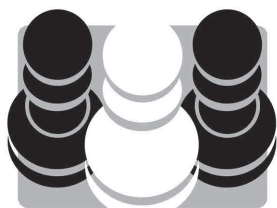


# Coffeehouse Repertoire

## 1.e4 Volume 1

By

Gawain Jones



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[www.qualitychess.co.uk](http://www.qualitychess.co.uk)

# Coffeehouse Preface

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Welcome to the Coffeehouse 1.e4 Repertoire! These days people know their lines so well that it's often difficult to put them under real pressure. Learning reams of main-line theory might give you a theoretical small edge, but that's not always so useful in a position that your opponent knows well, where he understands the plans and has a good idea of where the pieces should go. Instead, the aim of this series is to play opening lines which ask different questions to those your opponent is used to, and try to put them under immediate pressure.

My selection process was quite stringent. Primarily I wanted the choices to be sound. I've wasted too much time trying to fix holes in dodgy lines to inflict them upon you. Of course these recommendations will work best if they surprise your opponent, but I believe they all have inherent merit too.

Secondly, I wanted the repertoire choices to pack a genuine punch. Surprising your opponent with an insipid line may work occasionally, but will hardly scare a well-prepared opponent. With this repertoire, even if your opponents know what's coming, they won't have an easy time.

Thirdly, I aimed for relatively offbeat choices where possible, provided they met the above two criteria. A lot of your opponents are unlikely to have faced these lines many times (if at all) before.

What started as an idea for one book expanded, so thanks to John Shaw for his patience. I hope I've succeeded in building a repertoire which your opponents will find challenging. In general I've avoided well-known main lines, but the proposed lines still pose a real challenge, and often lead to positions where mistakes from Black meet with a heavy cost. I have analysed these lines more deeply than any of the sources mentioned in the bibliography, so there should be little risk of being out-prepared.

In many places I have strived to offer lines which allow us to transpose to the more theoretical main lines, should we wish to. The idea is to make life easier for us and more annoying for our opponents, who won't know what to expect and will have to be ready for lots of options. You can either use the books normally, and try to absorb the whole repertoire, or pick and choose which lines to incorporate into your existing repertoire. A good starting point could be to use it as inspiration against defences against which you are currently struggling.

This book is dedicated to the girls who helped me keep going.

To Phoenix for her patience. Listening to her snoring kept me calm but she knew when it was time for me to get some fresh air.

To Sue, without whom nothing would get done let alone this project.

Finally to our beautiful daughter Samaria. When I was exhausted your smile kept me going.

Gawain Jones  
Sheffield, April 2021

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# Introduction to Volume 1

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**1.e4** is our opening move.

In this volume, we'll focus mainly on **1...c5**, the Sicilian Defence. I recommend taking Black out of his comfort zone with **2.♘c3**. Black's most popular Sicilian variation is the Najdorf, and by developing the queenside knight first, we really annoy Najdorf players.

To avoid the prospect of being move-ordered, Najdorf aficionados usually choose **2...d6**. I'm proposing an extremely fresh approach here with **3.d4!? cxd4 4.♖xd4**, and our first chapter will examine the unusual positions that arise from it.

**2...♗c6** is Black's main defence. My primary recommendation is **3.♗b5**, but I also investigate the Anti-Najdorf **3.♗ge2**.

**2...e6** is Black's other main try. In response I want to stay flexible with **3.♗f3**. Depending on Black's set-up, we'll either develop the bishop to b5 or fianchetto it on g2. We have some possible transpositions to Open Sicilians, but our chosen move order has the advantage of cutting out many of Black's topical and critical responses.

We'll move on to **1...c6**, the Caro-Kann. Here I'm recommending a twist on the common Exchange Variation. We'll develop our kingside knight very early and attempt to gain the advantage of the bishop pair. I hope to persuade you that the ensuing positions are much more interesting than the Exchange Variation's typical reputation as a dull line.

Next we have the Scandinavian Defence: **1...d5 2.exd5** There are two distinct strategies employed by Scandinavian players. Proponents of **2...♖xd5** generally just want a solid, Caro-Kann style structure and a straightforward plan. The second group prefer **2...♗f6**, hoping to sacrifice a pawn for a lead in development and tactical opportunities. We're going to annoy both sets of opponents by responding with **3.♗f3**, intending to erect a big centre with c2-c4. Developing this knight first is relatively rare, and is likely to catch your opponents off-guard.

Finally we'll examine the Alekhine Defence. After **1...♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4 d6** I propose punishing Black for his loss of time with **4.c4 ♗b6 5.f4**, the Four Pawns Attack. Black needs to walk a narrow line to avoid being squashed in the opening.

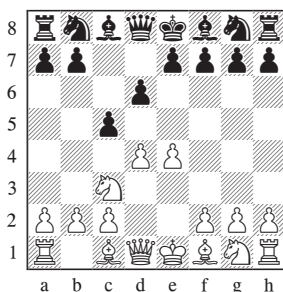
The Coffeehouse 1.e4 Repertoire will be completed in Volume 2, where I will cover **1...e5**, plus the French, Pirc, Modern, Philidor and other miscellaneous Defences.



# CHAPTER



## Carlsen Variation



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## Theory

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## Introduction

### 1.e4 c5 2.♘c3

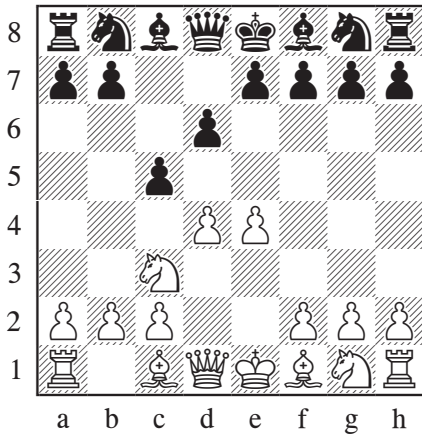
2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♕b5 would be the traditional way of playing with ♗xd4, but we have a different idea in mind.

### 2...d6

This is the move Black plays if he wants a Najdorf.

### 3.d4!?

What's this? This line came into the spotlight when Magnus Carlsen used it to beat Najdorf expert Radek Wojtaszek in the Shamkir tournament in 2018. I confess I struggled to take this idea seriously at the time, but analysing it more I realized it wasn't at all straightforward for Black.

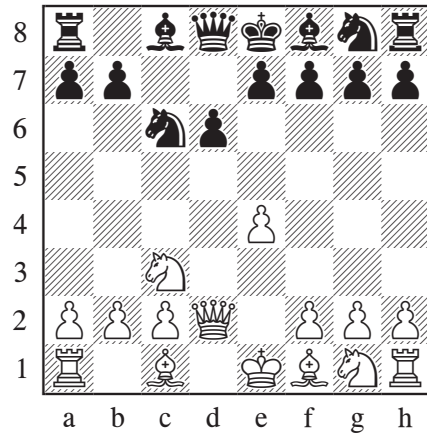


### 3...cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♗d2!

This naive-looking move was really Magnus's innovation, although I see Greek GM and theoretician Vassilios Kotronias managed to play it later the same day! The idea actually came from Greek IM Ioannis Simeonidis, who'd sent his find to Magnus's camp. He wrote an interesting article in *New in Chess* where he explained his thought process. The idea is to get a sort of improved 1.b3.

5.♕b5 is the older move, which was championed a few times by the sadly-missed star Vugar Gashimov. Playing in this style is likely to reach positions very similar to the traditional 4.♗xd4 (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6 5.♕b5).

Magnus came up with a completely different plan.



White's idea is actually extremely straightforward. We want to play b2-b3, ♕b2 and 0-0-0, and then attack on the kingside. The most logical counterplay plan for Black is to try and exploit the hook on b3 with ...a5-a4. We'll normally combat that with a2-a4 ourselves, when White's king seems pretty secure. Our bishop is actually better placed on b2 than e3 in a lot of Open Sicilian positions. In fact, in certain lines of the 6.h3 Najdorf White develops his bishop to b2 (see the Najdorf extract below). We have already provoked the knight to c6, whereas in a Najdorf it would prefer to be on d7, so the position has more resemblance to a Classical Sicilian.

Black has three distinct structures to choose from.

He can play in pure Najdorf style with ...e7-e5, but then his knight would rather be on d7 than c6.

He can play ...e7-e6, when the position resembles some sort of Scheveningen or Classical Sicilian.

Finally, he can play ...g7-g6, which leads to further divisions. Playing in pure Dragon style actually doesn't work out well for Black. White has good control over the d5-square, and can trade dark-squared bishops at will with a well-timed ♖d5. Black finds it difficult to generate counterplay. Therefore the top players have tried a strange hybrid, developing their bishop to h6 and quickly contesting in the centre with ...e7-e5 or ...f7-f5. I'll cover this towards the end of the chapter.

### Theoretical?

No. The idea is only a couple of years old, and there hasn't been time for established theory to develop.

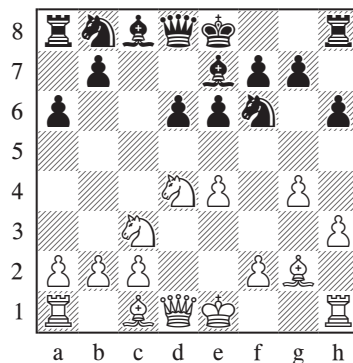
### Topical?

Yes – hardly surprising when the World Champion wins a game quickly with it. The American triumvirate of Caruana, Nakamura and So have all played it in Classical games, while their fourth player Dominguez has essayed it in blitz. Alexander Morozevich, who has a claim to be king of the sidelines, has also jumped on board and played quite a few games with it.

## 6.h3 Najdorf comparison

White's queenside set-up may look unusual, but it is tried in certain Najdorf variations. Here's an example from the topical 6.h3:

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 h6 8.♙g2 ♙e7 (8...g5 9.b3 ♗bd7 10.♙b2 ♗e5 11.♖d2 reaches the same set-up with the bishop on b2)



9.b3 This position has been seen in quite a few recent high-level games, one example being Praggnanandhaa – Artemiev, Moscow 2020.

### What we're hoping for

I don't think I can do a better job than simply showing the game that brought the concept into the limelight.

## Magnus Carlsen – Radoslaw Wojtaszek

Shamkir 2018

1.e4 c5 2.♗c3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♗c6 5.♖d2 ♗f6 6.b3 e6

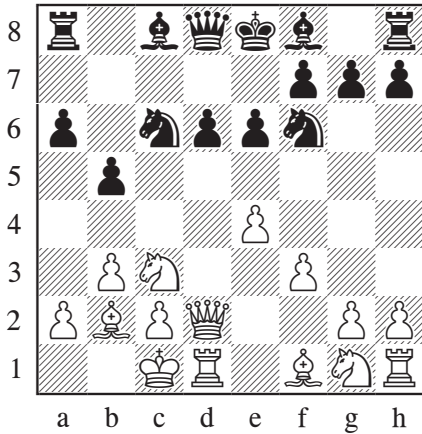
Wojtaszek chooses to play in typical Scheveningen style. This is probably the most likely reaction if your opponent is surprised.

7.♙b2 a6

Black has some alternatives on moves 7-9, which we will cover in the theoretical section.



## 8.0-0-0 b5 9.f3

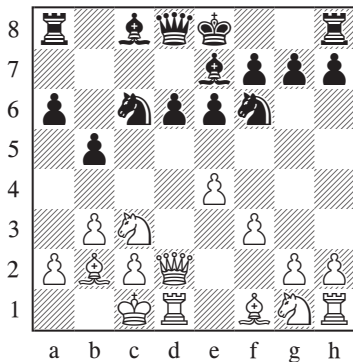


## 9...h5

This might look a little odd but it is a typical theme in these structures. Black wants to prevent White from grabbing lots of space with g2-g4. Ideas without ...h5 will be explored in the theory section.

If Black wants to play with ...h5, he would do better to start with:

9...♙e7



## 10.♖b1

Sidestepping any tactical trouble.

10.g4?! ♘g4! 11.fxg4?? ♙g5 is an important theme to remember and avoid.

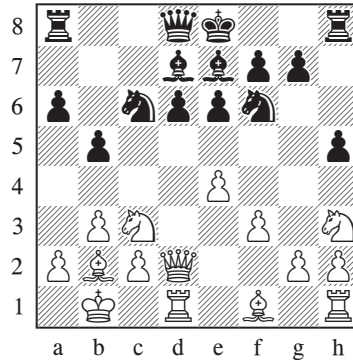
## 10...h5

Compared to the game, White has committed to ♖b1. This was recommended

as an improvement over Wojtaszek's play by Magnus's second Peter Heine Nielsen, and subsequently tested in a game which we will briefly follow.

11.♘h3 ♙d7!?

An interesting try. Black prepares ...b4 followed by taking the knight on a4. I think White should try:



12.♘f2!N

12.♘g5 continues to follow Magnus's plan but after 12...b4 Black gets decent counterplay: 13.♘e2 (13.♘a4 is generally desirable but in this instance 13...♘a5! leads to a complete mess. Notice that 14.♙xb4?! doesn't work here, as 14...♙b8 15.♙a3 ♙c7 with the threat of ...d6-d5 leaves Black with extremely dangerous compensation.) 13...a5 Black was getting some play of her own in Meissner – M. Brunello, Berlin 2018.

If Black plays in the same spirit with:

12...b4 13.♘a4 ♘a5

White has:

14.♙xf6!

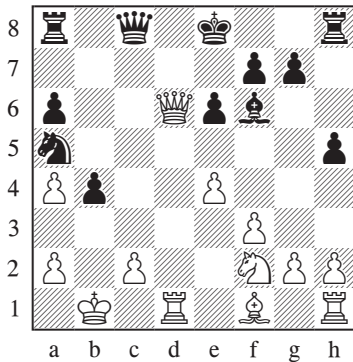
This wouldn't work with the knight on g5.

14...♙xf6

14...gxf6 15.♘b2± is quite unpleasant for Black. The knight gets in the way on a5, but if it drops back then White gets to play ♘c4. Otherwise White has ideas of f4-f5.

15.♙xd6 ♙xa4 16.bxa4 ♙c8

Here Black would have dangerous compensation for the pawn, were it not for:



17.e5 Qe7 18.Ne4! Qxd6  
 18...Nb7 19.Wd4±  
 19.Nxd6† Qe7 20.Qxc8† Bxc8 21.Wd4±

White has decent chances of converting the extra pawn.

### 10.Nh3!

Magnus immediately exploits the downside to Black's previous move. It is going to be hard for Black to dislodge the knight from g5. Similarities to the line I'm recommending against Tiger's Modern come to mind.

### 10...Qe7

Against 10...Qb7 we would play in the same style with 11.Qg5 followed by Qb1. It's hard to see how Black generates any counterplay.

### 11.Qg5

The most natural, immediately exploiting Black's weakened square.

White could also have started with 11.Qb1, transposing to 9...Qe7 above.

### 11...h4?!

This move was heavily criticized, with Sam Collins going as far as to attach "??" to it. Evidently, Wojtaszek must have been quite flustered at this point and struggled to come up with a good plan. Castling kingside is hardly attractive, and moving the bishop from c8 weakens the e6-square, making f4-f5 even more of a concern. However, the problem with

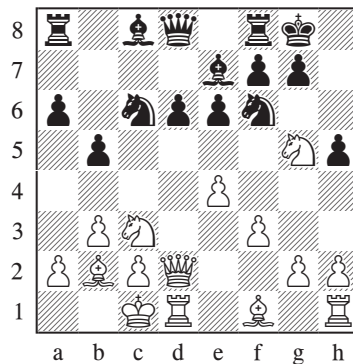
the text move is that Black is no longer slowing White's kingside play.

11...Qb7 is offered by Sam as an improvement, but I think Black is already under a lot of pressure. I'd start with 12.Qb1 which is a generally useful move. We'll follow up with either g2-g3 and Qh3, putting pressure on e6, or expanding with f3-f4.

Trying to play as Brunello did with 11...Qd7 is not as reliable when White hasn't had to sidestep with the king. The difference becomes clear after: 12.f4! b4 13.Qa4 Qa5 14.Wxb4! Bb8 15.Wd4± Compared to the above line, White has this square for the queen (f3-f4 having been played rather than Qb1) so Black can't hit it immediately with ...e6-e5.

### 11...0-0!

This makes a strange impression after having weakened the kingside with ...h7-h5, but is in fact Black's best try. He intends to break with ...d6-d5 next move.



### 12.h4

Defending the knight.

12.Qb1 is also enough for a small advantage: 12...d5! 13.exd5 Qxd5 14.Nxd5 Wxd5! (14...exd5? 15.Wc3! is embarrassing) 15.Qe4 Wxd2 16.Bxd2 and Black has restricted White to a nibble.

### 12...d5!

Otherwise White will play ♖b1 followed by g2-g4.

13.exd5 exd5

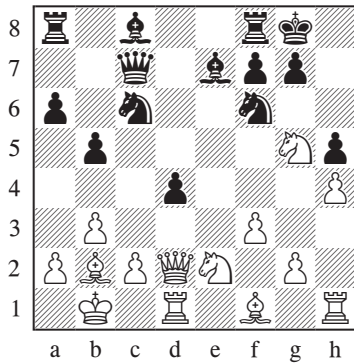
13...♗xd5? 14.♗xd5 ♖xc5 As the g5-knight is defended White is under no obligation to exchange queens here, and 15.♗d3 is simply winning.

14.♖b1! d4!

Black needs to generate counterplay before White establishes an ideal set-up with ♗d3 and ♗e2-d4/f4.

15.♗e2 ♖c7

15...♗f5 16.♗g3 ♗g6 17.♗d3±



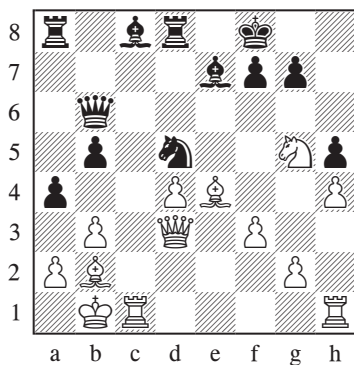
16.♗xd4 ♗d8 17.c3

Black has definite compensation for the pawn, but I believe White has the better chances. One thematic line continues:

17...♗d5 18.♗d3 ♗xd4 19.cxd4 a5

Here Leela Zero considers Black's compensation to be sufficient but misses an important attacking idea.

20.♖c1 ♖b6 21.♗e4 a4 22.♖d3 ♖f8

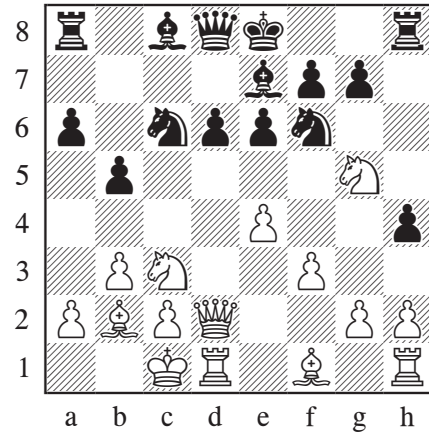


23.♖c5!

This is what it had overlooked.

23...♗xc5 24.dxc5 ♖xc5 25.♗d4!+-

Black is totally busted.

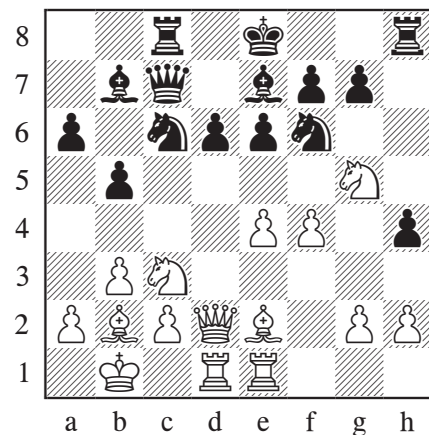


12.f4 ♗b7

It's a bit sad that Black has to play this anyway.

12...0-0? is now too late as 13.♖e1 is extremely awkward. The only way to hold on to the pawn is with 13...♗h7 but after 14.♗xh7 ♖xh7 15.g4! it seems extremely unlikely that Black's king will survive.

13.♖b1 ♖c8 14.♗e2 ♖c7 15.♖he1



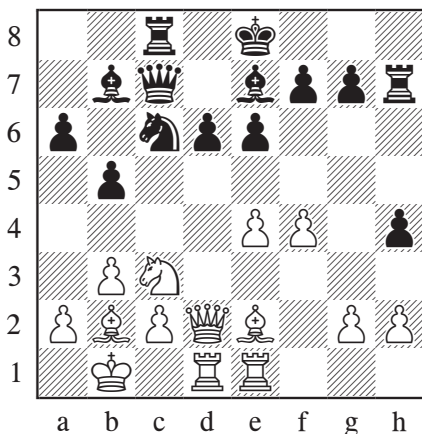
Peter Heine Nielsen makes an astute observation here: “Black’s position is much worse than it looks.” Black’s problem is he cannot generate any counterplay. Our b2-bishop does a good job of defending the king, while Black’s knight on c6 is severely misplaced.

### 15...♘h7?!

As Sam observes, this makes matters worse for Black, but it’s difficult to offer a playable alternative.

15...b4 16.♘a4 isn’t helping, and 15...0–0 16.♙d3 followed by ♖f2 is horrible.

### 16.♘xh7 ♖xh7



### 17.g4±

Keeping it simple. Black has a cramped position, king stuck in the middle, a misplaced rook on h7 and absolutely no counterplay.

As was noted at the press conference, 17.♘d5! was immediately killing: 17...exd5 18.exd5 ♘d8 19.♙d3 (or Sam Collins’ 19.♙g4+— when White follows up by trebling on the e-file and wins back the material with interest. Just look how uncoordinated the black pieces are!) 19...♖h5 20.♖xe7† Nielsen stops here. After 20...♗xe7 21.♗e1 White regains the material with a crushing position.

Nevertheless, it’s hard to criticize the World Champion’s play. The rest is pure agony for the Polish number one.

### 17...hxc3 18.hxc3 ♙f6 19.♙d3 ♖h8 20.g4

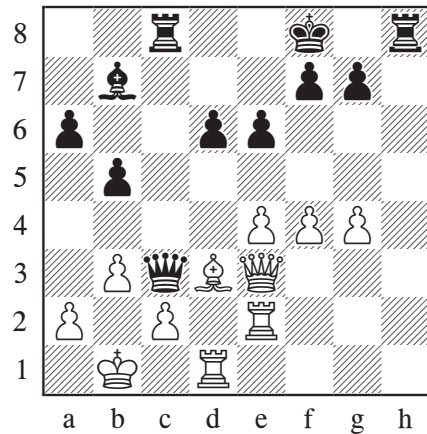
This move was criticized due to the fact that Stockfish doesn’t like it. However, Leela Zero remains happy as White.

20.♖h1± is offered by Collins to keep total control; while 20.♖f1 is given by Simeonidis.

### 20...♘d4 21.♖e3 ♗f8!

Black threatens a knight jump followed by taking on c3. The king sidestep is essential so that there can be no ♙xb5† intermezzo.

### 22.♘e2 ♘xe2 23.♖xe2 ♙c3 24.♙xc3 ♗xc3 25.♗e3



### 25...♖c5?!

Thus far Black has been holding on tenaciously, but now White crashes through.

It was better to continue chasing White’s queen with 25...♗c5 although after 26.♗g3 a5 27.f5 e5 28.g5 a4 29.♖h2± White’s attack arrives first.

### 26.e5! dxe5 27.fxe5 ♖h1?

This fails tactically. However, White was about to pile up on the f-file.

28.♖xh1 ♔xh1 29.♖h2 ♜xe5

White was threatening 30.♖h8† followed by 31.♗g5† and mate.

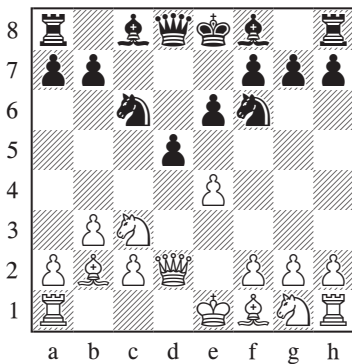
30.♖h8† ♔e7 31.♗a7†  
1–0

### Black's best defences

It has become apparent that if Black allows White free rein to complete his development then he can get into severe trouble. It therefore makes sense for him to try and mix things up straight away and attempt to exploit the delay in White's kingside development. Before we get stuck into the theoretical section, here are a few of the more challenging options to look out for.

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘c6  
5.♗d2 g6

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave has tried a quick break with: 5...♘f6 6.b3 e6 7.♙b2 d5!?



8.exd5 exd5 Black accepts a structural defect with the IQP, in return for some initiative. In a rapid game from last year Hikaru Nakamura successfully defused Black's play with 9.0–0–0 ♙e6 10.♖b1 ♗a5 11.♘b5 ♗xd2 12.♖xd2 and ground out a win in the better ending against MVL.

6.b3

The main line for Black is to delay developing his g8-knight to allow:

6...♙h6!

Gaining a tempo on our queen and anticipating the future arrival of the king on c1. We should react with:

7.f4

Black will try to undermine our position with either ...f7-f5 or ...e7-e5. The resulting positions may become extremely complicated. White will often sacrifice a pawn but have promising compensation with attacking chances on the kingside, especially with the pressure down the long diagonal. Black's weaknesses won't just go away, and so it's important to first stifle Black's counterplay on the queenside as much as possible.

7...♘f6

After 7...f5!? 8.♙b2 ♘f6 I investigate 9.0–0–0, again offering the pawn, and 9.♙d3 as a back-up option.

8.♙b2 0–0 9.0–0–0 e5

Sometimes 9...a5 10.a4 is included too.

10.g3

We have a very sharp position. Black will have needed to study the resulting positions very carefully, and even more important, actually remember the key ideas at the board. Not so easy, especially if he's not expecting this sideline.

We will now move to the theory. The material will be divided as follows:

1.1 ...e7-e6 set-ups

1.2 ...e7-e5 set-ups

1.3 Dragon set-up

1.4 Other lines

# Abridged Variation Index

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The Variation Index in the book is 6 pages long. Below is an abridged version giving just the main variations, not the sub-variations.

## Chapter 1 – Carlsen Variation

### 1.1 ...e7-e6 set-ups

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4  
♜c6 5.♗d2 ♜f6 6.b3 e6 7.♙b2

- A) 7...d5 20
- B) 7...♙e7 22
- C) 7...a6 8.0–0–0 24

### 1.2 ...e7-e5 set-ups

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4  
A) 4...♜c6 5.♗d2 ♜f6 6.b3 e5 31

- B) 4...e5!? 32

### 1.3 Dragon set-up

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4  
♜c6 5.♗d2 g6 6.b3

- A) 6...♙g7 36
- B) 6...♙h6 7.f4 39

### 1.4 Other lines

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4  
A) 4...♜f6?! 54

- B) 4...a6 55
- C) 4...♙d7 56

## Chapter 2 – 1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♜c6 3.♙b5

### 2.1 Chasing the bishop after 3...♜d4

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♜c6 3.♙b5 ♜d4 4.♜f3

- A) 4...e6 89
- B) 4...a6 100
- C) 4...g6 109

### 2.2 Taking the bishop after 3...♜d4

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♜c6 3.♙b5 ♜d4 4.♜f3

- A) 4...♜xb5 118
- B) ...a6/...e6 set-ups 126
- C) 4...♜f6 129

### 2.3 3...♜f6!? and other 3rd moves

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♜c6 3.♙b5 ♜f6!?  
(3...♗c7; 3...♗b6; 3...♜a5; 3...e6) 4.♜f3

- A) 4...e5 138
- B) 4...g6 139
- C) 4...♗c7 147

## Chapter 3 – Chameleon Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♜c6 3.♜ge2!?

- A) 3...e5 4.♜g3!? 162
- B) 3...♜d4 164

## Chapter 4 – 2...e6 3.♜f3

### 4.1 3...♜c6

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 e6 3.♜f3 ♜c6 4.♙b5

- A) 4...♗c7 183
- B) 4...♜ge7 189

### 4.2 3...a6 4.g3 b5

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 e6 3.♜f3 a6 4.g3 b5  
5.♙g2 ♙b7 6.d4 cxd4 7.♜xd4

- A) 7...♜c6 210
- B) 7...♜f6 212

### 4.3 3...a6

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 e6 3.♗f3 a6 4.g3

- A) 4...d5 227
- B) 4...♗c6 228
- C) 4...d6 5.♙g2 231

### 4.4 Other 3rd Moves

1.e4 c5 2.♗c3 e6 3.♗f3

- A) 3...♗f6 237
- B) 3...d6!? 238

## Chapter 5 – Move 2 Alternatives

1.e4 c5 2.♗c3

- A) 2...a6 3.g3 245
- B) 2...g6 3.d4 257
- C) 2...b6 270

## Chapter 6 – Caro-Kann

### 6.1 Main lines

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.♗f3

- A) 4...♗f6 5.♗e5 291
- B) 4...a6 296
- C) 4...♙g4 302
- D) 4...♗c6 304

### 6.2 ...g7-g6 set-ups

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.♗f3

- A) Meeting ♙b5† with ...♙d7 312
- B) Meeting ♙b5† with ...♗bd7 314
- C) Lines with an early ...♗c6 317
- D) Lines with an early ...g6 319

### 6.3 2.♗f3 move order

1.e4 c6 2.♗f3 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.♗e5!?

- A) 4...g6 324
- B) 4...e6 326
- C) 4...♗c6 327

## Chapter 7 – Scandinavian

7.1 2...♙xd5 3.♗f3

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 3.♗f3

- A) 3...♗f6 4.♙e2 337
- B) 3...♙g4 344

7.2 2...♗f6 3.♗f3

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗f6 3.♗f3 ♗xd5 4.d4 g6

5.c4 ♗b6 6.♗c3 ♙g7 7.c5! ♗d5 8.♙c4

- A) 8...♗xc3 364
- B) 8...c6 365

## Chapter 8 – Alekhine

### 8.1 Main lines

1.e4 ♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 ♗b6

5.f4 dxe5 6.fxe5 ♗c6 7.♙e3 ♙f5 8.♗c3

e6 9.♗f3

- A) 9...♙e7 383
- B) 9...♙g4 393
- C) 9...♙b4!? 397

### 8.2 Early deviations

1.e4 ♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4

A) 3...♗b6?! 403

B) 3...d6 4.c4 ♗b6 5.f4 405

B1) 5...g5?! 406

B2) 5...g6!? 407

B3) 5...dxe5 6.fxe5 411

B31) 6...c5?! 412

B32) 6...g6 416

B33) 6...♙f5 418