

How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings



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TRAFFORD

How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings

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Overview

This chess book is meant to replace a host of other chess books. It provides you with practical ways to play against a wide number of chess openings so that you don't have to buy specialized books about each one. Who has the time to read all those books anyway? Even if you did, do you want to look through them (often in vain) to pick out something to play? Instead, we suggest straightforward and in most cases easy-to-learn answers to each opening system. *How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings* is aimed all the way from average players to experienced ones interested in strengthening their opening repertoire. We think that it will also increase your understanding of chess in general. The emphasis is upon achieving a safe and promising game, hopefully a favorable one but in any case one that is comfortable to play.

The general idea behind this project is easy to understand, but the details may need some explanation. What is covered here? The short answer is that we give suggestions to meet systems that both players of White and Black must face after the moves 1.d4 d5. These systems are either lesser-played ones (known as "irregular" openings) or they are fully legitimate and normal ones that constitute obstructions to reaching the very main lines. We want to show both those who play 1.d4 and those who play 1...d5 how to handle such openings without having to invest more time in doing so than is absolutely necessary. This requires specific choices about which openings qualify for consideration. We have emphasized chess variations that you will actually see over the board rather than an abstract list of obscure possibilities. At the same time we make sure that we cover anything that must be known in order to reach your desired main line opening. Which main line openings would that include? For one, the traditional Queen's Gambit Declined Variations, e.g., the positions after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6, including those after 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 and 3.Nc3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5. Secondly, the Queen's Gambit Accepted with 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4. Another main line is the Slav Defense 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6. These three openings have been major systems for well more than 50 years they are examined in depth in seemingly endless books and articles and we couldn't begin to present the extensive material on them in a single volume. But any player will tell you that to arrive at their favorite main line variation is not so easy, whether playing White or Black. In fact, a common complaint of students and amateurs is that they never get to play the main opening that they've studied!

Let's examine what this means if you're on the White side of 1.d4 d5. You may have a brilliant new idea against a main of the Slav Defense, for example, after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4. But in actual tournament or match play you keep running up against such things as 1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nc6 or 2...Bf5. Or Black may answer 1.d4 d5 2.c4 with 2...e5, a gambit that has gained considerable popularity of late. Even within openings like the Queen's Gambit Declined, certain variations could take you by surprise, for example, 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 c5. Or, when Black plays the venerable Tarrasch Defense after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5, White should

know something about 4.cxd5 cxd4, by which Black gives up a pawn in return for a dangerous attack. 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 e5 is another bothersome gambit. These sorts of lines can be irritating – how can you study everything? In order to be well prepared as White you would have to pore through books on each individual opening. This is where we come in, trying to supply you with straightforward ways to meet these variations.

From Black's point of view the situation is also not easy. Suppose, for example, that you'd like to get to the position after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e3 O-O 6.Nf3 h6 7.Bh4 b6. That is called the Tartakower Defense and it has been played by nearly every modern world champion as well as many other great players in each generation. So you have studied that position carefully and are eager to play it. But how often will you get that far? There are all kinds of annoying obstacles. Right off, White can throw you a loop by playing 1.d4 d5 2.Bg5 or 2.Nc3. In the latter case you also have to deal with things like 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bg5, 1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 g6 4.Bf4, 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.e4, or all kinds of odd move orders. Then there is a popular gambit by 1.d4 d5 2.e4, or White might play a move like 2.e3, intending to follow up with Nf3, Bd3 and c3, or maybe even the move f4 at some point. Finally, Black has to be able to react to various ideas if White avoids 1.d4 d5 2.c4 by 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 and follows up with 3.Bf4 or 3.e3.

And on it goes. Not every possible infrequent or unconventional move order can be looked at, naturally, but we will examine the most important of them and particularly the ones that you will likely see when you get to the board and start the game. You will see that our solutions will generally be outside of main line theory. Against systems that are not tactically critical we try to keep these solutions simple, not *guaranteeing* an advantage every time (in some cases that's impossible) but giving you a practical setup requiring minimal study. At other times we may suggest something that is sound and fun to play, whether or not it is the solution that a 2700 Grandmaster might use to get a tiny technical advantage. Finally, we recognize that success against certain ultra-sharp systems simply demands that you learn some complex material by heart, or at least become extremely familiar with the basic tactical and positional themes that characterize the variations. Regardless of the level of complexity, we include a lot of extra games and analyses as reference material. They are not meant to be memorized! The idea is that you can come back to this reference material and compare it with what happens in your own games.

Often two reasonable answers are given against the most important openings because you might prefer a particular style of playing. For example, sometimes the best answer to a reasonably sound irregular opening might require a complex and precise response with some memorization required. But in that case we will also offer a second and simpler variation against the same opening, hopefully one that defuses the enemy attack and achieves an acceptable game or better.

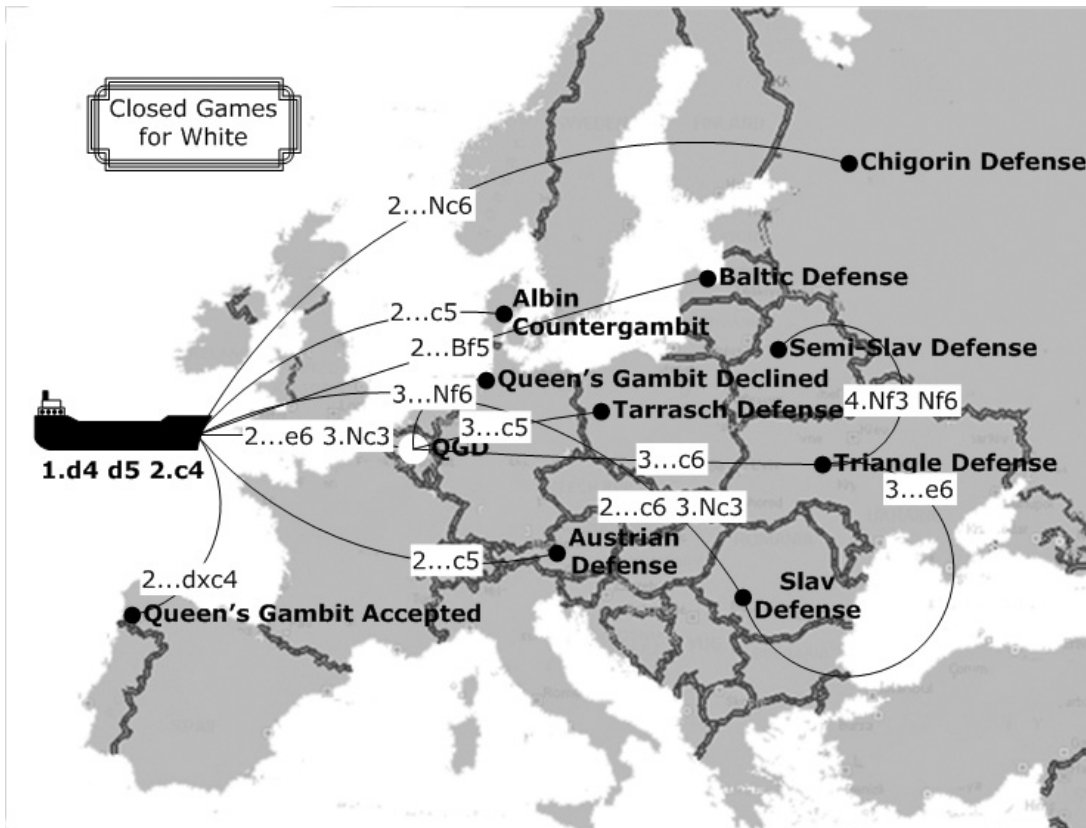
The specific explanations in each section should help you assimilate the material.. At the end of the book we have supplied grids which visually present an overview

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of the most important moves that you have studied. This should help you to remember what has been shown while avoiding the clutter of notes and lesser alternatives. More advanced players will gain from the analytical details, which are based upon extensive research and both human and computer evaluations. The authors are confident that if you study the material in this book you won't have many problems dealing with the surprises your opponent may pull on you.

The Closed Games as White (1.d4 d5 with 2.c4)

In this section we will examine 1.d4 d5 from White's point of view, starting with the most common move 2.c4. Later we will look at 2.Nf3. The fanciful map below indicates the geographical origins of the openings that we will investigate, or at any rate the country associated with their names. We'll show you how to attack these openings and to navigate through their obstacles to arrive at a desirable destination.

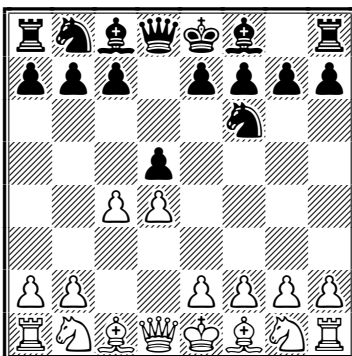


We begin our discussion of 1.d4 d5 2.c4 by looking at a couple of little-played and relatively simple variations. Fairly straightforward solutions should suffice to address these successfully. Then we'll plunge into some of the most complex and demanding of Black's counterattacking systems. You'll almost certainly encounter the latter more than the former, but it doesn't hurt to tackle some less challenging problems first.

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Against the Marshall Defense (2.c4 Nf6)

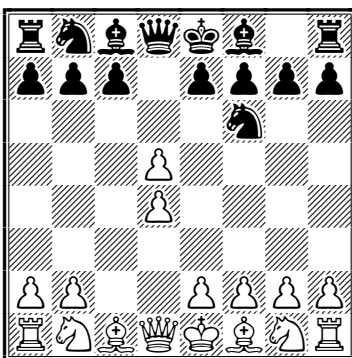
1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nf6



Position after 2...Nf6

Anyone who teaches young students can tell you that this is a very common response to 2.c4. Black wants to develop a piece and protect his d5 pawn at the same time. The problem is that he can't maintain a pawn presence in the center. You should gain an advantage by force against it. There is one trick, however.

3.cxd5



Position after 3.cxd5

3...Nxd5

Since this move allows White to take over the center, it's natural to look for alternatives, but none of them work very well:

(a) 3...g6?! allows 4.Qa4+ Bd7 (White holds onto his pawn and retains his big center after 4...Qd7 5.Qxd7+ Nbx d7 6.Nc3 Nb6 7.e4 likewise after 4...Nbd7 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.e4) 5.Qb3 (attacking b7 and preparing Nc3 and e4) 5...b6 6.Nc3 Bg7 7.e4 O-O 8.e5 Ne8 9.Nf3 and White's massive center rules the day

(b) 3...Qxd5 4.Nc3 gains a full tempo and prepares to take over in the center. Black has an inferior version of the Scandinavian Defense (1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qa5), for example, 4...Qa5 (4...Qd8 5.e4 and Black is already cramped) 5.Nf3 Nc6 (5...Ne4!? 6.Bd2 Nxd2 7.Qxd2 wins the two bishops for Black but he has no development or control of the center, for example, 7...e6 8.e4 Bb4 9.Bc4 O-O 10.O-O Nc6 11.a3 Bxc3 12.bxc3 with a nice advantage) 6.Bd2 Qb6 7.e3 a6 (A slow move, but White had a big threat that Black couldn't overlook, for example, 7...Bg4?? 8.Na4!, trapping Black's queen. Similarly, pawn grabbing by 7...Qxb2? is catastrophic due to 8.Rb1 Qa3 9.Nb5 Qxa2 10.Nxc7+) 8.Ne5! Nxe5 (8...Bf5 9.Na4 Qa7 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.Qc1 Bd7 12.Nc5 and Black has weaknesses all over the place) 9.dxe5 Nd7 10.Nd5! Qc6 (forced) 11.Bc3 e6 12.Nf4 Be7 13.Qg4! O-O 14.Bd3 with a space and development advantage in addition to a strong attack against Black's king.

4.Nf3!

Avoiding Black's trick. It turns out that the natural central takeover by 4.e4?! allows Black good counterplay by means of 4...Nf6 5.Nc3 (5.e5 Nd5 and the knight settles into the ideal blockading square d5) 5...e5!, with the idea 6.dxe5 (6.Nf3 exd4 7.Nxd4 Bc5 or 6.d5 Bc5!, when Black's development will be rapid and easy) 6...Qxd1+ 7.Kxd1 Ng4 with active play and equality. Even experienced players sometimes fall for this trick. But after 4.Nf3!, Black can no longer stop e4 efficiently, so he must snipe from the edges.

4...g6

White wins too much space after 4...Bf5 5.Qb3!, when the b-pawn is attacked and Black has these options:

(a) 5...Nc6 6.Nbd2! Nb6 7.e4 grabs the center and is much better than 6.Qxb7? Ndb4!

(b) 5...b6 6.Nbd2 intends e4. Then if 6...Nf6, White plays 7.e4! anyway, with entertaining tactics to follow: 7...Nxe4 (7...Bxe4 8.Nxe4 Nxe4 9.Ne5! Nd6 10.Qf3 c6 11.Nxc6 Qc8 12.Ne5 Nd7 13.Ba6!) 8.Ne5! e6 9.Bb5+ Ke7 10.Bd7!! and not only does White threaten Qf3 but Black can hardly move!

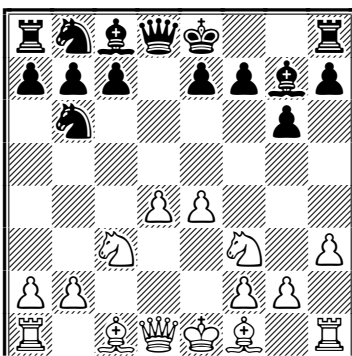
(c) 5...Nb6 6.Nc3 e6 7.e4 Bg4 8.Ne5 gives White the initiative and attack, for example, 8...Bh5 9.g4! Bg6 10.Be3 N8d7 11.O-O-O! Bd6 12.f4 and already Black is getting slaughtered.

5.e4 Nb6 6.h3!?

This is a simple way to keep White's central superiority by preventing ...Bg4. It does burn up a tempo, however, so White's advantage will be limited. Naturally 6.Nc3 is also good, for example, 6...Bg4 7.Be2 Bg7 8.Be3 O-O 9.O-O N8d7 10.Qb3!, clearing the way to bring White's rooks to d1 and c1 with the classic "ideal center".

6...Bg7 7.Nc3

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Position after 7.Nc3

7...O-O?!

Black should get a counterattack going by 7...Nc6, when a simple line is 8.Be3 (8.Bb5!?) 8...O-O 9.d5 Ne5 10.Nxe5 Bxe5 11.Bd4 then White has a superior central position but there is still plenty of play in the position..

8.Be3 Nc6 9.Bb5! Bd7 10.O-O Na5

Or 10...a6 11.Be2, when it's still difficult to see what Black is going to do about his poorly-placed pieces.

11.Bxd7 Nxd7 12.Qa4

Black has exchanged a pair of pieces but his development is backwards. See how easily White takes over the game.

12...Nc6 13.Rfd1 Nb6 14.Qc2 Nc4 15.Bg5! h6 16.Bf4 Rc8 17.Rac1

Every White piece is active.

17...e6 18.d5! Qf6?

But 18...exd5 19.Nxd5! Nxb2 20.Rd2 threatens Nc3 and Nb6 and other powerful moves.

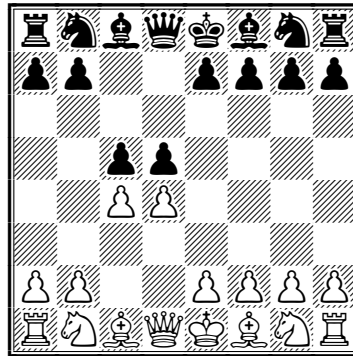
19.dxc6 Qxf4 20.Ne2

White wins a piece and the game. Rubel-Rahn, Frankfurt 2004.

Against the Austrian Defense

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5

Sometimes it can be annoying when your opponent just copies your moves. Fortunately, breaking the symmetry at the right point will usually lead to your advantage. The move 2...c5 is called "The Austrian Defense". Even though it's not disastrously bad for Black, you can come out with the better game after a few commonsense moves.



3.cxd5

3.dxc5 isn't bad either. A blitz game between the rising young star Nakamura and the veteran GM Glek in Dos Hermanas 2003 went 3...d4 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.e3 e5 6.exd4 e4 7.d5 exf3 8.dxc6 Qxd1+ 9.Kxd1 Bg4 10.Kc2 bxc6 11.Be3 with an extra pawn and clear advantage for White

3...Nf6

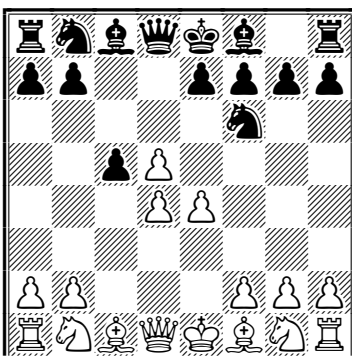
(a) 3...cxd4 4.Qxd4 leaves White a pawn ahead: 4...e6 (4...Nc6 5.Qd1 doesn't help, and 4...Nf6 5.e4 Nc6?? 6.Qa4 Qa5+ 7.Qxa5 Nxa5 8.b4! wins a piece) 5.e4 Nc6 6.Qd1 exd5 7.exd5 Bb4+ (7...Nb4? 8.a3! Nxd5? 9.Bb5+ Ke7 10.Qe2+ Be6 11.Nf3! with an enormous advantage because of Black's king position and White's superior development) 8.Nc3 Qe7+ 9.Be3 and Black has nothing for the pawn

(b) 3...Qxd5 4.Nf3 intends Nc3, and 4...cxd4 5.Nc3! Qd8 (5...Qa5 6.Nxd4, for example, 6...e5 7.Ndb5 Nc6 8.Bd2 Qd8 9.Nd5! Bd6 Bilobrk–Novak, Varazdin 2004, when the easiest way to a big advantage was 10.e4! with the idea 10...Nge7 11.Bg5!) 6.Qxd4 Qxd4 7.Nxd4 gives White a lead in development and active development, for example, 7...e5 8.Ndb5 Na6 9.Nd5 (or 9.Be3 b6 10.Nd5 Kd8 11.Nxa7!) 9...Kd8 10.Bd2 and O–O–O.

4.e4!

White gives back a pawn to cramp Black's game. 4.dxc5 isn't bad either.

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Position after 4.e4!

4...Nxe4 5.dxc5 Nxc5 6.Nf3 e6 7.Nc3 exd5 8.Qxd5

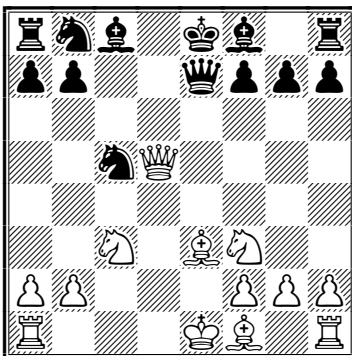
White is getting a big advantage in development.

8...Qe7+

(a) Later 8...Be7 was played but White showed the virtues of development with tempo: 9.Qxd8+ Bxd8 10.Be3 Nba6 11.Bb5+ Bd7 12.Bxd7+ Nxd7 13.O-O-O Ndc5 14.Bxc5! Nxc5 15.Rhe1+ Ne6 16.Nd4 O-O 17.Nxe6 fxe6 18.f3! and Black was left with a miserable isolated pawn on an open e-file, Gleizerov-Berkell, Stockholm 2002

(b) Not surprisingly, 8...Qxd5 9.Nxd5 Ne6 10.Ng5! presents a problem, for example, 10...Nxg5 11.Bxg5 Bd6 (the only move, since 11...f6? fails to 12.Bf4) 12.Bb5+ Nc6 13.Rc1 Bd7 14.O-O O-O 15.Rfd1 with all kinds of difficulties for Black.

9.Be3



Position after 9.Be3

9...Nc6?!

Probably not best, but Black was in trouble anyway, for example, 9...a6 10.Ng5 h6 11.O-O-O! Nbd7 (11...hxg5 12.Bxc5) 12.Nge4 Nxe4 13.Nxe4 Qe5 14.Bc4! Qxd5

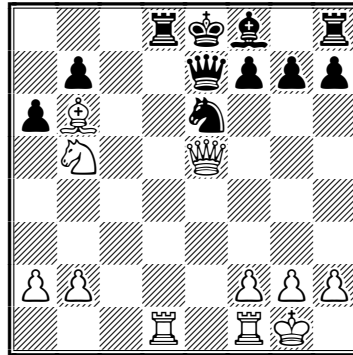
15.Bxd5 and White's pieces are dominating the position.

**10.Bb5 Bd7 11.O-O Ne6 12.Ne5 Nxe5 13.Qxe5 Bxb5 14.Nxb5 a6 15.Rad1!
Rd8**

Matters come to a quick end after 15...axb5 16.Qxb5+ Qd7 17.Qxd7#.

16.Bb6!

Black is getting slaughtered.



Position after 16.Bb6!

16...Rxd1

16...f6 17.Bxd8.

17.Rxd1 f6 18.Qf5 g6 19.Nc7+! Kf7

Or 19...Nxc7 20.Qc8+ Kf7 21.Rd7.

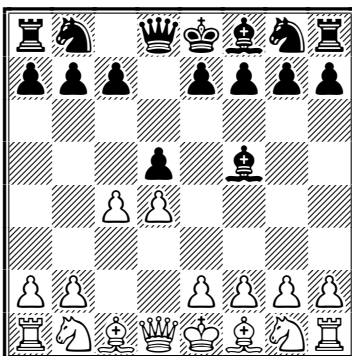
20.Qd5 Black resigned.

L Portisch–Bronstein, Monte Carlo 1969. Black can't do anything about 21.Re1.

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Against the Baltic Defense

1.d4 d5 2.c4 Bf5



Position after 2...Bf5

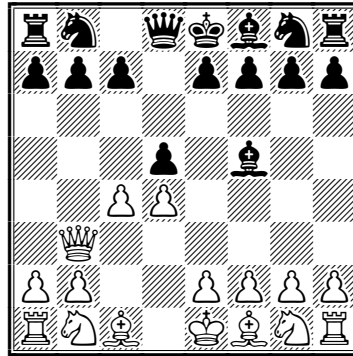
The Baltic Defense is also known as the Keres Defense, in honor of the great Estonian's use of 2...Bf5. Black wants to solve the problem of his queen's bishop, which would be locked in after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6. Now if Black could play ...e6 as well, his bishop would be actively placed outside of the pawn chain. The Baltic Defense had a revival a few years ago but is less popular at present. Nevertheless, there are some dedicated followers of the opening and you will doubtless run up against it some day.

The two drawbacks of 2...Bf5 is that it weakens Black's queenside (thus the first solution 3.Qb3) and that it doesn't shore up the center (thus the second solution 3.cxd5).

Against the Baltic Defense, Line #1: 3.Qb3

3.Qb3

This queen sortie introduces a very complex variation that requires quite a bit of memorization. This type of solution isn't our normal one in this book, but since the line seems to win by force we've included it. To balance things, our second solution (which follows below in the next section) is positional and easy to learn. After 3.Qb3, the authors follow a streamlined version of the analysis we did in our book 'The Big Book of Busts' (reprinted as 'The Handbook of Tricky Opening Strategies in Chess', Hardinge Simpole 2004).



Position after 3.Qb3

3...e5

This has always been considered the best reply. Black reacts dynamically rather than lose time worrying about his pawns. Other moves:

(a) 3...e6? 4.Qxb7 Nd7 5.Nd2!± – Minev.

(b) 3...Nc6 4.cxd5 Nb8 (4...Nxd4?? 5.Qa4+ wins a piece) 5.Qxb7 Nd7. We are following Koen–Stanciu, Women's Zonal 1991. Here White should play 6.Bf4! Rb8 7.Qxc7 Qxc7 8.Bxc7 Rxb2 9.Nd2 and he is two pawns ahead with e4 to come

(c) 3...Nf6 4.Qxb7 (or 4.Nc3 e6 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5!±) 4...Nbd7 5.cxd5 (or 5.Nc3 dxc4 6.Qc6) 5...Rb8 6.Qc6 Rb6 7.Qa4 Nxd5 8.Nd2 Bg6 9.e4 N5f6 10.Bd3±

(d) 3...dxc4 4.Qxb7 Nd7 5.Nc3! and White will follow with e4, dominating the center

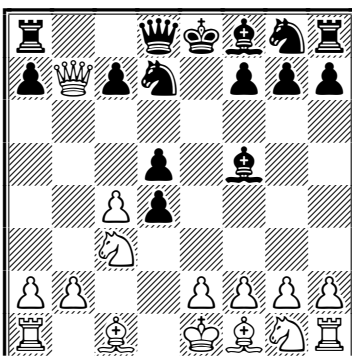
(e) 3...Bxb1 4.Rxb1 e5 (4...b6 stops Qxb7 but White is probably winning already after 5.cxd5 Nf6 6.e4! Nxe4 7.Bb5+ Nd7 8.Bc6 Rb8 9.Nf3 f6 10.Qd3! Nd6 11.Ne5! fxe5 12.dxe5 and Black can't stop e6!) 5.cxd5! exd4 6.Nf3 (or 6.Qxb7 Nd7 7.Bf4 Rb8 8.Qxc7 Bb4+ 9.Kd1 Qf6 10.Nh3 Qf5 11.Qc2 and White stays 2 pawns up) 6...Nf6 7.Qxb7 Qxd5 8.Qc8+ Qd8 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 10.Nxd4 Bb4+ 11.Bd2±.

4.Qxb7 Nd7 5.Nc3 exd4!

Black's only serious attempt at counterplay. Much worse is 5...Rb8? 6.Qxa7 Ra8 7.Qb7 Rb8 8.Qa6 and the queen gets out after 8...Rb6 (8...Ra8 9.Qb5) 9.Qa7 (or 9.Qa4 Rb4 10.Qd1 Rxc4 11.e3+-) 9...dxc4 10.Nd5 Rc6 11.Qa4.

Back to the main line:

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Position after 5...Nd7

6.Nxd5 Bd6

6...Rc8? 7.Bf4

7.Nf3!

We advocated and analyzed this move in 'The Big Book of Busts'. It is safe and effective, and thus compares well with the previously tried and unclear move 7.e4. It is not a good sign for the latter move that our database shows the score to be 7-1 in Black's favor!

7...Nc5!?

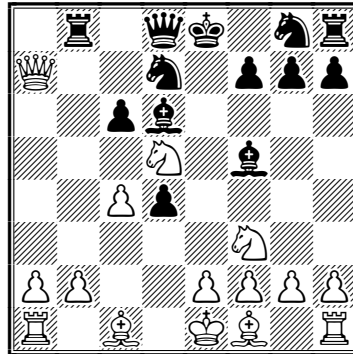
This is Nikolic's suggestion, which sacrifices the exchange for what Black hopes are attacking chances. Other moves leave White well on top:

(a) 7...c5 8.Qc6! Qb8 and now White has the choice of at least two strong moves: 9.e3! (or 9.g3, for example, 9...Ne7 10.Nxe7 Kxe7 (10...Qb4+ 11.Nd2 Kxe7 12.a3 Qa5 13.Bg2 Rac8 14.Qf3 and O-O) 11.Nh4! (11.Bg2!? Rc8 12.Qd5 Be6 13.Qe4±) 11...Be6 12.b3± of Knechtel-Stauch, Erlangen 1994) 9...dxe3 (9...Ne7 10.Nxe7 Bxe7 11.exd4 and 11...cxd4 12.Bf4! or 11...O-O 12.Be2) 10.Bxe3 Ne7 11.Nxe7 Qxb2 (11...Bxe7 12.Ne5! 11...Kxe7 12.O-O-O) 12.Nxf5!? (or 12.Rd1) 12...Qxa1+ 13.Ke2, winning

(b) 7...Ngf6 8.Nxf6+ (or 8.Nxd4!?, for example, 8...Nxd5 9.Qxd5 Bb4+ 10.Bd2 Bxd2+ 11.Kxd2 Bg6 12.Rd1 O-O 13.Kc1) 8...gxf6 (8...Nxf6 9.Bd2!?, for example, 9...Rb8 10.Qxa7 with the idea 10...Rxb2 11.c5 Be7 12.Qa4+ Bd7 13.Qxd4± Qb8 14.e3 Rxa2! 15.Rc1! O-O 16.Bc4 Ra4 17.Qe5! intending 17...Re8 18.Ng5) 9.Nxd4 Rb8 10.Qd5!? Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Kxd2 Bg6 13.b3 with two extra pawns and no real counterattack

(c) 7...Ne7 8.Nxe7 Bxe7 9.Nxd4 Rb8 10.Qd5 and White is two pawns ahead with many threats

(d) 7...Rb8 8.Qxa7 c6!



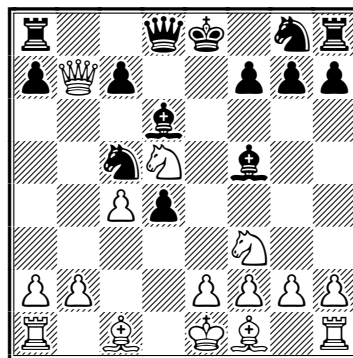
Position after 8...c6!

9.Nxd4! (or 9.Qa6!?) and now:

(d1) 9...Bc5 10.Nxc6 Bxa7 11.Nxd8 Kxd8 and White has 4 pawns (3 passed) for a piece! Play might go 12.f3 (or 12.e3 and b3 next) 12...Bc2 13.b3 (13.b4 Bd4 14.Bg5+!) 13...Bd4 14.Bg5+ f6 15.Rc1 and the pawns are too good

(d2) 9...cxd5?! 10.Nxf5 Bb4+ 11.Kd1 Bc5 (11...Qf6 12.Qe3+ Kf8 13.Qg5) 12.Qa6 dxc4 13.Kc2 g6 (13...Ne7 14.Nxg7+ Kf8 15.Qh6) 14.Nd6+ Bxd6 15.Qxd6 Qa5 16.Bd2 Qa4+ 17.Kc1 Ngf6 18.Bc3, consolidating the two pawns and position

(e) 7...Kf8!? is a tricky move that was tried against one of the authors: 8.Bg5! f6 9.Bf4 Bxf4 (9...Rb8? 10.Qxa7 Rxb2 11.Bxd6+ cxd6 12.Nxd4) 10.Nxf4 c5 11.e4!? (11.Nh4 is also good) 11...Qe8 (11...dxe3 12.Nh4!? exf2+ 13.Kxf2 with the idea 13...Rb8 14.Nxf5! Rxb7 15.Ne6+ 11...Rb8 12.exf5 Rxb7 13.Ne6+ Ke7 14.Nxd8 Kxd8 15.O-O-O±) 12.Bd3 g5 13.O-O-O gxf4 14.exf5 Rb8 15.Qc7 Ne7 16.Rhe1 with a winning game, J Watson-Filatov, Philadelphia 1998.



Position after 7...Nc5

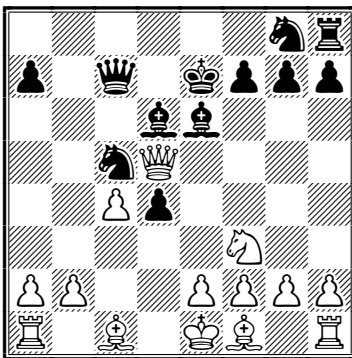
8.Nxc7+! Qxc7

How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings

8...Bxc7 9.Qb5+! – Nikolic, winning the piece back.

9.Qxd8+ Ke7 10.Qd5 Be6

This is Nikolic's recommendation. As it turns out, White is winning against any move, for example, 10...Bg6 11.Bg5+ Nf6 (11...f6 12.Bd2) 12.Nxd4 is pretty much winning on the spot because of 12...Qa5+ 13.Kd1 with the idea Nc6+ and a3 in some cases.



Position after 10...Be6

11.Qxd4!

Our improvement over Nikolic's 11 Qg5+. Another move that is probably winning but not at all as easy is 11.Bg5+!? f6 (11...Nf6 transposes to 11 Qxd4 Nf6 12 Bg5) 12.Qxd4 fxg5! 13.Qxg7+ Ke8 14.Qxh8 (14.Qxc7 Bxc7 15.Nxg5!?) 14...Ne4 15.Qd4.

11...Nf6 12.b4!

Strong, although 12.Bg5 is also very good, as we showed in "The Handbook of Tricky Opening Strategies in Chess", for example,

(a) 12...Qb6 13.bxc5 (13.Ba3!) 13...Bxc5 14.Qh4

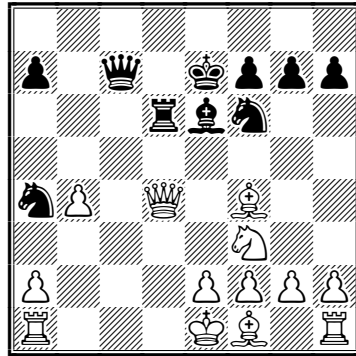
(b) 12...Rd8 13.bxc5 Bxc5 14.Qb2±

(c) 12...Nce4 13.c5 Bf4 (13...Rd8 14.cxd6+ Rxd6 15.Bf4) 14.Bxf4 Qxf4 15.Rd1

(d) 12...Ncd7 13.c5 Be5 14.Nxe5 Qxe5 15.Qxe5 Nxe5 16.Bb2 .

13.c5 Rd8 14.cxd6+ Rxd6 15.Bf4!

and White wins. That looks like a lot to learn, but the reward is a winning position within very few moves. If the position nevertheless arises, it's almost certain that you will be more familiar with the ideas than your opponent.



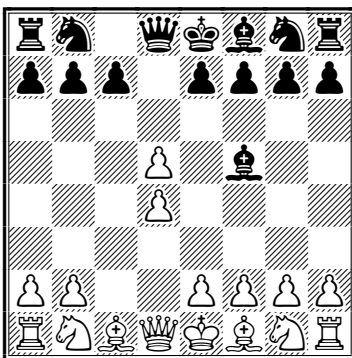
Position after 15.Bf4!

How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings

Against the Baltic Defense, Line #2: 3.cxd5

1.d4 d5 2.c4 Bf5 3.cxd5

This is a simple and solid approach, promising some advantage, although nothing so dramatic as after 3.Qb3.



Position after 3.cxd5

3...Bxb1

This is the point of the Baltic Defense. Otherwise after

3...Qxd5 4.Nc3 White gains time and controls the center. Somewhat better would be

3...Nf6, but among other ideas White can play 4.Nc3 (4.Qa4+!? c6!?) 4...Nxd5 5.Qb3 (5.f3!? Nxc3 6.bxc3 and 7.e4 next will take the center and gain some edge, even after 6...e5 7.e4 Be6 8.Rb1!) 5...Nxc3 6.bxc3 Qc8 (6...b6 7.Bf4 e6 8.f3+=) 7.f3 e5! 8.e4 Be6 9.Bc4 Bxc4 10.Qxc4 and White stands well.

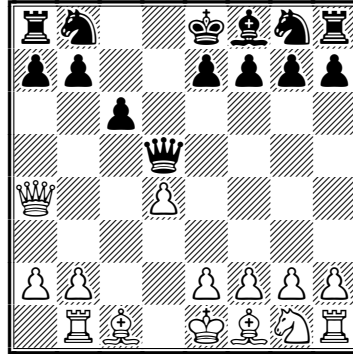
4.Qa4+

4.Rxb1 Qxd5 hits a2 and develops quickly. At that point White sometimes gambits by 5.Nf3 Qxa2 6.Bd2, but we're looking for a quiet solution this time.

4...c6

4...Qd7 5.Qxd7+ Nxd7 6.Rxb1 leaves White with the two bishops and, after Black recovers the d-pawn, White will have two center pawns to one, an important advantage: 6...Ngf6 7.Bd2 (or 7.f3!?) 7...Nxd5 (7...Nb6 8.f3 Nbx5 9.e4 Nb6 10.d5 is another structure that favors White, e.g., 10...e6 11.dxe6 fxe6 12.Nh3 Bd6 13.Bc3 e5 14.Bd3 O-O-O 15.Ke2 Na4 16.Bd2 Nc5 17.Bc4± J Pinter-Matkovic, Pula 1997) 8.e4 N5f6 9.f3 White has the center, whereas Black's knights lack outposts. One game went 9...c6 (9...e5 10.dxe5 Nxe5 11.Bc3! 9...c5 10.dxc5 Nxc5 11.Nh3 e5 12.Rc1) 10.Bc3 e6 11.Nh3 Be7 12.Nf2 O-O 13.Be2 c5! 14.O-O a6 15.Rfd1 cxd4 16.Bxd4 Rfc8 17.Rbc1 Bc5 18.Bxc5 Nxc5 19.Rc2 Na4 20.Rdc1 Nb6 21.Nd3 with a large advantage, Lehner-Hrosevitha, Internet 2004.

5.Rxb1 Qxd5



6.f3

There are also many games with 6.Nf3 and White has a good record with it, for example: 6...Nd7 7.b4 e5 8.e3 (or 8.dxe5!? or 8.b5, both favoring White slightly) 8...e4 (8...exd4 9.Nxd4 Ngf6 10.Qb3 Qxb3 11.Rxb3 Nd5 12.Bd2 and White is somewhat better due to his two bishops) 9.Nd2 Ngf6 10.Qc2 Nb6 11.g3 Nc8 Shulman–Vouldis, Duisburg 1992 and Sherbakov suggests 12.b5!±.

6...Nd7

Threatening ...Nb6. There are several alternatives here, but White always keeps some edge:

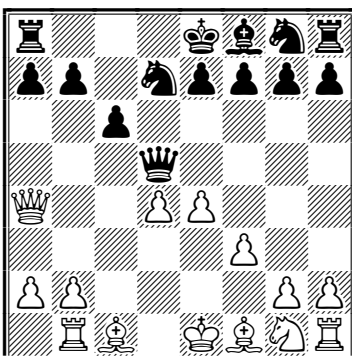
(a) 6...Nf6 7.e4 Nxe4? (A tempting but flawed sacrifice. Still, 7...Qd8 8.Be3 is good for White) 8.Bc4! Qf5 9.fxe4 Qxe4+ 10.Ne2 Qxb1 11.Qb3 Kishnev–Pronold, Munchen 1992. After a queen retreat, 12.Qxb7 follows, so play might go 11...Nd7 (11...Qf5 12.Qxb7) 12.Bd3 (or 12.Bxf7+ Kd8 13.Qxb7) 12...Qa1 13.O–O. The queen is trapped and lost after, e.g., Be3. Black has some material for it, but not enough, especially since White is well developed

(b) 6...b5 7.e4! Qxe4+ (7...bxa4 8.exd5 cxd5 9.Bb5+) 8.fxe4 bxa4 9.Nf3 with a big advantage—White will mop up the queenside pawns and his bishop pair is fearsome

(c) 6...e5!? 7.dxe5 Nd7 (7...Qxe5 8.Nh3 Na6 9.Bf4 Qe6 10.a3 with Qc2, e4, and Bc4 to come, Lorscheid–Juergens, Dresden 1992 7...Na6 intending ...Nb4 is Belov's suggestion, but after the obvious 8.e4 threatening Bxa6, this is hard to believe) S Ivanov–Skatchkov, St Petersburg 1997 and now fairly simple is 8.Bf4! and 8...Nxe5 9.Rd1 or 8...Nc5 9.e4!

7.e4

How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings



Position after 7.e4

7...Qd6

7...Nb6 8.exd5 Nxa4 9.dxc6 bxc6 (Belov's analysis) 10.Bd3 is simple and strong, in view of Black's weaknesses and the two bishops. 10.d5!? is good as well, but messier.

8.Be3

A promising alternative is Donev's 8.e5!? Qg6 9.Ra1 e6 10.Ne2.

8...e5 9.Ne2 Qb4+

A large advantage for White resulted from 9...Ngf6 10.Rd1 Qb4+ 11.Qxb4 Bxb4+ 12.Kf2 O-O-O 13.g3! exd4 14.Nxd4 Ne5 15.Bh3+ Kc7 16.Bf4 in Kishnev-Rausis, Moscow 1987.

10.Qxb4 Bxb4+ 11.Kf2

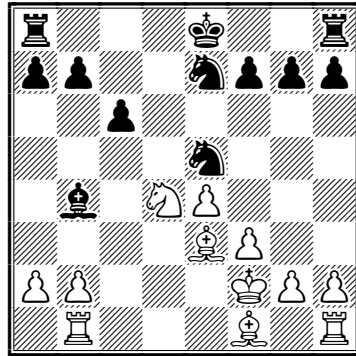
11.Nc3 intending Bc4 is also not bad.

11...Ne7

Or 11...exd4 12.Nxd4 Ngf6 13.Be2 O-O 14.Rhd1 with better pieces and development.

12.dxe5 Nxe5 13.Nd4

Again White has the standard advantages of the bishop pair and extra space, V Ivanov-Rausis, Moscow 1994.



Position after 13.Nd4