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Series Foreword

Move by Move is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate - as much as possible - lessons between chess teachers and students.

All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and to study chess in general.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms,
Everyman Chess

Introduction

The English Opening, 1 c4, is one of the great chess openings. Named after the first great English player, Howard Staunton, who was the unofficial world champion of his day in the 1840s, the English has been used at some time or other by almost every World Champion. Even Bobby Fischer, who once declared that 1 e4 was “best by test”, resorted to the English several times towards the end of his career, including twice in his 1972 world championship match against Boris Spassky. Fischer won both games! Fifteen years later in Seville, Garry Kasparov relied on the English as his principal weapon as White, in his world championship match against Anatoly Karpov. Faced with a situation where he had to win the final, 24th game, to retain his world title, Kasparov again placed his faith in the English, and duly won.

Probably the main reason why the English has proved so popular over the years, with players of such diverse styles as Botvinnik and Petrosian on the one hand, and Tal and Kasparov on the other, is its great flexibility. It can be interpreted in many different ways, ranging from slow, manoeuvring games to slashing kingside attacks. The great range of possible development plans, for both sides, also means that the English is much less prone to detailed, move-by-move analysis, than many forcing openings. This results in less pure “theory”, which makes the opening a useful weapon against weaker players, who cannot simply learn by rote a forcing sequence, leading to a draw, as they can in some ultra-sharp openings. The English tends to be an opening where understanding is more important than theoretical knowledge, and this often makes it a favourite with more experienced players, who lack the time, energy or inclination to swot up on sharp theoretical variations, and prefer to lure their opponents into relatively quiet, strategical positions, where their own greater experience will turn the battle in their favour.

Many books have been written on the English Opening, so I should say a word or two about the intentions of this one. Despite – or perhaps because of – the lack of hard forcing lines, there is actually a huge wealth of possible variations of the English, since both sides have great flexibility over how to develop. Some 30 years ago, the American author John Watson took four volumes to produce a comprehensive coverage of the English, and much more recently Mihail Marin needed three fat volumes, totalling almost 1200 pages, even to provide a comprehensive repertoire for White, based on one specific move-order. So, whatever else it purports to do, the present volume is not intended to provide a complete coverage of all English lines. By the same token, nor is it a repertoire book. The reader will

not find a complete, coherent set of recommended lines for White against each possible black defence. Many such books have been published before, and I see little sense in trying to rival them.

Instead, what this book seeks to do, via a series of deeply-annotated illustrative games, is to instruct the reader in the main English variations, and the different structures to which they lead. There is considerable emphasis here on the middlegame positions which result from the opening. As stated above, the English is an opening where understanding is more important than concrete theoretical knowledge, and the would-be English player, particularly at club and congress level, will win far more points by understanding the positional and strategic ideas of the opening, than he will by rote-learning of specific sequences.

For that reason, I have tried especially hard to select the most instructive examples of the various lines that I could find. In some cases, this has involved choosing quite old games, and the reader will find a few examples even from as far back as the 1960s. Fortunately, the non-critical nature of many English lines means that such games have not lost their relevance to the present day, something which could not be said of many sharper openings, such as the Sicilian or Marshall Gambit. Looking at a 1960s example of the Poisoned Pawn is about as much use to a present-day Najdorf player as studying the engine of a 1910 Model T Ford would be to a contemporary Formula One motor mechanic – it would be of purely historical interest. In the English, however, classics, such as Games 2 and 3 in the present volume, will never lose their instructional value to anybody who aspires to play the white side of the opening.

Having said that, the book still contains plenty of recent games, and it presents an overview of the current state of theory in many of the sharper, more forcing lines. Furthermore, although I have not sought to recommend a specific repertoire as such, I have added a final chapter on Building a Repertoire. This discusses the various move-order choices, and suggests alternative approaches to using the English as White. I hope that this will enable to reader to draw up a general idea for a repertoire beginning 1 c4, and to choose between the many different variations. Building a repertoire with the English is a bit like cooking – whatever a particular chef or his recipe may say, if you like a certain ingredient, there is no reason not to add some more of it to your dish. “Season to taste” is the motto – in the English, one can mix and match a good many different systems and set-ups according to one’s taste, and a player should not be afraid to do so.

I myself played the English a great deal during my playing career, and so I have a lot of experience with many of the lines concerned. It can be used either as one’s main weapon, or as an occasional transpositional tool, against certain opponents. One can use it to aim for quiet positions or sharp positions, to occupy the centre with pawns, or to hold back the centre pawns and control the centre from the flanks. The English is largely a blank canvas on which the player can create his own artwork, to his own taste. In short, as British Chancellors of the Exchequer (i.e. Finance Ministers) are wont to say, at the end of their annual Budget speech, “I commend it to the House!”

Acknowledgements

John Emms and Byron Jacobs of Everyman were their usual immaculately efficient and supportive selves. My friends Dave Barnes and Roger Parry both lent me theoretical volumes which my own library was lacking, whilst the libraries of the Hastings and Snodland chess clubs plugged other gaps in my collection.

This book is dedicated to Dave, with gratitude for almost 40 years of unswerving friendship. He is now the Medway Towns' leading practitioner of the English Opening, and long may his successes with it continue!

Steve Giddins
Rochester, UK
June 2011

Chapter Four

Anti-QGD, Slav and Hedgehog Lines

In this chapter, we look at lines where Black tries to force some sort of Slav or Queen's Gambit Declined (QGD) structure. In both cases, White could of course transpose into those very lines, but we are assuming that he prefers to keep independent, English contours to the game.

Game 19 shows our recommended anti-Slav set-up. White leaves his d-pawn untouched and just develops his kingside in traditional English style, with ♘f3 , g3 and ♗g2 . Black then has a variety of ways to play, including grabbing the gambit pawn on c4. In all cases, White gets very good play, with several of the most natural "Slav" moves, such as an early ... ♗f5 or ... ♗g4 , liable to run into some nasty tricks.

Games 20 and 21 show a set-up for White against the traditional QGD approach, where Black plays ... e6 and ... d5 . White again holds back his d-pawn, and plays a double fianchetto system. This retains a great deal of tension in the position, by avoiding mass early exchanges, and this makes the line very suitable for playing for a win as White. Contrary to popular belief, the best way to win "to order" is often to eschew a violent tactical battle, where the position is liable to fizzle out after a brief flare-up, and instead to play a more restrained game, maintaining the tension for as long as possible, so as to prolong the defender's agony. The classic illustration of this was Game 24 of the Kasparov-Karpov world championship match at Seville, 1987, in which Kasparov did precisely this, using the very double fianchetto system we recommend in this chapter.

Black has two main ways to deal with this system. In Game 20, he exchanges pawns on c4, producing an asymmetrical structure, where White has a central pawn majority and Black a majority on the kingside. White can then choose between a restrained approach,

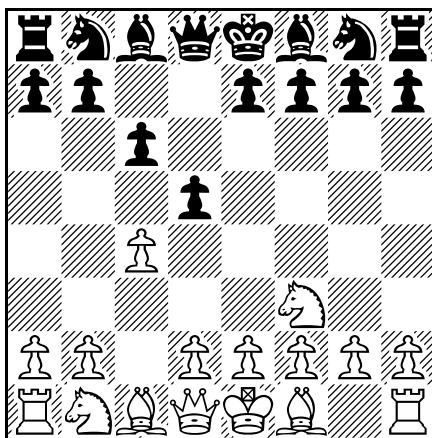
with d3 and a kingside pawn advance, or a more classical central strategy, pushing d4 and d5. Both methods are examined in Game 20, the first in the main game itself, and the second in the notes.

Game 21 shows Black's other approach, which is to push ...d5-d4. This results in yet another structural change, and yet another reversed opening structure, this time a Modern Benoni with colours reversed.

Finally, in Game 22, we examine the black system known as the Hedgehog. This is quite a popular way for Black to play against the English. We will consider two systems for White, both of which offer interesting play and the prospect of a small, but stable plus.

Game 19
J. Timman-S. Ernst
Wijk aan Zee 2012

1 c4 c6 2 ♘f3 d5



Black angles for a Slav Defence. The latter has been very popular over recent years, so English players can expect to meet this line quite regularly.

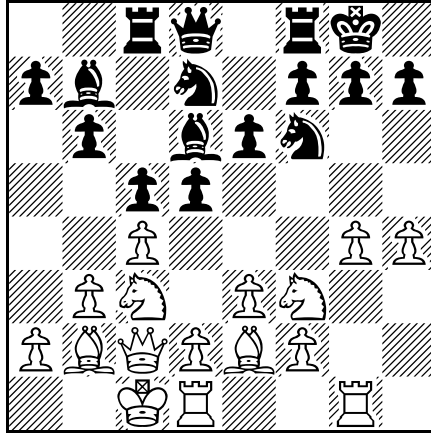
Question: So does White have a way to avoid a simple transposition?

Answer: He has a couple of ways, in fact.

3 g3

The text is the main attempt to dodge regular Slav lines and preserve a recognisably "English" structure, but there is also another option, beginning 3 e3. The idea after 3...♘f6 4 ♘c3 is to continue b3, ♗b2, ♕c2, holding back the d-pawn. White can always transpose into some form of Slav or Semi-Slav with a later d4, but he also has the option of 0-0-0,

followed by g4. This extremely direct attacking approach is analysed in some detail by Tony Kosten in *Dangerous Weapons: Flank Openings*, and in recent times, this move-order has been adopted by such top players as Aronian, Ivanchuk and Grischuk. We will not go into it in great detail here, but will offer one characteristic recent example: 4...e6 5 ♖c2 ♗bd7 6 b3 ♘d6 7 ♘b2 0-0 8 ♙e2 b6 9 ♖g1 ♘b7 10 g4 c5 11 h4 ♖c8 12 0-0-0



12...♗e4?! 13 ♗xe4 dxe4 14 ♗g5 ♙e5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♖xe4 (Black does not really have anything for the pawn) 17...♖f6 18 f4 ♗c6 19 ♙b1 ♖fd8 20 h5 ♖d6 21 g5 ♖e7 22 ♘d3 g6 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 a3 ♖cd8 25 ♘c2 a6 26 ♖h1 b5 27 ♖h2 bxc4 28 ♖dh1 cxb3 29 ♖xg6+! ♙f8 30 ♖xh7 bxc2+ 31 ♙c1 1-0, A.Stefanova-M.Sebag, Ulaanbaatar 2010.

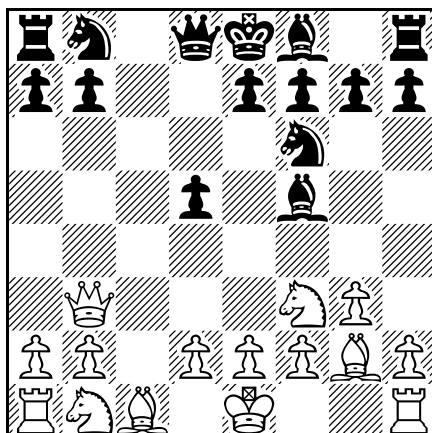
3...♗f6 4 ♘g2 dxc4

A major parting of the ways. Black has a few alternatives here.

a) 4...♙f5

Question: That is the typical Slav move, isn't it?

Answer: Yes, but here, as in many Slav lines, the early bishop excursion can be exploited by an attack on the b7-pawn: 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♖b3.



Now Black has various ways to defend b7, but none are totally satisfactory. The main choice is 6...♖b6.

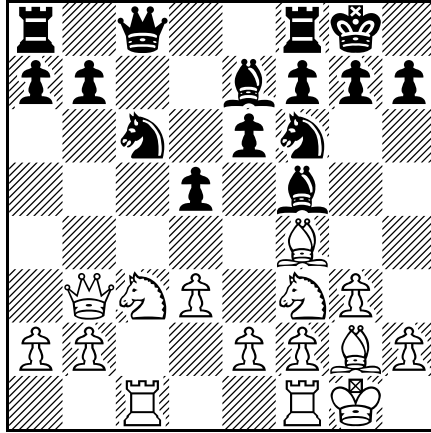
Question: So is this relatively best?

Answer: I think so, but the resulting position is rather prospectless for Black.

6...♖d7 exposes the queen to ♘e5: 7 ♘e5!? ♖c7 8 ♘c3 e6 9 d3 with ♙f4 and ♘b5 to follow. 6...♖c7 similarly exposes the queen after 7 ♘c3 e6 8 d3, followed by some combination of ♙f4, ♘b5 and ♖c1. 6...♙c8 is solid, but obviously passive. White is a little better after 7 ♘c3 e6 8 d3 ♘c6 9 ♙f4. That only leaves 6...♖c8.

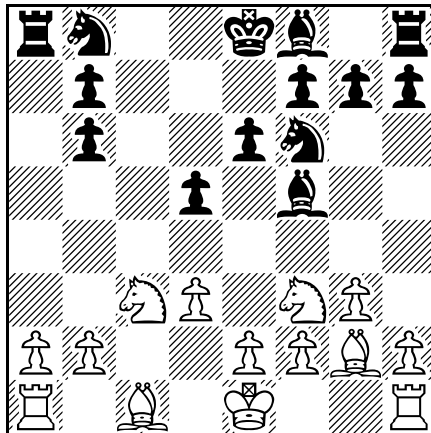
Question: Looks pretty awkward!

Answer: It is, but as we have seen, other queen moves have their problems too. 6...♖c8 was Smyslov's choice in a classic early game in the variation: 7 ♘c3 e6 8 d3 ♘c6 9 ♙f4 ♙e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖ac1.



White is clearly somewhat better. The black queen is still a little exposed along the open c-file and also prevents the rooks coordinating. G.Barcza-V.Smyslov, Moscow 1956, continued. 11...♔d7 12 e4! dxe4 13 dxe4 ♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 15 ♘e5 ♘xe5 16 ♙xe4 ♖c6 17 ♗fd1 ♗c8 18 ♗a4 and White regained the pawn, with much the better ending, which the Hungarian technical specialist duly conducted to victory – a notable result, given the calibre of the opposition: 18...♗d8 19 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 20 ♙xc6 bxc6 21 ♗xc6 h6 22 ♙e5 ♙g5 23 ♗c4 ♗d1+ 24 ♙g2 ♗d8 25 ♗f3 ♗xf3+ 26 ♙xf3 ♙f6 27 ♙xf6 gxf6 28 ♙e3 ♗d5 29 b4 ♙g7 30 a4 e5 31 b5 ♗d1 32 ♗c7 a6 33 bxa6 ♗d4 34 a7 ♗xa4 35 ♙d3 f5 36 ♙c3 ♙f6 37 ♙b3 ♗a1 38 ♙b4 ♙g5 39 ♙b5 ♙h5 40 ♙b6 1-0.

Back to 6...♗b6: 7 ♗xb6 axb6 8 ♖c3 e6 9 d3.



Question: Isn't this just very drawish?

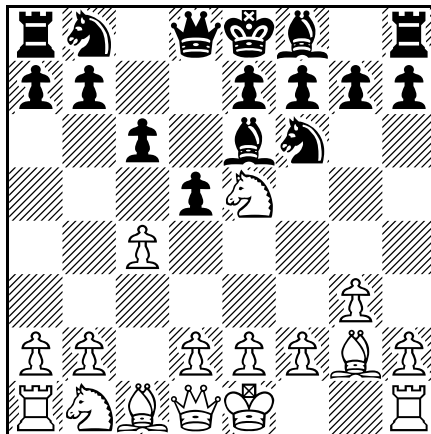
Answer: Not really. White has a small, but pleasant edge. His d3-e2 pawn structure shuts the black bishop on f5 off from the queenside, whilst White can point his pieces at that sector of the board, with such moves as ♖f4 (or ♖e3), ♗d4, ♜fc1, a3-b4, etc. It is one of those positions where objectively, Black is holding with accurate play, but where he is suffering a bit, and has few winning prospects, in the absence of a blunder from White.

Question: So it's another of your favourite "playing for two results" variations?

Answer: Absolutely! White has few losing chances and can torture his opponent. It does not strike me as very attractive from Black's viewpoint. Some examples: 9...♗c6 10 0-0 (10 ♗b5 ♜a5!? 11 ♗bd4 ♖g6 12 ♖d2 ♜a4 13 ♗b5 ♖b4 14 b3 ♖xd2+ 15 ♗xd2 ♜a5 16 a4 ♗d7 17 ♜hc1 ♜c8 18 ♜c2 ♗e8 19 ♜ac1 f6 20 ♗fd4 was also better for White, K.Ninov-K.Hulak, Sarajevo 1988) 10...♖b4 (10...h6 11 ♗b5 ♗d7 12 ♖d2 ♖e7 13 ♖c3 ♜hc8 14 a3 ♖h7 15 ♜ac1 ♗e8 16 ♜c2 ♗a7 17 ♗xa7 ♜xa7 18 ♜fc1 was similar in G.Meier-M.Yilmaz, Rijeka 2010; Black was eventually ground down) 11 ♗b5 ♗d7 12 a3 ♜hc8 13 ♖f4 ♖e7 14 ♜fc1 h6 15 b4 g5 16 ♗e5+ ♗xe5 17 ♖xe5. White retains his edge and went on to win in S.Collins-S.Mannion, Dublin 2011.

b) 4...♖g4 5 ♗e5! (it is important to play this at once; 5 cxd5 allows Black to flick in 5...♖xf3 6 ♖xf3 cxd5 with a solid position, where it is not easy for White to exploit the bishop pair) and now 5...♖h5?! is dubious (see below), while 5...♖f5?! usually comes to the same thing after 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♗c3 e6 8 ♜a4+.

However, 5...♖e6 is a better choice.

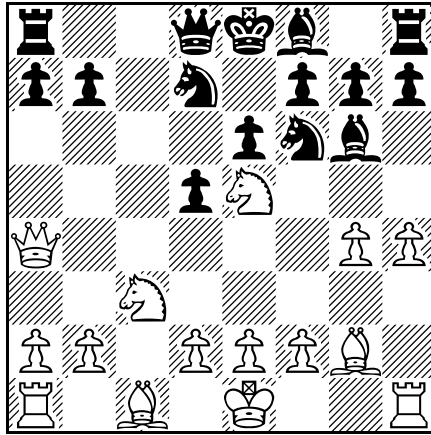


Question: It looks a pretty funny move, gumming up Black's development.

Answer: To some extent, it is, but it is still relatively best, because it avoids the forcing lines

which follow after other bishop moves. White retains a small edge after 6 cxd5 ♗xd5 7 ♖f3 c5 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 0-0 e6 10 d3 followed by e4 and d4.

Returning to 6...♗h5: 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♘c3 e6 8 ♖a4 ♗bd7 9 g4 ♘g6 10 h4.



Question: Wow! That's a bit extravagant, isn't it?

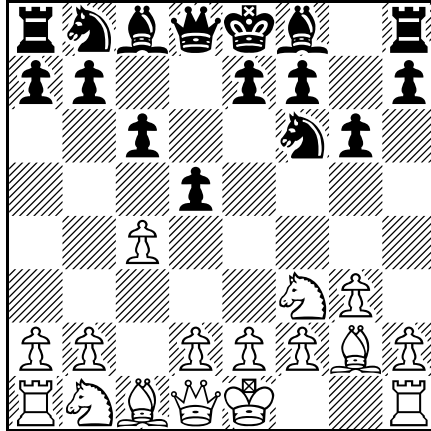
Answer: It's the sort of thing that is only good when it's good, if you'll pardon the expression! Clearly, it is a weakening of White's position, but the point is that the bishop on g6 is in serious trouble, and Black has no way to avoid loss of material, or the infliction of serious positional weaknesses. Black has two tactical tries, both of which fail:

The first is 10...♗c2, attempting to deflect the queen, but this runs into the desperado reply 11 ♖xf7! and Black will emerge a pawn down, e.g. 11...♗xf7 (if 11...♗xa4 then 12 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 13 ♖xa4) 12 ♖xc2 ♖xg4 13 ♖xd5! exd5 (after other moves, Black is a pawn down with a bad king) 14 ♗xd5+ ♗e8 15 ♖e4+ and White regains the piece with a winning advantage, V.Loginov-E.Shaposhnikov, St Petersburg 2000.

The other try, 10...b5, was refuted as long ago as 1936: 11 ♖xb5! ♖xe5 12 ♖c7+ ♗e7 13 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 14 h5 and the bishop still drops, A.Konstantinopolsky-V.Goglidze, Leningrad 1936.

After 10...♗d6, there follows simply 11 d4 (11 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 12 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 13 h5 is also strong, as given by Marin) and Black cannot now avoid the horribly weakening 11...h6 12 ♖xg6 fxg6 13 ♖c2 with a clear advantage to White.

c) 4...g6 is a quieter option.



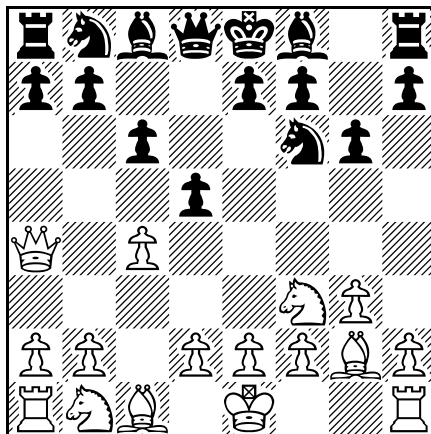
Black gives up the attempt to develop his queen's bishop at once, and settles for a solid, Schlechter-Slav structure.

Question: If White now plays d4, don't we reach well-known lines of the g3 Grünfeld?

Answer: That is correct. White has no more than a minimal advantage in such lines.

Question: So does the English offer anything more?

Answer: Objectively not, but holding back the white d-pawn presents slightly different problems. White retains a small edge in a solid position. Now 5 ♖a4! is a creative idea.



Question: It looks pretty odd! What is the point?

Answer: White pins the c6-pawn, thereby creating the positional “threat” of capturing on d5, when Black would have to cede his opponent the central pawn majority, by taking with a piece.

Question: Is that such a big deal?

Answer: No, but it is not quite what Black wants – when he plays ...c6, it is usually so as to recapture ...cxd5.

Question: Okay, then. In that case, I’ll just reply 5...♖bd7 and then take with the pawn!

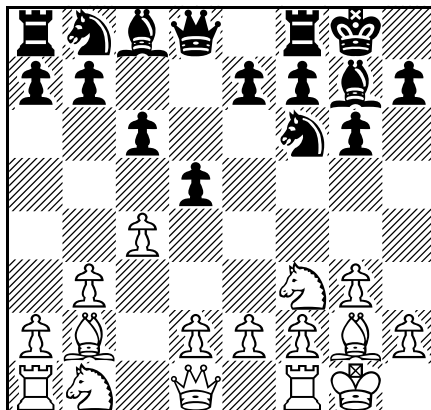
Answer: Ah, but now after 6 cxd5 cxd5 your queen’s knight is slightly misplaced – it would rather be on c6. After 7 d4 White will argue that he has gained a little something.

Answer: Hmm... looks like you are clutching at straws to me!

Answer: Perhaps, but as Tony Miles once said in a similar case, “What has White got? Basically nothing, but it’s still a bit more than Black has got!” After the further moves 7...♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘a3!? ♙b6 10 ♚a5 (or 10 ♚b4!? – Davies) 10...♗f5 11 ♗f4 ♘c4 12 ♘xc4 dxc4, R.Vaganian-L.Christiansen, Linares 1985, White would have been a bit better after 13 ♚b4.

Question: I am still not totally convinced!

Answer: Well, in that case, the other option for White is 5 b3, which is the main line. The b2-square is the natural place for the queen’s bishop, if White is not going to play d4, so he should play this at once. After 5...♗g7 6 ♗b2 0-0 7 0-0 Black has a number of sensible moves:

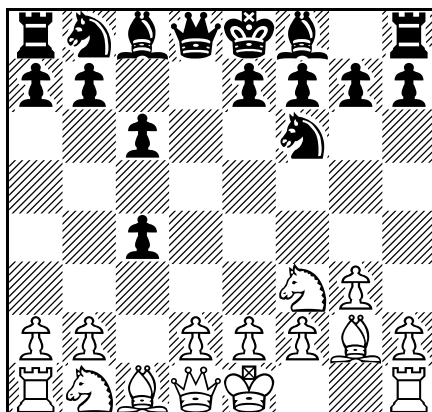


c1) 7...♟f5 8 d3 a5 9 a3 ♞a6 10 ♞bd2 b5 11 cxb5 cxb5 12 ♖c1 ♖c8 13 ♗xc8 ♜xc8 14 ♜a1 ♜b7 15 ♖c1 ♖c8 was level and soon drawn, V.Akopian-G.Sargissian, Yerevan 2008.

c2) 7...a5 8 d3 a4 9 ♞bd2 axb3 10 axb3 ♗xa1 11 ♜xa1 ♞a6 12 ♜a3! and White was a little better in L.Psakhis-P.Svidler, Haifa (rapid) 2000.

c3) 7...♟g4 8 d3 ♞bd7 9 ♞bd2 ♗e8 10 h3 ♟xf3 11 ♞xf3 and the bishop pair gives White a very slight edge, I.Stohl-I.Glek, German League 1995.

All in all, it seems clear that 4...g6 is the most solid option for Black in this line. Now, back to the position after 4...dxc4.



Question: Hold on! Haven't we lost a pawn here?

Answer: We have gambited one, yes!

Question: So what do we have by way of compensation?
After all, developing with g3, ♟g2, etc. is not typical gambit play – it is hardly an open position, is it?

Answer: That is true. White's gambit is for long-term positional pressure. He has lured the black d-pawn away from the centre, thereby securing a central pawn majority. If he can eliminate the c4-pawn, White will have the possibility of playing d4 and e4, occupying the centre. In addition, by attacking the c4-pawn, he hopes to induce some weaknesses from Black on the queenside (e.g. the move ...b7-b5), when he will have targets to attack, both on the b- and c-files, and also down the h1-a8 diagonal. Similar sacrifices are common in the Catalan; here, the difference is that White's pawn is on d2, rather than d4.

Question: And what happens if Black hangs onto the c4-pawn?
Won't that plug up the c-file as well?

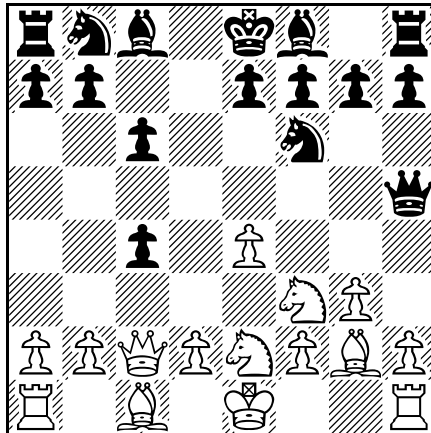
Answer: In that case, White will usually force the exchange by playing b2-b3. That will make the pawn sacrifice permanent, but remove the c4-pawn and open the c-file. He will then aim to use the open queenside files to exert pressure, slightly reminiscent of the Benko Gambit.

5 0-0

White can also delay this move and play 5 ♖c2 immediately.

Question: What difference does it make?

Answer: In many lines, it will just amount to a transposition, but it does cut out certain black options, notably the ...♘bd7-b6 defence adopted in the game. In view of the potential black improvement at move 7, White may do better to prefer the immediate 5 ♖c2, as advocated by both Kosten and Nigel Davies (the latter in his excellent book, *The Dynamic Reti*, which overlaps with various lines of the English). 5...♗d5 6 ♘c3 ♖f5 7 e4 ♗h5 8 ♘e2!



continues to harass the black queen, whilst also attacking c4 again. Alternatively, 5...b5 6 b3 (6 a4 ♗b7 7 b3 is also possible, transposing to the note on 5...b5 in the main game) 6...cxb3 7 axb3 was an old game R.Dzindzichashvili-V.Bagirov, USSR Championship, Baku 1972, where White had typical compensation after 7...♗b7 8 ♗a3 a6 9 0-0 g6 10 d4 ♗g7 11 ♘bd2 0-0 12 e4.

In all these lines, White's general ideas are similar to those illustrated after 5 0-0, but the move-order refinement 5 ♖c2 can be a useful way of avoiding certain black options.

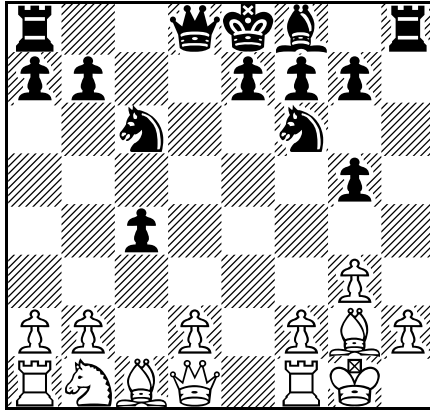
5...♘bd7

The text is probably Black's best, and initiates a plan of defending the c4-pawn with pieces.

Question: What other options does Black have?

Answer: He has a couple:

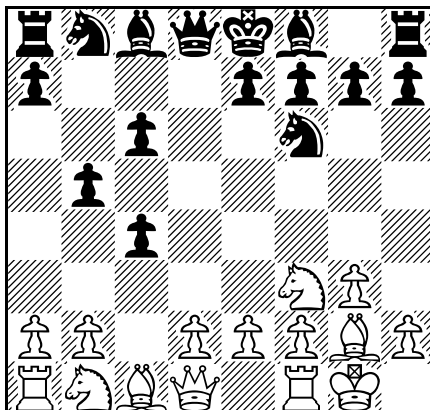
a) 5...♔e6 is another version of the same idea, of holding c4 with pieces. Play then continues 6 ♘g5 ♕d5 7 e4 h6 (forced, of course) 8 exd5 hxg5 9 dxc6 ♖xc6.



Question: This looks a pretty messy position, and doesn't seem all that impressive for White. What is going on?

Answer: Outwardly, it does not look great for White, who is still a pawn down, and has a weakness on the d-file and unimpressive development. But after 10 ♘a3 it is hard for Black to keep the c4-pawn, and after it drops, White can start to develop active play with his bishop pair. The g5-pawn is also weak. For example, 10...e6 (10...♖d3 11 ♖a4 0-0-0! is complex, and now Marin analyses 12 ♖e1! as better for White) 11 ♖xc4 ♔e7, N.McDonald-M.Turner, British League 2010, and instead of McDonald's 12 d3, the computer prefers the older move 12 d4!?, e.g. 12...♖d5 13 ♖e3 and White's bishop pair should give him an edge.

b) The other main black option is 5...b5.



Question: This guarantees keeping the pawn, doesn't it?

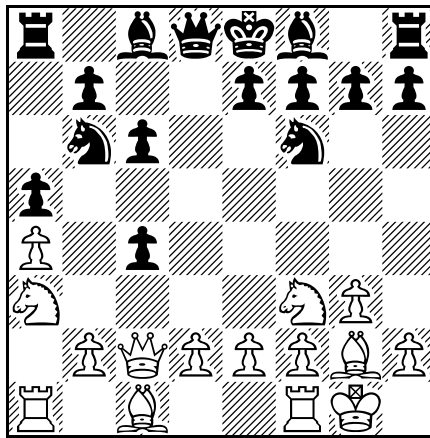
Answer: Yes, but now White carries out the typical Catalan-style play that we described above: 6 a4 ♗b7 7 b3! cxb3 8 ♖xb3 a6 9 ♗a3.

Question: So, White's compensation is as described?

Answer: Yes. He has the pawn centre (d4 and e4 can follow), pressure on the open queenside files (the c6-pawn is backward, and likely to stay that way after White's d2-d4 advance), and Black's development is hampered. Marin now quotes the game S.Vukanovic-P.Acs, Paks 1996, which continued 9...♗bd7 10 ♖c1 e5 (or 10...♗b6 11 ♗g5! e6 12 ♗xf8 and after any recapture, White has good dark-square compensation) 11 ♗g5 ♗d5 12 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 and now Marin's suggestion is 15 ♗xd5! cxd5 16 ♖f3 with dangerous compensation.

6 ♖c2 ♗b6 7 ♗a3

White has a major alternative here, in 7 a4 a5 and only now 8 ♗a3.

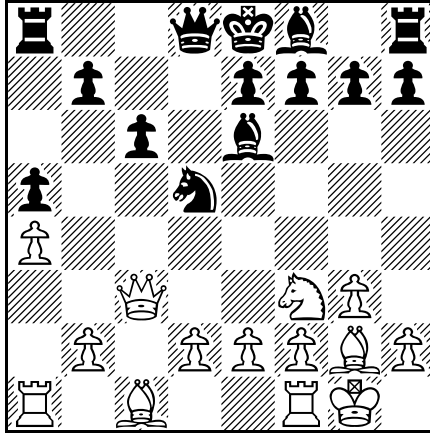


Question: What is the difference?

Answer: Flicking in the rooks' pawn moves has both good and bad sides. From the positive side, the position of the black knight on b6 is much less stable, since it is no longer defended by a pawn on a7. This means that, if the b-file is later opened (e.g. after b3 by White), there may be pressure down the b-file from a white rook on b1.

Question: That makes sense. So why not play 7 a4?

Answer: Well, in chess, as in life, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Including the moves 7 a4 a5 weakens the b4-square, so Black may be able to put a minor piece there and thus plug the b-file anyway. A high-level example where these moves were included was L.McShane-F.Caruana, Plovdiv 2010: 8...♖fd5 9 ♗xc4 ♖b4 10 ♚c3 ♗xc4 11 ♚xc4 ♙e6 12 ♚c3 ♘d5



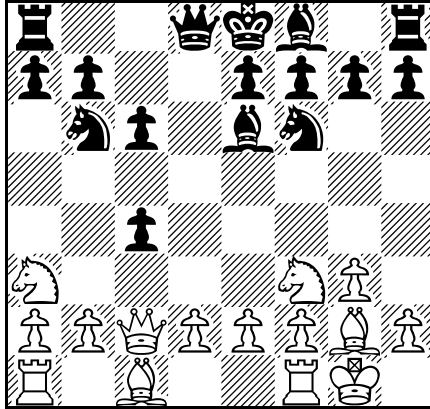
13 ♚e5 (McShane was apparently sufficiently impressed by the solidity of Black's position in this line subsequently to use it himself, notching a quick draw after 13 ♚d4 ♗b4 14 ♚c3 ♗d5 15 ♚d4 ♗b4 1/2-1/2, T.Hillarp Persson-L.McShane, Reykjavik 2011) 13...♗b4 14 ♚a3 ♚d6 15 ♚c3 ♗d5 16 ♚d4 ♗b4 17 ♚b6 ♙c8 18 d4 ♚a6 19 ♚c5 ♚xc5 20 dxc5 e5 21 ♗xe5 ♙xc5, with perhaps a small advantage to White, although eventually drawn.

Question: So come on, stop sitting on the fence!
Should White include 7 a4 a5 or not?

Answer: I am genuinely not 100% sure, but it may be significant that McShane later switched to 7 ♗a3 against Adams (see below).

7...♚d5

An important alternative here is 7...♙e6.

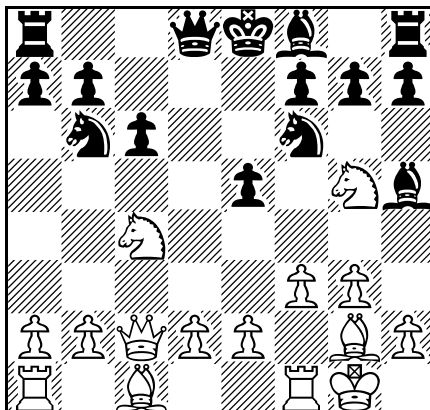


Question: Another clumsy-looking move!

Answer: You should be getting used to them by now! Black is trying to make it hard for White to regain his pawn without some concession. The critical line now is 8 ♘g5 ♙g4 9 f3 ♙h5 10 ♘xc4.

Question: I thought you said Black was trying to stop White regaining his pawn? He doesn't seem to have succeeded for long!

Answer: I didn't say "stop White regaining the pawn", I said "trying to make it hard for him to do so without some concession". The concession here is the somewhat ugly move f3, of which Black now takes tactical advantage: 10...e5!. Marin only considered 10...♙d4+ 11 ♘e3, but 10...e5! looks like an important improvement for Black, and has scored 100% for him in the three GM encounters I have located:

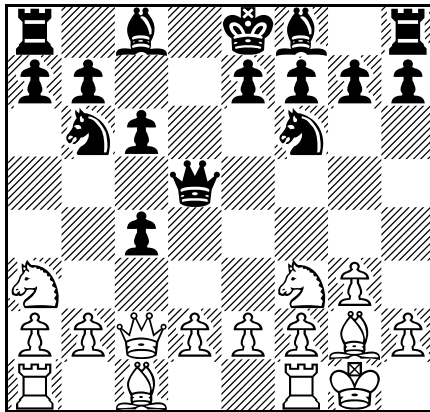


a) 11 ♖h1 didn't bring White anything in the following games: 11...♗fd5 12 d3 ♙e7 13 ♗e4 ♜c7 14 a3 0-0 15 b4 ♖h8 16 ♙d2 ♗d7 17 ♗a5 f5 18 ♗c5?! ♗xc5 19 bxc5 f4 and Black was better, H.Tikkanen-A.Giri, Porto Carras 2011; or 11...♗xc4 12 ♜xc4 ♙e7 13 ♗e4 ♗d5 14 ♗c3 ♗b6 15 ♜e4 ♜d4 16 d3 ♙g6 17 ♜e3 ♙c5 18 ♜d2 0-0 with good play for Black, J.De Jager-R.Van Kampen, Haarlem 2011.

b) 11 d3 ♗xc4 12 ♜xc4 ♙e7 13 ♗e4 ♗d5 14 ♗f2?! (14 ♗c3) 14...f6 15 ♖h1 ♜b6 16 a3 ♗d8 17 ♜h4 ♙g6 18 ♗d1 f5 19 ♙g5 ♙xg5 20 ♜xg5 0-0 and Black was again better and went on to win in L.McShane-M.Adams, German League 2011.

It would be interesting to know what Timman planned against this, or why Ernst refrained from it. White needs an improvement here, and if one is not forthcoming, he may have to prefer the 5 ♜c2 move-order.

Returning to 7...♜d5:



8 b3

Question: The queen looks vulnerable on d5.
Is there nothing in any of the discoveries?

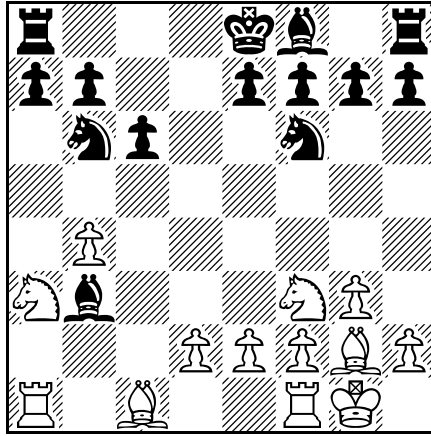
Answer: Nothing directly, but it is true that 8 ♗e1 is another way to play for compensation. Indeed, this is Marin's recommendation here. He then suggests 8...♜e6 as the "most conservative", when 9 d3 cxd3 10 ♗xd3 gives compensation. However, it seems to me more logical to play as Timman does in the game, trading the b-pawn, rather than the d-pawn, for Black's pawn on c4. Furthermore, the black queen remains exposed on d5 and sooner or later a knight discovery will become a real threat.

8...cxb3 9 axb3

Question: So, White has given up any hopes of regaining his pawn, and has made the sacrifice a real one?

Answer: Yes, but he hopes to create pressure on the queenside, along the open lines.

9...♙e6 10 b4 ♖b3 11 ♖xb3 ♙xb3



Question: White is a pawn down, and now the queens are off. Not your everyday gambit, is it?

Answer: It is a much more positional gambit. White is not so bothered by the queen exchange, as Black loses further time, which White now utilizes to continue his queenside initiative. The comparison I made earlier, with the Benko Gambit, is relevant again here – in the Benko, Black often welcomes the exchange of queens, as his pressure persists into the endgame.

12 b5 c5

After 12...♙a4 13 ♘e5 ♘fd7 Timman (annotating the game in *New in Chess Magazine*, 2012/2) points out the line 14 bxc6 ♘xe5 15 cxb7 ♖b8 16 d4 with advantage to White, since if the knight moves (e.g. 16...♘ed7), 17 ♙f4 follows. 16...♘g6 17 ♘c4 ♘xc4 18 ♖xa4 is also strong for White. Black may be a piece up, but the f8-bishop and h8-rook are asleep, and meanwhile, the black queenside is falling apart and the b7-pawn is a monster.

13 d3 ♘fd7?!

Timman recommended 13...g6 to develop the kingside. Then 14 ♘d2 ♙d5 15 e4 ♙e6 16 ♘ac4 maintains the pressure.

14 ♘d2 ♙d5 15 e4 ♙e6 16 f4 f6

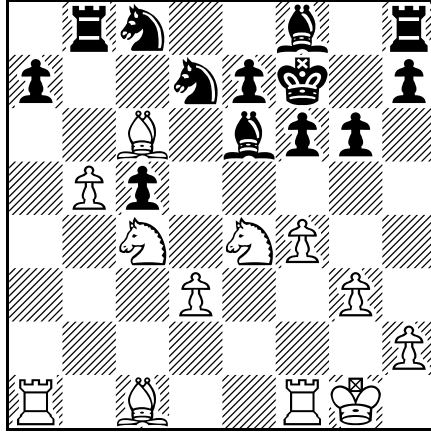
16...g6 was again Timman's recommendation for Black, but now he points out that White has 17 ♙b2 ♖g8 18 ♘ac4 when he is "firmly in control".

17 e5 ♙d5 18 e6! ♙xe6 19 ♙xb7 ♖b8 20 ♙c6

The English bishop exerts fearsome pressure on Black's position.

20...g6 21 ♘ac4 ♘c8 22 ♘e4 ♙f7

Walking into an incisive combinative finish, but Black's position is extremely difficult.



Exercise: Find a strong move for White.

Answer: 23 ♖e5+! ♜xe5

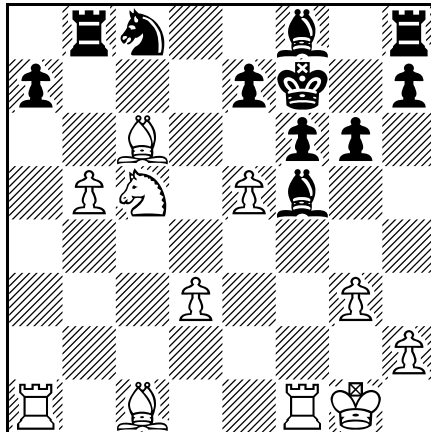
23...fxe5 24 ♜g5+ is immediately disastrous.

24 fxe5 ♕f5 25 ♜xc5

White has finally regained his pawn, and still maintains crushing pressure.

25...♕g7 26 d4 ♖d8

26...♕h3 was the last hope.



Exercise: How can White break through?

Answer: 27 ♖xf5! gxf5 28 e6+ ♔g6 29 ♜d7 ♜d6 30 ♜xb8 ♖xb8 31 ♖xa7 ♜xb5 32 ♖xe7 ♕h6

32...♖xd4 33 ♜e8+ wins.

33 ♜e8+ 1-0

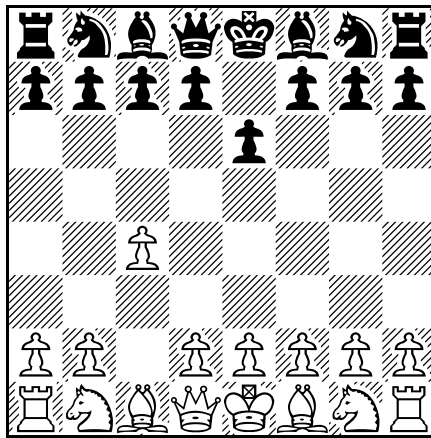
After 33...♖xe8 34 ♖xe8 ♜xc1, simply 35 ♖g8+ ♔h5 36 e7 wins. A splendidly impressive display by Timman, which excellently illustrates White's compensation in such positions.

Game 20
N.McDonald-J.Nicholson
 GLC Masters, London 1986

1 c4

Of course, this type of set-up can arise via numerous move-orders, which makes it impossible to cover all the possible variations. In fact, for the sake of clarity, I have changed the move-order of the main game itself. The position after move 12 was actually reached via the sequence 1 ♖f3 c5 2 g3 b6 3 ♜g2 ♜b7 4 0-0 ♖f6 5 b3 e6 6 ♜b2 ♜e7 7 c4 0-0 8 d3 d5 9 e3 ♖c6 10 ♗e2 dxc4 11 bxc4 ♗c7 12 ♖c3 a6.

1...e6



This move is an important transpositional line. If Black wants to play a QGD set-up, with ...e6 and ...d5, then this is the most accurate move-order. As we know from Chapter 3, if Black adopts the move-order 1...♖f6 2 ♖c3 e6, White has the option of the sharp Mikenas Attack 3 e4.

2 ♖f3

Question: So what happens if White tries to get the Mikenas with 2 ♖c3?

Answer: Black can then play 2...d5 after which White really has nothing better than 3 d4 transposing into a QGD.