

Yearbook

NEW  IN CHESS 140

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CHESS OPENING NEWS

Edited by Jan Timman

From the editor



Computers, amateurs and stars

We welcome Matthew Sadler as our new contributor. In his column 'From Sadler's Engine Room', which will alternate with Erwin l'Ami's 'From Our Own Correspondent', Matthew will focus on novelties by the different computers; you will get a first taste of this research in this Yearbook. Of course, most opening preparation nowadays is based on computer analysis, so games between computers are worthwhile in general.

However, it is still possible to find new ideas early on in the game that are not based on such analysis. Such an idea is Richard Rapport's knight jump 6.♘f5! in the Nimzowitsch/Larsen Opening (instead of swapping on c6 as in the famous game Larsen-Spassky, Belgrade 1970). The Hungarian grandmaster introduced this move into practice two years ago. Although he was not very successful with it, the idea was picked up by Vladislav Artemiev, and very recently by Magnus Carlsen. Now it has become a respected line. Tibor Fogarasi writes the Survey.

Carlsen likes to experiment in different openings. Faced with the Najdorf, he uncorked 6.b3 against Peter Svidler. This move was mainly known from amateur games and it shouldn't be a serious try for an opening advantage. Still, the World Champion won, mainly because he knows his way in unknown positions. Jeroen Bosch was happy to report on it.

Recently Firouzja did something interesting in the Mar del Plata Variation of the King's Indian: as White he opened the g-file, which is unusual, since White normally restricts himself to a queenside attack. Ivan Sokolov describes how this idea was born when he trained the young stars of Iran.

Jan Timman

Opening Highlights

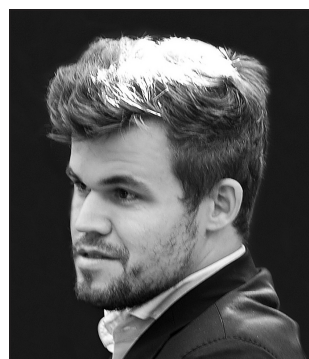


Alireza Firouzja

In his Survey on page 193, Ivan Sokolov reveals that he used to be scared of Black's kingside attack in the 'chain struggle' of the King's Indian Mar del Plata Variation. As a trainer in Iran he was dumbfounded when one of his pupils, Mohammad Amin Tabatabaei, showed him how White can be the one to start action on the kingside! Now rising star Alireza Firouzja has used this **revolutionary weapon against the Classical King's Indian** with success, so the idea looks viable on the top level too.

Magnus Carlsen

In the Asian Goldmoney Rapid, paired against Peter Svidler, Magnus considered it was time for **yet another experiment against the Najdorf Sicilian: the almost forgotten 6.b3**. With this, his 12th(!) reply to 5...a6, the World Champion beat Svidler, who went on to use the same move against Hou Yifan two days later and beat her! Jeroen Bosch, always on the alert for early opening surprises, analyses both games (one positional, one very tactical) in his Survey on page 51.



Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Shakh is back! After a relatively quiet period the Azeri super GM returned with his customary sharp play, among others in the New In Chess Classic. There he sparred a few times with Nakamura in a swashbuckling line of the Ragozin (Survey by Vilela on page 185) while he confronted Levon Aronian with **the cool rook move 9...♖b8 instead of the common 9...♖b6 in the currently hot Four Knights Sicilian**. The merits of this flexible option are explained by Abhijeet Gupta in his Survey on page 75.

Wesley So

We often present the American elite grandmaster as a very solid player here, and that is just the style in which he met Firouzja's Caro-Kann during the Magnus Carlsen Invitational. However, **So demonstrated with his careful treatment of the Short Variation that Black's task is not easy here**. Eventually, all hell broke loose over Alireza's uncastled king in a dazzling display of fireworks. We have Wesley's own analysis of this beautiful game in the Survey by Luis Rodi on page 94.





Anish Giri

Many black players struggle to find counterplay against the Catalan. Anish Giri has done some groundbreaking work in the Bogo-Indian line (and not only there, as you will see throughout this Yearbook). The Dutch winner of the Magnus Carlsen Invitational was also a long-time contender in the second leg of the Candidates. Against Ding Liren, Giri demonstrated **a way for Black to find activity in the Bogo-Catalan** by... pushing the h-pawn! Joshua Doknjas explains what this is all about on page 168.

Richard Rapport

Bent Larsen lost a famous game to Boris Spassky in his pet 1.b3 which turned into a Reversed Sicilian. But this opening too has evolved, and Richard Rapport's move 6. ♖f5! has been deployed by the likes of Carlsen and Nepomniachtchi. Such an **extravagant treatment of this set-up with 1.b3 and 3.c4** suits Rapport to a 't', as his fellow-Hungarian Tibor Fogarasi argues in his Survey on page 211. This is Tibor's 100th Yearbook Survey!



Zhansaya Abdumalik

From Kazakhstan's fresh grandmaster we present a victory over super-talent Praggnanandhaa thanks to a **very daring queen move in the Queen's Gambit Accepted**, in a line that was reputed to have been refuted. Zhansaya adopted an idea from Thai Dai Van Nguyen to introduce a series of fabulous tactics. The line, analysed by Robert Ris on page 155, may soon be written off as 'merely a surprise weapon', but Abdumalik has made her point!

Matthew Sadler

We present a new column, 'From Sadler's Engine Room', which will alternate with Erwin l'Ami's column on opening developments in correspondence chess. Matthew Sadler will write about opening developments in computer chess, a field in which the Englishman is considered an expert since his book *Game Changer*, co-written with Natasha Regan. In the first instalment (see page 27), Sadler delves deeply into **a couple of surprisingly offbeat computer opening ideas**.



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HOT! = a trendy line or an important discovery

SOS = an early deviation

GAMBIT = a pawn sacrifice in the opening

The return of practice

The FORUM is a platform for discussion of developments in chess opening theory in general and particularly in variations discussed in previous Yearbook issues.

Contributions to these pages should be sent to: editors@newinchess.com

More food for thought in the Sicilian Four Knights

by Luis Rodi

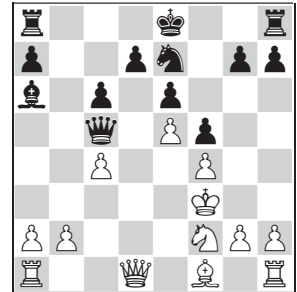
SI 34.8 (B45) YB 118, 128, 139

Instead of the positional and Sveshnikov-minded 6. ♖db5, Henry Bird's move 6. ♖xc6 (played first in 1849) leads to a more original struggle which has been the subject of various recent articles in the Yearbook, by Iva Videnova (YB 128), Andrea Stella (YB 139) and yours truly (YB 118), and also in some repertoire books (by Vassilios Kotronias & Semko Semkov and John Shaw). Yet, as is not surprising in a line where so much is still to discover, new ideas keep appearing all the time, and old moves, or moves previously considered harmless, are 'rescued' from oblivion. MVL's king walk against 'Pragg' in the recent World Cup tournament belongs to the second group.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa

Krasnaya Polyana 2021 (4.2)

1.e4 c5 2. ♖f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 ♖c6 6. ♖xc6 bxc6 7.e5 ♖d5 8. ♖e4 ♖c7 9.f4 ♖b6 10.c4 ♖b4+ 11. ♖e2 f5 12.exf6
12. ♖f2 – the subject of Stella's Survey – is the main alternative here. A game in the same tournament saw 12... ♖a6 13. ♖f3 ♖e7 14. ♖e3 ♖c5 15. ♖xc5 ♖xc5



16. ♖a4!? (this is rarely played, instead of the main move 16. ♖d6) 16... ♖b7
17.h4! (this looks like a strong novelty, fighting for the initiative) 17... ♖b6
18. ♖a3 c5+ 19. ♖g3 O-O?! (19...h6 is the computer suggestion here, but it looks a bit weakening) 20. ♖d3 ♖c8 21. ♖e2 with initiative) 20. ♖d1! ♖fd8 (20... ♖ad8 21. ♖e2±) 21. ♖e2± ♖ab8 22. ♖d2 ♖c6 (22...d5 23.exd6 ♖xd6 24. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 25. ♖d1 ♖b6 26.h5±) 23. ♖d6! ♖b4 24. ♖xb4 ♖xb4 25.a3 ♖c2 26. ♖c1 ♖d4 27. ♖d1+–
Esipenko-Abasov, Krasnaya Polyana 2021. After some great preparation work, it's harvest time for White, a task also performed impressively by Esipenko: 27... ♖e4 28.b4 ♖f8 29. ♖c3 ♖e7 30.bxc5 ♖c6 31. ♖xe4 fxe4 32. ♖c2 e3 33. ♖xe3 ♖a5 34. ♖a6 ♖b2 35. ♖xh7 ♖xc4 36. ♖c3 ♖d2 37. ♖c2 and Black resigned.
12... ♖xf6 13. ♖e3 ♖d8 14. ♖d6+ ♖xd6 15. ♖xd6 ♖b7
Here we have a modern tabiya of the Four Knights Sicilian.

White resigned, as his only developed piece, the queen, has no good square to retreat to.
Hasta la vista!

Excitement!

a letter by William Devin

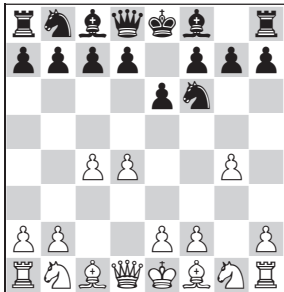
VO 18.8 (E00)

Recently I read the New In Chess book *Attacking with g2-g4 – The Modern Way to get the Upper Hand in Chess* by Dmitry Kryakvin. I was very excited because I have played an early g2-g4 for years against the Nimzo-Indian Defence, with reasonable success. I had hoped to see analysis by Mr Kryakvin of lines similar to what I have played. Unfortunately there is no discussion of any lines similar to the following game, played 55 years ago at the Lansing Chess club in East Lansing, Michigan. The game reflects perfectly the spirit of his dedication, and is quite pretty, I think.

William Devin
NN

East Lansing 1965

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.g4



3...♞xg4

3...d5.

4.e4 ♟h4

4...♞f6 5.e5 ♞g8 (5...♞b4+)

6.♞d3 ♞e7 7.♞f3 g6 8.h4



h5 9.♞c3 d5 10.exd6 ♟xd6
11.♞e4 ♟b4+ 12.♞d2 ♟xb2
13.♞b1 ♟a3 14.♞f6+ ♞d8
15.♞b3 ♟a6 16.♞e5 1-0
Krasenkova-S.Hoffman, Dos Hermanas Internet blitz 8/2' 2004. I suspect 3.g4 was a mouse slip in this game!
4...f5; 4...♞b4+.

5.♟e2 ♞xf2?

A tactical error from which Black will not recuperate.
5...♞b4+ 6.♞c3 ♞f6 7.e5 ♞e4
(7... ♟xd4 8.♞d2) 8.♟e3 f5
9.♞f3 (9.exf6 0-0 10.♞f3
♟xf6 11.♟xe4 ♟xf3 12.♟xf3
♟xf3 13.♞e3 ♞c6) 7.

6.♟xf2 ♟xe4+ 7.♟e2 ♞c6

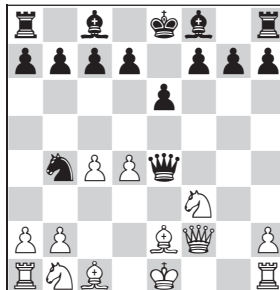
The point is that if **7...♟xh1**
8.♞f3 traps the queen.

8.♞f3

Because of Black's huge lag in development his three pawns are no match for White's extra piece.

8...♞b4?!

This only exacerbates the developing problems.



9.0-0!+- ♞c2 10.♞c3 ♟g6+

11.♞h1 ♞xa1

Biting the bullet.

12.♞e5 ♟f6 13.♟g3 ♟e7

14.♞g5

14.♞h5 g6 15.♞b5 is another way to take down Black.

14...f6 15.♞h5+ g6

15...♞d8 16.♞f7+ ♟xf7

17.♞xf7 fxg5 18.♞b5 d6

19.♟xg5+ ♞e7 20.♟xg7 ♟f8

21.♟xa1.

16.♞xf6

White's pieces are invading everywhere.

16...b6 17.♞xg6+ hxg6

18.♟xg6+ ♞d8 19.♞f7+ ♟e8

20.♞d6+ ♞d8 21.♟e8# 1-0

William Devin,
USA

Reply by Dmitry Kryakvin:

I am surprised at how many variations of the g2-g4 move there are. This is a good topic for future books!

A pragmatic Nimzo-Indian line

a letter by Wayne R. Gradl

NI 13.8 (E45)

YB 113

As recognized by Bobby Fischer, **1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞b4 4.e3 b6!?** is certainly a very pragmatic way to play the Nimzo-Indian (RR: see also Glenn Flear's Survey elsewhere in this issue about the same reply to **4...♟c2 !**). If White pursues 'smooth development' with **5.♞d3 ♞b7 6.♞f3**, then, among other things, Black can play **6...♞e4**, reinforce that knight with **...f7-f5**, and play for a kingside attack, especially if White opts to defend c3 with **7.♟c2** instead of playing **7.0-0!?**. Unfortunately, White can and frequently does deny Black the possibility of

Engines like offbeat lines too

by Matthew Sadler



The influence of chess engines on modern-day play is rapidly increasing. English grandmaster Matthew Sadler is the strongest amateur player in the world. He also wrote the best-seller *Game Changer* with Natasha Regan in 2019, is fascinated by computer play and writes about it with a lot of gusto and expertise. In this column, which will alternate with Erwin I'Ami's 'From Our Own Correspondent' column, Matthew introduces you to the wonderful world of chess engine openings, where everything seems possible.

Once over-the-board chess returns to our lives, it's going to be interesting to see the effect of a year of Covid lockdown on the opening choices of chess players.

I am not talking so much about the elite players but more about normal players whose practice has consisted of a daily diet of bullet and blitz. My own post-Covid definition of serious chess is if I haven't given away a pawn or my position after three moves (the Englund Gambit 1.d4 e5 and Elephant Gambit 1.e4 e5 2.f3 d5 have been my constant companions these past months)!

Larsen's 1.b3

VO 8.9 (A01)

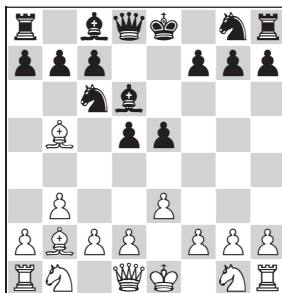
One of my online favourites is 1.b3, an opening I treasure as it helped me secure my third and final IM norm more than 30 years ago.

Matthew Sadler

Marc Geenen

Metz 1989

**1.b3 e5 2.♘b2 d5 3.e3 ♘c6
4.♘b5 ♘d6**

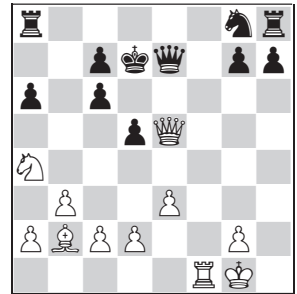


I have always enjoyed facing these most ambitious lines where Black occupies the central space that White has left free.

5.f4

The sharp fight initiated by this move (5...exf4 is impossible due to 6.♘xg7 so Black must struggle to maintain the pawn on e5) places Black on the back foot at once and brought me some good victories.

**5... ♖e7 6.♘f3 f6 7.♘c3 ♙e6
8.0-0 a6 9.♘xc6+ bxc6 10.fxe5
fxe5 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♖h5+
♙f7 13.♖xf7 ♘xh2+ 14.♖xh2
♖xf7 15.♖e5+ ♔d7 16.♖f1
♖e7 17.♘a4**







... was a promising exchange sacrifice that led to an endgame win.

Just over a year ago, a bonus match was played at the TCEC between Stockfish and Leela Zero's baby sister: Leela CPU. Leela CPU can run on the same hardware as Stockfish, but it is considerably weaker than its big sister! However, the match had many interesting moments and one made me jump out of my chair!

The Lockdown Opening

by Surya Sekhar Ganguly

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | e4 | c5 |
| 2. |  c3 | e6 |
| 3. | d4 | cxd4 |
| 4. |  xd4 |  c6 |
| 5. |  e3 | |





Raunak Sadhwani

Asian Nations Cup, and below I will share my findings.

Before playing in the Asian Nations Cup in October 2020, I talked with the talented young Indian GM Raunak Sadhwani, who introduced me to this particular line. He picked it up during the lockdown period and played four games with it in online chess. All of these games were exclusively played by Raunak in blitz. I got curious about the simplicity of this line and started investigating. I noticed that in 2019 Illya Nyzhnyk played it twice in OTB tournament games, but Raunak had a different approach to deal with this line – one that looked more attractive. Most of the games played in this variation were/are online.

The preliminary idea is simple. Although the queen looks odd on e3, it does a valuable job of preventing ...d7-d5 due to the pin on the e-file, and it also helps White play e4-e5 in many cases with the black knight on f6. I started analysing this line deeply before the

The obvious-looking 6...d5

After 5...f6 6.f3, this is probably the most obvious-looking move. After all, it is said that if Black gets the ...d7-d5 break in the Sicilian, it is usually good for him. Well, here, the most popular move is not the best choice for Black. Due to its natural look, it has been played many times. Raunak had a game here, and based on that, I came up with the strong improvement 11.c3, which gives White an edge. In the game against Bilguun in Asian Nations Cup 2020 (Game 1), I got a winning position rather quickly and maintained the same until the almost very end, but blundered in time pressure and only drew in the end.

The super-odd ...d7-d6-d5 and transposition issues

Instead of the move 6...d5, Black can also play 6...d6 and throw in ...d6-d5 only once White commits to 7.b3. This

occurred in a Chess24 Banter Blitz game between Aronian and Carlsen (Game 2). Interestingly, the game started with 1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 d6 and then eventually transposed into the Survey line. After the mass exchange on d5, Black was forced to take with the queen (remember the queen on e3?), giving White an additional tempo with ♙c4. Levon got a good position but eventually lost the game, which has no connection with the opening. Clearly, in the opening phase, White was more successful than Black.

The decent but unpopular 6...♙b4

This move is hugely underestimated. My hunch is that this is because players do not like the response 7.a3 when it is easy to miss (especially in online games) 7...♘g4! 8.♖f4 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♖f6!. This move saves Black and gives him a decent, playable position. On the other hand, if White goes 7.♙d2, as Raunak played against Korchmar (Game 3), then the simple novelty 7...d6 seems to solve Black's problems. It gives Black a nice retreat square on c5 for his bishop.

The ugly-looking 6...♙e7

This move was played in a 2017 correspondence game (Game 4), and we are yet to see this at master level. No one would like it at first sight as it allows White to play 7.e5, practically forcing Black to go 7...♘d5 and get a bad pawn structure after the exchange on d5. I tried to find some advantage for White here but failed against the machine – although I would be happy to play this over the board irrespective of the computer evaluation. On second thought, now that I also know Black's

ideas in the position, I would not mind playing it as Black either...

5th move alternatives

Another Indian prodigy, GM Arjun Erigaisi, played 5...♙b4 against Raunak in an online event (Game 5). White could immediately exploit the missing ...♘f6 move by going 6.a3 when Black does not have the ...♘g4 trick anymore that was available in the 6...♙b4 lines. In the game, 6.♙d2 was played, when Black had the chance to transpose by playing 6...♘f6, but in the game 6...♘e7 happened, which again gave White the chance to take over. After a short rollercoaster ride, White won the game. Other alternatives could be 5...a6, which is also fine according to engines, and we can get into a very original position after 6.♖g3, which requires more practical tests. I prefer White, as Black has to be very creative to maintain the balance while White's moves are rather easy to make. The move 6...b6 with the idea of ...♙c5 does not prevent White from getting to g3 with his queen, and I didn't find equality there for Black.

Conclusion

This online opening would need to go through many classical tournament games to get its proper reputation. It is high time to pick up the line as theory has not evolved much yet. From a practical point of view, I like White, and Black should find some concrete way to maintain the balance. If I have to play this line as Black, I would probably pick 6...♙b4 for now, although also after 6...♙e7 I have not found anything. I look forward to seeing some very interesting games in this direction in the near future.

The obvious-looking 6...d5

Surya Sekhar Ganguly 1

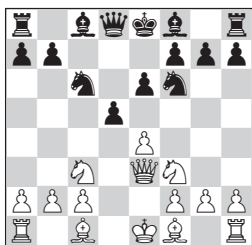
Sumiya Bilguun

Asia Nations online Cup final rapid 2020 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 e6 3.d4 cxd4

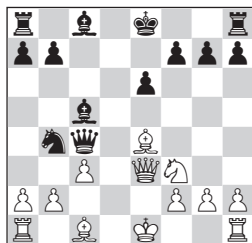
4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♖e3 ♗f6 6.♗f3

6...♗d2 has been played a few times. When I prepared this line as White, my major block was the simple 6...♗e7, threatening 7...d5, e.g. 6...♗e7! 7.♗g3 (7.f4 d5!±; 7.e5 ♘g4 8.♗g3 ♗gxe5 9.♗xg7 ♗g6!; the natural 7.0-0-0 fails to 7...d5! 8.exd5 exd5!±. Surprisingly, Black takes the isolated pawn and opens up the position while his king is in the centre. There is no way White can stop Black from playing ...d5-d4 now) 7...♗h5 (after 7...d5!? 8.e5 d4! Black gets easy play after the following exchanges: 9.exf6 dxc3 10.♗xc3 ♗xf6 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6 12.0-0-0 0-0=) is good enough for equality, e.g. 8.♗f3 ♗f6 9.0-0-0 (9.♗g3 ♗h5=) 9...d5⇒. **6...d5**

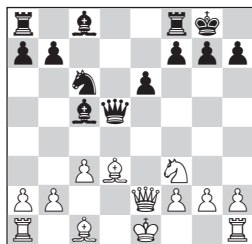


7.exd5 ♗xd5 The pawn sacrifice 7...♗b4 doesn't look scary here: with 8.♗b5+! ♗d7 9.♖e2 White calmly returns the pawn and seizes the initiative, e.g. 9...♗bxd5 10.♗xd5 ♗xd5 11.0-0± and Black is behind in development while the knight on d5 is not stable either. **8.♗xd5 ♗xd5 9.♗d3** 9.♗b3 was played by Nyzhnyk once, but this move doesn't promise any advantage to White: 9...♗c5! (9...♗b4 1-0 (48) Nyzhnyk-Zhou Jianchou, Sturbridge 2019) 10.♗xd5 exd5⇒ and Black's active piece play justifies his isolated pawn. The position remains balanced. **9...♗c5** 9...♗b4 looks tempting, but White has a devilish trap in mind down the line:

10.♗e4 ♗c4 (stopping White from castling) 11.c3 ♗c5?! (11...♗d5 is the lesser evil, e.g. 12.♗d4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 and White remains slightly better).



This natural move fails to the following cute tactic: 12.♗f4! ♗d3+ (12...♗d6 13.♗e5±; 12...♗d5 13.♗xf7+! ♗xf7 14.♗e5±) 13.♗xd3 ♗xd3 14.♗xf7+! ♗xf7 15.♗e5±. **10.♗e2 0-0 11.c3!** 11.0-0 ♗h5 12.♗e1 ♗b4 13.♗e4 ♗d5 is also good for White, but I like the move played in the game as it sets a good trap and is objectively stronger.



I had seen the Titled Tuesday blitz game by Raunak that went 11.0-0. My planned improvement was the move I played in the game. **11...♗d6** 11...♗d8 12.♗e4 ♗d7 (12...♗h5 13.g4 (the point of delaying castling) 13...♗xg4 (13...♗h3 14.♗g5+; Black cannot prevent both threats of 15.♗g1 and 15.♗xd8) 14.♗g1 ♗h3 15.♗g3 ♗h5 16.♗g5+;) 13.♗c2 ♗c7 14.♗e4! f5 15.♗e2±. Black gets into trouble due to his weak squares, and the c8-bishop remains passive. **12.♗e4 ♗h5 13.♗e3 f5 14.♗xc6! bxc6 15.0-0-0 ♗c7 16.♗c4** White is completely winning from this point. **16...♗e8 17.♗he1 h6 18.♗c5 ♗f6 19.♗d6 ♗b6 20.♗c5 ♗c7 21.♗d4 ♗g6 22.g3 ♗h7 23.h3 23.♗e5 ♗xe5 24.♗xe5+.**

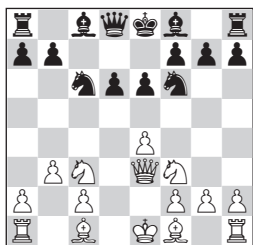
23...a5 24.♗c5 a4 25.♗xf5 exf5 26.♗xe8 c5 27.♗e5 27.♗xc5+. **27...♗b7 28.♗xa8 ♗xa8 29.♗d7 ♗d8 30.♗xd8 ♗xf3 31.♗d7 ♗e4 32.c4 ♗g8 33.♗c7 ♗f8 34.♗d2 ♗b1 35.a3 ♗a2 36.♗c3 ♗b6 37.♗xg7+ ♗e8 38.♗xc5 ♗b3+ 39.♗c2 39.♗d4! ♗xb2 40.♗xh6 ♗xf2 (40...♗b3 41.h4 ♗xa3 42.h5+–) 41.♗f4+– ♗f3 42.h4 ♗xa3 43.h5+–. **39...♗f3 40.♗d4 f4 41.gxf4 ♗xf4 42.♗c3 ♗f3+ 43.♗e3 ♗xh3 44.♗d5 44.b4!** axb3 45.a4 ♗h1 46.a5+–. **44...♗h4 45.♗d4 h5 46.♗b4 ♗b3 47.♗b5 ♗f4 48.♗d6 h4 49.c5 h3 50.♗e5 50.c6 h2 51.c7+–. 50...h2 51.♗h6 ♗xf2 52.♗b6??** The final blunder, after which there is no win. 52.♗xh2 ♗xb2 53.c6+–. **52...♗d5 53.♗xh2 ♗xh2 54.♗xh2 ♗d7= 55.♗e5 ♗c6 56.♗a7 ♗c8 57.♗a6 ♗d5 58.♗b5 ♗b3 59.c6 ♗d8 60.♗c5 ♗c8 61.♗b6 ♗d1 62.b4 axb3 63.♗b2 ♗f3 64.c7 ♗c6 65.♗e5 ♗e8 66.♗c3 ♗d7 67.♗b2 ♗e8 68.♗c3 ♗d7 69.♗b2 ♗e8 70.♗e5 ♗d7 71.♗b2 ½-½****

The super-odd ...d7-d6-d5 and transposition issues

Levon Aronian 2

Magnus Carlsen

Chess24 Banter Blitz Cup final 2020 (3.8) **1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6** Not part of our Survey... yet! **3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♖e3 e6** Now we are back in our Survey, which would arise after the move 6...d6 instead of the 6...d5 which we saw in the previous game. **7.b3!** In correspondence chess, a player named Lombardi tried 7.♗d3 a few times. I am not a big fan of this idea, and I feel Black can deal with it rather easily: 7...♗e7 8.0-0 0-0⇒. I don't see any issues in Black's position. He could play ...♗g4 next, aiming for the e5-square. He also keeps the standard Sicilian queenside plans with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 at his disposal.

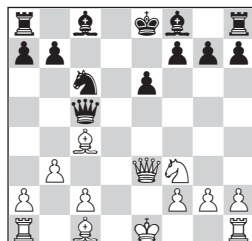


The text move fits in with the idea of keeping the queen on e3. White wants to castle queenside and would like to have his bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal. **7...d5** Only one game has been played with this strange ...d7-d6-d5 move-order, and that is the current game played by Magnus. Black tries to punish White for his last move by activating his dark-squared bishop and charging at the centre immediately.

A) 7...a6 8. **♙b2** b5 9.0-0-0 **♖c7** is close to equality according to the engine, but from a practical point of view, it is a lot easier for White to create an attack on the kingside than for Black to do the same on the queenside, e.g. 10. **♙g1** **♙b7** 11. **♗b1±**;

B) 7... **♗e7** 8. **♙b2** 0-0 9.0-0-0 a6 10. **♙g1!** (White wants to play g4-g5. By not committing to h2-h3, he wants to save a tempo by playing h2-h4 directly; 10.g4!? **♗xg4** 11. **♖e2** is also an interesting practical try for White; 10.h3 **♖c7** 11.g4 b5 (11... **♙e8** 12.g5 **♗d7** 13.h4+- Hanreck-Hebert, Ramsgate 1984) 12.g5 **♗d7** 13.h4 **♗c5**⇒) 10... **♗g4** (trying to exploit the g4-square; 10... **♖c7** 11.g4±) 11. **♖e1** **♖c7** (11... **♖b6** doesn't stop White from playing 12.h3! **♗ge5** (12... **♗xf2** 13. **♙d2**+-) 13. **♗b1** **♗d7** (taking on f3 only helps White to build pressure on g7) 14. **♗xe5** **♗xe5** 15. **♙e2±** and a kingside pawn storm with f2-f4 and g2-g4 is coming soon) 12.h3 **♗ge5** 13. **♗h2!** (planning to chase the knight further from e5) 13... **♙d8** (including 13... **♙g5** 14. **♗b1** would only worsen things as White will eventually get g2-g3 and f2-f4) 14.f4 **♗g6** 15.g3±.

8.exd5 **♗xd5** 8... **♙b4?!** 9. **♗d2** **♗xc3** 10. **♖xc3!** (not parting with the bishop pair) 10... **exd5** 11. **♖e3+±**; 8... **♗b4** 9. **♖d2** **♗bxd5** 10. **♗xd5** **♗xd5** 11. **♙b2±** as White keeps his lead in development. **9.♗xd5** **♖xd5** **10.♗c4** **♖c5**



11.♖e2 11. **♖e4!** **♖a5+** 12. **♗e2!** (à la Karpov!) 12... **♙e7** 13. **♙b2** 0-0 14. **♙hd1±** and soon the king will head back to g1 while keeping the development advantage. **11...♖a5+** **12.♗f1** 12. **♗d2** **♙b4** 13.0-0 **♗xd2** 14. **♗xd2±**. **12...♙e7** **13.♙b2** **♗f6!** 13...0-0 14.h4→. **14.♗xf6** **gxf6** **15.♗d2** 15.g3!∞. **15...♗d7** 15... **♗e7!** (prophylaxis against **♗e4**) 16. **♗e4** **♗d4**∞. **16.♗e4** **♗e7** **17.♖e3** 17. **♙d1** **♗e5**∞. **17...♙ad8** 17... **♗e5** 18. **♖f4+-**. **18.♗e2?!** 18. **♙e1** It was better to develop the h1-rook in a different manner, e.g. 18... **♙hg8** 19.h4∞. **18...♙hg8** **19.g3** **♗e5** **20.♖f4** **♙g6** 20... **♗xc4!** 21. **bx c4** **♖h5+** 22.f3 **♖e5**∞. **21.♙hd1** **♗xc4** 21... **h5!?** **22.bxc4** **♖e5** **23.♖e3** **f5** **24.♗d6?!** 24. **♗c5** **♖xe3+** 25. **♗xe3** **♙g4** (25... **♗c6** 26. **♙xd8** **♗xd8** 27. **♙d1+** **♗c7** 28. **♗d3**⇒) 26. **♙ab1** b6 27. **♙xd7+** **♙xd7** 28. **♗xd7** **♗xd7** 29.c5=. **24...♖xe3+** **25.♗xe3** **♗c6** **26.c5** 26. **♗b5!**⇒. **26...♙h6!** White probably missed the following brilliant idea. **27.h4** **f4+!** **28.♗xf4** 28. **gxf4** **♙xh4** 29. **♙g1** b6+- . **28...♙f6+** **29.♗e3** **♙f3+**+- **30.♗d4** **♙xf2** 30... **b6!**+- . **31.♙f1** **♙xf1** **32.♙xf1** **f6** **33.g4** e5+ 33... b6!+- . **34.♗c4** **♗e6** **35.g5** **♙f8** **36.gxf6** 36. **♗f5!** **♙g8**∞. **36...♙xf6**+- **37.♙xf6+** **♗xf6** **38.♗d3** **♗g6**+- **39.♗e3** **♗h5** **40.♗c4** **♗xh4** **41.♗xe5** **♗g3** **42.♗c4** **h5** **43.♗d6** **h4** **44.♗f5+** **♗d7** **45.♗h6+** **♗g5** **46.♗f7+** **♗f6** **47.♗h6** **♗g5** **48.♗f7+** **♗g6** **49.♗e5+** **♗f5** **0-1**

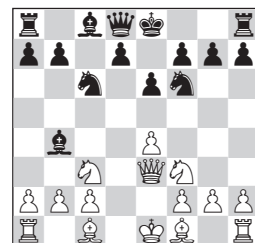
The decent but unpopular 6...♙b4

Raunak Sadhwani
Vasily Korchmar

3

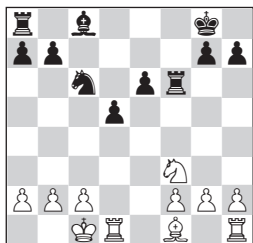
Titled Tuesday blitz 2020 (6)

1.e4 **c5** 2. **♗c3** **e6** 3. **d4** **cx d4** 4. **♖xd4** **♗c6** 5. **♖e3** **♗f6** 6. **♗f3** **♙b4**



This move hasn't gained any popularity probably because it is not obvious how Black is going to deal with the direct reply 7.a3. **7.♗d2** 7.a3 **♗g4!** (a nice intermediate move to disturb White's queen; 7... **♗xc3+** 8. **♖xc3** 0-0 9. **♗d3** d5 10. **exd5** **♗xd5** (10... **exd5** 11. **♙e3±**) 11. **♖b3±**) 8. **♖f4** (8. **♗d3** **♗c5** 9. **♗d1** d5⇒) 8... **♗xc3+** 9. **bx c3** **♖f6!** (this is the reason why Black is able to play 7... **♗g4**) 10. **♖xf6** (10. **♖xg4** **♖xc3+** 11. **♗d1** **♖xa1** 12.e5 0-0 and there is no attack coming immediately, thus White is lost here) 10... **♗xf6** 11. **♗d3** e5⇒. **7...0-0** 7... **d5?!** 8. **exd5** **♗xd5** 9. **♗xd5** **♖xd5** 10. **♗d3±**; 7... **d6!** N is still unplayed, but I am sure this will soon change. Black creates a nice retreat square for his dark-squared bishop, and prepares the thematic move ...e6-e5: 8. **♗d3** (8.0-0 0-0⇒) 8...0-0 (8... **♗c5** 9. **♖e2**) 9.0-0-0 e5 10. **♗b1** **♙e6**⇒. **8.e5** 8.a3! is right on time when Black is lacking a good square for his bishop, e.g. 8... **♙a5** (8... **♗xc3** 9. **♗xc3** d5 10. **♗xf6** **♖xf6** 11.e5±) 9.e5 **♗xc3** 10. **♖xc3** **♗e4** 11. **♖e3** **♗xd2** 12. **♖xd2** **♖c7** 13. **♖e3±**. **8...♗xc3** **9.♗xc3** 9. **♖xc3** **♗e4** 10. **♖e3** **♗xd2** 11. **♖xd2** **♖c7!**⇒ and here White is missing 12. **♖e3** due to 12... **♗b4** ideas. 9... **♗d5** 10. **♖d2** **♗xc3** **11.♖xc3** **f6**⇒ **12.exf6** **♖xf6** **13.♖xf6** **♙xf6** 13... **gxf6!** 14.0-0-0 d5 15.c4 **dx c4** 16. **♗xc4** **♗a5** 17. **♗d3** e5

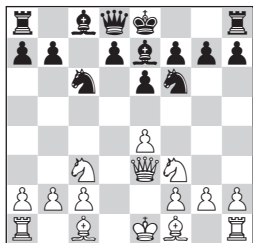
and Black gets enough counterplay to hold the balance. **14.0-0 d5?** 14...♟f7 15.♞d2 ♟e7 would have been more solid and thematic.



15.♟b5! ♞d7 16.♞he1 a6 17.♟xc6 ♟xc6 18.♞d2± ♞af8 19.b3 19.♞e3! ♞g6 20.g3 ♞gf6 21.♞e5 ♞xf2 22.♞xf2 ♞xf2 23.♟xc6 bxc6 24.♞xe6±. 19...h6?! Missing his chance: 19...♞g6! 20.♟h4 ♞gf6=. 20.a4 ♟e8 21.♟d4 ♞xf2 22.♟xe6 22.♞xe6+-, 22...♞f6 23.♟d4 23.g3±. 23...♞g6 24.♞xf2 24.♞e7 ♞xd2 25.♟xd2±. 24...♞xf2 25.♞e2 ♞xe2 26.♟xe2 ♟f7 27.♟d2 ♟e6?? 27...b6 28.b4 ♟f6±. 28.♟f4!+- ♟f7 29.♟xg6 ♟xg6 30.♟e3 ♟f5 31.♟d4 ♟e6 32.♟c5 ♟e5 33.a5 g5 34.♟b6 ♟d4 35.♟xb7 ♟c3 36.♟c6 d4 37.♟c5 g4 38.b4 1-0

The ugly-looking 6...♟e7

Danila Berezhnov 4
Igor Volkov
cr 2017
1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♞xd4 ♟c6 5.♞e3 ♟f6 6.♟c3 ♟e7 6...♞c7 7.h3 (threatening 8.e5) 7...d6 8.♟b5 ♞b8 9.c4 ♟e7 10.♟e2 gives White a small but secure edge.

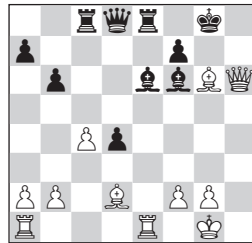


This move provokes White into playing 7.e5, and from a practical point of view, it is not easy to

play on the black side here; thus, it never really got popular.

7.e5 ♟d5 The only time this position was reached was in the correspondence game that we see now. It is no wonder that the upcoming structure does not look appealing in a tournament game.

8.♟xd5 exd5 9.♟d3 9.♟d2 0-0 10.0-0-0 d6 11.exd6 ♟xd6 and the machine generates enough counterplay for Black to keep the balance; 9.c4 0-0! 10.cxd5 ♞a5+ 11.♟d2 ♞xd5±. **9...0-0 10.0-0** After 10.h4, the following variation gives an impression of how tricky the line can get: 10...d6 11.♟g5 dxe5! (11...h6 12.e6!) 12.♟xh7+ ♟h8 13.♞f3 ♞d7!! (the only move that saves the game) 14.♟e4 ♞g4 15.♟xd5 ♟d4±. **10...d6 11.♞e1** 11.exd6 ♟xd6 12.c3 ♞e8 13.♞g5 ♞xg5 14.♟xg5 ♟c5 and the isolated pawn does not bother the engine as Black is active enough to generate counterplay in the centre. **11...dxe5 12.♟xe5 ♞e8** 12...♟f6 13.♟xc6 bxc6 14.♞c5 ♟d7∞. **13.♞f3** After 13.♟d2 ♟e6 14.♟xc6 bxc6 15.b4∞ I would still prefer to be White here in a practical game. **13...♟xe5 13...♟f6** would have forced an immediate draw: 14.♟xh7+ ♟xh7 15.♞h5+ ♟g8 16.♞xf7+ ♟h7=. **14.♞xe5 ♟e6 15.♞e1 ♟f6 16.♟d2 ♞c8 17.c3 17.h3!?. 17...d4 18.♞e4 g6 19.c4 b6 20.♞f4 h6** A strange correspondence move that would not come to mind naturally. **21.h4 21.♞xh6 ♟xc4±. 21...♟xh4 22.♞xh6 ♟f6 23.♟xg6 ½-½**



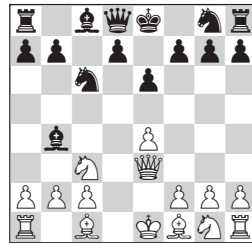
Something that can only happen in correspondence or engine games. Black has to make a long series of forced moves to achieve the draw: 23...fxg6 24.♞xg6+ ♟h8 25.♞e4

♞e7 26.♞f4 ♟g7 27.g3! ♟g8 28.♞h4 ♟xc4 29.♞h7+ ♟f8 30.♞f4+ ♟f7 31.♞g4 ♟g8∞.

5th move alternatives 5...♟b4/5...a6/5...b6

Raunak Sadhwani 5
Arjun Erigaisi

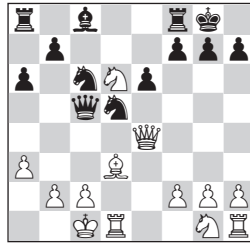
PNWCC blitz 2020 (8)
1.e4 c5 2.♟c3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♞xd4 ♟c6 5.♞e3 ♟b4
A) 5...a6 6.♞g3! (preventing the development of the f8-bishop; 6.♟d2 b5 7.0-0-0 ♟b7 8.f4 (8.♟d5 d6! and the knight must go back sooner or later) 8...b4 (8...♞c7!±) 9.♟d5 ♞a5± Sadhwani-Oleksienko, PNWCC blitz 2020) 6...b5 (6...d5 7.♟g5 ♟e7 8.♟xe7 ♟xe7 9.exd5 exd5 10.0-0-0 0-0 11.♟f3∞ and the engine calls this equal, but I would prefer White here in a practical game) 7.♟d3 (7.♟f4 ♟f6) 7...♟b7 8.♟f3 d6 (preparing 9...♟f6 by stopping 9.e5) 9.0-0 ♟f6 10.♞d1 ♞c7 11.♟d2∞. With a2-a4 coming next, I like White here irrespective of the computer evaluation. Black has to play in a very original manner not to get worse;
B) 5...b6! (trying to exploit White's queen's position by preparing ...♟c5) 6.♟d2 ♟c5? (6...♟b7 7.0-0-0 ♟f6 8.♞g3±) 7.♞g3 ♟f6 (0-1 (11) Csillag-Honsch, Hungary tt 2016/17) 8.e5! ♟h5 9.♞h3 g6 10.g4 ♟g7 11.♟f3+-.



6.♟d2 6.♞g3 ♟f6! 7.e5 ♟h5 8.♞h3 ♞a5!±; 6.a3! (if we compare this line with 5...♟f6 6.♟f3 ♟b4 7.a3, then we see that Black is missing the key move ...♟g4 here) 6...♟xc3+ (6...♟a5 7.♞g3 ♟f6 8.e5

♖h5 9. ♖h3 (this time Black is missing the ...♖a5 resource) 9...g6 10.b4+-) 7. ♖xc3 ♕f6 8. ♖g3! 0-0 9.f3 d5 10.e5 ♕h5 11. ♖h3 g6 12.f4±. **6...♕ge7?! 6...♕f6!** transposes to the 6...♕b4 line. **7.a3 7. ♖g3!?**±. **7...♕a5 8. ♕b5** 8.0-0-0 0-0 9.e5±. **8...d5 9.0-0-0 0-0 10.exd5 10.♕xa5 ♖xa5 11.♕f3∞. 10...♕xd5 10...♕b6!** 11. ♖g3 (11. ♖f4 e5) 11...♕f5±. **11. ♖e4?! 11. ♖g3 a6 12.♕c3∞.**

11...a6! 12. ♕xa5 ♖xa5--+ 13.♕d6 ♖c5 14.♕d3



14...♕f6? 14...f5 won a piece. **15. ♖h4 ♕e5?** 15...♖d8 16.♕e4 ♕xe4 17. ♖xe4 f5±. **16.♕f3!± ♕xd3+ 17.♖xd3 ♕d7 18. ♖d4 ♖c7 19.♕e5 ♕c6?! 19...♖ad8** 20. ♖c4 ♖b8∞. **20.♖g3 20. ♖c5!±.** **20...♖ad8??** 20...g6! 21.♕xc6 ♖xc6 22. ♖xf6 ♖xd6 23.h4 ♖ad8 24.h5 ♖d4±. **21.♕xc6 1-0**

Exercise 1

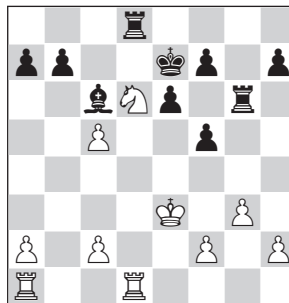


position after 13. ♖e3-f3

Black to move.

(solutions on page 247)

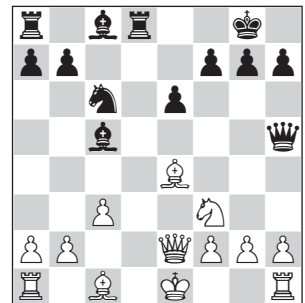
Exercise 2



position after 26. c4-c5

Black to move.

Exercise 3



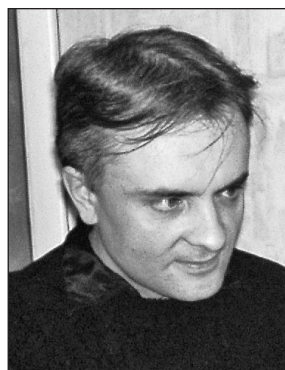
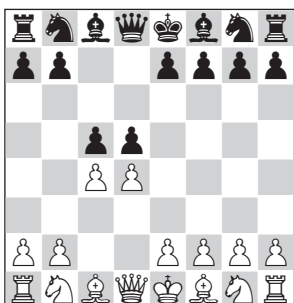
position after 12... ♖d5-h5

White to move.

The worst opening

by Ruslan Ponomariov

1. d4 d5
2. c4 c5



Alexey Bezgodov

This time I have an unusual topic for my Survey. Some people call this the Double Queen's Gambit or the Austrian Opening, but in Soviet chess books it was always just classified as an 'irregular chess opening'. I have to admit that during my whole chess career I didn't face this move a single time, not even in online chess with either 3 or 1 minutes thinking time. That was one of the reasons why I never studied it before. However, I felt this opening should be taken more seriously when I realized that Shakhriyar Mamedyarov played many games with it from 2013 till 2021, mostly in blitz and rapid, but even in a few games with a classical time control! In 2015, Alexey Bezgodov wrote a 280-page book on the subject, which helped me a lot as a starting point to study the critical lines and directions. The Russian version of this book was published by Andrey Elkov, and the English version you can buy with New In Chess. Bezgodov is known for his original approach – he also wrote books about 1.e4 c5 2.a3!? and 1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♟f5.

He writes with so much enthusiasm that at some moment you may start believing that everything is fine – how is it possible that I've always missed such a simple opening solution?

Obviously, it is not possible to check everything and to be prepared for every possible opening line, so I would suggest a more practical approach: don't try to refute such a line immediately and instead just follow basic opening principles like quick development and safety of the king. If you have enough patience, in this case you will obtain a decent middlegame position which is playable for both sides.

Conclusion

I had some more luxury with time and the use of all materials and engines, and I think I've found some annoying moves which make me feel that Black's strategy is kind of risky. Of course, you can always take your chances and hope for a surprise effect. But what will you do when there is no surprise effect and

your opponent is well prepared? Is it really worth spending so much time and energy to prepare just for one game?

Later you will have to go through this process again and again. Maybe it's better to just play good openings?

Taking on d4 with the knight
6. ♖xd4

Daniil Dubov
Magnus Carlsen

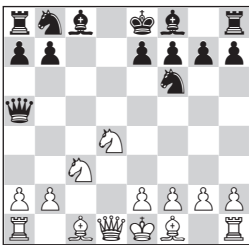
FTX Crypto Cup Prelim 2021 (9.8)
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5 In 2008 when Boris Avrukh published his book *GM Repertoire 1*, he wrote about this move: 'Probably the worst opening Black can choose after 1.d4.' Well, in 2016 he was less categorical about this, but still the so-called Double Queen's Gambit is mainly used only as a surprise weapon especially in blitz and rapid games.

3. ♘f3 I think the more precise move-order is 3.cxd5! ♖xd5 4. ♘f3 cxd4 5. ♖c3 ♖a5 6. ♖xd4 ♘f6 which transposes to our game.

3...cxd4 4.cxd5 ♘f6 5. ♖xd4 ♖xd5?!. More accurate is 5... ♖xd5 which I will discuss below.

However Black insists on getting the same position as after 3.cxd5!

6. ♖c3 ♖a5



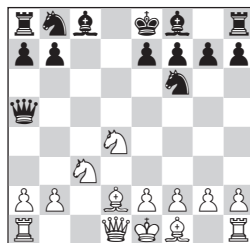
One of the critical positions of this opening. Here White has many options. White has an advantage in development, but Black has destroyed White's pawn centre and if he manages to stabilize his position, he will not have any problems. That's why White needs to play energetically:

7.e4?! I guess Daniil didn't really expect this opening from Magnus and having only 15 minutes for the whole game decided to play on

instinct rather than to enter some deep home preparation.

A) The most popular move is 7.g3, in Catalan style, an absolutely normal move. However I like other options for White better, and that's why I prefer not to go into great detail here: 7...e5 8. ♖b3 ♖c7 9. ♗g2 (in 2008, Avrukh recommended 9. ♗g5 but later he changed his mind) 9... ♖b4 10. ♖d3!? (this was Avrukh's new recommendation in 2016) 10...0-0 11. ♗g5 ♗d8 12. ♖e3 ♖xc3+ 13. ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 14. bxc3 ♘c6 15. ♘c5!? (15. ♖xf6 gxf6 16. ♗d1 ♖e6 17. ♘c5 ♖xa2 (≥ 17... ♖a5=) 18. ♘b7 ♗d1+ 19. ♘xd1 ♖c8 20. ♘d2± Wang Yue-Wang Hao, Huaian 2016) 15...h6 16. ♖xf6 gxf6 17. ♖b1. Avrukh thinks that White maintains annoying pressure here, and probably I agree with him. However modern chess is more concrete and just out of curiosity I decided to look a bit deeper: 17... ♖a5!? 18. ♖b5 (18.0-0 ♖b8) 18... ♘c4 19. ♖b4 (19.0-0 ♗d2; 19. ♘b7 ♖b8) 19... ♖d6 20. ♘b7 (20.0-0 a5) 20... ♘b7 21. ♖xb7 ♖b8 22. ♖xc8 ♖bxc8 23. ♖b3 ♖c4 and White is slightly better, but I think Black has decent chances for a draw in this four-rooks endgame;

B) I think a serious alternative is 7. ♖d2!?, for example:

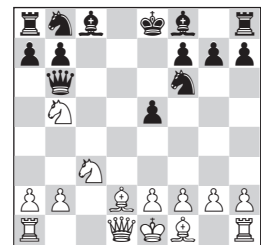


B1) 7... ♖e5 8. ♖c1!
 B2) 7... ♖b6 8. ♖c1! ♖d7 9. ♖b3 is simply bad for Black because his queen comes under attack and so

he will fall even further behind in development;

B3) It would be strange to play 7... ♖d8 because by playing only with the queen Black is sinning against all the basic opening principles; I didn't find a direct refutation here, but White can simply play 8. ♖b3 (8. ♖f4 ♘d5; 8. ♖c1 e5 9. ♖cb5 ♘a6 10. ♘f3 e4 11. ♘fd4 ♖e7) 8...e5 (this creates additional weaknesses, but otherwise it's not so clear how Black should develop his pieces; 8...g6 9. ♗g5 ♖d7 10.e4) 9.g3 ♖e7 10. ♗g2 0-0 11.0-0 ♘c6 12. ♖e3± (12. ♗g5!?!); I'm sure this is a dream position for regular Catalan players with white;

B4) 7...e5 8. ♖db5. Now in his 2015 book Bezgodov mentioned many moves for Black, but without giving much analysis: for example, 8... ♖b6! (Black needs to play very carefully to keep the balance; 8... ♖b4? 9.a3 ♖xc3 10. ♘d6+ ♖e7 11. ♖xc3 ♖d5 12. ♖b4+- Shirov-Westerberg, Batumi 2019)



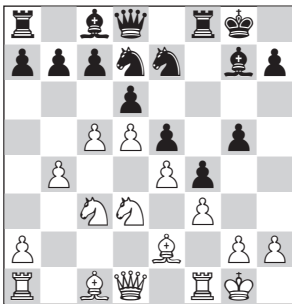
This move was recommended by Bezgodov. However, once again he didn't provide any analysis, so I will try to fill this blind spot:

B41) In case of 9. ♖e3 ♖c5 10. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 11.g3 Black has different decent options: 11...a6 (I like 11... ♖d7!? more, e.g. 12. ♖d6 ♖xd6 13. ♘xd6+ ♖e7 14.0-0-0 ♘c6! (14... ♖c6 15. ♘f5+; 14... ♘g4 15. ♘de4) 15. ♘xb7 ♖ab8 16. ♘c5 ♖f5 17.f3 ♖hc8 18.e4 ♖e6 19. ♖a6

A bad idea...?!

by Ivan Sokolov (special contribution by Simen Agdestein)

- | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | d4 | ♘f6 |
| 2. | c4 | g6 |
| 3. | ♗c3 | ♙g7 |
| 4. | e4 | d6 |
| 5. | ♗f3 | 0-0 |
| 6. | ♙e2 | e5 |
| 7. | 0-0 | ♗c6 |
| 8. | d5 | ♗e7 |
| 9. | ♗e1 | ♗d7 |
| 10. | ♗d3 | f5 |
| 11. | f3 | f4 |
| 12. | b4 | g5 |
| 13. | c5 | |



At the very start of my career (I was ten or eleven) there was a game that hugely influenced my KID approach. It was Larsen-Tal (Game 1) from their pre-



Mohammad Amin Tabatabaei

Candidates Match in 1969! In the Mar del Plata Variation, Tal ‘forgot about his queenside’ and sacrificed a full rook on a8 to gain time, and then a piece to keep the momentum of his attack, winning in his own inimitable style!

Computer engines did not exist at the time to show me the ‘easy defences’ Larsen missed. The game had huge influence on me, and I enthusiastically started playing the King’s Indian as Black, considering that the Mar del Plata kingside pawn roll was almost a forced win.

Tal’s game also influenced me to play the KID on the white side. Throughout my career I have tried almost all possible variations against it – except the Mar del Plata! The fear of Black’s pawns rolling towards my king prevented me from ever entering the Mar del Plata as White.

The Iranian connection

In the summer of 2016, I started working as the national coach of Iran and I stayed on the job for almost three years. I was lucky that Iran had an amazingly gifted generation at that time. One of those talented young lions was Mohammad Amin Tabatabaei. During one of our sessions, we discussed his approach as White vs the KID.

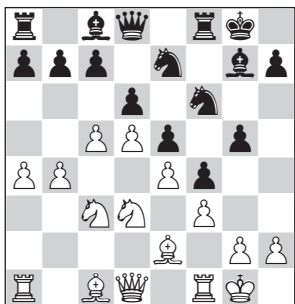
Mohammad told me he planned to play the Mar del Plata. ‘A bad idea!’ was my answer. ‘He will roll his pawns... bad idea... play one of the ‘safe king’ variations!’

Then Mohammad showed me the plan with ♗h1, ♙g1 and g2-g3, and I was amazed! At the time, there were no

games in GM practice with this plan, and I was amazed by his discovery. Mohammad had combined computer engine work with his own natural talent and had thus come to this discovery. Later, we shared this knowledge with some other Iranian team members, including Alireza Firouzja. Now, years later, Alireza has introduced the same plan in a slightly different position!

My game selection

I have selected six games to help the reader understand the idea and employ it. In Firouzja-Radjabov (Game 2), Black plays the sixth-rank rook lift 13...♖f6. To me this plan does not look to be equalizing. Firouzja-Jones (Game 3) is commented by Simen Agdestein. After the main continuation 13...♟f6 14.a4



Jones combines the early ...♟h8 with the standard ...♖f7 plan; a strange hybrid which does not bring Black a good result.

In the remaining four examples I have selected (Games 4-7), Black goes for arguably the most logical, standard Mar del Plata set-up with ...♟g6, ...h7-h5, ...♖f7 and ...♟f8.

Compared to the regular Mar del Plata, White does not play the move ♟d2, which: a) speeds up his queenside pawn advance and b) (important in many lines) allows the rook lift ♖a2, bringing this rook to the kingside.

A critical decision for White is whether to stop Black's pawn push ...g5-g4 (as in Game 5, Firouzja-Aryan) or ignore it and mind his own business on the queenside (as in Game 7, Stockfish-LCZero).

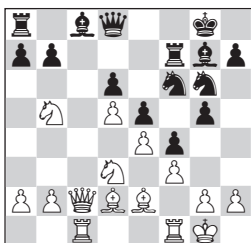
Conclusion

Firouzja's idea is dangerous for Black, and I expect it to gain in popularity. It looks to me that in the two mentioned games, Firouzja-Aryan and Stockfish-LCZero, the 'critical direction' is shown. In the former, do pay attention to my comment on 15...♖f7!? – a new idea for Black. The latter is a crazy computer game, in which I have suggested some improvements for White – but to try to improve on a top engine's moves... well... Please beware that in many positions, computer engines (at least my Stockfish 14) tend to make things look easier for White than it is in human play!

My inspiration – Mikhail Tal

Bent Larsen 1
Mikhail Tal
Eersel m 1969 (5)
This was Tal's sole win in a match convincingly won 4½-2½ by Larsen for an 'automatic' spot in the 1970 Interzonal. 1.♟f3 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 ♟g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.♟e2 e5 7.0-0 ♟c6 8.d5 ♟e7

9.♟e1 ♟d7 10.♟d3 f5 11.♟d2 ♟f6 12.f3 f4 13.c5 g5 14.♖c1 ♟g6 15.♟b5 ♖f7 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♗c2



17...g4 17...♟e8 18.a4 is the main line since Larsen-Najdorf, Santa Monica 1966. 18.♟c7 gxf3 19.gxf3 19.♟xf3!? (little-played but quite sensible) 19...♖b8 20.♟e1!? (perhaps better than the obvious 20.♟e6 ♟xe6 21.dxe6 ♟e7); 19.♟xa8? fxe2! 20.♗xc8 (20.♖xf4 exf4 21.♗xc8 ♗f8-+; 20.♖fe1 ♟g4! 21.h3 ♟d7 22.♟c7 ♟xe4 23.♖xe2 ♟g3-+) 20...exf1 ♗+ 21.♗xf1 ♖f8 22.♗xd8 ♖xd8 23.♟c7 ♟xe4 24.♟b4 ♖d7 25.♟e8 ♖. 19...♟h3

New wine in old bottles

by Glenn Flear



Englishman Glenn Flear lives in the south of France. For every Yearbook he reviews a selection of new chess opening books. A grandmaster and a prolific chess author himself, Flear's judgment is severe but sincere, and always constructive.

I've taken the liberty of quoting Viktor Moskalenko from the first page of his latest book on the French Defence. Despite revisiting the good old French Defence yet again, he has been able to highlight new variations that he has deemed worth tasting and bottle them up for the reader. See below to check out if his vinification has been a success!

The Italian game is even older fare, but the recipe has been Modernized by the Muscovites Kalinin and Kalinichenko. Otherwise, we've seen the Scandinavian discussed in these pages on several occasions, but here it's club players who are being offered their version of a palatable smorgasbord, thanks to Thomas Willemze. Finally, the English Opening has been examined by two notable English chefs, and below you can see what they have been cooking up! So, even if you have up to now been satisfied with your treasured vintage works, this shouldn't stop you relishing what the latest crop has to offer! So, please read on.

Alexander Kalinin & Nikolai Kalinichenko
The Modernized Italian Game for White
Thinkers Publishing 2021

Thinkers Publishing seem to find innovative ways to examine even well-trodden ground, but I was

curious to see what angle Alexander Kalinin & Nikolai Kalinichenko had picked. There have been so many recent works on this subject, what's going to be different here?

Ever popular at all levels, the Italian with d2-d3 still seems to be generating new ideas, but as there are so many intertwining move-orders and subtleties, the resulting complexity is little short of an author's nightmare! The answer chosen by the Russian pair has been to move away from pure theory and concentrate on themes. Those in the know might well be aware of *Winning with the Slow (but Venomous!) Italian* (Müller & Souleidis, *New in Chess 2016*, see my review in Yearbook 122) where this process was already begun, as the chapters were firmly based on strategic ideas. There, although the theory was incorporated in and around the plans, there were nevertheless many lines where the reader was required to weave his way through sack-loads of references and sub-variations.

Here the authors have gone further in subjugating out-and-out theory to only a minor role. Even though there are sporadic references to alternative tries in the notes, these do remain the exception rather than the rule. As they state themselves, '... we will