

Contents

Explanation of Symbols	6
Introduction	7
Chapter 1 The Scandinavian: introduction and general ideas.	9
Chapter 2 The Icelandic Gambit	20
Chapter 3 The Scandinavian Defence, Portuguese Variation: the quiet line with 4. ♘e2	33
Chapter 4 The Scandinavian Defence, Portuguese Variation: the classical system with 4. ♘f3	46
Chapter 5 The Scandinavian Defence, Portuguese Variation: the critical line with 4.f3	69
Chapter 6 The Modern Variation.	91
Chapter 7 Odds and ends	101
Chapter 8 The Albin Countergambit.	112
Chapter 9 The Stonewall: an unbreachable fortress	141
Chapter 10 The English and the Réti.	180
Chapter 11 The irregular openings.	196
Chapter 12 Solutions to Exercises	219
Bibliography	237
Index of games	238

Introduction

A few months have passed since the first volume of this diptych was written and published. Hocine and Nicolas, the two young children who were starting chess and whom we met in the introduction, have begun to study the openings in a systematic and intelligent way – in other words, without learning the first ten moves of a variation by heart. Both have also competed in numerous tournaments to put their new theoretical knowledge into practice, and the results were not long in coming. Nicolas, in particular, has surged more than 500 points in Elo rating, and we will see him at work later in these pages for his first game against a grandmaster with an Elo over 2600. The ten-year-old boy won the opening battle, but nevertheless failed to make use of a good advantage and finally lost after a tactical blunder, proving that the opening is important (I would not say otherwise while writing a book on the subject), but that it is not everything. We will have the opportunity to discuss this again.

I hope that those readers of the first volume that I have the pleasure to find here for the rest of our study have experienced the same progression as Nicolas and Hocine. I asked myself whether I should write a new introduction for this second volume. I know from experience that this is not the part of a book that chess players are generally the most fond of, and that it is often skipped by readers in order to plunge as quickly as possible into the heart of the matter. Furthermore, I do not really have any new elements to add to the first volume. I will therefore simply summarize a few of the main points.

Like its predecessor, this book is conceived in the form of a repertoire. It offers Black targeted systems against White's main moves, and is not an encyclopaedic survey of all openings. Naturally, a large part will be devoted to 1.e4, which is by far the most popular opening for amateurs and club players.

The choice of openings (for the black side!) is undoubtedly debatable. I have deliberately avoided the major theoretical variations of the Sicilian Defence (against 1.e4) or the King's Indian Defence (against 1.d4), which would have no place in a work mainly intended for amateurs or young children just starting out. And I have deliberately chosen aggressive variations. Playing aggressive openings allows the development of one's tactical vision in open positions, which can only benefit progression.

Do not be afraid, or reluctant, to play some of the gambits in this repertoire, even though they may have a dubious reputation according to omniscient opening theory. I have bet on pragmatism and efficiency. And this approach has been confirmed by the results of my students who have tested – and adopted! – this repertoire against opponents of their own level. There will always be time, later, to come to the main opening variations recommended by theory, which will inevitably require much more effort. Initially the goal must be to forge a digestible repertoire without expending too much energy on it, and above all by emphasizing

understanding rather than memorization. This is undoubtedly the aim of this book, which is not intended to prepare masters, or even candidates to become masters (at least not right away!), but rather to offer ideas and points of reference to players – young and less young alike! – who engage in competitions and are not sure where to start studying openings. This book will also be useful for organizers and trainers of clubs who sometimes feel a little lacking when they have to teach openings to their students.

I have kept the same framework, involving a collection of complete games, rather than the presentation of long theoretical lines which could prove indigestible for an amateur. Rather than being able to recite the first ten moves of an opening by heart, it is far more important to know the typical middlegame plans that result from an opening, and above all the most common combinations and tactical themes. And it is only by studying complete games that you can discover these.

Moreover, whenever possible, I have again mainly chosen to select young players' games rather than games from grandmasters. There are at least two reasons:

1. I would not have much to add to grandmasters' games, which have already been analyzed by illustrious authors and which can be found in many other publications.

2. It seems profitable, at least at first, to study games by children and amateurs, with their characteristic faults, rather than those of grandmasters. The latter are often free from major mistakes, but are sometimes a little difficult to grasp for the layman. Obviously, as it is impossible to study an opening without drawing on the experience of the best players, some games from great champions are included in this collection.

At the end of each chapter a series of exercises will test that the concepts discussed have been assimilated. An experienced player can try to solve the positions before reading the chapter. Solving these exercises will therefore also be a good way to work at tactics and the calculation of variations. Work that must necessarily go hand in hand with the study of openings. With greater tactical skill it is possible that Nicolas could have capitalized on the advantage he acquired in the opening against the grandmaster.

Now I wish you a safe and rewarding journey of initiation into the fabulous world of the openings. If, in addition to acquiring new knowledge, you have fun, then this modest book will have achieved its goal.

Vincent Moret
Nancy, June 2017

Chapter 2

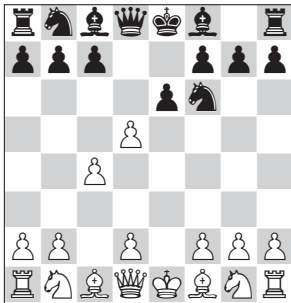
The Icelandic Gambit

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4



White hangs on to the pawn – a risky decision, especially if he persists in the intention to keep it.

3...e6!



The Icelandic Gambit, in reference to the Grandmasters Hannes Stefánsson and Throstur Thórhallsson, who used it with some success in the late 1980s.

In the same spirit as the text move, 3...c6 is also possible, and this leads to the Scandinavian Gambit. Both moves (3...e6 and 3...c6) have a good reputation and it is difficult to say for sure which is better. In their monographs on the Portuguese Scandinavian, Anderson and Smerdon analyze the two variations

without giving an opinion, and let readers make their own choice. Here, within the limited framework of our repertoire work, I will only propose the Icelandic Gambit, and this for three reasons.

First of all, it leads to very tactical positions with many traps in which an amateur player playing White will struggle to come out alive against a well-prepared opponent.

Second, we will find the ...e7-e6 move in many variations of the Portuguese. So there will be unity in the repertoire. The third reason is probably the most important. After 3...c6 White is not forced to take on c6 and can play 4.d4, which leads to the dangerous and complicated Panov Variation of the Caro-Kann. There is no need to burden our repertoire with an additional opening.

Game 3

Slobodan Mitrović 1915

Quentin Daios 1435

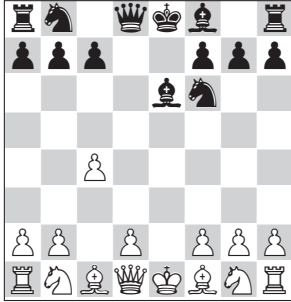
Metz 2014

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6
4.dxe6?!**

The acceptance of the gambit is much too risky. It is much wiser for White to return the pawn by 4.d4, thus transposing into a variation of the Exchange French after 4...exd5. Unlike the Panov Variation of the Caro-Kann (which could occur after 3...c6), this variation of the Exchange French poses no real problems to Black and certainly does not require a lot of learning. We

will see an example at the end of the chapter (a game by Magnus Carlsen when he was twelve years old).

4... ♖xe6



In compensation for the sacrificed pawn Black already has a lead in development, with two pieces out against zero for White. In most variations Black will castle queenside (in the spirit of the Scandinavian) and place the rooks on the two central files in an attempt to create threats to the white king before White has time to consolidate the position.

5.d4

A logical but dubious move. Later we shall see the other option, 5. ♘f3, which is preferable.

5... ♖b4+ 6. ♖d2

6. ♘c3 is not better, as we will see in Game 5.

6... ♖xd2+

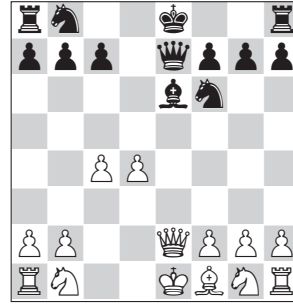
6... ♗e7! is just as strong as the text move.

7. ♗xd2 ♗e7!

The threat of a discovered check on the e-file is very unpleasant.

8. ♗e2?

It was absolutely essential to play 8. ♗e3, which we will analyze in the next game, even if White's problems are far from being solved.



8... ♗c6!

Be careful not to stray. 8... ♖xc4?? is not possible: 9. ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 10. ♖xc4+-.

There are 49 games listed in the 2017 Mega Database after the move 8... ♗c6. From these 62 games, White has scored a very poor 19%. In other words, White is already lost.

9. ♘f3

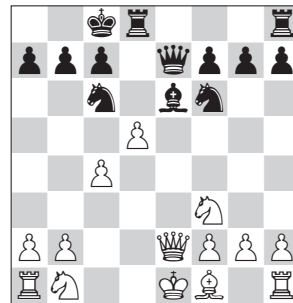
The fork is not possible: 9.d5? ♗d4, and the white queen cannot both defend the c2-square and prevent the discovered check on the e-file.

9... 0-0-0!

Renewing the attack on d4.

10.d5

The only way to defend the d4-pawn this time. If 10. ♗c3 ♗xd4! 11. ♗xd4 ♗xd4-+.



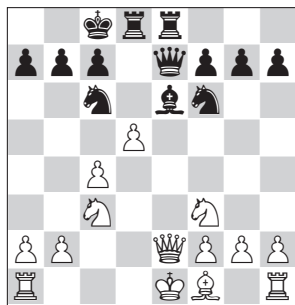
10... ♗he8!!

Without worrying about the fork Black centralizes his rook and so brings

the last undeveloped piece into play. The whole black army will be able to participate in the final assault on the white king.

11. ♖c3

Neither capture was possible: 11.dxe6? ♖b4+ 12.♖c3 ♜xe6--+, or 11.dxc6? ♖b4+ 12.♖c3 ♜xc4--+.



11...♜xd5!

Opening lines!

12. ♖xd5

A) 12.♖xe7? ♜xe7+ 13.♜e2 ♜xc4--+. White cannot castle without losing a piece;

B) 12.cxd5? ♖b4 13.dxc6 ♖xb2!--+;

C) It was doubtless better for White to evacuate his king immediately by 12.0-0-0, even if after 12...♖c5 13.♖d3 ♜xf3 14.♖xf3 ♜xd1+ 15.♖xd1 (15.♖xd1 ♜e1--+) 15...♖b6! his position remains very uncomfortable. One example: 16.b3 ♖d4+ 17.♖c2 ♖b4+ 18.♖b2 ♖d2+ 19.♖a3 ♖c2+ 20.♖a4 (20.♖b2 ♖e1+) 20...♜e6 and the white king will be mated.

12...♖xd5

12...♖c5! was even stronger.

13. ♖xe7 ♜xe7+ 14. ♖d1?

A) 14.♜e2 ♖f4--+;

B) 14.♖d2 ♖e3+ 15.♖c3 ♖d1+ 16.♖c2 ♖xf2--+.

14...♖e3+

0-1

White loses a rook or is mated.

White was an experienced adult rated around 2000 Elo. Black was a 15-year-old rated 1435 (!), but who knew his stuff well. Without taking anything from his performance, he was simply repeating analysis that he already knew, which just goes to show that, even for a player with a 500 Elo point advantage, the Icelandic Gambit is not a bed of roses for White.

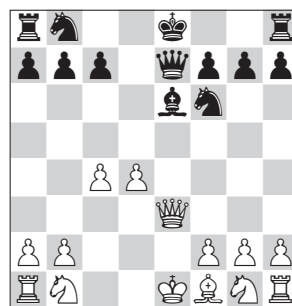
Game 4

Paul Smadja 1605

Marwan Brion 1542

Montbéliard ch-FRA jr 2012

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6 ♜xe6 5.d4 ♜b4+ 6.♜d2 ♜xd2+ 7.♖xd2 ♖e7 8.♖e3



On e3 the white queen does not block the bishop and provides additional protection to the d4-pawn.

8...♖c6!

As in the previous game!

9. ♖f3

And, also as in the previous game, the fork does not work: 9.d5? ♖g4 10.♖e2 (10.♖e4 ♖f6 – with a double attack on f2 and b2 – 11.♖e2 ♖d4--+) 10...♖d4 (the white queen is harassed) 11.♖e4 ♖b4+ 12.♖d2 (12.♖c3 ♖xb2--+) 12...♖b6! (stronger than 12...♖xb2 13.♜b1 ♖c2+ 14.♖e2 ♖d4+∞) 13.♖h3

(13.dxe6 f5! 14.♖b1 ♘c2+! 15.♗xc2 ♗xf2+ 16.♙d1 ♘e3+ 17.♙c1 ♗e1+ and it's mate!) 13...0-0-0 14.dxe6 (14.♙e2 ♘f6 15.♗d3 ♙f5-+) 14...♘f6-+.

9...0-0-0 10.♙e2

The position of the queen on e3 makes it possible to try to close the e-file.

Once again, the fork does not work: 10.d5? ♘g4 11.♗e2 ♗he8!, and again we find the themes of the previous game: 12.♘c3 ♙xd5!-+.

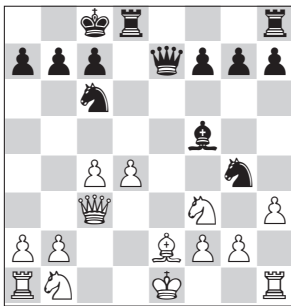
10...♘g4

10...♗he8 was also possible. Black obviously has very good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

11.♗c3 ♙f5

To open the e-file and prepare ...♗he8.

12.h3



12...♗he8?!

The highly original move 12...♘h2!!, preventing kingside castling, leads to a brilliant conclusion: 13.♗xh2 (13.♘h2 ♘xd4-+) 13...♗he8 14.♗d2 (14.♘g1 ♘xd4-+; 14.♗e3 ♗f6 15.♗d2 ♘xd4-+) 14...♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4!-+.

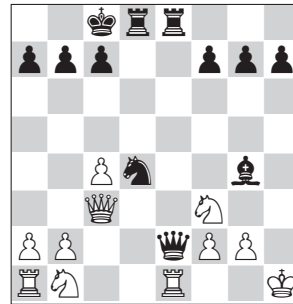
13.0-0 ♗xe2 14.hxg4 ♙xg4

15.♗e1?

15.♘bd2, threatening to trap the queen by 16.♗ae1, would have allowed White to hold the balance.

15...♘xd4! 16.♙h1?

A) 6.♗xe2? ♘xe2+ 17.♙f1 ♘xc3-+;
B) 16.♘bd2 ♙xf3 17.♘xf3 ♘xf3+ 18.gxf3 ♗d3 19.♗xe8 ♗g6+♠.



16...♘xf3! 17.♗xe2 ♗d1+ 0-1

Game 5

Keith Ruxton

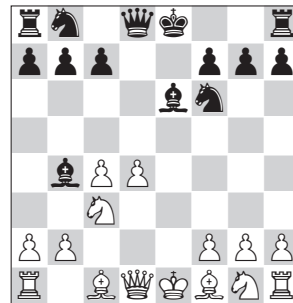
2325

Li Yang Hsu

2315

Tunja Wch jr 1989

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6 ♙xe6 5.d4 ♙b4+ 6.♘c3



6...♘e4! 7.♗d3

A) 7.d5? ♗f6! – attacking c3 and f2! – 8.♗f3 (8.dxe6?? ♗xf2#) 8...♘c3 9.♗xf6 ♘xd5+ 10.♗c3 ♘xc3 11.♙d2 ♘xa2♠. The black knight has made three consecutive captures in the last three moves;

B) 7.♗c2 was played in a game between Anne Haast and Mariya Muzychuk at the World Under 12 Championship in 2004. Black, who became Women's

World (adult!) Champion 11 years later, could have gained the advantage by playing: 7...♖xc3 8.bxc3 ♖xd4!.

7...♖f5 8.♖f3

A) 8.♖d2? 0-0! 9.♗ge2 (9.♗xe4 ♖xe4 10.♖xe4? ♗e8-+) 9...♗e8 10.♗xe4 ♖xe4 11.♖g3 ♖xd2+ 12.♗xd2 ♗c6 13.♗c3? ♗xd4!! 14.♗xd4 c5 15.♗c2 ♖f6+ 16.♗b3 ♗e6 and the threats to the white king were too strong in the game Yasin-Koc, Turkey tt 2008;

B) 8.a3 was no better, as demonstrated by the game Dicu-Florescu, played in the Romanian Team Championships in 2011: 8...♖xc3+ 9.bxc3 0-0 10.♖f3 ♗e8, and as often in the Icelandic Gambit, Black has a big lead in development in exchange for the sacrificed pawn – the entire white king's wing is still in its paddock.

8...♖xd4 9.♗ge2

9.♖xf5? was not possible. After 9...♖xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 11.♗e2 0-0! 12.♖xe4 ♗c6, as is also typical of the Icelandic Gambit, the white king will not survive the arrival of two black rooks on the central files. Again, the entire white kingside is still on its starting blocks.

9...♖d7 10.a3?

The decisive mistake. It would have been better to try to develop the kingside by 10.g4 ♖g6 11.♖g2 in order to castle, even though Black, who has restored material equality, retains the better position.

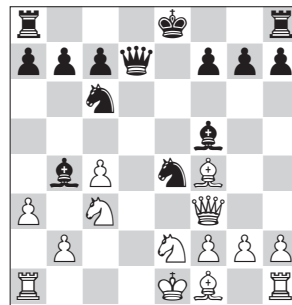
10...♗c6!

Developing a new piece and threatening 11...♗e5.

11.♖f4

To prevent ...♗c6-e5.

11.axb4 ♗xb4 (threatening mate on c2!) 12.♗d5 ♗c2+ 13.♗d1 ♗xa1-+.



11...♗e5!

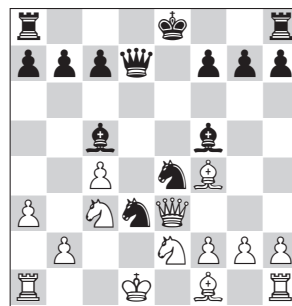
Anyway!

12.♖e3

12.♖xe5? ♖d2#.

12...♗d3+ 13.♗d1 ♖c5

0-1



The white queen is lost. In all the variations and notes we examined in this game, neither the f1-bishop nor the h1-rook moved.

Game 6

Sophie Aflalo

1953

Salomé Neuhauser

1798

Aix-les-Bains ch-FRA jr 2006

This game was played in the last round of the French Championship between the two big favourites for the Under 12 category, who were then in the lead. The winner was assured of the title. Salomé, who usually plays the Sicilian Dragon, decided to avoid her opponent's preparation and bet on the surprise

effect of playing the Scandinavian for the first time – a choice that paid off, as we shall see.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6 ♙xe6 5.♙e2

A move order intended to avoid the variation of the following game (5.♘f3 ♚e7!), but which allows Black to develop very easily and thus obtain good compensation for the pawn.

5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♙c5



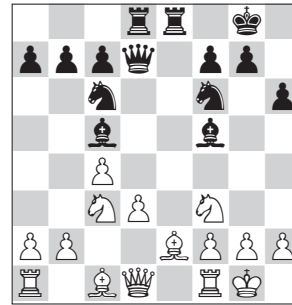
For the sacrificed pawn Black has obtained a development advantage and positional compensation thanks to her control of the d4-square and the weakness of the white d-pawn, which is backward on a semi-open file. This is a direct consequence of not having played d2-d4.

7.0–0 ♚d7

Black plans to castle queenside to strengthen the pressure on the d-file and the backward white pawn. In his book, however, Smerdon considers that this plan is perhaps too ambitious. According to him, Black's compensation being essentially positional in this position (pressure on the backward d-pawn), there is no reason to take risks by unbalancing the position with opposite-side castling, where positional considerations weigh less. That is why 7...0–0! is preferable in this position,

followed by ...♚d7, ...♖ad8, ...♗fe8 and ...♙f5, when Black will press on the d3-pawn, while of course maintaining absolute control of the d4-square.

Let's see, with a diagram, the position that Black must try to get with her pieces:



Of course, White is missing some moves, but this diagram is just intended to show on which squares Black should try to place her pieces (note that ...h7-h6 has been played to prevent ♙g5). Black firmly controls the d4-square to prevent the d3-pawn from advancing, and this is attacked three times: by the black queen, bishop and rook. White is struggling to protect the pawn. If she is forced to play ♘e1, Black can then play ...♘d4 to try to exchange the e2-bishop and thus eliminate one of the defenders of the d3-pawn.

An example of this strategy (with Black castling kingside!) was adopted in a game from the 1987 European Under-16 Championship, between the future super-grandmaster Michael Adams and Hannes Stefánsson, one of the 'fathers' of the Icelandic Gambit. In this game Black recovered the d-pawn at move 20, and went on to win 30 moves later. One might think that with the capture of the d3-pawn Black merely restores material equality. But very often, in this type of position, the gain of the white d-pawn

is accompanied by a mass exchange of pieces on d3, and Black remains better in the endgame that follows because his pieces are more active.

8. ♘c3

8.d3, with the idea ♘bd2 and ♘b3 to challenge the d4-square, was preferable.

8...0-0! 9.a3 ♖he8 10.b4

With opposite-side castling the game becomes more tactical. White is the first to launch a pawn storm on the opposing king, but Black has centralized her pieces and they occupy active squares.

10...♙d4 11.♙b2 ♘e5 12.c5?

White continues her advance on the queenside, but it was absolutely necessary to exchange the strong bishop on d4: 12.♘xd4 ♖xd4 13.♘a4 ♗f4. Black retains compensation for the pawn less, but chances are equal.

12...♘xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♙c4

One of the consequences of not having played the d-pawn to d3.

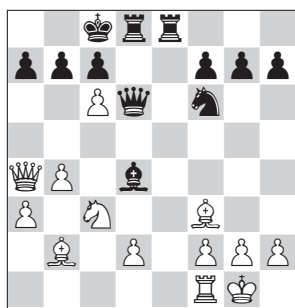
14.c6 ♗d6 15.♗a4?

This allows a nice combination, but the white position was already difficult.

15.♖e1 allows 15...♙xf2+! as in the game.

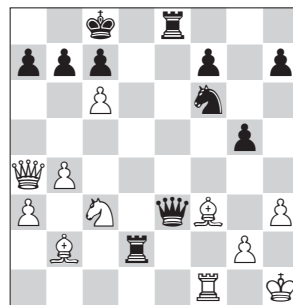
And after 15.cxb7+ ♖b8 16.d3 ♙xd3! the d-pawn falls, as 17.♗xd3 is not possible because of 17...♙xf2+.

15...♙xf1 16.♖xf1



16...♙xf2+!! 17.♙h1?

It was necessary to at least take the bishop. But not with the rook, certainly, because it's mate after: 17.♖xf2?? ♖e1+ 18.♖f1 ♗d4+. The king had to capture: 17.♙xf2, even though Black now gets a very strong attack: 17...♗d4+ 18.♙g3 g5! (threatening mate on h4) 19.h3 ♗f4+ 20.♙f2 ♖xd2+ 21.♙g1 ♗e3+ 22.♙h1



analysis diagram

22...g4!! 23.♘d5 (the only move) 23...♘xd5 24.♙xg4+ ♖b8 25.♗b5 ♗b6 26.♗xb6 axb6.

17...♗d3 18.cxb7+ ♖b8 19.♖c1?

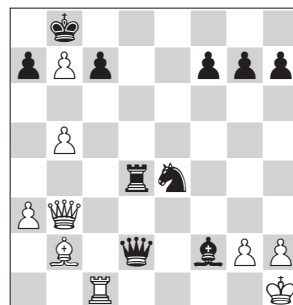
White blunders in a difficult position.

19...♗xd2

In this game one can see the strength of the black rooks centralized on the d- and e-files – a recurring theme in the Icelandic Gambit.

20.♘e4 ♖xe4 21.♙xe4 ♘xe4 22.b5 ♖d4! 23.♗b3

23.♙xd4? ♗xc1+.



23... ♖g3+! 24. ♔xg3
 24.hxg3 ♕h6#.

24... ♕d1+! 25. ♖xd1 ♖xd1#

A powerful game from the French Under 12 champion, which qualified her for the European and World Championships. We will find her again at this event a little later in this book. Salomé had adopted the Scandinavian, and, of course, the Portuguese Variation.

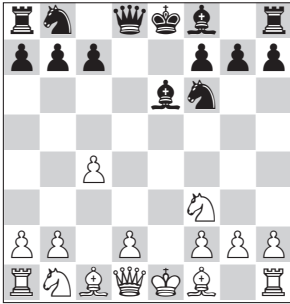
Game 7

Romain Di Costanzo

Ernesto Dillenschneider

Sarrebourg 2015

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖f6 3.c4 e6 4.dxe6
♗xe6 5. ♖f3!



The move recommended by theory, and the only one, in any case, that can cause Black problems in the Icelandic Gambit. Rather than playing d2-d4, White gets a piece out and hurries to develop his king's wing to be able to castle quickly.

5... ♕e7!

Also the best move, still according to theory. It may seem odd to block the f8-bishop, but Black threatens a discovered check on the e-file that will force White to adopt the same position with his queen.

The natural move 5... ♖c6 is not entirely satisfactory. With the two knights out the move 6.d4! becomes

very strong. Let's try to understand why by following the same course as that of Game 5: 6... ♗b4+ 7. ♖c3! ♖e4 8. ♗d2!. In the aforementioned game this move was not playable because of ... ♕xd4, but it is possible here because the f3-knight defends the d4-pawn. So, after 8... ♖xd2 9. ♕xd2 White will be able to castle while keeping the extra pawn.

6. ♕e2

White has no choice and must follow Black if he does not want to immediately lose his extra pawn.

After 6. ♗e2! ♗xc4 7.d3 ♗d5 8.0-0 ♖c6 9. ♖e1 Black can evacuate his king from the e-file just in time by castling queenside: 9...0-0-0, and 10. ♖c3 isn't possible because of 10... ♗xf3 11. ♗xf3 ♖xd3!

6... ♖c6 7.d4 ♗f5!

A rarely played move. There are only 14 games in the 2017 Mega Database against 74 for 7... ♗g4 and 69 for 7...0-0-0, but according to Smerdon this is the one that offers Black the best chances.

8. ♕xe7+

8. ♗e3?, which was possible on 7... ♗g4, isn't here because of 8... ♖b4, when the threat of 9... ♖c2+ is very unpleasant.

8... ♗xe7

Despite the exchange of queens Black retains good compensation. He still has a big lead in development, with four developed pieces against a single one for White, and above all the first player must reckon with the threat of 9... ♖b4.

9.a3 ♖a5

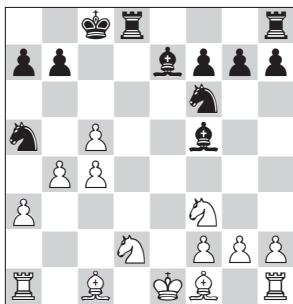
Threatening to win a piece by infiltrating the hole on b3.

10. ♖bd2 c5 11.dxc5

11.d5 0-0 12. ♗e2 b5! offers enough counterplay to Black.

11...0-0-0 12.b4?!

White had to think about the development of his king's wing.



12...♖he8!

A tactical theme already encountered several times in this chapter. Once again, the centralization of the black rooks on the two files in front of the white king is more important than the material. Although this position has only been played once, in an email game, it was extensively analyzed in 2008 by the FM Michiel Wind in the German magazine *Kaissiber*. Ernesto knew this analysis.

13.bxa5?

It was absolutely necessary to close the e-file by 13.♙e2, even if Black retains a dangerous initiative: 13...♘h5! (threatening 14...♘f4) 14.g3 (14.0-0 is no good because of 14...♙f6) 14...♙f6 15.♞a2 ♙d3 16.♘g1 ♘c6. Despite his two extra pawns, White will have great difficulty completing his development. 17.♚f1, for example, was not possible because of 17...♞xe2 18.♘xe2 ♘d4.

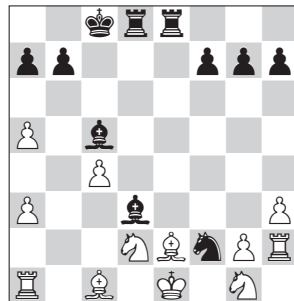
13...♙xc5+

The first move 'out of theory' for Ernesto, but the position is not very difficult to play. With all his very active pieces facing an uncastled king, Black has excellent compensation for the sacrificed piece.

14.♙e2

14.♚d1, falling into another pin on the d-file, is no better: 14...♘e4 and White can no longer defend f2.

14...♙d3 15.♘g1 ♘g4 16.h3 ♘xf2 17.♞h2



The white position is tragicomic.

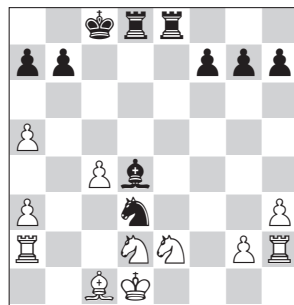
17...♙d4

Black misses an elegant conclusion: 17...♘g4!! 18.hxg4 ♙xg1 19.♞h1 ♙d4 20.♞a2 ♙xe2--.

18.♞a2

18.♘b3 offered more resistance, but would not save the game: 18...♙xe2 19.♘d4 ♘d3+ 20.♚d2 ♘xc1 21.♚xc1 ♞xd4. Black captures the c4-pawn and, of course, has a winning ending.

18...♙xe2 19.♘xe2 ♘d3+ 20.♚d1 20.♚f1 would have met the same reply.



20...♞xe2!

The winning liquidation.

21.♚xe2 ♘xc1+ 22.♚d1 ♘xa2

White resigned.

Game 8**Rolf Sander** 2061**Magnus Carlsen** 2214

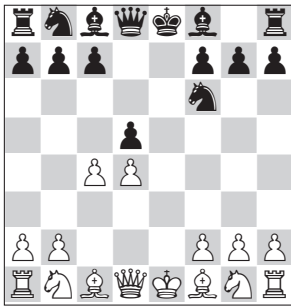
Bergen 2002

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.c4 e6

The move order has been modified to stick to our repertoire. Black actually played ...e7-e6 on the first move.

4.d4

A wise refusal of the gambit.

4...exd5

The game has now transposed into an Exchange French (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.c4 ♘f6). This variation does not pose major problems to the second player, even if he is not usually a French player.

5.♘f3 ♙b4+ 6.♗c3

6.♙d2 would be good for Black. After the capture on c4, which will inevitably occur, we will be in the presence of a position with an isolated pawn on d4. The exchange of bishops therefore favours Black and weakens White's potential to attack: 6...♙xd2+ 7.♖xd2 0-0 8.♗c3 ♗e8+ 9.♙e2 dxc4.

6...0-0 7.♙e3

7.c5?!, to try to avoid the isolated pawn, would hinder development: 7...♗e8+ 8.♙e2 ♖e7 (White is already under pressure and cannot castle) 9.0-0? ♙xc3 10.♙d3 (the only way to avoid losing a piece) 10...♙a5 11.♖a4 b6 12.b4 ♙d7 13.♖a3 ♙xb4 14.♖xb4 ♗c6.

The game Feller-Bauer, played at the 2008 French Championships in Pau, continued with 7.♙e2 dxc4 (of course, Black waited for the f1-bishop to develop before taking on c4 with gain of tempo). After 8.0-0 (8.♙xc4=) 8...♙xc3 9.bxc3 ♙e6, followed by ...b7-b5, Black succeeded in keeping his extra pawn.

7...♗c6 8.♙d3

White still cannot afford to play c4-c5: 8.c5?! ♗e4 and Black grabs the initiative. White still needs two more moves to castle.

8...dxc4

As in the game Feller-Bauer cited above, Black was waiting until the f1-bishop was developed to take on c4.

9.♙xc4 ♙g4 10.0-0 ♖d6

There are a dozen possible moves for Black in this position, all of which are playable.

10...♖b8 is the one proposed by John Watson, in the 4th edition of the French players' bible (*Play the French*). The idea of ...♖a8-b8 is simply to protect the b7-pawn and thus threaten to capture on f3 and then win the d4-pawn, without White being able to take back on b7 in exchange.

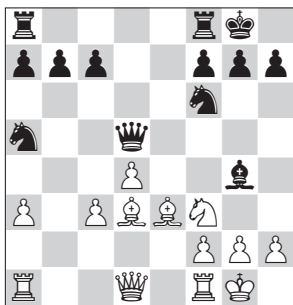
After 11.♙e2 ♗e8 Black will have a very satisfactory middlegame due to the isolated pawn on d4 and above all the strong square on d5.

11.a3 ♙xc3 12.bxc3

The exchange on c3 has certainly strengthened the isolated pawn on d4, but with three islands the white pawn structure remains weaker than Black's.

12...♗a5 13.♙d3 ♖d5

Black wants to prevent White from advancing his c-pawn to c4 and will attempt a blockade of the c4- and d5-squares.



14. ♖b1 a6 15. h3 ♗h5

After 15... ♗xf3 16. ♖xf3 ♗xf3 17. gxf3 his pawn structure is in ruins, but White retains some chances due to the bishop pair.

16. g4 ♗g6 17. ♘e5 ♗xd3 18. ♖xd3 b5

Strengthening control of the c4-square.

19. ♖fe1 ♘c4

A bit rushed. It was better to exchange the defender of the c4-square first: 19... ♘d7! 20. ♘xd7 ♖xd7. The black knight will come to c4 and will be stronger than the white bishop, which is bad because it is hampered by its own pawns.

20. ♗g5 ♘d7 21. ♘xc4 bxc4 22. ♖e3 ♘b6 23. ♗f4 ♖d7 24. ♖g3 ♘d5

Black has maintained a slight advantage thanks to the strong knight on d5.

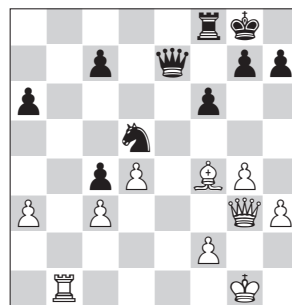
25. ♖e5 f6 26. ♖e2 ♖ab8 27. ♖eb2 ♖xb2 28. ♖xb2 ♗e7 29. ♖b1??

A blunder in a position that was beginning to become difficult.

29. ♖b7? wasn't possible either: 29... ♗e4 30. ♗xc7 ♘f4, with an attack on the b7-rook and the threat of a fork on e2.

And 29. a4 is countered by 29... ♗a3.

White had to play 29. ♖f3, even though Black retains a superior position.

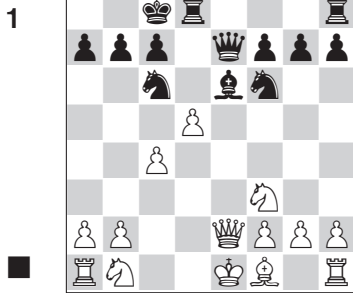


29... ♗e4

0-1

A double attack on the f4-bishop and b1-rook. White loses a piece, and so he resigned.

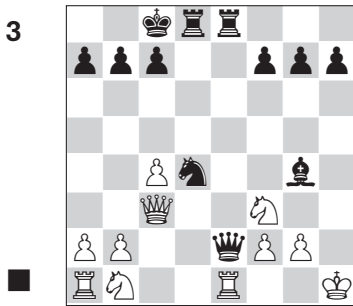
Your move!



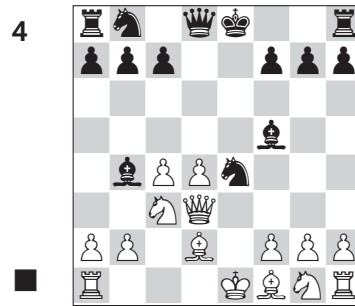
White has just played 8.d5, forking two pieces. How should Black react? (solution on page 219)



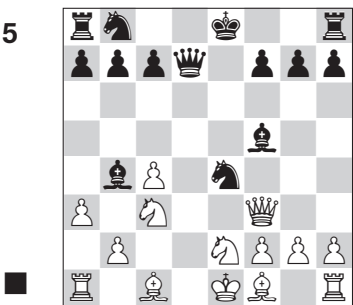
White has just played 12.h3 to attack the knight. How does Black take advantage of the exposed situation of the white king in the centre? (solution on page 219)



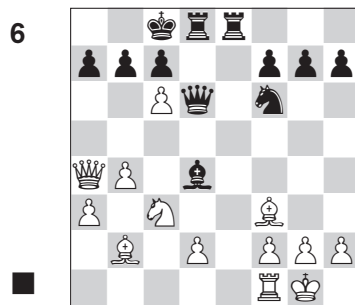
White has just played 15.♖e1 to attack the black queen, which does not appear to have a retreat square. What to do? (solution on page 219)



How should Black (best!) react to the attack on the c3-knight? (solution on page 219)

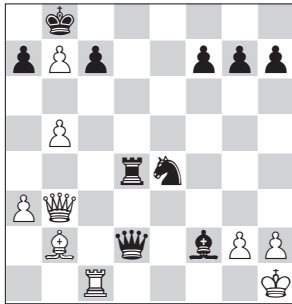


White has just played 10.a3 to attack the b4-bishop. What is Black's best reply? (solution on page 220)



The attack is raging on both wings, but it's Black's move and he is the first to strike. (solution on page 220)

7



Black to play and mate in three moves.
(solution on page 220)

8



White has just played 12.b4 to attack the black knight. What is the best reply?
(solution on page 220)