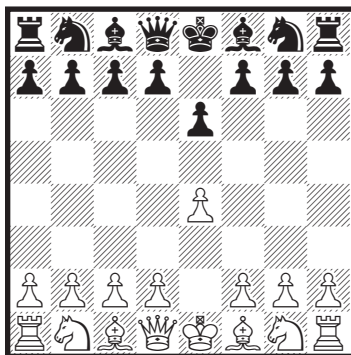


WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS

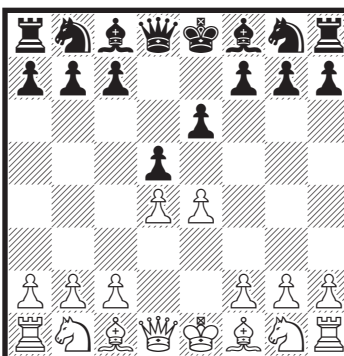
FRENCH DEFENSE



1.e4 e6

The French Defense is an opening which most players either love or hate. With the very first move Black tells the bishop at c8 that it is going to be a long time before that piece will play an active role in the game, at least on the kingside. White will be granted an advantage in the center and an advantage in space. Why then, should anyone want to play it as Black, especially such distinguished players as World Champions Botvinnik and Petrosian?

The answer lies in the solid nature of the defense, and the ease with which over-ambitious play by White can be punished. Most games continue 2.d4 d5 (Black can slide into the St. George Defense with 2...a6 instead) when White is faced with a serious decision: what to do about the vulnerable pawn at e4?

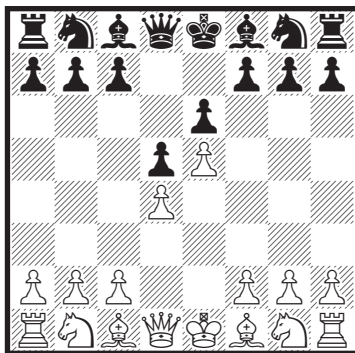


In general, the most principled reply is to defend the pawn while developing a piece, and there are two possibilities here for the knight at b1. In the Classical and Winawer Variations, White chooses 3.Nc3. The Classical ap-

WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS

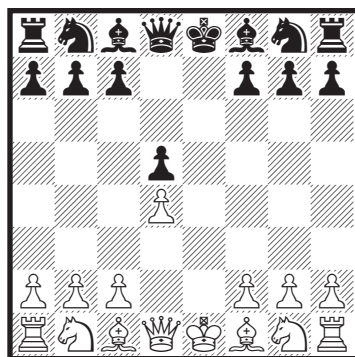
proach is to respond 3...Nf6, also developing a knight, but the dominant line has been Winawer's 3...Bb4, which pins the knight at c3 and threatens to capture it. In the Tarrasch Variation, White plays 3.Nd2, which temporarily blocks the bishop at c1 but which does not allow the pin at b4 because on 3...Bb4?! White can reply simply 4.c3!

Of course White can also advance or exchange the e-pawn.



The Advance Variation 3.e5 locks in the enemy bishop at c8 and secures an advantage in space, but Black can obtain counterplay with 3...c5 followed by ...Nc6 and ...Qb6 with a lot of pressure at d4, and can also attack the pawn chain with ...f6, which is a typical French strategy.

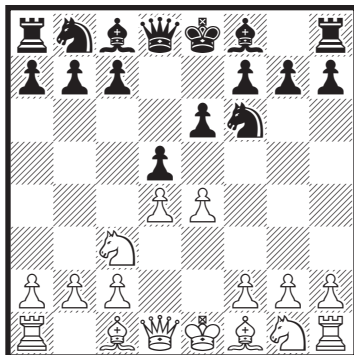
As with most symmetrical lines, the exchange at d5 does not achieve anything.



After 3.exd5 exd5 Black can comfortably develop all of the army, and this strategy is rarely adopted by White. Other rare approaches by White are 2.d3; 2.Qe2, 2.f4 and even 2.Bb5!?, which prevents ...d5 by pinning the d-pawn, and can lead to a silly draw after 2...Qg5; 3.Bf1 Qd8; 4.Bb5 etc.

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CLASSICAL VARIATION



1.e4 e6
2.d4 d5
3.Nc3 Nf6

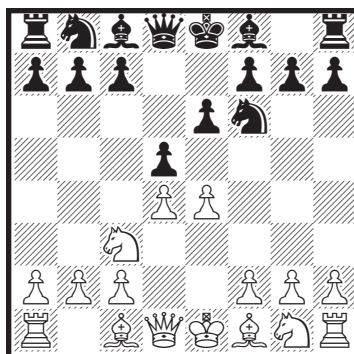
The **Classical Variation** is one of the oldest chess openings, and it is enjoying a renaissance with world championship challenger Nigel Short leading the charge. While the World Champions have always been up to the challenge, for a long time mere mortals did not dare to adopt these passive lines. In the 1990s, however, several new resources have been found for Black, and the MacCutcheon Variation, where Black meets the standard 4.Bg5 with the exciting 4...Bb4!? has renewed interest on the part of Francophiles.

Black suffers from the usual French bad bishop, locked in at c8, but counterplay is often present in the center. When the White pawn advances to e5, as is usually the case, Black will try to undermine the d4-e5 chain by playing ...c5 and, eventually, attack it with ...f6.

(31) KASPAROV - SHORT

Amsterdam (Euwe Memorial), 1994

1.e4 e6; 2.d4 d5; 3.Nc3 Nf6.



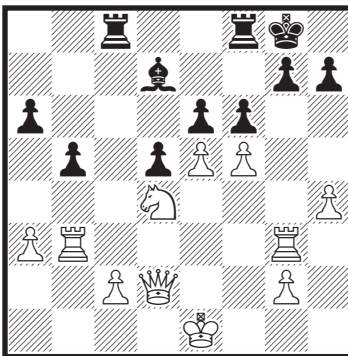
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Now White can play 4.Bg5, which allows either a pure Classical with 4...Be7 or a MacCutcheon with 4...Bb4. Often White avoids both by putting the question to the knight immediately with 4.e5. 4.e5. The old Steinitz Variation is enjoying renewed popularity as well. 4...Nfd7; 5.f4 c5; 6.Nf3 Nc6. This is the normal continuation. The battle rages for control of the d-pawn. 7.Be3 cxd4.

The alternative is 7...Qb6 which can be met by 8.Qd2 The pawn sacrifice offered by this move has rarely been tested in the tournament arena. I was quite surprised when young Grandmaster Gabriel Schwartzman accepted it against me at the 1994 United States Open. The game was very exciting, and shows how the inspiration derived from the Kasparov game we are examining can be translated effectively into a similar plan.

My game continued 8...Qxb2; 9.Rb1 Qa3; 10.dxc5. This was my own idea. I decided to eliminate the dark-squared bishops and use Kasparov's attacking formation on the kingside. 10...Bxc5; 11.Bxc5 Qxc5; 12.Bd3 a6; 13.h4 Nb6; 14.Rh3! Nc4; 15.Bxc4 Qxc4; 16.a3! This is a very important move. I had to free the knight from the need to hang around at c3 just to defend the poor pawn. 16...b5; 17.Ne2 Bd7; 18.Nfd4! This eliminates the enemy knight, and I have a decent endgame even without the pawn, because Black is left with a very bad bishop.

18...Nxd4; 19.Nxd4 Rc8; 20.Rbb3! There are two points to this move. One is to be ready to transfer to the kingside at a moment's notice, and the other, more subtle, will be revealed shortly. 20...0-0, 21.Rhg3 f6. Standard French counterplay. 22.f5!? I hadn't worked out all the tactics here. But I had a great deal of confidence and had seen some pleasant long variations, beginning at move 27!

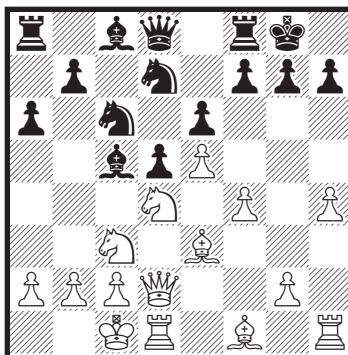


22...exf5. This fell in with my plans. But what about the alternative? Could I have held the position following: (22...fxe5; 23.Qh6 Rf7; 24.Rb4 Qc5!; 25.fxe6 Re7!; 26.exd7 exd4+; 27.Kf1 Rf8+; 28.Kg1 d3+; 29.Kh2 Kh8!; 29...dxc2? allows 30.Rbg4! with devastating threats at g7! 30.Qf4! Rxd7; 31.Qg4 Rdf7; 32.cxd3 Qc1. It might not have been easy, but neither would it have been a simple matter to find all these moves at the board!) 23.Rbc3! A critical preparatory move before the real attack begins. 23...Qa4; 24.Qh6 Rf7; 25.exf6 g6; 26.Rxg6+ hxg6; 27.Qxg6+ I had already worked out the rest of

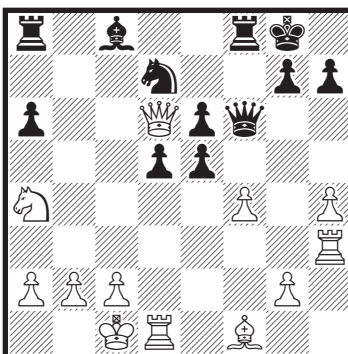
WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS

the game, and didn't bother to look for any alternative plans. 27...Kf8; 28.Qh6+ Ke8; 29.Qh8+ Rf8; 30.Re3+ Kd8; 31.Qxf8+ Kc7; 32.Qc5+ Kb8; 33.Qd6+ Rc7; 34.Rc3 Qa5; 35.Qxc7+ and my opponent resigned. This was one of the biggest upsets of the Open. Now back to our Kasparov game

8.Nxd4 Bc5; 9.Qd2 0-0; 10.0-0-0 a6; 11.h4

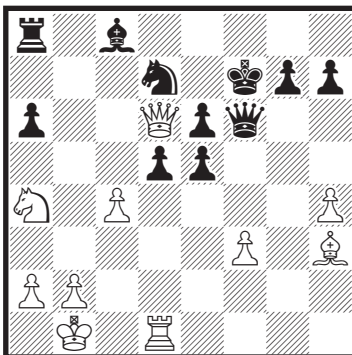


The point of this move is to provide a route to the third rank for the rook. In the game cited at move seven we saw this idea at work. 11...Nxd4; 12.Bxd4 b5; 13.Rh3 b4; 14.Na4 Bxd4; 15.Qxd4 f6. This was an original idea, but 15...Qa5 would have been a better choice. 16.Qxb4 fxe5; 17.Qd6! 17.fxe5 Nxe5 gives Black fewer headaches. 17...Qf6.

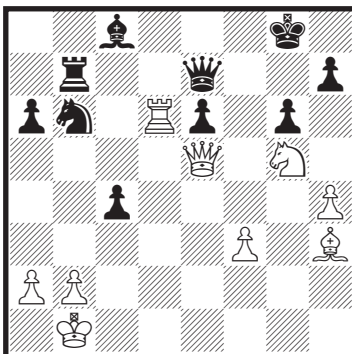


Now Kasparov plays a brilliant and unexpected move. 18.f5!! The pawn cannot be captured. 18...Qh6+. 18...exf5; 19.Qxd5+ Kh8; 20.Qxa8 wins a rook; 18...Qxf5; 19.Rf3 Qg4; 20.Rxf8+ Nxf8; 21.Nb6 Bb7; 22.Nxa8 Bxa8; 23.Bxa6 Qxg2; 24.Rf1 and Black can resign. 19.Kb1 Rxf5. The pawn is gone, but another file is open! Against 19...Nf6 White could try 20.fxe6. 20.Rf3 Rxf3; 21.gxf3 Qf6; 22.Bh3 Kf7. There was little choice, as Kasparov pointed out that 22...Nf8; 23.Nb6 Qxf3 loses to 24.Rf1 Qxh3; 25.Rxf8 mate. 23.c4.

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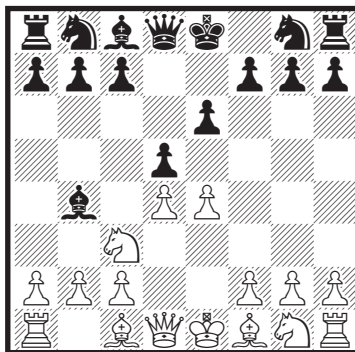
Here Short might have been better off with 23...d4, keeping the d-file closed. 23...dxc4; 24.Nc3 Qe7; 25.Qc6 Rb8; 26.Ne4 Nb6! Short finds the only defense, but Kasparov still has a huge advantage. 26...Nf8 defends the e-pawn but White wins with 27.Nd6+ Kg8; 28.Nxc8 Qb4; 29.Bxe6+ Kh8; 30.b3! as given by Kasparov. After 30...cxb3; 31.Bxb3 Black has no more attack. 27.Ng5+ Kg8; 28.Qe4 g6; 29.Qxe5 Rb7; 30.Rd6.



The e-pawn is doomed. 30...c3; 31.Bxe6+ Bxe6; 32.Rxe6. Black resigned. Kasparov provided the following convincing conclusion: 32...Nc4; 33.Qxc3 Na3+; 34.Kc1 Qd7; 35.Rc6 and the threat of Rc8+ is fatal. White won.

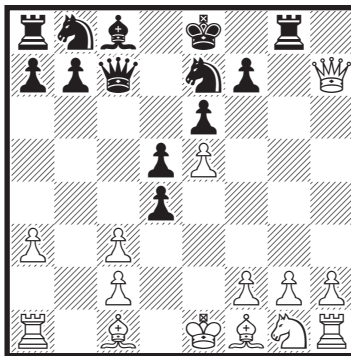
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WINAWER VARIATION



- 1.e4 e6
- 2.d4 d5
- 3.Nc3 Bb4

The Winawer is the sharpest variation of the French, and from Botvinnik's time to quite recently it dominated the French arena. It leads to very complex play, an example of which is the French Poisoned Pawn Variation. 1.e4 e6; 2.d4 d5; 3.Nc3 Bb4; 4.e5 c5; 5.a3 Bxc3+; 6.bxc3 Ne7; 7.Qg4 Qc7; 8.Qxg7 Rg8; 9.Qxh7 cxd4 and here White has a choice.

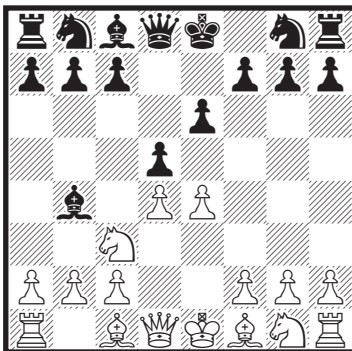


Both 10.Kd1 and 10.Ne2 are common. In either case White has problems developing, but Black still has that bad bishop at c8. The evaluation of these positions remains controversial. In any case, thorough knowledge of the many well-analyzed variations is essential to playing the Winawer effectively as Black or White.

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(32) TAL - BOTVINNIK World Championship (12), 1961

1.e4 e6; 2.d4 d5; 3.Nc3 Bb4.

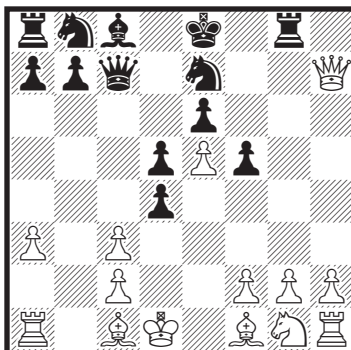


The Winawer is the most deeply investigated variation of the French. As such, it attracts players who enjoy the challenge of exploring hundreds of lines, looking for improvements which can deliver a full point against a less well-prepared opponent. 4.e5 c5; 5.a3 Bxc3+; 6.bxc3 Qc7.

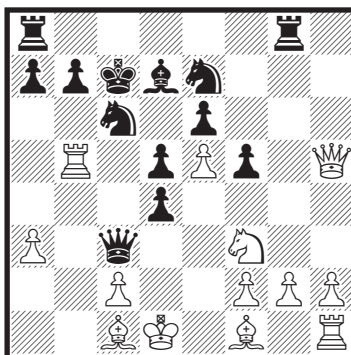
This is the most complex, yet at the same time, one of the most common continuations. With the main alternative, 6...Ne7, Black offers a pair of pawns on the kingside, but sees great counterplay in the center. Often, neither king enjoys the safety of a castled position. The text gives Black one additional option, which is explored in this game. 7.Qg4 f5. This is possible because Black chose 6...Qc7 rather than 6...Ne7.

Now the g-pawn is protected. The price Black pays is that ...f6 is no longer an option, so the White center is easier to maintain. 7...Ne7 is more popular. After 8.Qxg7 Rg8, 9.Qxh7 cxd4 White chooses between 10.Kd1 and 10.Ne2, each aimed at addressing the threat of ...Qxc3+. 8.Qg3 Ne7. Black does not have to offer the g-pawn here. 8...cxd4; 9.cxd4 Ne7 (9...Qxc2; 10.Bd2 lets White take over the c-file with Rc1.) 10.Bd2 0-0; 11.Bd3 b6; 12.Ne2 Rf7 was seen in Diez del Corral-Petrosian, Palma de Mallorca 1969, where Petrosian pointed out that 13.h4! would have given White a small advantage. 9.Qxg7 Rg8; 10.Qxh7 cxd4; 11.Kd1.

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White must do something about the pressure on the c-file. The king is relatively safe, since Black has only the queen to attack with. If Black is able to marshal more attacking power, however, things can become dangerous. 11...Bd7. 11...Nbc6; 12.Nf3 Nxe5; 13.Bg5 N7g6 was played in Gligoric-Petrosian at the 1959 Candidates tournament, but Euwe discovered that 14.Bf6! is overpowering, so this line has been retired. 12.Qh5+ Kd8. 12...Ng6; 13.Ne2 d3; 14.cxd3 Ba4+; 15.Ke1 Qxe5; 16.Bg5 Nc6; 17.d4 Qc7; 18.h4 gave Tal a clear advantage in the first game of the 1960 title match against Botvinnik. 13.Nf3 Qxc3; 14.Ra2 Nbc6; 15.Rb2 Kc7; 16.Rb5!

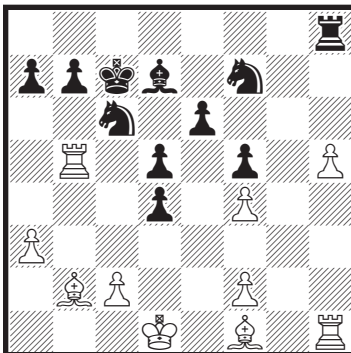


This move controls important squares at a5 and c5. 16...Rh8. Tal now sacrifices the queen, noting the miserable position of Black's queen. Nevertheless, the less flashy 17.Qg5! would have been wiser, objectively 17.Qxh8 Rxh8; 18.Bb2 Qxf3+; 19.gxf3 Ng6?. What would Tal have done if Botvinnik had found 19...Rh4!; for example 20.f4 Ng6; (20...Rxf4; 21.h4 Nxe5; 22.Rb3 Ng4; 23.Ke1 Ba4; 24.Rg3 Bxc2; 25.Be2! d3; 26.Bxg4 Rxc4; 27.Rxc4 fxc4; 28.Kd2 is given in the classic work on the Winawer by John Moles.) 21.Bc1 Nxf4; 22.Bxf4 Rxf4; 23.h4 Nxe5 with the deadly threat of ...Ng4, which White cannot meet because the rook at b5 is attacked.

Now it is interesting to note that in the authoritative 1993 monograph on the main lines of the Winawer by Viktor Korchnoi, the analysis ends here with the opinion

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that Black stands much better. But Moles had already published the following analysis in his 1975 book! 24.Rb3 Ng4; 25.Ke1 Nxf2; (25...Be8; 26.h5 Nxf2; 27.h6! Nxf1; 28.h7 Rh4; 29.Rh3 winning.) 26.Rg1 Ng4; 27.h5 Be8; 28.Rh3 Re4+; 29.Be2! and White wins. The moral of the story: don't ignore older sources of information—they may contain nuggets overlooked in more recent works! 20.h4 Ngxe5; 21.h5 Nf7; 22.f4.



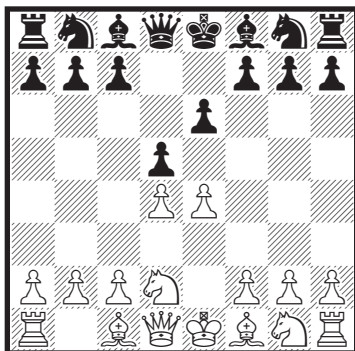
White has too many assets here. There is the extra exchange, of course, and a powerful passed pawn. In addition, the bishop pair can be used effectively. Finally, it is hard to see how Black's pawn mass can be activated. 22...Nd6; 23.Rb3 Ne4; 24.Ke1 Rh6; 25.Be2 Be8; 26.Rd3. White has to trade the pawn at h5 for the one at d4. 26...Nf6; 27.Bxd4 Nxd4; 28.Rxd4 Bxh5; 29.Rd3! The awkward position of the rook at h6 is exploited. A deadly pin is threatened. 29...Rh7; 30.Rdh3 Bg6. This is the only way to release the pressure, but the exchange of rooks accentuates White's advantage.

31.Rxh7+ Nxh7; 32.Rh6 Nf8; 33.Rh8 Nd7; 34.Rg8 Bf7; 35.Rg7. White has effectively improved his position. The e-pawn will be his reward. 35...Be8; 36.Re7 Kd8; 37.Rxe6 Bf7; 38.Rh6 Ke7; 39.Bd3 Be6. Now it is the turn of the f-pawn. 40.Rh5 Nf6; 41.Rg5. There was no point in continuing since the adjournment point was reached and if 41...Ne4, then 42.Rh5 leads to a winning position. White won.

The theory-dependent nature of the opening has led many players, including World Champions to prefer the quieter streams of the Tarrasch Variation.

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TARRASCH VARIATION



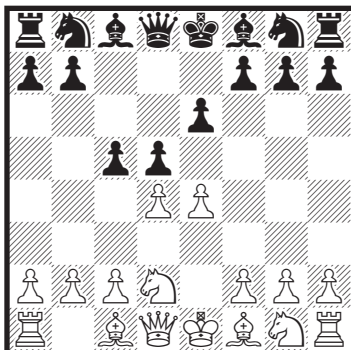
1.e4 e6
2.d4 d5
3.Nd2

In the Tarrasch Variation, White stations the knight at d2 rather than c3. Black is no longer able to pin it as in the Winawer or MacCutcheon Variations, because against ...Bb4 White can always play c3. The Tarrasch Variation has a quite different nature than the Classical or Winawer. Often positions arise which see one side or the other accept an isolated d-pawn, an important structural feature which determines the flow of the game.

Tal used the Tarrasch Variation effectively as White, winning many impressive games. It is a good choice for beginners and experts alike, because it is fairly simple to play. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that Black has a choice of several acceptable plans, including 3...Nf6, 3...c5 and 3...a6. Guimard's anti-positional 3...Nc6!? is also sometimes seen, even though it temporarily blocks the advance of the c-pawn.

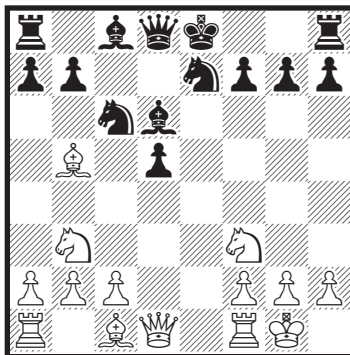
(33) KARPOV - UHLMANN Madrid, 1973

1.e4 e6; 2.d4 d5; 3.Nd2 c5.

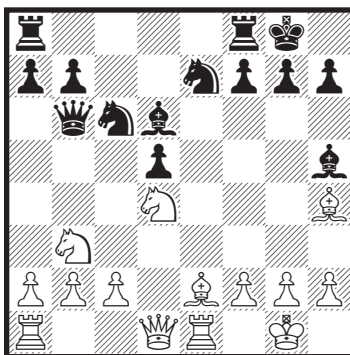


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This remains one of the most popular defenses to the Tarrasch. 4.exd5 exd5. Black can also capture with the queen. 5.Ngf3 Nc6; 6.Bb5 Bd6; 7.dxc5 Bxc5. Tarrasch, who developed this approach for White, loved isolated pawns. He was disappointed to discover that Black would have that “luxury” in his own pet line. On the other hand, most strong players consider the isolated pawn a slight weakness unless accompanied by a strong initiative or good piece play, so many players have favored the White side. 8.0–0 Nge7; 9.Nb3 Bd6.



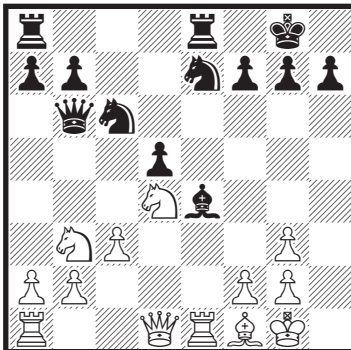
In positions with an isolated d-pawn White has two main objectives: the blockade of the isolated pawn and the elimination of Black's dark-squared bishop. 10.Bg5! This move directly implements White's plan by transferring the bishop to a post from which it can reach the h2-g8 diagonal (via h4 to g3). 10...0–0; 11.Bh4 Bg4; 12.Be2 Bh5?! The superior 12...Re8! had already been introduced by Uhlmann, but he was probably afraid of a prepared innovation. 13.Re1 Qb6; 14.Nfd4!



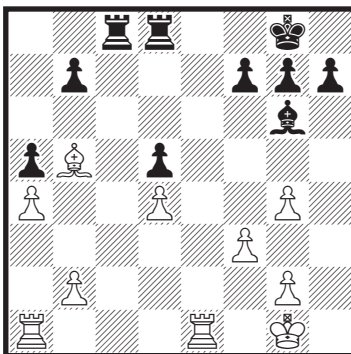
Black must now do something about the bishop at h5. 14...Bg6. If Black had exchanged bishops, the isolated pawn would have less protection. Uhlmann decides that the bishop may be of use at e4, since any eventual f2-f3 will weaken the a7-g1 diagonal. 15.c3 Rfe8; 16.Bf1! Karpov realizes that this is the best square for the bishop, since on f3 it could be attacked by Nc6-e5. As we will see, the control of the e-file plays an

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important role in the remainder of the game. 16...Be4; 17.Bg3!. Now that all of White's pieces have been properly positioned, the exchange of bishops is appropriate. 17...Bxg3; 18.hxg3.



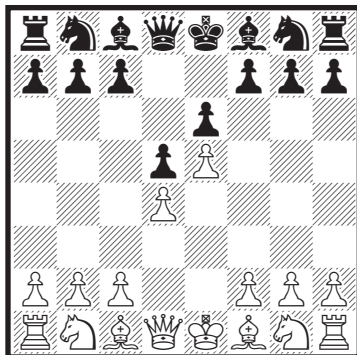
The cluster of pawns in front of the king creates an insurmountable protective barrier. 18...a5!? The weakening of b5 is probably more significant than Black's mild initiative, but perhaps the move was played without taking into consideration White's potential sacrifice of the b-pawn. 19.a4 Nxd4; 20.Nxd4! Karpov correctly maintains the blockade with the piece, since if 20...Qxb2 then 21.Nb5! threatens both 22.Nc7 and 22.Re2. 20...Nc6; 21.Bb5! The pin encourages Black's rook to leave the e-file. Probably 21...Bg6 would have been best here. 21...Red8?!; 22.g4! A very clever move, the point of which is to create threats of trapping the enemy bishop should it retreat to g6 (with f2-f4-f5). 22...Nxd4. Now White gets a superior endgame. 23.Qxd4 Qxd4; 24.cxd4 Rac8. 24...Kf8 would not have prevented infiltration by the White rooks: 25.Re2 Rac8; 26.f3 Bg6; 27.Rae1 Rc7?; 28.Re8+ Rxe8; 29.Rxe8 mate. 25.f3 Bg6.



26.Re7. The immediate objective has been achieved. After the doubling of rooks on the e-file, Karpov illustrates his famous endgame technique. 26...b6; 27.Rae1 h6; 28.Rb7 Rd6; 29.Ree7 h5; 30.gxh5 Bxh5; 31.g4 Bg6; 32.f4 Rc1+; 33.Kf2 Rc2+; 34.Ke3 Be4; 35.Rxf7 Rg6; 36.g5 Kh7; 37.Rfe7 Rxb2; 38.Be8! Rb3+; 39.Ke2 Rb2+; 40.Ke1 Rd6; 41.Rxg7+ Kh8; 42.Rge7. White won.

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ADVANCE VARIATION



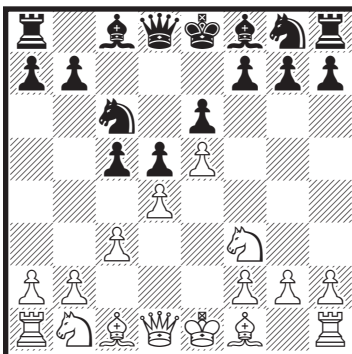
1.e4 e6
2.d4 d5
3.e5

The Advance Variation with 3.e5 appeals to many amateur players because it leads to an advantage in space and is easy to play. At Championship level, however, it has been terribly ineffective, and only a few top professionals have been found on the White side. In typical French fashion Black will try to undermine the White pawn chain, starting with pressure at d4 via 3...c5.

As Black, Botvinnik and Petrosian have demonstrated that this system is not difficult to play. By studying their games, French fans can eliminate the Advance Variation from their worry list. Still, one must be well prepared, as there are some sharp lines and White can achieve good results against unprepared opponents, as the next game shows.

(34) TAL - NEI
Soviet Union, 1958

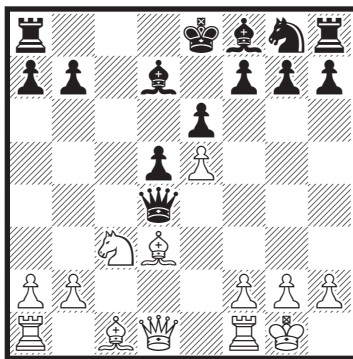
1.e4 e6; 2.d4 d5; 3.e5 c5; 4.c3 Nc6; 5.Nf3.



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The Advance Variation is rarely used by top players, because it leads to a very fixed pawn structure, and Black's source of counterplay is a no-brainer: attack key points along the b2-e5 pawn chain.

5...Qb6; 6.Bd3. This is the Milner-Barry Gambit, a fun line which was developed by the late Sir Stuart Milner-Barry, one of the most important figures on the British chess scene. 6...cxd4; 7.cxd4 Bd7. This move is intended to set up the threat of capturing at d4, which would have led to disaster if played immediately. 7...Nxd4?; 8.Nxd4 Qxd4; 9.Bb5+ picks up the Black queen. 8.0-0 Nxd4; 9.Nxd4. There are alternatives, but this is the most testing continuation. 9...Qxd4; 10.Nc3.

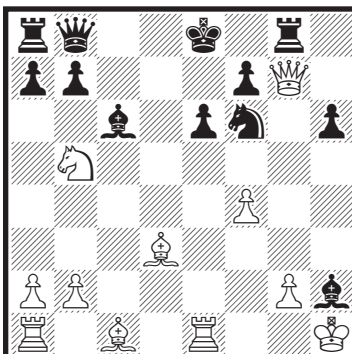


The position is more complicated than it seems. Even the American theoretician and devoted Francophile John Watson is unsure how Black should continue. He has great faith in the plan adopted by Nei in this game, and indeed, it has become the main line. 10...Qxe5. Black can also try 10...a6 and 10...Ne7.

There is plenty of terra incognita to explore. 11.Re1 Qd6?!. 11...Qb8; 12.Nxd5 Bd6; 13.Qg4 Kf8; 14.Bd2 h5; 15.Qh3 Bc6 is now the normal continuation. Watson has played it several times, and his conclusion is that after 16.Ne3 Nf6; 17.Nc4 Be7; 18.Bc3 and now 18...Ng4!, an original idea which has not yet been tested, Black stands well. In fact, he sums up: "The whole 10...Qxe5 line favors Black, in my opinion."

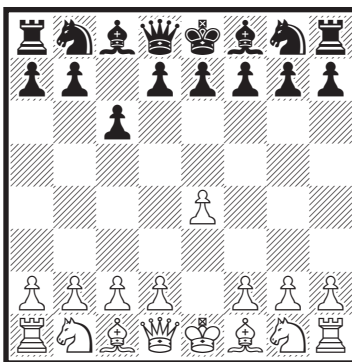
12.Nb5. Returning to our game, we see what happens when Black tries to hold on to the d-pawn. 12...Qb8; 13.Qf3 Bd6. Black is hoping that White will be satisfied to trade the knight for the good bishop, but White has greater ambitions. 14.Qxd5! Bxh2+. This pawn does not matter. The clerics can fatten themselves on pawns, but their monarch will pay the bill. 15.Kh1 Bc6; 16.Qg5! This move is credited to Pachman, but as we see, it had already been played in a game. 16...Nf6; 17.f4! Tal is patient. The g-pawn will be captured, but only at the appropriate moment. 17...h6. Forcing matters, but there was nothing better. 18.Qxg7 Rg8.

WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS



Perhaps Black was hoping that White would settle for the knight at f6. **19.Rxe6!!** A brilliant finish, typical of Tal. **19...fxe6; 20.Bg6+ Kd8 21.Qxf6+.** This game is not in the *Complete Games of Mikhail Tal*, and that is truly a pity, because it is quite elegant. **White won.**

CARO-KANN DEFENSE



1.e4 c6

In the **Caro-Kann Defense**, Black will advance the d-pawn to d5 on the second move, confronting the White pawn at e4. Unlike the French, the Caro-Kann does not force Black's bishop to sit idly at c8. Instead, it has an open highway to the kingside, and is usually developed quite early in the game.

Even though players often castle on opposite wings, the Caro-Kann cannot be defeated by direct attacks in most cases. The Black position can usually absorb whatever White throws at it, and endgame play is typical. This is why World Champions have often employed the defense, since their superior