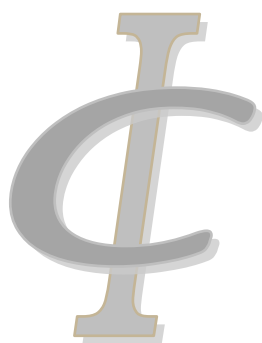


Institute of Chess

Revision Guide to

LEVEL 5



The contents were written and arranged by

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with advice from
GM Chris Ward.

This revision guide is dedicated to the memory of

IM Bob Wade OBE (1921 ~ 2008),

who devoted his life to chess.

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Institute of Chess
Level 5 Coaching Course
by Andrew Bigg

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PART 1: Bishop's Opening and Portuguese Opening

The Bishop's Opening is rarely seen at the highest level since it presents Black with no real difficulties. It does, however, along with its brother the Portuguese, have one crucial difference to an Italian game, which is what this section concentrates on.

The Italian game, or Giuoco Piano, starts as you know with the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 and the Spanish, or Ruy Lopez, begins with 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5. The two openings in this section omit the moves 2.Nf3 Nc6, leaving us with the Bishop's Opening:



and the Portuguese Opening 1.e4 e5 2.Bb5

Now what you may ask does White think he is gaining by breaking the usual opening rule of 'knights before bishops'? Well, by not putting a knight on f3 White has left open one option which he does not usually have in either the Lopez or Giuoco Piano. You may have guessed it by now, White intends to advance his f-pawn to f4 in order to initiate a kingside attack. Generally attacking is helped by having one's pawns in front of one's pieces since maximum mobility can then be enjoyed. These openings have a strong link with both the Vienna Opening (1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 intending a future f2-f4) and the King's Gambit (1.e4 e5 2.f4 getting on with it immediately). I think the best way to tackle this idea is to show some sample variations, some of which will turn out well for White and some which won't.

Let's start with the Bishop's Opening and play may continue from the diagram 2...Nc6 3.d3 – White covers the f4-square with his c1-bishop and simultaneously supports both his e4-pawn and his c4-bishop, looking good so far – 3...Nf6 4.f4 Bc5 5.Nf3 and we reach a critical position:-

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



However, a closer look shows a weakness in White's pawn formation – the dark squares are left very weak. Full marks if you have already seen 5...Ng4 6.Rf1 (to cover the weakness on f2) 6...Nxb2! And if 7.Nxb2 then 7...Qh4+ gets the knight back and deprives White of the right to castle. For those of you who like complications, however, you might like to look at 6.Bxf7+! instead: 6...Kxf7 7.Ng5+ and now 7...Kg8 may objectively be best so Black may just have gone wrong with 5...Ng4. Perhaps therefore 5...d6 is better, keeping ...Ng4 ideas in reserve. It is often said in chess that 'a threat is more dangerous than its execution'.

If White plays 5.Nc3 instead of 5.Nf3 then the queen covers g4 anyway so White doesn't have to worry. If Black plays 5...d6 then White can cut the bishop off from the g4-square with 6.f5!?. The other advantage of moving the queen's knight first is that by far the most irritating Black piece is the c5-bishop as it prevents kingside castling by White. Therefore the plan of Na4xc5 is likely to be quite high on White's agenda.

Black has fairly few deviations from 2...Nc6, 3...Nf6 and then ...Bc5, ...d6 etc. To give a couple of examples let's say 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nc6 3.d3 Na5 (trying to get the bishop pair) 4.Bxf7+! Kxf7 5.Qh5+ and now if 5...Ke8 or 5...Ke7 then 6.Qxe5+ wins the knight back on a5; 5...Kf6 allows 6.Bg5+ and the black queen leaves the board; finally 5...g6 6.Qxe5 forking knight on a5 and rook on h8, Black now reduced to trying 6...Nc6 7.Qxh8 Nf6 threatening 8...Bb4+ winning the white queen by discovered attack, but the calm 8.Nc3 leaves Black struggling.

Another try by Black is to play 2...f5. Usually this move would be very risky after 2.Nf3 by White in the opening. It is called the Latvian, and we will meet it in a later section on 'unusual openings' but I'll let you into a secret now: it is **not** very good! White plays 3.Nxe5 when the best line is 3...Qf6 to avoid Qh5+ by White. Need I say more when the queen moves in a defensive manner on move 3? After 2.Bc4, however, this resource is unavailable for White, and if 3.exf5 then 3...Nf6 covers the h5-square against the white queen and prepares 4...d5 taking a big centre with tempo on the c4-bishop, followed by perhaps regaining the pawn with ...Bxf5. The weakness of the light squares is still a problem after 2...f5, but ironically can only be exploited by surrendering the key light-squared bishop with 3.Bxg8! Rxg8 4.Qh5+ g6 5.Qxh7 Rg7 with a tense position for a pawn sacrifice. White must probably play 6.Qh3 when 6...d5!? 7.ed c6 8.dc Nxc6 springs to mind, with a lot of development for two pawns. The onus is on you to prove you know what you are doing with 2...f5 but I can say one thing for it – your opponent is unlikely to be familiar with the resulting positions!

2...Bc5 is one last move that I'll mention as now 3.Nc3 is the best move, with 4.d3 and perhaps 5.Be3 in mind. The point is that 3.Nf3 Nc6 is a Giuoco Piano and 3.f4? falls foul of 3...Bxg1! 4.Qh5! (not 4.Rxg1 allowing 4...Qh4+ 5.g3 Qxh2 when there is no longer a 'Rg2' option because the extra tempo White has he has spent moving his f1-bishop! 6.Kf1 is forced and then 6...d5! With the double threat of 7...dxc4 and 7...Bh3+ wins:-

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



The insertion of 4.Qh5! covers h4 against checks and threatens mate should Black try to save the g1-bishop. Black has 4...Qe7 5.Rxg1 d6 intending 6...Nf6 gaining time on the white queen. Play may continue 6.Nc3 Nf6 7.Qh4 Nc6 8.d3 Nd4?! (8...Be6 is safer) 9.dxe5! dxe5 10.Bg5! Nxc2+ 11.Kd2 Nxa1 12.Nd5 (maybe 12.Rf1 threatening Rxf6 is even better) 12...Nxd5(!) 13.Bxe7 Nxe7 14.Rxa1 Ng6 15.Qf2 0-0 16.Rf1 Be6 17.Bxe6 fxe6 18.Qe1 with an ending that is tricky but should objectively favour White. I have shown this variation because it contains quite a few tactical concepts common to chess at a higher level, even if the variation itself has never been played before!

So let us now consider the Portuguese with 2.Bb5 instead of 2.Bc4.

The main independent significance is that after 2...Nc6 White may try 3.Bxc6!? (in fairness Black is hinting at 3...Nd4 if White doesn't do this) 3...dxc6 4.d3 and a subsequent f2-f4 advance. Black must be a little careful he doesn't just end up with a bad structure but his pieces will be very active after 4...Ne7 5.f4 exf4 6.Bxf4 Ng6 7.Be3 (else 7...Bc5 and Black may even be better) 7...Bd6 8.Nf3 0-0 9.0-0 f5 10.N(b)d2 Qe8



Ok, I admit this is all a bit far off the opening track but it gives a feel for where the play for both sides comes from. Even 7...Qh4+ 8.Bf2 Qg5 attacking g2 or 8.g3 Qf6 intending h7-h5-h4 is worth a look.

If 3.f4 instead of 3.Bxc6 then 3...Nd4 4.Bc4 exf4 5.Nf3 Bc5 6.c3 looks better for White to me, and 4...Bc5 5.c3 Nc6 (5...Ne6 hitting f4 is probably best) 6.Nf3 likewise seems good for White after a subsequent d2-d4. Perhaps therefore 3...Nd4 is not so much of a problem and 3...exf4 should be preferred when 4.Nf3 g5!? Is a violent way to try to seize the initiative typical of Black in the King's Gambit.

Finally, let us look at 2...a6 when thematic is 3.Ba4 b5 4.Bb3

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



On the face of it this just seems to help White. He has his bishop back on the safe b3 square and can lash out at Blacks weakened queenside with a timely a2-a4, as well as still intending d2-d3 and f2-f4 on the kingside. The question is whether, after 4...Nf6 5.d3 (5.f4 exf4 6.e5 Ne4 7.Bd5 does not work due to 7...Qh4+ 8.g3 fxc3 9.Nf3+ g2+! Winning) 5...Bc5, does White have anything better than 6.Nf3 Nc6 going back into a Lopez? The only move of independent value is f2-f4, but let's throw in 6.a4 first. Play may continue 6...Bb7 7.Na3 b4 8.Nc4 d6 9.c3 Nc6 10.f4 0-0 11.Nf3



This is certainly a more dynamic Lopez than with the pawn still back on f2. Black's best may be 11...bxc3 12.bxc3 Re8 intending perhaps ...exf4 and either...d5 or a sacrifice with ...Nxe4 while the white king stays in the centre. White may try 13.f5 Rb8 14.Rb1 but where does he go from here? He cannot castle at the moment, so Be3 is the intention, but 14...Ng4 seems to put a stop to that. However, we do not give up this easily: 15.Ng5! Nf2 16.Qh5 is horrible for Black. Thus 14...h6 springs to mind: 15.Be3 Bxe3 16.Nxe3 Na5 when 17.Ba2 d5! Is at least equal for Black and 17.c4 c5 or 17...c6 with ...d5 in mind is also nothing for White.

I hope that one thing you have realized about these less popular lines is that in order to play for a win in a style unique to that opening (in other words not transposing back into main lines of more common openings) then one needs to be prepared to handle some intense complications. This naturally involves a risk, but at the end of the day it is your choice!

PART 2: Pirc and Modern Defences

The Pirc and Modern Defences are as closely related to each other as the Bishop's Opening and the Portuguese. The biggest difference is that you are far more likely to come across these at some stage, and indeed may even give them a try as Black.

The basic idea is not to rush to take the centre but to allow White to develop good control of the centre and then to try and knock it down from the flank. It is referred to as Modern because this strategy of flank attack was only popularised some time after 'Classical chess' (where both sides fight to occupy the centre from the start) had been going on for pretty much right up until the early twentieth century. Like most new ideas, 'hypermodernism' as it is known, enjoyed a spurt of popularity and then theory was worked out on the openings that fell under this classification of style. I intend to demonstrate the main lines of the Pirc and Modern Defences and show the pros and cons of the play for each side.

First of all we need to understand the key difference between the two and how a Modern may later transpose to a Pirc. The Pirc starts (via its most common move order) as follows: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6



By contrast, the Modern starts 1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7



Note that Black is deliberately delaying the development of his g8-knight and the reason for this will be made clear later. First let's tie up some loose ends. In the Pirc move order the move 3.e5? is seriously flawed due to 3...dxe5 4.dxe5 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 Ng4 forking f2 and e5, thus winning a pawn for nothing as well as having deprived White of castling rights. The only other deviation is to avoid 3...g6 by playing 3...c6, with the intention to move the queen out and exert pressure on White's dark squares.

Against this I recommend 4.f4! and now: (i) 4...Qa5 5.e5 Ne4 6.Qf3 d5 7.Bd3 Bf5 (7...f5 8.Ne2 may be best) 8.Ne2 intending bxc3, 0-0, a4, Rfb1 etc, with an initiative on the queenside:

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



(ii) 4...Qb6 5.e5 Nd5 6.Nxd5 cxd5 7.Bd3 Nc6 (7...Qxd4?? 8.Bb5+ is simply embarrassing) 8.c3 and the strategy is to prevent Black from being able to play his light-squared bishop outside the pawn chain, but rather to provoke ...e7-e6 first, perhaps with a move like Qf3 to hit the d5 pawn. If then ...e6 then Qe2 followed by Nf3 and 0-0 gives White a very nice centre, which, in view of the doubled d-pawns, Black is unable to knock down with the usual 'French Defence' pawn break ...c5.

So to the Pirc itself and after 3...g6 White has a large number of alternatives. First I will mention the flank action that White may choose to embark upon. There are two ways of doing this, one passive, one violent.

The passive way is 4.g3, intending to fianchetto and castle kingside. The problem with this is that Black should just play moves such as 4...Bg7 5.Bg2 0-0 6.Nge2 e5! 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 and then chip away at the white centre with ...c7-c6. White's pieces seem to me to be too passive to offer much resistance. It should be noted, however, that passive play from Black against this fianchetto system can be very bad for him, as we shall see in the final session of this course, on 'exploiting an advantage', where we shall see Anatoly Karpov completely dismantling the strong Dutch grandmaster, Jan Timman.

The violent way is 4.h4, a move that I myself have experimented with in the past. Unfortunately there is a simple rule in chess that an attack on the flank is well met by a counter-strike in the centre. Here the centre is open to a strike by Black and indeed this is his main plan anyhow. 4...Bg7 5.Be2 h5 is best, when after 6.Nf3 0-0 7.Ng5 Nc6 (threatening ...e7-e5 with complete control) 8.f4 (threatening e5 himself) 8...e5! And Black plays it anyway, he is in no danger of getting mated and White will regret his pawn advances because he can't play h4-h2 and f4-f2!

One move I will mention briefly, for the attacking player is the so-called Chinese Attack, with 4.Be2 Bg7 5.g4!? when at least White threatens to potentially disrupt Black's control of the centre with the advance g4-g5. Aggressive players among you may like this idea.

By far the most common moves are 4.Be3, 4.Nf3 and 4.f4. The first two nearly always transpose back into each other anyway so only 4.f4 is of independent value. This is known as the Austrian Attack and is a very popular line with White. The downside is the space left behind the advancing pawns, as many a White player has discovered horribly to their cost. Black should play 4...Bg7 and then after 5.Nf3 we arrive at a crossroads.

- (i) 5...0-0 allows 6.e5 when Black usually plays 6...Nfd7 and now White goes for it with 7.h4, logic being that he has chased a key defender away from the h7-square. Ok, Black must hit in the centre and so 7...c5 8.h5 cxd4 9.hxg6 (White carries on regardless; I once tried 9.Qxd4 here, intending to meet 9...Nc6 with 10.Qh2 and Qh4, but Black has the clever 9...dxe5 10.Qf2 e4! Allowing him to play his knight back to f6 safely and then perhaps Nbd7, without allowing fxe5 hitting the knight away again. This position is still not bad for Black by any means, but nor is it bad for White!)



So after 9.hxg6 comes 9...dxc3, grabbing the piece and accepting the challenge. There follows 10.gxf7+ Rxf7 (not 10...Kh8 in view of 11.Rxh7+! Kxh7 12.Ng5+ Kh6 13.Bd3 intending Qg4 and mating) 11.Bc4



Black must now play accurately. The threat is 12.Ng5 when the white queen is also liberated to swing to h5. Black's best is 11...e6 12.Ng5 (12.Qxd6!?!; 12.Bxe6 Nxe5!) 12...Nf8 13.Nxf7 Kxf7 14.Qh5+ Kg8 15.Bd3 h6 which is in fact reckoned to be a bit better for Black. Obviously if you intend to play this line with either side you need to study it, but the more of these sorts of variations you play through, the more you get a feel for what works and what doesn't.

- (ii) 5...c5 has an independent significance as it allows White a further choice: 6.dxc5 is harmless for Black after 6...Qa5 (the dark squares are a key theme as we shall see) 7.Bd3 (7...Nxe4 was the threat) 7...Qxc5 8.Qe2 Bg4 9.Be3 Qa5 10.0-0 0-0 11.h3 Bxf3 12.Qxf3 Nc6 13.a3 Nd7 and Black's dark square grip gives him a fully equal game.



The second sixth move choice is 6.Bb5+ and in my view the more dangerous. The major problem with this is that there are too many variations to cover in this session, so I shall just show you a couple of ideas. If you are interested, you can find the theory in an appropriate opening book.

6...Nc6 is not good as White has either 7.d5 a6 8.Ba4 b5 9.dxc6 bxa4 (notice this device to draw the opponents pawns out onto the a-file, it is often useful for ruining the opponent's structure) 10.e5!?, or simply 7.dxc5 to release the tension.

6...Bd7 is the main line, when one thematic idea is 7.e5 Ng4 8.Bxd7+ Qxd7 9.d5 gaining space, and after 9...dxe5 10.h3 e4! (a device we have seen already) 11.Nxe4 Nf6 12.Nxf6 Bxf6 13.0-0 0-0 with an unclear middle game in prospect.

As I have already said, the two most common fourth move choices are 4.Nf3 and 4.Be3. The only big difference between them is that after 4.Be3 White retains the option of playing 5.f3 to secure the e4 and g4 squares against the f6-knight. An example is 4...Bg7 5.f3 0-0 6.Qd2 (Lining up along the c1-h6 diagonal with a view to a later Bh6xg7 to weaken the black king. Now we see why the Modern Opening delays the development of the g8-knight in order to keep the h6-square covered for as long as possible.) 6...c6 7.Bd3 b5 (Black's standard plan in this line to attack on the flank) 8.Nge2 Nbd7 9.a4 (also typical of this line – White lashes out at the weakened queenside) 9...b4 10.Nd1 a5 11.Nf2 e5 12.c3 when White has a solid centre and will slowly build up to a kingside attack.



So finally to 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Be3 – probably the most played response to the Pirc among club players and hence called the ‘150’ attack – and now:-

Trying to grab the dark-squared bishop with 5...Ng4 is risky. For starters White may try 6.Bc4 Nxe3 7.fe intending 0-0 and double heavy pieces on the f-file. The attack on f7 should fully compensate for the loss of the dark-squared bishop. If this is not to taste then White may try 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 g5 (remember, pawns can't move backwards!) 8.Bg3 and it is not clear to me what Black thinks he has gained from this other than a weakened kingside.

5...0-0 is more sensible and then 6.Qd2 c6 7.Bd3 b5 and now 8.Bh6 would be my recommendation, with the idea that White will follow up with 9.a4 if allowed. For example 8...Nbd7 9.a4 b4 10.Ne2 a5 11.Ng3 intending h2-h4-h5 and an attempt at a direct mating attack. Of course, Black has moves like 11...e5 with a counterstrike in the centre and an interesting fight in prospect.



So onto the Modern, and we will look at a couple of example where Black stubbornly refuses to move his g8-knight.

One of the most desperate attempts to try and refute the Modern is 1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.Bc4 – the idea being that if Black intends to keep his king’s knight at home then this delays castling and f7 becomes a juicy target. The ‘Modern Defence’ move here is 4...c6, planning the usual ...b5, this time gaining time on the c4-bishop. White answers this with 5.Qf3 when Black must cover f7 with 5...e6. Play continues 6.Nge2 b5 7.Bb3 a5 (I feel that Black should get punished for making one bishop move and six pawn moves on his first seven turns, but he has no weaknesses) 8.a3 with the idea to try and hit Black on the kingside with h2-h4(-h5 if allowed).



The main move after 3...Bg7 is still 4.Be3 and then 4...a6 (the key difference – Black intends to play for c7-c5; if instead 4...c5 then play gets very awkward after 5.dxc5 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Nf6) 5.Nf3 (there is no rush for Qd2 since Bh6 is not possible anyhow) 5...b5 6.Bd3 Nd7 7.0-0 Bb7 8.a4 b4 9.Ne2 c5 10.c3 a5 11.Ng3 h5!? 12.h4 and a very tense situation arises.



Black will finally develop his knight with 12...Ngf6 and White can occupy a nice square with one of his own knights with 13.Ng5. If Black castles then 14.f4 springs to mind, until we notice that 14...Ng4 is awkward due to the fork on e3 and d4. Therefore 14.f3 is indicated and then if Black plays 14...bxc3 15.bxc3 cxd4 16.cxd4 then it is a race between the two sides to get their rooks to the b and c files. Black must also be wary of the move Qb3, probing b7 and f7 simultaneously.

The Pirc and Modern Defences are usually played by solid players who do not want to have to learn much theory, but just a few simple plans and concepts. The difficulty is, as we have seen, that there are quite a few concepts to bear in mind. Good luck!

PART 3: Queen's Gambit Accepted and Anti-Marshall Lines

The main part of these notes is dedicated to an opening that you may not have seen in detail before, but which is very popular at the higher levels of the game so it is well worth knowing. This is the Queen's Gambit Accepted (or QGA for short), and begins with the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4



White now has three main options, which I shall step through in order: 3.e3, 3.e4 and 3.Nf3 with a quick 4.Nc3 in mind. I start with 3.e3 – the attraction being its simplicity.

Two instant advantages of 3.e3 are that it (a) supports the d4-pawn, which is often a target for counterattack by Black, and (b) it sets a lethal trap. The trap is, that if Black gets greedy, and tries to cling onto his extra pawn (obviously the idea is to play Bxc4 if possible, whereupon White would have successfully exchanged a Black d-pawn for his own c-pawn, and as you know by now, centre pawns are generally more valuable in the opening) with 3...b5 then White calmly plays 4.a4, the standard recipe to smash down a b5-pawn, and in fact Black is now in almost terminal difficulties already. 4...a6 is clearly impossible due to 5.axb5 and the pin on the a8-rook is decisive. However, 4...c6 does not help either due to 5.axb5 cxb5 6.Qf3 and once again the rook on a8 is Black's undoing. It is trapped in broad daylight! Believe me, some players fall for this trap, so keep it in mind. Of course, it does not work after 3.e4, blocking the f3-a8 diagonal. Finally, if Black plays 4...bxa4 then I leave it to you to count the number of isolated pawns Black has given himself!

So after 3.e3 the most normal plan is 3...Nf6, but 3...e5 is worth a quick look. Obviously to capture would be to deny White castling rights after the exchange of queens, but is this such a problem? Let's check! After 4.dxe5 Qxd1+ 5.Kxd1 Nc6 6.Nf3 (6.f4 f6! 7.exf6 Nxf6 intending ...Bg4 and ...0-0-0 is risky for White, and 6.Bxc4 Nxe5 7.Bb3, trying to play Ke2, is flawed by 7...Bf5 8.Ke2 0-0-0 with a huge grip on the d3-square) 6...Bg4 7.Be2 0-0-0+ 8. Nbd2 Bb4 looks unpleasant to me.



Instead, I recommend 4.Nf3 with the idea of 4...exd4 5.Bxc4! and then capture back on d4 with whichever piece seems most appropriate depending on what Black does now. Note that 5...dxe3 allows 6.Bxf7+ and also 5...Bg4 6.Bxf7+ and Ne5+. The Black bishop never really develops to the kingside in this line because if nothing else, having taken back on c4 with his bishop, White will play Qb3, forking f7 and b7, as soon as he sees the bishop on c8 move. Make sure you see how this works, because people at a lower level fall for things like this regularly. Finally, if after 5.Bxc4 above Black tries 5...Bb4+ then 6.Bd2 Bxd2+ 7.Qxd2 dxe3 8.Bxf7+ Ke7 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 and White could play 10.fxe3 but then his pawn is weak for the rest of the game. Instead, 10.Nc3! is a good gambit idea: 10...exf2+ 11.Kxf2 and the white rooks will flood in very quickly.



So to the main line 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 Nf6 4.Bxc4 and now, seeing as moves with the c8-bishop fall foul of 5.Qb3, Black plays 4...e6. Play now always seems to continue 5.Nf3 c5 – Black now hits back at the White centre in true Queen's Gambit fashion.

White should now play 6.0-0 and now it is Black who has the three major alternatives.

- (iii) 6...cxd4 7.exd4, gives White an isolated d-pawn, but this often works to White's advantage because his pieces are more active. We will meet IQP (Isolated Queen's Pawn) positions in the section on planning, but it is obvious that White has now a mobile bishop on c1 and the g5-square suggests itself. The knight will come to c3 and the f1-rook to the open e-file. As I say, more on this position in section 5 of the course, but for now just trust me: White stands better here. 6...cxd4 releases the central tension too early.
- (iv) 6...Nc6 7.Nc3 threatens to advance in the centre. For example 7...Be7 8.d5 exd5 9.Nxd5 Nxd5 10.Bxd5 and e3-e4, with a good grip on central light squares. Having said that, it is debatable how bad this is for Black, since he has the dark squares in return! Note also 7...Bd6 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 10.Rd1+ Ke7 and now **not** 11.e4? Ng4! (I once fell for this in a very important round of a junior masters tournament. I was on 3/3 playing the top seed in the fourth round with White. A win would have put me clear favourite for the tournament, and I come up with Rf1-d1...and back to f1!) Instead, 11.h3! is therefore correct, and Black cannot prevent the e3-e4 advance. White has a tiny edge here, but no more.



- (v) 6...a6 is by far the most common move, play continuing 7.Qe2 (7.a4 is playable but gives Black an outpost on b4, which, as we shall see later (section 5), would not help at all after a subsequent ...cxd4 exd4 with an IQP. Here the b4-square is actually crucial.) 7...b5 8.Bb3



This is the main position for this line and has been seen almost too many times to count. White's ideas include playing for e3-e4 by the preparatory Rf1-d1 – annoying the black queen into the bargain – as well as keeping an eye out for the aggressive plan of Nc3 and the advance d4-d5. Sometimes he will capture on c5 to release the tension on the centre at an appropriate moment.

Black's plan is to develop with moves like ...Bb7, ...Nbd7, ...Bd6, ...Qc7 and ...0-0. Sometimes he will even try ...0-0-0 if he is feeling aggressive, and in any case will be on the lookout for a chance to play ...Nf6-g4 and attack the white king. White usually plays h2-h3 as a precaution against this. Black will also look for appropriate moments to play either ...c5xd4 and leave White an IQP, or ...c5-c4 intending to keep his majority of pawns on the queenside. Of course this gains time on the bishop on c4 and if White plays Nc3 then Black may gain a further tempo to push his queenside pawn majority by ...b5-b4.

All in all the diagram position is to be played on and understood thematically rather than to be assessed as better for one side at the moment.

White's second major third move option is 3.e4, which takes the centre ambitiously and 3...b5 4.a4 c6 5.b3 still looks bad for Black if he tries to cling onto the c4-pawn. The downside is that the d4-pawn lacks pawn support, and Black will get counterplay by attacking it with either 3...e5 or 3...Nc6 (3...c5 allows White to push forward in the centre with d4-d5 and get an advantage in space; 3...Nf6 4.e5 Nd5 5.Bxc4 allows White to regain the pawn with no worries).

3...e5 4.Nf3 is main line – development is top priority. 4...exd4 5.Bxc4 Nc6 can follow, where White has surrendered a pawn but will play 6.0-0 and either Nb1-d2-b3 to regain the pawn, or play around it with Qb3(or a4), Bg5, Nbd2, Re1 and e5 etc. I think that White's development lead and

active pieces compensate for the pawn, but probably no more. If you are an attacking player, however, you will like playing White here.

3...Nc6 4.d5 is a critical line: 4...Ne5 and now:-



(i) 5.f4 Bg4 (5...Nd3+ 6.Bxd3 cxd3 7.Nc3 and White is in no rush to round up the d3-pawn, reserving options of Qb3 or Qa4 instead) and White needs to find a clever move. Perhaps 6.Be2 Nd3+ 7.Kf1 Bxe2 8.Nxe2 Nf6 9.Nc3 intending Qa4+ might appeal, but this is hardly forced for either side.

(ii) 5.Bxc4 Nxc4 6.Qa4+ is nothing for White after 6...Bd7 7.Qxc4 c6 or 7...e6 to destroy White's now overextended centre.

(iii) 5.Qd4 Ng6 and Black will equalize with 6...e5

(iv) 5.Nf3 is most common when there can follow 5...Bg4 6.Be2 (6.Qa4+ Bd7 gets White nowhere) 6...Bxf3 7.gxf3 leads to dynamic play where White intends f3-f4, or 6...Nd3+ 7.Bxd3 cxd3 8.Qxd3 with the threat of Ne5.

3.e4 tends to lead therefore to more tense situations than 3.e3 and it is purely a question of style as to who chooses which. However, I will now finish on the QGA with a look at my own personal preference with White: 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3!?



White does not commit his e-pawn, and instead develops and waits to see how Black will proceed. If Black now plays 4...c6 we transpose into a variation of the Slav Defence, which is not the topic of this section. White can play 5.a4 to halt ...b5 or 5.e3 b5 6.a4 and try to destroy Black's temporary queenside grip.

The main moves here are 4...c5 and 4...a6. After 4...c5 5.d5 is by far the best move in my view but 5.e4 cxd4 6.Qxd4 is also playable for people who like more endgame-style situations. After 5.d5 one fun line to whet your appetite is 5...b5 6.e4 b4 7.e5 bxc3 8.exf6 – it is anyone's guess what is

going on here, but I prefer White's activity. If instead 5...e6 then 6.e4 and if allowed 7.Bg5 with an attack.

4...a6 is my recommendation – 5.e4 b5 6.e5 Nd5 7.a4 is main line. Here 7...e6 is best, because if 7...Bb7 (hoping for 8.axb5 Nxc3 9.bxc3 axb5 when Black seems OK) 8.e6! f6 (8...fxe6 is hideous) 9.Nd2!? Qd6 10.Nce4 Qxe6 11.Be2, looking for setups like Nc5, 0-0, Re1, Bf3 and Nde4 etc. If 11...Nf4 12.0-0! Bxe4 13.Nxe4 Qxe4 14.Bf3 wins, or 12...Nxc3 13.Kxc3 Bxe4+ 14.Nxe4 Qxe4+ 15.Bf3 Qg6+ 16.Kh1 Ra7 17.axb5 and Black is in trouble.

After 7...e6 White should play 8.axb5 when 8...Nb6 is the idea: 9.Be3 defends d4 here in order to play Nf3-d2 next, hitting c4 and allowing the queen access to f3 and g4 as required. Black will commonly need to sacrifice a pawn in this line. It produces interesting and active play. I hope that these lines give you some tactical insight and concept of how to manoeuvre your pieces effectively. You will need such ideas when we come to the sections of this course on planning and combinations, and you have a go at working plans out and analysing on your own.

OK, finally a very brief word on avoiding the Marshall Gambit as White in the Ruy Lopez. (Actually it is probably not that dangerous since most of the main lines of the Marshall seem to end in perpetual check as far as I can see, but anyway!)

After 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 White can try 8.h3

The idea is to prevent h2 being a target of attack (8...d5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6 12.d4 Bd6 13.Re1 and now 13...Qh4 doesn't threaten h2. Having said that, ...Bxh3 is a threat in some cases, but 14.Bxd5 cxd5 15.Qf3! Qxd4 16.Nc3 Bb7 17.Be3 Qb4 18.Nxd5 seems one good option for White).



8...d6 is best, when we avoid the Marshall, and 9.c3 returns to the main line when Black increases the grip on the centre with either 9...Na5 10.Bc2 c5 or 9...Nd7 10.d4 Bf6. Both are found extensively in the theory books.

8.a4 is a more interesting alternative, when 8...Bb7 9.Na3 is the idea: 9...b4 (practically forced) 10.Nc4 d6 11.d3 – Black has difficulty here in finding a plan. White on the other hand may play moves like a4-a5, keeping the pawns on a6 and b5 unconnected and thus weak. If Black plays 11...a5 first then either 12.h3, intending 13.Be3 or even 12.Ne3 both offer White good chances for a lasting advantage. Perhaps ...h6, ...Re8 and ...Bf8 is best for Black, but it is hardly ambitious. As it happens I do not play the Lopez with either colour, but if I did, then I would choose 8.a4 with White!

PART 4: Anti-Sicilians

There are many White players who do not like the main lines of the Open Sicilian, if for no other reason than that they simply do not like walking into pet Dragons or Pelicans! If you play the Sicilian as Black then the line you know best is almost certainly the Open lines with Nf3, d2-d4 and Nxd4. I intend now to take you through a variety of anti-Sicilian ideas, giving my own recommendation for Black at each stage.

I begin with a line where White looks as if he is going to cooperate 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 (looking forward to a Dragon or Najdorf) and then 4.Qxd4 comes out. Clearly, White intends to answer 4...Nc6 with 5.Bb5 and a subsequent capture on c6. The queen on d4 can be annoying in this case. I recommend 4...Bd7, preventing the Bb5 idea.



White cannot avoid losing time with his queen now and will usually try for a bind on the d5-square instead by 5.c4 Nc6 6.Qd1 (simplest, but 6.Qd2 intending Nc3, b3 and Bb2 is worth investigating) 6...Nf6 7.Nc3 g6 intending ...Bg7, ...0-0 and ...Qa5, ...Rfc8 etc, with classical Dragon-style pressure. Blunders permitting, Black should have no problems here at all, and Qxd4 lines are very rare as a result.

Another line in which White looks at first to be cooperating is 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 and then 3.c3 is quite common. The best idea for Black is to see that the b1-knight now cannot get to c3 to defend e4 and so 3...Nf6 suggests itself. 4.d3 would then be very non-ambitious and 4.Qc2 Qc7! will make the push d2-d4 much harder owing to the pin down the c-file after ...cxd4. 4.Bd3 has been viewed very suspiciously in the past as it just looks so unnatural. One good line for Black is then 4...Bg4 5.h3 Bxf3 6.Qxf3 Nc6 7.0-0 g6 8.Bb5 (8.Bc2 Bg7 9.d3 0-0 intending ...Nd7, ...Rb8 and b7-b5-b4 risks being better for Black if anything) 8...Qb6 looks good enough if nothing else. Let us hold our horses a bit though, because 3...Nf6 does not actually threaten the e4-pawn yet. Can you see why?

The answer is that the pawn is tactically defended since ...Nxe4 meets with Qa4+ forking king and knight! Hence White may try 4.h3 to stop ...Bg4 and then go for Bf1-d3-c2, and d2-d4. Black plays 4...Nc6 and then 5.Bd3 d5! Hits White where it hurts. GM Chris Ward points out the line 6.e5 Nd7 7.e6 fxe6 8.Ng5 Nf6 9.Bxh7 Nxh7 10.Qh5+ Kd7 11.Nxh7 b6! 12.Nf6+ exf6 13.Qxh8 Ba6 with almost a winning position for Black due to the strength of the light-squared bishop. Consider for instance what happens if the bishop reaches d3!

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



White's main try is 4.Be2 but he doesn't threaten d2-d4, since then the line from a4-e4 is blocked, making ...Nxe4 perfectly safe. The trap is, that if Black plays 4...Nc6, which looks sensible, then 5.d4! cxd4 6.cxd4 Nxe4 7.d5 (the black knight cannot move on account of Qa4+(xe4) again) 7...Qa5+ (forced to cover a4) 8.Nc3 and practice has shown that White has too much development to compensate for the pawn. You can find the analysis in a book, but I would not recommend this for Black. Instead, I prefer 4...Bd7, once again just covering tricks along the a4-e8 diagonal before they occur. Now ...Nxe4 is a definite threat, so 5.d3 look forced. This looks unbearably passive but the hope is that the bishop is misplaced on d7. Black may try a setup with ...g6, ...Bg7 and ...0-0 with ...Bc6 and ...Nbd7 to develop the queenside. Of course, White has moves in between and Black will need to think carefully about the **order** in which he plays this sequence, but he should not experience too many difficulties as White is likely to be engaged in his own quiet manoeuvring while this is going on, such as 0-0, Re1, Bf1, Nbd2 etc.

The other third move option for White is 3.Bb5+, known by its dullness! 3...Bd7 is simplest against this, when 4.Bxd7+ Qxd7 (4...Nxd7 is more complicated and I would prefer c6 for this knight) 5.0-0 Nc6 6.c3 Nf6 7.Re1 – the idea of White's play, to go for d2-d4 – 7...e6 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5! 10.e5 Ng8!/? Intending to reroute to e7, a very important manoeuvre to remember. Note that White must be careful not to get saddled with a bad dark-squared bishop since all his fixed pawns are on the same colour square. Black has traded off his 'bad' bishop already on move 3 and should now have no problems.



As far as White is concerned the two main anti-Sicilian lines are 2.c3 and 2.Nc3 which are the main focus of this section. I start with 2.c3, against which Black has two choices:-

(i) 2...d5 takes advantage of the b1-knight's immobility once more. This is the key concept for getting counterplay in this line. White cannot play 3.e5 since 3...Bf5 and 4...e6 gives Black a very good French/Caro-Kann setup. Hence 3.ed is forced and then 3...Qxd5 (3...Nf6 is also interesting since if 4.c4 e6 5.dxe6 Bxe6 – the only way to test Black – there appears to be good compensation for a pawn, and moves like ...Nc6, ...Bd6, ...Qe7 and perhaps ...0-0-0. If White plays 4.Bb5+ Bd7 5.Bxd7+ Qxd7 6. c4 e6 7.dxe6 fxe6! intending ...Nc6 and ...0-0-0 might be even more dynamic because of the weakness of the d3-square. 3...Qxd5 is still safer, however.)

4.d4 Nf6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.h3 Bh5 7.Be2 e6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.cxd4 Nc6 10.Nc3 is the main line here.



In spite of the rather dull reputation that the 2.c3 Sicilian has we now have an interesting IQP position. Black has a target on d4 and active pieces, but where does he put his queen? I have tried 10...Qa5 here and I think all retreat squares along the d-file have been tried in their time. White usually puts a bishop on e3 and will look for opportunities to play either Ne5 or d5 to get some central play going. The fairest assessment here is that the position is unclear.

(ii) 2...Nf6 is the other way to hit the e4-pawn, and probably my preferred choice for Black here. 3.e5 is the only sensible reply and then 3...Nd5 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 is standard. Please note that if your opponent tries the Morra Gambit with 1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 then 3...Nf6 4.e5 Nd5 5.cxd4 transposes to the above line. Therefore you do not need to worry about the complications after accepting the gambit with 3...dxc3 4.Nxc3, although White players be warned: this gambit is not so dangerous for Black in any case if he knows his theory book. Black should now play 5...d6 to chip away at White's space advantage and play might continue 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Nc3 Nxc3 8.bxc3 Qa5!? forking c3 and e5:-



White now has to play 9.exd6 and now 9...e6! (9...e5 10.d5! is awkward) 10.Bd2 Bxd6 11.Bd3 0-0 12.0-0 (the Greek Gift with 12.Bxh7+ doesn't work due to 12...Kxh7 13.Ng5+ Kg8 14.Qh5 Qf5!) and now 12...e5 seems to equalize at least, and the sacrifice at h7 still fails since now the bishop comes to f5 to cover h7 after Qh5.

The other second move alternative is 2.Nc3 but I would just like to 'clear up the rubbish' as it were by looking at 2.f4 and 2.d3 – neither of which I much like. After 2.f4 Black plays 2...d5 3.exd5 Nf6 4.c4 (what else challenges?) 4...e6 5.dxe6 Bxe6 or 4.Bb5+ Bd7 (4...Nbd7 5.c4 a6 6.Ba4 b5!? is also a spirited way to try and seize the initiative) 5.Bxd7+ Qxd7 6.c4 e6 7.dxe6 fxe6 or Qxe6+ seem to create a good impression, since they are the same as that which we could have had in the 2.c3 line, but the difference being the outrageous insertion of f2-f4, weakening the dark squares. Black should be doing well here.

2.d3 is passive and not worrying, but Black must be a bit careful that he doesn't slowly get ground down by White gaining a progressive space advantage. For instance, if White plays Nd2, g3, Bg2,

Ngf3, 0-0, Re1 and e5 Black can find himself under an ever strengthening kingside attack and White has no weaknesses. I recommend 2...Nc6 3.Nd2 e6 4.g3 Nf6 5.Bg2 d5 6.Ngf3 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Re1 b5! 9.e5 Nfd7 when Black's plan is to play ...a7-a5-a4, ...b5-b4 and ...Bc8-a6 with a big space advantage on the queenside. We have actually transposed from a Sicilian to a French Defence in this position, so it is always useful knowing more than one opening!



So finally to 2.Nc3, the Closed Sicilian. The inevitable sequence is then 2...Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 d6 and we reach the main starting position, upon which there are almost too many choices for White to cover properly.



I will focus on three main choices, the first of which is a move that White often flicks in at some stage, the timid 6.Rb1. Black should happily follow this example and play 6...Rb8, a move which probably helps him more, because while both sides have got their rooks off the vulnerable long diagonal Black is the one with the more mobile b-pawn and will play ...b7-b5-b4 quite quickly, and maybe ...Qa5 to attack the vulnerable a2-pawn. I do not like 6.Rb1, and consider that Black should have no problems.

6.f4 is an aggressive-minded move that intends Nf3, 0-0, and an advance of the kingside pawns. This would be especially effective if Black were to place a knight at f6. For instance: 6...Nf6 7.Nf3 0-0 8.0-0 Rb8 9.h3! b5 10.g4 b4 11.Ne2 with the plan of Ng3 and g5 when White will get a strong attack. Note that if Black ever tries to hit the centre with ...d6-d5 then White replies e4-e5, opening up his light-squared bishop and locking out Black's dark-squared bishop, plus it gains time on the f6-knight.

The correct square for the g8-knight is thus e7 and so 6...e6! is best: 7.Nf3 Nge7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Be3 Rb8! – Black notices that 10.d4? fails to 10...cxd4 11.Nxd4 Qb6, winning the b2-pawn and a lot of dark squares at the very least – 10.Rb1 Nd4!

This is the key move, to blockade White on the dark squares. Play might continue 11.Ne2 Nxf3+ 12.Bxf3 b6! – a clever move, securing c5 in preparation for a future ...d6-d5 advance – and if White tries 13.g4?! then Black blockades with 13...f5! when 14.h3 Bb7 is better for Black.

6.Be3 is the most dangerous in my opinion, hoping for 6...e6 7.Qd2 Nge7 8.Bh6 0-0 9.Bxg7 (9.h4 allows the cunning 9...Bxh6 10.Qxh6 f6! to answer 11.h5 with 11...g5 trapping the White Queen with ...Kh8 and ...Ng8 to follow!) Kxg7 10.h4 h5 11.Nh3 or 11.Nge2 and I prefer White since the exchange of dark-squared bishops has taken a lot of the punch out of the Black position. Instead, I recommend 6...Rb8! 7.Qd2 b5 in order to play some useful moves on the queenside while keeping the knight back on g8 to cover f6 just as we saw previously in the Modern Defence in section 2. Castling queenside is risky in the extreme after moves like ...Qa5 and ...b4, while castling kingside takes the punch out of an h-file attack. For instance 8.Nge2 Nd4! 9.h4 h5 10.0-0 Nh6! and it is White who has to be careful.

The final option for White is the Grand Prix Attack with 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4.

The general idea is to play Nf3, then develop the f1-bishop to c4 or b5 and finally play 0-0 and d3, with a view to an eventual f4-f5 advance and a kingside attack. Black has one strategy to prevent this working, and working well at that, but fortunately this strategy is easily adequate for equality. The idea will be to give the light-squared bishop as much hassle as possible.

So 3...g6 is almost invariably played (although French Defence players might like 3...e6 and 4...d5, but if they are French Defence players then why did they play 1...c5?) 4.Nf3 Bg7 and now the parting of the ways:

(i) 5.Bb5 Nd4! (Obligatory in my view, since 5...d6 6.0-0 Bd7 7.Bxc6 Bxc6 8.Qe1 and d2-d3 will actually give White quite an easy way to build up a kingside attack. Have a look at this yourself and see why the knight is such an important defensive piece on d4.) 6.a4 a6! (The idea is to harass the bishop, not to capture it.) 7.Bc4 e6 8.0-0 Ne7 9. Qe1 0-0 10.d3 d5!



11.Ba2 (11.exd5 may be even worse as it liberates the c8-bishop into the bargain for Black) 11...b5! Is relentless, threatening moves like ...Bb7 and b5-b4(-b3). Black is better in the diagram position.

Instead of 6.a4, 6.Bd3 is also common to try and keep the bishop out of harm's way. There follows 6...d6 7.Nxd4 cxd4 8.Ne2 Nf6! (with the tactic 9.Nxd4 Nxe4 with discovered attack) 9.0-0 0-0 10.c3 bxc3 11.bxc3 b6! 12.Bc2 Bb7 – now the idea is clear, White cannot play d2-d4 due to the e-pawn being attacked – 13.d3 Qc7 14.Qe1 and a critical position arises.

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



Here, White threatens the rook swing $Rf1-f3-h3$, $Qe1-h4$ and $f4-f5$, with an attack that could be mating if Black is not very careful. For his part, Black can play $14...Rac8$ with a view to $...Rfd8$ and meeting $f4-f5$ with $...d6-d5$ to blast open the centre. A very tactical struggle is inevitable here and a good position to test one's combinational vision.

(ii) $5.Bc4$ is very dangerous if Black is slow. For instance $5...d6$ $6.0-0$ $e6$ $7.f5!?$ $exf5$ $8.d3$ is a nasty long-term pawn sacrifice to try to break open lines on the light squares. Best is $5...e6$ at once $6.0-0$ $Nge7$ $7.Qe1$ $0-0$ and now $8.d3$ $d5!$ is once again fine for Black with $9.Bb3$ $b5!$ because $10.Nxb5$ fails to $10...Qb6$, hitting the knight and simultaneously threatening $...c4$ discovered check, winning the bishop on $b3$. This is the kind of tactical trick that you will be becoming more familiar with, so keep an eye out. Thus the only dangerous line is $8.f5!?$ $d5$ $9.Qh4!?$ with the idea of $9...dxc4$ $10.f6$ but $10...Nf5!$ $11.exf5$ $Bxf6$ $12.Qxc4$ $exf5$ $13.Qxc5$ $Nd4$ seems very nice for Black ($14.Nb5$ $b6!$). I would not worry about the Grand Prix too much.

There is one final thing to say before this section is over, and that is that Black may not be a $2...d6$ player after $2.Nf3$. This has the advantage that you won't ever have to worry about $3.Bb5+$ or $Qxd4$ systems, but after $2...e6$ $3.c3$ presents new problems since after $3...Nf6$ $4.e5$ $Nd5$ $5.d4$ $cxd4$ $6.cxd4$ we do not transpose back into the line we had earlier after $2.c3$, but this is still OK for Black. I recommend $6...b6$ to bring the bishop out onto the powerful long diagonal and then perhaps $...d6$ and $...Nd7$.

If you are a $2...Nc6$ player then $3.Bb5$ may prove irritating. The best way against this is to stay calm and play $3...g6$, with $...Bg7$ and $...e5$ to follow. White usually captures on $c6$ and Black should recapture with his d -pawn if possible. He may defend his $e5$ -pawn with $...f6$ before playing $...Nh6$ and $...0-0$. He has a good grip of central squares and White is usually calmly rearranging his pieces while Black does all this. The battle may only start on about move 15, but if one side has failed to place their pieces sensibly the game can all too often be quite short and painful once things liven up.

This is not a complete set of anti-Sicilian systems because there are too many to cover in the time. I have omitted the systems where White goes $b3$ and $Bb2$ and also failed to cover early $c2-c4$ systems. Both of these tend to be quite quiet in nature, but watch out for tactics of course. Finally the Wing Gambit $2.b4$ is just nonsense: take it and play $...d7-d5$ and $...e7-e6!$

PART 5: Planning – the Basics

No matter how well you can picture the board in your head and move pieces in your mind's eye, and no matter how much opening theory you can remember, you will get almost nowhere unless you can plan. It is vital in chess to be able to know what you think you should be aiming for in the longer term apart from checkmate itself! Obviously when a position gets really tense and tactical, then analysis is what matters and planning then becomes a simple matter of “in that line I come out a piece down, but in that one I come out two pawns up” and picking the line of analysis which is best for you in the final position. We will look at three games of this type in section 10 of the course, but for now we will look at how to form a plan in quieter positions.

Middlegame theory will be discussed in more detail in sections 6-8, so the idea of this section is to get you thinking on your own. The notes for this section are short and the idea is simple: I write less, you think more. You will find below four positions on emerging from the opening. The opening may or may not be familiar to you, but don't worry, all I want is for you to think about what you think the side whose move it is ought to be doing. I will discuss my thoughts on each position at the end. If you are doing this at home then try to do it as if you were in an hour-long coaching session and spend 15 minutes on each position.

Try to write down your thoughts and plans, giving variations where necessary to explain your decisions.

Position 1: White to play



Position 2: White to play



Position 3: Black to play [SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



Position 4: Black to play



Good luck!

Ok, so here are my thoughts on these positions

25. Position 1: Well this should already be familiar to you in the opening because it is a QGA from section 3. Like I said, I think that Black has loosened the tension too early, but does nonetheless have a weak pawn on d4 to aim at. In order to aim at it, however, Black must first blockade it, thus preventing White from playing the advance d4-d5, which he will always have his eye out for, liquidating his only weakness. For his part, White wants to exploit his slightly greater share of space by developing his pieces to active squares such as Re1, Bg5 and Nc3. Black will presumably be castling kingside in the meantime, and trying to get a knight to d5 and keep it there. If Black is allowed ...Be7, ...0-0, ...Nd5, ...Bf6 etc, he seems to have everything under control. Then you might also notice that ...Nc6-b4-d5 is even stronger, when both knights can control the blockading procedure. Also if the f6-knight has to move to d5 then h7 will be a target if Black castles kingside (which he will!). It would be nice to arrange a line up of bishop and queen along the b1-h7 diagonal. The queen needs to be in front of the bishop for this to be dangerous. Aha, now we see the idea: play a2-a3, preventing ...Nb4 and then Qd3 and Bb3-c2. The other pieces can then go to the squares that we mentioned earlier. Once the key move a2-a3 is seen, it is simply a question of a little bit of analysis to work out move order. I like 1.Re1 because d4-d5 is now a threat. Black cannot play ...Nb4 with his king still in the middle because 1...Nb4 2.Nc3 again threatens d4-d5 and 2...Nbd5 3.Bg5 and Black is in too many pins; 3...Nxc3 4.bxc3 and White no longer as an IQP and 3...Be7 4.Bxf6 forces 4...gxf6 because 4...Bxf6 loses a piece to Nxd5 as the king is still in the centre and the pin down the e-file is now fatal. So 1...Be7 2.a3! 0-0 3.Nc3 Qc7 4.Bb3 (avoiding discovered attack along the c-file) 4...Rd8 5.Bg5 b6 6.Qd3 Bb7 7.Bc2 g6 8.Rad1 and White completes development and maintains a small advantage.

Position 2: This position arises from the Trompowski Attack, which you will meet, if you haven't already, in section 13. The key question for White is how to develop and we need to ask **what our opponent wants to do** in order to decide upon the best plan of action. Black's doubled pawns give him one worry and one bonus, the worry is the inability to hit at the centre with ...e5 and the bonus

is that the e-file is open for a rook. Black's plan is ...Bg7, ...d6, ...f5, ...0-0 and ...Re8. He will probably play his knight via d7 to f6 and then into e4. White must also not allow the f-pawn to reach f4 safely because if Black can liquidate his doubled pawns he will just have an unopposed dark-squared bishop for nothing. This is White's main worry ever since he gave his bishop up for a knight on move 3. The fact that d4-d5 is horrible for White also makes ...b6 and ...Bb7 a possibility for Black. So what are White's assets? Well he has the chance to play on the queenside with his pawn majority and he can freely expand over there while Black gets his forces out. However, we need to stop this f-pawn advance by Black which means controlling f4 as much as possible. Clearly White does not want his knight on f3 as Black will have excellent control over e5 and the knight hits nothing. A far better square is e2. Also, White's bishop clearly belongs on the long diagonal if White intends to attack on the queenside. So we have a plan: pawns to e3 and g3, bishop to g2, knight to e2, castle kingside and advance the queenside pawns. Move order? Well if 1...b6 might be annoying were it Black's move, we start 1.g3! and stop this before we are stopped from fianchettoing! Play may go 1.g3 Bg7 2.e3 d6 3.Ne2 0-0 4.Bg2 f5 5.0-0 Re8 6.c4 Nd7 7.Nbc3 c6 8.b4! Nf6 9.Qd3 (covering e4 and connecting rooks) 9...Qe7 10.a4! Ne4 11.b5 Bd7 12.a5! threatening a5-a6 and if Black moves the b-pawn then bxc6 and Black must recapture with the bishop, leaving a huge outpost on d5 and the move Nf4 now looks very nice for White, with a choice of knights to deposit on d5. White is better.

Just before we move on to the next position, I should point out that if anyone wanted to play 1.h4 then do not feel silly, because Britain's top player GM Michael Adams once did the same! Black plays 1...h5 and the plan is then to play e3 and Ne2-f4, with c4 and Nc3 to follow. This is obviously very effective if Black goes ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...d5 in some order, since White's control of d5 will be better, with backup moves like Qb3! Finally, no credit for anyone wanting to play for e2-e4 as White, since Black has the bishop pair and an open centre is exactly what he wants.

Position 3: This is from the French Defence and White has just played Ne2-g3. I had this position recently and played 1...Bd7, which is bad and illustrates the dangers of playing a move 'for the sake of it' rather than have a plan. The analysis of this position is simple, I have only one plan: play ...e6-e5. In this light ...Bd7 is a waste of time, since after a subsequent ...e6-e5, which is what I ended up playing for anyway, the bishop will have to move again. The game that I played went 1...Bd7? 2.Bd2 Qc7 3.Rc1 Rae8 (intending to hide the queen on b8) 4.b4! Qb6 5.Bc3 Bxb4?? 6.Rb1 Qa5 7.Rxb4! (I missed this) Nxb4 and White should play 8.Qb3 and get two minor pieces for a rook, whereupon because of my weak dark squares I am already lost! This helps us to think to ourselves: "Well, the knight on g3 is now away from the control of d4 but it does block any attack on h2, both directly along the b8-h2 diagonal and also in the fact that Black cannot play either ...Qe8-h5 or ...Bd7-e8-h5. Therefore there is but one idea left: 1...e5! And simple analysis gives 2.dxe5 Nxe5 3.Nd4 (one knight must get to d4!) 3...Bc5! With moves like ...Qb6 and ...Nfg4 to follow: new target on f2. Black's active play more than compensates for the weak d-pawn. By the way anyone who wanted to play 1...Qb6 may take credit for it as long as they remembered that Black must play ...Kh8 before he can threaten to capture on d4, otherwise an exchange of knights to drag the Black queen to d4 will lose very embarrassingly for Black after Bxh7+ with a winning discovered attack on d4.

Position 4: This is from a top grandmaster encounter between Salov and Yusupov. White has just played Ra1-b1 to prevent Black's first plan of advancing his a-pawn further. If 1...a4 then either 2.b4 or 2.bxa4 with Bxf6 and Rxb7 to follow is possible. The correct plan is to deploy Black's pieces more usefully for a push in the centre with ...e6-e5. The main problem with that push at the moment is that White will play Ne3 to hit the g4-bishop and put pressure on f5 and d5. Yusupov played therefore the cool 1...Bh5! To step out of the way and met 2.Ne3 with 2...Bc5 (note the switch to this diagonal familiar from the last position) 3.Qd2 Qb6 4.a3 Qa7 (step off b-file) 5.Nc2 (change of plan by White: play for b3-b4) 5...Bf8! (get out of the way of this advance) 6.Bd4 Qb8 7.Ba1 (losing the thread of the game somewhat) 7...e5 and Black is better and went on to win.

Do not worry if you found these difficult, the idea is to make you look for your opponents moves as well as your own, a key factor in planning successfully. Also as you have seen strong players are quite capable of coming up with creative plans but also getting it horribly wrong!

PART 6: Middlegame Strategy – Open Centre

Parts 6-8 of this course cover three important aspects of middlegame strategy in turn. Firstly in this section, the open centre, and then in the next two, the closed centre and centre under tension respectively. Clearly, no matter what your style, nothing detracts from the fact that the centre is a very important feature in any game of chess and as a result planning the strategy for the middlegame is dependent upon knowing about the different types of central structure that can occur.

In each of parts 6-8 there will be two complete games shown to you, with my commentary, from GM-level encounters. It is best to deal with complete games, since it gives you a feel for where a middlegame position has come from and how it all gets finished off. It is no good knowing just one part of the game well, if you are going to win games you need to win most of them as complete games with opening, middlegame and closing it off in an ending. Only if your opponent blunders can you get away with faulty knowledge, and we can't rely on that!

The first game I will show you is a French Defence and is the game Nijboer – Uhlmann, Amsterdam 1990. This is a real classic for open centre play. One feature of an open centre is of course open lines for pieces and therefore the strategy should already be clear. The one who can put his or her pieces on more active squares than the opponent and use them to fullest effect will stand the better chances of winning. This game has been chosen because that battle for active squares is very noticeable, in a position which is otherwise of a very equal nature: starts with rough material equality (although Black's best plan correctly involves trying to hold onto an extra pawn), no glaringly weak squares and castling on the same side. I hope you enjoy this game as much as I did when I first played through it. Oh, and one more thing, I would encourage you to follow this on your own board, including the analysis. Moves that were actually played in the game are in **bold print** and analysis in normal print. Here we go....

1. e4	e6
2. d4	d5
3. Nd2	c5

Another common line is 3...Nf6, to attack the e4-pawn again, when play usually continues 4.e5 Nfd7 and Black strikes at the centre with ...c7-c5 and ...f7-f6. This gives the game a closed nature, or a 'centre-under-tension' nature, which is the topic of the coming sections. 3...c5 blasts open lines and usually leaves Black with a weak d-pawn (an IQP) but active pieces to compensate.

4. exd5	exd5
5. Ngf3	Nc6
6. Be2

This move is rare, and probably not best. Most challenging is undoubtedly 6.Bb5 Bd6 7.dxc5 (notice White waits until Black has moved his bishop and then forces it to move again, whilst securing the IQP position at the same time) 7...Bxc5 8.Nb3 (another tempo gain) 8...Bd6 9.0-0 Ne7 10.c3 0-0 and now 11.Bd3! to prevent the natural 11...Bg4 on account of the tactic 12.Bxh7+ and Ng5+ which should be a very familiar concept to you by now. Black can just about equalize here, but it is tricky.

6.	Cxd4
7. 0-0	Be7!

Black correctly realizes that since the white bishop on e2 blocks the e-file, thus preventing Re1+, he has time for the manoeuvre ...Be7-f6 and then ...Nge7, in fact keeping an eye on the extra, albeit doubled pawn on d4. Black now has slightly the superior control of the centre, which will help him to get the more active pieces later on. White's play is now forced if he is to regain his pawn.

8. Nb3 Bf6
 9. Nbx d4 Nge7
 10. c3 0-0

While White has been getting his pawn back, Black has been catching up with development and now needs to think about where best to put his light-squared bishop and queen. Well, the choice for the queen is easy: b6 is glaring, because Black wants to put maximum pressure on d4, the square in front of his IQP, with a hope to one day advancing it. The bishop has only one available square at g4. So all is quite simple at the moment, with both sides playing good and logical moves. The real battle has yet to begin.

11. Bf4

There is a nice trick here after 11.Bg5 when Black plays 11...Nxd4! And White has to recapture with the c-pawn, whereupon there is no weak d-pawn to aim at anymore, because White has blocked the d-file. The knight couldn't recapture because of the need to protect the bishop on g5 and it is no use playing 12.Bxf6 first because Black wins a piece by 12...Nxf3+ and then 13...gxf6.

11. Bg4
 12. h3 Bh5
 13. Nb5!?!

This move marks the start of the real fight. It is very aggressive, eyeing the c7 and d6 squares, but be careful! Do not get so distracted by this that you miss the threat of 14.g4 Bg6 15.g5 winning a piece because there is no longer a knight to capture on d4 with the f6-bishop. This is of course a nasty trick even at GM level and many masters could even miss it because it doesn't look like a candidate move to hurl a pawn up in front of the king. Open centre play, however, opens up many active possibilities, and as such demands accuracy and calculation.

13. Bg6!

Uhlmann, a great tactician, sees the problem and finds a solution. He withdraws the bishop in good time and stays one move ahead of the game. If now 14.g4 then 14...Be4! 15.g5 Bxf3 16.gxf6 Bxe2 and Black even emerges a bit better. The position would have been blown wide open and complicated considerably, but White would have lost a lot of control in doing so. White avoids 14.g4 in the game because he is still fighting for a small but steady advantage, but Black is fighting back. Note how actively he was able to make use of just one bishop in that last variation.

14. Nd6 Qb6
 15. Qb3 d4!

An excellent move, requiring very good judgement indeed. With all the piece out and aiming at nearly every available square, Uhlmann judges that his are the slightly better posted pieces and that the knight on d6 could be a weakness if it were surrounded. He therefore liquidates the centre completely.

16. cxd4

Exchanging queens does not help: 16.Qxb6 axb6 17.Nxb7 dxc3 18.bxc3 Nd5! – a real 'power-play' move securing a large advantage. Also after 17.cxd4 Nxd4 18.Nxd4 Bxd4 Black is still better because of his more active pieces. Note that it is precisely the pieces, and not the pawns, which are most relevant in deciding who is better. One inaccuracy in piece positioning could change the assessment very quickly.

16. Nxd4
17. Nxd4 Qxd4!

The black queen is very powerful on this central square, and gains time on the bishop. Generally speaking, you should try to avoid having undefended pieces (or 'hanging' pieces as we call them in chess) in any position if possible, but especially in open positions, since the chances of that piece being hit is that much more likely. Black has everything defended here, whereas White has a bishop on f4 undefended and tied down to a knight on d6. Added to this, the b-pawn is attacked.

18. Qc4 Nd5!

Relentlessly attacking f4 again to improve his knight position.

19. Bg3 Qxb2!

Black uses all his developed forces to effect here as he grabs a pawn, eyeing two more targets on a1 and e2, as well as defending b7. White now shifts another piece to a securely defended square, but he has lost a pawn for it.

20. Bf3 Nc3!

Preventing Rb1 by White and making sure the knight is securely defended. In fact 21...Nb1! Is a winning threat, so White creates some breathing space for his a1-rook.

21. a4 Rad8
22. Rfe1

Correctly avoiding 22.Nxb7 Bd3! Winning. It is nearly always the simple moves that end up catching people out, so be careful.

22 h5

I like the subtlety of this, since White has just moved a defender away from f2 and so Uhlmann prepares to kick another one away with ...h4.

23. h4 b6
24. Rac1 Qa3

With this elegant double attack on a4 and d6, Black is effectively just a clear pawn up with the initiative and the win is almost in sight.

25. Qc6 Na2!

This is a beautiful use of piece play even with a knight on the rim! Uhlmann frustrates his opponent's pieces and keeps an eye on all the key squares. This position merits a diagram.

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



26. **Rcd1** **Nb4**
 27. **Qb5** **Nc2!**

Relentless again, but you have to admire the agility of that knight.

28. **Re4!**

Let's not forget that White is a grandmaster too. This is a nice sacrificial concept, giving an exchange to improve White's coordination and deprive Black of his two bishops. If 28...Bxe4 29.Bxe4 and Qxh5 to follow is very dangerous. It is not over until your opponent has signed the score sheet.

28. **Qc5!**

Nice change of tack, exchanging the queen's instead.

29. **Qxc5** **bxc5**
 30. **Rc4** **Nd4**
 31. **Rxc5** **Nxf3+**

Now things clam down and White has lost one of his bishops and had his structure ruined in return for getting the pawn back. He now has little resistance to offer and the rest of the game needs no special comments other than to mention that when people go on about the advantage of the two bishops, this is the kind of position they have in mind!

The game concluded **32.gxf3 Rd7 33.Re1 Rfd8 34.Ne4 Be7 35.Rc4 f6 36.Nc3 Bf7 37.Rc6 Bb4! 38.Rb1 a5 39.Bf4 Rd3 40.Bc7 Rc8 41.Nb5 Rxf3 42.Nd4 Bd5! 43.Rcc1 Rh3 44.Bh2 Re8! 45.Nf5 Be4 46.Rxb4 axb4 47.Nd6 b3 48.Rc5 b2 49.Rb5 Bc6! and White resigned (0-1).**

The second game shows a very different flavour to open positions, because in this one we see castling on opposite sides. The race is now to give checkmate but it is still true that piece activity is more important than where the pawns are. This game is a Sicilian Defence and is from Nezhmetdinov – Taimanov, USSR Championship Semi-Final, 1951. The flow of this game will become apparent in due course, so let's get straight into the action.

1. **e4** **c5**
 2. **Nf3** **Nc6**
 3. **d4** **cxd4**
 4. **Nxd4** **Nf6**
 5. **Nc3** **d6**
 6. **Bg5**

This is a particularly sharp variation of the Sicilian called the Rauzer Attack. There is more theory on this than most people would care to learn, but one thing is common to nearly all variations: White is castling long, and Black short.

6. e6
7. Qd2 Be7
8. 0-0-0 0-0

The deed is done. Another possibility is 8...Nxd4, a simplifying exchange that White now avoids, at the same time as depriving the black queen of the possibility of using the a5-square.

9. Nb3 Qb6

Eyeing the f2-pawn.

10. f3 a6
11. Be3 Qc7

The last few moves are not just for decoration. White plays 11.Be3 in order to have no obstacle to advancing his kingside pawns, while Black plays 10...a6 so that, when the queen is kicked back to c7, the b5-square is covered in preparation for ...b7-b5. Note one key difference in the attacks though: Black already has an open file to fire down.

White must get on with it therefore.

12. g4 b5
13. g5 Nd7

This kicks a knight away from defending the kingside but towards attacking the queenside. It is already a case of all or nothing for both sides.

14. f4 Nb6

White takes the e5-square away from Black so he covers the a4-square instead. On 14...b4?! 15.Na4 would have held Black up. He must not block the position in any way.

15. Qf2 Rb8
16. h4 Na4!

This is better than the obvious 16...b4, which allows unwanted piece exchanges after 17.Bxb6, reducing Black's threats considerably. Note that 17.Nxa4? is suicide as it allows Black two open files on the queenside after 17...bxa4 before White has done anything on the kingside.

17. Bd2 Nxc3
18. Bxc3 b4
19. Bd2 a5
20. Kb1 a4
21. Nc1 Bd7

Notice how Black has arranged to push his pawns to maximum effect, exploiting the unfortunate placement of the White minor pieces. They are not attacking the black king and are losing White many tempi on the queenside as they step out of the way of the advancing pawns. White must go all out now or he will get crushed.

22. Bd3 Rfc8

PART 7: Middlegame Strategy – Closed Centre

There is no special introduction to this section, so we will get straight on with the games. The major characteristic of the closed centre, is, as you will see, the pawn breaks, and who can arrange them first in order to create entry points into the opponent's position. The first game is Kramnik – Topalov, Dortmund 1999. This is of course some of the highest quality chess you will ever see, between two of the greatest players ever, and also relatively up-to-date! In this game we will see Kramnik closing the centre and then making an impressive breakthrough on the flank.

1. d4	Nf6
2. Nf3	d5
3. c4	c6
4. Nc3	a6
5. c5

I am glad that Kramnik is the one who made this decision to close the centre. I would have played 5.Bg5 allowing a pawn-grab with 5...Ne4 6.Bf4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.e4 b5 9.Qb1!? preventing 9...Bb7 due to 10.Bxc4 and on 9...Bg4 10.Ne5 is now possible. The plan otherwise is 10.a4 to exert maximum pressure on the rather brittle queenside and then play simply with Be2 and 0-0. I trust Kramnik knows what he is doing closing the centre here, because I probably wouldn't understand this position for White at all if I had to play it for the first time. However, that is why Kramnik made it to World Champion!

5.	Bf5
6. Bf4	Nbd7

If the players want a draw here then 6...Nh5 7.Bd2 Nf6 8.Bf4 Nh5 and a repetition is one way to make peace quickly. Black is weak on the dark squares on the queenside so White has to be careful before he gives up his dark-squared bishop for a knight with 7.Bg3 Nxg3 8.hxg3, although this is the most obvious way to avoid repetition and play for a win. Actually the best move may well be 7.e3!? Nxf4 8.exf4 when White keeps plenty of control over the e5-square. This is important since Black has one plan in this blocked up position: play for an ...e5 break.

7. e3	e6
8. Be2	Be7
9. Nd2!?

Two of the key characteristics of closed positions are (i) simple development, often unhurried, and (ii) manoeuvring pieces to key squares. Kramnik sends his knight over to the side of the board where he has the space advantage and prevents ...Nh5 ideas in doing so. White also sets a trap by delaying castling, namely 9...0-0?! 10.g4! Bg6 11.h4 now with an initiative on both flanks. Topalov plays a retreating move in good time with his bishop instead, a technique we have seen in a few GM games already in this course.

9.	Bg6
10. b4	Qc8
11. 0-0	Bd8

An instructive manoeuvre by Black, although trading dark-squared bishops is not ideal in principle, nonetheless the advance ...e6-e5 must be played for and this is the only way. Topalov intends 12.a4 Bc7 13.Bxc7 Qxc7 14.f4 (looks good at the moment) 14...b6! and perhaps ...a6-a5 with good counterplay on the dark squares. If you wanted to play 12.a4 do not be upset – I would probably

have played it too! Kramnik, ever alert, plays a very perceptive move, emphasizing that in closed positions you **do not have to rush**.

12. Rc1

Directed against any hint of ...b6 on account of a capture and the rook already pressing against the weak backward c-pawn, not to mention the queen on c8 or c7.

12. Bc7
13. Bxc7 Qxc7
14. f4

Forced, but now Black has no constructive pawn breaks and stands worse as a result. Phase 1 is complete, opponent's counterplay dead. Now Kramnik can improve his pieces. Castling is still risky for Black due to g2-g4 and h2-h4 advances.

14. Ng8

An intriguing manoeuvre by Black, intending the knight for the f5-square, where, in fairness to him, it at least hits something. That same something is not staying there long though.

15. e4!

I like this move, playing an alternative pawn break to one on the queenside and thus frustrating Black's plan. He also eyes up f4-f5 ideas that Black must be on his guard against. A good principle in chess is called the 'principle of two weaknesses. If you can attack two areas in your opponent's position and force a weakness in both then he is tied down to defending both which is going to be a lot harder in the long run than if he only had one weak pawn, say.

15. Ne7
16. f5!?

Kramnik plays it anyway! This is risky, but at least it forces a new weakness after...

16. exf5
17. exd5 cxd5

Not 17...Nxd5, which would allow the d2-knight access to c4 and d6. Now Black has a weak d-pawn and White has a mobile pawn majority on the queenside.

18. b5 0-0
19. b6

To some people's eyes this might look unnatural as it closes things off somewhat, but Kramnik has a cunning intention as we shall see. He keeps as all the pawns on the board and gains more space with tempo. He also prevents Black opening the a-file for good.

19. Qd8
20. Nb3 Nf6
21. Na5

That's the point, the knight has a superb outpost and attacks b7, all from the rim.

21. Rb8

22. a4! Ne4
23. Na2

Now we see the idea of 22.a4!, well in fact there are two ideas. First, Black must always be on the lookout for the sacrifice 23.Nxb7 followed by a4-a5 and capturing on a6. Second, it allows Kramnik to avoid exchanges and keep his knights with 23.Na2. The knights are important of course, because the position is still of a blocked nature.

23. f6?

Kramnik criticizes this move and recommends 23...f4! Instead, sacrificing a pawn in order to play ...Ne7-f5 and ...Qd8-g5. This is instructive as it shows that clinging into material is not always good even in blocked positions. Black is dead on the queenside and must now seize the moment and go all out on the kingside. After the game move, Black is perhaps already lost.

24. Nb4 Be8

Having done A, Black must do B.

25. Qc2! g6
26. Rb1 Rf7
27. Nxb7!

Having lined up his pieces appropriately (don't forget – do not rush!) White now crashes through.

27. Rxb7
28. a5 Nc6

Black desperately tries to blockade, but all is in vain.

29. Nxc6 Bxc6
30. Bxa6 Rb8
31. Bb5!

An important move, simultaneously stepping off the a-file and trading off an important Black blockader.

31. Qc8
32. Bxc6 Qxc6
33. a6 Kg7
34. Rb4 Nd6
35. Qa4!

Eliminating the last decent blockader of the pawns and ending resistance.

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



The game finished **35...Qxa4 36.Rxa4 Nc8 37.Rb4 Na7 38.bxa7 Ra8 39.c6 Raxa7 40.Rc1 and Black resigned** since the passed pawns will cost him a rook after Rb7.
(1-0)

Notice that there were only a relatively few variations to go through in that game and it was mainly based on positional concepts of space and available squares. The only specific calculation was the breakthrough on b7.

Next up is a game of my own (not quite GM standard perhaps but both my opponent and I were about BCF 200 when this was played and my opponent is now significantly stronger still). The game is Woodward – Bigg from a weekend congress back in 2001. In this game, a King's Indian Defence, each side has total domination of one particular flank. White has the queenside and I have the kingside. It is a race against time. White wants to shatter and capture Black's queenside and Black wants to give checkmate on the kingside.

1. Nf3	d6
2. d4	Nf6
3. c4	g6
4. Nc3	Bg7
5. e4	0-0
6. Be2	e5

It is important to strike at the centre as soon as possible. If White now plays 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.Qxd8 Rxd8 9.Nxe5 then Black regains his pawn with 9...Nxe4! 10.Nxe4 Bxe5 and a slight edge to Black. Also the *zwischenzug* 10.Nxf7 fails to 10...Bxc3+ and then 11...Kxf7 and an extra piece for Black.

7. 0-0	Nc6
8. d5	Ne7

Ok, so we have the blocked centre. White's space is on the queenside and so he needs to advance his pawns with and pieces manoeuvring in behind them. He particularly wants to play the pawn break c4-c5. Black, by contrast, wants to play the pawn break ...f7-f5 and then advance his pawns on the kingside with his pieces coming in behind them. Who will win?

9. Ne1	Ne8
10. Be3	f5
11. f3	f4
12. Bf2	g5
13. c5

A key moment: both sides have redeployed their pieces for a future assault and pawns have been hurled forward. Now is when each side has to think how best to place their pieces. I like my knight on e8 for the moment, since it covers d6 and c7 in anticipation of Nb5 and Rc1 by White.

Obviously I will play ...h7-h5 at some point and also will need my queen in the attack. At the moment though, my e7-knight gets in the way and so...

13. Ng6
14. a4! Rf7!

While White correctly probes the queenside with yet another pawn, Black arranges some defence along the seventh rank and prepares moves like ...Bf8 in some lines, to pressurize c5 and defend d6.

15. a5 h5
16. cxd6

Possibly an inaccuracy: 16.Nd3 is solid enough to keep the tension and 16.c6!/? b6 17.axb6 cxb6 18.Ba6 and if 18...Nc7 then 19.Bb7 looks good. Maybe White is a little better in this variation. If White can exchange the light-squared bishops then Black's attack will be held up on the light squares more effectively. Often in this line, White is even willing to sacrifice an exchange along the c-file for the light-squared bishop. 16...bxc6 may be best when 17.dxc6 Be6 is unclear, or 17.Bc4 c5 and White plays for b2-b4.

16. cxd6
17. Nb5

The intention of this move is to provoke ...a7-a6 and then use the outpost resulting at b6. However, this plan may be a little slow in view of the game continuation.

17. a6
18. Bb6?! Qd7

18.Na3 and Nc4 was perhaps preferable, because ironically d7 is a great square for the queen at this particular moment because it controls g4 one more time.

19. Na3 g4!

Black is now taking over the initiative and getting nearer the White king. Psychologically too, this position is now very difficult for White. For instance the key question: defend or carry on regardless on the queenside?

20. Nc4 g3!



The key position. White cannot play the natural 21.h3 due to 21...Nh4 (Black could easily have ruined this possibility if he had pushed his h-pawn any further). Note the similarity with Kramnik's knight on a5 and the sacrifice on b7 in the last game. The idea is the same: ...Nxc2 followed by

...Qxh3 and White will get mated very quickly. Notice the ineffectiveness of the White pieces to defend this type of dark square assault. The pawn on f3 in particular gets in the way. White now reluctantly decides to switch to defence and it is hard to suggest any major improvement.

21. Kh1 Bf6!

Perhaps my favourite move of the game, allowing the f7-rook to swing over and planning ...Bd8 to cover the key b6-square.

22. Bg1 Bd8

23. Nb6

Too cooperative, but after the alternative 23.Nd3 it is hard to see how White goes about doing anything quickly, or is he just fiddling while Rome burns? The knight may be needed on e1 to cover g2 anyway.

23. Bxb6

24. Bxb6 gxh2

Black is clearly better now, because he has a nice square for a knight on g3.

25. b4 h4

26. b5 h3

27. bxa6 bxa6

28. Qc2 Bb7!

Now with the move ...Rc8 Black even gets active on the queenside. There is no rush: the g3 square isn't going away.

29. Rc1 Rc8

30. Qb2 Nf6

Time to move into g3, and I think White is now lost. The game concluded **31.Rxc8 Bxc8 32.Qa3 Nh5 33.Bf2 Ng3+ 34.Bxg3 fxg3 35.gxh3 Nf4 36.Qb2 Qxh3 37.Bc4 Rc7! and White resigned** because he will lose the c4-bishop and the f1-rook in turn.

(0-1)

PART 8: Middlegame Strategy – Centre under Tension

The characteristic feature of a centre under tension is that it is not known whether either side may suddenly choose to open it or to close it off. Flexible piece play thus becomes very important and the key to tense central positions is probably best summed up by the question: who has the initiative? Forcing moves can be extremely important in these situations.

First up is the game Marin – Knaak, Stara Zagora Zonal 1990. It is a Semi-Slav Defence and a very high quality game from two imaginative grandmasters. At each stage in the early middlegame one needs to ask oneself, ‘have I got enough initiative to force the issue in the centre?’

1. Nf3	d5
2. c4	e6
3. d4	c6
4. e3	Nf6
5. Nc3	Nbd7
6. Bd3	dxc4

Notice once again the idea of waiting for the bishop to move before capturing. The strategy is like this: Black wants to break out with either ...c6-c5 or ...e6-e5, and he doesn't want to allow cxd5 in response, because that would give him an IQP in all probability. He therefore gets rid of his d-pawn while it gains a tempo to do so.

7. Bxc4	b5
8. Bd3	a6

Ok, so the idea is now clear – Black intends ...c6-c5. If White now castles, 9.0-0, then 9...c5 10.a4 (to hit out on the weakened light squares) then 10...b4 11.Ne4 Bb7 is fine for Black. Instead, White takes up the gauntlet thrown down by Black with...

9. e4	c5
10. d5	c4

So there we have it, a centre under tension. White has squares like c6 and Black has d3. White may chip away at Black's pawns with moves like a2-a4 or may capture on e6. Black may choose to block with ...e6-e5 or to give White an IQP with ...exd5. Who can take the initiative and resolve the central tension to their advantage?

11. dxe6
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Perhaps Marin did not like the fact that after 11.Bc2 Black can choose between blocking with 11...e5 and pressurizing with 11...Bb7. Both these moves have been seen in practice and now is not the place to quote theory, but here White prefers to carry the action himself. This move allows the option, rejected by Black in this game of playing 11...cxd3. In fact this might be best, since 12.exd7+ Qxd7! 13.0-0 Bb7 would not worry me as Black at all.

11.	fxe6
12. Bc2	Qc7

Black covers e5 and f4. If you think that the tension is now over then just wait till you see what's in store!

13. 0-0	Bc5
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14. Qe2 Ne5

Another option was to swing the other knight round with 14...Ng4 15.h3 Nge5 16.Nxe5 Nxe5 when White will play either Kh1 or Be3 and then advance f2-f4. Then we would have a new situation of central tension, namely: will White continue e4-e5 or f4-f4, or indeed, neither.

15. Nxe5 Qxe5
16. Be3

Again, 16.Kh1 was worth a look, though presumably Marin was anxious to exchange the dark-squared bishops.

16. Bxe3
17. Qxe3 0-0
18. Rad1 Ng4

The game remains tense as Black has a queenside majority, but a weak e6-pawn. White's bishop and knight are slightly immobile at present, but how long will that last I wonder? This last move forces the transition into a very tense endgame indeed.

19. Qg3 Qxg3
20. hxg3 Ra7

A good move, since getting this rook in the game is Black's top priority if he wants any form of initiative. White must try to combat this initiative as best he can, and hopefully wrestle it back.

21. Rd2 g5
22. f3 Ne5
23. Kf2 Bd7
24. Rc1!

An excellent move, anticipating the advance ...b5-b4 by aiming at the c-pawn, which would be weakened by such an advance.

24. b4
25. Nd1 Bb5
26. Ne3 Raf7



This is the culmination of all the tension and both sides are fighting for it. It looks though, as if White has gone wrong on account of the threat of 27...Nxf3+ 28.gxf3 Rxf3+ and the knight is lost because 29.Ke2 loses to 29...c3+. In this key position, however, White now comes up with the best move in the game, which he would have had to have seen well in advance of this position.

27. Bd1!!

At first sight, what could be more natural. We defend f3 and prepare Be2 to terrorize the c-pawn. But hang on! What about.....

27. Nd3+

?? Answer....

28. Rxd3 cxd3

29. Bb3

And White is in possession of the initiative, but is it enough for an exchange?

29. Re8

30. Rc5 h6

31. Ke1!

Yes! If you look carefully at this position, you will find that it is not easy to spot any constructive move for Black here. White just has all the squares covered.

31. Kg7

32. Kd2 Kg6

33. Re5 Rfe7

34. f4

In a sense the game is now resolved because the tension has gone in White's favour. I will include the remaining moves for the sake of completeness but the key point is the hard work – the fight for the initiative – is over.

The game concluded **34...Bd7 35.Bc4 a5 36.Rxa5 gxf4 37.gxf4 e5 38.Ra6+ Kh5 39.f5 Rg7 40.f6 Rh7 41.f7 Rf8 42.Ra5 Rhxf7 43.Rxe5+ Kh4 44.Bxf7 Rxf7 45.Nf5+ Bxf5 46.exf5 Kg3 47.Kxd3 Kxg2 48.Ke4 h5 49.f6!** (An advantage of two pawns on one side is what we want in a rook and pawn endgame. Black must therefore go for the a-pawn and White has seen that his better king position will win the day even then.) **49...Rxf6 50.Rxh5 Rf2 51.Rg5+ Kh3 52.b3 Rxa2 53.Kd3 Kh4 54.Rb5 Kg4 55.Kc4 Kf4 56.Kxb4 Ke4 57.Rh5 Ra8 58.Kc4 Rc8+ 59.Rc5 and Black resigned (1-0)**

Next up is an old classic: Boleslavsky – Keres, Candidates Tournament 1953. The opening was a Ruy Lopez, renowned for tense central situations. This game is a masterpiece when it comes to using the initiative and I'd wager no-one worth a title of IM or GM has gone down this particular line for White since.

1. e4 e5

2. Nf3 Nc6

3. Bb5 a6

4. Ba4 Nf6

5. 0-0 Be7

6. Re1 b5

7. Bb3 d6

8. c3 0-0

9. h3 Na5

10. Bc2 c5

11. d4 Qc7
12. Nbd2 Rd8

I think that nowadays 12...Re8 is more common, with ...Bf8 to follow. If White had seen what was about to happen he would likely have played 13.d5! in this position and taken the game back into a closed structure. After he continues with the robotic Lopez manoeuvre Nf1, the tension reaches its peak....

13. Nf1 d5!



Black blasts the centre right open. Here judgement was needed in order to make sure Black's pieces are better placed for an open situation. This looks unlikely if we just view the position statically, because the e7-bishop and a5-knight seem to be passive. However the pawn will not be on c5 for long and the knight is going to c4. White should keep a pawn on c5 here with 14.dxe5, which also covers the f6-square against the black bishop. There follows 14...dxe4 15.N3d2 Qxe5 16.Qe2 Bb7 when Black is fine.

14. exd5? exd4
15. cxd4 Nxd5
16. Qe2 Bb7
17. Ng3 cxd4!

Now that the pieces have developed and the centre has been cleared we have a full horror of the situation for White. His bishop is loose on c2 and Black's pieces are more aggressively poised for an open game. White's one chance is to mate Black on the kingside, but Black's very next move puts paid to that idea!

18. Nxd4 g6!
19. Bh6 Bf6

Simple stuff, but it works and White is now struggling on the long diagonal.

20. Nb3 Nc4
21. Ne4 Bxb2
22. Nbc5

Desperation, and it doesn't even work! The game ended 22...Bxa1 23.Rxa1 f5! 24.Nxb7 Qxb7 25.Nc5 Qc6 26.Nd3 Nc3 27.Qe1 Qf6 28.f4 Ne4! 29.Kh2 Qc3 30.Qb1 Ncd2 31.Qc1 Rxd3 32.Bxd3 Qxd3 33.Qc7 Nf3+! and White resigned (0-1).

I hope you have seen that it is important to think about the central structure to decide the best way to proceed in a game. As we have just seen, if you get it slightly wrong at first, that could be the end of that fifteen moves later.

PART 9: Analysis and Planning

This is a more advanced section on planning than Part 5, and in the same format as the last three chapters, except that there are three illustrative games rather than two. In each one the winning side has to construct an effective long-term plan in order to win, but having done so it looks like he is just playing one good-looking move after another. Good chess often looks like effortless chess!

First up is the game Williams – Karpov, Nice Olympiad, 1974. This is an unusual variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, known for its mad tactical nature. There have been some very exciting wins for both sides in this opening, but in this game Karpov makes his superiority known.

1. d4	Nf6
2. c4	e6
3. Nc3	Bb4
4. Bg5

The dreaded (by some) Leningrad variation. It must be admitted that I would quite enjoy playing this for either side. White aggressively tries to force through e2-e4 and practically forces Black to play some weakening moves to break the pin.

4.	h6
5. Bh4	c5

This move facilitates possibilities of ...Qa5 at some stage. It should be mentioned that this opening is almost refuted by this move, because after 6.d5 it looks at first as if the incredible 6...Nxd5 is possible: 7.Bxd8 Nxc3 and I leave you to work out what happens if White puts his queen on any square except the correct 8.Qb3! Ne4+ 9.Kd1 Nxf2+ 10.Kc2 Kxd8 11.Qg3! Nxh1 12.Qxg7 Re8 13.Qxf7 covers f2 and the h1-knight is trapped.

6. d5	d6
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6...b5 is an interesting attempt to get some play after 7.dxe6 fxe6 8.cxb5 d5

7. e3	Bxc3+
8. bxc3	e5
9. Bd3	e4

This is an important move. At first it looks like e3-e4 is no big deal, after all Black has his pawns on the opposite colour square from his remaining bishop and doesn't appear to be in any huge danger. But then we see Ne2, 0-0 and f4! as a plan, and we get a tad nervous. This is why the pin will have to be broken sooner rather than later. White's play is easier to arrange if the position gets completely blocked and so Karpov keeps it under tension. What he needs now is a plan giving him the initiative.

By the way, the e4-pawn is taboo since 10.Bxe4 loses to 10...g5 and 10.Bxf6 Qxf6 hits the c3-pawn.

10. Bc2	g5
11. Bg3	Qe7

As we shall see in a moment, this is not just a quiet supporting move, but a vital part of the overall plan.

12. Ne2 Nbd7
 13. h4 Rg8
 14. hxg5 hxg5
 15. Qb1



This is the critical position, on emerging from the opening. White has a strong dark-squared bishop and chances to attack down at b-file and with an a-pawn advance. His king is a potential weakness and Karpov will seek counterplay on the kingside and use the central tension. First, however, he needs to attend to his own king safety and then look for a break on the kingside. Ideally the pawn break ...f7-f5-f4 looks ideal, but very difficult to arrange. Well, difficult for you or I perhaps, but not for Karpov!

15. Kd8!

Actually the standard plan in this line and another reason for the queen move earlier. Black will put the king on c7 and hope it is safe. In fact, although it looks safe, I have seen the king get into serious trouble in some games as well, based on the fact that the bishop on g3 stares straight at it. White is on the lookout for tricks on d6 and c5.

16. a4! a5!

Both players know what White wants. If 16...Kc7 17.a5! then one plan might be Ra1-a2-b2-b5. This looks like three moves with the same piece in a row, but if Black is forced to play ...b6 then the pawn on a5 means that the black knight is tied down to d7, and this seriously limits Black's play on the kingside. Furthermore there is the amazing idea of Nd4! as a follow up, when ...cxd4 allows cxd4 and c4-c5 with what might be a crushing attack. With the move 16...a5! Karpov makes sure that he will be able to defend with either ...b7-b6 or even ...Ra8-a6.

17. Ra2 Kc7
 18. Rh6 Ra6!

White now hurls the kitchen sink in for good measure, but Karpov's defence is immaculate as he looks for an opportunity to take the initiative and resolve the tension in his favour.

19. Qb5 Kb8
 20. Rb2 Ka7

Stage 1 complete: the king is out of danger. In hindsight perhaps 19.Rb2 would have been better for White, since then the rook is in front of the queen and he only has to retreat the queen now anyway. Karpov now seizes the initiative.

21. Qb3? Ng4!

One move is all it takes and now it is all but over.

22. Rh1 f5!
23. Kd1 Rb6

And White is lost. The queen had to remain on b5 to hit a5 and stop ...Rb6. The game ended abruptly with **24.Qa2 Rxb2 25.Qxb2 b6! 26.Bb3 Ba6 27.Nc1 Nde5 28.Qe2 Ng6 29.Kd2 Nf6 30.Qd1 f4! and White resigned (0-1)**

Next up is an old classic, revolving around a very simple strategy. Having got a big space advantage, White just opens an important file and penetrates into his opponent's position along it. I feel a bit guilty showing this game, because Black doesn't seem to make nay contribution to chess during it, but I blame it on misplaying the French Defence!

The game is Forgacs – Tartakower, St. Petersburg 1909.

1. e4 e6
2. d4 d5
3. Nc3 Nf6
4. Bg5 Be7
5. e5 Ne4?!

In my view it all goes downhill from here. 5...Nfd7 is by far the best move, when White can choose between 6.h4 and 6.Bxe7.

6. Nxe4 Bxg5

This is the most sensible in appearance, but given what is going to happen perhaps 6...dxe4 and take the chances with the weak pawn was preferable.

7. Nxc5 Qxc5
8. g3! c5
9. c3 Nc6
10. f4

Now we see the problem for Black. The dark squared bishops are off and White has an ideally supported pawn wedge and a long-term space advantage.

10. Qe7
11. Nf3 Bd7
12. Qd2 0-0
13. Bd3 c4?!

I do not like this anti-positional move. Black's best try was 13...f6! and to take his chances after 14.exf6. The e5-square is a problem but at least he is active. Now White has an easier time of it.

14. Bc2 b5
15. 0-0 a5
16. Rae1 b4
17. f5!

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



This is pretty much end of game for Black now. White wrenches the f-file open (the threats are g4, Ng5 or f6) and Black has made no impact on the queenside at all. One word of advice: these plans of throwing a b-pawn down the board to weaken the c3-pawn or c6-pawn, depending on whether you are Black or White respectively, then laboriously trying to win it, only work if (a) you play exactly the right moves in exactly the right order and waste no time, and (b) if your opponent has no play at all. Ideally therefore you would need a fighting initiative on the other side of the board as well. We saw a good example in Kramnik – Topalov in section 7, but it takes a player of Kramnik’s understanding to get that sort of thing right.

The above game concluded **17...exf5 18.g4! fxf4 19.Ng5 g6** (19...h6 20.Nh7 Rfe8 21.Nf6+! gxf6 22.Qxh6 looks good) **20.Rf6 Kg7 21.Rfe1 Be8 22.Qf4 Nd8 23.e6! Ra6 24.Qe5! Kh6 25.R1f5! fxe6 26.Nf7+!! Qxf7 27.Rh5+ Kg7 28.Rxg6 mate!**

Beautiful, and a nice warm up for the next section, on combinations.

First, however, the final game of this section. This game is another classic, but from a bit later than 1909, and a little less one-sided! It is Kasparov – Tal, Brussels 1987. These two are both very attacking, and of course very strong. I like this game, because Kasparov shows that in some positions a plan need often be no more than playing pieces to the strongest squares, pushing the right pawns and looking out for tactics. In fact this kind of ‘series of little short term plans’ is by far the most common in most tournament situations. Do not always stare at the board until you see a long-term plan therefore, because there might not be one!

- | | |
|----------|------|
| 1. d4 | Nf6 |
| 2. c4 | e6 |
| 3. Nc3 | Bb4 |
| 4. e3 | 0-0 |
| 5. Bd3 | d5 |
| 6. cxd5 | exd5 |
| 7. Ne2 | c5 |
| 8. 0-0 | Nc6 |
| 9. a3 | cxd4 |
| 10. exd4 | bxc3 |
| 11. bxc3 | |

A common Nimzo-Indian structure has arisen and share of central space is equal. The first micro-plan if you like is to strengthen White's centre, which allows him to keep the important light-squared bishop. If 11.Nxc3 Nxd4 12.Bxh7+ Kxh7 13.Qxd4 still leaves White better but the opposite colour bishops give the game drawish tendencies. In fact there is perhaps even the amazing move 13...Kg6!!? to prevent 14.Bg5 and ...Bf5 and possibly ...Rh8 to follow. In any case, the White knight is needed on the kingside and this is another reason for 11.bxc3.

- | | |
|----------|------|
| 11. | Ne7 |
| 12. Qc2 | |

White covers the e4 and f5 squares a second time to keep the Black knights out. We have seen by now that a plan can be as simple as saying: ‘What does my opponent want to do? How can I stop him?’

12. Bd7
13. Bg5

Of course, everything is line up along the h4-d8 diagonal and Black has no dark-squared bishop so White makes full use of his. Garry must keep the initiative, as potentially his c-pawn is weak down the semi-open file.

13. Ng6
14. f4!

Absolutely! Garry combines piece play and pawn play to gradually improve his position.

14. h6

This looks like a risky weakening, but it sets a little trap. If now 15.f5? hxg5 16.fxg6 we find the remaining black knight on f6 very strong indeed and White has conceded his dark-squared bishop for nothing.

15. Bxf6 Qxf6
16. f5

Garry kicks the remaining knight back but closes the diagonal for his queen and bishop. He needs to find a clever way of opening it again.

16. Ne7
17. Ng3 Nc8

This manoeuvre of ...Ne7-c8-d6 is tedious, but the only way to untangle. I'd wager Tal was not enjoying this position. Garry now finds a beautiful build-up move to increase his attacking forces. If you have more space it is generally a good idea to make full use of it for bringing pieces in to play.

18. Rf4!

Some players might think that if Tal now played 18...Qd6, Garry would play 19.Raf1. However, that would allow 19...f6! and the f5-pawn blocks everything. Instead think tactically: 19.f6!! allows White in first because the rook is taboo due to 19...Qxf4 20.Bh7+ Kh8 21.fxg7+ Kxg7 22.Nh5+ and the greedy black queen pays the price for gluttony. Generally speaking tactics are there in chess to allow one to carry out positional ideas with more force. That is certainly the case here.

18. Nd6
19. Qf2

This move prepares 20.Nh5 when 20...Qg5 is met by 21.g4 and the queen on f2 covers h4 in readiness for the tempo-gaining thrust h2-h4 when White's attack develops alarming proportions.

19. Rfe8
20. Nh5 Qd8
21. Nxc7!

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



The key breakthrough, Garry rips through his opponent's defences in the most simple and direct way. The knight is immune from capture because 21...Kxg7 22.f6+ followed by Qh4xh6 just wins.

21. **Ne4**
 22. **Bxe4** **Rxe4**

Black is doing his level best to complicate matters, but Garry has won a pawn and his next move seals his opponent's fate.

23. **f6!** **Kh7**
 24. **Rxe4** **dxe4**
 25. **Qf4**

Black's next move is forced, in order to defend the e-pawn and then White will have the f5-square under complete control.

25. **Bc6**
 26. **Re1!**

Typical Garry, the cleanest win is found and there is no defence to Re1-e3-h3. The game ended with **26...Qf8 27.c4** (27.Re3 Qxa3 threatens the annoying ...Qa1+) **27...Qxa3 28.Nf5 Qf8 29.Re3 Bd7 30.Rg3 Bxf5 31.Qxf5+ and Black resigned (1-0).**

PART 10: Analysis – Combinations

Well I hope you're ready for this section because we have two very exciting games coming up, followed by a challenge to see if you can work out the winning combination in the position I shall give at the very end of these notes. The answer will be at the beginning of the notes for the next section.

Where combinations are concerned all we really need is (a) an ability to spot weak points in the opponent's position and the lines leading to them, and (b) an ability to hold more than one variation in our head at a time. Ideally you are able to analyse further down a line now than you were a year ago, but analysis requires constant practice, because discipline of concentration is one of the easiest things to lose in chess.

The first game sees our old friend Mr Uhlmann showing us how to play the French Defence. It is Bogdanovic – Uhlmann, Sarajevo 1965. Try to follow the game pausing to have a think for yourself every so often. I wonder how much of Uhlmann's analysis you can find.

1. e4	e6
2. d4	d5
3. Nc3	Bb4
4. e5	Ne7
5. a3	Bxc3+
6. bxc3	c5
7. a4

This is no longer thought to be the most challenging move, which is almost certainly 7.Qg4. 7.a4 has its points though, hinting at Ba3 and also preventing sequences like ...Qa5 8.Bd2 Qa4!? which can often be a nuisance.

7.	Nbc6
8. Nf3	Qa5
9. Qd2	Bd7

All sensible development so far, and a semi-blocked but tense centre. The initiative will only come out of a tense struggle here. If White plays 10.Bd3 then 10...c4 is a useful tempo gain for Black as long as he realises that, as in the game, his plan is to blast the centre open with ...f7-f6.

10. Be2	f6!
11. exf6	gxf6
12. dxc5!

White rises to the challenge, accepting tripled pawns for a chance to play aggressively. His ideas include Nf3-d4-b5 and c3-c4 as well as activity down the b-file. Black meanwhile, has to castle queenside and go for ...e6-e5 and a g-file attack. Tactical awareness will clearly be very important here.

12.	0-0-0
13. 0-0	e5
14. c4

White goes for it to try to open lines on the queenside. It also asks Black the question, do you fear an exchange of queens?

14. d4!

No, we do not! 15.Qxa5 Nxa5 is just a bad ending for White because his appalling pawn structure severely hampers the activity of his bishop pair. White now avoids the queen swap. Note that 14...Qxd2 15.Nxd2! d4 16.Ne4! gives White some unwelcome play.

15. Qh6 Ng6
16. Nd2

Both sides manoeuvre purposefully to make inroads into their opponent's position. The need for combinational awareness cannot be far off.

16. f5!

A good move to frustrate White by preventing Nd2-e4.

17. Nb3 Qc7
18. f4!?



White sees that his structure leaves him in danger of being worse if he is not imaginative. This move is either reckless or good and only tactical developments will prove which one. Black cannot play the logical 18...e4 since 19.Bb2 Be8 20.Rad1 is awkward for the d4-pawn. The downside of this move is that it weakens the e3-square and opens the white king up. It also strands the queen temporarily on h6. It is factors like this that the tactician must always bear in mind.

18. Nb4!!

Brilliant! Uhlmann correctly sees that the c2-pawn is deprived of a defender with Qh6-d2 and angles his knight towards c2 and then perhaps e3, as well as vacating c6 for his bishop to point at the kingside. If 19.Bd3 then 19...e4 comes with tempo, but what about 19.fxe5? Let's analyse 19...Nxc2 20.Rb1 (if 20.Ra2 the problem is that the knight returns to b4 with gain of time) 20...Bc6! Intending to meet 21.Rxf5 with 21...Be4 when Black has by far the better-coordinated pieces. So White has to play....

19. Bd1 d3!

The best way to secure entry squares for the black pieces is to exchange the pawns.

20. cxd3 Nxd3
21. fxe5

Finally White commits to clearing the centre and the tactics are now set to come thick and fast. We have already seen in section 6 how good Uhlmann is in open positions!

21. Qxe5

Typical Uhlmann, the queen is the most powerful piece in the centre, so use her.

22. Bf3

Looks good, but what about the tempo-gaining 22.Bg5 to activate the other bishop? This is where we hunt for tactical resources and in his notes Uhlmann gives 22...Bc6! 23.Bxd8 Ngf4! (threatening ...Qe3+ and ...Bxg2 mate!) 24.Bf3 Qe3+ 25.Kh1 Bxf3 and now:-

(a) 26.Rxf3 Nf2+ (the only move to consider that could possibly do anything, which makes playing through in your head easier: if it works then play it and if not the whole line is refuted and you can look for something else) 27.Rxf2 (27.Kg1 N4h3+ and ...Qxh6! Remember the bishop on d8 will drop at the end of Black's onslaught too) 27...Qxf2 28.Qg5 Rxd8 29.Qxf5+ Kb8 and Black has by far the better placed pieces and threats in return for the two pawn deficit and let us not forget that White can hardly boast that the extra pawns are well placed!



(b) 26.gxf3 and now 26...Rg8!! With the very nice threat of ...Rg1+ and either ...Qxf3 or ...Nf2 are both mating. 27.Bg5 aims to block the g-file, but then 27...Qe2 and there is no 28.Bxf4 because of 28...Qg2 mate. But what about 27.Ra2! Rg1+ 28.Rxg1 Qxf3+ 29.R1g2 (29.Rag2 Nf2 mate) 29...Qf1+ 30.Rg1 Qf3+ and we have a perpetual, after all that!

22. f4

The chance to play Bg5 is now gone.

23. Bd2 Bc6
24. Bxc6 bxc6

It looks as if things are quietening done, but don't relax just yet because the position is gaining new possibilities in place of the old ones.

25. Rab1 Rd7!
26. Qh3 Re8

The pieces have now rearranged themselves and 27.Na5 looks like the natural move, but what about 27...Qxc5+ 28.Kh1 Nf2+ 29.Rxf2 Qxf2? Is this enough play for an exchange? No! The rook is tied down to the back rank and 30.Nxc6 Qxd2 31.Rb8+ Kc7 gives White nothing because he doesn't have enough pieces aiming at the right squares. This is a key for a combination to work. Having pieces near the opponent's king is no guarantee of success.

27. Qf3 Qe4!

Black's pieces are better, so he offers a simplifying queen swap. He has not given up on combinations, however, since (from Uhlmann's notes again) 28.Rfe1 Nxe1 29.Rxe1 Qxe1+! 30.Bxe1 Rxe1+ 31.Kf2 Ne5! Wins immediately as there is no defence to the dual threats of ...Nd3+ and ...Nxf3.

28. Nxa5 Qxf3

Now that the queens are off Black is in full control and the game ended **29.Rxf3 Re2! 30.Bc1 Nh4! 31.Rxf4 Rxe2+ 32.Kf1 Nxf4 33.Bxf4 Rd3! and White resigned (0-1).**

If someone were to ask me what was the best game I had ever played then I would need to put all my wins on Fritz and see how many mistakes were made and the one with the fewest would get the vote, but that is a very difficult thing to judge. If, however, someone asked me what the most entertaining game I have ever played was then it would certainly be the one I am about to show you. Basically the opening position was crazy and all I could think to do was to create complications. I am White and my opponent is G. Buckley (IM) from yet another weekend congress. This game is by no means free of mistakes, but pleases the crowds.

1. d4 Nf6
2. Bg5 Ne4
3. h4!?

For those of you who don't know, this is the Trompowski Attack and 3.h4!? was my pet line at the time. This game was played back in 2001 and since then I have mainly graduated towards the more sensible 3.Bf4. Having said that this is a dangerous opening against anyone not on their guard and I have clocked up a lot of points against lower-rated players in this line. In this game, Black plays a response that I had never seen before.

3. c5
4. d5 Qc7!?

I now played the only logical move, fully aware what the planned response was.

5. Nd2 Ng3
6. Rh3

Clearly forced, since 6.fxg3 Qxg3 would have the only advantage that I'd be the first to finish!

6. Nxf1

You don't see this too often in chess – a knight moves four times in the opening and all to capture a bishop that (a) hasn't moved and (b) can't move! I debated a friend of mine after the game as to whether I should recapture with the king or the knight. My friend prefers 7.Kxf1 and maybe he is right.. My plan was to reroute the knight to the kingside. It is hard to know how big a plus the two bishops are for Black in this position.

7. Nxf1 d6
8. Rh1 e5
9. e4 Nd7
10. Ne2 b5

This is an interesting decision, since my plan is to play on the kingside and Black is safer with his king on the queenside. I can hardly criticize this move, however, because I will confess that I just didn't understand this position at all.

11. N2g3 Nb6
12. h5

Threatening h5-h6.

12. h6
13. Bc1 Be7
14. Ne3



This is a key position and clearly castling kingside for Black is out on account of Ngf5 and Qg4 with Rh1-h3-f3 if necessary. Black can either allow a knight to f5 and retreat with ...Bf8, or play the double-edged ...g6.

14. g6
15. hxg6 fxg6
16. a4!?

I could easily be wrong but I need to keep open active possibilities on both flanks. The way I saw it, if Black gets to castle queenside unhindered then I am struggling for a plan, so I decided to sacrifice a pawn to make some ground on the queenside.

16. Nxa4
17. c4 a6
18. Qe2 Bd7
19. Ng4

Having made some weaknesses for Black on the queenside I return to the kingside and threaten simply Nxe6.

19. h5
20. Nh6!

I like this move since it deters 20...0-0-0 on account of 21.Nf7, and if 20...Bf8 then 21.Nxe6 is strong: 21...gxe6 22.Qxe6+ or 21...Bxe6 22.Nf6+ Kf7 23.Bxe6 Rxe6 (23...Kxf6 24.Qf3+ Ke7 25.Bg5+ wins) 24.Rxe6 Kxf6 25.Qh5! Rg8 26.Qh4+ is dangerous. For instance, 26...Kf7 27.Rh7+ Rg7 28.Rxe7+ Kxe7 29.Qe7+ Kg8 30.0-0-0! (an argument for not playing 7.Kxf1!) and Rh1 is difficult to meet.

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



20. **bxc4**

An imaginative move, intending to bring the bishop out to b5.

21. **Nxh5** **0-0-0**

Both sides are hurling everything they have into outplaying one another. Sadly I must now retreat!

22. **Ng3** **Bb5**
 23. **Qc2** **Qd7**
 24. **Rh3** **Rdf8**

At first I thought I was stuck here, but then I saw an imaginative way to get more pieces to the kingside.

25. **Ne2** **Kb7**
 26. **R1a3!** **Bd8**
 27. **Rag3**

Usually rooks coordinate along the first rank at this stage in a game, but not in the 3.h4 Trompowski!

27. **Ba5+**
 28. **Nc3** **Rf6**
 29. **Bg5** **Rf8**
 30. **Bd2**

In addition to the silly rook moves my bishop has now gone from c1-g5-c1-g5-d2!

30. **Nxc3**
 31. **bxc3** **Qe8**
 32. **Rh4!**

The rooks have a bit more shuffling to do yet.

32. **Rh7**
 33. **Rhg4** **Rg7**
 34. **Nf5!** **Rd7**
 35. **Rxg6** **Bc7**

Well I have my pawn back and am now clearly better, but how do I get to his king?

36. **Bh6** **Rh8**

37. Qd1 Rdh7?

Perhaps Black had had enough of the silly rook and bishop moves and wanted to put the boot in down the h-file, but this move gives me the opportunity of an exchange sacrifice, and more silly rook moves along the sixth rank into the bargain!

38. Rxd6! Bd7

Clearly the rook is immune due to the fork on d6 but now all my pieces seem to be attacked and ...Bxf5 is a big threat.

39. Qb1+ Ka7

40. R3g6!



A picturesque setup, and temporarily material ahead.

40. Bxd6

41. Rxd6 Bb5

41....Bxf5 42.Qb6+ Ka8 43.exf5 is good for White because if the pieces come off, the pawns are good for him in the ending. Black simply has too many potential weaknesses.

42. Kd2!

Perhaps my favourite move of the game, quiet but deadly. I want to play Be3 without allowing check on h1.

42. Rb7

43. Be3 Qc8

44. Qb4! Rc7

45. Qa5 Ka8

46. Re6!

There is no need to hunt for tricks. If I can take the e-pawn then I have four connected passed pawns. I will now give the remaining moves of the game with no comment other than that this was the first time, and the last, that I have ever won a game with a king-storm in the middlegame! The game finished 46...Ra7 47.Rxe5 Qb8 48.Re6 Bd7 49.Bxc5! Qb2+ 50.Ke3 Qc1+ 51.Kd4 Bxe6 52.dxe6 Qb2 53.Bxa7 Qxf2+ 54.Ke5 Qxa7 55.Qd5+ Qb7 56.e7 Re8? 57.Qxb7+ Kxb7 58.Nd6+ and Black resigned (1-0).

Finally, the challenge: Black to play and win.

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



PART 11: Putting it all together – Learn from the Champions

Ok, first here is the solution to the puzzle at the end of the last section. The game is Ortueta – Sanz from Madrid in 1934. Black played the logical 1...Rd2 2.Na4 (I hope you all got this far!) 2...Rxb2!! 3.Nxb2 c3 4.Rxb6 (4.Nd3 c4+ 5.Rxb6 cxd3 and one pawn will queen) 4...c4! (threatening ...c2 and if 5.Nxc4 c2 wins!) 5.Rb4 a5!! 6.Na4 (6.Rxc4 cxb2 wins) 6...axb4 (0-1).

Congratulations to anyone who got this.

This section is simple: having worked through a lot of strategy and tactics we take a look at two absolute top-level classics to see all the elements in action together. The first is from a long time ago and the second another game from Vladimir Kramnik.

The first game is Rubinstein – Teichmann, Vienna, 1908.

1. d4	d5
2. c4	e6
3. Nc3	Nf6
4. Bg5	Nbd7
5. e3	Be7
6. Nf3	0-0
7. Qc2	b6
8. cxd5

The best move, in order to fix a pawn on d5 now that Black has signalled his intention to play a fianchetto. If 8...Nxd5 9.Nxd5 Bxg5 10.Nxc7 or 9...exd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.Qxc7 Qb4+ 12.Qc3.

8.	exd5
9. Bd3	Bb7
10. 0-0-0!

By far the best way to fight for an initiative. Black can achieve counterplay on the queenside with ...c7-c5 while White tries to checkmate him on the kingside.

10.	c5
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Another way to go for counterplay is 10...Ne4 when 11.h4! is an important move, so that after a capture on g5 White will have the h-file to launch a crushing attack down. Play might continue 11...f5 12.Kb1 Rc8 13.Qb3 Nxc3 14.bxc3 is very unclear. Do notice, however that if 12...c5 then it is combination time with 13.dxc5 bxc5 (else Black gets an IQP and a weak d4-square, with manoeuvres like Nc3-b5-d4 in the offing) 14.Nxe4 fxe4 15.Bxe4! dxe4 16.Qb3+ Kh8 17.Qxb7 wins a piece as d7 is twice attacked.

11. h4	c4
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Both sides are going for it full out.

12. Bf5	Re8
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It is often useful to vacate the f8-square for a knight in these positions, from where it will defend h7. The rook also eyes the e4-square to aim to disrupt the coordination of White's pieces.

13. Bxf6!

A very perceptive move, clearing the way for the advance of the g-pawn.

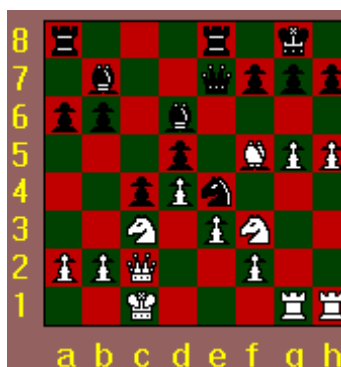
13. Nxf6
14. g4 Bd6?!

It seems harsh to criticize but every move must count and as such 14...Bb4 was better, to have options of capturing c3 and dominating the e4-square. Having said that, it might make no difference after 15.g5 anyway.

15. g5 Ne4
16. h5 Qe7?!

This has got to be too slow. 16...Nxc5 17.Nxc5 Qxc5 18.Bxh7+ Kh8 19.Rdg1 Qh6 20.Bg6! is winning for White because, even if Black defends f7, White will take it and play Rg6 forking the queen and the unfortunately placed bishop on d6. Maybe the desperate 16...b5 is indicated.

17. Rdg1 a6



Black just doesn't seem to sense the danger, and carries on preparing for ...b6-b5 regardless. Now is combination time, surely?

18. Bxh7+!!

Yes! It is indeed crunch time. This is crushing and there is not much to say other than, can you work out the finish from here, **in your head!**

18. Kxh7
19. g6+ Kg8

19...fxg6 20.Nxe4! dxe4 (20...Qxe4 21.Ng5+) 21.Ng5+ Kg8 22.Qxc4+ Kf8 23.Nh7 mate would have been a nice finish.

20. Nxe4 dxe4

20...Qxe4 loses to 21.gxf7+ Kxf7 22.Ng5+ again.

21. h6!

Very nice indeed: 21...exf3 22.gxf7+ Qxf7 23.hxg7! with dual threats of Rh8 mate and Qh7 mate, and if 23...Qxg7 then 24.Qh7+ anyway due to the pin; if 21...fxg6 22.Nh4! g5 (22...Kf7 23.Rxg6! Rg8 24.Qxc4+ Kf8 25.h7! Rh8 26.Re6 with Ng6+ to follow wins) 23.Ng6 hits the queen and

threatens h7+, whereupon the best is 23...Qf6 24.h7+ Kf7 25.h8=Q Rxf8 26.Nxf8+ Ke7 with some compensation for the exchange, but probably not enough. If this worries White then maybe 23.h7+!? Kf7 24.Nf5 is worth a look. For instance 24...Qf6 to defend g5 loses to 25.Qxc4+ Kg6 (blocking on e6 hangs the d6-bishop with check due to the pin along the a2-g8 diagonal) 26.Nh4+ Kxh7 27.Nf3+ Kg6 28.Nxg5 Rac8 29.Nh7+ Kf5 30.Rh5+ g5 31.Rhxg5+ Qxg5 32.Rxg5 mate, or 28...Qxg5 29.Rxg5+ Kxg5 30.Qf7! wins. Finally if 21....gxh6 then 22.exf7+ Kxf7 23.Rxh6 with dual threats of Rh7+ and Qxc4+.

21. f6
22. hxg7 exf3!

Although this lets the white queen into the attack it is still the only way to test White to see whether he can see the finish.

23. Rh8+ Kxg7
24. Rh7+ Kg8
25. Qf5!

This threatens the finishing move Qh5.

25. c3!
26. Rxe7

White avoids the last trap: 26.Qh5?? cxb2+ 27.Kb1 Be4+ 28.Kxb2 Ba3+ 29.Ka1 Bb2+! 30.Kxb2 Qb4+ mating.

Black now resigned due to 26...Bxe7 losing to 27.Qe6+ and into f7 with Rh1 to follow if necessary, and 26...Rxe7 27.Qxf6 Bb4 28.Rh1 Rg7 29.Qe6+ mating.

I can't help feeling a bit sorry for Black because everything seemed to work for White, but deservedly so because he showed superb judgement in all aspects of the game.

The last game sees Vladimir Kramnik punishing a dodgy opening move. The game is Gelfand – Kramnik from the European Club Cup in Berlin in 1996.

1. d4 d5
2. c4 c6
3. Nc3 Nf6
4. Nf3 e6
5. e3 Nbd7
6. Qc2 Bd6
7. g4?!

This move is wild, and obviously hopes for 7...Nxg4 8.Rg1 with play. Perhaps my assessment of dubious is only based on what happens to you if you play this against Kramnik. The idea is g4-g5 and a quick e3-e4 to follow. The main reply was 7...dxc4 but Kramnik comes up with something else.

7. Bb4!

The character of the position has changed, and e4 is now a very important square. Black wants to play full out in the centre and try to make the g-pawn look silly.

8. Bd2 Qe7

9. a3

Kramnik mentions 9.g5!? Bxc3 10.Bxc3 Ne4 11.Bd3 Nxc3 12.Qxc3 as 'a Queen's Gambit with a pawn on g5 instead of g2!' He admits that it is hard to see who this favours and suggests 12...dxc4 intending ...b7-b5 and ...Bc8-b7.

9. **Bxc3**
10. Bxc3 **b6!**

A double-purpose move, allowing ...c7-c5 in response to Bb4 ideas and looking to develop the bishop on the flank.

11. Bd3 **Ba6!**
12. Qa4 **dxc4!**

Now if 13. Qxc6 Rc8 14. Qa4 Bb7 15. Bb4 Qd8 16. Be2 a5 and this is when the pawn really wants to be back on g2, since the long diagonal weakness is telling.

13. Qxa6 **cxd3**
14. Qxd3 **0-0**
15. g5 **Nd5**
16. Bd2 **f5!**

That is the positional phase out of the way and Gelfand has been outplayed. He cannot capture on f6 *en passant* because of the f-file weakness after 17...Qxf6. Thus Black is better and has only now to find a way to smash through. White has another awkward question to answer, namely: where is he going to put his king?

17. 0-0-0 **c5**
18. Kb1 **b5!**

It is no use White hiding, Black is persistent. Now ...c5-c4 is a threat, and horrible moves like ...a7-a5, .../Rac8 and pushing the b-pawn through. Therefore White must accept the offer.

19. Qxb5 **Rab8**
20. Qa5 **....**

White tries to stay out of the range of the black knights but lets a rook in instead.

20. **Rb3**
21. Ka2? **....**

The final error in a bad position. Gelfand doesn't see the coming combination, as if he had he would almost certainly have chosen 21.Ka1

21. **Rfb8**
22. Rb1 **e5!**

A beautiful move, intending to move the queen onto the g8-a2 diagonal to attack the white king. Gelfand tries bringing his last piece into the defence, but to no avail.

23. Rfc1 **Qe6!**

Can you see the threat? (Answer on next line)

24. Ka1

An admission or previous error, but he couldn't allow 24...Nc3+ as then whichever way White captures Black plays ...Rb2 with double check, and then Ka1 Qa2 mate!

24. exd4

25. Rxc5

Desperation as Black's last move threatened the simple ...Qe4, as well as just being a good positional move.

25. Nxc5

26. Qxc5 Nc3!!

The finishing combination, mate is unavoidable! See if you can see why.

The game finished **27.Nxd4** (27.Bxc3 dxc3 28.Nd4 cxb2+ 29.Ka2 {29.Rxb2 Rxb2 30.Nxe6 Rb1+ 31.Ka2 R8b2 mate} 29...Rxa3+! 30.Kxa3 Qa6 mating) **27...Rxb2! 28.Rxb2 Qa2+! and White resigned.** I leave you to find the finish!!

PART 12: Unusual Openings

This section is intended to familiarize you with some of the less common openings that occur. In fact, some of these are now quite common in modern chess, just emphasizing the fact that chess is just as influenced by trends as everything else. The Trompowski Attack in particular, one of my own favourites, is now very common in tournament practice. Historically, the openings in this section are rare because they deviate slightly from the opening ‘rules’ that you are used to. This does not mean that breaking the rules is clever (a lot of the openings in this section I shall be showing you how to refute – **not** recommending them!), but it does mean that there is no such thing in chess as an ‘unbreakable’ opening rule. The rules are general guidelines such as:-

(1) Pawns in the centre (2) Knights before Bishops (3) Castle early (4) Don’t move the queen too early....etc, etc.

These only apply in the context of a broader strategy and it is this strategy that has to come first. The above list cannot take account of the specifics of the position by move 7, for instance, nor can it account for the strategic style of the player involved. The first opening we will look at is the Trompowski itself, and the first moves are 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 moving a bishop before the knight. Usually this is not recommended because it was thought generally that it would be easier to know where you wanted your knights (f3/c3 etc) than where you wanted your bishop. However, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 (following the opening ‘rule’) is far less common at the higher level than 3.Bb5. This is because the strategy that the White player chooses to adopt is defined by this pressurizing bishop move. Similarly, the mindset of the Trompowski player has a clear intention in mind for how he or she wishes to apply pressure to the opponent’s position. Thus it is clearly known that we want the bishop on g5 because our strategy depends upon it. It is not yet known, however, whether the knight’s want to go to c3 and f3, or f3 and d2, or d2 and e2. This will depend on how Black answers our initial strategy of applying pressure down the h4-d8 diagonal and threatening perhaps to take on f6.

So without further ado let’s get down to the nitty-gritty of the openings themselves.

(a) The Trompowski Attack

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 and Black has the choice of whether to allow a capture at f6 or not. Clearly this capture would weaken his control of the centre, but it would give him the two bishops. I will consider briefly the five main responses.

- (i) 2...g6 is not a move I feel I can recommend since the whole point of the Trompowski is to avoid lines like the King’s Indian, so the opening would seem pretty pointless if 2...g6 was good. White should play 3.Bxf6 exf6 and Black has a difficult choice. The main idea of most King’s Indians is to hit out at the centre with ...e7-e5 but Black no longer has an e-pawn. We saw the best setup for White in this position in section 5 of this course when we discussed the plans for both sides. One of my favourite wins in this line went as follow: 4.c4 (4.g3 may be even more accurate as discussed in section 5) 4...Bg7 5.Nc3 d6 6.g3 0-0 7.Bg2 f5 8.e3 Nd7 9.Nge2 Nf6 10.0-0 c6 11.Qd3 Qe7 12.b4 Bd7 13.a4 Rfe8 14.b5 Ne4 15.a5 a6 (else a5-a6 by White) 16.bxc6 Bxc6?! 17.Nf4 Nxc3?! 18.Qxc3 Bxg2 19.Kxg2 Rac8 20.Qd3 Qe4+ 21.Qxe4 fxe4 22.Rfc1 Bf8 23.Rab1

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



The culminating point of White's strategy, he has better rooks, better pawns and good knight against bad bishop. Black is lost, and although he struggled on until move 41 he could possibly have resigned here with a clear conscience.

(ii) 2...e6 is a far more sensible move, aiming for 3...h6 to secure the bishop pair. There is quite a lot that White can do here so I shall just mention a couple of possibilities. 3.e4 is most common, when after 3...h6 4.Bxf6 Qxf6 5.c3 is an interesting plan. I feature another game of my own in the next section in this line, in which Black played 5...d5. If he plays 5...d6 then the idea is 6.Bd3 and then Ng1-e2, 0-0 and f2-f4 with a very active centre and a potentially exposed black queen. 6...Qg5 is an interested attempt to frustrate this, when White probably has to play 7.g3, which does at least have the virtue of adding further support to f4. For instance 7...e5 8.Ne2 Bg4 9.Nd2 Nc6 10.Qa4 with the intention to castle queenside, looks interesting.



In addition to this, White can play 3.Nf3 taking play into a Torre Attack. Black may answer with 3...h6 and then White must choose between 4.Bxf6 Qxf6 5.e4 and follow with c2-c3 and Nb1-d2 before choosing which side to castle, or 4.Bh4 g5 5.Bg3 d6 6.e4 Nh5 7.c3 Bg7 8.Nfd2! Nxc3 9.hxc3 with Nb1-a3, Qd1-a4 and 0-0-0 to follow.

(iii) 2...d5 is super-solid, when White plays 3.Bxf6 and after 3...exf6 4.e3 Be6 (otherwise c2-c4 comes with a nice structural advantage to White) 5.g3!? intending a solid setup with Bf1-g2, Ng1-e2, 0-0, Nb1-d2 and then perhaps b2-b3 and c2-c4. In fact, I can recommend 2...d5 and 3...exf6 for Black, with the idea of playing a subsequent ...h7-h5 at some stage after 5.g3!? If 3...gxf6 then the position gets sharp after 4.c4! dxc4 (if 4...c6 5.e3 Bf5 6.Nc3 e6 then either 7.Nge2 with the idea of Ng3 and f2-f4 or simply 7.Nf3 with Bf1-d3, 0-0 and e3-e4 to follow are both good for White) 5.e3 c5 6.Bxc4 cxd4 7.exd4 Bg7 8.Ne2 0-0 9.Nbc3 f5 10.Qd2 Nc6 11.Rd1 e6 12.0-0 is the usual continuation, when I slightly prefer White. I should make it clear that you are not expected to commit these lines to memory, all I wish to do is to give you a flavour of the variety of structures that can arise in chess, and the Trompowski is one of the best openings to do this with.

(iv) 2...c5 3.Bxf6 gxf6 leads to very interesting positions. I recommend 4.d5 Qb6 5.Qc1 f5 6.c4!? – left to his own devices White intends Nb1-c3, e2-e3, f2-f4, Bf1-d3, Ng1-e2, Qc1-c2 and then either g2-g3 and 0-0, or Rh1-g1, h2-h3 and g2-g4 with intent to 0-0-0 at some stage. The thing I like about

White's position here is that it is so easy to be flexible. For instance instead of Bf1-d3 there is also g2-g3 and Bf1-h3 and Ng1-f3-h4 in mind. Flexibility due to better coordination between the pawns and the pieces is what makes up for the lack of the bishop pair in most Trompowski positions.

(v) 2...Ne4 is by far the most common move, keeping the pawns intact. 3.Bf4 is the main response and then after 3...d5 White chooses between 4.f3 Nf6 5.e4!? dxe4 6.f3 – an imaginative gambit line for rapid piece development after 6...exf3 7.Nxf3 or the solid 3.e3 with the intention to shift the e4-knight with Bf1-d3xe4. Black's most common try is 3...c5 when 4.f3 Qa5+ 5.c3 Nf6 leaves a further choice between 6.d5!? (the aggressive move) and 6.Nd2 cxd4 7.Nb3 Qb6 8.Qxd4 Nc6! 9.Qxb6 axb6 10.Nd4! e5 11.Nxc6 dxc6 12.Bxe5 Be6 with a very interesting position and compensation for the pawn.



In summary, the Trompowski allows the White player to experience a huge variety of positions against the different Black responses and much more so than in other openings. Even if you only play it occasionally, the experience is worth having.

(b) A mad gambit line!

The next opening I want you to see is a very off-beat one. I am showing it to you, so that you get a flavour for the sort of tricks that are at least possible in the opening. The gambit in question is called the Frankenstein – Dracula Gambit and arises out of a possible variation of the Bishop's Opening that I declined to mention back in section 1. The moves are as follows: 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nf6 3.Nc3 (instead of 3.d3) giving Black the opportunity of the tactic 3...Nxe4!?



The idea is, of course, that if White plays 4.Nxe4 then 4...d5 regains the piece by a fork, whereupon Black will have no problems at all from the opening. White, however, sees that things are not so simple due to the possible threat of mate on f7. He sees that 5.Qf3 Nd6 6.Bb3 Be7!, with ...0-0 and ...Nb8-c6 to follow gets nowhere, but what about 5.Qh5! which hits e5 into the bargain. I leave you to work out for yourself why 5...Nd6 is absolutely forced. 6.Qxe5+ is now perfectly possible and

6...Qe7 is enough to equalize for Black, but White wants more with 6.Bb3 and now after 6...Nc6 to defend e5 there comes 7.Nb5! exploiting the fact that Black is still one move off castling. The d6-knight is the only thing preventing mate and can't move, but is now attacked. 7...Qe7 fails to 8.Nxc7+ and it all looks rather bad. So 7...g6 is the only move and then 8.Qf3 hits f7 from another angle. Now Black must play 8...f5 but then 9.Qd5! and finally there is no way to cover f7 other than by 9...Qe7. Then White triumphantly plays 10.Nxc7+ expecting resignation of at least serious disappointment, but Black calmly plays 10...Kd8 11.Nxa8 b6! and we arrive at the starting position of the Frankenstein – Dracula Gambit!



So what is going on? Well Black's next move is bound to be ...Bc8-b7, attacking a8 and threatening nasty things against the white queen. Play usually continues 12.Nxb6 axb6 13.Qf3 Bb7 14.Qh3 when I think 14...h5 intending ...g6-g5-g4 is worth a punt. Clearly this is a drastic try by Black, but if his pieces coordinate properly then it is not out of the question that he might pull off a win, and probably one that will please any spectators!

(c) The Latvian Gambit

Still in the 1.e4 e5 mode, one other gambit that is played occasionally at lower level is the Latvian, but I cannot recommend this. The moves are 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 f5?! when White should play 3.Nxe5 and the threat of Qh5+ almost forces 3...Qf6 and then 4.Nc4! fxe4 5.Nc3 Qg6 6.d3 is a simple way to a good position for White.

(d) The Alekhine Defence and Nimzowitsch Defence

These two openings are the two where Black is determined to move a knight before any pawns. The Alekhine Defence is 1.e4 Nf6 when White can either keep it quiet with 2.Nc3 or try for more with 2.e5 whereupon the main line runs 2...Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.Nf3 (4.c4 Nb6 5.f4 is the most aggressive, but after 5...dxe5 6.fxe5 Nc6 Black appears to have what he wants, a vulnerable White centre to attack.) and Black has a choice between a kingside fianchetto with 4...g6, or trying to clarify matters in the centre with 4...dxe5 5.Nxe5 c6 intending 6...Nb8-d7xe5. Note, however, that Black should be careful of 5...Nd7 on account of 6.Nxf7! Kxf7 7.Qh5+ when if Black is not just going to lose a pawn and castling rights for nothing then he must play 7...Ke6!? to hold onto his extra piece and take his chances.

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



The Nimzowitsch, after the great man himself, begins 1.e4 Nc6 and after 2.d4 then 2...e5. Of course, if White so desires then he can play 3.Nf3 and go back into a Scotch Game, but there are also 3.d5 and 3.dxe5 to consider. After 3.d5 Nce7 4.c4 Ng6 Black intends ...Bb4+ with ...Ng8-f6, ...d7-d6 and ...0-0 to follow and then he will play for ...f7-f5 with a kingside attack. White may counter this with 5.a3 a5 (trying for ...Bf8-c5 instead) 6.Be3 when Black must play 6...b6 and try for ...Bf8-c5 anyway. White may also play 4.Nf3(!) when 4...Ng6 not only walks into 5.h4 but also 5.Be3 Bb4+? (again, 5...b6 is best) 6.c3 Ba5 7.Qa4! Bb6 8.Bxb6 cxb6 9.d6! and Black is in big trouble, as I once discovered to my cost!

3.dxe5 is a curious way of playing and leads to such positions as 3...Nxe5 4.Nf3 Qf6 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Bd2 Nxf3 7.gxf3 Ne7 when clearly an assessment is not easy. Black may have to play ...c7-c6 to keep the white knight out of d5 and b5. Meanwhile White is developing and using the g-file.

Again I hope this has increased your awareness of the variety of positions that can arise in chess, as that is the main point of this section.

Finally, we go back to 1.d4 and look at a move which is tricky, but nowadays very common.

(e) The Dutch Defence

This opening has too much theory on it to even contemplate giving you anything more than a brief introduction to the possibilities. The opening begins 1.d4 f5 whereupon White has a few tricky second moves:-

(i) 2.Nc3 tries for an immediate 3.e4 which Black wishes to avoid as his king is slightly open. 2...Nf6 meets 3.Bg5 when 3...d5 is the main way to stop the e-pawn advance. White plays 3.Bxf6 exf6 4.e3 and if Black plays 4...c6 (4...Nc6 and re-route to e7 may be best here) then 5.Bd3 and Qd1-f3 is often a good plan, with ideas like Ng1-e2, h2-h3 and g2-g4. This is a pawn break that all 1...f5 players need to be aware of, because played at the right time it can be deadly.

(ii) 2.Bg5 hopes for 2...Nf6 3.Bxf6 or 2...h6 3.Bh4 g5 4.e4 with the threat of Qh5 mate. I recommend 2...g6! 3.Nc3 Nh6!? 4.e4 fxe4 5.Nxe4 Nf7 with moves like ...Bf8-g7, ...d7-d5 and ...Nb8-c6 to follow.

(iii) 2.e4 is a desperate attempt to take the Dutch Defence to pieces quickly, but I do not recommend this: 2...fxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Nc6!? 5.d5 Ne5 6.Qd4 Nf7 7.Bxf6 exf6 8.Nxe4 f5 9.Ng3 g6! 10.0-0 Bh6+ 11.f4 0-0 is main line. One interesting plan here is to play ...Bh6-g7, ...Nf7-d6, ...b7-b5, ...Ra8-b8 andQd8-f6 with some pressure against the white queenside.

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



The main line is 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 when Black must choose between 3...g6 and 3...e6. In the former case he has a King's Indian set-up with a pawn already on f5. Given that one of the aims of the King's Indian is to break with ...f7-f5 one might think that this is just very good for Black. The harder part is getting in the move ...e7-e5 successfully. For instance, 3...g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7.Nc3 Nc6 8.d5 Ne5 9.Nxe5 dxe5 and Black has a pawn at e5, but it is doubled and the game can burst into action after 10.e4 f4 11.exf4 Nh5!?. If Black feels up to taking this on then good luck, but you will need to study this in the theory books first.

3...e6 is more common and after 4.Bg2 the strategy revolves around whether Black wants to fight for ...e6-e5 by playing 4...Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 – the Classical Variation, or whether he wants to solidify his grip over e4 once and for all by playing 4...d5 when play might continue 5.0-0 Bd6 6.c4 c6 7.b3 Qe7 to prevent Bc1-a3 and moves like ...b7-b6, ...Bc8-b7, ...0-0, ...a7-a5 and ...Nf6-e4 to follow, choosing d7 or a6 for the knight on b8 as appropriate. White may also try 7.Bf4 Bxf4 8.gxf4 0-0 and 9...Nbd7 with a very tense situation of Black having the more solid structure but White having the better dark-square control, in particular the outpost created by Black at e5.

PART 13: Unusual Openings in Practice

In this section there are two games of my own, with me being White in both. They show less usual openings getting into tense positions with lots of things to analyse. Both games are eventually drawn, but White has the upper hand in both, in the first case playing with the 'rare opening' and in the second case playing against it.

The first game is Bigg – Tsesarsky (IM), Coulsdon 2002. The opening is another Trompowski, and as you will see, complications start quite early!

1. d4	Nf6
2. Bg5	e6
3. e4	h6
4. Bxf6	Qxf6
5. c3	d5
6. Nd2	c5!

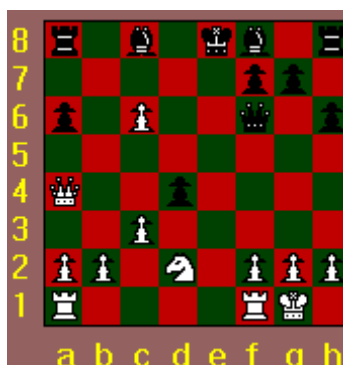
Much more accurate than 6...dxe4 7.Nxe4 Qd8 8.f4!? intending 9.Nf3 with more space and a huge grip on e5, or just 8.Nf3 at once.

7. Ngf3	Nc6
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Here 7...cxd4 is perhaps more accurate at once, to force me to make a decision as to how to recapture. 8.cxd4? is ugly due to 8...dxe4 and I have an IQP and my opponent has the two bishops into the bargain, one trump too many. 8.exd5 is correct, with the idea of 8...exd5 9.Nxd4 when Black has the IQP but two bishops to compensate, or if he plays 8...dxc3!? then 9.Ne4 Qg6 10.Nxc3 with Bb5+ and 0-0 to follow is good for White.

8. Bb5	cxd4
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Here I thought about 9.Nxd4 exploiting the pin. If 9...e5 then 10.exd5! exd4 11.0-0!? is very interesting, since 11...dxc3 is met by 12.Ne4 with Rf1-e1 to follow and an attack, while 11...a6 12.Ba4 b5 13.dxc6! bxa4 (13...Qxc6 14.Re1+ Be6 15.Bc2 threatens Be4 skewering the queen and rook and gaining time for 16.cxd4 as a result, and 15...0-0-0?! Is risky to say the least after 16.Be4 Qb6 17.a4!) 14.Qxa4 and we reach the critical position:-



By this stage I had used quite a lot of time checking all the side variations and convincing myself that this was the best line. I was unsure how to assess my chances here and decided not to risk it. Was my decision correct? Well I had noticed that all of Rfe1+, Ne4 and c7+ are potential threats, but what if Black just plays ...Be7, ...Bd7 and ...0-0 in response? This is what put me off, but now we have the position in front of us, let us see if we can make something work. One threat that I failed to notice is the simple 15.cxd4 with three nice pawns that can be pushed for the piece. One plan that looks good then is rooks to e1 and d1, d4-d5 and Ne4. Thus it seems Black should either

take on c3 or defend d4. If **14...dxc3** then do we go 15.Ne4 or 15.Rae1+? (I pick the a-rook so that a future ...cxb2 will not gain a tempo). If 15.Rae1+ Be7 (not 15...Be6 16.c7+) 16.Ne4 Qg6 17.Nc5 with a threat of c7+ looks good and I assume that 15.Ne4 and 16.Rae1 may well transpose. But wait! Black has 17...0-0 18.Rxe7 Qd6! And I see no way to save the piece. What about 17.Nxc3 instead, threatening Nc3-d5? Maybe 17...Qd6 again, but wait, in that case I will play my f-rook to e1 on move 15 and then I would have 18.Rad1 winning after 17...Qd6. Let us check that there is no opportunity for ...cxb2: no, there is not! Move 15 is with check, move 16 threatens to capture the queen on f6 with check and the knight captures the problem pawn on the next turn. Therefore we play 15.Rfe1+ Be7 16.Ne4 Qg6 17.Nxc3 and has Black got a defence (this is how we need to analyse chess: be prepared to go back and look at improvements in a line, because you might not find the correct rook to move or the most forcing move order first time round)? 17...Kf8 looks hideous so 17...Be6 is the last try. White must try 18.c7+ and then 18...Bd7 (18...Kf8 19.Rad1! threatens ideas of both Qxa6 and Rd8+, as well as Qc6 and Nd5: this looks risky for Black to me) and now perhaps we can sacrifice with 19.Rxe7+ Kxe7 20.Qb4+! to take the f8-square away from Black as an escape route. 20...Qd6 allows 21.Nd5+ Ke6 22.Re1+ Kxd5 23.Rd1+ winning the queen and mating shortly after, while 20...Ke8 21.Nd5! Qg5 22.Qb8+! wins. Thus the king would have to come forward with 20...Kf6 21.Nd5+ Ke5 (note that if 20...Ke6? then White wins a tempo with Re1+ which makes things even worse) 22.Qc5! wins. White threatens the unstoppable 23.Re1+ and if 22...Qe4 then 23.Nc3+



That is what I call a king hunt and it seems that **14...dxc3** is losing, so **14...Bc5** is indicated, to defend d4. However, White has 15.Ne4 but then 15...Qe5 is surprisingly annoying, so 15.Rae1+! Be6 16.c7+ Ke7 (16...Kf8 17.Qc6 regains the piece) 17.Nb3! when 17...Qf5 loses to 18.Qa5! and 17...Bb6 to 18.Qb4+ so 17...Ba7 is forced and then just 18.cxd4 and White has material equality and a huge attack. So perhaps 9.Nxd4! is best, but there was no way I would have seen all the above at the board, and White had to be very accurate too. This type of analysis is good fun and excellent practice. Perhaps 9.Nxd4! Bd7 is more solid but then 10.Qa4 e5 11.exd5 exd4 12.0-0-0!? is worth a look. 12...Ne5 13.Rhe1 might be awkward and 12...Nb8 13.Rhe1+ Be7 14.Ne4 Qf4+ 15.Kb1 also looks good, but perhaps the calm 13...Kd8! 14.Ne4 Qf4+ 15.Kb1 f5!? holds on. Maybe then 10.exd5 exd5 11.0-0 is safest. Grabbing a pawn with 11...Nxd4 12.Bxd7+ Kxd7 13.cxd4 Qxd4 is surely suicide after 14.Qb3! Bb4 15.Nf3 or 14...b6 15.Rad1

So after all that, back to the game!

9. cxd4 Bd7

Evidently Tsesarsky is worried about 9...dxe4 10.Ne5! catching his king in the centre after 10...Bd7 11.Nxd7 or 11.Qa4 Rc8 12.Nxe4 Qd8 13.Nxd7 Qxd7 14.Rc1 with a likely transition into a superior ending for White.

10. 0-0 Be7
11. Ne5!?

This exploits the fact that the black queen cannot retreat to d8 after 11...Nxe5 12.dxe5 and so White will get to keep the black king in the centre with Bxd7+ on the next move. 11.Ne5 also prevents 11...0-0, and 11...0-0-0 is clearly asking for 12.Rc1 and Qa4 to follow. Note that 11.e5 is still bad, even though the black queen can't retreat, because it just blocks up all White's play and in the long run Black has the two bishops.

11. Rd8
12. Nxd7

The problem for White is that there are too many candidate moves and time is running out. 12.exd5 was also to be considered: 12...exd5 13.Bxc6 Bxc6 14.Rc1 with the aim of taking on c6 and saddling Black with a backward c-pawn, following up with Nd2-b3 and perhaps an edge in an ending. Black can try 12...Nxe5 instead, however. After 13.dxe5 Qxe5 14.Bxd7+ Rxd7 15.dxe6 Qxe6 16.Re1 Qd6 it will be difficult to stop Black castling when he might have a better ending because of bishop against knight. 17.Nc4 Qxd1 18.Raxd1 Rxd1 19.Rxd1 might be best, with a dead draw.



19...0-0 20.Rd7 Rc8! 21.Rxe7 Rxc4 22.Re8+! Kh7 23.Kf1!(=)

The move in the game may be the best way to fight for more.

12. Rxd7
13. Qa4 dxe4!

Forced but good.

14. Bxc6 bxc6
15. Nxe4 Qxd4
16. Qxc6 0-0!

16...Qxb2 17.Rab1 Qe5 18.Rfd1 Qc7 19.Qxc7 Rxc7 20.Rb8+ wins.

17. Nc3! Qd6

17...Rfd8 loses to 18.Rad1! Qxd1 19.Nxd1 Rxd1 20.Qc2 and White is in control.

18. Qxd6 Rxd6

[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



A very interesting endgame has arisen in which I have a queenside majority and Black has a weak a-pawn but Black has the bishop on an open board. Black's rooks are too active for my liking so the first plan is to exchange them off.

19. Rfd1 Rfd8

Moving the rook allows 7th rank infiltration with 20.Rd7!

20. Rxd6 Rxd6
21. Rd1 Rxd1+
22. Nxd1 Kf8
23. Kf1 Ke8
24. Ke2 Kd7
25. Kd3 f5

I must now think about how to get my pawns in motion while holding Black's pawns up on the kingside by blockading on the light squares.

26. f3 Kd6
27. Nc3 Kc5
28. a3 Bd6
29. h3 Bb8
30. b4+ Kd6
31. Kc4 Kc6
32. a4 Bg3

White is now better but can he win. I could not see how and may have been running out of time by now. The game eventually fizzled out to a draw by **33.Nb5 Bf2 34.Nd4+ Kd6 35.b5 Ke5! 36. Nc6+ Kd6 37.a5 Be1 38.Nd8 Kd7 39.b6! a6! 40.Nb7 Kc6 41.Nd8+ and a draw was agreed.**

The next game is taken from the last round of one of the worst tournaments of my entire life. It was another weekend congress and I had started on the depressing score of half a point out of three. I managed to win the fourth round with Black and needed to win this game with White just to finish on half-score! The determination was almost too much to bear. My opponent is David Tucker, who has been on the regular tournament circuit in Kent for a long time.

1. d4 Nf6
2. Nf3

I had lost with the Trompowski in both of my previous White games in this tournament and was in no good humour about it!

2. b5?!

It must be said I do not like this move, but my first reaction, given my performance in the rest of the tournament was ‘O great! I’m going to lose to this as well now am I?’

Black tries to take hold of the c4-square but White changes plan and plays of the kingside instead.

3. Bg5! Ne4
4. Bf4

My excuse is that Black does not generally-speaking play an early ...b7-b5 against the Trompowski.

4. Bb7
5. e3 a6
6. a4 b4
7. Nbd2 e6
8. Nxe4 Bxe4
9. Bd3! Bb7

Perhaps best, since 9...Bxd3 10.Qxd3 leaves the light squares looking very shaky for Black when he plays ...a6-a5 and if he doesn’t play this then I play a4-a5 and the b-pawn will be a permanent worry for Black.

10. 0-0 d5

Black is worried, probably quite rightly, about 11.e4 and 12.Qe2 when there is little point in Black’s position and I threaten building moves like a4-a5, c2-c3 and if the b-pawns are exchanged then Rf1-b1 and the b7-bishop gives Black more trouble. The problem with 10...d5 is emphasized by my next move.

11. Ne5! Nd7
12. Qh5! Nxe5
13. Bxe5

Black is hopelessly tied down on the kingside. He move the f8-bishop or g7 falls, the f-pawn is pinned and 13...g6? 14.Qh3 wins a couple of pawns after 14...f6 (14...Rg8 15.Qxh7 is even worse) 15.Qxe6+ and Qxf6. There is only one plan remaining: castle queenside.

13. Qd7
14. f4! 0-0-0
15. f5

The threat is 16.fxe6 and the rook gets into f7. Again, Black finds an only move.

15. f6
16. fxe6 Qe8
17. Qh3! Kb8

Obviously not 17...fxe5 18.e7+ Rd7 19.exf8=Q Rxf8 19.Rxf8 Qxf8 20.Bf5 winning.

18. Bf4 Bd6

Black covers the diagonal and prepares ...Bb7-c8. I cannot save my extra pawn so I must further get to grips with his weakened queenside and try to expose the black king while he retrieves his pawn.

19. a5! Bc8
20. c3!

My 19th move fixed a6 and b4 as weaknesses and my 20th move attacks b4. Swapping b-pawns on c3 is very dangerous as Black would then come under heavy attack down the b-file. 20...Bxe6 21.Qg3! Ka7 22.cxb4 and attacking down the c-file leaves Black in serious trouble.

20. b3

The only other option but even this allows me to keep a clear advantage.

21. Bxd6 Rxd6
22. Ra3! Rxe6
23. Rxb3+ Bb7

23...Rb6 24.Rxb6+ cxb6 25.Qg3+ and 26.axb6 leaves Black a pawn down and now vulnerable down the a-file. If the king moves then 24.Qg3 gains a vital tempo on the c7-pawn.

24. Re1 Qc6?!
25. Qg3! g6
26. Rb6

The point of my 25th move, the c-pawn is pinned.

26. Qd7
27. e4! Rhe8
28. Rxe6 Rxe6
29. e5 fxe5
30. Rxe5 Rf6
31. Qe1 Qa4
32. b4 Qc6
33. h3 Be8
34. Re8 Kb7



White is winning; he has total control of the e-file, an extra pawn and perhaps a safer king. The pawns on the dark squares complement the bishop superbly. It is around this stage that the quality of moves goes downhill. I was eager to get home with half-score and forget all about the tournament and I imagine Black was just hacked off at his position.

35. Qe5 Re6?!
36. Rxe6 Bxe6
37. Qe3 Bf5?

Far too impatient and makes my life a lot easier. Obviously not 37...Qxc3?? 38.Bxa6+

38. Bxf5 gxf5
39. Qf3! Qe6
40. c4! c6?!

Not 40...Qe4? 41.Qxe4! fxe4 (41...dxe4 42.g4! f4 43.g5 Kc7 44.h4 Kd7 45.h5 Ke6 46.d5+ cxd5 47.cxd5+ and Black cannot stop all the pawns, especially with b4-b5 and queening the a-pawn in reserve) 42.cxd5 and the king will round up the e4-pawn. 40...Kc6 deserves attention though.

41. cxd5 cxd5

41...Qxd5 42.Qe3! and black's isolated pawns and now exposed king begin to tell.

42. Kf2 Kc6?
43. Qc3+?? Kb5!

And the game is drawn.

I cannot believe my hasty 43rd move, allowing the king to roam freely around my weak pawns. 42...Kc6? is a mistake too, after 43.Qd3! Kb7 44.b5! axb5 45.Qxb5+ Ka7 46.a6! Qxa6 47.Qxd5 and the passed d-pawn gives me an easy win with the black king all the way over on a6 and the remaining black pawns isolated. After playing so many good moves one blunder can still throw it all away. This is a tournament that I wish to forget as soon as possible!

PART 14: Exploiting an Advantage

One of the most common things that you will hear chess player say to you is the immortal phrase “I was winning, but.....!” Exploiting an advantage is sadly not always as easy as the opponent’s play might mean it deserves to be.

One player who probably would not be heard saying the above phrase is Anatoly Karpov and if we want lessons in converting an edge then he is the person to follow. If he does ever lose a game it is because he started with a bad position, not because he blundered a winning one. The first game is Karpov – Timman, Montreal 1979. Timman gets a bad position from the opening and that’s about that. This game might be described as a lesson in grinding.

1. e4	d6
2. d4	Nf6
3. Nc3	g6
4. g3	Bg7
5. Bg2	0-0
6. Nge2	e5
7. 0-0	Na6

I wonder whether 7...Nc6 or 7...Nbd7 is better.

8. Re1	c6
9. h3

An important move, eliminating counterplay by Black on g4, and preparing to put his bishop to e3.

9.	Re8
10. Bg5

An important provoking move, to get Black to weaken his kingside before retreating the bishop to e3.

10.	h6
11. Be3	Qc7

I do not like this set-up by Black, it seems very artificial and where is the a6-knight going?

12. Qd2	Kh7
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That’s another advantage of provoking ...h7-h6 of course, Karpov gains a tempo while connecting his rooks.

13. Rad1	Bd7
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[SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF]



Black has a horrible position, with almost no play at all, but if White goes forward recklessly then Black may get all the chances he needs. Karpov is calm and patient, waiting to see whether his opponent will make mistakes here. Most of us would probably play 14.f4 here, or perhaps wait with 14.Kh2. Karpov prefers to gain a bit more space first.

14. g4 Rad8
15. Ng3

Karpov carefully overprotects his centre and move slowly further forward.

15. Bc8
16. f4

Karpov now thinks the time is right and gains more space creating tension. Interestingly enough, I would be concerned about 16...Bxg4 17.hxg4 Nxc4 here, but Karpov never seems worried about his opponent's sacrificing. Perhaps 18.d5 is just good for White though.

16. b5
17. a3!

Typical Karpov, just stop the counterplay before it starts.

17. b4

Clearly risky, since it will give Karpov the weak a-pawn as a target, but with the pawn on b5 the move d4-d5 is always in the air for White, intending to undermine the pawn's support.

18. axb4 Nxb4
19. Nce2!

I like the philosophy, there is a piece in my half of the board therefore I will shift it!

19. exd4
20. Nxd4

Even here Karpov is sure to avoid 20.Bxd4 c5! and ...Bc8-a6 to follow with some play.

20. a5
21. c3

Actually now or never since after ...Bc8-a6 this move could be met by ...Nb4-d3!

21. Na6

22. Qc2!

Simple control, defending e4 so that he can answer 22...Nc5 with 23.b4

22. **Bd7**
 23. Nf3 **Re7**
 24. Bf2

Coordinating his defences to the utmost before making any attempt to move forward.

24. **Be8**
 25. Qd3!

A nice moment to play this, as 25...Nc5 loses simply to 26.Bxc5 due to the pin along the d-file.

25. **Qb7**
 26. Ra1

Karpov could have gone for it with 26.e5, but why break the habit of a lifetime. Black cannot defend a5 and 26...Qxb2?? 27.Rfb1 is just embarrassing.

26. **Nc7**
 27. Rxa5 **R8d7**
 28. b4



Just compare this with the position on the last diagram. Karpov has a winning position against a strong GM by just calmly grinding out a better position by keeping a good defensive set-up on the key squares and gaining space where possible.

28. **Ne6**
 29. Be3!

Even now he does not relax. 29.Qd2 allows 29...d5! 30.e5 Ne4 31.Nxe4 dxe4 32.Nd4 c5! and Black has counterplay. It seems unfair that Black still has chances after White has played so well, but such is chess.

29. **c5**
 30. f5 **Nd8**
 31. b5! **Kh8**

I leave it to you to work out why capturing on e4 would have lost for Black.

32. Bf2 **Qc7**

33. Re4

e4 will be overprotected whether it likes it or not.

33. Qb8
34. c4

It just gets better with every move.

34. Ra7
35. Rxa7

Karpov is a clear pawn up so he trades pieces at every opportunity. Note that it was still possible to go wrong: 35.Rfa1 Nxe4! and the bishop on g7 hits a1 and if 36.Rxa7 then 36...Nxf2! wins.

35. Rxa7
36. e5

At last the breakthrough, and the end is in sight.

36. dxe5
37. Nxe5 Ra2
38. Bxc5

and Black resigned (1-0)

I end the notes on this course with one of my all-time favourite games, in which rather than use a grinding technique to convert an advantage, here we see White use the initiative, and once he's got it he doesn't let it go. The game is Tal – Ivkov, Uppsala 1956. I just give the moves here, without any commentary, because my input would spoil the flow of a masterpiece. By the way, in case you think Black is a weak player, then I would point out that Borislav Ivkov is a top class grandmaster who recently played in the Senior European Championship in a field of strong veteran GMs and IMs, including Victor Korchnoi, and won the tournament outright with an amazing score of 8/9! Mikhail Tal, however, can beat anyone on his day.

1. e4 e5
2. Nf3 Nc6
3. Bb5 a6
4. Ba4 Nf6
5. 0-0 Be7
6. Re1 b5
7. Bb3 0-0
8. c3 d6
9. h3 Na5
10. Bc2 c5
11. d4 Qc7
12. Nbd2 Bd7
13. Nf1 Re8
14. Ne3 g6
15. b4 cxb4
16. cxb4 Nc4
17. Nxc4 bxc4
18. Re3 Bf8
19. Bb2 Bh6
20. Ra3 Qb7

- | | |
|----------|------|
| 21. dxe5 | Qxb4 |
| 22. Qd4 | Nh5 |
| 23. exd6 | Bg7 |
| 24. e5 | Bc6 |
| 25. Re3 | Bxf3 |
| 26. Bc3 | Qb5 |
| 27. gxf3 | Rad8 |
| 28. f4 | Re6 |
| 29. Rb1 | Qc6 |
| 30. Rb6 | Qc8 |
| 31. Bd1 | Bh6 |
| 32. Bxh5 | gxh5 |
| 33. f5 | |

and Black resigned (1-0)



The final position speaks for itself.

I hope you find these notes useful and that this course will have shown you a lot about how chess is played at some of the highest levels. I hope also that your grade will show a big leap as a result. Best of luck.

Andrew Bigg.