

# **The Modernized Queen's Gambit Declined**

**A Dynamic Repertoire  
for Black**

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## **A Dynamic Repertoire for Black**

**Luis Rodi**

**Thinkers Publishing 2024**



# 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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# Foreword

"*You can't play the Queen's Gambit with Black any more*" said Hector, in a bitter tone of voice. My friend, the ICCF grandmaster Hector Walsh, was trying to defend a difficult position in one of his correspondence games where he had ventured to play the Queen's Gambit Declined and faced the dreaded Exchange Variation which, according to his words, offered White the chance to play for two results (win or draw) while Black's best result was a draw. After looking at the position on his board, he came to this sinister conclusion, which, it must be said, was in keeping with the sentiment of the time – the beginning of our century.

The possibility of playing almost without risk, with a draw in the bag and some chance of victory, had meant that Botvinnik's plan in the Exchange Variation, perfected by Kasparov, caused a sudden cessation of use in the 1...d5, 2...e6 order, while promoting White's scheme in several repertoire books. This resulted from the practice of strong players from the area, such as the International Master Juan Pablo Hobaica and the present writer, all living at that time on the beaches of the Argentinean Atlantic coast, halfway between Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata, two chess meccas in their own right.

At that time I was no longer playing the Queen's Gambit Declined. After a brief and ill-fated passage through the Grünfeld, I had found in the Leningrad Dutch the right defense to face 1.d4. In my formative chess years I had indeed used the Tartakower, Bondarevsky and Makogonov variants of the QGD based on Bobby Fischer's model in his match against Spassky. But it was a brief passage, from which I soon turned away in search of more dynamic schemes.

It was not until I moved to Brazil in the second decade of the century that I began to analyze some positions of the declined Queen's Gambit, in the footsteps of great champions such as Kramnik, who showed that the order 1...d5, 2...e6 could be played with confidence even at the highest levels. So, by 2013 I started to play the defense, alternating it with the other replies against the Queen's Pawn opening in my repertoire.

In the preparation prior to the Batumi Olympiad 2018, which I attended as a representative of the team from my native country, Uruguay, I had prepared some sharp lines within the universe of the declined Queen's Gambit. Although I could not put them into practice on that occasion, they were part of a series of surveys published

in successive Yearbooks of the prestigious Dutch publisher New in Chess, which ended up being the basis of this work.

The main aim of the present work is to show that Black can indeed obtain positions where all three results are possible. The Queen's Gambit Declined, about a century after its golden age, is still a reliable and lively defense, where despite all the theory developed during its long existence it still holds secrets for analysts and offers new positions to enjoy a lively game, both strategically and tactically.

During the course of writing this book I have had the help of some great friends who have read, reviewed and offered ideas for each chapter: they are the national masters Angelo Bil Ramos, José Carlos Ferreira and Tadeu Santos Filho, all from Rio de Janeiro, the renowned film-maker and fan of the sixty-four squares game Juan Carlos Desanzo, from Cariló (the Argentinean green beach), and Dr. José Arlindo do Carmo, from Cuiabá (the capital of Mato Grosso, Brazil). My thanks go to them, as well as to the many other friends that chess has given me over the years.

This book was initially written in Spanish, my mother tongue, and published a few months ago by the well-known publisher Solis for the Portuguese-Spanish-American public. The English version has been corrected, updated and expanded with three new model games. I grew up in a world where famous chess publishers in South America published chess books of great theoretical significance and with signatures that were among the most recognized in the world. The successive economic crises that are frequent in this part of the world, technological advances and piracy have unfortunately cornered them to the point of almost ceasing their efforts – and in some cases exterminating them.

That is why I welcome the existence of publishers specializing in chess such as Thinkers Publishing, which since its foundation has been presenting books of an excellent technical level, the work of authors who are well known in the field of chess literature and who have made technical contributions of incommensurable value.

I am extremely grateful to them – and especially to Daniël Vanheirzeele, who was my first contact with the publisher and Adrien Demuth, who did the always difficult job of editing – for giving me the opportunity to bring this work to you, my readers.

*Luis Rodi Maletich, Londrina, PR, Brazil, 2024*



# Introduction

The history of the Queen's Gambit is connected with the very beginnings of modern chess, the opening being cited in the earliest published books on the science of the game, such as the Göttingen manuscript (1490) and the books of Ruy Lopez (1561) and Salvio (1604).

The so-called Queen's Gambit Declined – or Refused – is, together with the Slav, the main defense in the universe of queenside openings, and shares with the aforementioned defense a well-earned reputation for being a reliable and very solid scheme. It is mentioned in the above-referred book by Salvio, although the first game that appears in the databases is one from the famous match between Alexander McDonnell and Louis De Labourdonnais (1834).

With the new trends in positional play led by Steinitz at the end of the 19th century the queen pawn openings gained a remarkable place in practice, and logically the Queen's Gambit Declined was one of the systems that began to be common in the practice of the masters. By the 1920s it had so dominated the scene that it occurred in most of the games of the world title match between the then champion Emmanuel Lasker and his challenger, José Raúl Capablanca, and made an almost unanimous appearance in the games of the next match, held in Buenos Aires 1927 between Capablanca and Alexander Alekhine.

It was at that time that the constant study of certain lines – the so-named Classical Variation, for example – first raised the specter of a "death by draw" but, as we can now appreciate, it was a death with excellent health.

In the following decades a more aggressive style of thinking on Black's part led to the appearance of schemes such as the King's Indian Defense, the different forms of the Benoni or the Dutch, which soon disputed the supremacy of the venerable and solid defense that is the subject of this work, even though it remained popular. And positional alternatives such as the Nimzo-Indian were also gaining ground. From that moment on the Queen's Gambit Declined had, from a theoretical point of view, good and bad spells. Perhaps the nineties and the beginning of this century saw the most delicate of the bad spells, when a classical plan by Mikhail Botvinnik as perfected by Garry Kasparov in the Exchange Variation (with the development of the king knight to e2 and the f3/e4 plan) put it on the ropes. Suffice it to say that among the elite, the masters avoided the order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 because of 3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.cxd5, preferring instead 1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 and only if 3.♘f3 then 3...d5; but

in case of 3.♘c3 the usual choice was for the Nimzo-Indian (3...♙b4).

Those dismal prospects were gradually cleared up, thanks to the emergence of new ideas for Black that allowed him to play for all three results. In the Exchange Variation, in particular, one such idea is the jump of the knight to h5 to exchange the dark-squared bishops and then castle in the same sector as that which White has chosen.

We are currently experiencing a new moment of theoretical explosion of the Queen's Gambit, with a multitude of novelties in practically every variation of the defense. The strongest exponents of our noble game returned to rely on the natural order with 1...d5, and everyday interesting games are played which add to the knowledge of these lines.

From a strategic point of view, and compared with defenses that leave the light-squared bishop free, Black here has a difficult piece to develop on the queen's wing, enclosed by his own pawns. As compensation, the liberating break on c5 can be made in time and – not least – in case of an exchange on d5 the result is an asymmetrical formation, with both sides having a moving pawn majority which increases the chances of victory for both sides. These are some of the positional elements that the defenders of Black's position – and their opponents – will have to consider, as well as typical plans that are already part of the rich classical heritage of these systems, such as the minority attacks, the aforementioned Botvinnik-Kasparov plan or Capablanca's simplifying maneuver.

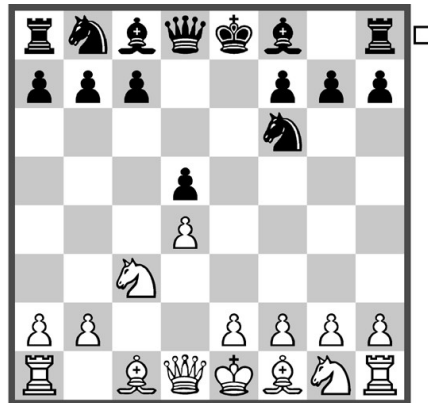
To produce a book that considers each and every possibility arising from the opening position of the Queen's Gambit Declined is an encyclopedic task that would demand many volumes. Instead, my aim is to present a simpler repertoire, with no more than one or two variation options for each important position (in the latter case I generally present a more positional and a more aggressive line, although in many cases these boundaries are blurred).

In the remainder of this introduction, I will cite the main variations discussed – and recommended – in this book. Obviously, some less usual ideas also have their place, but here I limit myself to pointing out the core of the work.

Let's start with the 3.♘c3 continuation, which more than duplicates the second most commonly used order in terms of preference. After 3...♘f6 (this is the only possibility I analyze, but Black has interesting continuations such as the Alatorzev

Variation with 3...♗e7, or the Tarrasch with 3...c5) White has several possibilities.

First of all, I would like to present the not-so-long-ago feared Exchange Variation, which arises after 4.cxd5 exd5.



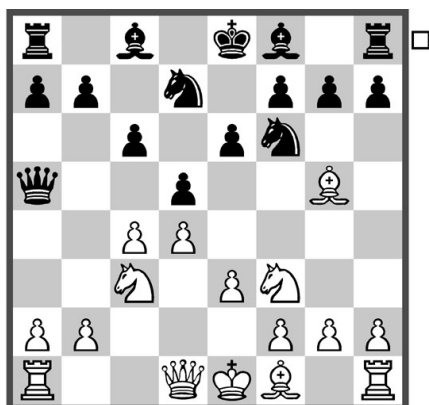
Now the most popular order is 5.♗g5, which I recommend answering with 5...c6; and against 6.e3 (or 6.♔c2) then 6...♗d6! (instead of the more classical 6...♗e7 or 6...♞bd7). The more aggressive development of the dark-squared bishop is strategically justified by the arrangement of the black pawns and is often complemented by a quick maneuver of the king rook to e8. Despite being the only solution I present against this variation, in the basic position of the system I offer Black different plans, which undoubtedly hinders White's preparation attempts. The reason for my choice is simple: other interesting lines against the Exchange Variation have recently been analyzed in other repertoire books, such as those of Tibor Karolyi, Alexei Kornev, Nikolaos Ntirlis or Michael Prusikin – the interested reader can find in those works different ideas for dealing with the Exchange Variation, as well as other lines of the Queen's Gambit Declined. The variation with 6...♗d6 has been analyzed by this author in Yearbook 130 of the Dutch publisher New in Chess, which provided me with an effective basis for organizing the structure. And finally, I consider the positions Black achieves to be of equivalent value, from a theoretical point of view, to those offered by more classical lines such as 6...♗e7.

In the statistics, the most popular option by White is 4.♗g5, which after the ultra-popular 4...♗e7 can lead to different lines (the Lasker Variation, or the Tartakower-Bondarevsky-Makogonov are examples). However in our case, after a switch on d5 this leads to a line of the Exchange Variation which we want to avoid because it is not part of the proposed repertoire.

So, against White's most popular idea I present two alternatives; one classical, the

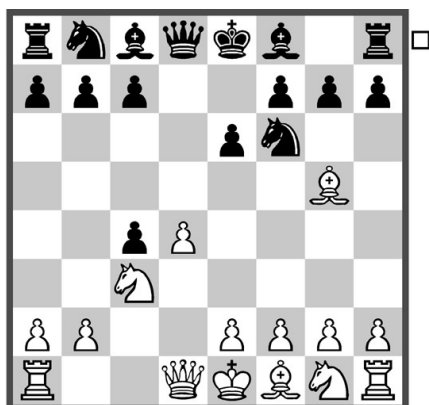
other more experimental.

The classical alternative is 4...♞bd7 where the more popular sequence, 5.e3 c6 6.♞f3 ♚a5, takes us to one of the most classical lines of the Queen's Gambit: the Cambridge Springs, so-called because it was played several times in a tournament held in 1904 in that American city.



The variation itself is a world of its own, with different plans for Black to fight for an advantage in practice. However I think the path proposed in the section dedicated to this line is interesting and offers equivalent chances to the second player in real strategic battles. In cases where I consider it necessary I offer two theoretical possibilities (e.g. against the line 7.♞d2, where the replies ...dxc4 and ...♞b4 lead to strategically different scenarios). In the main line with the exchange on d5 (and recapture with the knight) my basic idea is not to enter lines with pawn captures that delay development which offer at worst an interesting compensation to White – unless the material gain is fully justified by strategic details.

The most experimental possibility is 4...dxc4.

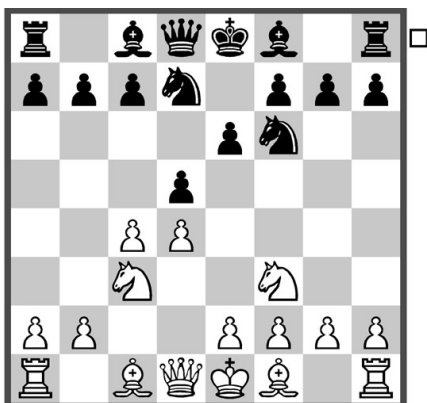


This leads to positions somewhere between the Queen's Gambit Accepted and the Vienna Variation. The critical continuation here is 5.e4 c5 6.d5 ♔e7 (threatening ...♞xd5), which leads to complex positions where the second player's chances are not inferior. This is a line which has only recently appeared in the masterly arena and has so far been little analyzed – one of the most recent publications is my article in Yearbook 133.

In addition to 4.cxd5 and 4.♔g5 White has an "open" continuation, waiting for more definition of the situation, such as 4.♞f3.

For awhile the very interesting Ragozin, 4...♔b4, was a central part of my repertoire, but this time I have decided to make room for two other continuations. This is partly because the Ragozin was the subject of two recent books of very good technical quality by Matthieu Cornette and Richard Pert – but also because the space devoted to this variation would have considerably threatened the length of the present volume.

One of my solutions is 4...♞bd7.

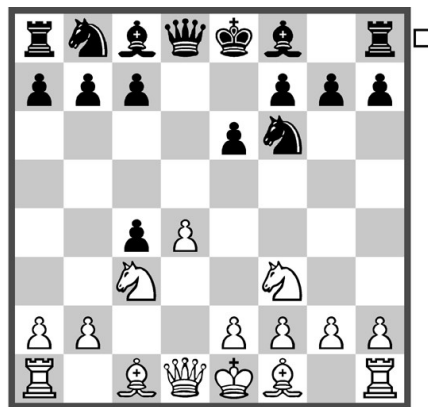


This is a move that can be played by transposition but which fits into our repertoire. Within that framework, it is worth noting that the continuation 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♔g5 c6 7.e3 leads to a different position from those appreciated in the first section devoted to the Exchange Variation (although Black can of course transpose to it if he wishes), because the early development of the white knight allows us to experiment with the idea 7...h6 8.♔h4 g5!? 9.♔g3 ♞h5. Black takes some positional risks, but wins the bishop pair and enters a double-edged position where he obtains suitable counterplay.

This section also presents an independent idea against the more usual move,

5. ♘g5, which can lead by transposition to the Cambridge Springs Variation, but here I analyze an alternative based on the idea ...h6, ...g5. While usual possibilities like 5.e3 and 5. ♖c2 have their place, with great chances of transposing to positions from other schemes, the most interesting independent possibility, in my opinion, is 5. ♘f4, where my recommendation 5...dxc4 6.e3 b5!? leads to a lively game where the theory has not yet had its last word.

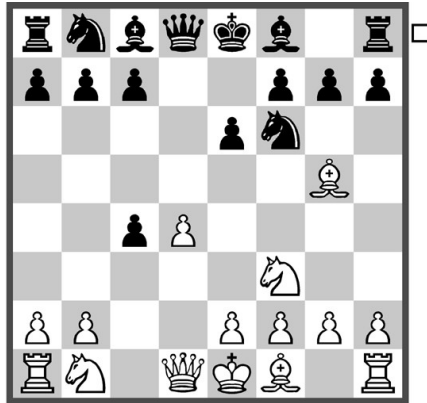
The second continuation I offer as a reply to the order 4. ♘f3 is 4...dxc4.



This is the Vienna Variation. In itself this line would be worthy of a whole volume, but here I try to keep the material within certain spatial limits by choosing a more extreme selection of lines. Thus, against 5.e3 we fearlessly enter a transposition into the accepted Queen's Gambit where White has lost some aggressive options along the way. Against the fashionable move 5.e4, I propose 5...b5!? 6.e5 ♘d5 7. ♘b5 ♘b6, a recent line where the theory is still evolving. Finally, against 5. ♘g5 my recommendation is 5...a6, and against 6.a4 then 6...♘c6 (a line I recommended in Yearbook 134). Ideas like ...♘a5 make White's task of regaining the pawn difficult (here the aggressive 7.e4 offers White less than 10% on the statistics!)

The other big possibility in White's third move is 3. ♘f3, which we also respond with 3...♘f6. Now the exchange on d5 or the exit of the other knight to c3 transposes into one of the sections seen above. White, meanwhile, has independent ideas. One of the move orders recently favored in practice is 4. ♘g5, which I recommend answering with 4...dxc4.

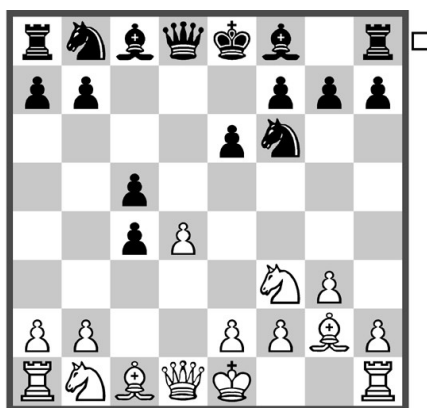
*(see diagram next page)*



This is perhaps a less critical line for Black than its cousin in the order 3.  $\text{Nc3}$   $\text{Nf6}$  4.  $\text{Bg4}$   $\text{dxc4}$ , but no less interesting for that. Here 5.  $\text{Qa4+}$   $\text{Nbd7}$  (a position I wrote about in Yearbook 132) or 5.  $\text{e4}$   $\text{b5}$  are my main recommendations, although in the corresponding section I offer some alternatives, since the theory on this line is still being written. As in the other cases, various transpositions are possible.

Although it is not really part of the Queen's Gambit Declined family I cannot omit the move 4.  $\text{g3}$ , because of the frequency with which it happens and because otherwise this repertoire would not be complete. This is the so-called Catalan Opening. Obviously it is a variation which would also need a whole book to discuss, and which is also one of the main opening ideas today, but here we will limit ourselves to just one line to integrate into our repertoire.

For this publication I have especially analyzed the variation 4...  $\text{dxc4}$  5.  $\text{Bg2}$   $\text{c5}$ .



This is one of the many good continuations that the second player has at his disposal to tackle this popular scheme. As I don't want to repeat the theoretical information that I have just published for the Bulgarian publisher Modern Chess (where I developed a repertoire against the Catalan based on the active 4...  $\text{Bb4+}$

continuation), I invite the interested reader to acquire that material if he wishes to complete his knowledge of the variation or to arrange another line to combat White's idea. However my choice is also based on the confidence I have in Black's ideas in the position arising from 5...c5.

The eighth section is devoted to the other possible schemes starting from different moves by White on their third or fourth move. Here the chapters on the Catalan order 3.g3, which is among the fashionable lines at the master level, and the move 4.e3 (preceded by a knight move to the third rank) are highlighted.

As a bonus track I offer the reader an analysis of 2.♘f3, 3.g3, and the London System, both of which have been widely used in recent times. In the latter case I present two systems, one more positional and solid; the other sharper and riskier, but of equal theoretical value. In the first of these chapters there are also some lines about the formerly more popular Torre Attack.

Each section presented here is composed of several chapters in which theory is developed with an emphasis on the most modern choices in practice. At the end of each chapter I present analyzed games that explore the most common ideas in middlegames that derive from the lines developed here.

I hope that by the end of reading this material the reader will not only have incorporated some new ideas into his repertoire – and perhaps alter the perception that the Queen's Gambit Declined is a passive defense – but that this will also have contributed to his general knowledge of chess.

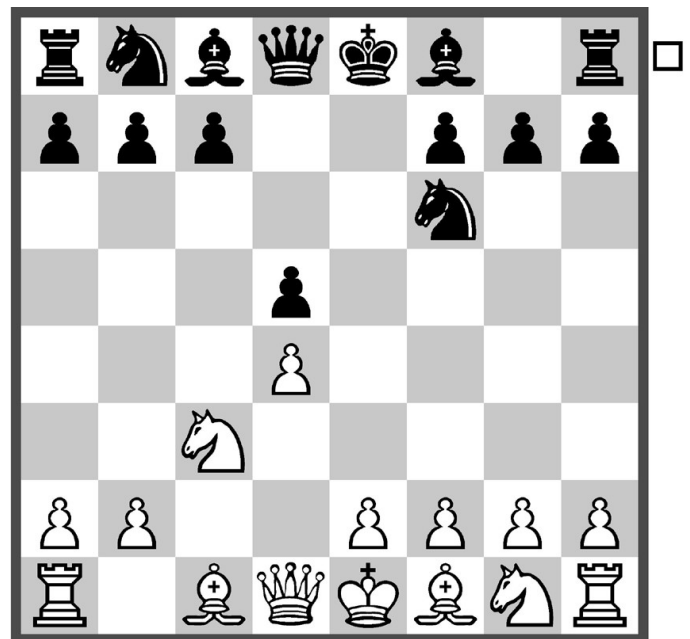




# The Exchange Variation

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6

4.cxd5 exd5



# Chapter Guide

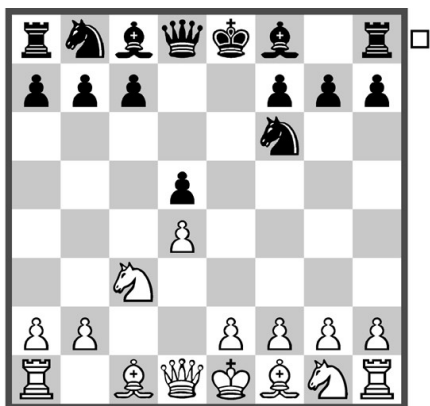
## Chapter 1 – The Exchange Variation

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## a) 5. ♔c2 & Secondary Lines

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. cxd5  
exd5



Position after: 4... exd5

The Exchange Variation has always had prestige among the elite, based on the theoretical discoveries of grandmasters such as Mihail Botvinnik or Samuel Reshevsky. However it was not until the late 1990s when, following the example of the then-world champion Garry Kasparov, it gained primacy among the various options for White and was considered a weapon if the fight came down to two outcomes. In particular Botvinnik's plan with f3 and e4 was, in Kasparov's hands, a constant source of problems for the defenders with Black. Additionally it became the recommendation of practically all the White repertoire books published at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one, which also favored its utilization. As I mentioned in the introduction, at that time the grandmasters entered the Queen's Gambit using the

order 1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 and only in the case of 3. ♘f3 (where Botvinnik's and Kasparov's plan was no longer possible) then 3... d5 (the Nimzo-Indian was favored in the case of 3. ♘c3). By the end of the first decade of the century, Black had begun to employ with some success (i.e. obtaining positions where all three results were again possible) different schemes for dealing with this dreaded variation, returning to the natural order with 1... d5 and 2... e6 to the master boards.

From a strategic point of view, the exchange on d5 produces a position where each side gains a half-open file and a pawn majority. In that sense, the position differs from others produced in the Slav or French for example, where the exchange on d5 produces a symmetrical structure and a single open file – a type of position where the chances of a draw are greater. Here, after the consolidation of the structure with e3 (usually played after ♗g5 to leave that piece out of the pawn chain) and ...c6 we get the so-called Carlsbad formation, one of the most explored and practiced positions in modern chess. At first the d5 exchange was viewed with some suspicion, because it opened up avenues for Black's limited bishop, but it soon became clear that it was not so easy to bring that piece into play, even with the original diagonal open. If I am

not mistaken, it was Savielly Tartakower in his book *Suggestions for Chess Strategy* who warned about the difficulties of the possible developments of the bishop which, in the first place, continues to be bad when moving through squares of the same color as its central pawns. In that particular position the light-squared bishop often has to settle for a passive position on e6 or b7, because f5 is generally forbidden (White usually plays ♔c2, ♘d3 quickly) and on g4 it is exposed to knight jumps on e5 (in lines with ♘f3) or pawn advances that gain time for White's plans. Meanwhile, White's bad bishop finds a more active position on g5, where it is directly involved in the fight for the d5-square.

It is details such as these that ensure White an early initiative, which Black must fight with patience and with as much activity as possible. Dynamics are important in this type of position – passive behavior leads Black to positions where he can only fight for a draw – and in this respect some of the recent theoretical discoveries have shed new light on the variation. While the scheme with ...♘d6 is the central part of this section, let's first consider some positions where White plays without ♘g5.

### 5. ♔c2

In principle, White wants with this move to make sure that ...♘f5 will not be possible – or at least to make it difficult. Black, of course, can respond with

logical moves such as 5... c6 and wait for some transposition, but he also has independent ideas. In addition to the move in the text, White can think of one of the following ideas, rarely played but not without logic.

**A)** 5. g3 This is a Catalan where White has prematurely developed the queen knight and (also prematurely) puts an end to the central tension which is important for these fianchetto formations. 5... ♘d6 6. ♘g2 c6 7. ♘f3 0-0 8. 0-0 ♖e8



Position after: 8... ♖e8

Black has an excellent position after the following. 9. ♔c2 ♘bd7 10. ♖e1 [10. ♘h4 ♘f8= Sasikiran – Libiszewski, Stockholm 2019] 10... ♘f8 [10... h6!? This also offers good results for Black.] 11. ♘g5



Position after: 11. ♘g5

11... ♖g4 [11... h6 This is worse. 12. ♖xf6 ♗xf6 13. e4± Kaminski – Dolnik, Eslovaquia 2008] 12. e4 [12. ♗ad1 h6 13. ♖c1 ♗d7♭ Miladinovic – Novikov, Khorintos 1999] 12... dxe4 13. ♗xe4 [13. ♖xe4 ♗xe4 14. ♗xe4 ♖f5 15. ♖xf6 ♗xf6=] 13... ♖e6=

**B)** 5. e3 This does not cause problems for Black, as it does not press on the center. A simple solution is as follows. 5... c6 6. ♖d3 ♖d6 7. ♗ge2 0-0 8. 0-0 ♗e8 9. ♗c2 [9. f3 This can be answered thematically with 9... c5♭.] 9... ♗bd7= Drozdova – Khavsky, St. Petersburg 2012. Without the dark-squared bishop outside the chain, White has no way to challenge Black's center effectively.

**C)** 5. a3 ♖f5!? 6. ♖g5 c6 7. e3 ♗bd7 8. ♖d3 ♖xd3 9. ♗xd3 Damm – Boensch, Bad Woerishofen 1992. This is very comfortable for Black, who can continue with 9... ♖d6!? or 9... ♖e7=.

**5... ♗c6!?**

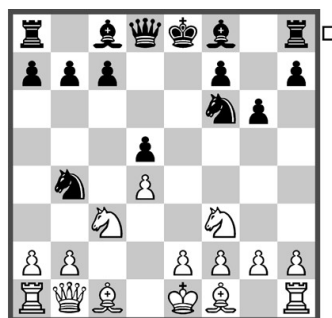
It seems to me that this move is the best attempt to take advantage of the move order played by White, with immediate pressure on d4. As indicated, Black can hold on to his central idea and continue with 5... c6 where a transposition to the more usual lines is likely to occur.

**6. ♖g5!?**

A really speculative move, but one that gives White the best statistics (over

60%, although only in six games). Other possibilities are as follows.

**A)** 6. ♗f3?! ♗b4 7. ♗b1 g6♭



Position after: 7... g6♭

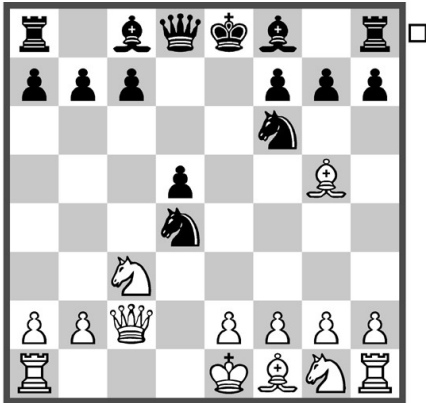
8. ♖g5 ♖f5 9. e4 dxe4 10. ♗xe4 ♖xe4 11. ♖xf6 ♖xb1 12. ♖xd8 ♗c2+ 13. ♗d2 ♗xa1→ White's position quickly collapsed, in Teglas – Mullner, Hungary tt 2005.

**B)** 6. e3?! This is also answered as follows. 6... ♗b4 7. ♗b1 g6 8. ♖d3 White at least has this move here against the threat of ... ♖f5, but the following is obviously in Black's favor. 8... c6 9. ♗f3 ♖d6 10. 0-0 ♗xd3 11. ♗xd3 ♖f5 12. ♗e2 J. Christiansen – P.Hansen, Copenhagen 1989. Here Black played 12... ♗e4; also good are 12... ♗e7 or the simple 12... 0-0♭.

**6... ♗xd4!**

White's statistical success in the position arising from 6. ♖g5 is directly associated with the low utilization of this critical capture.

(see diagram next page)



Position after: 6... Nxd4!

7. ♖a4+

7. ♖b1 ♗f5→ Peters – Gheng, Stuttgart 2004

7... ♞c6 8. 0-0-0 ♗d7

8... ♗e7 9. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10. ♞xd5 0-0  
This is another possibility.

9. ♗xf6

9. e3 ♞b4 10. ♖b3 c6 11. a3 This can be answered in an original way as follows. 11... a5!



Position after: 11... a5!

12. axb4 axb4 13. ♞b1 ♗d6 Black has excellent compensation. 14. ♗d3 0-0 15. ♗c2 [15. ♞f3 ♗e6 16. ♞bd2 c5→] 15... h6 16. ♗h4 ♗e6

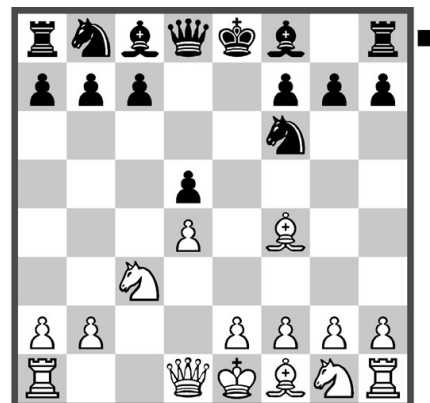
9... ♖xf6 10. ♞xd5 ♖h6+ 11. e3 ♗d6

Black has given back the pawn, but instead won the pair of bishops in an open position, and also has active pieces.

## b) 5. ♗f4

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♞c3 ♞f6 4. cxd5 exd5 5. ♗f4

This development is relatively popular, but not critical from a theoretical point of view. On f4 the bishop does not put pressure on the center as it does on g5 – White's objective in choosing this move is to develop as simply as possible, avoid theory and carry the fight to the middlegame.



Position after: 5. ♗f4

**5... c6 6. e3**

The most common. The alternatives are as follows.

**A)** 6.  $\text{Nf3}$  This allows Black's pieces to develop easily. I imagine that Tartakower would have allowed the ominous black queen bishop to come out here. 6...  $\text{Bf5}$  7.  $\text{e3}$   $\text{Nbd7}$  8.  $\text{Bd3}$   $\text{Bxd3}$  9.  $\text{Qxd3}$   $\text{Re7}$  10.  $\text{h3}$  0-0 11. 0-0  $\text{Re8}$  12.  $\text{Rab1}$   $\text{a5}$  13.  $\text{Rfc1}$   $\text{Nf8}$

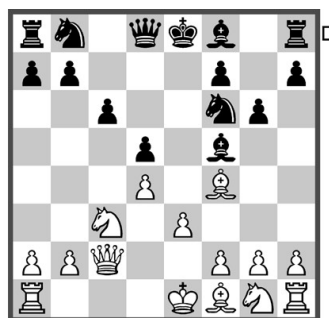


Position after: 13...  $\text{Nf8}$

14.  $\text{a3}$  [14.  $\text{Qd1}$  White doesn't get much out of this. 14...  $\text{Ng6}$  15.  $\text{Bh2}$   $\text{Bd6}$  16.  $\text{Bxd6}$   $\text{Qxd6}$ = Eichlerr – Dautov, Germany 2018] 14...  $\text{Ng6}$  15.  $\text{Bh2}$   $\text{Bd6}$  16.  $\text{Bxd6}$   $\text{Qxd6}$  The position is balanced. 17.  $\text{b4}$  White may think about the traditional minority attack, as in Thorfinsson – Akesson, Reykjavik 2006. 7...  $\text{b5}$ ! However Black has this reply, with a balanced position.

**B)** 6.  $\text{Qc2}$  This is directed against the idea of ...  $\text{Bf5}$ . 6...  $\text{g6}$  However after this move Black renews the idea. [Black also has the following possibility. 6...  $\text{Bb4}$  7.  $\text{e3}$   $\text{Nh5}$  8.  $\text{Bg3}$   $\text{Nxc3}$  9.  $\text{hxc3}$   $\text{h6}$  10.  $\text{Bd3}$   $\text{Nd7}$  11.  $\text{Nf3}$   $\text{Nf6}$  12. 0-0 0-0 13.

$\text{Nd2}$ ?!  $\text{Re8}$  14.  $\text{a3}$   $\text{Bf8}$  15.  $\text{b4}$   $\text{Bd7}$  16.  $\text{Rfc1}$   $\text{Rc8}$  17.  $\text{Nb3}$   $\text{Rc7}$  18.  $\text{Bf5}$   $\text{Bd6}$  Black prepares actions on the king's wing, in Bashtavenko – Rodi, Caibobá 2022.] 7.  $\text{e3}$   $\text{Bf5}$



Position after: 7...  $\text{Bf5}$

8.  $\text{Qd2}$ !? [8.  $\text{Bd3}$   $\text{Bxd3}$  9.  $\text{Qxd3}$   $\text{Bg7}$  10.  $\text{Nf3}$  0-0 This does not create problems for Black, in Khurtsidze – Limontaite, St. Petersburg 2009.] 8...  $\text{Nh5}$  9.  $\text{Be5}$   $\text{f6}$  10.  $\text{Bg3}$   $\text{Nd7}$  11.  $\text{Bd3}$   $\text{Nxc3}$  12.  $\text{hxc3}$   $\text{Bxd3}$  13.  $\text{Qxd3}$   $\text{f5}$ = Riediger – Froewis, Austria 2018

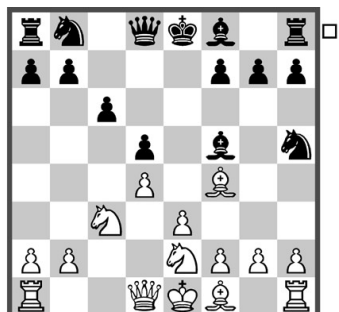
**6... Bf5**

Another case where Black beats White handily on the b1-h7 diagonal. Two factors to keep in mind related to this development are that the reply  $\text{Qb3}$  is not dangerous and that the potential exchange of the light-squared bishops is strategically convenient for the second player.

**7. Bd3**

Despite being a positional concession, this move is by far the most common. Other ideas are as follows.

A) 7.  $\text{Nge2}$   $\text{Nh5!?$



Position after: 7...  $\text{Nh5!?$

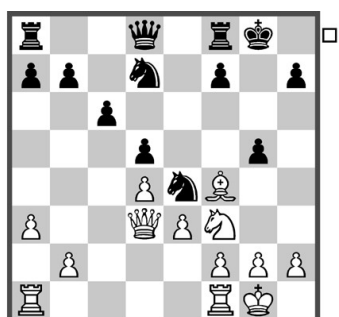
Black goes for the bishop pair. 8.  $\text{Qe5}$   $\text{Nd7}$  9.  $\text{Ng3}$   $\text{Nxg3}$  10.  $\text{Qxg3}$  (Gaertner – Betzel, Austria 2012) 10...  $\text{Qb6=}$

B) 7.  $\text{Qb3}$   $\text{Qb6}$  8.  $\text{Qxb6}$  [8.  $\text{f3!?$   $\text{h5}$  9.  $\text{Nge2}$   $\text{h4}$ ] 8...  $\text{axb6}$  9.  $\text{Nge2}$   $\text{b5}$  10.  $\text{Ng3}$   $\text{Qg6}$  Lakner – Zhao Zong Yuan, Brisbane 2005

7...  $\text{Qxd3}$  8.  $\text{Qxd3}$   $\text{Qd6}$

This is the simplest way to equalize but Black can also keep his pieces.

8...  $\text{Nbd7}$  9.  $\text{Nf3}$   $\text{Qb4}$  10. 0-0 0-0 11.  $\text{a3}$   $\text{Qxc3}$  12.  $\text{Qxc3}$   $\text{Ne4}$  13.  $\text{Qd3}$   $\text{g5}$



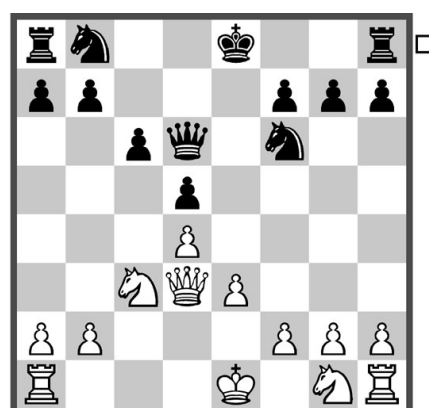
Position after: 13...  $\text{g5}$

14.  $\text{Qe5}$   $\text{f6}$  15.  $\text{Qg3}$   $\text{Qe7}$  M.Socko – Stefanova, Beijing blitz 2011

9.  $\text{Qxd6}$

9.  $\text{Nge2}$  0-0 10. 0-0  $\text{Qe8}$  11.  $\text{Qab1}$   $\text{a5}$   
This is also equal. 12.  $\text{a3}$   $\text{Qxf4}$  13.  $\text{Nxf4}$   $\text{Qd6}$  14.  $\text{Qfc1}$   $\text{Nbd7=}$  Rivas Pastor – Baron Rodriguez, Barcelona 2000

9...  $\text{Qxd6}$



Position after: 9...  $\text{Qxd6}$

Black has comfortably reached equality. Here I will offer some examples taken from practice that show how both players can maneuver to try to turn the fight in their favor.

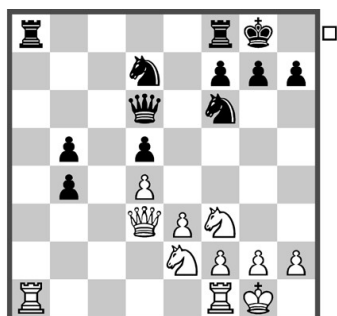
10.  $\text{Nf3}$

10.  $\text{Nge2}$  0-0 11. 0-0  $\text{Nbd7}$  12.  $\text{Ng3}$   $\text{Qfe8}$  13.  $\text{f3}$   $\text{Qad8}$  14.  $\text{Qad1}$   $\text{Qb4}$  Bezler – Donev, Austria 1995

10...  $\text{Nbd7}$  11. 0-0 0-0 12.  $\text{Qab1}$

12.  $\text{b4}$   $\text{b5}$  13.  $\text{a4}$   $\text{a5!?$  It is not clear that the minority attack will achieve anything. 14.  $\text{axb5}$   $\text{axb4}$  15.  $\text{Ne2}$   $\text{cxb5}$





Position after: 15... cxb5

(Perdomo – Leitão, São Paulo 2008) 16. ♖xa8!? [In the game White went for the b5-pawn. 16. ♙xb5 ♖xa1 17. ♖xa1 ♖b8 However after this the resulting passed pawn on b4 is dangerous.] 16... ♖xa8 17. ♖b1 ♙c7 Other moves can be answered with ♙xb5 or ♞e1-c2; 18. ♖xb4 ♖a1+ 19. ♖b1 ♙a5= White's knights are doing well to defend against Black's passed pawn, although in practice their task is certainly more difficult.

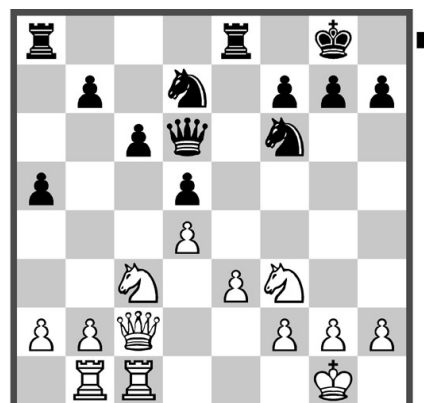
12... a5 13. ♙c2

The following option is of similar value.

13. ♖fc1 ♖fe8 14. ♞d2 g6 15. ♞a4 ♞g4 16. ♞f3 Adamski – Bagirov, Polanica Zdroj 1969. 16... ♙e7 17. h3 ♞gf6=

13... ♖fe8 14. ♖fc1

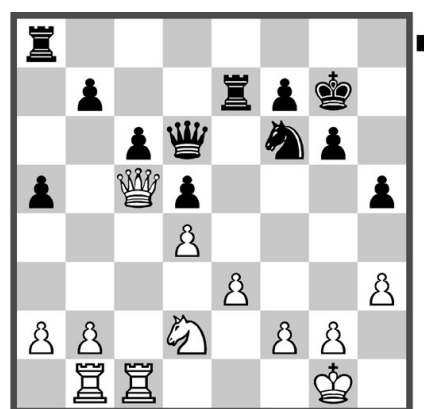
(see diagram next column)



Position after: 14. ♖fc1

14. a3 g6 15. ♖fc1 ♖ec8 16. h3 ♙g7 17. ♞d2 h5= Yang Kaiqi – Bluebaum, internet blitz 2022

14... g6!? 15. h3 ♙g7 16. ♞d2 ♖e7 17. ♞a4 h5 18. ♞c5 ♞xc5 19. ♙xc5



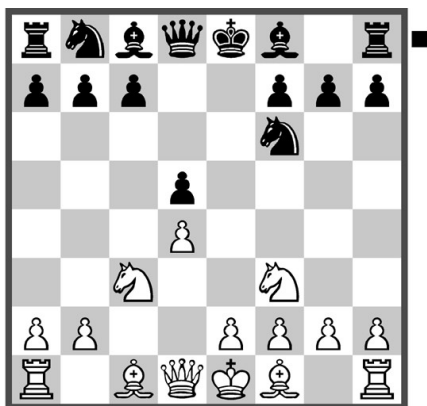
Position after: 19. ♙xc5

19... ♙e6=

Black has no problems in this position, with his control of the central e4-square, in Geivondian – Timofeev, Russia rapid 2018.


## c) 5. f3

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3.  c3  f6 4. cxd5  
exd5 5.  f3







Position after: 5.  f3








In practice this is the second most popular idea, usually leading to the main lines by transposition. It may be considered slightly premature, as White can make other moves while waiting to discover the best square to develop this piece, but it is certainly not bad.

5... c6 6.  c2

This move order results in different positions from those analyzed in subchapter a) from which it can transpose. The alternatives are as follows.










**A)** 6.  g5 The most popular here, which leads by transposition to the main lines after 6...  e7 or 6...  bd7. After the natural 7. e3 a position arises which, although it is an integral part of the Exchange Variation, I have included it, for reasons of order, the Chapter 4.






Of course, Black also has 6...  d6 with more than likely transposition to the scheme analyzed in the following chapters.

**B)** 6. e3  d6 7.  d3 0-0 8. 0-0  e8 This is similar to our main line; however White is playing here with the dark-squared bishop inside the pawn chain, which is less active. [8...  g4!? This can also be considered; in some cases Black has the maneuver ... h5-g6 to exchange the light-squared bishops.] 9.  c2  bd7



Position after: 9...  bd7

**B1)** 10. e4 As is usually the case in such situations this has a structural disadvantage, since White has to accept an isolated pawn in the center. 10... dxe4 11.  xe4  xe4 12.  xe4  f6 13.  g5 h6 14.  xf6  xf6 15.  fe1  g4 Weiler – Doettling, Stafer 2000

**B2)** 10.  e1  f8 11. h3  d7 (Alternatively 11... h6 in order to prepare ... e6 is also popular.) 12.  d2