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Better Chess Opening Moves

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2. The OPENING PHASE

When playing chess, all players need to well understand and accept that *all* phases of the royal game are important: that is, the opening, the middle game, and the endgame. Although the importance of the opening phase is often overestimated by beginners, at higher levels a mastery of the opening in detail will indeed often make the difference between a win or a loss. In this book, the player is gradually acquainted with the opening theory as the explanations of various key principles, which for every level – beginner, intermediate, and advanced – will be given in progressive details.

2.1 Opening principles

Whereas the importance of the opening phase has been known in chess for centuries, the kind of advice given for its success has varied over the ages. Good practical and general advice was given by various grand masters in *How to Open a Chess Game* (Evans et al. 1974). Some general advice, more for beginners, is given in Ward (2000), wherein a complete list of various opening variations is given, with no recommendations, however, for preferences. The unique approach in *this* book is to emphasize specific variations in a so-called repertoire for both White and Black, depending on the level of play.

But first we start by mentioning the most common general guidelines for opening play. These guidelines, also mentioned in *The Ideas Behind the Chess Openings* (Fine [rev]]1989), are certainly useful for beginners, and they follow:

1. Start the game with **1.e4**. This leads to 'Open games' (tactics!), and also tries to keep the (positional) advantage for White.
2. Move **knights** before bishops, alternately.
3. Try to occupy the **center** with pawns²⁶.
4. Don't move the same piece twice²⁷ in a row²⁸ (5. Don't make two pawn moves in a row²⁹).
6. Don't develop the **queen** to early³⁰ (especially into the center of the board).
7. Protect your king; almost always 'castling'³² is the best way for this.
8. Try to **control the center** of the board.
9. Don't sacrifice any piece without a reason, including pawns.

Although general guidelines like these can be useful for beginners, practical play makes it clear that such rules first of all are simplifications, and secondly, often have exceptions. In addition to the above nine rules for example, it usually is advised to 'connect' the rooks on the first lines³³, which implies the queen is played to the second or third rank, sometimes even further away.

²⁶ Exceptions apply in the 'hypermodern' openings i.e. *Gruenfeld*, *Modern*, where it occupation of the center is not important but striking out against the enemy's central pieces usually with pawn breaks.

²⁷ For example **1.Nf3** d5 **2.Ng5?** as the knight now is moved a second time.. An exception is an opening line as **1.Nf3** 1...e5? **2.Nxe5** (a dubious 'gambit' for Black).

²⁸ Without a good reason such as re-capturing an enemy piece or pawn. Some exceptional variations also are excluded (also holds true for the other rules).

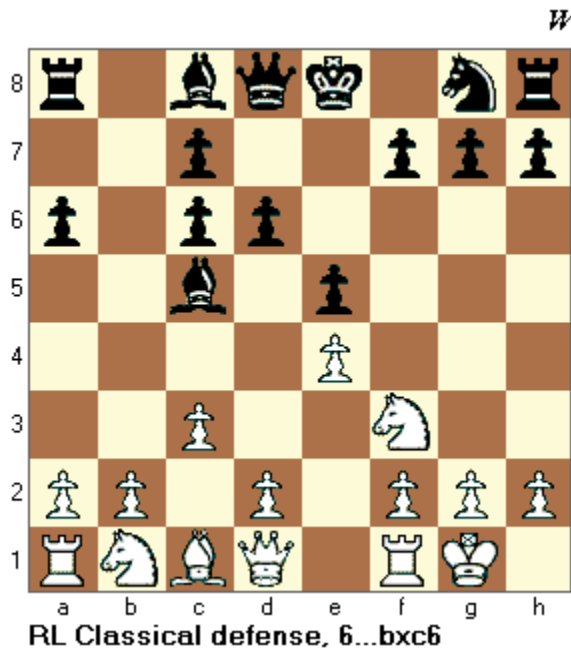
²⁹ For example **1.e4** c5 **2.e5?**. For the rest the above exception (in footnote) still applies.

³⁰ As this often brings the valuable queen into danger of tactics, or locking it up by enemy pieces; exceptions are variations such as e.g. *Scandinavian* for Black.

³² Don't delay castling too long, and when choosing between queen-side and king-side castling, bear in mind that the king-side is usually the safest option.

³³ On resp. the first row for W, and the 8th row for B, after castling. **In general, also in the opening phase, the resulting position after a possible move needs to be evaluated according to general criteria, such as material balance, positional considerations** (attacks, center dominance, pawns structure, and so on).

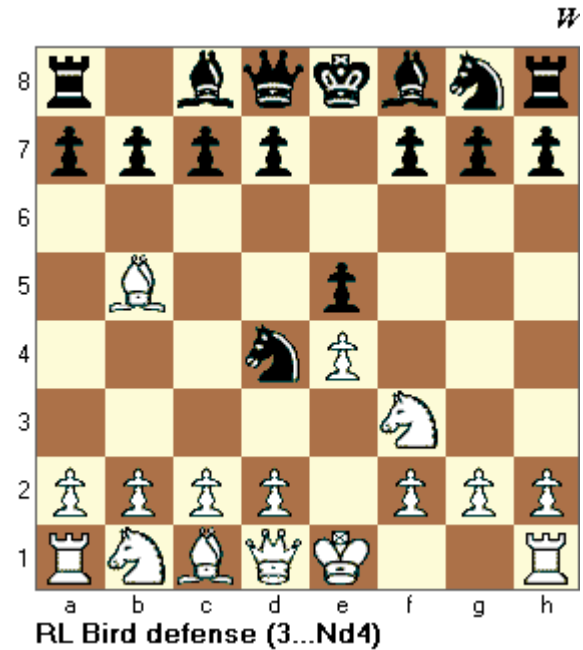
As this is quite a sharp variation, we advise *beginners* to play **4.0-0**, to avoid dangerous tactics by White involving, for example, an attack on f2 with ...Bxf2. After **4.0-0**, White can maintain a slight advantage, that is after **4...d6** (after 4...Nxd4, simply 5.Nxd4 and so on), **5.c3** a6, **6.Bxc6** bxc6, which gives following position.:



Now White can play **7. d4** exd4, **8.cxd4** Ba7, **9.Nc3** and has achieved a slightly better position (White has lost his bishop pair, but Black has a double pawn on c7/6, and the pawn on a7 is weak).

G) 3...Nd4, *Bird* variation

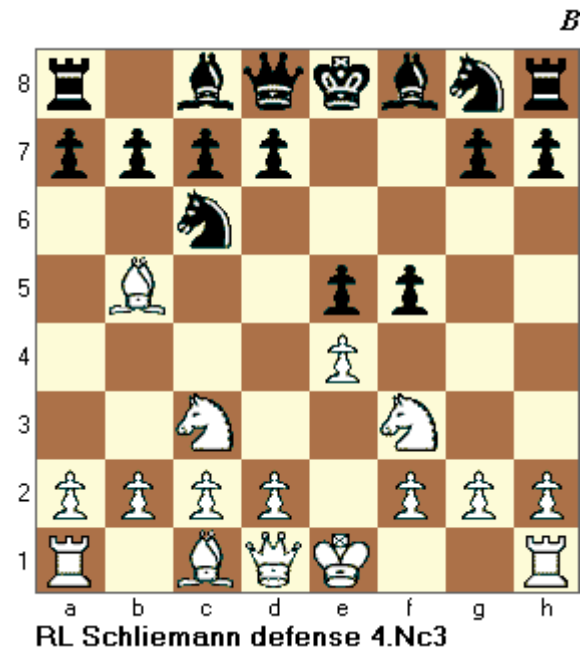
With the surprise move **3...Nd4**, Black attacks the bishop on b5, as shown above right:



Now the knight on d4 can simply be easily taken: **4.Nxd4** exd4, after which White first castles: **5.0-0**. Black can now play ...c6, chasing the bishop away, but White then simply plays **6.Bc4!** and has a better position.

H) 3...f5 (*Schliemann* defense)

After the sharp move **3...f5?!**, **4.Nc3** is the recommended move. See position:



It is a so-called queen's 'fianchetto'⁷³, and as a result of Black's fianchetto, ...Bb7, with the bishop pointing at g2, White must thus be careful for his king's safety. A strong move by Black is a subsequent ...Bb4, pinning the knight on c3, but the danger of this pin can be reduced by Nge2!. However, as this would lock in the bishop on f1, it is wise first to play **4.Bd3**, and after ...Bb4, play **5.Nge2**. This also allows a later f3 pawn move to further protect the pawn on e4.

But after **4.Bd3** the move **4...Nf6** seems better for Black, after which White nevertheless also plays **5.Nge2**, for similar reasons (and to enable the f pawn to advance in a later stage). So the general plan in this opening is to develop the bishop on f1 to d3, then playing Nge2! instead of Nf3, also to allow a later f3 that will further protect e4.

Nevertheless, White should still not underestimate Black's chances, at least for equality. On the other hand, it must be clear that we do not recommend this defense when playing Black, also not against 1.e4. See also the discussion in Chapter 4 for this *Owen* defense.

3.3.14 Other Black moves after 1.e4

(for example 1...a6 and 1...h6, or ...g5)

The move **1...a6?!** is strange sort of flank defense, giving up center control. The idea is to follow -up with **2...b5**, and then fianchetto the bishop to b7. See the following diagram, which is resulting after **1.e4 a6**, **2.d4 b5** **3.Bd3!** and then **3...Bb7** **4.f3** (see diagram above right):



White already dominates the center. But when analyzing the possibility of obtaining equality), we see Black still has some sort of a flank attack as result of the bishop on b7. But after moves like ...e6, Black will never be able to get a sufficient grip on the center; whereas the flank attack will not be dangerous for White after castling short.

Also for other strange moves, including **1...g5?**, or **1...h6?!**, general opening principles should be sufficient to maintain an advantage for White.

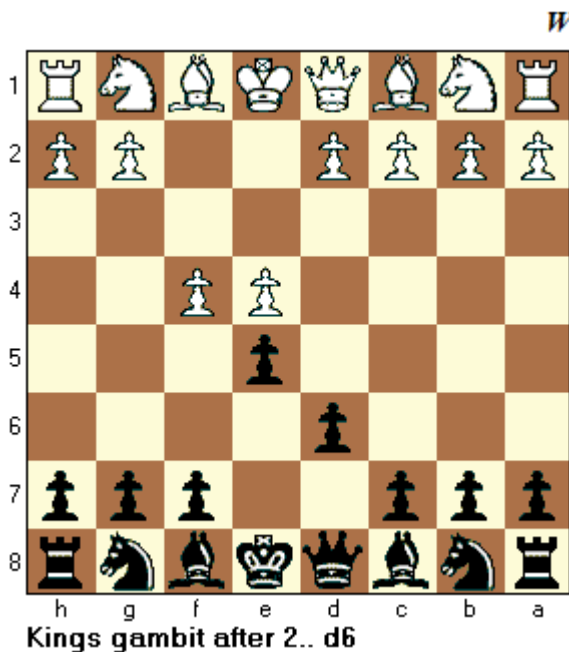
So in such Black flank defenses, White should just aim only for solid development and center dominance. This would use normal opening strategy, such as developing pieces, castling early to get the player's own king into safety, and only later aiming for an attack with such unconventional defenses. In such a way, White should not have any real difficulties in obtaining an advantage throughout the rest of the game. Although in chess always looking out for tactical threats is required, especially for beginners, no matter how strange the defense by Black may seem..

⁷³ Putting a bishop near a corner, see the glossary for the explanation of such specific. chess terms.

3.4.8 Kings Gambit (2.f4)

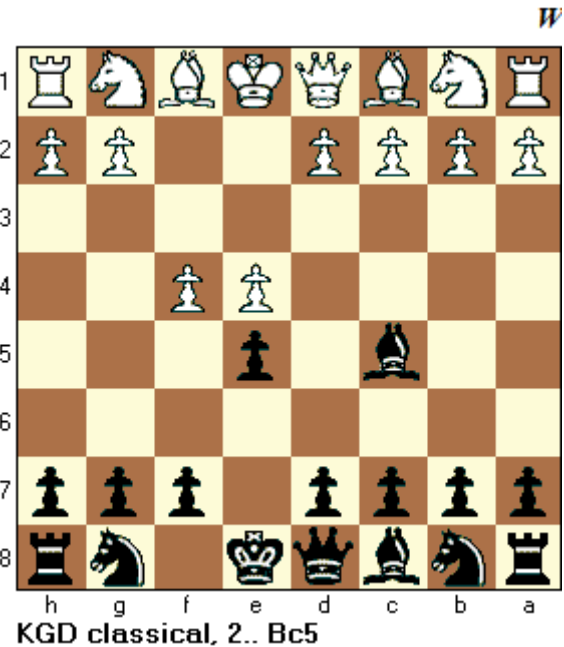
The old fashioned and 'romantic' *Kings-Gambit* opening can lead to wild and sharp play, which often is in favor of the White player who has chosen to play this variation. So we advise to decline the gambit with 2...Bc5⁹⁷. As discussed after the following:

Absolute *beginners* can decline the gambit with 2...d6, which gives the following position:



White and Black now simply continue their development; and basically Black should not have much to fear.

Declining the gambit with the slightly stronger (and sharper) 2...Bc5 is called the *Classical* variation of the King's-Gambit declined (KGD), or *KGD/Bardeleben*⁹⁸. The position is (see above right):



A typical way of development for Black now is to first- play moves like 3...d6 and then ...Nc6 (if White plays 4.Nf3) to protect the pawn on e5. And thereafter with the move ...Nf6, castling short is prepared.

3.4.9 Center Opening (2.d4)

Not played very often, the *Center Opening* can be rather dangerous for Black when White aims for *gambit* play⁹⁹. A possibility to avoid this, which we recommend for absolute *beginners*, is to transpose to a *Philidor* type of position with 2...d6. So White now can transpose to the *Philidor opening* with 3.Nf3, or exchange queens with 3.dxe5 dxe5 4.Qxd8 Kxd8, and so forth.

Now Black can not castle anymore, but this is not such a big disadvantage because the queens now are now off the board.

⁹⁷ Also advised in [Marin, M, 2007.] More advanced players with Black, when not playing *French* as advised in chapter 4 might prefer 2...exf4, accepting the gambit, and after 3.Nf3 3...h6! the strong *Becker* defense.

⁹⁸ After a German chess player, von Bardeleben, who lived from 1861 to 1924.

⁹⁹ For example, after 2...exd4 3.c3 (or 3.Nf3).

For more-advanced players of Black, there is a more complex yet general defense system called the **Hedgehog**, as discussed by Suba (2000). This system is characterized by Black pawns on a6, b6, d6, and e6. It can be used not only against the *English*, or as part of a *Sicilian* setup, but also against other White openings, such as the *Reti opening* (1.Nf3).

Although the **Hedgehog** system is an interesting and rather dependable system, we don't recommend it in *general* for Black and instead give *specific* variations when such positions occur.

Should transpositions occur to **Hedgehog** types of formations, we will try to mention this (mostly in the appendix where detailed variations are listed). In the diagram below we see such a **Hedgehog** pawn position for Black, with some typical piece placements. For White, most pieces are left out, but the typical pawn placement would be on e4 and c4.

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typical Hedgehog position

As the last general system to discuss, we show how to play against a relatively new system for Black, namely the **Sniper**, as described by Storey (2011). It is defined by the moves 1...g6 (**Modern defense**), 2...Bg7, and 3...c5. The latter move leads to a *Sicilian* type of position, and in some cases play could indeed transpose to a sub-variation of the *Sicilian Dragon* or, in combination with ...d6 by Black and d4 and later d5 by White, to **Benoni** type of positions. The author Storey claims it can be used against most of White opening moves, and indeed after 1.d4 g6 2.e4 we transpose back to the **Modern** defense again.

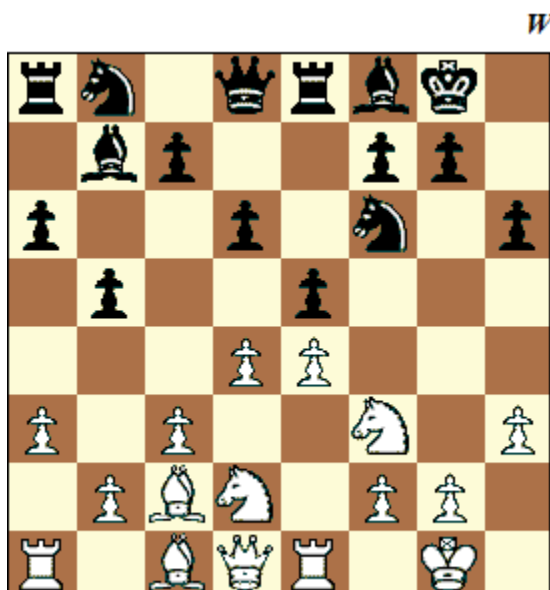
We will show how to attack this system with White, when starting with 1.e4 and to be consistent with our recommended move against the *Modern* defense, start with 2.d4 after 1...g6 and then after 2.e4 Bg7 3.Nc3 c5 we get the **Modern/Sniper** position as shown below:



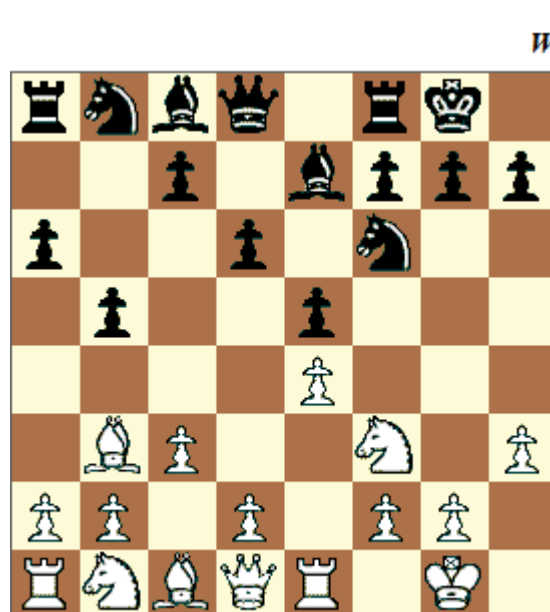
Modern Defense/Sniper system

White now plays 4.dxc5! and will gain a much better position. So in this setup with the White knight on c3, the **Sniper** is harmless because after 4...Bxc3 5.bxc3 Nc6 6.Bd3 Qa5 7.Rb1!¹¹⁷ ±, White gets a better position.

¹¹⁷ For example, after 7...Qxc5 8.Nf3 Qxc3 9.Bd2 Qg7 10.0-0 Nf6 11.Qc1 Ng4 12.Qa3 ± and so on.



RL Closed, Zaitsev, after 13...Nb8 .



RL Breyer after 9.. Nb8

Now **14.b4!** is a strong move for White, also from a statistical point of view.

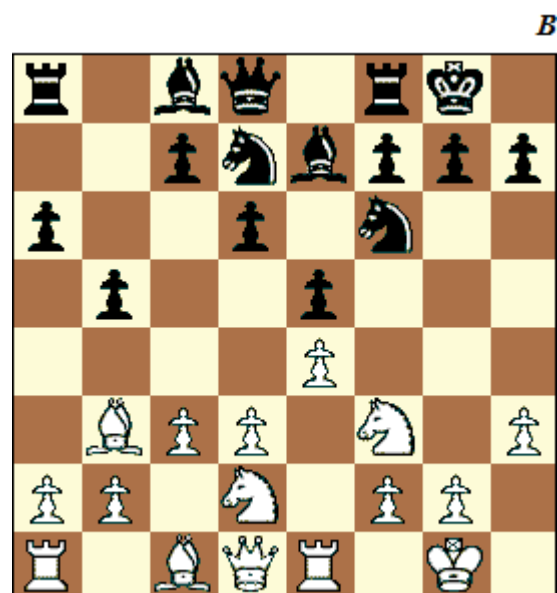
So our current judgment on this position¹⁵⁹ is positive for White, but how much is unclear until more analysis is done (and more games played in this line).

In the line with 12...Qd7 **13.Bc2** h6¹⁶⁰, White will keep a slight advantage with **14.Nf1** and the usual plan of playing Ng3.

And lastly, with 12...exd4 **13.cxd4** Na5 **14.Bc2**, White also keeps an advantage¹⁶¹.

(E3e) 3) RL *Breyer*, 9...Nb8

After 9...Nb8, the *Breyer* variation. we achieve the following position (above right):



RL Closed, Breyer, 10.d3! , 11.Nbd2 .

¹⁵⁹ See the appendix for further moves.

¹⁶⁰ Or 13..Rad8 **14.Nf1** h6 **15.Ng3** d5! **16.dxe5** dxe4 **17.Nxe4** Nxe4 **18.Qxd7** Rxd7 **19.Rxe4** Rde7 **20.Bf4** ±

¹⁶¹ As in the game Kokarev-Matlakov (2009).

By playing **3.Bb5** instead of 3.d4, we also avoid the complicated and sharp *Kalashnikov* variation (with the move ...e5), which is not easy for White to play¹⁹⁹.

And by playing after 3.Bb5 with accuracy, White can also get a slight edge in these systems. For further info, see the Appendix and/or the book Bologan (2011). After **3.Bb5**, Black most often plays 3...g6²⁰⁰, and by simply adhering to general opening principles and keeping a strong position in the center, White should be able to come out of this opening with no difficulties²⁰¹.

(B) *Sicilian, 2...d6!*

If 2...d6 is played, the main move is 3.d4 but also good is **3.Bb5**, the *Moscow Attack*. Recommended when your level is somewhere between beginner and intermediate, to avoid the complicated and sharp variations after 3.d4, such as the *Najdorf* and the *Dragon*. Then after (3.Bb5) 3...Nc6 you get the *Rossolimo* by transposition; a variation which already was discussed. And after 3...Bd7! **4.Bxd7** Qxd7 **5.c4!** White gets reasonably good play²⁰². Finally after 3...Nd7 **5.d4** Nf6 **6.Nc3** cxd4 **7.Qxd4** a6 **8.Bxd7** Bxd7 **9.Bg5** White gets a slight advantage.

¹⁹⁹ The sharp *Sveshnikov* system also is avoided here, but it can still occur as transposition of the *Taimanov* after 2...e6; see further on under (C).

²⁰⁰ And then e.g. **4.0-0** (4.Bxc6 is advised in the book by Bologan but requires more positional understanding) ...Bg7 **5.d3** as listed in the footnote below. Another option is 3...e6! but after **4.Bxc6** bxc6 **5.d3!** White still can achieve a slight advantage (...d5 6.c4! ±). And after 3...d6 **4.0-0** Bd7 **5.c3** a6 **6.Ba4** White is clearly better.

²⁰¹ For example **4.0-0** Bg7 **5.d3** Nf6 **6.Bxc6** dxc6 **7.h3** and so on ±

²⁰² After 5...g6! (5...Nc6 6.Nc3 g6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bg7 9.Be3 Nf6 10.f3! ±) **6.Nc3** Bg7 **7.0-0** Nc6! **8.d3** ±/=

After **3.d4**, recommended for more advanced -but still *intermediate*- players, play follows with ...cxd4 **4.Nxd4**, after which Black usually plays 4...Nf6.

After this move, 4...Nf6, White is advised to follow the common lines with **5.Nc3**, which gives the following quite common position:



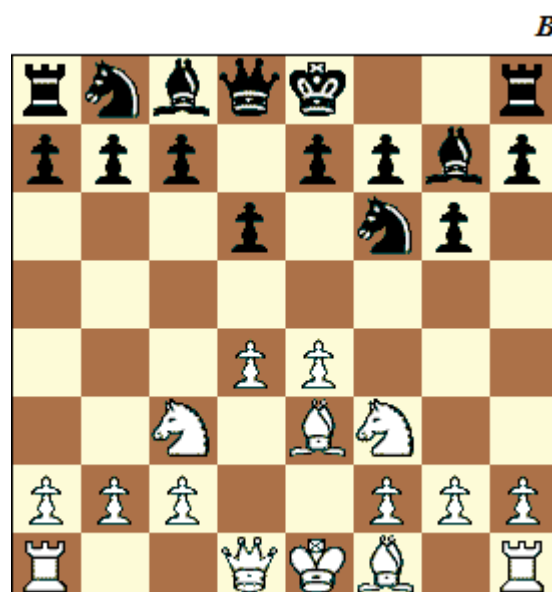
The White d pawn has been exchanged against the Black c pawn, and as a result Black has an open c line, which can be useful for the rook on a8 on a later stage. After a later ...Rac8. White still occupies the center with a knight on d4, but this knight can be easily chased away. White has an open d line, which sometimes is very useful during long castling, after which a rook on d1 has an open line. Such a theme often is seen in the *Dragon*, (with variation occurs after 5...g6).

In the above position (after 3.d4 3...cxd4 **4.Nxd4** Nf6 **5.Nc3** the three main²⁰³ moves for Black are these (next page):

²⁰³ After 5...e6, we get the *Scheveningen* variation. We will discuss this later with the sequence 2...e6 and **5...d6**, transposing to *Scheveningen* again.



Modern defense after 4...a6



Attacking Modern/(tp)Pirc , 5.Be3! .

Such lines with 4...a6 are discussed in more detail in Persson (2005). Although interesting and original play may result, Black's play is rather risky because he doesn't acquire control of the center. And indeed, after **5.Bc4!**²⁵⁷ **Nf6** **6.0-0** **Nxe4** **7.Bxf7+!**, White achieves an advantage.

We thus may usually expect Black to transpose to the *Pirc* type of play with 4...Nf6, instead of 4...a6. Because in the situation with 4...a6, after 5...b5, White plays **6.f3!** instead of **Nf3** and has a better position, so then 5...Nf6 (tp. to *Pirc*) would have been better for Black. Just as with the *Yugoslav* attack against the *Sicilian Dragon*.

The best plan for White against such *Pirc* variations with ...Nf6 appears to be a setup with **5.Be3**, and there-after **6.h3** (or **6.f3** if **Nf3** has not been played), to avoid ...Ng4 and to prepare **Qd2**. Such an approach is shown in the following diagram (above right):

With the plan of playing **h3**, castling long, and a subsequent **Bh6**, to attack the Black fianchetto position.

4.3.11 *Alekhine*²⁵⁸ variation **1.e4 Nf6** **2.e5**

And after 2...Nd5 **3.d4**.

Avoiding unconventional Alekhine variations, such as with 3.c4 or Vienna with 3.Nc3

Below is a picture of the former Russian world champion, *Alekhine*, known for his bold tactical style and ability to create complicated and sharp positions:



Fig. 7. GM Alexander Alekhine

²⁵⁷ In Persson (2005), only **4.Be2** or **4.a4** are mentioned, but **4.Bc4** seems stronger. For example after 5...e6 (instead of 5...Nf6) **6.0-0** **Ne7** **7.Be3** ± .

²⁵⁸ A more Western spelling is 'Aljechin,' but to be consistent, we will use 'Alekhine,' both for the chess player and for this variation.

(A4) French *Exchange*, 3.exd5

The French *Exchange* variation has a drawish reputation and thus is not so dangerous for Black. After the obvious Black reply 3...exd5, White usually develops with moves like 4.Nf3 and 5.Bd3 or Be2, whereby Black initially should do the same, that is ...Nf6 and ...Bd6 and then castle short.

There-after it depends on the skills of the players how the game will develop (for more moves see the appendix).

(A5) French, other 3rd moves

After 3.Bd3, the rare *Schlechter* variation, Black plays 3...dxe4, and after 4.Bxe4 4...Nf6 and so on, Black can equalize quite easily.

The dubious *Dieter-Duhm* gambit is 3.c4?!. After 3...dxe4 4.Nc3 Nf6, Black has won a pawn, and White has not much compensation.

4.4.2 French Defense, sidelines for 2nd move

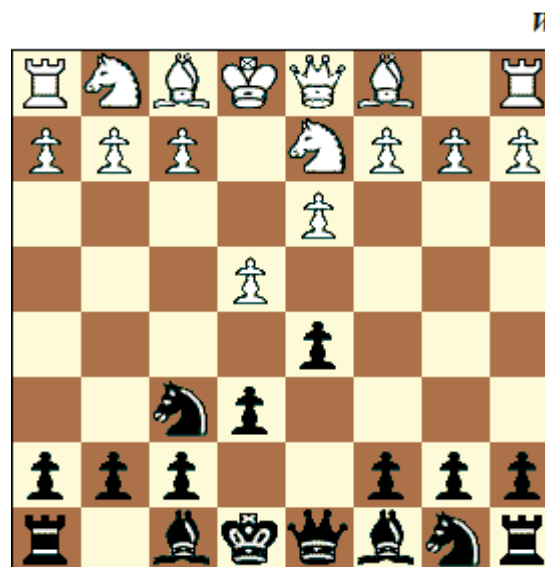
After (1.e4 e6) 2.Nc3, we simply play 2...d5. Then after 3.d4, we achieve the *Winawer* again by transposition (as we advised 3...Bb4 at the intermediate level).

After 2.Nf3!? we also play 2...d5, and now White cannot –or should not– play 3.d4?, because we then simply take the pawn on e4 with ...dxe4. So Black usually plays 3.exd5, which leads to the *Exchange variation* by transposition, or 3.e5, and after 3...c5 4.c3 (4.d4 Nc6 5.c3 tp) 5.d4 Nc6, it leads to the *Advance* variation.

After 2.f4!? we get the *Labourdonnais* variation, and we then advise 2...d5!

After 3.exd5 exd5, Black obtains a good position. And after 3.e5?! Black can develop his knight with 3...Nh6! to a good position.

Also possible is the move 2.d3, the *King's Indian attack* in the *French*, often followed with the move g3 and a king's fianchetto we first advise Black to play 2...d5 and after for example 3.Nbd2²⁸⁶, the most usual move, 3...Nf6! as shown in the position below:



French, King's Indian attack, 3...Nf6!

Then White can play 4.e5! and after 4...Nfd7 5.f4 c5 Black has equalized.

After 2.b3!?, the *French Reti* variation Black plays 2...d5 and after 3.Bb2! dxe4 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.Qe2 Be7 Black is a tiny bit better. Finally after 2.c4!? the *Steiner* variation Black simply plays 2...d5 and gets an equal position after 3.cxd5 exd5 4.exd5²⁸⁷ Nf6.

Other second moves are dubious²⁸⁸ for White.

²⁸⁶ After 3.Qe2 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.g3 c5! =

²⁸⁷ White can also play a gambit move here, namely, with 4.Qb3?! the *Orthoschnapp* gambit. After 4...dxe4 5.Bc4 Black can best play 5...Qd7! and after e.g. 6.Nc3 ...Nf6 7.d3 Nc6 Black maintains a better position.

²⁸⁸ After 2.Bc4 d5! 3.exd5 exd5 4.Bb3 Black is slightly better; after 2.Qe2, the *French Chigorin* variation, Black plays 2...c5! in *Sicilian* style. And after 2.Be3?!, known as the *French Alapin* variation, but in fact a dubious gambit, Black simply plays 2...dxe4 and after 3.c3 4.Nf6 has won a pawn.

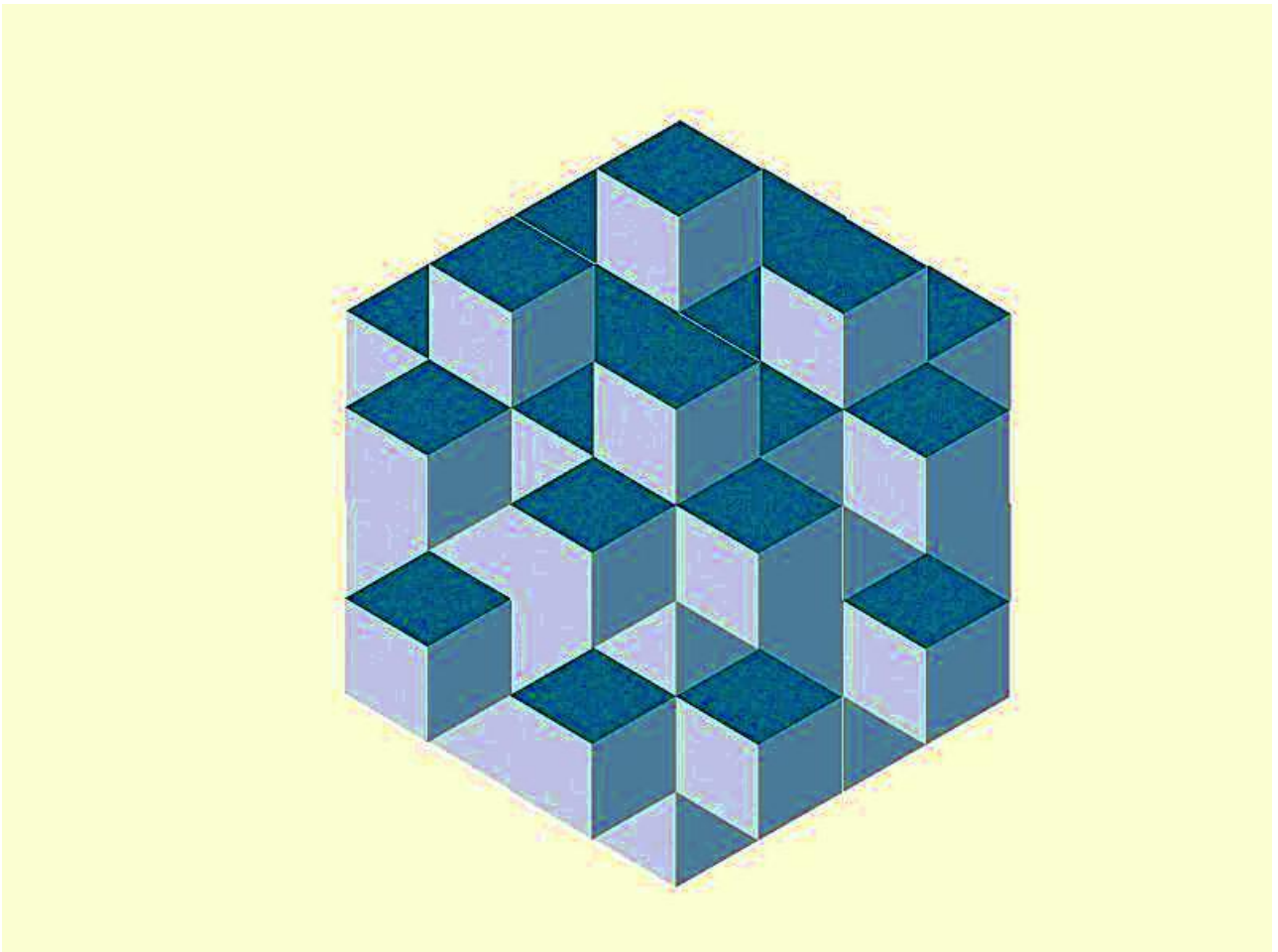


Fig 8. Some more building blocks (*artist's impression*)

8.h3! d5 **9.e5** Ne4 **10.Qe2** the position is approximately equal, because White has achieved compensation for the lost pawn by dominating the center.

(A) 2) *Smith Morra* 5...e6

Now after **6.0-0!** (instead of 6.a3) ...Nc6 7.c4! the position has transposed to the variation discussed above under 1).

(A) 3) *Smith Morra* 5...g6

Finally after 5...g6 White plays **6.a3!** which gives a position as shown below:

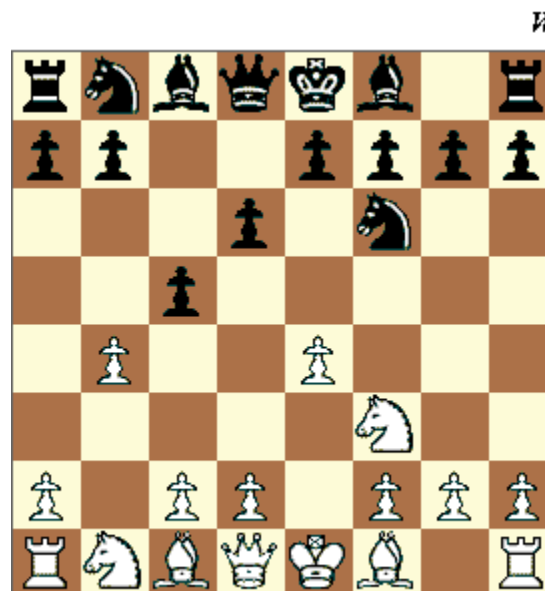


Wing Gambit Deferred 5...g6 6.a3!

Then after 6...bxa3 **7.Nxa3** White has good chances for an attack because of much better development. For example after 7...Bg7 **8.0-0** **9.Bd2** and so on.

B) *Smith Morra*

After (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.b4) 3...Nf6 we get a position as shown below.



Wing Gambit Deferred/Declined

Now White simply plays **4.bxc5** and after 4...Nxe4 **5.cxd6** Nc6 **6.d4** gets a slightly better position. Because after 6...exd6 7.Bd3 and then for example 7...d5 **8.0-0** White has a lead in development and Black has an isolated queen's pawn on d5.

5.3.2 *Smith Morra gambit* (after 2...e6 **3.d4**)

If Black plays the move 2...e6 in the *Sicilian* (after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3) then in this chapter we advise to aim for a *Smith-Morra* gambit, namely, after 3...cxd4 **4.c3**, instead of the more normal move 4.Nxd4.

The resulting position is shown on the next page:

6.1 1.d4! Nf6 Introduction

After 1...Nf6 White plays **2.c4**, after which Black can play 2...e6, 2...g6! (*Grünfeld* or *King's-Indian*), 2...c6 which will transpose to *Slav* variations, 2...c5 (*Benoni*)³⁵⁴, 2...Nc6?! (*Knight's-Tango*), and some other playable moves.

Such other playable but more *rare* second moves for Black are 2...d6 (*Old Indian*, possible transposition (tp) to *King's-Indian*), 2...b6 (*Queen's-Indian accelerated*) 2...Nc6 (*Trevez-Trajkovich*) and 2...e5 (*Budapest gambit*). For these moves we will not give detailed analysis but instead just give the main moves, achieving an advantage for White. With our advised move **2.c4**, the conventional setup which in our latest analysis is a bit better than 2.Nf3³⁵⁵, we also achieve good play against such less conventional defenses.

The move with 2.Nf3 can lead to for example the *Torre attack* (with Bg5) but in this opening, although probably easier to play than the *Catalan*, we have not found any significant *fundamental* advantage for White in case of best play that is if Black plays the best responsive moves. And other moves than 2.c4 or 2.Nf3 for White we consider inferior because Black with solid positional play should be able to get easy equality or even an advantage.

We start with the main move for Black, 2...e6. Now if White would play 3.Nc3, after ...Bb4! we get the *Nimzo-Indian*; we already have given these lines when discussing our repertoire for Black against d4 in Chapter 4.

³⁵⁴ Or 1...c5 and then 2.d5 transposition to *Benoni*.

³⁵⁵ Advised by GM Nigel Davies, for people switching from 1.e4 to 1.d4; after 1.d4 **d5** 2.Nf3 is possible, but our recommendation for 2.c4 after 1..Nf6 is based on a subtle difference, namely to avoid strong sub-variations of the *Grünfeld* defense after 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6! =

And as the '*Nimzo*' is a strong defense³⁵⁶ we do not recommend this move 3.Nc3 for White.

Also, after a possible **3.Nf3**, Black can defend strongly with 3...b6, leading to the *Queen's-Indian*, which -although maybe more cramped and more difficult to play for Black, still is a solid defense when played correctly, as we found with extensive computer analysis.

Nevertheless, for players who are not so advanced and who just started with 1.d4 instead of 1.e4, we recommend to play **3.Nf3**³⁵⁷ instead of **3.g3**. The latter will lead to the more positional *Catalan* variation- or *Benoni Fianchetto* -, which we will describe in detail in the appendix, which might be interesting for more advanced players at 'expert level'.

The *former* option of **3.Nf3** can lead to either the *Queen's-Indian* defense if Black plays 3...b6 or the *QGD* variations³⁵⁸ if Black plays 3...d5 instead (as in 6.2). Thus in sub-chapter 6.1.1 we will show some main variations for the *Queen's-Indian*, in particular the 'best' defense for Black as found by our analysis. Whereby we will show how White can try to maintain at least a slight positional advantage against almost every possible defense.

³⁵⁶ Even when playing **4.Qc2!** (after 3...Bb4) because then after 4...0-0 **5.Nf3** d5! **6.a3** Bxc3 **7.Qxc3** dxc4 **8.Qxc4** b6 Black seems to be able to equalize.

³⁵⁷ We prefer this move **3.Nf3** above 3.Nc3 because after 3...Bb4 Black obtains a strong defense with the *Nimzo-Indian* variation.

³⁵⁸ An advantage for the -not yet- highly advanced players in choosing the option of **3.Nf3** is that after the -quite common- response of the move 3...d5 by Black, leading to typical *QGD* variations as discussed in 6.2, White will be able to maintain a positional advantage in all situations.

B

King's Indian, Orthodox, 6...Nbd7 7.0-0

Now 7...e5 **8.Be3!** leads to a better position for White, via transposition to the variation as given under **B1c)** as described earlier.

B3) King's Indian, 6...c5

After (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d6 4.e4 Bg7 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2) 6...c5 we get the following position:

W

King's Indian, Orthodox, 6...c5

White now plays **7.d5** after which there are two playable moves for Black, namely, 7...e6 or 7...Bg4.

After 7...e6 **8.Bg5** h6 **9.Be3** Ng4 **10.Bf4** g5 **11.Bc1** exd5 **12.exd5** Nd7 **13.0-0** ± and White is slightly better.

And after 7...Bg4?! 8.0-0 Nbd7 **9.h3** Bxf3 **10.Bxf3** Ne8 **11.Qc2** ± and White is clearly better.

B4) King's Indian, 6...Na6

After 6...Na6 **6.0-0** we get the following position:

B

King's Indian, Orthodox, 6...Na6 7.0-0

Now after 7...e5⁴⁰⁴ **8.Be3!** exd4 **9.Nxd4** Nc5 **10.f3** Re8 **11.Qd2** ± and White is better.

⁴⁰⁴ After 7...c5?! 8.e5! and White is better.

B



QGD/Slav Chebanenko 7.Bd2

The black knight on h5 now is not well positioned but after Black brings it back to f6 with 7...Nhf6, White has gained a 'tempo' with **8.Rac1**. The game now can continue with for example 8...g6 **9.h3** Ne4! (or...Bg7 **10.Bf4** ±) **10.Bf4** Bg7 **11.e3** ± and White has gained a slight advantage.

C2) Chebanenko Slav, 5.c5 g6

Another good move for Black is 5...g6, after which White develops in a similar way as above under A), namely, with **6.Bf4** but after 6...Nh5 (or ...Bg7 **7.h3!** ±) White now plays **7.Bg5!** (instead of 7.Bd2) and then after 7...Bg7 **8.e4!**N⁴⁵⁶ 0-0 (or ...dxe4?! 9.Nxe4±) **9.exd5** cxd5 **10.Be2**± White has achieved an advantage again.

C3) Chebanenko Slav, 5.c5 b6

After 5...b6 White simply plays **6.cxb6** and after 6...Qxb6 (...Nbd7?! 7.Bf4 Nxb6 8.Ne5! ±) **7.Qc2!** we get the following position:

⁴⁵⁶ So-far mainly 8.e3 has been played but only with marginal results, for example in the game Grischuk(2728)-Kamky(2723) , 2008, which is identical up till move eight by transposition, White had played e3 and only achieved a draw.

B



QGD/Slav Chebanenko 7.Qc2

Now Black can play 7...g6 or 7...e6. After 7...g6 **8.Bf4!**N White has gained a slight advantage. And after 7...e6 **8.g3!**N White also gets a significantly better position.

D) Slav (tp Grünfeld/Schlechter) 4...g6

After the move 4...g6 in the previously discussed Slav variation we transpose to the **Schlechter** variation of the *Grünfeld* defense, which 'normally' is achieved with the move order 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 c6:

W



Slav, tp Grünfeld/Schlechter variation



And after, for example the moves 5...dxc4 6.e3 Nbd7 7.Bxc4 White will achieve a tangible advantage.

Another unusual 4th move is 4...Nc6?! after which White achieves an advantage with 5.a3! and then for example 5...a6!? 6.e3 ± and so on.

And after 4...b6?! 6.cxd5! exd5 6.Bg5 Be7 7.e3 White also is achieving a significant advantage.

B) QGD, Slav Defense, 3...c6

After (1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4) 3...c6 White again should play 4.Nc3 which gives the following position (above right):



Note that this is an exact transposition to the *Slav* or *Semi-Slav* (after 4...e6) as discussed earlier in sub-chapter 6.1.4 with the move order 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3. So we refer to this -rather extensive- sub-chapter, for all resulting variations.

C) (QGD) tp QGA 3...dxc4

After (1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4) 3...dxc4 we get a transposition to a known variation of the *Queen's Gambit Accepted*⁴⁹⁵ (QGA) with the following starting position:



⁴⁹⁵ With the move order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6.

But Black can also play **A) 3...e5?! or B) 3...Qa5⁵²⁸** which we discuss below.

A) *Old Benoni*, 3.Nc3 e5

After (1.d4 c5 2.d5 Nf6 3.Nc3) 3...e5?! White can play 4.Nf3 or 4.e4. After 4.Nf3 e4 5.Ng5 would be complicated, so we prefer the more simple **4.e4** which gives the following position:



Old Benoni, 4.e4

Now Black usually continues with 4...d6 and after **5.Nf3 Be7 6.h3 Nbd7** White plays **7.a4!** to prevent a queen-side attack by Black. And now Black can play moves as 7...Nf8 or simply 7...0-0 but White keeps having a better position.

B) *Old Benoni*, 3.Nc3 Qa5

After 3...Qa5 the *Benoni/Woozle defense* White simply plays **4.Bd2**, threatening the Black queen, and then continues developing his king-side with moves as Nf3 and will get a better position.

⁵²⁸ Sometimes the gambit 3...b5?! is played but this is refuted by 4.Nxb5 and after 4...Qa5 5.Nc3± and so on

6.3.3. *Old Benoni*, (1.d4 c5 2.d5) 2...e6

After 2...e6 White plays **3.e4!**⁵²⁹ which gives the following position:



Old Benoni, 2...e6 3.e4

Now, after 3...Nf6 4.dxe6 dxe6 5.Qxd8 Kxd8 6.Nc3 White gets better play because Black cannot castle anymore.

And after 3...d6⁵³⁰ 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bd3 Be7 6.c4 Nbd7 7.Nc3 White also is significantly better.

6.3.4. *Old Benoni*, 2...e5?!

Finally, after (1.d4 c5 2.d5) 2...e5?! White plays 3.Nc3 and after 3...d6 (or 3...Nf6 4.e4 d6 tp) **4.e4 Nf6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Be2** White gets better play because of the cramped position for Black.

⁵²⁹ After **3.c4** Nf6 we would transpose to the *Modern Benoni*, as described earlier in 6.1.3, paragraph C). Whereby we showed that White can achieve a slight advantage. Even better however in this situation is for White to play **3.e4!** as indicated above.

⁵³⁰ After 3...exd5 4.exd5 d6 5.c4 Ne7 6.Nf3 Bg4 7.Bd3 White is clearly better.

A 1.3 Positional evaluation

There are many excellent books available about middle game theory yet this is not the topic of this book. For more info the reader is referred to books such as for example [Kotov, A, 1978] or [Euwe & Kramer, 1964].

Yet it can be argued that with recent advances in computer chess, modern chess programs, so called 'engines' with built-in evaluation routines already are capable of providing satisfactory evaluations of the end positions of the basic opening variations, as given in the book. In such a way, using a new top chess champion program, namely Houdini (3), we have come to the evaluations given in the appendix for the main lines. And after considerable analysis, it is an encouraging fact that quite often the same or similar lines were found as the 'main' or 'best' lines as given in reference books, as listed in the Bibliography.

A 1.4 Developing a repertoire

In conventional opening books like NCO [Nunn, J., et al, 1999], BCO, ECO, MCO, and FCO⁵⁴¹, the opening lines are given with evaluations like \pm , \pm , $+-$, $=$, etc., as determined by human, often GM chess players. For an average chess player it is impossible to remember such lines from memory.

Thus, it is recommended for beginning chess players to develop a solid repertoire, understand the basic opening principles of such lines, and concentrate on tactics, middle game strategy. But although many⁵⁴² lines are given in such books, it is not known to the average chess player how to find the best choice from such lines.

This means that generally it is not known how to develop a *rational* and sound opening repertoire, based on the known opening theory in books like NCO, etc. If the chess player could select the "best", i.e. most successful opening lines, from such books, he could concentrate on these lines, and thus develop a repertoire.

In this book, such work for average chess players has been done, and those lines have been found which are most likely to give success, i.e. an opening advantage for White, even with the best possible defense by Black.

⁵⁴¹ Resp. (GM) Nunn's Chess Openings, Batsford C.O. Encyclopedia of Chess Openings, Modern C.O., and Fundamental C.O. The NCO book probably is the best quality for advanced players, whereby the FCO book by Dutch GM Paul vd Sterren is suitable for intermediate players. A drawback of all such books however is that they do not contain advised B/W repertoires.

⁵⁴² In fact a huge number of lines when the foot notes are also taken into account

														(tp)
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Nd5	c4	cxb5	exd5	0-0	Nxb5	Sicilian tp to	
..	..	..	..	..	..	b5	Nf6	Nd4	Nxd5	Be7		±	<i>Kalashnikov</i>	
														(2)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10					
e4	Nf3	d4	Nxd4	Nc3	Nb5	Bg5	Na3	Bxf6	Nd5	Bd3	0-0	exd5	Sicilian	
c5	Nc6	cxd4	Nf6	e5?! 617	d6	a6	b5 ⁶¹⁸	gxf6	f5	Be6	Bxd5	(⁶¹⁹)	<i>Sveshnikov</i>	
..	..	..	..	c4!	Be3	Nc3	Qxg4	Qd1	Qb3			±	<i>Accelerated</i>	
..	..	..	g6	Bg7 ⁶²⁰	Nf6	Ng4	Nxd4	Nc6					<i>Fianchetto</i>	
e4	exd5	Nc3	d4	Nf3	Bd3!	0-0	Be3N!					±	<i>Scandinavian</i>	
d5	Qxd5	Qd6 ⁶²¹	Nf6	a6!	g6	Bg7							<i>Pytel/Wade .</i>	
e4	exd5	Bb5!	Bc4	f3	g4!	Qe2	Qd3	Qxc4	dxe6	Qb5	d4	±	<i>Sc. Marshall gambit</i>	
d5	Nf6!?	Bd7 ⁶²²	Bg4	Nc3	Ndb6	Bc8	Nxc4 ⁶²³	e6	Bxe6	Nfd7N			or 'Modern'	
e4	d4	etc.										±	<i>Robatsch</i>	
g6	d6!												See <i>Pirc</i> (tp)	
e4	e5	d4	Nf3	c4!	Nc3	Be3!	c5!	exd6	cxd6	Bd3N!	0-0	±	<i>Aljechin, modern-fianchetto</i>	
Nf6	Nd5	d6	g6	Nb6	Bg7	0-0 ⁶²⁴	Nbd7	cxd6	exd6	Nc6				
e4	e5	d4	Nf3	Be2	0-0	c4	Nc3	exd6	h3N ⁶²⁵	Bf4		±	<i>Aljechin (2)</i>	
Nf6	Nd5	d6	Bg4	e6	Be7	Nb6	Nbd7	cxd6	Bh5				<i>Modern, 4..Bg4</i>	
e4	d4 ⁶²⁶	Nc3	d5	Nxe4	Bc4	Qxd5	Bxd5	Bc4	Ne2N!			±	<i>Nimzowitch</i>	
Nc6!?	d5	dxe4	Nb8!	c6	cxd5	Qxd5	e6	Bd7					<i>Berlin gambit</i>	

⁶¹⁵ Usually the *Kalashnikov* is played with first **4..e5** (instead of 4..d6) and then 5.Nb5 d6 6.Nc3 a6 and so on

⁶¹⁶ After 5..Nf6 Black is transposing to the *Richter Rauzer* (see above, with 5. Bg5 etc.)

⁶¹⁷ After **5..d6!** tp to *Richter Rauzer* (6.Bg5 Bd7 etc.)

⁶¹⁸ **8..Be6** 9.Nc4 Be7 (.b5 10.Bxf6 Qxf6 11.Nxd5 Qd8 12.Ne3) 10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.Nxd6 Kf8 12.Bc4 Qe7 13.Nf5 Bxf5 14.exf5 Rad8 15. Qh5 ±

⁶¹⁹ And then **13 .. Ne7** 14 Nxb5! Bg7! 15. Nc3 etc. ±

⁶²⁰ **5 .. d6** 6. Be3 Bg7 7.Be2 Nf6 8.Nc3 0-0 (.. Bd7 9.0-0 0-0 10.Qd2 ±) 9.0-0 a6 10.Ndb3 ±

⁶²¹ **3.. Qa5** 4.Nf3 Nf6 **5.Bc4!** Bg4 (.. Nc6 6.0-0 Bg4 7. h3 etc tp) **6.h3 Bh5 7.0-0 Nc6** (Nbd7 8.d4 e6 9.a3 ± e.g. Koskela-Lehtimaki (1-0), FinCh 1992)) **8.g4 Bg6 9.d3 0-0-0 10. Bd2** ± (Sazonova-Madynski (1-0), 1993)

⁶²² **3.. Nxd5?! 4. c4!** (and after Nf6 or Nb6 5.Nf3 and White is ahead in development) ±

⁶²³ Or **8..g6 9.b3 Bg7 10. Nge2N!** ± (in Pecotic-Maestre, 2000, White played 10.Ba3 and lost, but Nge2 is much better)

⁶²⁴ Or **7 .. dxe5** 8.Nxe5 Nc6 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.Qf3 0-0 10.Rad1! ±

⁶²⁵ Or **10. b3** 0-0 11.h3 etc. which is scoring very well statistically e.g. Kosa-Omjakov (1-0), 2007

⁶²⁶ Beginners should play **2.Nf3**, which after **2..e5 3.Bb5** leads to **Ruy Lopez** by transposition; in case of 2..d6?! then White can get a positional advantage after: 3.d4 Nf6 3. Bb5 Bd7 4.Nc3 e5 5.Be3 etc. ±

List of highest ratings on the Internet Chess Club (ICC) including computers, August 2013(*) nr 1 in standard and Bullet, bookbuilder(C) using Quad HP computer Q9300, Houdini engine.

Standard	Blitz ⁶⁹⁸	Bullet ⁶⁹⁹
2933 bookbuilder (C)	3450 Zigfrid (GM)	2894 bookbuilder (C)
2922 DesertCat (C)	3363 AndreAgassi	2876 DesertCat (C)
2879 Sjeng (C)	3345 brookercostello (C)	2789 Anesthesia (C)
2842 Orcrist (C)	3276 BlackHorse96 (IM)	2767 brookercostello (C)
2804 Anesthesia (C)	3252 Anamai	2722 chemea (C)
2800 brookercostello (C)	3237 Woef (GM)	2597 DiverDan (C)
2799 Data (C)	3226 Red-white (GM)	2583 Goldbar (C)
2784 Harimau (C)	3209 Uchitel (GM)	2574 SeaShepherd (C)
2762 chemea (C)	3207 ledope (GM)	2533 BountyHunter (C)
2751 paj (C)	3198 K-Georgiev (GM)	2451 Djoser
2747 accertaste (C)	3197 Ricky (GM)	2445 YaacovN (IM)
2743 DiverDan (C)	3186 LastKeks (GM)	2444 UzbekTiger (GM)
2727 Polyphemus (C)	3179 aplusk (IM)	2436 chess2kay
2663 NightmareX (C)	3175 FedoseevV195 (GM)	2428 Harimau (C)
2652 BountyHunter (C)	3167 Data (C)	2421 parrotC (C)
2622 Alkaline (C)	3164 KeepMoving (IM)	2400 blueprint
2583 ArasanX (C)	3156 ALIAS	2394 angpan
2569 SeaShepherd (C)	3141 DesertCat (C)	2385 Gameking
2553 MissingLink	3133 Falstaf (GM)	2373 blik (C)
2552 Goldbar (C)	3132 Danya (IM)	2371 HungarianChess (IM)
2545 jasrom	3111 BlitzorDDD (GM)	2365 PazificDreams (IM)

(*) in **May 2014** Bookbuilder(C) was nr 1 again (after sometimes a few little setbacks) with *standard* , now with a Xeon cpu, 4 cores, 8 threads, mainly with the latest (open source) Stockfish engine.

⁶⁹⁸ ICC Blitz ratings are inflated for humans as they usually don't play computers, and some computers like brookercostello(C) only play against humans in blitz and thus artificially inflate their blitz rating. So competing in this field was beyond my scope of developing a best opening repertoire.

⁶⁹⁹ With very fast time controls, for example two (or one) minute for the whole game.