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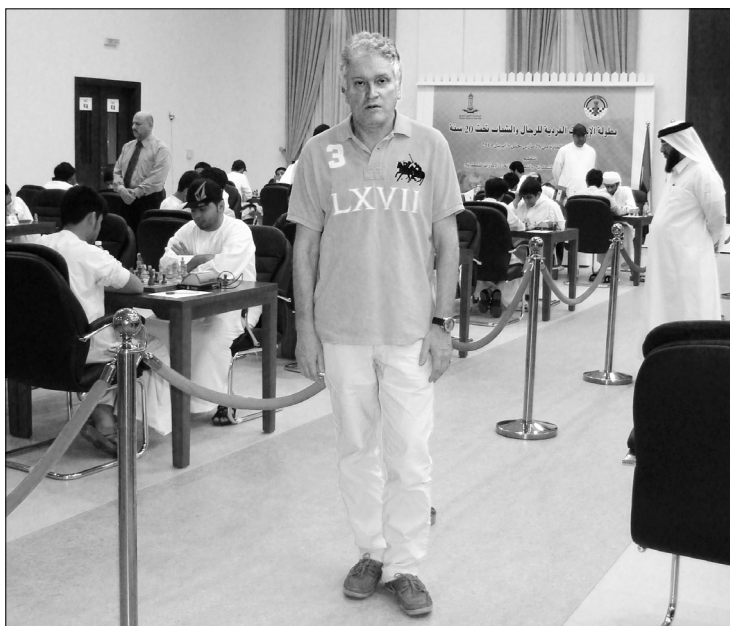
## On ‘The Even More Flexible French’

Compared to ‘The Flexible French’, ‘The Even More Flexible French’ has:

- 12 new chapters
- 28 extra games
- almost 100 extra pages
- updates and, where necessary, expansions in every chapter
- hundreds of improvements, alternatives and new ideas

The chapters are re-structured; lines that have become more important have been turned into separate games, or even separate chapters. Some of the ‘old’ games have been replaced by others.

For Chapter 15 material was used from a Survey in Yearbook 98; Chapter 16 contains material from a Survey in Yearbook 112, and Chapter 18 contains material from a Survey in Yearbook 79.



The author at work as a chess coach in Dubai.

## Foreword



The French Defence is a gem in any chess player's opening repertoire. The main difference in comparison to other great openings is the display of knowledge and concepts that are required here, instead of a constant memorization and repetition of long, forced, 'theoretical' lines. The middlegame and, with it, the real battle begins at a very early stage.

This 'Flexible French' book is an attempt to mix various aspects: my general experience in this opening, new concepts and analysis of several creative lines. Its purpose is to offer a combative repertoire to black players, and also to offer white players some sharp ideas.

With 1...e7-e6, Black builds a fortress with a closed centre, so the main roads to success are those leading to a game where White's extra tempo is not so important. This defence is also full of strategic as well as tactical resources, and according to many masters, its lines are among the most complicated in chess. There are also several forgotten systems that are still full of possibilities, sharp and exotic lines, original ideas and much more.

### **The current state of opening theory**

During the past years – the computer days – many books by vanguard authors have seen the light, with ambitious names like 'Beating the Spanish, the Sicilian, the French' and many others. Some authors even churn out books of this type up to 3-5 times a year!

Please note that the Grand Masters, such as Botvinnik, Petrosian and also the best modern players, work on the study of their systems much more slowly, but with great depth – learning and practicing them year after year. The evaluations of their ideas hardly change, at least not as abruptly as in these new books.

Also, I think that a new time has arrived for chess books on opening theory. Instead of copying thousands of games that are played each day and presenting extensive analyses by engines, it is much more effective – and more positive – to compose a book with articles according to a different concept: with space for background information, an instructive selection of the material and conclusions drawn from this material.

The reader of *The Even More Flexible French* will find it the easiest and the most interesting to learn the main plans with the following structure in each Part:

- Historic origin of each variation
- Main ideas, resources, advices
- Analysis of the most interesting lines through model games
- Illustrative games (the best examples)
- Statistics, summaries and conclusions.

I hope that my previous publications and the present work can serve as good examples of this new method of writing opening books and articles.

Of course, many questions will remain open, for practical players as well as theoreticians. However, in this day and age you won't need years and years to study this genuine opening – The French Defence. Just read this book!

Greetings to you all!  
Grandmaster Viktor Moskalenko, Dubai 2015

## Seven Symbols

For the convenience of the reader of my books, certain special lines in the analyses are marked with the following seven symbols:



**TRICK:** hidden tactics and some tricky ideas, e.g. traps you can set and pitfalls you have to avoid.



**PUZZLE:** possible transpositions, move order subtleties, curiosities and rare lines.



**WEAPON:** the best lines to choose; strong or surprising options for both attack and defence, which deserve attention.



**PLAN:** the main ideas for one of the sides in the next phase of the game.



**STATISTICS:** winning percentage for a line or for either side/player.



**WORKSHOP:** how the author plans to construct the chapter at hand.



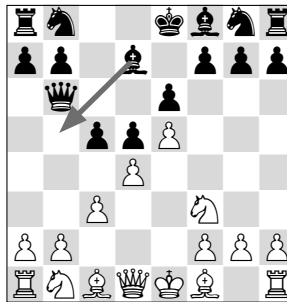
**KEEP IN MIND:** here, fundamental ideas for either side are given.

## Chapter 3 – Don't Touch the French Bishop on c8!

### 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3

In this chapter we examine the passive set-up with an early ...♞d7 (Games 7 and 8).

- Game 7: A quite wrong idea is 4...♔b6 5.♘f3 ♞d7?!, following up with 6...♞b5.



For a long time this was one of Black's most popular options. However, the plan of exchanging the 'bad French bishop' might be too slow. White has to react dynamically, trying to open the centre: see Grischuk-Morozevich (2011).



Russian Grandmaster Alexander Grischuk is another 'expert/fanatic' on the white side of the Advance Variation. He has won all his theoretical duels against the slow set-up with ...♞d7.

- Game 8 – 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 ♞d7?! 6.♞e2 ♘ge7 7.0-0!

Later, in the semi-finals of the same tournament (Khanty-Mansiysk 2011), Black lost two decisive games in rapid chess.

## Don't Touch the French Bishop on c8! – Games

### GAME 7 – 4...♙d7

Alexander Grischuk (2746)

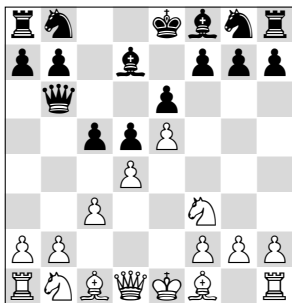
Alexander Morozevich (2694)

Khanty-Mansiysk 2011 (3)

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♙d7?!**

White's main idea in the Advance Variation is to get a space advantage, while Black usually presses against White's centre.

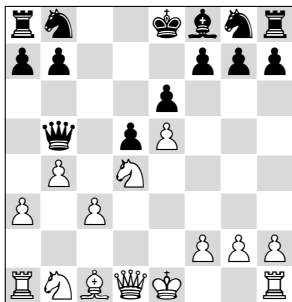
**5.♘f3 ♗b6**



Therefore, exchanging the French bishop (...♙d7-♙b5) is too slow and too passive. White has many pleasant options to develop the initiative. Let's see:

**6.♙d3!?**

Still an interesting line is 6.a3!? ♙b5 (6...♘c6?! 7.b4 is advantageous for White) 7.♙xb5+ ♗xb5 8.b4 cxd4 and now 9.♘xd4! (instead of the old 9.cxd4 ♘d7∞)



analysis diagram

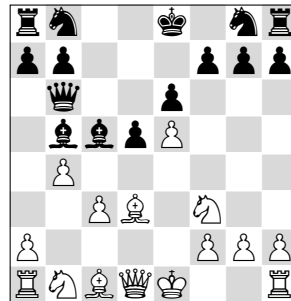
9...♗c4?! (probably safer is 9...♗d7!∞)  
 10.♙b2!N (less good is 10.♙e3 ♘d7  
 11.♘d2 ♗d3 12.c4 dxc4 13.♘b5 ♗c8∞  
 Kotronias-Zhu Chen, Gibraltar 2011)  
 10...♘c6 (10...♘d7 11.f4!?) 11.♘d2 ♗d3  
 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.c4!↑ with nice attacking ideas for White: h4-♗h3, ♗c1-c3, or simply ♗a4!.

**6...cxd4**



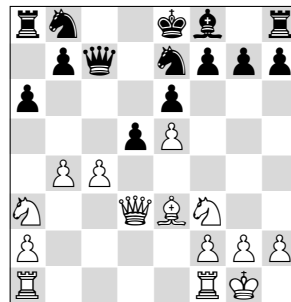
TRICK: The main point is 6...♘c6?! 7.dxc5! ♙xc5 8.0-0± with the idea 8...♘ge7?? (8...♗c7 9.b4!) 9.b4, winning the bishop on c5.

Or, after the even more common 6...♙b5, now 7.dxc5! ♙xc5 8.b4!. The arising complications mainly favour White:



analysis diagram

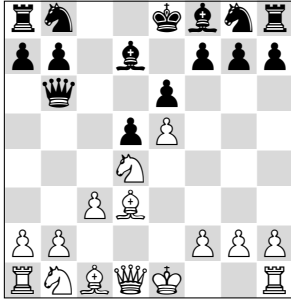
8...♙xd3□ (8...♙xf2+? 9.♙e2±; or 8...♙e7? 9.♙e3 ♗a6 10.♙c2!±, and similarly, after 8...♙f8? 9.♙e3 ♗a6 10.♙c2!±) 9.♗xd3 ♙f8 10.♙e3 ♗c7 11.0-0 ♘e7 12.♘a3 a6 13.c4!



analysis diagram

13...♖bc6 14.♙c5! ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♚xe5  
16.♜fe1 and White gets a dangerous  
initiative for the pawn that disappeared  
from e5, T.Hansen-Djurhuus, Moss 2006.

**7.♘xd4!**

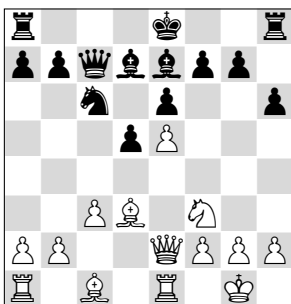


The key concept in this line: White is  
trying to blockade the centre with his  
pieces. Of course, less interesting is  
7.cxd4 ♘c6!? (the gambit – see Chapter  
3) or even 7...♙b5.

**7...♙c5**

Black is going to win a pawn on d4:  
8...♙xd4 and 9...♚xd4. Quite risky, but  
what else is there? I suspect that White's  
chances are slightly better in any case:

A) 7...♘e7 8.♘d2 (8.0-0!?) 8...♘bc6  
9.♘xc6 ♘xc6 10.♚e2 ♚c7 11.♘f3 (11.  
f4!?) 11...h6 12.0-0 ♙e7 13.♜e1f.

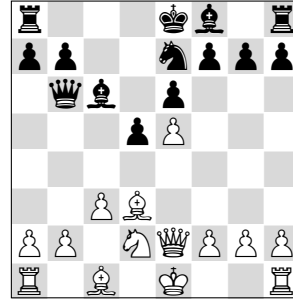


analysis diagram

In this position, kingside castling can  
be very dangerous for Black, Vallejo  
Pons-Rustemov, Mondariz 2002.

B) After the natural 7...♘c6 8.♘xc6!  
White also keeps a clear initiative:

8...♙xc6 (or 8...bxc6 9.0-0 ♘e7 10.♘d2  
♘g6 11.♘f3 ♙e7 12.♜e1 c5 13.♚b1 ♙b5  
14.♙c2! a5 15.♘g5! ♜d8 16.b3 ♜d7  
17.♚f3 ♙d8 18.♚h3↑ Ehlvest-Ibragimov,  
Las Vegas 2003) 9.♚e2 ♘e7 10.♘d2!N.



analysis diagram

GM Psakhis: 'White's knight soon will  
come to the important d4-square and  
it is not easy for Black to organize any  
counterplay – White's advantage may  
not be big but it is very stable.'

10...♘g6 11.♘f3 ♙e7 12.0-0 ♚c7  
13.♙d2± ♙d7 (here again, castling  
is problematic: 13...0-0 14.h4!→)  
14.♚ae1!? Black is almost in zugzwang,  
Grischuk-Gurevich, Wijk aan Zee 2002.

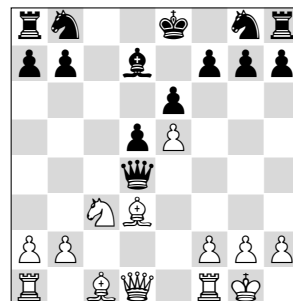
**8.0-0!**

The alternative 8.♚g4?! leads to  
extremely sharp play after 8...♘e7!  
9.♚xg7?! (9.0-0! is safer) 9...♚g8 10.♚f6  
♚g2↑ and Black should be better,  
Volokitin-Volkov, Dresden Ech 2007.

**8...♙xd4 9.cxd4 ♚xd4**

9...♘c6 10.♙e3!?

**10.♘c3N**



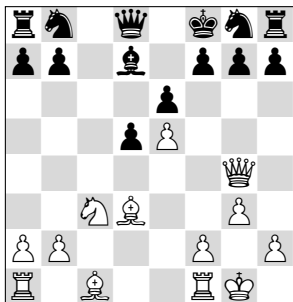


In comparison with the usual Advance Gambit (see Chapter 4), here White has two bishops and an extra tempo.

10. ♖b3? is the old move (Komandirchik-Permiakova, Kherson 2008): 10... ♘c6! ♣.

### 10...a6

After 10... ♖h4 11.g3 (11. ♖e1!?) 11... ♗d8 12. ♗g4 ♟f8□...



analysis diagram

... White has long-term compensation for the pawn: 13. ♙e3 ♘e7 14. ♙c5 ♘bc6 15. ♙d6 ♟g8 16.b4 h5 17. ♗f4 ♘g6 18. ♙xg6 fxg6 19. ♘e2 g5 20. ♗d2 a6 21. ♖ac1 g4 22.a4 ♗e8 23.b5 axb5 24.axb5 ♘a5 25. ♖c7 ♘c4 26. ♗g5♞ and White won on move 43 in Ni Hua-Zhou Weiqi, Danzhou 2012.

### 11. ♖e1!

11. ♙e3!? ♗xe5 12. ♖e1♞.

### 11...♙c6

11... ♘c6 12. ♙e3↑.

### 12. ♘e2! ♗g4

Black loses more tempi.

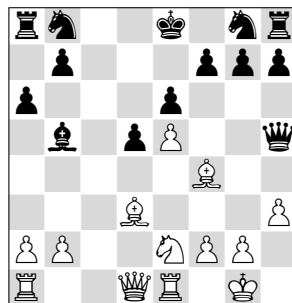


TRICK: But after 12... ♗xe5?? 13. ♘g3 ♗c7 14. ♗g4 g6 15. ♗d4 White is winning, Areschenko-Rustemov, Germany Bundesliga 2013/14.

### 13.h3 ♗h5 14. ♙f4

This square was also good for the knight. For instance, 14. ♗d2!? ♘d7 15. ♘f4↑, or first 14. ♙e3!?

### 14...♙b5



In a slightly strange way, finally Black has managed to carry out the main idea of this line!

### 15. ♗b3

My computer found a much stronger line: 15. ♗c1! ♘c6 16. ♘g3 ♗h4 and now 17. ♙e4! ♗d8 (17...h6 18. ♙xd5!) 18.a4 with a great initiative for White.

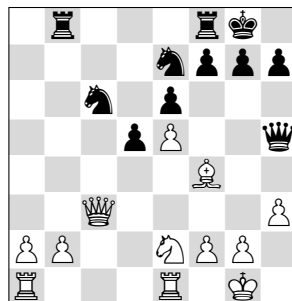
### 15...♘e7 16. ♙xb5+ axb5

### 17. ♗xb5+ ♘bc6 18. ♗xb7 0-0≠

### 19. ♗b3 ♖ab8

19... ♖fc8!??≠.

### 20. ♗c3±



From the ensuing complex middlegame, we can learn how White increases a small advantage (now also including one extra pawn) to a full point:

20... ♖fc8 21. ♗d2 h6 22. ♖ac1 ♗h4 23.b3 ♘f5 24.g4! ♘fe7 25. ♟g2 ♖a8 26. ♖c5 f5 27.gxf5 ♘xf5 28. ♖ec1 ♘ce7 29. ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 30. ♖c6 ♗e7 31. ♗c2 ♗e8 32.a4 ♗g6+ 33. ♙g3 ♘ce7 34. ♘f4 ♗f7 35. ♖c7 g5 36. ♘e2 ♖f8 37.a5 h5 38. ♗d2 ♗g6 39.a6 h4

40. ♖h2 g4 41. ♗f4 ♔g5 42. ♚e2  
 ♗h6 43. ♜xe7 gxh3+ 44. ♜xh3  
 ♚xe7 45. ♗g6 ♚b4 46. ♗xf8 ♜xf8  
 47. a7 ♚a5 48. ♖f4 ♗f5 49. ♚h5  
 ♜g7 50. ♚g5+ ♜h7 51. ♚h5+ ♜g7  
 52. ♖g5 ♚c3+ 53. ♜g2 h3+ 54. ♚xh3  
 ♚c6 55. ♖f6+ ♜g6 56. ♚g4+ 1-0

Grandmaster Vasily Ivanchuk has been recognized as maybe the best theoretical player of all time – and in all possible openings – but he still needs more knowledge, strategic as well as tactical, of the French Defence.

In the starting position of this line, after losing an important tempo with the French bishop, Black is too passive. See what went wrong in the following game.

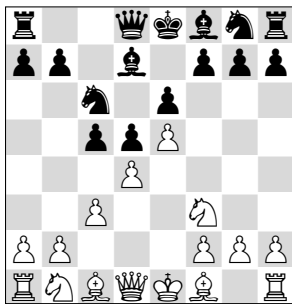
### GAME 8

**Alexander Grischuk** (2746)

**Vasily Ivanchuk** (2768)

Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid) 2011 (6)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♗c6  
 5. ♗f3 ♖d7?!



Black plays slowly, not applying the dynamic idea of the opening: the direct attack on d4!

6. ♖e2 ♗ge7 7.0-0±

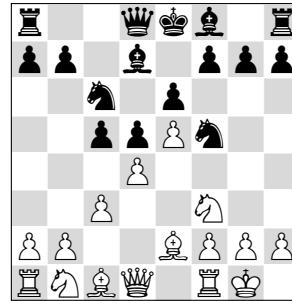
Now Black is too passive.

7... ♗g6

The same strategy, although it was an ‘improvement’ by Ivanchuk. However, the knight is badly placed on g6: it does not attack d4, and it can be punished with h2-h4-h5.

A) The main point is 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 and now 8...♗f5 is too late: 9. ♗c3! ♚b6 10. ♗a4±;

B) In the previous game of the match Ivanchuk played 7...♗f5, but with the same result.



analysis diagram

Black seems to be ready to attack d4, however: 8.dxc5! (instead of 8. ♗a3, see the comment in Game 6) 8...♖xc5 9. ♖d3 ♗fe7 (9...♗h4 10. ♗bd2 0-0 11.b4 ♗xf3+ 12. ♗xf3 ♖e7 13. ♚c2 h6 14.b5 ♗a5 15. ♚a4 f5 16.exf6 ♜xf6 17. ♗e5 b6 18. ♖e3± Mitrovic-S.Popov, Vrnjacka Banja tt 1996) 10. ♗bd2 ♗g6 11. ♗b3 ♖b6 12. ♜e1 ♚b8 (now e5 is Black’s target) 13. ♚e2 ♖c7 14. ♖xg6 (‘A forced exchange, which, however, has the merit of increasing White’s overall control on the dark squares’ – GM Marin, CBM 145). 14... hxg6 15.h4 ♜h5 16. ♖g5 (the computer suggests 16. ♗c5!±; or 16. ♖f4!± with the idea 16...f6? 17. ♗c5 fxe5 18. ♗g5!→) 16...♗xe5 17. ♗xe5 ♖xe5 18. ♚xe5 ♚xe5 19. ♜xe5 f6 20. ♜e3 fxg5 21.hxg5 ♜xg5 22. ♗c5. White won this slightly better endgame on move 44, Grischuk-Ivanchuk, Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid) 2011.

8.g3

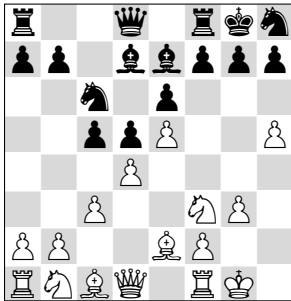
Preparing h2-h4, instead of the common 8. ♖e3 ♚b6!.

8... ♖e7

Black prefers to castle first, since he is not well prepared for activity: 8...f6 9.exf6! ♚xf6 10. ♖g5 ♚f7 11. ♖e3!N (11.c4!? Vysochin-Grigoriants, St Petersburg

2002) 11...cxd4 12.cxd4± and White can play for the initiative.

**9.h4! 0-0 10.h5 ♘h8**



One does not need to be a grandmaster to evaluate this position – White is better according to all the chess rules.

**11.dxc5!**

11.h6!?

**11... ♖xc5 12.b4**

12.c4!?!; 12.♘bd2!?

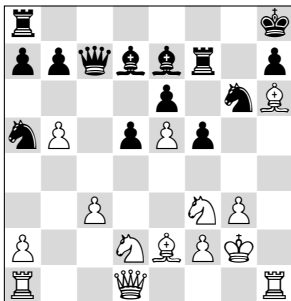
**12... ♖e7 13.b5 ♘a5 14.h6**

14. ♖d3!?

**14...f5 15.hxg7 ♖xg7 16.♔g2 ♘g6**

**17.♖h1 ♖f7 18. ♖h6+ ♔h8 19.♘bd2**

**♖c7**



**20.♖c1**

The rest of the game was played in extreme time-trouble, leading to a huge number of amazing mistakes by both players.

After the immediate 20.c4! White was probably winning.

**20... ♖g8 21.c4 d4 22. ♖d3**

22.♘b3!?

**22...b6 23.♘xd4 ♖xe5 24.♘2f3**

**♖c7 25.♘g5 ♖xg5 26. ♖xg5 e5!≠**

**27.♖h5? ♖c8! 28.c5?? exd4**

**29.cxb6 ♖b7+??**

29...♖xb6干.

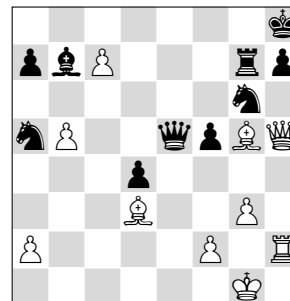
**30.♔g1??**

30.f3±.

**30... ♖e5 31.♖c7 ♖xc7 32.bxc7 ♖g7**

32... ♖xh1干.

**33.♖h2?**



**33... ♖xc7??**

The last turn on this rollercoaster track. 33...f4 was winning for Black.

**34. ♖xg6 ♖c1+ 35. ♖xc1 1-0**

### Summary of Chapter 3

The early development of the c8-bishop is probably a waste of time, since it allows White to castle and develop an initiative.

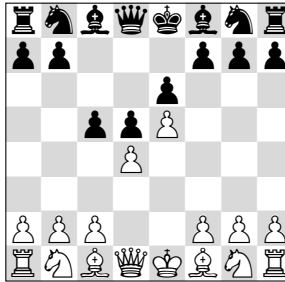
Clearly, even elite grandmasters do not know the best moves and set-ups to defend against the Advance Variation!

The best and most dynamic concept for Black is to immediately create pressure against the centre: by attacking the d4-pawn.

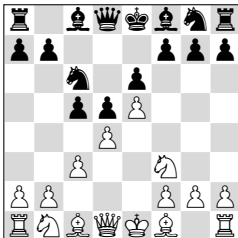
# Index of Variations

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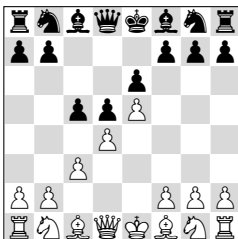


Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6 – 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♗f3



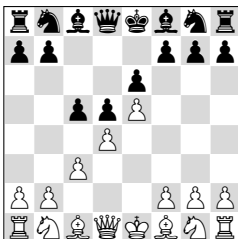
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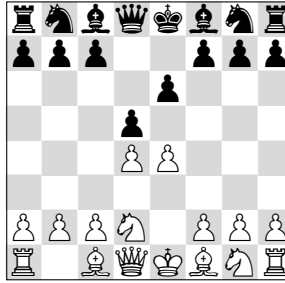
- 4...♙b6 5.♗f3 ♙d7 ..... Game 7
- 4...♘c6 5.♗f3 ♙d7 ..... Game 8

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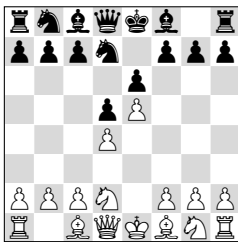


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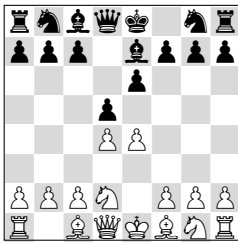


Chapters 7-11 – 3...♗f6 4.e5 ♘fd7



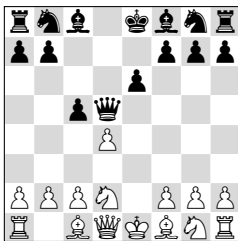
- 5.c3 c5 6.♙d3 ♘c6 7.♘e2 cxd4 8.cxd4 f6
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- 9.♘f4..... Games 25, 26
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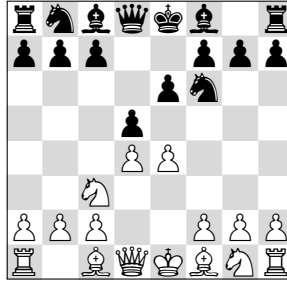
- 4.e5 ..... Game 35
- 4.c3 ..... Game 36
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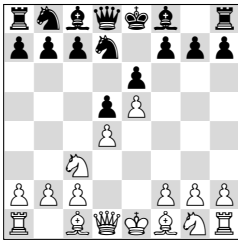


- 5.♘gf3 cxd4 6.♙c4 ♙d6 7.♙e2. .Game 41
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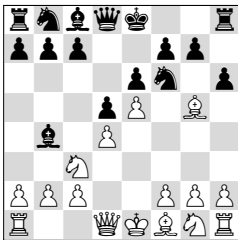


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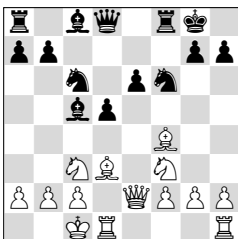
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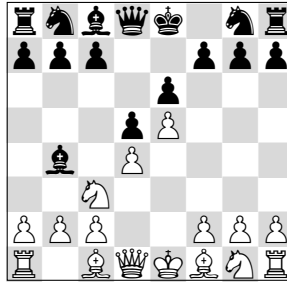
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- 9.exf6 ♘xf6 10.♙e2
- 0-0 11.0-0-0

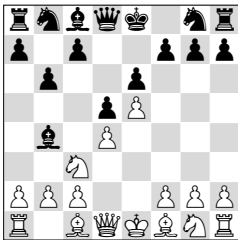


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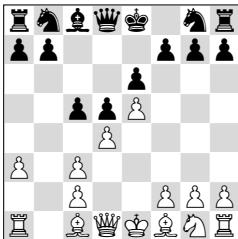


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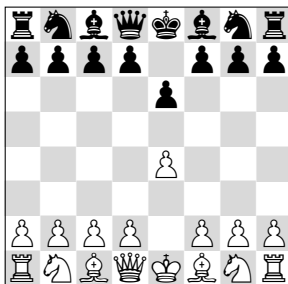
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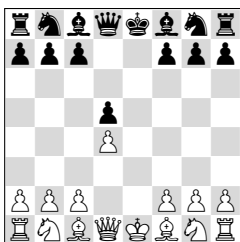


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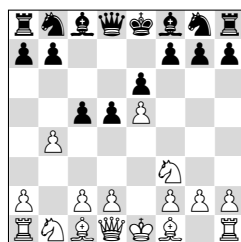
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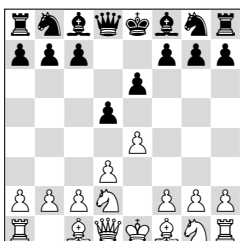
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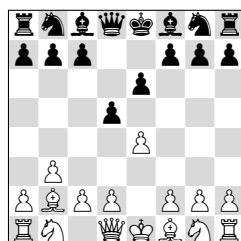
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