilibrium, with a great deal of activity on both sides of the board but a balance that's somehow maintained. If there's a decisive result, the victory is often won by the slimmest of margins.

When things go White's way

White secures the center, then advances and breaks through on the queenside. White's strategic success often culminates in a tactical flourish to wrap up the win.

In a 1999 game between Veselin Topalov and Judit Polgar in Frankfurt, Germany, Topalov (White) was able to gain a spatial advantage in the center and on the queenside. Topalov built up pressure on the queenside, and Polgar was unable to prevent him from breaking through.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7

This is the King's Indian Defense. Black develops quickly but allows White to build up a big center.

4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2

Arriving at the Classical Variation of the King's Indian Defense.

6...e5

Black stakes a claim to the center.



7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.b4

This is an aggressive and good way to get started attacking on the queenside.

9...a5

Black tries to slow down White's advance. For example, if White were to play 10.b5, Black would block any further advance with 10...b6.

10.Ba3 Nh5 11.c5 Nf4

Black has found a good post for his knight.

12.b5

White's threat is to play b6, which would decimate Black's pawn structure.

12...b6 13.cxd6 cxd6 14.Rc1 Bh6 15.Nd2 f5

Black gets on with the task of attacking on the kingside, but White is able to secure himself there.

16.Re1 Bb7 17.Bf1 Rc8 18.Nc4

White's queenside attack arrives well ahead of any kingside attack by Black (see Figure 17-2).

18...Rf6 19.Rc2 Rc7 20.Nxe5! Nxd5

White's idea is if 20...dxe5, then 21.d6. For example, one continuation could be 21...Rd7 22.dxe7 Rxd1 23.Rxd1! Qe8 24.Rd8, winning for White.

21.Nxd5! Nxd5 22.Nc6!

With this move, Black's defenses collapse.

22....Bxc6 23.bxc6 Nb4 24.Bxb4 axb4 25.e5! 1–0

Depending on where the rook moves, Bc4 or exd6 will pick up a lot of material.

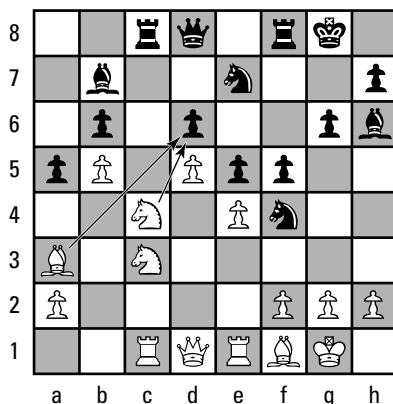


Figure 17-2:
White's
attack
comes first.

When things go Black's way

Black's attack on the kingside comes crashing through first. Hikaru Nakamura played Black in this 2010 game against Boris Gelfand from the World Team Championships in Bursa, Turkey. It seems as though White's attack on the queenside is on the verge of success, but Nakamura makes a series of remarkable moves that force White to resign.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6
5.Nf3 0–0 6.Be2

White chooses to play the Classical Variation.

6...e5 7.0–0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Nd2 Ne8
10.b4 f5

Black's attack gains space on the kingside and pressures e4.

11.c5

White attacks d6, a key point in Black's pawn chain.

11....Nf6 12.f3 f4



Now that White has extended his pawn chain by f3, Black extends his. The plan is ...g5-g4, and from now on, the players single-mindedly attack on the side of the board where they're the strongest.

13.Nc4 g5 14.a4 Ng6 15.Ba3 Rf7 16.b5

White's pressure reaches a height. The bishop on a3 and the knight on c4 are focused on d6, so Black has to give up the base of his pawn chain.

16....dxc5 17.Bxc5 h5 18.a5 g4 19.b6 g3

This is a nice look at the opposing strategies. Both sides are trying to break down their opponent's defenses (see Figure 17-3).

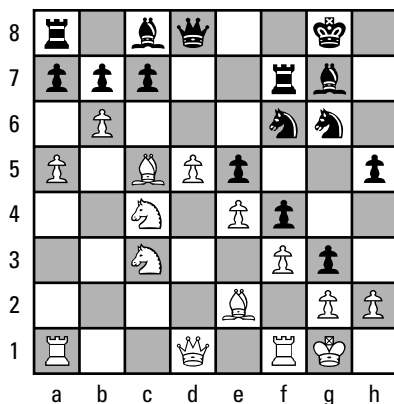


Figure 17-3:
The attacks
are on
opposite
wings.

20.Kh1



It's important to see that 20.h3 doesn't succeed in blocking off White's attack because of 20....Bxh3! 21.gxh3 Qd7, and White has to allow the fatal penetration by ...Qxh3 because 22.Kg2 Nh4+ forces White to retreat.

20....Bf8 21.d6 axb6 22.Bg1

White defends h2 and is ready to break through on the queenside.

22....Nh4! 23.Re1

The alternative 23.dxc7 fails to 23....Bh3! (threatening ...Bxg2#), when Black would answer 24.gxh3 with 24....g2#.

23....Nxc2

Black has to keep forcing the action.

24.dxc7?



In this remarkable position, White makes a mistake. The continuation 24.Kxc2 Rg7 instead is complicated and unclear.

24....Nxe1! 25.Qxe1

White can get another queen with 25.cxd8Q, but 25....g2# would be checkmate!

25....g2+ 26.Kxc2 Rg7+ 27.Kh1 Bh3!

The same idea: White can't allow ...Bg2#.

28.Bf1 Qd3!!

Very pretty! Now, if White plays 29.Bxh3, 29....Qxf3+ is mate in two.

29.Nxe5 Bxf1

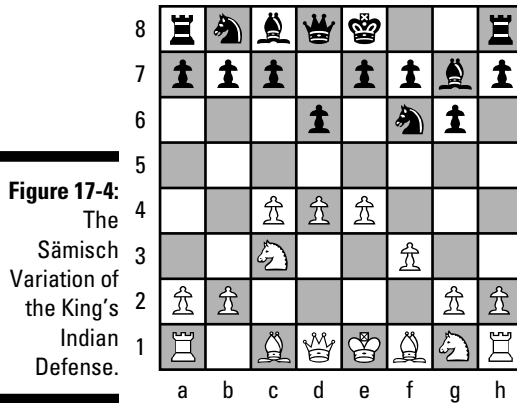
Threatening ...Bg2# for the last time. Black ends up a piece ahead:

30.Qxf1 Qxc3 31.Rc1 Qxe5 32.c8Q Rxc8
33.Rxc8 Qe6 0-1

Playing Differently with the Sämisch

The *Sämisch Variation* of the King's Indian Defense is named after Friedrich Sämisch (1896–1975), who put his stamp on a number of different opening systems. You reach the Sämisch Variation following the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 (see Figure 17-4).

White tries to provide additional protection to the pawns on e4 and d4 in this variation. White supports the e-pawn with the f-pawn and intends to support d4 by playing Be3. Black can't count on White castling on the kingside in this variation, so the all-out-attack strategy that's useful in the Classical Variation (see the preceding section) has to be modified against the Sämisch.



When things go White's way

Black attacks on the kingside, but his attack goes nowhere. White is left with a free hand on the queenside. In a 2001 game played in Bosnia, Alexey Dreev easily defended against Zdenko Kožul's kingside attack and patiently broke through on the queenside.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3

This is the Sämisch Variation. White solidifies his center and brings his bishop to its best square on e3 without fearing ...Ng4.

5...0-0 6.Nge2 c6 7.Be3 Nbd7 8.Qd2 e5 9.d5

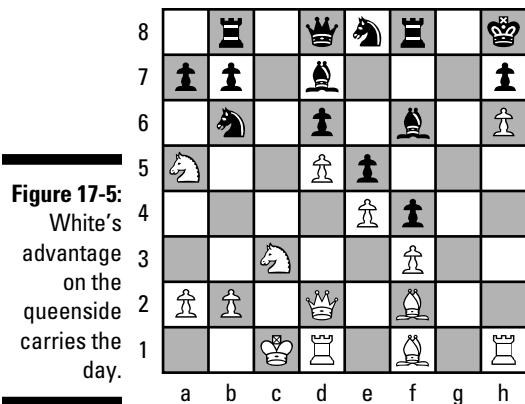
This pawn advance secures additional territory for White.

9...cxd5 10.cxd5 Ne8

Black's idea is to attack White's pawn chain by ...f5. White frustrates this plan.

11.h4! f5 12.h5 f4 13.Bf2 g5 14.h6 Bf6
15.g3 Nb6 16.gxf4 gxf4 17.Nc1! Kh8 18.Nb3 Bd7
19.Na5! Rb8 20.0-0

With Black unable to do anything on the kingside, White now turns his attention to the queenside, where he has a standard advantage. His simple idea is to play Kb1, Rc1, and attack along the c-file (see Figure 17-5).



20....a6 21.Kb1! Nc8 22.Ne2 Ne7 23.Rc1 Bb5
24.Qb4 Ng6 25.a4

This forces the exchange of Black's best queenside defender, after which Black's game collapses.

25....Bd3+ 26.Ka2 Nh4 27.Rc3 Bxe2 28.Bxe2 Ng2
29.Rb3

White has three threats: Nxb7, Nc6, and Bxa6.

29....Rc8 30.Qxb7 Nc7 31.Nc6 Qe8 32.Bf1 1-0

Black's knight is trapped on g2, so he has to try something like 32....Ne3, when 33.Bxe3 fxe3 34.Bh3 wins more material for White.

When things go Black's way

Black is able to crack open the center and get excellent piece activity as a result. Black goes on the attack and places White's king in jeopardy. In a 1969 game against Anthony Saidy in Netanya, Israel, Heikki Westerinen used a speculative pawn sacrifice to dissolve White's center.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3

Establishing the Sämisch Variation.

5....0-0 6.Be3 Nc6

This defense to the Sämisch depends on quick action in the center: The knight adds to Black's control over e5 and d4.

7.Nge2 Rb8

The point of this move is that Black's setup usually leads to opening the b-file by means of ...a6 and ...b5. In the game, the b-file is opened in a different way because of Black's decision to capture with a pawn on his 12th move.

8.Qd2 Re8 9.Nc1

White clears the way for his bishop to develop. Sometimes he plays 10.h4, intending h5 and Bh6, as in a Sicilian Dragon (see Chapter 9).

9...e5 10.d5 Nd4 11.Nb3 c5 12.dxc6 bxc6

This is a speculative move, as opposed to recapturing the pawn with 12...Nxc6. Black gives up a pawn in the center, but after White takes it, Black gets open lines along the b- and e-files, and active play. White has to be very careful not to get blown away.

13.Nxd4 exd4 14.Bxd4 d5

Black is trying to demolish White's center and open more lines (see Figure 17-6).

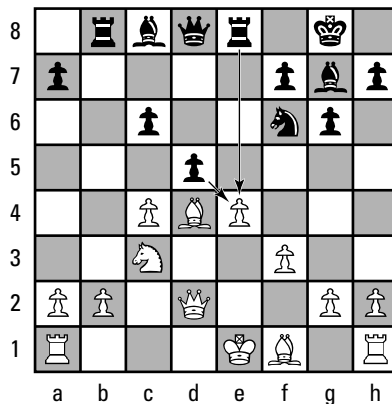


Figure 17-6:
Black is prying open the center.

15.cxd5 cxd5 16.e5

White tries to keep the position under control and refuses to open more lines.

16...Nh5

Black threatens ...Qh4+.

17.Bb5 Rxe5+!

18.Kf2

White's problem is that 18.Bxe5 Bxe5 would threaten ...Bc3+, winning a piece, as well as ...Qh4+ and ...d4.

18....a6

19.Be2 Rxb2!!

Those open files prove to be decisive.

20.Qxb2 Qh4+

21.Kf1 Qxd4

22.Rc1 Bd7

23.Bxa6 Nf4

Every Black piece is joining the attack on the king.

24.Rd1 Qe3

25.Qd2 Nxe2!

Beautiful. Now 26.Kxg2 Bh3+! 27.Kxh3 Qxf3+ mates in one more move.

26.Qxg2 Qxc3

27.h4 Re3!

28.Be2 Bd4

29.Rxd4 Qxd4

30.h5 Qd2

31.hxg6 hxg6

32.Qf2 Bf5

33.Qh2 Bh3+!

34.Qxh3 Qxe2+

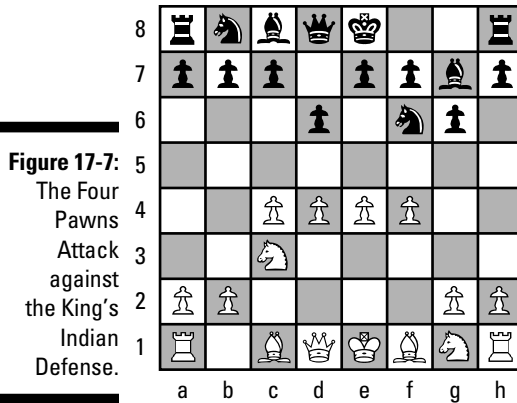
35.Kg1 Qe1+ 0-1

Checkmate follows soon — for example, 36.Qf1 Qg3+ 37.Qg2 Re1#.

Going for It All with the Four Pawns Attack

The *Four Pawns Attack* is initiated by the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f4 (see Figure 17-7).

When I was first learning about chess I thought this variation was an outright refutation of the King's Indian Defense. It just seemed obvious to me that the advanced White pawns would keep Black's pieces pinned down to the back ranks, and White would enjoy far greater piece mobility. The truth is a little different. Sure, in many games, White does indeed steamroll over Black's forces, but in just about as many games, White's advanced pawns become liabilities rather than assets.



When things go White's way

White's pawns in the center and kingside advance deep into Black's position. White opens lines against Black's king and goes on the attack. Anatoli Vaisser had White in this game from 1991 in Biel, Switzerland, and he just overran Stefan Kindermann's position.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f4

This is the Four Pawns Attack.

**5...0-0 6.Nf3 c5 7.d5 e6 8.Be2 exd5
9.cxd5 Bg4**



The idea behind Black's move is to capture the knight on f3. The reasoning is that the f3-knight is the best defender of White's center, so its capture will help weaken it.

**10.0-0 Nbd7 11.Re1 Re8 12.h3 Bxf3 13.Bxf3 Qa5
14.Be3 Rac8 15.g4 h6 16.h4**

The advance of the kingside pawns is a major theme in this variation (see Figure 17-8).

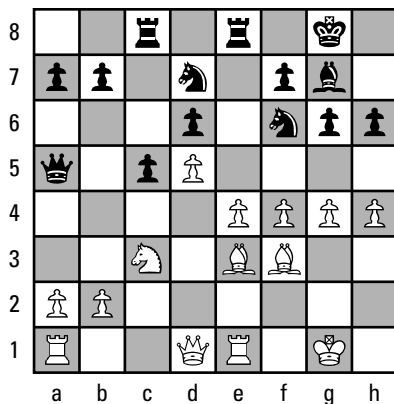


Figure 17-8:
The kingside
pawn roller
is under-
way.



16...b5

A better defensive try may have been 16...h5 17.g5 Ng4.

17.g5 hxg5 18.hxg5 Nh7 19.Bg4 Rcd8 20.e5!

This thematic central advance is intended to break down Black's defenses.



20...dxe5 21.f5! e4 22.fxg6 fxg6 23.Be6+ Rxe6

Black would've been better off playing 23...Kh8 instead.

**24.dxe6 Ne5 25.e7 Re8 26.Qd5+ Kh8 27.Kg2 Rxe7
28.Rh1 Rf7 29.Raf1 Rxf1 30.Kxf1 1-0**

White is threatening 31.Qa8+ Bf8 32.Qxf8#.

When things go Black's way

Black opens lines on the queenside and uses them to infiltrate White's territory. White's pieces drift into passivity trying to defend. In a 1991 game between Zdenko Kožul and John Nunn in Wijk aan Zee in the Netherlands, Nunn (Black) was able to penetrate White's defenses and administer a crushing blow.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f4

Establishing the Four Pawns Attack.

**5...c5 6.d5 0-0 7.Nf3 e6 8.Be2 exd5
9.cxd5 Bg4**



Black has alternatives such as 9...Re8 and 9...Nbd7, but the reasoning behind this move is given in the preceding game.

10.0-0 Nbd7 11.Re1 Re8 12.h3 Bxf3

Black eliminates the best defender of White's center.

13.Bxf3 Qa5 14.Be3 b5 15.a3 Nb6 16.Bf2 Nc4

Black is forcing White into a defensive posture on the queenside. Black continues to step up the pressure by opening lines for his pieces (see Figure 17-9).

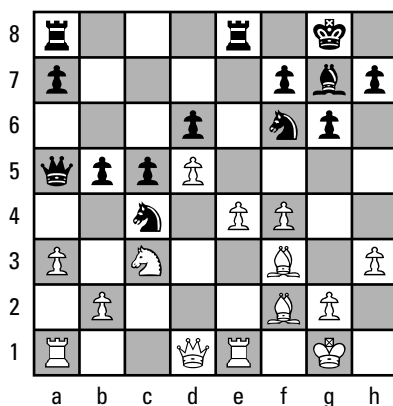


Figure 17-9:
White's pieces are becoming passive in defense of the queenside.

17.Qc2 Nd7 18.Be2 Rab8 19.a4 b4

This thematic advance assures that lines on the queenside will be opened. Black's rook on b8 and bishop on g7 are perfectly positioned.

20.Bxc4 bxc3 21.b3 a6 22.Rec1 Nb6 23.Bf1 c4

The pawn isn't important, but the open b-file is. Black penetrates White's defenses and goes on to win on his 37th move.

24.Bxc4 Nxc4 25.bxc4 Rb2 26.Qd3 Rd2 27.Qf3 f5

Black forces open more lines.

**28.e5 dxe5 29.fxe5 Rxe5 30.Kh1 Re4 31.Be1 Qc7
32.Rab1**



If White tries 32.Bxd2 instead, Black would play 32...cxd2 followed by 33...Bxa1 and 34...Re1+, mopping up the victory.

32...Rde2	33.Bxc3	R2e3	34.d6	Qxd6
35.Bb4 Qc6	36.Qf1	Rxh3+	37.gxh3	Re2+ 0-1

White resigns in the face of 38.Kg1 Bd4+.

Chapter 18

Grinding in the Grünfeld

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting hypermodern with the Grünfeld Defense
 - ▶ Beating the Grünfeld with the Exchange Variation
 - ▶ Establishing the ideal center with the Russian System
-

The Grünfeld Defense is at the leading edge of the theoretical disputes about how best to control the center. White's most direct attempt to steamroll Black with a big pawn center is the Exchange Variation, but no one has been able to demonstrate a conclusive advantage for either side. This chapter also covers White's other main approach to controlling the center in the variation referred to as the Russian System.

Hypermodern to the Max

The *Grünfeld Defense* is named after the Viennese Grandmaster Ernst Grünfeld (1893–1962). He introduced it in his fourth match game against Albert Becker in 1922. The opening moves are 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 (see Figure 18-1).

This opening belongs to the Hypermodern School (see Chapter 3) of defenses, which allow White to establish a classical pawn center, only to try to tear it down. Although many openings concentrate on a particular color complex in the center, the Grünfeld does not. The Queen's Gambit Declined and Slav (see Chapters 14 and 15) concentrate on the light central squares d5 and e4. The Grünfeld player, however, attacks both light and dark squares with equal abandon.



The Grünfeld appeals to the type of player who likes active, tactical games. You always have to guard against being steamrolled by White's big pawn center, but you have plenty of chances to mix things up.

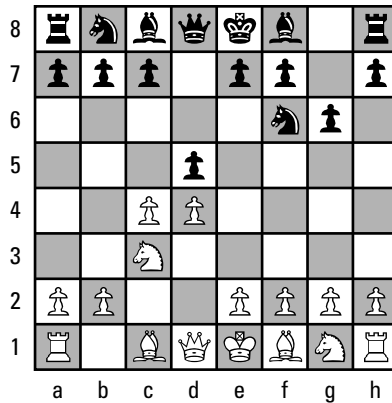


Figure 18-1:
The
Grünfeld
Defense.

Examining the Exchange Variation

The *Exchange Variation* of the Grünfeld Defense arises after the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 (see Figure 18-2). This variation is the most direct attempt to defeat the Grünfeld. White establishes the classical pawn center with pawns on d4 and e4. If White can maintain them there, or advance them at opportune times, White will enjoy a spatial advantage.

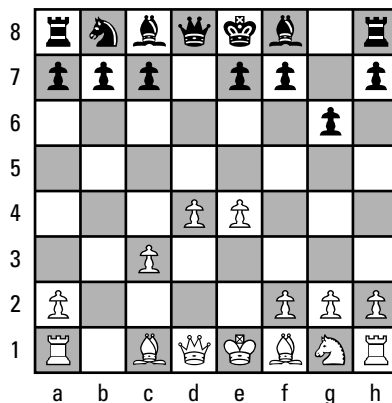


Figure 18-2:
The
Exchange
Variation of
the Grünfeld
Defense.

Black continues to develop with ...Bg7 and ...0-0 and then strikes out at the White center. White tries to develop as quickly as possible and then exploits the spatial advantage in the center by initiating an attack. Though this is the most ambitious way for White to play against the Grünfeld, Black has plenty of resources to counter White's plans.

When things go White's way

White advances the center pawns in order to split Black's forces in two, or simply overrun them. In a 1999 game played in St. Petersburg, Russia, Sergey Ivanov stormed Victor Mikhalevski's Black army and routed it.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5
5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3

The Exchange Variation of the Grünfeld.

6...Bg7 7.Nf3 c5 8.Rb1 0–0 9.Be2 Nc6

Black is exerting maximum pressure on the d4 pawn. The attempt to reinforce it by 10.Be3 can be met by 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 Qa5+.

10.d5!

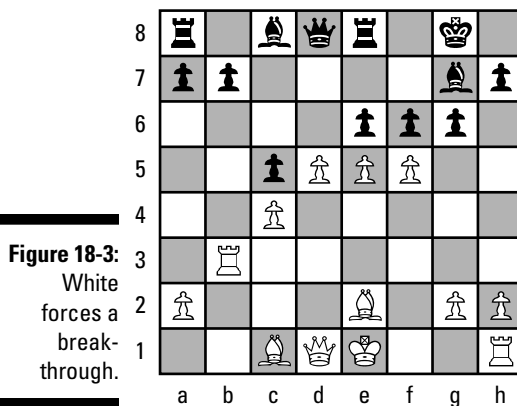
The center pawns start their advance. In this position, Black has tried 10...Bxc3+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Qd2, but White's position is preferred.

10...Ne5 11.Nxe5 Bxe5 12.Rb3 e6 13.f4 Bg7 14.c4

White is reinforcing the pawn center.

14...Re8 15.e5 f6 16.f5!

Just when it seemed as though White's center would be broken apart, White forces a breakthrough (see Figure 18-3).



16....gxf5

17.Bh5 Re7

18.d6 Rd7

19.Rg3

White finally allows his center to crumble because he's getting a decisive attack going against Black's king.

19...fxe5 20.Bb2 Kh8 21.0-0 Rxd6 22.Qe2 Rd4
23.Rxg7!

White deprives Black's king of his last protector.

23...Kxg7 24.Qxe5+ Kg8 25.Rf4 Qg5 26.Rxd4 cxd4
27.Qxd4 Kf8 28.Qh8+ Ke7 29.Ba3+ Kd7 30.Qd4+ 1-0

White continues with 31.Qd6#.

When things go Black's way

Black counters White's control of the center with action on the queenside. Black frequently targets White's weak light squares so that he can use them as bases for later piece operations.

Wolfgang Uhlmann was able to generate significant counterplay as Black in his 1975 game against Josef Pribyl in the Czech Republic. He was able to exploit White's light squares early and finish him off nicely later.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5
5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3

The Exchange Variation is established.

6...Bg7 7.Bc4 0-0 8.Ne2 Nc6

This move isn't as popular as 8...c5, but the game demonstrates some important defensive ideas for Black. He already has his eye on the weak c4 square.

9.Be3 b6 10.0-0 Bb7 11.Rc1 e6 12.Qd2 Na5

Black's last five moves initiate a strategy of controlling the light squares, especially c4 and d5.

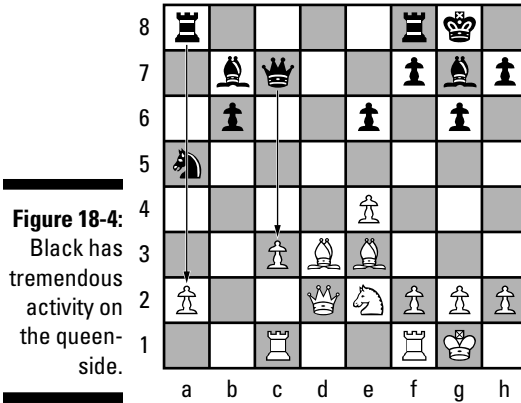
13.Bd3 c5 14.dxc5 Qc7!

Black sacrifices a pawn (this is a standard idea in the Grünfeld) in order to open lines.

15.cxb6 axb6



Here, Black has two very active bishops, open files for his rooks, an outpost on c4, and two weak pawns to attack on a2 and c3. (See Figure 18-4.)



16.Rb1 Nc4!

Consistent with his strategy, Black gets rid of the defender of White's light squares.

17.Bxc4 Qxc4

Black is threatening ...Rxa2, as well as capture on e4.

18.Rb4 Qxa2 19.Qxa2 Rxa2

Black is occupying the powerful 7th rank. This rook stays there for the rest of the game!

20.Re1 Rc8 21.Bxb6 Ba6 22.Nd4 Bd3

Now, Black would like to play ...Bxe4 (depending on the weakness of White's last rank) or capture on c3.

23.h3 Rxc3 24.Nf3 Rc8 25.e5 Be2 26.Bd4 Bxf3
27.gxf3 Bh6



The rest of the game shows how a grandmaster exploits weak pawns by using the weak squares that they create.

28.Re4 Bd2 29.Rb1 Rc4 30.Rd1 Kg7 31.Kg2 g5
32.h4 h6 33.hxg5 hxg5 34.Kg3

White begins what looks like an aggressive king advance, but it puts him in tactical trouble.

34....Kg6 35.Kg4? Bf4 36.Rh1

Now comes a pretty finish:

**36....Rxd4! 37.Rxd4 Bxe5 38.Rd8 f5+ 39.Kh3 Rxf2
40.Rd3?**

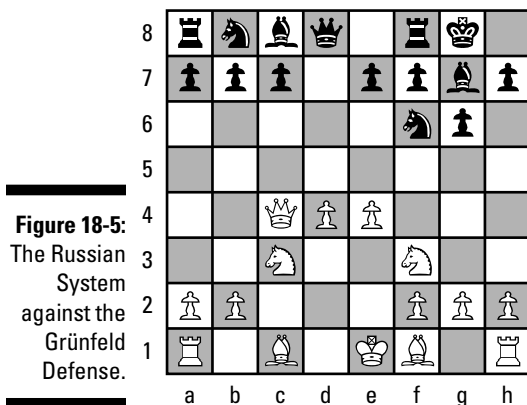
But Black was about to play ...Rxf3+ and get three connected passed pawns, which would win easily.

40....Kh5 0-1

This must have come as an unwelcome surprise to White. Black threatens 41....g4+ 42.fxg4 fxc4#, but 41.Rg1 Rh2 is also checkmate.

Rolling Out the Russian System

White adopts the *Russian System* after the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Qb3. Almost always, the opening continues 5....dxc4 6.Qxc4 0-0 7.e4 (see Figure 18-5).



White establishes what the classical thinkers would call the ideal center. Black, in the true spirit of the Hypermodern School, tries to develop quickly and then strike out at this center to prove that it's anything but ideal.

When things go White's way

White advances one or more center pawns and disrupts Black's forces. Black's pieces drift into passivity defending against the pawn advance, or Black is simply saddled with a poor endgame.

In the 1986 World Championship match between Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov, Karpov used the Russian System against Kasparov's Grünfeld Defense on more than one occasion. In this game, Karpov, as White, gets a passed pawn on the d-file. Even though Kasparov is eventually successful at eliminating it, he's left with a lost endgame.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Qb3

This is the Russian System.

5...dxc4 6.Qxc4 0-0 7.e4

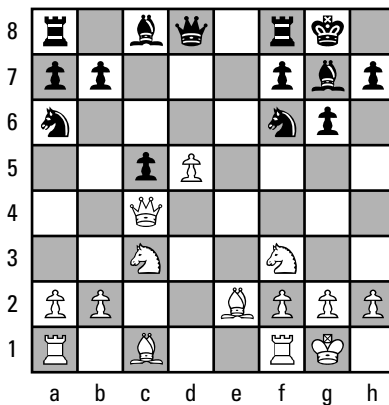
Now, Black has the choice of playing 7...a6, 7...Bg4, or the actual game continuation.

7...Na6 8.Be2 c5 9.d5 e6 10.0-0 exd5 11.exd5



White establishes a passed d-pawn. If Black can immobilize it and attack it, White's pieces may become passive in defense. If the pawn remains mobile, it can split Black's forces in two, or tie them down trying to prevent the pawn's further advance. (See Figure 18-6.)

Figure 18-6:
The passed
d-pawn has
the potential
to disrupt
Black's
plans.



11...Bf5
15.Bd3 Nb4

12.Bf4 Re8

13.Rad1 Ne4

14.Nb5 Qf6

Kasparov was known for valuing active piece play over a small material deficit. Here, he sacrifices a small amount of material in order to remain active.

16.Nc7 Nxd3 17.Nxe8 Rxe8 18.Qxd3 Qxb2

White wins a rook for a knight and a pawn. This is a slight material advantage.

19.Rde1 Qb4



Black probably should have tried 19....Qxa2, although White retains a slight advantage after 20.Qb5.

20.Nd2 Qa4 21.Qc4 Qxc4 22.Nxc4 Bc3

The pin along the e-file is causing Black problems, so it may have been better to play 22....Bd7.

23.Nd2 Bxd2 24.Bxd2 Bd7 25.Bf4 Bb5 26.f3 g5
27.Bxg5 Bxf1 28.Kxf1 Nd6 29.Be7 Nc8 30.Bxc5

White is a healthy pawn to the good. Also, with pawns on both sides of the board, the long-range bishop is superior to the short-range knight.

30....Rd8 31.Re5 f6 32.Rf5 b6 33.Bd4 Ne7
34.Bxf6 Rxd5 35.Rg5+ Rxc5 36.Bxc5 Nc6 37.Ke2 Kf7
38.Kd3 Ke6 39.Kc4 Ne5+ 40.Kd4 Nc6+ 1-0

Black isn't able to prevent White from queening one of the kingside pawns.

When things go Black's way

Black destroys White's center. The collapse of the center means that Black's pieces have open lines and good activity. Black's pieces are better coordinated and create more threats than White can cope with.

In the 1997 game from Tilburg, the Netherlands, played between Joel Lautier and Peter Leko, Leko (Black) survived an early onslaught from Lautier and then went on the attack. White's material advantage couldn't save him because his pieces drifted into passivity.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.Nc3 d5 5.Qb3

The Russian System is in play.

5....dxc4 6.Qxc4 0-0 7.e4 a6 8.Qb3 b5
9.e5 Nfd7 10.h4 c5 11.e6 fxe6 12.h5 cxd4
13.hxc6 Nc5 14.Qc2

White goes all out to attack Black's king. Meanwhile, Black destroys White's center. Black is now thinking about a direct attack on White's king. (See Figure 18-7.)

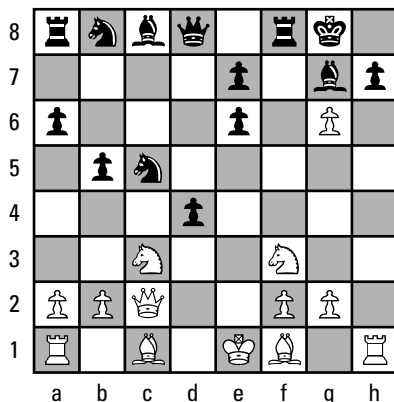


Figure 18-7:
White's
center is
destroyed.

14...Rxf3!

Black eliminates White's best defensive piece.

15.gxh7+ Kh8
19.Rxh6 Bb7

16.gxf3 d3

17.Qd1 Nc6

18.Bh6 Bxh6

It's interesting to note that Black's king is hiding behind one of White's pawns. It's also becoming ever clearer that Black's pieces are much better coordinated than White's.

20.Bg2 Ne5
24.Kg1 Rf4

21.Rh3 Qd4

22.Rg3 Nc4

23.Kf1 Rf8

Black is tying White up in knots.

25.Qc1 e5

26.Nd1 Kxh7

The king isn't in any danger at this point.

27.Rb1 Bc8

28.Ne3 d2

29.Qc2+ Qd3

Black's advantage remains, even after the exchange of queens.

30.Qxd3+ Nxd3

31.Bf1 Nc1

32.Bxc4 bxc4

33.Rg5 Bf5

The knight can only move to d1, or the d-pawn queens.

34.Ra1 Rxf3

35.Nd1 Bc2

36.Kg2 Bxd1

37.Rh5+ Kg6 0-1

Chapter 19

The Best of the Rest of the Semi-Closed Games

In This Chapter

- ▶ Cooling it with the Colle
 - ▶ Loosening up with the London
 - ▶ Breaking out the Benoni
 - ▶ Digging two variations of the Dutch
-

If you don't want to play against Main Line defenses after 2.c4 in semi-closed games, you can always play a different second move. In fact, you can choose from a number of systems of development to play against pretty much anything Black tries to do.

In this chapter, I introduce two such systems: the Colle and the London. After considering these alternative developmental schemes, the chapter ends with alternatives for Black against 1.d4: the Benoni Defense and the Dutch Defense.

Considering the Colle

In the *Colle System*, White plays the moves 1.d4, 2.Nf3, and 3.e3 against whatever Black chooses to do. This system is named after the Belgian champion Edgard Colle (1897–1932), who made it his specialty in the 1920s.



The Colle is well-suited to the type of player who wants to simply get out of the opening without suffering any disasters and reach a viable middlegame.

When things go White's way

White develops and castles quickly. The e-pawn advances from e3 to e4, freeing up the bishop on c1. White advances in the center and attacks on the kingside.

Although this system is named after Edgard Colle, it was another Belgian player, George Koltanowski (1903–2000), who refined it over the course of many years. In this 1937 game against John O'Hanlon in Dublin, Koltanowski overwhelmed his opponent with a deadly attack.

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 c5
5.c3 Nc6 6.Nbd2 Bd6 7.0-0

This is the characteristic setup for the Colle system. White bolsters the pawn on d4 with pawns on e3 and c3, develops the knights to f3 and d2 and the bishop on f1 to d3, and then castles (see Figure 19-1).

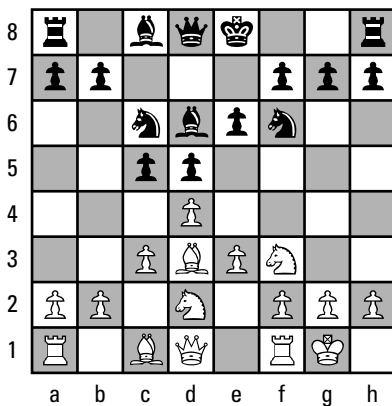


Figure 19-1:
The Colle
System.

7...0-0 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.e4

Although it takes White two moves to get this central advance in, it's almost always necessary.

9...Qc7 10.Qe2 Re8

A better alternative for Black is 10...Bd6 in order to prevent the advance of the pawn from e4 to e5.

11.e5 Nd7 12.Nb3 Bb6 13.Bf4 f6



Black wants to demolish White's center, which is a good idea, but this also leaves Black's kingside vulnerable.

14.Rae1 Nxe5?



Black's move is a mistake. Black should admit that his tenth move was an error and play either 14...Rd8 or 14...Rf8. Sometimes it's difficult to admit one's mistake.

15.Nxe5 Nxe5

Now, the stage is set for a thematic sacrifice of White's bishop, which quickly decides the game in White's favor (see Figure 19-2).

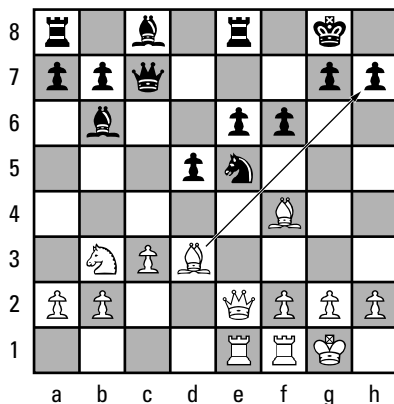


Figure 19-2:
The stage is set for a thematic bishop sacrifice.



16.Bxh7+! Kf8

If Black plays 16...Kxh7 instead, then 17.Qh5+ wins the rook on e8.

17.Bg6 Rd8

18.Qh5 Ke7

19.Nd4 Bd7

This loses at once, but Black has no alternative that would salvage the situation.

20.Rxe5 1-0

Taking the rook with 20...fxe5 loses to 21.Qh4+ Kd6 22.Bxe5+ Ke5 23.Qe7, when checkmate can't be prevented.

When things go Black's way

Black gains the upper hand in the center and establishes a superior pawn structure. White becomes passive, and he loses the fight for spatial superiority. This is what happened to Drazen Muse, as White, in this game against Sergey Ivanov from 1993 in Berlin. Black takes advantage of White's cramped development to win the center and grab the initiative.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.e3 c5 4.Bd3 Nc6
5.0-0 d5 6.Nbd2 Qc7 7.c3

Arriving at the typical Colle setup.

7....Bd6

Black is ready for ...e5, so White makes his move in the center.

8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.e4 0-0 10.Qe2 h6!

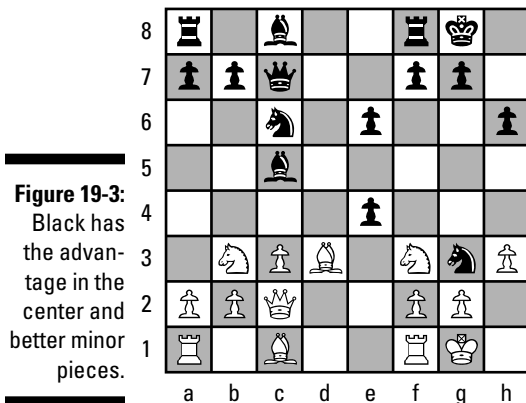
Black has a central majority, but he wants to prevent the standard Bxh7 sacrifice, as seen in the preceding game.

11.h3 Nh5!

White's last move stopped ...Ng4, but now Black threatens both ...Nf4 and ...Ng3.

12.Nb3 Ng3 13.Qc2 dxe4

Not 13....Nxf1? 14.Nxc5 and Black's knight is trapped. But now Black gains the bishop pair and advances in the center (see Figure 19-3).



14.Bxe4 Nxe4

15.Qxe4 Bd6

16.Nbd4 Nxd4

17.cxd4 Bd7

Black's development is nearly complete, and he's ready to start creating some mischief.

18.Ne5 Bb5	19.Re1 f6!	20.Ng6 Rfe8	21.Bf4 Bc6
22.Qe3 Rad8	23.Rac1 Qa5	24.Qg3 Qg5!	

Black uses the pin to simplify the position, and White is left with a weak isolated pawn.

25.Bxg5 Bxg3	26.Be3 Bc7	27.Red1 Bb6	28.Nf4 g5
29.Ne2 f5!	30.f4 gxf4	31.Bxf4 e5	32.Bxh6 exd4

Black's passed pawn is too much to handle. Watch how the power of his two bishops helps to win the game easily:

33.Ng3 d3+	34.Kh1 Bc7	35.Nxf5 Re2	36.Nh4 d2
37.Ra1 Rd4!	38.Nf3 Bxf3	39.gxf3 Rh4	40.Rxd2 Rxh3+
41.Kg1 Bb6+ 0-1			

If White plays 42.Kf1, then 42....Rxd2 43.Bxd2 Rh1+ wins the rook on a1.

Loving the London System

The *London System* is similar to the Colle except that White develops the dark-square bishop to f4 prior to playing e3. It's a very flexible system that you can use against virtually any Black setup. The name was adopted after the system was used in a tournament in 1922 in, of course, London.



The system is fairly easy to learn but still packs some punch. Players who play the London System enjoy its flexibility and prefer to avoid a ton of opening preparation.

When things go White's way

White establishes a powerful grip in the center and then initiates an attack against Black's king wherever Black puts it. Black has many different types of defensive setups, but White's basic strategy remains the same regardless.

Pavel Blatny used the London System against Jason Luchan in the 2001 U.S. Open. He adopted a pawn formation called the *Stonewall* and overwhelmed his opponent on the kingside.

1.d4 Nf6	2.Nf3 d5	3.Bf4
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This is the London System (see Figure 19-4).

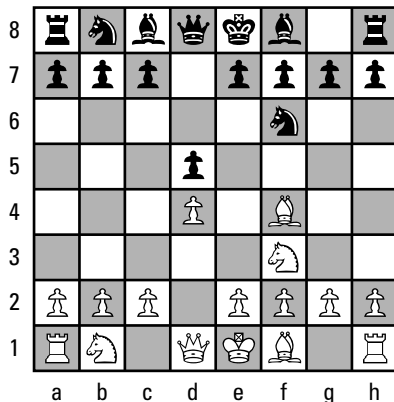


Figure 19-4:
The London
System.

3...e6
7.Bg3 0-0

4.e3 c5
8.Bd3 Re8

5.c3 Nc6
9.Ne5 Qe7

6.Nbd2 Bd6
10.f4



The pawns on d4 and f4 are defended by other White pawns and serve to secure the center.

10....Nd7 11.Ndf3 f6

Black wants to drive the knight off its outpost on e5, but it comes at the cost of weakening his kingside defense.

12.Bh4 Nf8 13.0-0 Qc7 14.Ng4

Black finally succeeds in driving the knight away, but it's still in a dangerous attacking position.

14....Qe7



Black walks right back into the pin on the f-pawn. He could've instead improved his kingside defense with 14....Be7.

15.Nfe5

White achieves a tremendous attacking position (see Figure 19-5).

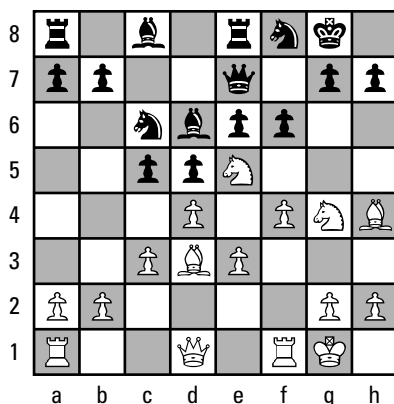


Figure 19-5:
White is prepared to attack Black's king position.

15...Bd7

16.Bxf6 gxf6

17.Nh6+ Kg7

18.Qg4+ 1-0

Blatny didn't, but I needed my computer to confirm that 18...Kxh6 19.Rf3 leads to a forced checkmate.

When things go Black's way

Black establishes superiority in the center and goes on the attack. That's what Ivo Vukovic did against Rudolf Urban in this game played in 2000.

1.d4 Nf6

2.Nf3 e6

3.Bf4

This is the London System.

3...c5

4.c3 d5

5.e3 Nc6

6.Nbd2 Bd6

It's a good idea for Black to challenge White's control over e5.

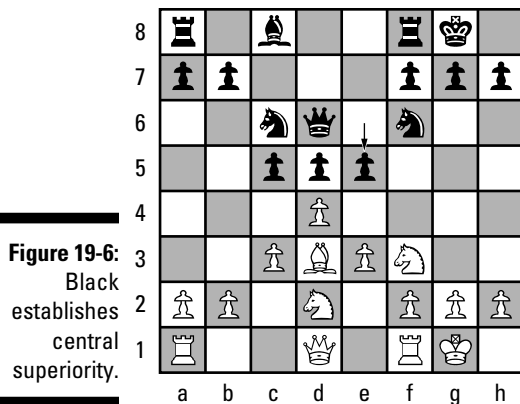
7.Bxd6 Qxd6

8.Bd3 0-0

9.0-0 e5!

Black wins the center before White can and frees his light-square bishop (see Figure 19-6).





10.dxe5 Nxe5 11.Nxe5 Qxe5 12.Qc2 Qh5 13.f3

White stops ...Ng4 but weakens the pawn on e3.

13...Re8 14.Rfe1 c4! 15.Bf1 Bf5 16.Qd1 Re7

Black targets e3.

17.Qe2 Rae8 18.Qf2 Qh6 19.e4?

White is desperately trying to give up the e-pawn and attack a7, but he doesn't get time.

19...dxe4 20.Nxe4? Bxe4 21.fxe4 Ng4! 0-1

It's all over because ...Nxf2 and ...Qxh2+ are threatened, but if White plays 22.Qg3, then 22...Qb6+ 23.Kh1 Nf2+ 24.Kg1 Nh3+ 25.Kh1 Qg1 is checkmate.

Beginning the Benoni

The *Benoni Defense* is a sharp response to 1.d4 but lacks some of the flexibility of, for example, the King's Indian (see Chapter 17). *Ben-Oni* is Hebrew for "child of my sorrow" and comes from the title of a chess book published by Aaron Reinganum in 1825. Grandmaster Nick de Firmian once told me that, if you play the Benoni, "you can't mind being lost." He meant that in an opening like the Benoni the tables may be turned more than once.



The Benoni appeals to players who like immediate confrontations. The Benoni does introduce an imbalance right off the bat. The response 1...c5 to 1.d4 constitutes the Benoni, although it frequently arises after the move order 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 (see Figure 19-7).

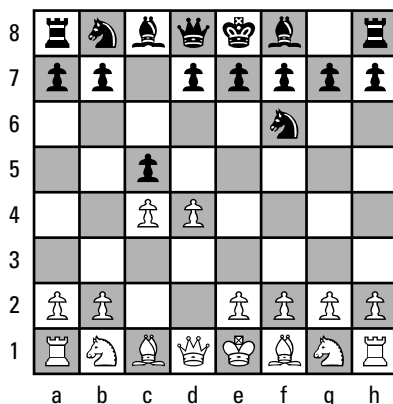


Figure 19-7:
The Benoni
Defense.

White's most common response to the move ...c5, whether played on Black's first or second move, is to advance the d-pawn to d5. White acquires a spatial advantage, which Black attempts to combat with pressure on the queenside.

When things go White's way

White uses the spatial advantage inherent in the Benoni to attack Black in the center and on the kingside. White's pieces have more maneuverability than Black's and ultimately create more problems than Black can solve.

It's somewhat surprising to see how quickly Black came to grief in this 1982 game in Switzerland between Garry Kasparov and John Nunn. Kasparov, as White, chose an aggressive line of play and followed it up with even more aggression!

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6

This is the modern Benoni Defense.

6.e4 g6 7.f4

White chooses to combat the Benoni with a pawn-storm attack.

7...Bg7 8.Bb5+ Nfd7

Otherwise, White may play e5 and even e6.

9.a4 Na6 10.Nf3 Nb4 11.0-0 a6 12.Bxd7+ Bxd7 13.f5!

Black acquires the two bishops, but he hasn't castled, and White's pieces are ready to spring into attack mode.

13...0-0 14.Bg5 f6 15.Bf4 gxf5 16.Bxd6 Bxa4
17.Rxa4 Qxd6 18.Nh4!

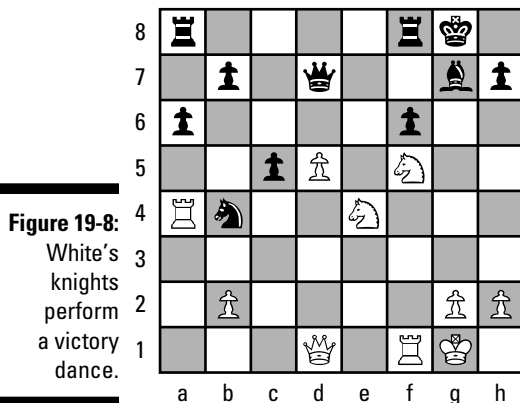
Black wins a pawn, but suddenly, White puts a knight on the dominating f5 outpost, and Black's game collapses.

18...fxe4 19.Nf5 Qd7

If Black plays 19...Qe5 instead, then 20.Qg4 threatens Qxg7, and if Black responds with 20...Rf7, then 21.Nh6+ wins material.

20.Nxe4

White's knights are dominating the action (see Figure 19-8).



20...Kh8

If Black tries to protect his c-pawn with 20...b6, White brings one more major piece into play with 21.Ra3!, threatening the decisive Rg3.

21.Nxc5 1-0

Black throws in the towel because after his intended move 21...Qxd5, 22.Qxd5 Nxd5 23.Ne6 not only has direct threats on f8 and g7, but bigger ones following moves like Rd1 and Rg4.

When things go Black's way

Black creates and exploits weaknesses in White's queenside. Black's pieces invade White's territory and create havoc. In a 1999 game played in Patras, Greece, against Aurelian Crut, Stelios Halkias used this winning formula.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6
6.e4 g6 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0

This is the Old Main Line against the Benoni Defense, but White has since developed alternative attacking ideas, as seen in the preceding game.

9...Bg4 10.h3 Bxf3 11.Bxf3 Nbd7

Now, because of the central pawn structure, White would ideally like to attack with e5, maybe prepared by f4. Black, on the other hand, would like to expand on the queenside, perhaps with ...b5-b4 and ...c4.

12.Bf4 Qe7 13.Re1 a6 14.a4

White prevents Black from playing ...b5.

14...Ne8

Black's move opens up the bishop on g7 to prevent e5, and you'll see the knight go to c7 to support the ...b5 advance.

15.Qd2 Nc7 16.Be2 Rab8

White prevents ...b5, and Black prepares it again.

17.Bf1 Rfc8 18.a5 b5! 19.axb6 Rxb6

Now, Black's pawn on a6 is isolated and weak, but so is White's on b2. In many positions, Black's knight on c7 can come to b5.

20.Ra2 Rcb8 21.Bc4 Bd4 22.b3 Re8 23.Re2 Ne5
24.Bxe5 dxe5 25.Qd3 Reb8 26.Rec2 Qh4 27.Kh2 Nb5!

Black maximizes the activity of his pieces and is developing threats (see Figure 19-9).

28.Bxb5 axb5 29.Qg3 Qf6 30.Nd1 Ra6 31.Qd3 c4!

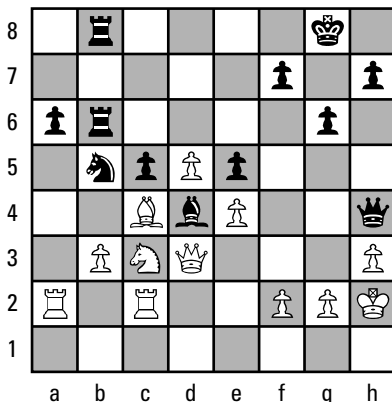
The queenside pawns will decide the game after all.

32.bxc4 Rxa2 33.Rxa2 b4! 34.Rc2 b3 35.Rc1?

This allows a fork, but 35.Rd2 b2 threatens ...b1, queening the pawn, so White would have to give a piece to stop it.

35....Qf4+ 0-1

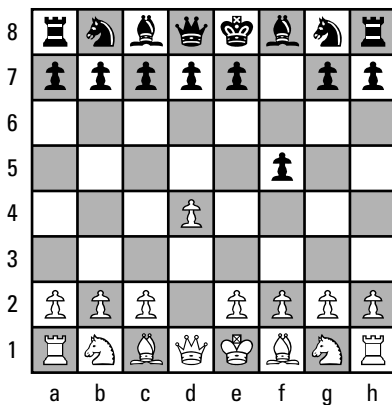
Figure 19-9:
Black is prepared to break through on the queen-side.



Going Dutch

The *Dutch Defense* is reached following the moves 1.d4 f5 (see Figure 19-10). This opening originated from Elias Stein (1748–1812), who advocated it while he was living in the Netherlands. Black uses the f-pawn to fight for control over the e4 square. Black avoids the symmetry associated with 1.d4 d5 and wants to create an imbalanced game.

Figure 19-10:
The Dutch Defense.





The Dutch Defense appeals to players who like to immediately announce that they're going to attack. Black is willing to accept certain weaknesses in order to go on the offensive.

The Classical System

In the *Classical System* of the Dutch Defense, Black puts pawns on d6, e6, and f5 and then tries to launch a kingside attack. A typical maneuver is to shift the queen from d8 to either g6 or h5 via e8. If the kingside attack is unsuccessful, Black often pays a high price.

When things go White's way

In the 1956 game played in Moscow between Svetozar Gligoric and Edwin Bhend, White (Gligoric) was able to blunt Black's kingside advance and then turn the tables. Black's advanced kingside pawns left behind weak squares that White used to invade and then overrun Black's territory.

1.d4 f5	2.g3 Nf6	3.Bg2 e6	4.Nf3 Be7
5.0-0 0-0	6.c4 d6	7.Nc3 Qe8	

This is the typical way to transfer the queen to the kingside in the Classical Dutch.

8.b3 Qh5	9.Ba3 g5	10.d5 g4
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

Black wastes no time in initiating a pawn advance on the kingside. White reroutes his knight from f3 to d3, where it won't be threatened by the advancing Black kingside pawns.

11.Ne1 e5	12.Nd3 Nbd7	13.Qd2 Rf7	14.f3
------------------	--------------------	-------------------	--------------

White wants to fix the Black pawns in place. By robbing them of their mobility, he strips them of their power.

14....gxf3	15.exf3 Rg7	16.Rae1 Nf8	17.f4 e4
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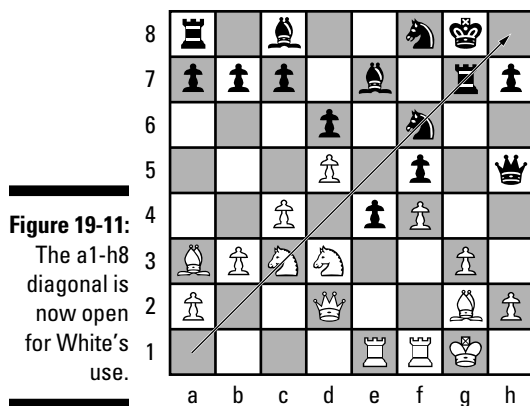
By provoking this advance, White opens the a1-h8 diagonal. After stabilizing the kingside, he turns his attention to this diagonal as a means to invade Black's territory (see Figure 19-11).

18.Nf2 Bd7	19.Ncd1 Qg6	20.Ne3 h5	21.Nh3 N8h7
22.Bb2			

First White's bishop, and then his queen will occupy the long diagonal.

22....Rf7 23.Qc3	Kf8
-------------------------	------------





Black is attempting to escape the coming invasion, but to no avail.

24.Ng5 Nxg5 25.fxg5 Qxg5

Black wins a pawn, but it's a poisoned one.

26.Bh3 Ng4 27.Qh8+ Qg8 28.Qxh5 Rh7?



A terrible blunder in a difficult position. 28...Nxe3 would've prolonged the game.

29.Qxg4 1-0

Black overlooked the fact that his f-pawn is now pinned and can't capture on g4.

When things go Black's way

Black's kingside attack pays dividends. In a 1934 game played in New York, Reuben Fine had the Black pieces against Al Horowitz. White wasted some time, which allowed Black's attack to gather steam until it was unstoppable.

1.d4 f5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 e6 4.Bg2 Be7
5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7.Nc3 Qe8

This maneuver is the now-familiar transfer of the queen to the kingside.

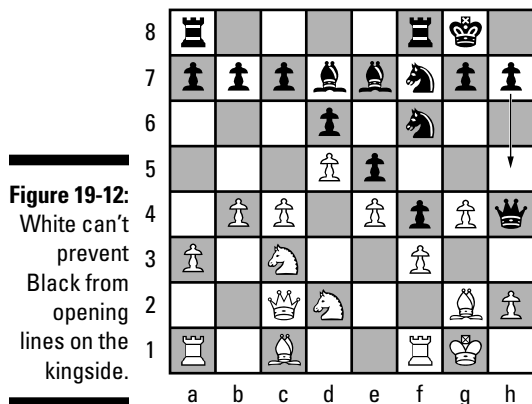
8.Qc2 Nc6 9.a3



White is moving too slowly, allowing Black to advance in the center and, later, on the kingside.

9...e5 10.d5 Nd8 11.b4 Bd7 12.Nd2 Qh5
13.f3 Nf7 14.e4 f4 15.g4 Qh4

White is trying to keep the kingside closed, but Black is about to pry it open. (See Figure 19-12.)



16.Nb3 h5 17.gxh5 Qxh5 18.Rf2 Ng5 19.Nd2 Kf7

Black is clearing the way for his rooks to enter the attack along the h-file.

20.Nf1 Rh8 21.Ne2 Qh4 22.Qd2 Nh5 23.Nc3 Rh6
24.Re2 Rg6

Black controls the g-file as well as the h-file, and White is helpless to prevent the final assault.

25.Kh1 Rh8 26.Rf2 Ng3+ 27.Kg1 Nh3+ 28.Bxh3 Ne2+



This is a double check (by the rook on g6 and the knight on e2), and it's one of the most powerful tactics in all of chess. The only way out of a double check is to move the king.

29.Kh1 Rg1# 0-1

The Stonewall Dutch

In the *Stonewall Dutch*, Black places pawns on f5, e6, d5, and often c6. The idea is for these pawns to serve as a central barrier that can't be breached. Because Black places so many pawns on light squares, the dark squares have to be protected by pieces.

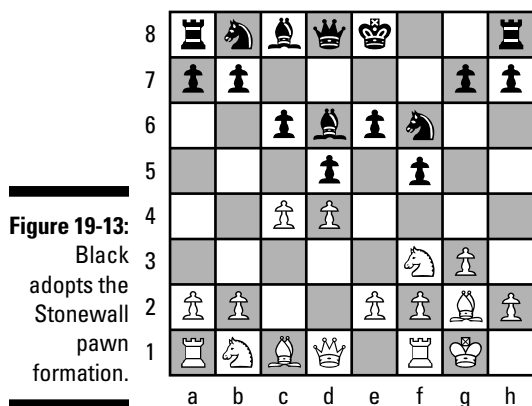
When things go White's way

White exploits the dark-squared weaknesses in Black's position in order to find excellent posts for White's pieces. After the pieces are optimally placed, White initiates a central breakthrough that leaves Black's position in ruins.

In a 1946 game between Tigran Petrosian (White) and Viktor Korchnoi in Leningrad, White exchanged off Black's dark-square bishop, which accentuated Black's difficulties in guarding those squares. Petrosian's pieces found wonderful posts, and Black's defenses crumbled swiftly.

1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 f5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d5
5.0-0 Bd6 6.c4 c6

This is a typical Stonewall pawn formation by Black (see Figure 19-13).



7.b3 0-0 8.Ba3

White seeks to remove the dark-square bishop from the game.

8...Bxa3 9.Nxa3 Qe8 10.Nc2 Qh5 11.Qc1

White's queen move prevents Black from advancing with ...g5.

11...Ne4 12.Nce1 g5 13.Nd3

Petrosian was famous for lengthy maneuvers designed to get pieces to their optimal squares. The knight's sequence of a3-c2-e1-d3 is typical.

13...Nd7 14.Nfe5 Kh8 15.f3 Nd6 16.e4

White forces the issue in the center. Black wants to keep the position closed but can't (see Figure 19-14).

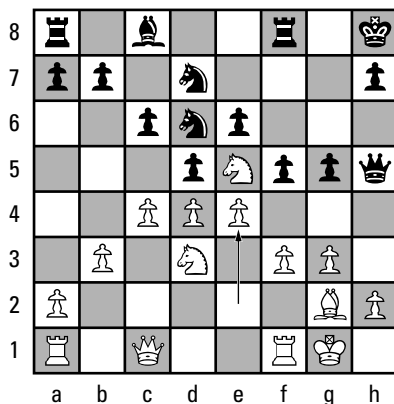


Figure 19-14:
White
breaks the
center open.

16...Nf7 17.cxd5 Ndx5 18.dxe5 cxd5 19.exd5 exd5
20.f4 Rd8 21.Qc7

It's no coincidence that this invasion is on a dark square. That's this game's theme.

21...b6 22.fxg5 Ba6 23.Nf4 1-0

The queen must give up its guard over the knight on f7, allowing it to be captured.

When things go Black's way

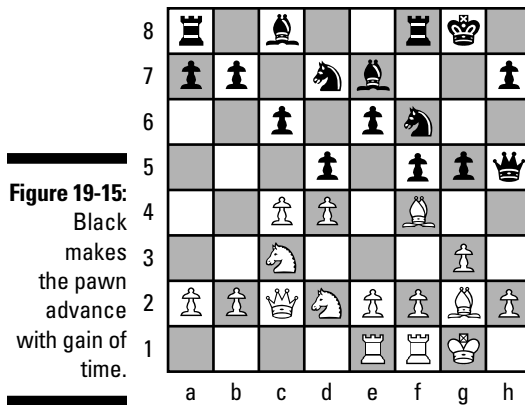
Black's kingside attack comes crashing home. White isn't quick enough to challenge in the center, and Black is able to advance on the kingside with impunity. In a 1946 game against Herman Steiner in Groningen in the Netherlands, Mikhail Botvinnik demonstrated an excellent way to conduct just such a kingside attack.

1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 Bb4+ 5.Bd2 Be7
6.Nc3 0-0 7.Qc2 d5 8.Nf3 c6 9.0-0 Qe8

This the tried-and-true method for shifting the queen to the kingside.

10.Bf4 Qh5 11.Rae1 Nbd7 12.Nd2? g5

The kingside pawn advance commences (see Figure 19-15).



13.Bc7 Ne8

14.Be5 Nxe5

15.dxe5 f4

Black is now certain to be able to open lines against White's king.

16.gxf4 gxf4

17.Nf3 Kh8

18.Kh1 Ng7

19.Qc1 Bd7

Black takes his time to complete his development and get the rook on a8 into the attack.



20.a3 Rf7

21.b4 Rg8

22.Rg1 Nf5

23.Nd1

If White plays 23.Qxf4 instead, then 23...Ng3+ would be winning for Black.

23...Rfg7

24.Qxf4 Rg4

25.Qd2 Nh4

26.Ne3

The alternative try 26.Nxh4 would be met by 26...Rxh4 27.h3 Rxh3+ 28.Bxh3 Qxh3#.

26...Nxf3

27.exf3 Rh4

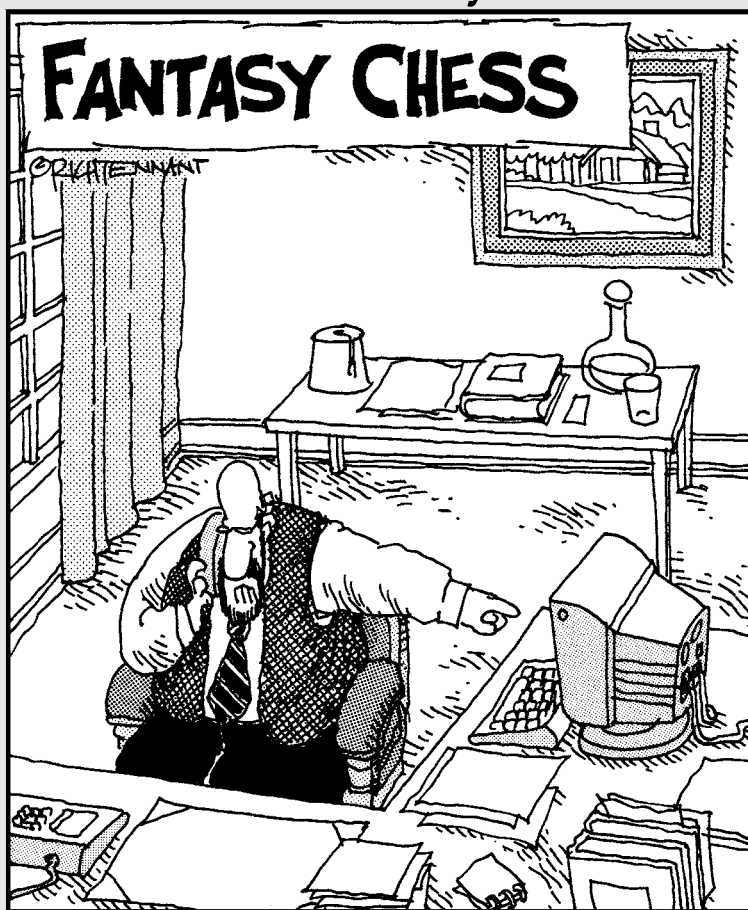
28.Nf1 Bg5 0-1

If the queen moves away from the bishop's attack, the bishop moves to f4, followed by mate on h2.

Part V

Advancing with Flank Openings

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



"See here, Tepperman. Playing chess online doesn't mean you can draft IBM's Deep Blue supercomputer as a midseason replacement!"

In this part . . .

This part covers openings in which moves by the center pawns are delayed or avoided. These openings tend to defer confrontations and give you a good deal of flexibility in choosing when and where to react to an opponent's moves. If you want to get your pieces off their starting positions before engaging in hand-to-hand combat, these openings may be just the ticket.

The English Opening is in this part. 1.c4 is the most popular opening move of the flank openings.

Chapter 20

Speaking the King's English

In This Chapter

- ▶ Opening with the English
- ▶ Trying out the Sicilian with colors reversed
- ▶ Sampling the Symmetrical Variation
- ▶ Calling in the Four Knights
- ▶ Defending with the King's Indian

The move 1.c4 is the third most popular way of opening a chess game, trailing only 1.e4 and 1.d4. This chapter contains material on Black's two main responses, 1...e5 and 1...c5, as well as the typical King's Indian approach to Black's development.

The British Are Coming!

The move 1.c4 is called the *English Opening* (see Figure 20-1). It was adopted multiple times by the English player Howard Staunton (1810–1874) in his 1843 match against Pierre Saint-Amant (1800–1872), who was the leading French player of his day.

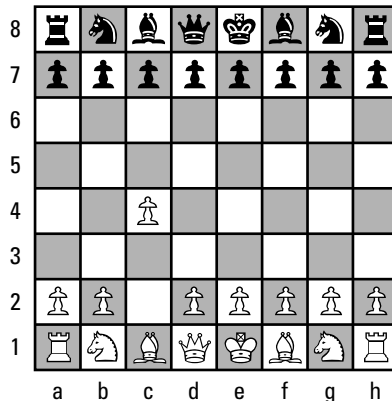


Figure 20-1:
The English
Opening.

The first move in the English, 1.c4, is White's most popular one after 1.e4 and 1.d4. White wants to control the d5 square without subjecting his center pawns to attack. It's quite common for White to transpose into a queen-pawn opening such as the Queen's Gambit after beginning play with 1.c4, but there are a great number of lines that are unique to the English.



The English Opening appeals to players who like to preserve their flexibility without being too committal.

Reversing the Sicilian

If Black plays 1...e5, then you arrive at a *Sicilian Defense with colors reversed* and White with a tempo in hand (see Figure 20-2). Whether this extra tempo leads to improved, Sicilian-like positions later on is the million-dollar question.

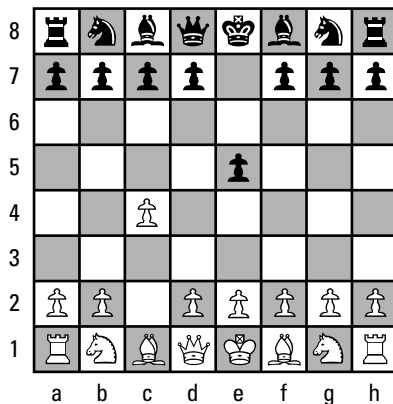


Figure 20-2:
The Sicilian
Defense
with colors
reversed.

The *Sicilian Defense* is a complicated opening in its own right (see Chapter 9). It can diverge along wildly different lines. Trying to assess reversed Sicilian positions can be equally as challenging.

When things go White's way

White tries to control the center from a distance. If Black tries to establish a strong pawn center, White actively undermines it. White often exploits the long diagonal h1-a8.

Oleg Moiseev had White in a 1973 game, where Black attempted to establish a dominating pawn center. White was able to break it apart and then exploit the power of his long-range bishop on g2.

1.c4 e5

Arriving at the *Reversed Sicilian*.

2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3

The 3.g3 system of the Reversed Sicilian is consistent with White's strategy because the f1 bishop moves to g2, where it targets the e4 and d5 squares.

3...c6

This move signals Black's intention to set up a big center with ...d5.

4.Nf3

White doesn't mind ...d5. Black can chase away the f3 knight by advancing his e-pawn, but it costs a move, and the attacked knight lands on a good square.

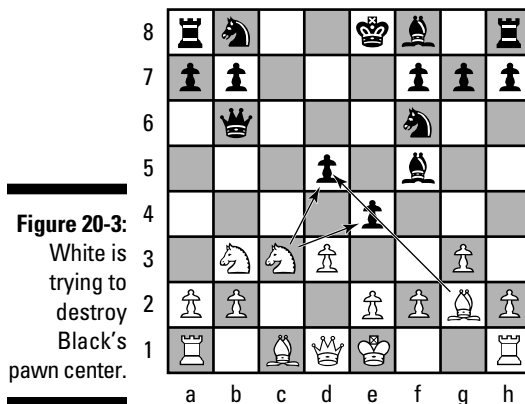
4...e4 5.Nd4 d5 6.cxd5 Qb6

Black's move is a common *intermezzo*, or in-between, move, designed to chase White's knight from its aggressive post on d4.

7.Nb3 cxd5 8.Bg2 Bf5 9.d3



A good illustration of the trade-offs involved in fianchetto openings. White has pressure on the light squares e4 and d5, and he can develop quickly by 0-0 and Be3. Black has space, and his pawn on e4 cramps White's position. (See Figure 20-3.)



9....exd3 10.0-0! Bb4



If Black plays 10....dxe2? instead, then 11.Qxe2+ gives White too much of a development lead. For example, 11....Qe6 12.Qb5+ Qd7 13.Re1+ Be7 14.Nd4! is much better for White.

11.exd3 Bxc3 12.bxc3 0-0 13.Be3 Qd8 14.Nd4

White is attacking the bishop on f5 and establishing a firm blockade of Black's isolated pawn.



14....Bg4?

This is a mistake. 14....Bg6 is the best try.

15.Qb3 b6 16.c4!

Now, White is able to exploit the long diagonal h1-a8.

16....Be6 17.Bg5 Nbd7 18.Qb5

Every move has to do with attacking d5.



18....Rc8 19.Nc6

This move is enough to establish a winning advantage, but the alternative 19.cxd5! would've been even stronger.

19....a6 20.Nxd8 axb5 21.Nxe6 fxe6 22.cxb5 Rc3
23.Rfe1 Kf7 24.Bf1 Ng4 25.Bf4 Ra8? 26.Bh3! Ndf6
27.f3 e5 28.Bg5 h6

If Black tries 28....Nh6 instead, then 29.Rxe5 Rxd3 30.Be6+ Kf8 31.Bxf6 gxf6 32.Rxd5 leaves White two pawns up.

29.Bc1! 1-0

And now White wins a piece because the knight is trapped on g4.

When things go Black's way

Black's development is easier than White's, and Black's pieces find more active posts. White drifts into a passive position having to defend against Black's threats. Black shifts gears at some point and goes on to press the attack.

Playing Black in a 1972 game in Bamberg, Germany, against Josef Pribyl, Hans-Joachim Hecht was able to establish a strong bind on White's queenside. By the time White got untangled, Black was able to shift his sights to the kingside.

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5

Entering the Reversed Sicilian.

3.g3 Bb4 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4

White wants to stop ...d5 once and for all.

5...Bxc3! 6.bxc3 c6!

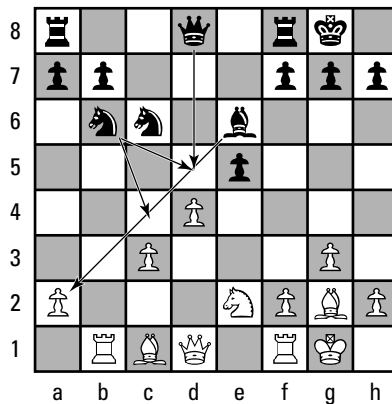


Black gives White the bishop pair, which is an advantage. However, Black is ahead in development and can blast open lines in the center before White brings his own pieces out.

7.Ne2 d5 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.0-0 Nc6
11.Rb1 Nb6 12.d4 Be6!

Black paints an instructive picture. Black has more control of the center than White does, and he can put a piece on White's very weak c4 square. White's knight has no squares to go to, and if he plays dxe5, his pawn on c3 will be terribly weak. To make matters worse, Black is threatening ...Bxa2. (See Figure 20-4.)

Figure 20-4:
Black has good pressure in the center and on the queenside.



13.a4 Bc4 14.Re1 Qd7 15.Ba3 Rfd8 16.Bc5 Nd5

Black is threatening ...Bxe2, followed by ...Nxc3. White has gotten his pieces out, but they're not posted optimally.



17.Qd2 b6

18.Ba3 Nf6

This isn't a bad move, but 18...Rac8! would've left every Black piece ideally developed.

19.Qg5 h6

20.Qh4 Bd5

Black tries to take over the weak light squares around White's king, especially f3.

21.dxe5 Nxe5

22.Nf4?

White's alternative pinning move 22.Rbd1 fails to 22....Bxg2! 23.Kxg2 (if White tries 23.Rxd7 instead, then Black would play 23....Nf3+!) 23....Qc6+. (For example, 24.Kh3 g5 25.Qxh6 g4+ 26.Kh4 Nf3#.) White's best chance is probably 22.Bxd5 Qxd5 23.Nd4, when 23....Rac8 keeps the pressure on.

22....Bxg2

23.Rxe5 Bb7

24.Qh3 Qc6

Black threatens both checkmate on h1 and capture on c3.

25.Ng2 Qxc3
29.Qe5

26.Bb2 Qc2

27.Ree1 Ne4

28.Qf5 Rd2

Maybe White was hoping Black wouldn't see the threat of mate on g7.

29....f6

No mates today.

30.Qe6+ Kh8

31.Ne3 Qxa4

32.Qc4 Ng5!

A pretty finish.

33.h4

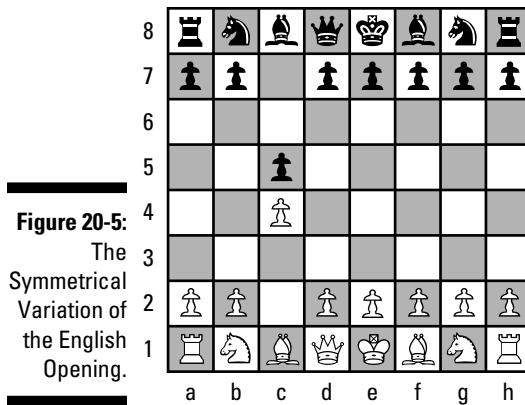
If White tries 33.Qxa4 instead, then 33....Nh3+ 34.Kf1 Rxf2 is checkmate.

33....Nf3+

34.Kf1 Ba6 0-1

Staying Symmetrical

The *Symmetrical Variation* of the English refers to the moves 1.c4 c5 (see Figure 20-5).



Black often adopts a copycat strategy of mimicking White's moves, but such a strategy can't be maintained forever. At some point the attempt to copy White's moves will backfire because some moves, if copied, lead to a serious disadvantage.

In other lines, a battle for control over the d4 and d5 squares is hotly contested. Whichever player is successful in controlling the center will likely be in control of the game.

When things go White's way

White establishes superiority in the center and uses the long diagonal h1-a8 to his advantage. White's pieces are more active than Black's.

In the 1987 game between Zsuzsa Polgar and Stephan Gross, White (Polgar) fianchettoed both bishops, pressuring the center from a distance. Polgar was able to get dynamic piece play and then used the combination of an outside passed pawn and threats against Black's king to eventually secure the win.

1.c4 c5

The Symmetrical Variation.

2.Nc3

In this line, White begins by controlling e4 and d5.

2....Nc6

3.g3 g6

4.Bg2 Bg7

5.Nf3 Nf6



Black often deviates at this point with a move such as 5...e6 or 5...e5. These are good choices; the difference comes down to a question of taste.

6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 0-0 8.0-0 Nxd4

The copycat moves 8...d5 9.cxd5 Nxd5 10.Nxd5 Nxd4 run into trouble after 11.Bg5!

9.Qxd4 d6 10.Qd3

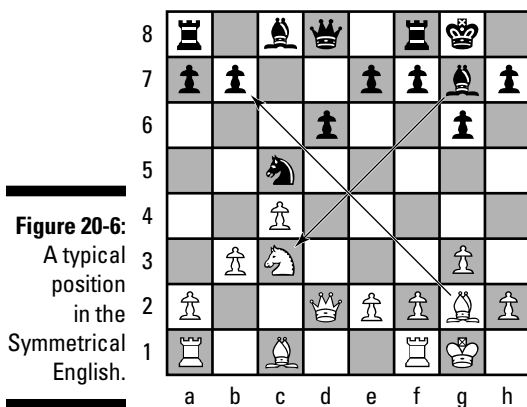
This move keeps White's queen developed while avoiding a possible attack from the bishop on g7, if the knight on f6 should move. Chess players call that kind of attack a *discovered* attack.

10...Nd7

Black's idea is to open up his powerful bishop diagonal. He moves the same piece twice but will recover some of the lost time by playing ...Nc5 with an attack on White's queen.

11.b3 Nc5 12.Qd2

Here's a typical picture from the Symmetrical English: White prevents ...d5 and thus has some extra space under control in the center. He's also ready to fianchetto his other bishop in order to challenge Black's on g7. Black has a well-placed knight on c5 but is cramped. His solution is to chip away at White's influential c-pawn and give himself more room to find a spot for his bishop on c8. (See Figure 20-6.)



12....Rb8 13.Bb2 a6 14.Nd5! Bxb2 15.Qxb2 b5!
 16.cxb5 axb5 17.Rfd1

Black now has two pawns in the center to White's one. He's behind in development, however, and he can't play ...e6 for fear of Nf6+. So he tries to trade off White's pieces, which are very active.

17....Bb7 18.h4! Bxd5 19.Rxd5

White is threatening h5-h6!



19....Nd7!?

20.h5 Nf6

21.h6 Rb6

The alternative 21....Nxd5?? allows 22.Qg7#!

22.Rad1 Qc7 23.Rc1 Rc6 24.Rxc6 Qxc6 25.Rf5! Qe8!
 26.Rf4



If White tries 26.Rxf6? exf6 27.Qxf6, Black would turn the tables by playing 27....Qe5!

26....Qd8 27.a4!

Now that Black is tied down to defend his kingside, White creates a passed a-pawn whose queening square happens to be covered by his bishop.

27....e5

This move is played so that Black can move his queen without having to face Rxf6.

28.Rb4 Qa5?!

Instead 28....bxa4 is best, but after 29.bxa4, White's a-pawn is still hard to stop.

29.Qd2! bxa4 30.bxa4 d5 31.Qg5! Ne8 32.Qe7

Now Rb8 is a huge problem for Black, and he also has to watch over his pawns on e5 and d5. This maneuver worked because of the great power of the pawn on h6.

32....e4 33.Rb8 Qxa4 34.Qe5!

White is threatening Rxe8 with mate on g7.

34....f6 35.Qe6+ Kh8 36.Qe7 1-0

Checkmate will follow soon; for example, 36....Rg8 37.Rxe8 Qxe8 38.Qxf6+ Rg7 39.Qxg7#.

When things go Black's way

White spends too much time trying to secure a strategic concession from Black, and Black obtains a dangerous lead in development. When you have a lead in development, it's time to attack!

Albin Planinc had Black in this 1974 game against Rafael Vaganian played in Hastings, England, and he was able to whip up a dangerous attack when White grabbed a pawn he probably shouldn't have taken. The game is a good lesson in the vulnerability of an exposed king, even in a simplified position.

1.c4 c5

Establishing the Symmetrical Variation.

2.Nf3 Nf6

3.d4 cxd4

4.Nxd4



This exact position can also come from a 1.d4 order: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 (the Benoni Defense — see Chapter 19) 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4.

4...e6 5.Nc3

Bb4

6.Ndb5!?



This is a typical English Opening idea. Instead of playing g3, Bg2, and so on, White tries to probe enemy weaknesses with his pieces. In this case, he's looking at the squares d6 and c7 for his knight, usually supported by moving the bishop from c1 to f4. The drawback of this strategy is that White is moving the same piece twice — and in some cases three times — in the opening, which can be a waste of time.

6...0-0 7.a3

White decides to win the bishop pair. Note that 7.Bf4 doesn't force Black to defend because 7...d5! 8.Nc7? Ne4! has multiple attacking ideas, the simplest one being 9.Nxa8 Qf6!

7...Bxc3+ 8.Nxc3 d5!



The side with better development should attack!

9.Bg5 h6

10.Bxf6 Qxf6

11.cxd5 exd5

12.Qxd5?

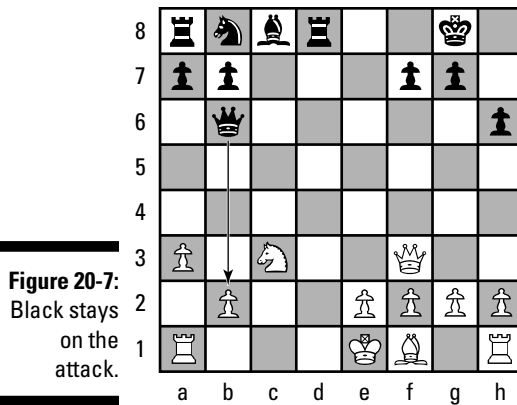


This is very dangerous for White because his kingside isn't developed and he hasn't even moved his e-pawn. The move 12.e3 would've been better.

12...Rd8 13.Qf3

Qb6!

Black keeps the initiative by attacking b2 (see Figure 20-7).



14.Rd1! Rxd1+ 15.Nxd1

Now, White stays a pawn ahead but is still stuck in the center.

15....Nc6 16.Qe3

White is still not developing, but the alternative 16.e3 Be6 17.Be2 Rd8 18.0-0 Rd2 gives Black a big advantage. White's pieces remain totally passive.

16....Nd4

Black threatens the fork ...Nc2+. White probably thought he had it covered.

17.Qe8+ Kh7 18.e3 Nc2+ 19.Kd2 Bf5!!

A wonderful move! Black gives up a rook with a stunning idea in mind.

20.Qxa8 Qd6+ 21.Kc1

Who wouldn't make this move? The alternative 21.Ke2 loses to the beautiful sequence 21....Qd3+ 22.Kf3 Qxd1+ 23.Be2 Nd4+! 24.exd4 Qb3+ 25.Kf4 g5+ 26.Kxf5 Qe6#. Also, 21.Kc3 turns out to be bad after 21....Qe5+, but that's much more complicated.

21....Na1!

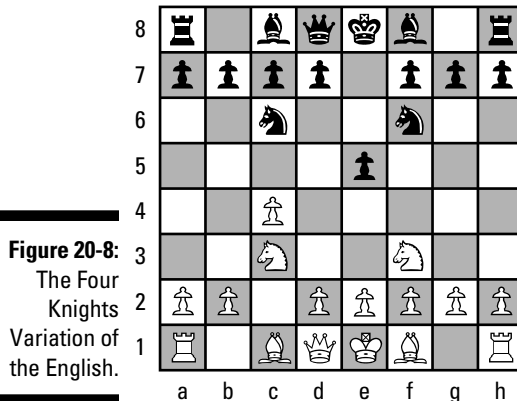
This threatens 22....Nb3 checkmate! But White probably anticipated this sequence many moves ago and must've thought that his next move would prevent the knight from moving to b3.

22.Qxb7? Qc7+!! 0-1

White resigns because if he plays 23.Qxc7, then 23...Nb3#. That must've come as a complete surprise to White. For the record, 22.Bc4! was the right way to play, when Black ultimately gets a very good game out of 22...Qc5 23.Nc3 Qxc4 24.Qd1 Nb3+ 25.Kd1 Qg4+.

Stampeding in the Four Knights

The *Four Knights Variation* occurs after the following moves: 1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 (see Figure 20-8).



The Four Knights is a flexible way for Black to proceed. Black often trades his f8 bishop for one of White's knights in an attempt to develop quickly and control the center. White has to decide whether to play d2-d4 or proceed in a less direct manner.

When things go White's way

White uses pieces in conjunction with the c-pawn to gain control over the d5 square and secure an advantage in space. White often exploits the long diagonal h1-a8 in order to weaken Black's queenside, but he never misses an opportunity to attack on the kingside.

Vasily Smyslov had White in this 1972 game against Jonathan Mestel played in Hastings, England. White inflicted severe damage to Black's kingside for the small cost of a pawn. Smyslov pressed the attack until Mestel was compelled to capitulate.

1.c4 Nf6

2.Nc3 e5

3.Nf3 Nc6

This is the initial position of the Four Knights Variation of the English Opening. The order of Black's moves can be transposed, as long as the same position occurs after move #3.



4.g3

White plays the Main Line. He has several options, but top-level players have used this move far more often than any other.

4...Bb4 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0

You can see the battle shaping up over the center. White's bishop on g2 and knight on c3 help to control e4 and d5, but Black hasn't abandoned those squares, as indicated by the fact that he's ready to play ...Bxc3 and perhaps ...e4.

6...Re8 7.Nd5

White avoids ...Bxc3 and occupies the key d5 square.

7...e4

A bold advance. This pawn can become a target, but for the moment it gains a tempo and cramps White's game.

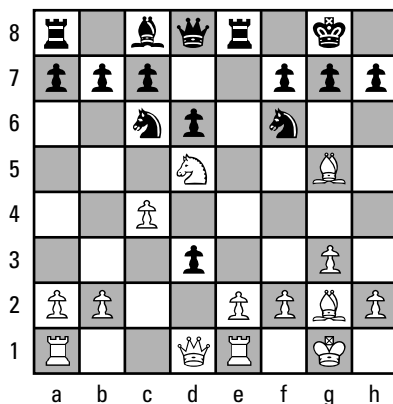
8.Ne1 d6 9.d3

Now, White threatens Nxf6+, followed by dxe4.

9...Bxe1 10.Rxe1 exd3 11.Bg5!

White's move is unexpected and strong. For a mere pawn, he gets to damage Black's kingside and launch an attack there. (See Figure 20-9.)

Figure 20-9:
White creates weaknesses in Black's kingside defense.



11....dxe2 12.Rxe2 Rxe2 13.Qxe2 Be6 14.Nxf6+



It's possible that 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.Rd1 is a better way to exert pressure.

14....gxf6 15.Bh4 Ne5!

Black scurries to the defense by ...Ng6.

16.Bxb7 Bxc4 17.Qh5 Rb8 18.Be4 Ng6 19.b3 Ba6

These last moves have been forced, but here Black has the superior option of 19....Be6!

20.Re1 Rb5 21.Bd5! Kg7

At first it looks like 21....c6 should win, but White planned the brilliant 22.Qh6!! Rxd5 23.Bxf6! Qf8 24.Re8!, when 24....Qxe8 25.Qg7 is checkmate, and the only defense, 24....Rd1+ 25.Kg2 Bf1+ 26.Kf3 Be2+! 27.Kxe2 Qxe8+ 28.Kxd1 Qf8, still leaves Black with serious kingside weaknesses after 29.Qd2! That sequence is worth playing over.



22.a4 Rb4 23.Bxf7! Qd7

The alternative 23....Kxf7 24.Qxh7+ Kf8 25.Qxg6 wins for White.

24.Bxg6 hxg6 25.Bxf6+!

A lovely finish to the attack.

25....Kxf6 26.Qh8+ Kg5

If Black plays 26....Qg7 instead, then 27.Re6+!

**27.f4+ Kg4 28.Re3! g5 29.Qh6! Rxf4 30.gxf4 Kxf4
31.Kf2 Qc6 32.Qf6+ Kg4 33.Rg3+ Kh5 34.Qxg5# 1-0**

When things go Black's way

Vassily Smyslov had Black against Gudmundur Sigurjonsson in this 1974 game from Reykjavik, Iceland. Black develops quickly and goes on the attack before White can get completely developed. Black often uses a strategy reminiscent of the *Nimzo-Indian Defense* (see Chapter 16), in which the dark-square bishop is traded for a White knight in order to develop quickly and maintain a foothold in the center.

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6

This is the initial position of the Four Knights Variation of the English Opening.

4.g3 Bb4

This is Black's traditional defense to the Main Line with 4.g3.

5.Bg2 0-0

6.0-0 e4!?

7.Ng5



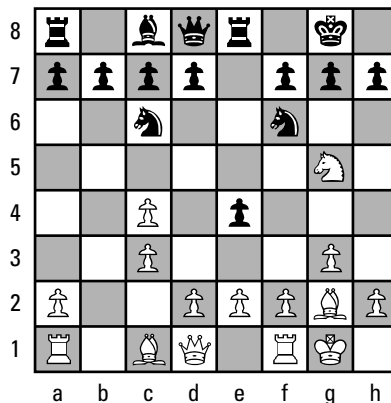
It looks as though Black's last move is too risky because White attacks e4, forcing Black to cede his valuable bishop.

7...Bxc3 8.bxc3

Re8

Black gives White the bishop pair and isn't even ahead in development. But he has a powerful cramping pawn on e4 and is about to chase White's knight offside by ...h6. (See Figure 20-10.)

Figure 20-10:
Black's
pawn on e4
is a thorn
in White's
side.



9.f3!?

White has to get rid of the pawn on e4; 9.d3 is the other way to do it.

9...exf3 10.Nxf3

d5!

Black is opening central lines quickly before White's bishops start to control the game.

11.cxd5 Qxd5

Now, Black is a little ahead in development, and he can get his other pieces out quickly and aggressively with the moves ...Bg4 and ...Rad8. So White tries to attack.

12.Nd4 Qh5!

13.Nxc6 bxc6

14.e3

White can't capture the pawn by 14.Bxc6?? because of 14....Qc5+.

14....Bg4 15.Qa4 Re6!

Black's rook lift anticipates a possible attack by ...Rh6, ...Rg6, or ...Rf6.

16.Rb1 Be2! 17.Re1?



The alternative 17.Rf2 fails because of the sequence 17....Ng4 18.Bxc6 (White can't play 18.Rxe2?? because of 18....Qxh2+ 19.Kf1 Rf6+) 18....Nxf2 19.Bxa8 h6!! And with e8 covered, Black's rook is free to help checkmate White's king. 17.Rf4! is the best try, although 17....g5! keeps some advantage.

17....Ng4 18.h3 Qf5!

Black threatens both ...Qxb1 and ...Qf2#.

19.Rxe2

The move 19.hxg4 is no better because of 19....Qxb1.

19....Qxb1 20.Qxg4 Qxc1+ 21.Kh2 Rd8 22.Qb4 h6
23.c4 Qd1 24.Rf2 Qe1 0-1

Countering with the King's Indian

Another common defensive formation used against the English is the *King's Indian* setup (see Chapter 17). If White wants to play the English, the move d2-d3 will be played, as opposed to the alternative d2-d4 you see in Chapter 17.

When things go White's way

White succeeds in advancing on the queenside and creating weaknesses in Black's position there. White's pieces invade and exploit those weaknesses, causing Black to become tied down in defense.

In a 1989 game played in Chicago, James Rizzitano used this strategy as White to break down the defenses of his opponent, Mike Blankenau. After White's queenside invasion was accomplished, Black's defenses quickly collapsed.

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 d6

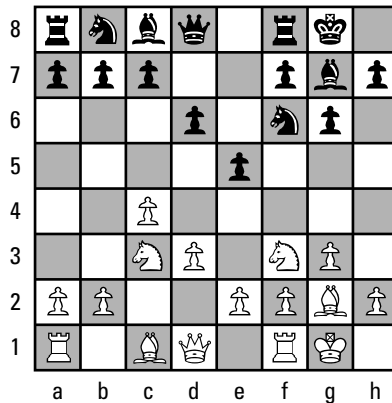
The King's Indian formation.

5.Nf3 0-0 6.0-0 e5 7.d3



If White plays d4 on any of the moves up until now, he'd be in a conventional King's Indian Defense that comes from 1.d4. After d3, however, this is the English Opening version of the King's Indian. It's an important variation because a lot of 1.c4 players have no interest in the risky positions that the Main Line King's Indian produces. (See Figure 20-11.)

Figure 20-11:
Establishing
the English
Opening
version of
the King's
Indian
Defense
with the d3
pawn.



7...Nc6

This variation is also important because it can arise by other common move orders, such as 1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.Nf3 d6 6.d3 Nf6 7.0-0. Against 7...c6, White will probably also use the plan Rb1 and b4-b5.

8.Rb1



White intends b4-b5 to drive away the knight and to increase the influence of his bishop on g2 over the light squares. His main strategy is to advance his queenside pawns and initiate an attack on the queenside and center.

8...a5 9.a3

Nh5

Black wants to get a kingside attack started with ...f5.

10.b4 axb4

11.axb4 h6

12.b5 Ne7

13.Qb3

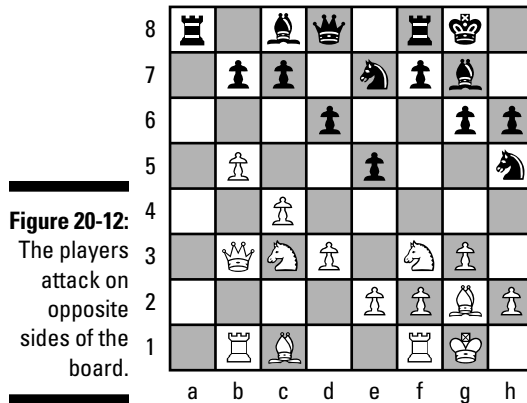
This is a typical situation of attack on opposite wings. White intends Ba3 and either c5 or Nd5 as the situation calls for. Black begins his own attack on the kingside. (See Figure 20-12.)

13....f5

14.c5+ Kh7

15.Ba3 Rf6?

The alternative 15...d5 would be answered by 16.c6, but that would be the lesser of two evils.



16.b6!

Destroying Black's pawn chain. White's attack is the faster one.

16...d5

17.bxc7 Qxc7

18.Nb5 Qb8

19.Nd6

The knight is a monster on d6, and Nxe5 is also threatened.

19...Nc6

20.Bb2 d4

21.e3 Be6

22.Qb6 Bd5

23.exd4 exd4

24.Ng5+! hxc5

25.Bxd5

White's pieces are overwhelmingly strong.

25...Bf8

26.Bxc6 Bxd6

27.Bxd4 1-0

White is a pawn up, but he's also attacking Black's bishop on d6 and his rook on f6, along with threats on the b-file. For example, after 27...bxc6 (if Black instead tries 27...Be5, White would answer with 28.Bxe5 Qxe5 29.Qxb7+) 28.Qxc6 Qd8 29.Rb7+ Kh6 30.Bxf6, White is winning a lot of material.

When things go Black's way

Black's kingside attack crashes home before White can do serious damage on the queenside. Black attempts to eliminate the pieces that defend the White king and overrun those that remain.

Daniel Stellwagen had Black against Sergei Yudin in this 2004 game played in Heraklion, Crete, and he was able to launch a dangerous attack on the kingside. Black wrapped up the game with a nice combination that destroyed White's defenses.

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0
5.d3 d6 6.Nf3 e5 7.0-0

Again, this is an English setup versus the King's Indian formation.

7...Nc6 8.Rb1 a5 9.a3 Bf5 10.Nd2 Qd7

Black's idea is simple: exchange off White's favorite bishop on g2. So White sidesteps the exchange.

11.Re1 Bh3 12.Bh1

Now, White's king is a little exposed; his f2 pawn lacks defense. But with ...Bh3, Black's bishop has abandoned the fight for squares like d5 and e4. So it's a trade-off.

12....h6 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 Ng4

Black is heading toward the king.

15.b5 Nd8 16.Nb3

This knight tends to be needed for kingside defense. A better way to proceed is 16.Bb2 f5 17.Ra1 Rxa1 18.Qxa1 and then bring the queen down to attack b7.

16....f5 17.c5 dxc5! 18.Bd5+

Black's point is to meet 18.Nxc5?? with 18...Qd4.

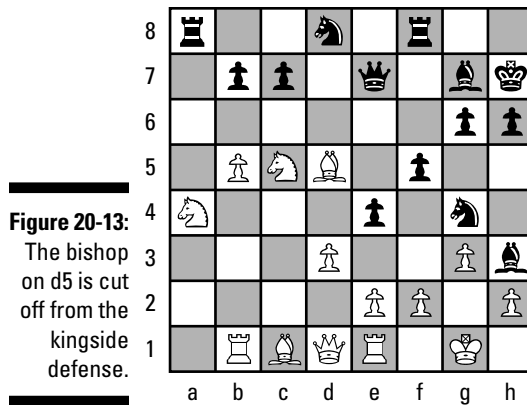
18....Kh7 19.Nxc5 Qe7 20.N3a4 e4!

See how White's bishop on d5 is cut off from defense of his king? That's a bad sign (see Figure 20-13).

21.dxe4?

This fails, but it's tough for White to defend anyway; for example, 21.d4 e3! 22.f3? Nf2 23.Qb3 f4! is a killer attack.





21....fxe4 22.Be3?

Missing Black's combination. White is lost anyway; for example, if White plays 22.Bf4, then the sequence 22....Rxf4! 23.gxf4 Rxa4! 24.Nxa4 (the alternative 24.Qxa4 doesn't work because of 24....Qxc5) 24....Qh4 results in a quick checkmate.

22....Rxf2! 23.Bxe4

Black would meet 23.Bxf2 with 23....e3 24.Nd3 exf2+ 25.Nxf2 Qe3 26.Rf1 Bxf1 27.Qxf1 Bd4, and it's time to give up.

23....Rg2+! 0-1

The finish would be 24.Bxg2 Qxe3+ 25.Kh1 Nf2+, and Black wins the queen, for starters.

Chapter 21

Getting Réti

In This Chapter

- ▶ Rolling with the Réti
- ▶ Changing it up with a Réti alternative

The *Réti Opening* is named after Richard Réti (1889–1929), a key member of the Hypermodern School (see Chapter 3). Over the years, the opening has morphed from an either-or succession of moves to an established order.

The first part of this chapter examines the move order that constitutes the Réti Opening today. The second part presents a couple of examples where White plays b2-b4 instead of b2-b3.

The Contemporary Réti

The Réti initially referred to any opening that combines the moves c4 and Nf3, in either order, and also includes a kingside fianchetto. Nowadays, it refers to the moves 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 (see Figure 21-1). In the spirit of hypermodern play, White continues with a kingside fianchetto (and sometimes a queenside one, too) and attempts to control the center from a distance.

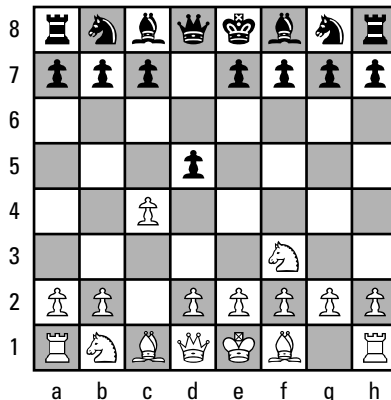


Figure 21-1:
The Réti
Opening.



The Réti appeals to players who like to attack the center from a distance.

When things go White's way

White controls the center from a distance. After White's king is safely castled, White can open lines in the center. White's bishops penetrate deep into Black's territory, and White ultimately launches a successful invasion.

In his 1924 game in New York against Frederick Yates, Réti used the open c-file and a novel placement of the White queen to put Black's position under pressure. After adopting his ideal piece setup, White struck out in the center and secured an advantage there. Black finally cracked under the pressure.

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4

Getting the Réti underway.

2...e6 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 Bd6 5.b3 0-0
6.0-0 Re8 7.Bb2

Réti liked to employ a double fianchetto.

7...Nbd7 8.d3 c6 9.Nbd2 e5 10.cxd5 cxd5

White opens the c-file and then tries to control it.

11.Rc1 Nf8 12.Rc2 Bd7 13.Qa1



White's queen maneuver really illustrates the hypermodern idea of controlling the center from a distance. Even from the remote a1 square, the queen has an effect on the center (see Figure 21-2).

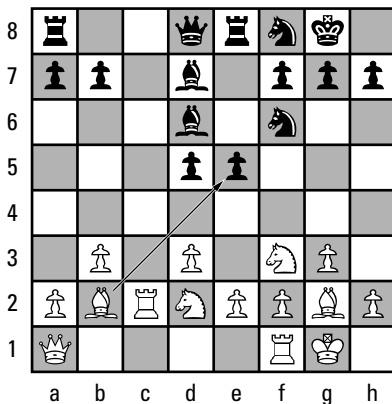


Figure 21-2:
Attacking the center from the flank.

13....Ng6 14.Rfc1 Bc6 15.Nf1 Qd7 16.Ne3 h6
17.d4

White finally strikes directly at the center.

17....e4 18.Ne5 Bxe5 19.dxe5 Nh7 20.f4

White secures his spatial advantage in the center and kingside.

20....exf3 21.exf3 Ng5 22.f4 Nh3+ 23.Kh1 d4

Black tries to complicate the situation in the hopes that White will go awry, but Réti finishes off the game with a nice tactical flourish.

24.Bxd4 Rad8 25.Rxc6!

By the end of this tactical combination, White will have a winning material advantage.

25....bxc6 26.Bxc6 Nf2+ 27.Kg2 Qxd4 28.Qxd4 Rxd4
29.Bxe8 Ne4 30.e6 Rd2+ 31.Kf3 1-0

When things go Black's way

White's efforts to control the center from a distance fail. Black gains the upper hand in the center and uses that as a base for an attack against White's king.

Gregory Kaidanov had the Black pieces in this 1988 game against Mark Taimanov from Belgrade, Serbia. He used a clever maneuver to transfer a rook from the queenside to the kingside. Black then had an overwhelming force to throw at White's king.

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4

Putting the Réti into play.

2....e6 3.b3 Nf6 4.Bb2 c5 5.e3 Nc6
6.cxd5 exd5 7.Bb5

White's bishop move forgoes the usual Réti strategy of developing the bishop via g2. White appears to want to trade pieces and hope for an easy game.

7....Bd6 8.Ne5 0-0!

White's game will be anything but easy after this challenging move.



9.Nxc6 bxc6 10.Be2?!

White needed to play 10.Bxc6 instead.

10....Re8 11.0-0 Rb8

White probably thought that Black was going to try and take advantage of the bishop on b2 by threatening 12....c4, but Black had something else up his sleeve.

12.d3 Rb4!



Black's move is an amazingly efficient way of getting the rook to the other side of the board. One drawback of trying to control the center from a distance is that you don't have any center pawns to block this sort of transfer.

13.Nd2 Rh4 14.g3 Ng4

Black now has an overwhelming amount of force with which to attack White's king (see Figure 21-3).

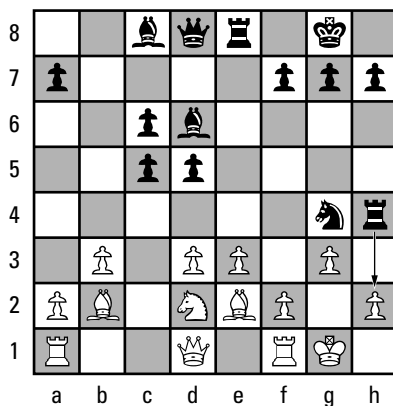


Figure 21-3:
Black's kingside attack is unstoppable.

15.Bxg4 Bxg4 16.f3 Rxh2 17.fxg4 Rxe3 18.Bf6

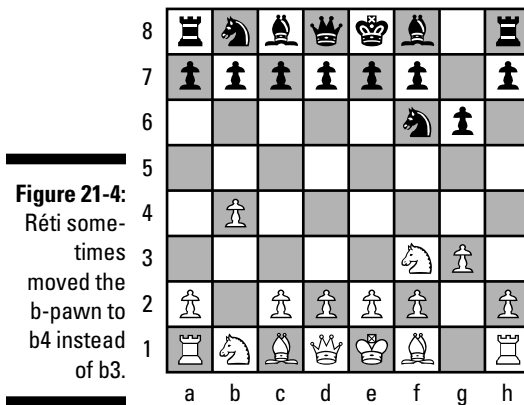
White makes a brave attempt to block the Black queen from entering the fray, but it's not enough to save the day.

18....Rh3 19.Rf3 Rxg3+ 20.Kh1 gxf6 21.Rxg3 Bxg3
22.Nf3 Qd7 0-1

The Original Réti

Although the Réti is now defined by the move order 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4, that wasn't always the case. The original system that Réti devised featured Nf3, c4, and at least one fianchetto. It was also characterized by d2-d3 rather than d2-d4.

Réti also liked to advance his b-pawn to b4 instead of b3 on occasion (see Figure 21-4). This move helps to secure space on the queenside and leads to slightly different types of positions.



When things go White's way

White is successful in controlling the center from a distance. White's pieces maneuver toward their optimal squares, and then White opens lines and mounts a successful invasion.

Vladimir Poley played just that way in this 1992 game from Stockholm, Sweden, against Oskar Von Bahr.

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 g6 3.b4

Réti loved to play this move. He once beat the great José Raúl Capablanca with 1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.b4.

3...Bg7 4.Bb2 O-O 5.Bg2 d5 6.d3 c6 7.Nbd2 Qb6

A good, aggressive move by Black meant to prepare a space grab on the queenside.

8.c3



This is a typical modern approach to double-fianchetto systems: First, play safely to secure the position, and after you complete development, get breaks in the center.

8...a5 9.a3

White is getting ready to play for moves such as e4 and c4, so Black undertakes counterplay.

9...c5 10.0-0 axb4 11.Qb3

This pin will recover the pawn.

11....Nc6 12.cxb4 cxb4 13.Rab1 Be6 14.axb4 Rfc8



Both sides have played logically, but here, Black may have stopped White from driving his knight into passivity by playing 14....Qb5 instead of 14....Rfc8.

15.b5 Na5 16.Qb4 Nc6 17.Qh4 Nb8 18.Bd4 Qd6 19.e4!

White finally gets this break, threatening e5 with a fork (see Figure 21-5).

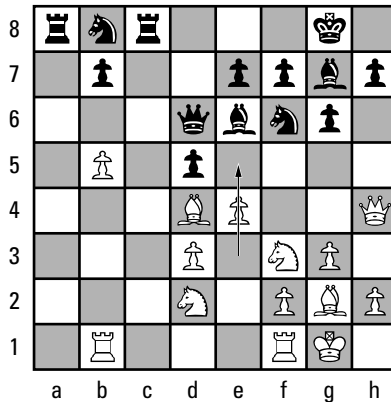


Figure 21-5: White finally advances in the center with further threats.

19....dxe4 20.dxe4 Nfd7?

Black is trying to prevent e5, but this strategy fails badly.

21.e5!

Anyway!

21....Nxe5

Black is losing material. But in the alternative sequence 21....Qc7 22.b6 Qd8, 23.Ng5 attacks h7 and b7.

22.Bxe5 Bxe5 23.Ne4 1–0

White wins the bishop on e5. For example, 23.Ne4 Qd5 24.Rfd1. (If Black makes the move 23....Qc7, then 24.b6 Qc2 25.Nxe5 follows.)

When things go Black's way

White has insufficient control over the center, and Black launches a kingside attack. Black advances the kingside pawns in order to open lines against White's king. Black's pieces invade White's territory and pave the way for a decisive attack.

Tom Wedberg played Black in this 1983 game against Eero Raaste in Esbjerg, Denmark. Black established control in the center before initiating a direct kingside attack. White gained spatial superiority on the queenside, but that didn't do his king any good.

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.b4

The Réti in action.

3....Bg7 4.Bb2 0–0 5.g3 c6 6.Bg2 d6
7.0–0 Nbd7 8.Nc3 e5

Black stakes the first claim in the center. White doesn't commit his center pawns to the 4th rank, preferring to attack the center from afar and expand on the queenside. That's the standard Réti strategy.

9.d3 Re8 10.Nd2 Nf8 11.a4 d5

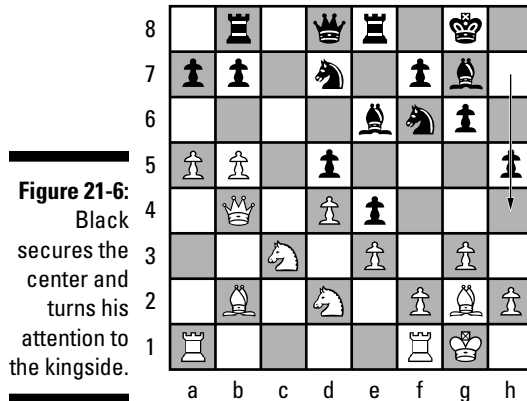
Black shamelessly takes over the center in classical fashion.

12.a5 Rb8 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.b5 Bf5 15.Qb3 Be6
16.Qb4 N8d7 17.d4

White finally advances, but it's rather late to do so.

17....e4 18.e3 h5!

Black wants to simply blast through on the kingside with ...h4. This needn't be disastrous for White, but in what follows, he pursues his queenside attack and neglects to bring pieces over to defend his king. (See Figure 21-6.)



19.a6 b6
23.Nc6 Ra8

20.Qb3 h4
24.Ba3 Qh5

21.Na2 Nh7
25.Qd1

22..Nb4 Qg5

White's last move is a waste of time, because after Black's next move, White's best option is to return the queen to b3.

25....Bg4 26.f3?

You can see why White didn't want to return to the queenside, but this move opens too many lines in the area of Black's strength.

26....exf3
30.Ra3 Bh6!
34.Qe2 Nh3+

27.Bxf3 hxg3
31.Re1 Rxa3
35.Kf1

28.hxg3 Rxe3
32.Bxa3 Ng5

29.Bd6 Ndf6
33.Bxg4 Nxg4

The alternative 35.Kg2 loses neatly to 35....Nf4+! 36.gxf4 Qh2+ 37.Kf3 Qh3#.

35....Ne3+ 0-1

White can only escape the check by giving up his queen.

Chapter 22

The Best of the Rest of the Flank Openings

In This Chapter

- ▶ Taking flight with the Bird's Opening
 - ▶ Getting versatile with the King's Indian
 - ▶ Skipping along with the Sokolsky
-

The terms *flank* and *wing* are interchangeable in chess and refer to the a-, b-, c-, f-, g-, and h-files. Pawns on these files are referred to as *flank pawns* or *wing pawns*. Flank openings involve pawn moves on one or more of these files. The English is by far the most popular flank opening, and it's the subject of Chapter 20.

This chapter focuses on three flank openings that are far less likely to occur in practice, but you may encounter each of them from time to time. Even if you don't intend to play these flank openings yourself, it's good to know a little bit about them in case your opponent plays them against you.

Winging It with the Bird's

The *Bird's Opening* is named after the English player Henry Bird (1830–1908), who played it repeatedly in his 1873 match in London against John Wisker. The move 1.f4 constitutes the Bird's Opening (see Figure 22-1).

By moving the pawn from f2 to f4, White tries to discourage Black from playing ...e5. White often follows up with a queenside fianchetto to increase control over the d4 and e5 squares, or he sometimes adopts the *Stonewall* pawn formation (pawns on f4, e3, and d4).

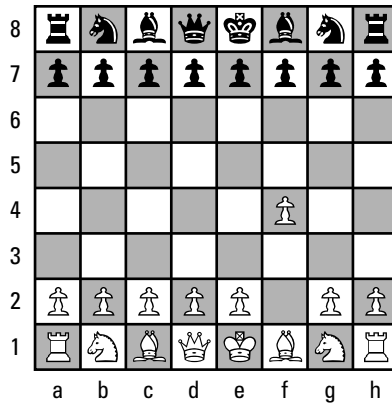


Figure 22-1:
The Bird's
Opening.



The Bird's Opening appeals to players who like to know what their general strategy is going to be right from the start.

When things go White's way

White controls the d4 and e5 center squares and uses the latter as a springboard for an attack against Black's king. White dominates the long a1-h8 diagonal and invades Black's territory on the kingside.

Emanuel Lasker, the future World Champion, used the Bird's Opening in this 1889 game against Johann Bauer in Amsterdam. He concluded the game with a sacrifice that became the model for generations to come.

1.f4

The Bird's Opening. White tries to control e5.

1....d5 2.e3

Nf6

3.b3

Normally, White would play 3.Nf3 first, and then later b3, but delaying the knight move doesn't make much difference in this game.

3....e6

4.Bb2 Be7

5.Bd3 b6

6.Nf3

Now, White is controlling both d4 and e5 three times, while Black has yet to challenge those squares.

6....Bb7 7.Nc3

This knight will slither over to the kingside.



7....Nbd7 8.0-0 0-0

If you look at all the White pieces aiming at the kingside, the decision to castle there seems risky at best!

9.Ne2 c5 10.Ng3 Qc7 11.Ne5 Nxe5 12.Bxe5 Qc6
 13.Qe2 a6 14.Nh5! Nxh5 15.Bxh7+! Kxh7
 16.Qxh5+ Kg8 17.Bxg7!

White's bishop move rips open the king's position. This classic attacking theme was played for the first time here by Lasker. (See Figure 22-2.)

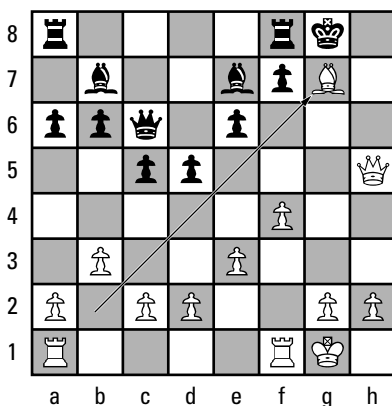


Figure 22-2:
A now classic method of attack.



17....Kxg7 18.Qg4+ Kh7

If Black tries 18....Kf6 instead, 18.Qg5 is checkmate.

19.Rf3 e5 20.Rh3+ Qh6 21.Rxh6+ Kxh6 22.Qd7!

If it weren't for White's queen move, forking the two bishops, Black could make a fight of it. As it stands, White has extra material and no trouble from here on out.

22....Bf6 23.Qxb7 Kg7 24.Rf1 Rab8 25.Qd7 Rfd8
 26.Qg4+ Kf8 27.fxg5 Bg7 28.e6

White is exploiting the pin along the f-file, which prevents Black's f-pawn from capturing.

28....Rb7 29.Qg6

Now the queen is exploiting the pin along the f-file and piling up on f7.

29...f6

Otherwise, White can capture on f7.

30.Rxf6+!

White crashes through in any case.

30...Bxf6

31.Qxf6+ Ke8

32.Qh8+ Ke7

33.Qg7+

White is winning a decisive amount of material.

33...Kxe6

34.Qxb7 Rd6

35.Qxa6 d4

36.exd4 cxd4

37.h4 d3

38.Qxd3! 1-0

Yes, White gives up his queen, but his five extra pawns do the trick!

When things go Black's way

Black gets open lines against White's king and goes on the attack. Black is often willing to sacrifice material in order to expose the White king's position. That's what Alexander Panchenko did against Vladimir Antoshin in this 1983 game from Moscow.

1.f4 e5

This is the introduction to *From's Gambit* — a response to the Bird's Opening where Black gives up a pawn to initiate an entertaining attack. This possibility drives some players away from 1.f4, even though the experts say that White should be able to grab the pawn and hold on.

2.fxe5

Here, White can transpose from the Bird's Opening into the *King's Gambit* by playing 2.e4 instead.

2....d6 3.exd6

Bxd6

This is the gambit position. Black is a pawn down but threatens checkmate in three moves, beginning with 4...Qh4+.

4.Nf3 g5

And now Black threatens ...g4, so that when White's attacked knight moves, he can go back to his attack with ...Qh4+.



5.g3 g4 6.Nh4 Ne7 7.d4 Ng6 8.Nxg6

White's move is risky because it opens Black's h-file. White can also retreat the knight to g2.

8...hxg6

Now, Black's threat is ...Bxg3+, or even ...Rxh2! So White defends g3.

9.Qd3 Nc6 10.c3

Still another tricky threat avoided: If White plays 10.e4? instead, then Black would play Nxd4! with the idea 11.Qxd4?? Bxg3+ 12.hxg3 Qxd4 13.Rxh8+ Qxh8.

10...Bf5 11.e4 Qe7 12.Bg2 0-0-0



Black has a very dangerous attack in return for his material investment. All of his pieces are out and active. A well-prepared grandmaster can defend White's position and hope to escape with an extra pawn, but in practice, it will be difficult for anybody. (See Figure 22-3.)

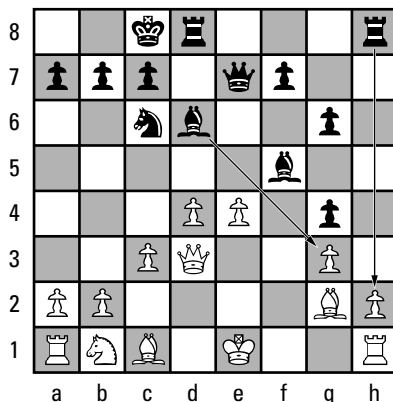


Figure 22-3:
Black's
attack is
becoming
fierce.

13.0-0 Ne5! 14.Qd1

White doesn't play 14.dxe5? because of 14...Bc5+.

14...Nf3+!



This piece sacrifice not only keeps the attack going but also gets rid of White's g2 bishop, which is the best defender of his king.



15.Bxf3 gxf3 16.exf5 Rxh2!

An attacking theme to remember: If White plays 17.Kxh2, then 17...Qh4+ leads to checkmate in two more moves.

17.Qxf3 Rh3 18.Bf4 Bxf4 19.Qxf4 Rdh8 20.Qf3 Qg5

The attack is decisive.

21.Kf2 Rh2+ 22.Kg1 Rh1+ 0-1

At first you may not think that 23.Qxh1 is so bad, trying to get two rooks and a knight for a queen. But Black forces matters by 23...Qe3+ 24.Kg2 (if White plays 24.Rf2 instead, then 24...Rxh1+ 25.Kxh1 Qxf2 follows) 24...Qe4+! 25.Rf3 Rxh1 26.Nd2 Qxf3+ 27.Nxf3 Rxa1. He'll mop up some queenside pawns and win the ending easily.

Attacking with the King's Indian

The *King's Indian Attack* is an all-purpose setup that can be played against virtually any response by Black. The g1 knight develops to f3, the f1 bishop to g2, and White castles and plays d3 (see Figure 22-4).



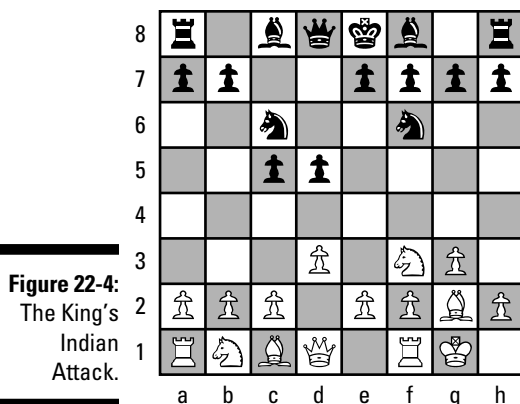
This attack appeals to players who can't or don't want to spend time studying openings. White can make the same moves against multiple Black setups.

When things go White's way

White develops quickly, secures the center, and attacks on the king-side. Andrey Stukopin used the King's Indian Attack to defeat Benedict Hasenohr in this game from 2008 in Vietnam, which was played in the World Championships for players under 14 years old!

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 c5 4.0-0 Nc6 5.d3

This is the King's Indian Attack. Notice that White plays the same moves that Black does in the King's Indian Defense.



5...e6

The position after 5...e5 is a common one with colors reversed. Also, 5...g6 is a good, solid move.

6.Nbd2 Be7 7.e4 Qc7

The fight now revolves around the e5 square.

8.Re1 0-0 9.e5 Nd7 10.Qe2

White defends e5 just in time and will soon reinforce the defenders. Black decides to launch an attack on the queenside, where he is strongest.

10...b5 11.Nf1



You see this move a lot in the King's Indian Attack. It frees a path for the bishop on c1 and gets ready to transfer the knight into an attacking position.

11...a5 12.Bf4 Ba6 13.h4!

Now, White can anchor a piece on g5. In some cases, he may weaken Black's dark squares by advancing h5-h6.

13...b4 14.Ne3

White is thinking about the sacrifice 15.Nxd5 exd5 16.e6, winning his piece back. Otherwise, he can play 14.N1h2 and head for g4 anyway, while keeping an eye on his e5 pawn.

14...Rac8

Black can grab a pawn by 14...Ndx5, but White gets it back with another pawn to fall after 15.Nxe5 Nxe5 16.Ng4 f6 17.Nxe5 fxe5 18.Qxe5! Qxe5 19.Rxe5, when Black can't defend e6 against Rael and Bh3 without allowing something bad, like 19....Bc8 20.Bxd5! exd5 21.Rxe7.

15.Ng5!? Bxg5

That bishop is an important defender of the kingside dark squares, as you'll see. But White was planning Qh5 with a big attack.

16.hxg5 Qb6 17.Qh5 Ne7 18.Ng4

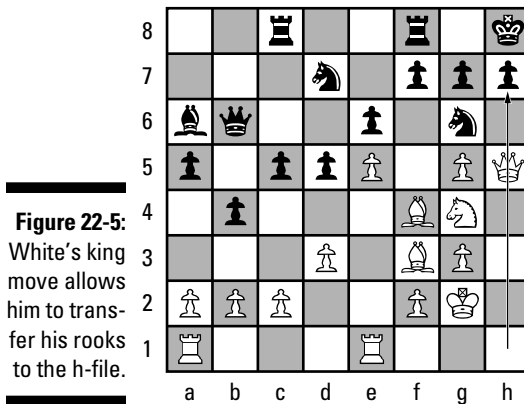
Now a potential knight sacrifice by White on f6 looms large.

18....Kh8 19.Bf3!

White finds a way to bring his rooks into the attack.

19....Ng6 20.Kg2

White is ready to shift his rooks to the h-file (see Figure 22-5).



20....Rg8 21.Rh1 Ndf8

This move temporarily stops checkmate, but White will bring another rook into play and threaten it again.

22.Rh2 Nxf4+ 23.gxf4 g6

Black is not waiting for 24.Rah1.

24.Qxh7+! Nxh7

Is Black escaping by ...Kg7-f8?

25.Nf6! 1-0

No. Black resigns because he sees that 25.Nf6 Kg7 26.Rxh7+ Kf8 27.Nd7+, followed by Nxb6, will leave White a piece ahead.

When things go Black's way

Black gains an advantage in the center and uses that as a base for operations against White's king. In a 1992 game in Wuerzburg, Germany, Wolfram Frobenius (White) used the King's Indian Attack against Alexander Budnikov, but he didn't successfully challenge Black's grip on the center. Black developed easily and then started the hunt for White's king.

1.Nf3 d5

2.g3 c6

3.Bg2 Bg4



This is a common strategy for Black: He brings out his bishop in front of the pawn chain that's formed by ...e6 and then develops without presenting White a target.

4.h3 Bh5
8.e4 Ne7

5.d3 Nd7
9.Re1

6.Nbd2 e6

7.0-0 Bd6

White is in the familiar King's Indian formation, but Black has his forces well-placed to control the important e5 square (see Figure 22-6).

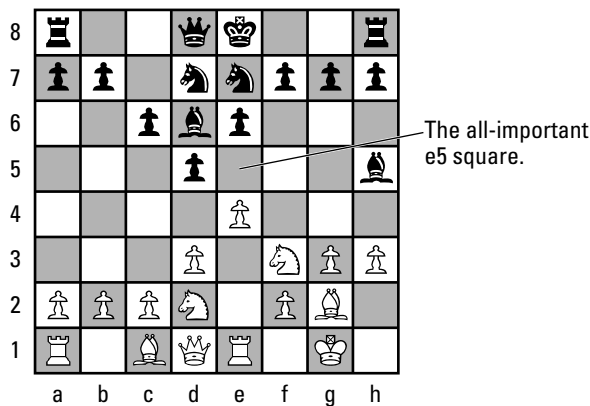


Figure 22-6:
Black is trying to control the e5 square.

9...0-0 10.c3 e5

Black gets this move in first.

11.Nf1

White makes another standard King's Indian Attack move, but he has no king-side attack for the knight to help with.

11...f5 12.exf5 Bxf3 13.Bxf3 Nxf5 14.Bg2 Qf6

Black is getting pressure down the f-file, and he controls more central space.

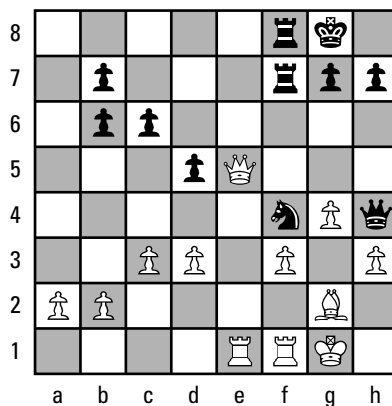
15.Qc2 Rf7 16.Ne3 Raf8 17.Nxf5 Qxf5 18.Be3 Bc5

Black attacks the defender of f2, and White has to weaken his kingside.

19.f3 Qg6 20.g4 Bb6 21.Bxb6 axb6 22.Rf1 Nc5
23.Rad1 Ne6! 24.Rde1 Qf6 25.Qe2 Nf4! 26.Qxe5 Qh4

This is a classic picture of a good knight versus a bad bishop. Black threatens both ...Nxd3 and ...Qg3, and his attack is overwhelming (see Figure 22-7).

Figure 22-7:
White's
bishop is
little more
than a big
pawn.



27.Re3 Qg3 0-1

White can try to prevent 28...Qxg2 checkmate by 28.Rf2, but then, 28...Nhx3+ 29.Kh1 Nxf2+ is murderous.

Getting an Edge with the Sokolsky

The move 1.b4 has been given more than one derogatory name in the past, but ever since Alexei Sokolsky (1908–1969) published serious analysis of the opening in 1963, it has been named after him (see Figure 22-8).

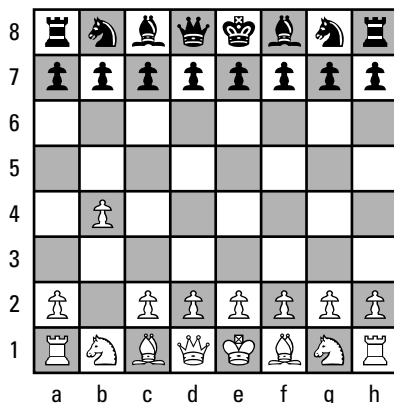


Figure 22-8:
The
Sokolsky
Opening.

Although the move has no direct influence on the center, it prepares the development of the c1 bishop to b2, where it attacks the d4 and e5 central squares. The move 1.b4 is also designed to seize space on the queenside and discourage Black's normal move of the b8 knight to c6, because that knight can be attacked by b5.



Players who want to venture into less explored territory often play openings such as the Sokolsky. It can have some surprise value if your opponent isn't prepared to play against it.

When things go White's way

White gains a spatial advantage on the queenside and eventually in the center as well. White's pieces are positioned more aggressively than Black's and create threats that are difficult for Black to respond to. In this 1957 game against Vladimir Kirrilov in Minsk, Belarus, Sokolsky demonstrated White's plan in the opening that would ultimately bear his name.

1.b4

Employing the Sokolsky Opening.

1...e5

2.Bb2 d6

3.c4 Nf6

White establishes himself on the queenside and in the center, while Black gets developed.



4.e3 Nbd7 5.Nf3 g6

It's often effective to oppose one fianchetto with another.

6.d4 Bg7 7.Be2

After the alternative 7.dxe5 Ng4, Black recovers his pawn, which is what happens in the game.

7...0-0

Black's King's Indian formation is quite common.

8.0-0 Re8 9.dxe5 Ng4 10.Nc3 Ngxe5 11.Nd4 Nf6
12.Qb3 c6 13.Rad1

White puts some pressure on Black's rather weak pawn on d6.



13...Qe7 14.h3 Be6?

Black's move ends up losing valuable time. The alternative 14...a5 15.b5 Nfd7! is better, heading for c5.

15.f4! Ned7 16.e4



You can see the advantages of controlling more territory: Black's pieces don't have good posts to go to.

16...Nf8 17.Bf3 Rad8 18.b5!

A typical flank opening idea: White wants to force Black's c-pawn away from the key d5 square.



18...c5

18...Qc7 is probably better to keep a pawn on c6 watching over d5.

19.Nc2 Bh 20.Bc1 Bg7 21.Ne3

White has total control over d5. He wants to be able to occupy d5 with a piece, and, if Black captures on d5, he wants to be able to recapture with a piece. (See Figure 22-9.)

21...h6 22.f5 Bc8 23.Ned5 Nxd5 24.Nxd5 Qh4 25.Bg4!

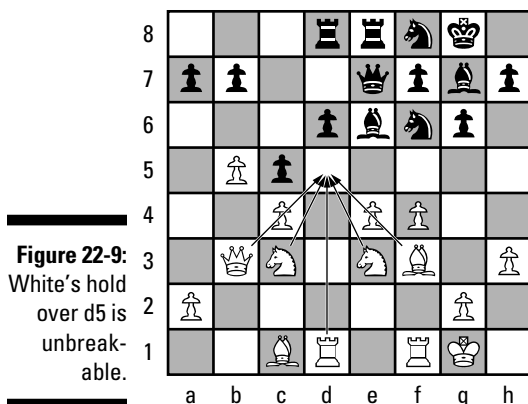


Figure 22-9:
White's hold
over d5 is
unbreak-
able.

White's bishop move is played with the idea of following up with f6, entombing Black's bishop. All that remains is to drive away Black's queen.

25....Be5 26.Rd3 h5 27.g3! Bxg3 28.Rxg3 hxg4
29.Rxg4 1-0

In order to avoid a fork with Nf6+, Black has to try 29....Qh8, but then 30.Bb2 is overwhelming, especially because if 30....Re5, then 31.Ne7+ wins.

When things go Black's way

White falls behind in development, and Black uses his greater piece activity to mount a successful attack. Stefan Loeffler tore down Roland Franke's defenses in this correspondence game from 1986.



1.b4 e5 2.Bb2 Bxb4

This is Black's most aggressive and direct line in the Sokolsky Opening.

3.Bxe5 Nf6 4.e3 0-0 5.Nf3 Re8

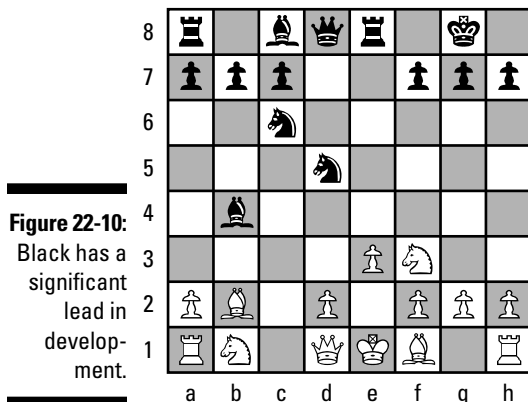
Black will gain time attacking the bishop.

6.c4 d5 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Bb2

The alternative 8.Be2? loses to the nice trick 8....Rxe5! 9.Nxe5 Qf6, and Black wins material because the d2 pawn is pinned and 10.f4 Nxe3! followed by ...Nxg2+ rips open the kingside.

8....Nc6

White has an extra center pawn and very solid position. His main problem is Black's piece activity, stemming from quicker development and two open center files (see Figure 22-10).



9.Be2

White is ready to castle.

9....Rxe3!!

An amazing move that prevents White from castling at the cost of material.

10.fxe3 Nxe3 11.Qb3 Nxg2+ 12.Kf2 Bh3! 13.d4 Qe7
14.Nbd2 Re8!?

Black brings his last piece into the attack. He also has a winning combination with 14....Bxd2 15.Nxd2 Nxd4!, intending 16.Bxd4 Qh4+ and ...Qxd4.

15.Rhe1 Nxe1 16.Rxe1 Nxd4! 17.Nxd4

If White had tried 17.Bxd4, then Black would answer with 17....Bxd2 18.Nxd2 Qh4+.

17....Bxd2 18.Rd1?

The move 18.Qxh3 would've been better, but Black has a lot of extra pawns after the continuation 18....Bxe1+ 19.Kxe1 c5 20.Qg4 cxd4 21.Bxd4 f5! 22.Qf3 Qb4+ 23.Qc3 Qxc3+ 24.Bxc3 Kf7.

18....Be3+ 19.Kg3 Qg5+! 20.Kxh3 Re4 21.Nf5 Qxf5+
22.Kg2 Rg4+! 23.Bxg4 Qxg4+ 24.Kf1 Qf3+ 25.Ke1 Qf2# 0-1

Part VI

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"It's a classic Diner endgame - king, rook, saltshaker, mate."

In this part . . .

To help you master the art of the opening, I include a few top-ten lists. One gives you tips on avoiding mistakes in the opening, and another one lists ways to study chess openings. The final one points you to some excellent chess Web sites.

Chapter 23

Ten Common Mistakes to Avoid in the Opening

In This Chapter

- ▶ Controlling the center and capturing material
 - ▶ Taking care of your queen and your king
 - ▶ Watching for traps
-

Mistakes are unavoidable in chess. Everyone makes them. The perfect game has yet to be played. One wag once said that the winner of a chess game is the player who makes the second-to-last mistake.

You do, however, want to limit the number of mistakes you make, and, if you do make one, you want to learn from it. Figuring out why you lost a game makes you play better in the future. In this chapter, I cover some general rules of thumb that may help you avoid committing some cardinal sins in an opening, or at least help you to recognize them if you do commit them.

Wasting Time

Every move is precious. Wasting a move is the same as allowing your opponent to move twice in a row. That's not a recipe for success.



Every move in the opening should be a developing move — one that improves the mobility of your pieces. The power of the pieces is tied to their mobility. The more mobile they are, the more powerful they are.



If you don't make developing moves but your opponent does, you'll eventually be outgunned. Here are a couple of time-wasting strategies to avoid:

- ✓ **Moving the same piece multiple times:** Although some openings require you to move the same piece more than once, you should only do so for a good reason if you haven't yet developed the rest of your pieces.

For example, in the Sicilian, after the moves 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4, it's perfectly acceptable to move the knight a second time by playing 4.Nxd4. The move recaptures the pawn on d4, restoring material equilibrium, and it centralizes the knight.

However, if you played 3.Ng5 instead of 3.d4, that would be a mistake (see Figure 23-1). This second knight move wastes an opportunity to develop the other pieces. 3.d4 opens a line for White's dark-square bishop, but 3.Ng5 leaves the bishop still unable to move.

- ✔ **Checking pointlessly:** Giving check is not an end in itself, but some players check their opponent's king every chance they get. Often, that's a waste of time. For instance, in the Scandinavian, after the moves 1.e4 d5, playing 2.Bb5+ would be a waste of time because of Black's reply of 2...c6 (see Figure 23-2).

After 2...c6, the bishop must move again or risk being captured by the pawn. After the bishop moves, it's Black's turn again, and the move 2...c6 is thrown in for free.

Figure 23-1:
Pointlessly
moving the
same piece
twice is a
mistake.

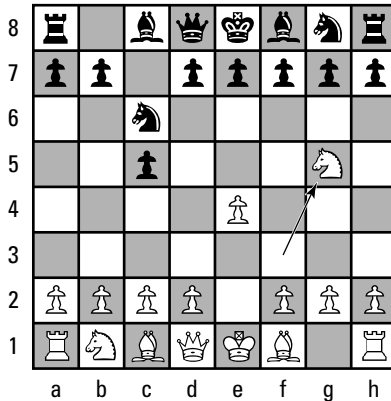
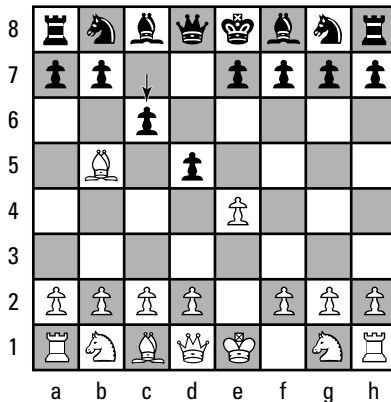


Figure 23-2:
White's
check is a
waste of
time.



Leading with the Lady

Many players love to move their queen into an early attack mode. This is usually a mistake. It's true that the queen is the most powerful chess piece, but that means that you should develop your queen with the greatest of care.

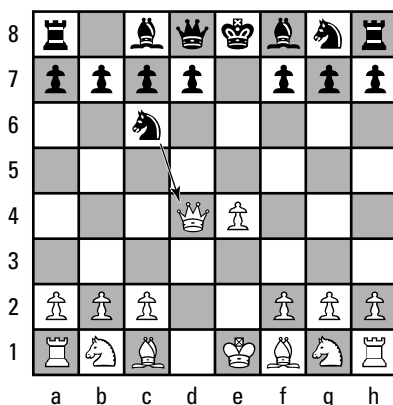


Deploying the queen too early may leave it open for harassment by pieces of lesser value. This harassment causes you to waste time by moving the queen multiple times, and worse, your queen may end up being lost for less than it's worth.

Using the queen to make threats that are easily parried is a mistake. For example, after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Qh5, White's queen threatens to capture Black's pawn on e5. However, Black can answer the threat with 2...Nc6, 2...d6, or 2...Qe7. After Black's natural developing move Ng8-f6, White's queen will eventually be attacked and forced to retreat.

In the opening known as the Center Game, the moves 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.Qxd4 Nc6 demonstrate the drawback of developing the queen too early (see Figure 23-3). Black's knight is well-posted on c6, and it moves there with a gain of time because White's queen must retreat.

Figure 23-3:
Black gets a "free" developing move by attacking the queen.



White begins the game with an advantage in time by virtue of having the first move. It makes no sense to squander away that advantage by developing the queen too early.

Losing Material



You begin the game with a fighting force of equal ability. If you lose some of that force without compensation, you've made a mistake. You need to keep the material balance or you risk losing the game.



If your opponent offers you material, be careful — there may be a catch. However, if after careful analysis you can't see any adverse consequence to taking the offered material, by all means take it! A preponderance of force is the easiest advantage to turn into victory.

Sometimes, it's not immediately obvious that you're about to lose material. Very often, the other shoe drops after a threat against your king or queen. In the position in Figure 23-4, White is about to lose material if it's Black's move.

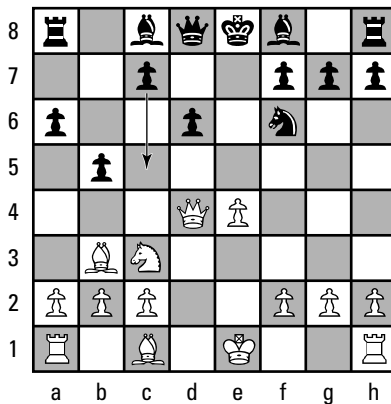


Figure 23-4:
White is
about
to lose
material.

White has what appears to be a nice edge in the center. White has developed three pieces, while Black has developed only one. However, Black can win material by attacking the queen with ...c5. After the queen moves away from d4, then ...c4 will trap and win the bishop on b3. The bishop is worth a little over three pawns, so Black is getting the better end of that exchange, and White is a couple steps closer to defeat.

Abandoning the Center



If you control the center, you ultimately control more space than your opponent. More space gives your pieces greater maneuverability. Greater maneuverability gives them more power. You'll discover that you can force your opponent to make concessions that increase your advantage to the point where you'll have a winning position. All because you controlled the center.

If you abandon the center, however, you're making a mistake. Consider the position after the moves 1.e4 h5 2.d4 h4 3.Nf3 a5 4.Nc3 a4 (see Figure 23-5).

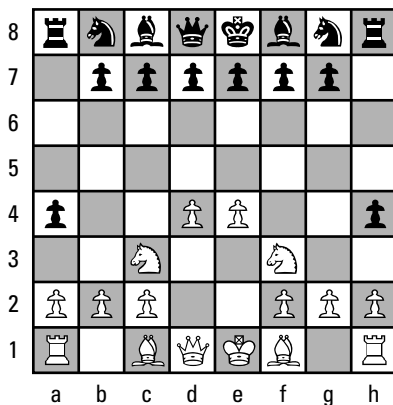


Figure 23-5:
Black abandons the center.

White's knights are developed and help control the center. White's bishops are ready to be developed. White's control over the center can hardly be disputed. Black's pawn advances produce nothing tangible, and Black's pieces will have trouble finding adequate posts. It's critically important to have at least some stake in the center or you run the risk of being overrun.

Creating Weaknesses

Squares may be considerably weakened when both pawns on neighboring files advance. If a square can't be guarded by a pawn, it's an open invitation for your opponent's pieces.

White frequently opens with 1.e4, which is a very good move. But the advance of the e-pawn has a slight drawback in that the pawn can no longer be used to help control the d3, d4, f3, and f4 squares. The move has many more virtues than drawbacks, but its drawbacks can be accentuated if White also advances the g-pawn (see Figure 23-6).



If you have weak squares in your position, you may have to cover them with pieces. Pieces aren't active when performing such guard duty, so it's best to avoid making them do it. Of course, if you can win a queen at the cost of creating a weakness, it may be worth it! All things being equal, though, it's best to avoid creating weaknesses in the first place.

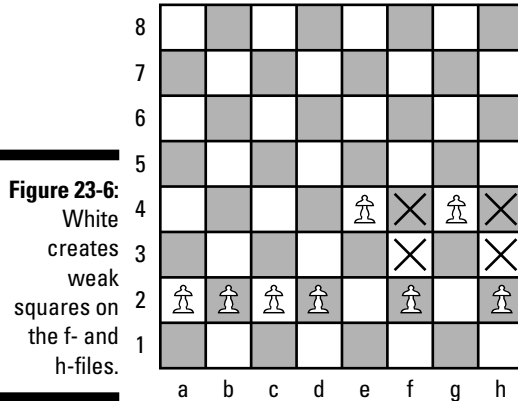


Figure 23-6:
White
creates
weak
squares on
the f- and
h-files.

Pawn Grabbing

Pawn grabbing is the phrase used to describe the mistake of taking too much time away from your development in order to win a pawn. Chess players speak of a “poisoned” pawn, indicating that the time spent in capturing it is not worth the material gain.

A line in the London System (see Chapter 19) allows Black to grab a pawn early after the moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 c5 3.e3 Qb6 4.Nc3 (see Figure 23-7).

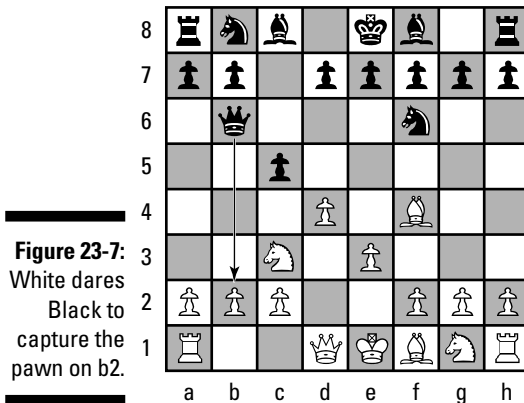


Figure 23-7:
White dares
Black to
capture the
pawn on b2.

If Black captures the offered pawn by 4...Qxb2, then White plays 5.Nb5, threatening 6.Nc7+. White can force a draw by repeatedly attacking the Black queen, which has no means of escape, or White can choose to press on, trying for the win. You don’t want to give your opponent that sort of choice so early in the game.

Exposing the King

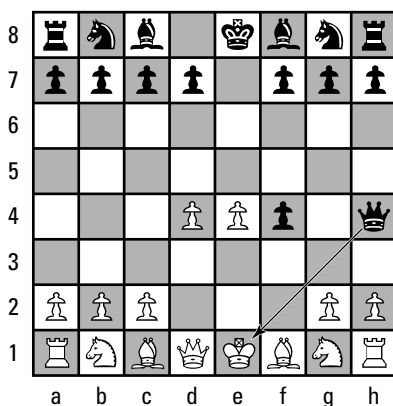


Exposing the king to unnecessary risk is a mistake. Most openings involve castling relatively early because keeping the king safe is so important. In some lines, the king's safety is compromised in order to secure a different type of advantage, but those lines are risky.

One variation of the King's Gambit (see Chapter 4) features the moves 1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.d4 Qh4+ (see Figure 23-8). White is forced to move the king because 4...g3 loses to 4...fxg3. White forfeits the ability to castle just to establish a strong pawn center, but history has shown that this strategy is unwise.

Figure 23-8:

It's not worth exposing the king simply to establish a central pawn duo.



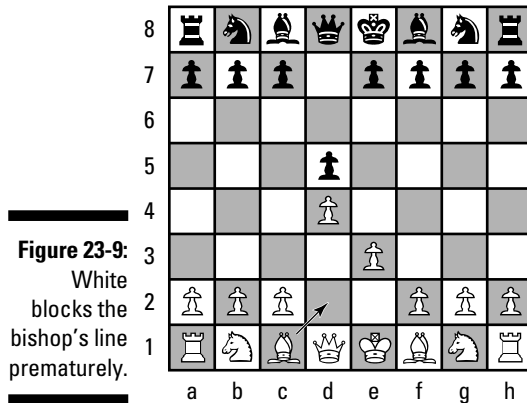
Blocking Lines

Sometimes, you need to block a diagonal in order to stake your claim in the center. This happens in both the French Defense (see Chapter 10) and the Queen's Gambit Declined (see Chapter 14). Blocking a line for no good reason, however, is a mistake.

After the moves 1.d4 d5, White usually wants to support the d4 pawn with the e-pawn by playing e2-e3. To do so immediately, though, would block the dark-squared bishop's line (see Figure 23-9).



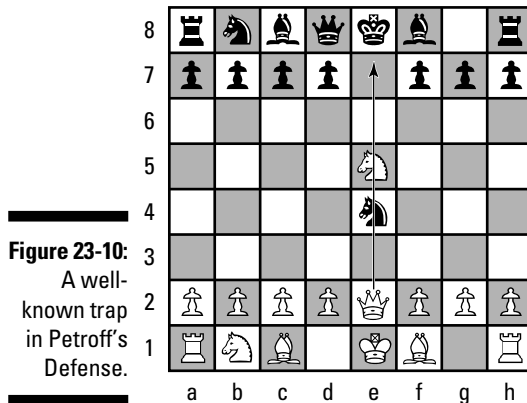
Some openings employ this strategy, such as the Colle System (see Chapter 19,) but it's generally better to develop the bishop to f4 or g5 prior to playing e2-e3.



Falling for Traps

Opening traps are a sequence of moves that are tempting but known to be bad. When you choose an opening for yourself, you need to know whether any traps are involved.

If you want to play Petroff's Defense (see Chapter 8), for example, you need to know that after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5, the capture 3...Nxe4 is a mistake. White plays 4.Qe2 with an advantage. (See Figure 23-10.)



Black can play 4...Qe7 but can't copy White's move after 5.Qxe4 because White's knight is now protected. Notice that the knight on e4 can't retreat with 4...Nf6 because 5.Nc6+ wins Black's queen!

Memorizing Moves

Memorizing moves without understanding the ideas behind them is a mistake. You have to commit a certain amount of time to be able to tell one opening from another and to avoid traps, but after that, it's far more important to know the ideas behind a given opening than it is to know numerous variations that are many moves deep.



You want to know the general strategy behind a particular opening, and you want to know the general principles of opening play. If, on top of that, you're familiar with any traps associated with the opening you choose, you'll avert any disaster in the opening.

Chapter 24

Ten Best Ways to Study Chess Openings

In This Chapter

- ▶ Turning to others to improve your chess game
 - ▶ Using the Internet to sharpen your skills
 - ▶ Examining your own games in order to get better
-

Studying implies work, and there's simply no way around it: If you want to get serious about improving your play, you have to do some work. This chapter helps you work smarter rather than harder and helps you get the most out of your study time.

Some people spend an enormous amount of time studying chess openings. Right now, someone somewhere is studying a chess opening with the intention of finding a slight improvement in one of its variations. That person doesn't have to be you.

Spend some time studying openings, but concentrate on understanding the ideas behind them, not on memorizing the moves. If you play enough chess, you'll always encounter a move you've never seen before. If you understand the ideas behind an opening, you'll have a firm basis for making a choice of how best to face the unexpected.

Getting a Coach

When I first started playing tournament chess back in 1972, chess coaches couldn't be found. Nowadays, they're commonplace. What they charge for their time and how good they are varies widely, of course, but you can almost certainly find one.



If you can't find a coach in your vicinity, you can always get an Internet video phone service and find a coach on the Internet. Face-to-face lessons are best, but phone lessons aren't bad at all.

Good coaches are able to evaluate not only your knowledge about openings but also your level of motivation and interest in improving. They tailor their lessons to meet your needs. If they don't do this, then you may need a new coach.

Nothing's better than having a strong player patiently explain to you the ideas behind an opening. He or she can answer your questions and explain why one move may be preferable to another, even if the moves look pretty much the same to you.

Finding a Friend

A less formal way to get help in understanding chess openings is to find a friend who knows more than you do. Some chess players hoard their knowledge, but most are more than willing to hold court and show off their smarts.

Ask your friend to tell you what he or she knows about an opening you're interested in, and be prepared to ask questions. People sometimes think some things are obvious even when they're not. If you don't understand what your friend is telling you, speak up!

When you think you have at least some understanding of what your friend is talking about, play some games. You'll probably make mistakes, and you'll probably lose, but you'll gain experience using the opening you've chosen to learn about.



There's no substitute for experience, and there's no better way to acquire experience than by playing chess with a friend. You may have to concede some bragging rights for a while, but you'll get better!

Reading Annotations

When players make notes to the moves in a particular chess game, those notes are referred to as *annotations*. Playing over well-annotated games is a good way to study openings.

Some players' annotations are little more than alternate variations to the actual game. These won't be very useful to you in the beginning. Look for games that have more prose than moves in the annotations.

You can find well-annotated games in books or online. You can't ask a book any questions, obviously, but online you can often find forums where you can ask for clarification or advice. In Chapter 25 I provide some useful Web sites to check out to find well-annotated games.

Dragging and Dropping

I got serious about chess before the Internet made it so easy to find other chess players. We actually used to play chess with people in other locations via postcards. One player would send off a move to another and then wait for the return mail to get a response.

It was slow, but it was a good way for me to learn new openings, because every time I got a postcard from my opponent, I'd set the game up on a board and start from scratch. That way I could see the opening moves over and over until they stuck in my head, and I could remember them.

Today, you can play this type of correspondence chess with people all over the world on the Internet. (Chapter 25 has information on how to get started.) Web servers allow you to just drag and drop a piece onto a square, and the move is transmitted to your opponent immediately. Your opponent may not have to reply for a few days, but there's no transmission delay. Nothing against the U.S. Postal Service, but that sure beats the mail!



Most sites allow you to back up to the start of a game and advance through it one move at a time. I recommend you do this when you're learning a new opening. The repetition makes a lasting impression. Ideally, you set the game up on an actual board and physically move the pieces around, but in this age of convenience, that may simply be asking too much.

Playing in Real Time

When you play chess in real time (as opposed to correspondence chess), you're given an allotment of time (called a *time control*) in which you must complete the game or forfeit. (Chapter 25 lists Web sites where you can play chess in real time.)

This is a more pressure-packed way of playing chess, but some people find it stimulating to the point of addiction. I had to quit one site cold turkey when my wife came home from work, and I realized I had spent the entire day playing chess online!

I recommend real-time chess only in moderation, but it's a way for you to get a great deal of experience in whatever opening you've chosen to play. Different players respond differently to your moves, and you can rapidly develop a broader understanding of the ideas involved.

Blitzing It Out

If you're familiar with chess clocks, and you have a friend who likes to play fast games, you can try what's called *blitz chess*. In blitz chess you have a very quick time control. Both players may have only five minutes to play the entire game. You actually have to blitz out your moves!

Blitz games can become rather chaotic, and some people don't like them at all. If you do, though, a blitz game is the fastest way to gain a lot of experience in a particular opening. You don't have time to sit and think, and you must learn to recognize the patterns involved, and choose your moves quickly.

Blitz isn't for everyone, and it's certainly not for the faint of heart. It is, however, a good way to test just how well you really know an opening.

Basing the Data

Chess games have been collected into databases that contain literally millions of games. They can be sorted into specific openings, and you can use the associated software to play through these games as quickly or as slowly as you'd like.

Chapter 25 steers you to some of these databases. Some are free, but others require a financial commitment in order to access them. The free sites are more than adequate for all but the most dedicated players.

Revvng an Engine

Software programs that play chess are called *engines*. They've come a long way, baby. In 1985, I played a two-game match against a program developed by Bell Labs that was running on a Cray supercomputer. I won one game and drew the other. Ten years later, I could buy a stronger program to run on my PC.

If you don't have a coach or a strong chess-playing friend to consult with, you can use these engines to analyze chess openings. They can run in the background while you play computer games or do actual work, and they give you a pretty good idea of whether White or Black is doing better in the opening. They give a numeric rating of the position — a positive number means that White is doing well, and a negative number means that Black has the edge.

Studying Your Games

The best way to learn about chess is to study your own games, especially the games you've lost. Use chess notation to record any serious game you play (if you play online, the moves are usually recorded automatically).



Try to be as objective as you possibly can. Figure out where you went wrong and why. If your mistake was in the opening, figure out an improvement for next time. You probably won't have trouble remembering the improvement, if you've figured it out on your own.

It never hurts to let a better player or an engine analyze your games, but self-analysis leaves the deepest impression. It may be more fun to show off your wins, but it will pay bigger dividends if you study your losses.

Buying a Book

More books have been published on chess openings than on any other aspect of the game, and that trend will in all likelihood continue.

Some of them are extremely technical in nature, but many are beginner-oriented. You can find the right fit for you by shopping around. You may find that a certain chess publisher prints the sort of book that's perfect for you, or a particular author may be just the ticket.

You'll go through some trial and error, and what's right for you may not be what's right for the next person, but there's a vast ocean of chess literature out there. Don't be afraid to dip your toe in it.

Chapter 25

Ten Great Chess Web Sites

In This Chapter

- ▶ Playing chess with others on the Internet
 - ▶ Tapping Web sites to increase your chess knowledge
-

You can always type the word *chess* into a search engine and take it from there, but this chapter provides you with ten Web sites that I can personally vouch for or that have a sterling reputation in the chess community. The Internet is always changing, but these sites have been around for a while, and I suspect they'll be around for some time to come.

The first section lists sites where you can play against other chess players, or, if you so desire, against chess-playing engines. The second section includes sites that are filled with information about all aspects of chess — especially chess openings.

Playing Sites

On the first Web site in this section, you can play chess against others for free; the other two sites require you to pay to play. You get more features at the pay-to-play sites, but the free site is more than adequate if you just want to play chess.

Free Internet Chess Server

The Free Internet Chess Server (FICS) is an extremely popular Web site on which people play chess games — for free! — against opponents from around the world.

Experienced players have ratings next to their handle that allow you to gauge their approximate chess strength. The higher the rating, the stronger the player. After you play a game against a rated player, you're given a rating based on the outcome of the game.

It takes a certain number of games against a variety of rated players before your rating accurately reflects your playing strength. Some people take their ratings very seriously, but I'd focus more on having fun and let the ratings take care of themselves. They're mainly useful in helping you find players that are roughly at your playing level. (www.freechess.org)

Internet Chess Club

The Internet Chess Club (ICC) is a pay site with an annual fee of \$69.95, one of the two largest and most active Web sites for playing and observing games. It's used by hundreds of grandmasters and thousands of amateurs. The associated ChessFM program has numerous lectures and presentations by grandmasters and masters, as well as discussions about such topics as individual chess games, skills improvement, and chess openings. The site also has live commentary by grandmasters during ongoing tournaments, including World Championship matches. (www.chessclub.com)

ChessBase

This is the other large pay Web site (29.90 Euros, or about \$36 at the time this book was published, for an annual membership) for playing games, with many features that are similar to ICC. This German site is populated by grandmasters from all over the world and contains many lectures about chess history, as well as live commentary by leading grandmasters about important chess events. (www.playchess.com)

Informational Sites

These sites provide a wealth of chess information on a wide variety of topics. Most of them feature instructional articles, news features, and annotated games. Most of these sites are free, but some of them charge for access to their content.

Chessville

Chessville has many features, including a section on chess openings and an instructional area with opening strategy. The site also has a free "playing zone" for playing online games. (www.chessville.com)

Chess games

This is a free site with more than 100,000 users and a database of more than half a million games. You can find games that use the openings you're interested in or do a search by a favorite player. Many games have instructive comments from other users — you may want to add your own! (www.chessgames.com)

Chess Cafe

This site has monthly columns on chess history, endgames, instruction, and many other subjects, including three columns devoted to chess openings. (www.chesscafe.com)

Chess Lecture

This is a pay site (annual fee starts at around \$100) with a huge number of videos produced by master lecturers. Many of the lectures are about chess openings. (www.chesslecture.com)

Jeremy Silman

Jeremy Silman's site contains an enormous amount of chess material — in particular, an archive of chess opening articles. Jeremy is an International Master (IM) and an exceptional chess teacher. (www.jeremysilman.com)

The Week in Chess

The Week in Chess (or TWIC) is the best-known Web site for chess news and the primary Internet resource for downloading the latest games from around the world. (www.chess.co.uk/twic/twic.html)

U.S. Chess Federation

The U.S. Chess Federation Web site features the organization's online magazine, *Chess Life Online*, as well as all the information you could ever want to know about chess in the United States, including scholastic chess, chess clubs, rules, ratings, and news articles. (www.uschess.org)

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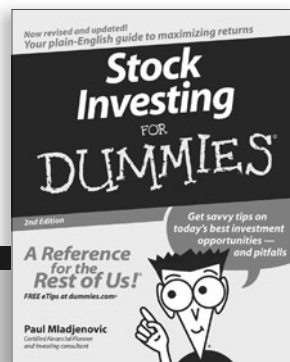
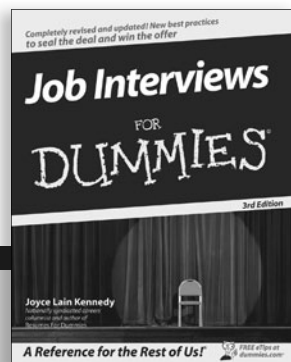
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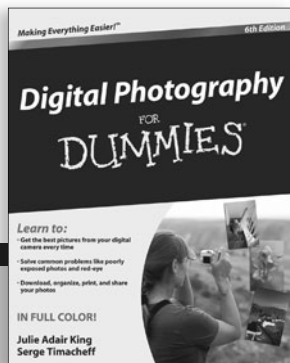
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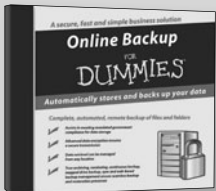
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