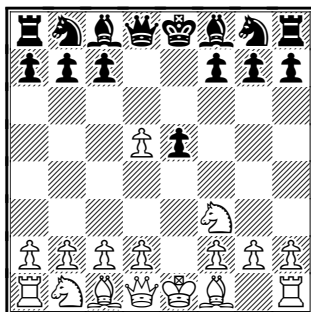


AGAINST THE ELEPHANT GAMBIT

The Elephant Gambit, popular on the club level, has recently received a fair amount of theoretical attention. It is often seen in scholastic tournaments, but even advanced amateurs try it from time to time. After White captures on d5, Black has explored several plans, but they are easy enough to deal with.

1.e4 e5; 2.Nf3 d5; 3.exd5



Position after 3...exd5

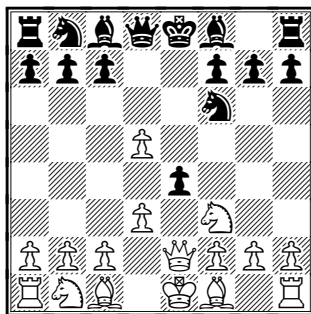
Black has three distinct plans. 3...e4 is the most familiar idea for most players, and we take that as the main line. Black has two very interesting alternatives, which we deal with in the supplement: 3...Qxd5 (A) and the gambit approach 3...Bd6 (B).

4.Qe2 Qe7. The move one would expect to see most often.

4...Be7; 5.Qxe4 Nf6; 6.Bb5+ Bd7; 7.Qe2 Nxd5; 8.Bxd7+ Qxd7; 9.d4 gave White a big edge in Morphy-Paulsen, New York (blindfold) 1857.

4...f5; 5.d3 Nf6; 6.dxe4 fxe4; 7.Nc3 Be7 (7...Bb4; 8.Qb5+ c6; 9.Qxb4 exf3; 10.Bg5 cxd5; 11.O-O-O Nc6; 12.Qa3 Be6 was seen in Tal vs. Lutikov, Tallinn 1964, and Tal pointed out that White could get a clear advantage with 13.gxf3!) 8.Nxe4 O-O; 9.Nxf6+ Bxf6; 10.c3 Re8; 11.Be3 or 10...Qxd5; 11.Qc4 Be6; 12.Qxd5 Bxd5; 13.Be2.

Black has also sacrificed a second pawn by 4...Nf6, and this is probably his most dangerous attempt to seize the initiative. Play continues 5.d3 with four options for Black.



Position after 5.d3

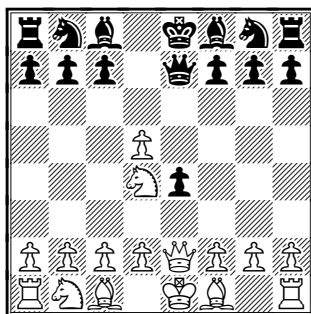
a) 5...Qxd5; 6.Nfd2! Be7; 7.Nxe4 O-O; 8.Nbc3 and White is a full pawn ahead without real problems, Keres vs. Augustin, 1943.

b) 5...Bb4+; 6.c3 O-O; 7.dxe4! Be7; 8.Qc2! Re8; 9.Be2 and Black hasn't gotten anything substantial for his two pawns.

c) 5...Bc5; 6.Bg5 O-O (6...h6; 7.Bxf6 Qxf6; 8.Nc3 O-O; 9.dxe4 is very strong for White.) 7.dxe4 Re8; 8.Nbd2 and White can follow up with Qc4 or O-O-O. Theory gives another, perhaps easier, line favoring White as follows: 6.dxe4 Ng4; 7.Be3 Nxe3; 8.fxe3 c6; 9.Nc3 Qb6; 10.O-O-O Bxe3+; 11.Kb1.

d) 5...Be7; 6.dxe4 O-O; 7.Qd3! (Breyer's move, considered a refutation by Buecker) 7...Na6; 8.Be3 Nb4; 9.Qc4 b5; 10.Qb3 Nxe4; 11.Bxb5 and White had a clear advantage in De Smet vs. Rehfeld, Postal 1989-91.

5.Nd4.



Position after 5.Nd4

5...Qe5.

5...Nf6; 6.Nc3 Qe5; 7.Nf3 Qe7; 8.Ng5 gives White a clear advantage, according to Pachman. 8...Bg4; 9.Qc4 (or 9.Qb5+ c6; 10.dxc6 Nxc6; 11.Bc4) 9...a6; 10.Ngxe4 Nbd7; 11.f3 Bf5; 12.Be2 Nb6 is De Groot vs. Paul, Postal 1987, and now simply 13.d6! cxd6; 14.Qb3 would have destroyed Black's coordination and position.

5...f5; 6.Nc3 g6; 7.Qb5+ (or 7.d3 Bg7; 8.Ndb5 a6; 9.d6! is crushing. 9...cxd6?; 10.Nd5) 7...Kf7; 8.Bc4 Kg7; 9.Ne6+ Kf6; 10.d6! Qxd6; 11.Nxe4+ fxe4; 12.Qg5+ Kf7; 13.Nxc7+ Kg7; 14.Ne8# O'Kelly vs. Frank, Belgian Championship 1959.

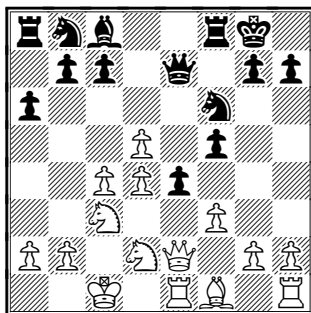
5...g6 is Platz's suggestion, to which we found a good answer in *Big Book of Busts*: 6.d3! exd3 (6...Bg7 proves awkward after 7.Be3!) 7.Qxe7+ Nxe7; 8.c4 c6; 9.Nc3 Bg7; 10.Be3 and Black is very uncomfortable, to say the least.

6.Nb5 Bd6.

6...a6; 7.d4! Qe7; 8.N5c3 gives White a strong initiative.

6...Na6; 7.d4! Qxd5; 8.N1c3 Bb4; 9.Bd2 Bxc3; 10.Nxc3 Qxd4; 11.Nxe4 threatening Bc3 with a large advantage—Buecker. Here 11.O-O is also good.

7.d4! Qe7. 7...exd3; 8.Qxe5+ Bxe5; 9.Bxd3 a6; 10.O-O axb5; 11.Re1 f6; 12.f4 Nd7; 13.Bxb5 wins. 8.c4 Bb4+; 9.Bd2 Bxd2+; 10.Nxd2 a6; 11.Nc3 f5; 12.O-O-O Nf6; 13.Re1 O-O; 14.f3.

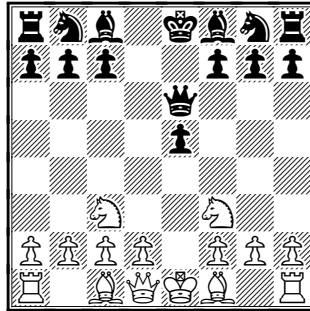


Position after 14.f3

White is winning a second pawn. Morphy vs. Mongredien, Paris 1859. The game continued 14...b5; 15.fxe4 fxe4; 16.Ncxe4 bxc4; 17.Qxc4 Kh8; 18.Bd3 Bb7; 19.Nxf6 Qxf6; 20.Rhf1 Qd8; 21.Rxf8+ Qxf8; 22.Qb4.

Supplement:

A) 3...Qxd5!? is the Cozio Variation. 4.Nc3 is a strange sort of Scandinavian Defense (1.e4 d5; 2.exd5 Qxd5; 3.Nc3). Black has discouraged d4, but on the other hand he is behind in development, and has committed to ...e5, creating a potential target. 4...Qe6. 4...Qa5; 5.Bc4 is very risky for Black due to the ideas of Ng5 and O-O; followed by Re1.



Position after 4...Qe6

5.Bb5+. Rapid development!

5.b3 threatening Bc4 is another idea. For a positional treatment, 5.g3!? isn't in the databases, but looks promising, intending to just fianchetto, castle and play Re1. For example:

a) 5...e4; 6.Ng5 Qe7; 7.Nd5!? Qxg5 (7...Qe5; 8.Bc4 leaves Black's queen in an exposed position.) 8.Nxc7+ Kd8; 9.Nxa8 Qd5 (9...b6? can be handled by 10.d3 or 9...Bg4; 10.d4.) 10.Bg2 b5; 11.d3 Qxa8; 12.dxe4+ with a clear advantage for White.

b) 5...Be7; 6.Bg2 e4; 7.Nd4 Qe5 (7...Qc4; 8.Ndb5!? a6; 9.d3! exd3; 10.Bd5 Qc5; 11.Be3 gives White a winning game.) 8.Nb3 Nf6; 9.O-O Bg4; 10.Qe1 is probably the best way for White to keep an advantage. (10.d4!? Qh5) After 10...Nc6; 11.d4 Qh5; 12.Nxe4 White definitely has the better game.

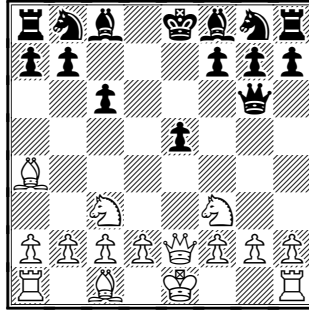
c) 5...Nc6; 6.Bg2 Nf6; 7.O-O should be slightly better for White.
5...c6.

5...Nc6; 6.O-O, when Re1 and/or d4 is very depressing for Black.

5...Bd7; 6.O-O and Re1 is again a problem, whereas 6...Bxb5; 7.Nxb5 Bd6; 8.d4! opens up the play against Black's underdeveloped position.

6.Ba4. Intending Bb3, O-O, Re1 etc. **6...Qg6!** The most challenging try, hitting g2. 6...Nf6 (6...e4 is also countered simply by 7.O-

O!) 7.O-O Bd6; 8.d4 e4; 9.Ng5 Qe7; 10.Re1 is very strong, for example Bf5; 11.Ncx4 Bxe4; 12.Nxe4 Nxe4; 13.Qf3 and White comes out a pawn up. 7.Qe2.



Position after 7...Be7

7...Be7!?

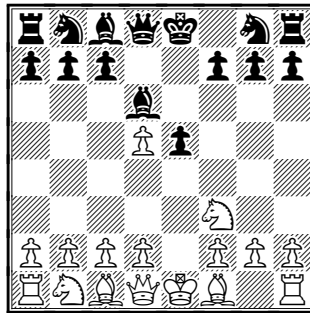
7...Bd6; 8.d4 Qxg2; 9.Rg1 Qh3; 10.Bb3! intending Bxf7+ according to Buecker.

7...Qxg2; 8.Rg1 Qh3; 9.Qxe5+ Qe6; 10.Bb3!

8.Bb3 Nh6. Losing is 8...Qxg2?; 9.Rg1 Qh3; 10.Rg3 Qh5; 11.Rxg7. 9.d3. White maintains the lead in development while the knight on h6 is awkwardly placed. Buecker gives the following interesting try for Black: 9...Nf5!; 9...O-O; is met by 10.Qxe5 while 9...f6; 10.Bxh6! Qxh6; 11.d4 and White's development and powerful bishop on b3 give him the advantage.

10.O-O Nd4; 11.Nxd4 exd4; 12.Re1 Be6; 13.Nb1! Kd7!; 14.Nd2. 14.Bxe6+ Qxe6; 15.Qxe6+ fxe6; 16.Nd2 Na6; 17.a3 also maintains an advantage, due to the weak squares along the e-file and White's better bishop. 14...Re8. 15.Nc4 Bf6. 15...Bxc4; 16.Bxc4 Na6; 17.Qf3 gives White the two bishops and ongoing pressure. 16.Bf4 Na6; 17.Nd6 Re7; 18.Qf3 leaves Black with real difficulties.

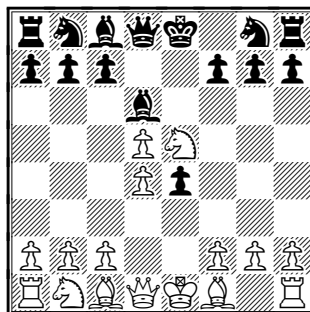
B) 3...Bd6 is the Maroczy Gambit.



Position after 3...Bd6

This move characterizes the modern-day gambit handling of the Elephant, whereas 3...e4 might be better called “The Center Game in Reverse.” Be that as it may, the authors treated 3...Bd6 superficially in our *Big Book of Busts*, and will try to recommend something more straightforward here. Black wants to develop quickly and either regain his pawn on d5 or claim territory with ...e4. Still, White has the advantage of the first move and once again he can develop rapidly.

4.d4. The most ambitious, but 2...d5 expert Stefan Buecker strongly recommends 4.Nc3 Nf6; 5.d3!, intending simply Bg5 and either Be2 with O-O, or g3, Bg2, and O-O. It’s awkward for Black to recover the d5-pawn. One of Buecker’s lines continues 5...Nbd7; 6.Bg5 h6; 7.Bh4 Qe7; 8.Qe2 O-O; 9.O-O-O and White has an attack by g4-g5 in mind. 5...h6 can be met by 6.g3 or just 6.Be2 O-O; 7.Be3 with Nd2 and Bf3 to follow. 4...e4; 5.Ne5.



Position after 5.Ne5

5...Nf6.

a) 5...f6?? loses to the standard 6.Qh5+ g6; 7.Nxg6

b) 5...Ne7 is very logical, hitting d5 and threatening ...f6 in some cases. Jonathon Rogers, author of a book on the Elephant Gambit, considers this inferior due to 6.Nc3!, giving some remarkable analysis. Now that White holds the d-pawn, critical is 6...f6 (6...Bf5 is countered by 7.Nc4 Bb4; 8.Ne3. 6...Bb4; 7.Bb5+ c6; 8.dxc6 Nbxc6; 9.Nxc6 bxc6; 10.Bc4 Nd5; 11.Bd2 Nb6 is older analysis, which Rogers deftly refutes: 12.Nxe4! Qe7 (12...Bxd2+; 13.Nxd2 Qxd4; 14.c3 with a clear extra pawn.) 13.Be2! Qxe4; 14.Bxb4 Qxg2? 15.Bf3.) 7.Bb5+ Kf8 and Rogers finds the beautiful solution 8.Qh5! fxe5; 9.dxe5 Bb4; 10.e6 g6 (10...Ng6; 11.Bg5) 11.Qe5 Kg8; 12.Qf6! Qf8; 13.Qxf8+ Kxf8; 14.Bh6+ Kg8; 15.Be8!

6.Bb5+ Bd7. 6...Nbd7; 7.Bg5 or just 7.O-O, when White will play c4 soon thereafter. 7.Nxd7 Nbx7; 8.O-O. *Nunn's Chess Openings* also likes 8.c4, for example 8...a6; 9.Ba4 b5!; 10.cxb5 Nxd5; 11.Nc3. 8...a6.

8...O-O; is countered by 9.c4. On 8...Nxd5, 9.Nd2! is intended to discourage 9...f5 because 10.Nxe4 is hard to meet., for example 10...fxe4; 11.Qh5+ or 10...Bxh2+; 11.Kh1 fxe4; 12.Qh5+.

9.Bxd7+ Qxd7; 10.c4 O-O; 11.Nc3 b5; 12.Bg5

This is given as a clear advantage for White in *Nunn's Chess Openings*, and that seems right. 12...b4; 13.Ne2 Ng4! looks plausible, but 14.h3 Nh2; 15.c5 Nxf1 (15...Nf3+; 16.gxf3 Qxh3; 17.cxd6 exf3; 18.Nf4.) 16.cxd6 f6; 17.Bc1 leaves Black short of compensation.

Summary Chart #21

ELEPHANT GAMBIT: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d5

ECO Code: C40

	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	exd5 Bd6	Bb5+ c6	dxc6 bxc6	Bc4 Nf6	O-O e4	Ng5 Bxh2+		
2	exd5 Bd6	Bb5+ c6	dxc6 Nxc6	d4 e4	Qe2 Qe7	Nfd2 Nf6	Nc3	
3	exd5 Bd6	Bb5+ Nd7	Qe2 Ngf6	Nc3 O-O	d3 Nxd5	Nxd5 c6	Nc3 cxb5	Nxb5
4	exd5 Bd6	Bb5+ Bd7	Bxd7+ Nxd7	d3 Ngf6	Nc3 h6	O-O O-O	Re1	
5	exd5 Qxd5!?	Nc3 Qe6	Bb5+ c6	Ba4 Qg6	Qe2 Ne7	Bb3 f6	d4 Qxg2	Rg1
6	exd5 e4	Qe2 Be7	Qxe4 Nf6	Qa4+ c6	dxc6 Nxc6	Be2 O-O	O-O Nb4	a3
7	exd5 e4	Qe2 Nf6	d3! Be7	dxe4 O-O	Nc3 Re8	Bd2 Bb4	O-O-O Bxc3	