

Chapter Five

Gambit Lines

In the final chapter of this book we'll look at four diverse gambit lines for Black and one avoidance measure versus the Marshall Attack for White:

1. The Schliemann Defence: 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♝c6 3 ♞b5 f5.
2. The Steinitz Deferred, Siesta Variation: 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♝c6 3 ♞b5 a6 4 ♞a4 d6 5 c3 f5.
3. The Gajewski Gambit in the Chigorin: 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♝c6 3 ♞b5 a6 4 ♞a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♞e7 6 ♞e1 b5 7 ♞b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗a5 10 ♞c2 d5.
4. The Marshall Attack: 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♝c6 3 ♞b5 a6 4 ♞a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♞e7 6 ♞e1 b5 7 ♞b3 0-0 8 c3 d5.
5. The Anti-Marshall with 8 h3: 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♝c6 3 ♞b5 a6 4 ♞a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♞e7 6 ♞e1 b5 7 ♞b3 0-0 8 h3.

The common theme in these gambits is the deflection or elimination of White's e4-pawn, which allows the black pieces more freedom than they normally achieve at an early stage in the Ruy Lopez. Their increased energy won't necessarily express itself in an immediate 'do-or-die' counterattack. As we shall see in the Marshall Attack, for example, Black's dynamism can be maintained into the endgame, preventing White from exploiting his extra pawn.

So let's get down to business. The Schliemann Defence needs the most attention as it comes right at the beginning of the Ruy Lopez – there's no way to avoid it.

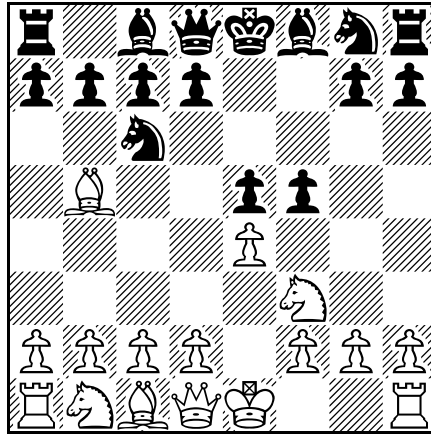
The Schliemann Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♝c6 3 ♞b5 f5

We have already examined 4 d3!? in Chapter One, and if you are happy with that then you can skip the coverage of 4 ♗c3 here.

In the Schliemann, Black in effect says to his opponent: 'You have placed your bishop on

the wrong diagonal. Because it is on b5 rather than c4 I can play a King's Gambit with the black pieces!' Such reasoning was probably more convincing back in 1847 when Jaenisch pioneered this defence. Nonetheless, it is alive and kicking more than 150 years later.



It certainly doesn't lack ambition. Without any preparation, Black challenges the e4-pawn. He is willing to loosen his pawn structure, and even toy with his king's safety, in order to increase the energy of his pieces. In other words, it is quite 'modern' in its aims.

There is no definite refutation, and Radjabov has played it with success at the highest level. Playing like this requires an adventurous spirit combined with some hard knowledge of theory.

For our first game we'll choose a battle of the Kates: Katerina Nemcova, of the Czech Republic, a WGM, versus Kateryna Lahno of the Ukraine, a full GM.

Game 34

K.Lahno-K.Nemcova

European Women's Championship, Plovdiv 2008

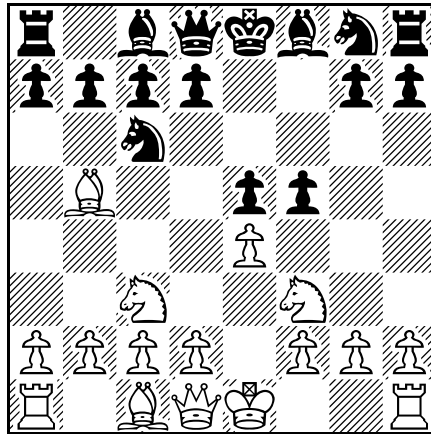
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 f5

If Black intends to attack e4, it isn't a good idea to interpose 3...a6 4 ♙a4 as after 4...f5 5 d4! is a good reply. For example 5...exd4 6 e5 followed by 7 0-0 and 8 c3 with a strong initiative. In contrast after 3...f5 4 d4?! fxe4 5 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 6 dxe5 Black has 6...c6! attacking the white bishop, when if 7 ♙e2 ♙a5+ and 8...♙xe5 wins an important centre pawn.

4 ♘c3

The most popular response. It allows Black to build a big centre, but White aims to cut it down to size with the help of some sharp tactics.

Another possibility is 4 d3 (see Chapter One), but let's not take the pawn with 4 exf5? as Black gains the initiative with 4...e4, disturbing our knight on f3.



4...fxe4

The elimination of the e4-pawn is the whole point of Black's last move.

We don't need to worry too much about other options for Black. For example if 4...♞d4 5 ♙c4 when 5...fxe4? 6 ♞xd4 exd4 7 ♚h5+ is already winning for White. Against 4...♞f6 5 exf5 is a good moment to accept the pawn, as 5...e4 6 ♞g5 can be followed by d2-d3, breaking up the black centre, while after 5...♙c5 6 0-0 0-0 the fork trick 7 ♞xe5! achieves the same end after 7...♞xe5 8 d4, when White regains the piece. Or if 7...♞d4, the calm 8 ♞f3! c6 9 ♞xd4 ♙xd4 10 ♙a4 leaves White with two extra pawns and facing no danger.

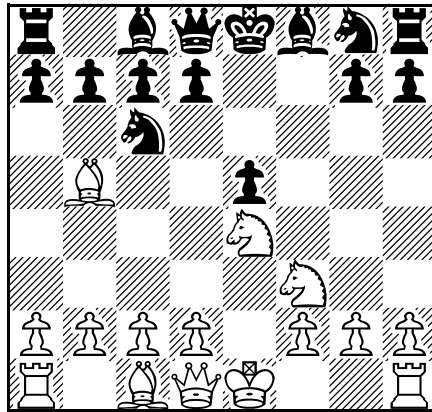
Question: Okay, but after 4...fxe4 I don't like the way my e-pawn has vanished and my knight can be kicked from the centre. It looks all wrong to me.

Answer: I guess we've been looking at too many games with a closed pawn centre! Generally speaking in the Ruy Lopez, the downfall of the e4-pawn is a cause of celebration for Black, and a source of regret for White.

But here things have happened very fast – the black king is still in the centre and his defences have been weakened by the removal of the f7-pawn. Does Black really have time to construct a pawn centre and also get the king to safety? Aren't the active white pieces going to land a blow somewhere? Let's see how the theory unfolds.

5 ♞xe4

The knight takes up an impressive centre post. It has to be challenged by the black pieces – but how?



5... Nf6!?

This is the most popular move at the time of writing. The ambitious alternative 5...d5, which is examined in games that follow, has never been refuted, but armed with the necessary theory White can avoid all the traps to reach a slight, if unexciting advantage in the middlegame.

6 ♖e2!?

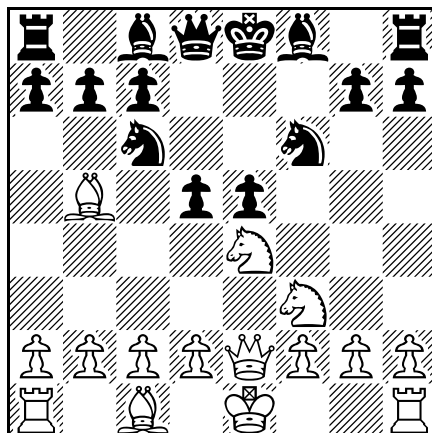
Lahno defends her knight and keeps up pressure on the black centre.

Question: Why not 6 ♘xf6+ and 7 ♕e2 – doesn't that come to the same thing?

Answer: Be patient! The next game will answer this question.

6...d5

Black has no other good way to shake off White's centre pressure. Still, building a broad pawn centre was the whole point of dislodging the white pawn from e4.



7 ♖xf6+

Question: Doesn't this strengthen the black centre after she recaptures with the pawn?

Answer: Black does temporarily get a broad centre, but she won't be able to keep it intact. You could say that a centre is only as powerful as the pieces that are supporting it. That's why White is playing energetically to force a crisis before Black is able to complete her development.

7...gxf6!

The only way to hold onto e5. After 7...♙xf6 8 ♚xe5+ Black is just a pawn down.

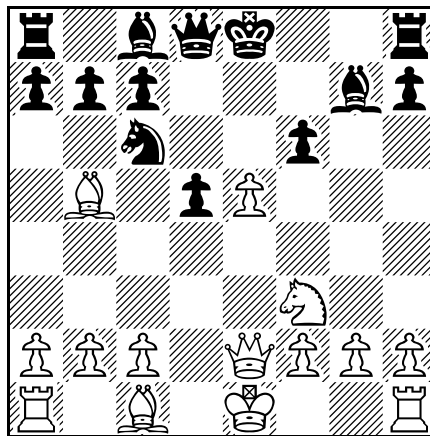
8 d4!

The key move. If now 8...e4 9 ♘h4, when besides suffering the weakening of her centre pawns (ideally she wants to keep them on d5 and e5) Black is menaced by a queen check on h5.

8...♗g7

At first glance this looks like a mistake, but Black is planning a temporary pawn sacrifice to catch up in development and evacuate the king from the centre.

9 dxe5



Exercise: See if you can guess Black's dynamic reply.

White appears to have triumphed, as the black centre is broken up and she has won a pawn after 9...fxe5 10 ♘xe5. But...

Answer: 9...0-0!

Black breaks the pin on c6 and removes the king from the firing line.

10 ♗xc6

The Ruy Lopez: Move by Move

If instead 10 exf6 then 10...♙xf6 gives Black good play for the pawn.

10...bxc6

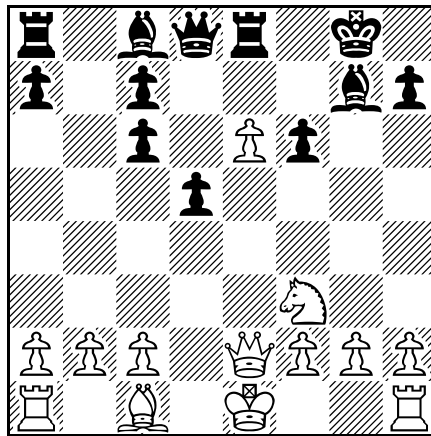
Question: How should White prevent 11...fxe5, when Black energizes her pieces and pawns?

Answer: 11 e6!

An excellent positional move. Instead after 11 exf6 ♙xf6 intending ...♗g4 and then ...♖ae8 Black is splendidly active. Permissible is 11 0-0 by White, as long as she answers 11...♗e8 by 12 e6 returning to the main game.

Going back a move, instead of 10 ♗xc6, 10 e6!? at once is sometimes played, when Black can reply 10...♞e5 with complications.

11...♗e8



Black will regain the pawn, but remains with her bishop shut in on g7 and a fractured kingside.

12 0-0

Now it is White's turn to whisk away the king to avoid a pin on the e-file.

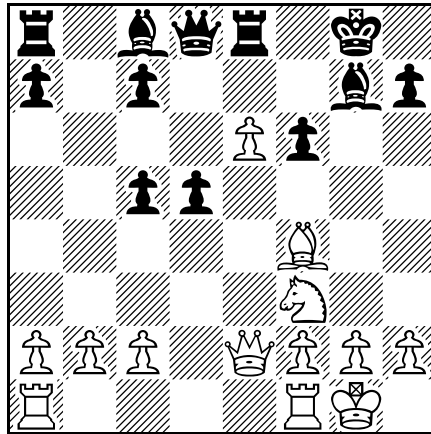
12...c5

Question: Why is it useful for Black to have control of the d4-square?

Answer: After the immediate 12...♖xe6 13 ♙d3 White has the strong idea of 14 ♞d4 followed at an appropriate moment by ♞f5, putting the knight on the outpost square in front of the isolated f6-pawn. Black would have no wish to be forced into the exchange ♗xf5 as after ♙xf5 her dynamism has dwindled – whereas the static pawn weaknesses remain.

After 12...♖xe6 13 ♙d3 Black could still play 13...c5, but Nemcova has another reason in mind to delay the capture on e6.

13 ♗f4



Exercise: Black has two obvious ways to take on e6, but can you find an imaginative way to arrange the capture by a third black piece? (Hint: it will take a three-move manoeuvre!)

13 ♖f4 takes advantage of the gaps in the black centre to put the bishop on an active square where it can't be attacked by a black pawn. The pressure on the c7-pawn is also significant. An interesting alternative was 13 ♖b5!? when Black should defend c5 with 13...♗f8.

Answer: 13...♖b8!?

An admirable lesson in how to activate your worst placed piece. The black rook intends to join the ensemble of other black pieces in the centre via b6 and e6.

14 b3

Black has gained a useful move for her rook's journey as White can't allow the b2-pawn to fall.

14...♖b6

Question: Now what is the best way for White to try to exploit Black's weakened queenside pawns?

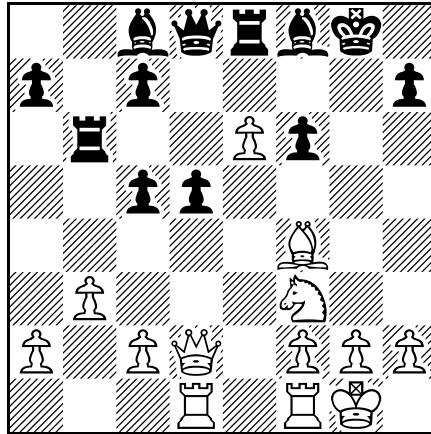
Answer: 15 ♖d2!

Black's rook manoeuvre has the drawback that the a7-pawn has been left undefended. Therefore ♖a5! will attack a7 and c5 and, in the event of ...♖bxe6, the c7-pawn in unison with the bishop on f4.

15...♗f8

Black defends the c5-pawn. 15...♖bxe6 16 ♖a5 ♖e7 17 ♗xc7 ♖a6 18 ♖fe1 ♖xa5 19 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 20 ♗xa5 would leave White a pawn up in the endgame, though the two bishops would give Black considerable power of resistance.

16 ♖ad1



Question: How should Black meet the threat to d5?

The pressure on the black centre leads to a rather panicky reaction by Black:

16... ♗xe6?

Answer: It only takes one 'obvious' move to ruin a position. The bishop capture is totally inconsistent with putting the rook on b6. Also weak are 16...d4, when 17 c3 undermines the centre pawn, and 16...c6 which shuts out the rook on b6. But the position looks unclear after 16... ♗b7, for example 17 ♘h4 ♖bxe6 18 ♘f5 ♕d7 etc.

17 ♗fe1

Nemcova's choice of 16... ♗xe6? means that she has a rook on b6 and a bishop on e6 rather than, after 16... ♗b7 and 17... ♖bxe6, a rook on e6 and a bishop on b7. Can you see that this represents a loss of coordination by the black pieces? It becomes even clearer after Black's next move:

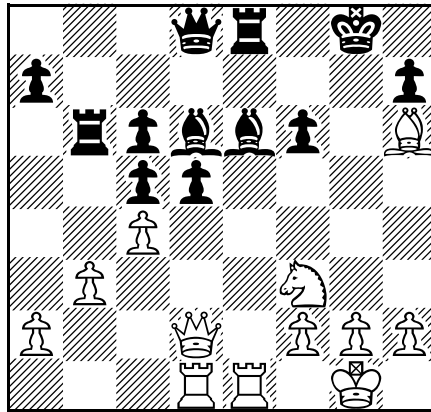
17...c6

Black feels obliged to stabilize the d5-pawn, but what a miserable outcome to the grand hopes of centralizing the rook with ... ♖bxe6!

18 ♗h6!

Offering an unwelcome exchange of bishops which would leave the dark squares weak around the black king. Besides, the c5-pawn would become more fragile once deprived of its defender.

18... ♗d6 19 c4



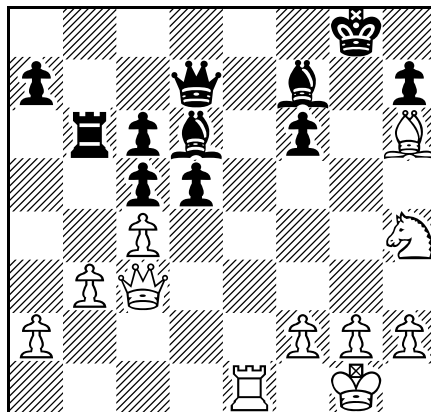
19...♗f7

Question: I don't understand these moves. Why can't Black play 19...d4 with a protected passed pawn in the centre?

Answer: After 19...d4 any counterplay that Black might have achieved through pressure on c4 is gone. Her two bishops are lame, and it would be rather unpleasant having to endure White's probing with say 20 ♖d3 followed by 21 ♘d2 and 22 ♘e4.

Perhaps the best move was 19...♖b7, to bring the rook back into the game. Black might have feared the sacrifice 20 ♗xe6!? ♗xe6 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 ♖xd5 though 22...♗c8 seems to hold for Black. In any case, provoking a crisis of this sort was preferable to being slowly ground down in the game.

20 ♘h4 ♗xe1+ 21 ♗xe1 ♖d7 22 ♖c3!



Exercise: Work out what happens after 22...♗e5.

The Ruy Lopez: Move by Move

White's task after 22 ♖c3 is to get the queen involved in the attack on the enemy king. The g3-, g4- and g5-squares are all barred to her, but Lahno finds an admirable way to gradually infiltrate the defence.

22... ♕d8

The black queen is obliged to defend the f6-pawn.

Answer: If 22... ♗e5? there follows 23 ♖xe5 fxe5 24 ♖g3+ ♗g6 25 ♗xg6 hxg6 26 ♖xg6+ ♗h8 27 ♗g5! and there is no defence to 28 ♗f6+ winning the queen or mating. Notice how the rook on b6 is a useless bystander whilst all this is going on.

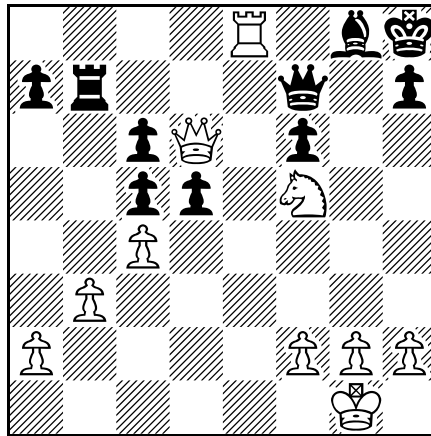
23 ♖f3 ♗h8 24 ♖g4 ♗f8 25 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 26 ♖f4 ♗g8 27 ♖e8!

A pretty infiltration. It's mate in one if Black takes the rook.

27... ♖f7 28 ♖d6 ♖b7

Black's rook manoeuvre to b6 proved a catastrophe because Black lost heart before completing it. It isn't enough to have a good idea – you need to carry it out to a finish if at all possible.

29 ♗f5!



The knight reaches its 'Lopez' f5-square in some style. Black has no way to oust it as her own minor piece is completely dominated. If 29... ♖xe8 30 ♖xf6+ and mate next move.

29... ♖g6

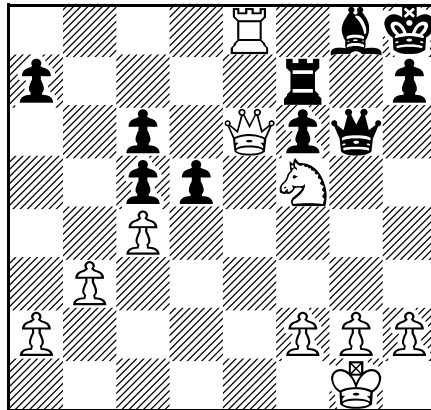
White mustn't become so obsessed in the attack on the black king that she forgets about her own king. Nemcova is hoping to catch her opponent in a cruel trap: 30 ♗e7, planning the brilliant finish 30... ♖xe8 31 ♖xf6 mate, is a howler because of 30... ♖b1 and it is White who is mated.

30 ♖e6!

Lahno calmly defends her knight and strengthens the pin on g8.

30... ♖f7

Black defends f6 to avoid being put into a fatal pin after say 30... d4 31 ♖xg8+ ♖xg8 32 ♖xf6+ ♖g7, but now the black pieces fall prey to the white knight.



31 ♖xg8!

A neat concluding combination. Whichever way Black recaptures there is a decisive fork.

31... ♗xg8

The lesser evil, as 31... ♗xg8 32 ♘e7+ wins the queen.

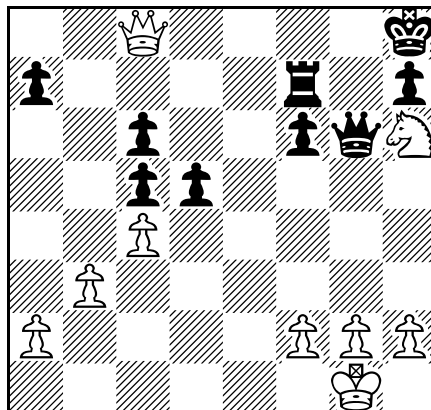
32 ♘h6

The knight strikes the decisive blow from its outpost square.

32... ♗g6

Hoping to fight on after 33 ♘xf7+ ♔g7 when the mating threat on b1 wins time to recapture on f7.

33 ♗c8+! 1-0



After 33... ♔g7 the knight once more returns to its outpost square and wins the queen with 34 ♘f5+. I guess you can live quite happily with the move order 6 ♗e2 and 7 ♘xf6+ but I can't resist showing you the curious consequences of inverting the move order with 6 ♘xf6+ and 7 ♗e2.