

The Modernized French Defense

**Volume 2:
Against the Tarrasch**

First edition 2020 by Thinkers Publishing
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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

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Software: Hub van de Laar

Cover Design: Iwan Kerkhof

Graphic Artist: Philippe Tonnard

Production: BESTinGraphics

ISBN: 9789492510853

D/2020/13730/09

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Thinkers Publishing 2020



Key to Symbols

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

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Table of Contents

Key to Symbols & Bibliography.....	4
Preface	6
Overview of the variations	9
Chapter 1 – 4.c3 (The bad Caro-Kann)	13
Chapter 2 – 5.♘b5+ (A cheeky check)	21
Chapter 3 – 4.♘gf3 ♘f6 (Universal line, waiting to take the candy)	33
Chapter 4 – 11.♘b1 (Drawing guns)	55
Chapter 5 – 4.exd5 exd5 5. ♘gf3 ♘f6 (A new plan with 7...♙xd7)	69
Chapter 6 – 7...♘bxd7 (The common lines with 10.♘b3)	77
Chapter 7 – 10.♙e1 (Mimicking Ruy Lopez).....	85
Chapter 8 – 5...♘c6 (Introduction and 6...cxd4)	99
Chapter 9 – 6...♘d6 (The central station and how to get there).....	117
Chapter 10 – 10.h3! (The right track)	133
Chapter 11 – 6...♙e7+ (Just checking)	161
Chapter 12 – 5...a6!? (And the rest)	171

Preface

Dear reader,

Let me share here how I have made my choices for this second volume. Ten years ago, I would sometimes even play the Petroff against people who had games with 3.♘d2 in the database. I actually thought that the Petroff gave me better winning chances! You might have a similar story. 3.♘d2 gives White a very nice pawn structure so it is difficult to get a grip on the position as Black. For many years I have tried moves like 3...♗f6 from the GM Repertoire book or the more drawish 3...c5 and 4...♙xd5 line. It has taken me a lot of time to find the variation against 3.♘d2 which best fits my playing style. After trying virtually every possibility, there is only one satisfactory variation for me - the isolated pawn!

The reason why I had left this option at the bottom of my list initially is because there was a firm belief at the time that Black was worse in these isolated pawn positions. On the flipside, players on the white side have usually studied the lines after 3...♗f6 or 4...♙xd5 in much greater depth. This is one reason why people often mix up their theory as White. Typically they assume they are already better, so why would they need to remember any subtle details? The whole point of 3.♘d2 is to be microscopically better. Fortunately, this can all be easily neutralized with good opening knowledge.

Whilst studying most of the existing literature, I have noticed that there is hardly any recent analysis on the systems with 3...c5 and 4...exd5. Still, many authors who have been covering them from White's perspective have a lot of respect for the variations and hardly achieve anything against them. When I started to play with the isolated pawn myself, my results against 3.♘d2 became better. My score against 3.♘d2 is actually better than my score against 3.♘c3 now. I have noticed that in correspondence chess, these isolated pawn lines are favored by black quite often. That is when I realized that this small advantage was just a prejudice.

I have to admit, the positions are slightly harder to play for Black. However, that is probably also true for the other lines against 3.♘d2. It just takes some time to become familiar with all the possibilities and ensuing middlegames. But once you finally master the isolated pawn structure, it will serve you well and equip you with a wide selection of tools with which you can outplay your opponent. My original plan for this book was to cover 3.♘d2 as well as all the other options besides

3. ♘c3, but I believe it is much more important to focus on showing as many examples as possible of how to play with different versions of the French isolated pawn. All the material in this book is designed for you to be able to pick your favorite line in the 3...c5, 4...exd5 system. Consequently there will be a third volume in this series, covering the rest of White's options against the French.

Finally, a word of thanks. I would like to thank my roomies at Schaakhuis Amsterdam for being a team; Teele Kuusk for getting me out of some dead ends without even knowing; Peter and Thomas from K41 for the great meals and nine avocados; Sivert, for his silly behavior which always makes me laugh; My uncle Chris and aunt Elles for the best bed and breakfast anyone could wish for; and last but not least, my brothers and sister just for being there.

David Miedema

Overview of the variations

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. $\text{N}d2$



Position after: 3. $\text{N}d2$

This is the starting point of the book.

3... c5

In this book you will see a lot of versions of isolated pawn positions. The best way to enter these lines is with 3...c5.

4. exd5

A) 4. $\text{N}gf3$



Position after: 4. $\text{N}gf3$

This line is a clever way for White to postpone his decision. It avoids the 5...a6 line in the IQP variations. 4... $\text{N}f6$ [4... $\text{N}c6$ 5. exd5 exd5 transposes to the main line.] 5. e5 $\text{N}fd7$ 6. c3



Position after: 6. c3

Here we have entered the 'universal variation'. If you play 5... $\text{N}f6$ then you need to be well prepared in these positions as well as the IQP positions. After analyzing them, I must say that it is a lot of fun to play these lines as Black. Hopefully you will share this view after a detailed studying of Chapters 3 and 4! 6... $\text{N}c6$ 7. $\text{O}d3$ $\text{Q}b6$ 8. 0-0 cxd4 9. cxd4 a5! This will be the focus of our study in Chapters 3 and 4. A fresh new waiting approach!

B) 4. c3 is covered in Chapter 1.

4... exd5

Entering the isolated pawn positions!

5. ♘gf3

5. ♗b5+ This attempt at getting a unique position is covered in Chapter 2.



Position after: 5. ♘gf3

The most common move. Black now has an important choice to make and I have covered all possible options in this position. There are no inferior choices but 5... ♘c6 is the easiest to learn.

5... ♘c6

A) 5... a6 This move is covered in Chapter 12.

B) 5... cxd4 This move is also covered in Chapter 12, but it usually transposes to Chapter 8.

C) 5... c4 is, yet again, covered in Chapter 12.

D) 5... ♘f6 will be our focus in the first half of the book. Chapters 5-7 will cover the positions arising after this move. 6. ♗b5+ ♗d7 7. ♗xd7+ ♘bxd7 [7... ♙xd7!?



Position after: 7... ♙xd7!?

This move is a diamond in the rough and will be covered in Chapter 5.] 8. 0-0 ♗e7 9. dxc5 ♘xc5 10. ♖e1 is the slow approach and will be the subject of Chapter 7. All other tenth moves like 10. ♘b3 will be covered in Chapter 6.

6. ♗b5



Position after: 6. ♗b5

6... ♗d6

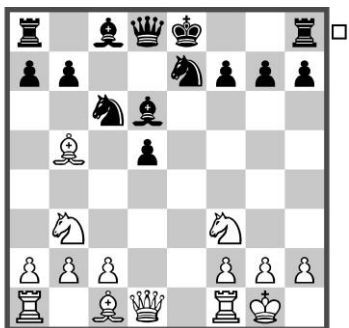
This move is covered in Chapters 9 and 10. Even though we will cover a lot of material on this move, I would not say it is the easiest to play.

A) 6... cxd4 is Marin's recommendation and it is covered in Chapter 8. Black tries to trick White into a bad version of the

6... ♘d6 line. However, with the right knowledge White should be able to get an advantage.

B) 6... ♖e7+!? This check is covered in Chapter 11. The major advantage of this move is that it is the easiest to learn. Black hardly has to know anything because there has been so little analysis of yet.

7. dxc5 ♘xc5 8. 0-0 ♗ge7 9. ♞b3 ♘d6



Position after: 9... ♘d6

This is the position I call the 'central station'. There are a lot of new ideas to be discovered here. In Chapter 9 we will

see what happens when White occupies d4 with a knight and we will also take a look at all of White's other tries besides 10.h3!. Finally, in Chapter 10 we will come to deal with the strongest move, 10. h3!.

By the time you have finished reading this book, you will have been presented with a number of different repertoires against 3.♗d2. Chapters 1 and 2 are a core part of each possible repertoire. Chapters 3-7 cover the repertoire with 5...♗f6. Chapters 8 and 9 focus on the the tricky 6...cxd4 line. In Chapters 9 and 10 we reach the 'central station' with 6...♘d6 (there is some overlap between 6...cxd4 and 6...♘d6). Chapter 11 is a repertoire for the lazy based on 6...♖e7+. Finally, Chapter 12 is a diverse dessert menu which we can choose from to surprise our opponents. In my view, surprising our opponents is key because when you know the isolated pawn positions better, you can use your extra knowledge to compensate for your slightly worse position.