

The Modernized Janowski Variation

The QGD Redefined

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Alexey Kovalchuk

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Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⊙	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
▷	better is
◁	worse is
+	check
#	mate

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Introduction

Dear readers

I am pleased to welcome you, and I present to you my new work *The Modernized Janowski System: The Queen's Gambit Redefined for Black*. When a chess player begins to build their opening repertoire against 1.d4, what are their goals? Should they play aggressively or positionally? Should they play the main lines, or is it better to play something rarer? I've faced all these questions myself. In this book, I recommend playing: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 a6 With this last move, Black plans to play ...dxc4, and then support the c4-pawn with ...b7-b5.

This is the idea of David Markelovich Janowski, a Russian (later French and American) chess player. He was a world championship contender, a chess theorist, a practitioner, and a journalist. He generally loved to play unconventionally; he loved dynamic chess, perhaps even too much, which harmed his results. Why do I like this line and recommend it to you? The fact is that this line is much less common than the classic 3...♗f6, which your opponent is more likely to know and be well-prepared to face, which cannot be said about the rarer 3...a6. Furthermore, this move incorporates both dynamic and positional play, and this mix gives us a very rich game. Not only is our goal to equalize the position, but we also think about playing for a win. When I play this system, I don't think about making a draw; I think about how, in a difficult game, I will manage to overcome my opponent and win. And it's easier to be an optimist than a pessimist.

I wrote this book over two years. I started working on it in 2023 and finished it in late 2025. How did the idea for this book come about? The thing is, in 2022, I came across Grandmaster Nils Grandelius' analysis of "The Magnus Queen's Gambit." After studying it, I began to apply his developments, but at some point I realized that in a critical position, namely after the moves:

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 a6 4. cxd5 exd5 5. ♗f3 h6

This last move, while strange, is perfectly logical, preventing the bishop from reaching g5. Yet, though I played this line time and again, my soul rebelled. Even though

my results were excellent and there was no reason to complain, I continued to search for the truth, and then an idea struck me: why play 5...h6 when you can make the more useful 5...c6? Little by little, I began analyzing it myself, accumulated a certain amount of material, and thus the idea for a book was born.

In writing this book, I wanted to provide clear, in-depth recommendations with the ability to play for a win. Furthermore, I analyzed the same variations several times, trying to improve them. I thought about how to play not just strongly, but ultimately, like a human being. Sometimes computer-generated lines seem overly complex, even fantastical, so I tried again and again to improve my analysis. Believe me, I'm not chasing material wealth (although, of course, I won't hide the fact that it would be pleasant) and I don't write twenty books a year to make as much profit as possible. I didn't set out to publish the book as quickly as possible. I wrote it conscientiously, as if I were writing it for myself. I could say I asked myself questions: How would I play? How can I build the most practical repertoire? I wasn't shy about spending hours on the computer, and the depths were often 45, 50, and even greater.

The book contains a lot of analysis, but is that a bad thing? The resulting analyses exhaustively show how Black can achieve an acceptable position, which is why I believe in my work. Modern databases and analysts aim to publish analysis as quickly as possible, yet often dubious assessments are presented as "playable". While this approach certainly has its place, in my work I still strive for "purer" assessments. The analysis may be much more complex, but the reader will be confident that after looking at a particular variation, they will be psychologically protected, because everything has been analyzed. In the modern world, almost every chess player has a computer (I've occasionally met strong players, even grandmasters, who claimed they didn't have a computer), and every player can run Stockfish and analyze variations. Furthermore, you can "build" an opening yourself. Indeed, modern engines are very powerful and accurate, and sometimes they don't even require much depth, as computer evaluations at a shallower depth are very accurate, and depth may not decide anything, although it all depends on the specific position.

So, why does the reader need my work? A good question, but you know, I'll let you in on a secret. Just please don't tell anyone. Agreed? The chess world is built on laziness. People are too lazy to sit and analyze something for hours, but they have a strong desire to play. And what about building your own repertoire? That requires

both effort and time. And why do you need it? There's a little chess player in the world, Alexey Kovalchuk, who has both the patience and the desire to watch and analyze all sorts of opening systems, devoting hundreds of hours of analysis to it, when I could, for example, be taking a walk with my wonderful dog (Busya, an American Bulldog) in the park. Nevertheless, I'm doing this work for you and for myself, too. The book contains hundreds of new developments, new continuations that haven't been used in practice. It doesn't just offer dry evaluations (as some authors do, too lazy to even write a word) but also includes commentary. I actually sat and thought about writing, "What do I think about the position? Why is there an advantage here, and equality there? How can I describe it in words?" I think this book will 100% help the reader who wants to develop a great, strong repertoire for years to come.

I express my gratitude to Alexander Shurov, my English translator, and to my wonderful wife, Elena Tsaritsanskaya, who inspired me not to abandon this work but to continue waking up, drinking coffee, and believing that I would one day finish this book. Indeed, I was able to do just that, and Elena deserves credit for that. Friends, an amazing adventure awaits you in this wonderful opening: the Modernized Janowski System of the Queen's Gambit. I wish you beautiful victories and good luck on the 64-square board

Alexey Kovalchuk
February 2026

Part I

3.  c3 a6

Rare Systems

Our journey begins with the moves...

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 a6



Position after: 3... a6

And in this section we will look at various rare/uncommon moves

4. g3

Chapter 2 will be devoted to this continuation. It's essentially a Catalan, but there are differences, as the knight is already on c3, making White's position less flexible. This we will call the Pseudo-Catalan.

Chapter 1 will cover several sidelines;

A) 4. Bf4 dxc4 5. e3 b5



Position after: 5... b5

Black initially clings to the extra pawn. Most likely, they won't be able to hold on to it, but they will get an active position with good pieces.

B) 4. e4!? is not without poison.



Position after: 4. e4!?

This is how German grandmaster Bluebaum plays. 4... dxe4 5. Nxe4 Bb4+ 6. Nc3 c5! Black gets a satisfactory game, if necessary they are ready to spoil White's pawn structure with ... Bc3 . Chapter 1 explains all the subtleties of this system

C) A very important line to consider is 4. c5!? e5!



Position after: 4... e5!

An unexpected move. Black is ready to waste a tempo, but immediately attack the center and unleash the c8-bishop.

The main line then develops as follows:
 (For a long time I thought that I should play: 4... b6?! But after: 5. cxb6! c5 6. e4! White gains the initiative) 5. dxe5 d4 6. ♖a4 ♘c6 7. ♘f3 ♙f5 with excellent compensation for Black.

D) 4. e3!?



Position after: 4. e3!?

One of the most modest continuations: White voluntarily locks up the bishop c1, but in the future, as a rule, White develops it by means of: b2-b3 and ♙b2 - this is the so-called Zukertort system. 4... ♘f6 5. ♘f3 ♘bd7 6. b3 b6 Both sides fianchetto their bishops, and overall the position is calm, but I don't see any particular advantages for White as Black is playing decently.

4... dxc4 5. ♙g2 ♘f6 6. ♘f3

White can immediately win back the pawn by 6. ♙a4+!? ♘bd7 7. ♙xc4 c5! Black will have a pleasant game due to the thematic b7-b5 the queen will not be under attack much, and will have to waste tempos on retreating it

6... b5 7. ♘e5 c6! 8. 0-0 ♙b7




Position after: 8... ♙b7

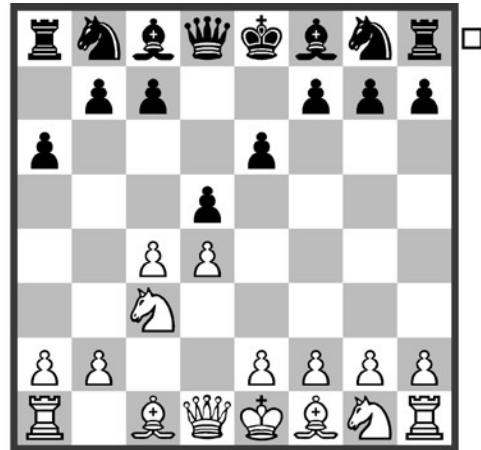
In this system, White doesn't expect to win back a pawn; he plays a pure gambit. Indeed, compensation is based on the strong bishop on g2 and the powerful knight on e5, while Black has a passive bishop on b7 and a weak pawn on c6. However, if Black can play ...c6-c5 at an opportune moment, White's compensation could vanish, so White takes certain risks here.

Overall, although these systems have some tricks, Black confidently overcomes difficulties in these lines, so it's not surprising that it's not often played in practice.





Rare 4th Moves

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.  c3 a6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Rare 4th Moves

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1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 a6

So, our journey begins with this modest but clever move. Our idea is to capture on c4 and support the pawn with ...b7-b5. In this chapter and the next, we will look at rarer continuations for White. You may not face these as often but there will always be opponents who go off the beaten track.



Position after: 3... a6

a) 4. e4**1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 a6 4. e4!?**

Position after: 4. e4!?

The German grandmaster Matthias Bluebaum plays this very often. Interestingly, this continuation was used as early as the 19th century: Tinsley and Schlechter played this way against the creator of this system, Janowski. White immediately attacks the center, although in my opinion this line poses no danger for Black.

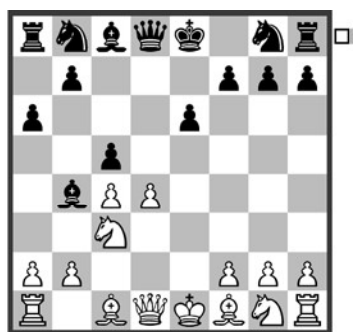
4... dxe4 5. ♘xe4 ♙b4+ 6. ♘c3

White has to retreat. What problems does Black have? Let's be honest, none!

If White wants problems, then they can play 6. ♙d2? ♙xd4! 7. ♙xb4 ♙xe4+ 8. ♙e2 ♘c6 9. ♙a3 e5 10. ♘f3 (1-0 Tang, A (2523) – Carlsen, M (2835) Bullet Chess Losers Chess.com INT blitz 2023). Anything is possible in bullet. Yes, Magnus lost, but excuse me, he's just like you and me. Black has a super position after: 10... ♙d7!N 11. 0-0 0-0-0♠ when White's bishops do not compensate for the missing pawn.

6... c5!

Very natural and strong; Black strikes at the centre immediately.



Position after: 6... c5!

7. a3

Overall, a useful move. Why not ask the bishop on b4 how it's feeling?

A) 7. Nf3! ? This straightforward development of the knight seems logical: But then simplest is 7... cxd4! ?

Position after: 7... cxd4! ?

A1) Those who like to play endgames can choose 8. Qxd4 . Yes, these guys don't mind a draw, but what can we do? Let's just play chess without queens. 8... Qxd4 9. Nxd4 e5

A1.1) In earlier analyses I considered 10. Nc2N Qxc3+ 11. bxc3 Nc6 12. Nc4 Qf5 13. Qe2 Nge7= White has two bishops, but they

also have a damaged pawn structure on the queenside, so the chances are equal. But, as a practitioner I would choose Black – perhaps a slightly optimistic assessment, but I like the way the black warriors are positioned.

A1.2) 10. Nde2 (1-0 Madumadha, M (1923) – Shubh, A (1788) SRI-ch Dini Colombo 2024) In this position I suggest a natural reinforcement:

10... Nf6!N

Position after: 10... Nf6!N

And what could be more natural than the sunrise? 11. a3 Qe7 12. Na4 Nc6 13. Nb6 Bb8 14. Nc3 (You can enjoy a bishop with 14. Nxc8 ? but this leads to problems 14... Bxc8 15. Bb1 0-0 16. g3 e4 17. Qg2 Ne5 18. b3 Nd3+ 19. Qf1 b5+ Clearly not what White was hoping for.) 14... Qe6 15. Qe3 Bd8 16. h3 0-0 Black has finished his development, and what I like is that he has sweet access to the d4-outpost. Yes, we can play for a win.

A2) 8. Nxd4