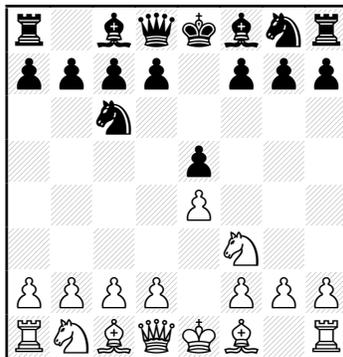


C44–C59: **Scotch, Four Knights, Italian & other 3rd Moves**

*Written by GMs Nigel Davies, Tony Kosten, Victor Mikhalevski & Olivier Renet
Last updated Saturday, March 12, 2011*

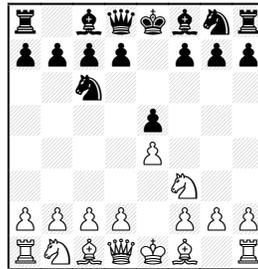


This eBook covers everything after **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6** except the Spanish.

All the game references highlighted in [blue](#) have been annotated and can be downloaded in PGN form using the PGN Games Archive on www.chesspublishing.com.

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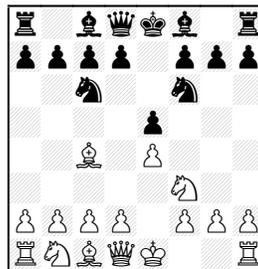
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Bishop's Opening [C55]

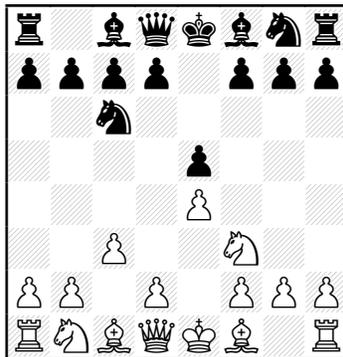
Press F5 to toggle the Navigation Pane, then click on the appropriate bookmark to go straight to that section.

Ctrl + 2 resizes the page.

Ponziani, Goring & Others [C44]

Last updated: 12/06/07 by Tony Kosten

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 c3



I'm of the opinion that the 'Ponz' is White's most serious option at this point, having attracted the attention of some very strong positional players when followed up as a reversed Philidor.

The Scotch Gambit is initiated by 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖c4 (The safest way to deal with 4 c3 is to decline it with either 4... ♗f6, transposing into 3.c3 ♗f6 4.d4 exd4, or 4...d5. After this latter move play might continue 5 exd5 ♖xd5 6 cxd4 ♖b4+ (For the wild 6... ♗g4 7 ♗c3 ♗xf3 8 ♗xd5 see [Jestadt,J–Ricca,R/Correspondence 1993 \(17\)](#)) 7 ♗c3 ♗g4 8 ♗e2 ♗xf3 9 ♗xf3 ♖c4 10 ♖b3 ♖xb3 11 axb3 ♗ge7 giving Black a very reasonable endgame – see [Mastrovasilis,D–Gabriel,C/Greece vs. Germany Match 1999 \(52\)](#)) 4... ♗c5 (4... ♗e7 5 0-0 d6 6 ♗xd4 ♗e5?! 7 ♗b3 c5? 8 ♗e2 was good for White in [Wagner,R–Meier,D/US Amateur West Ch. 1999 \(27\)](#), 4... ♗f6 is a Two Knights Defence) 5 0-0 (Black must not react to 5 ♗g5 too passively – for 5... ♗h6 6 ♖h5 ♖e7 7 f4 0-0?! see [Blackburne,J–Gifford/The Hague 1874 \(20\)](#)) 5...d6 6 c3 ♗g4 (6...dxc3 7 ♖b3 ♖d7 is also interesting – see [Cobb,J–Adams,M/West Bromwich ENG 2002 \(25\)](#)) 7 ♖b3 ♗xf3 8 ♗xf7+ ♗f8 9 ♗xg8 ♖xg8 10 gxf3 ♗b6 and Black was better in the game [Peretz,M–Mikhalevski,V/Ramat Aviv 1999 \(57\)](#).

Aiming for a King's Indian Attack formation with 3 g3 leads to a kind of reversed Larsen Philidor after 3... ♗f6 4 d3 d5 5 exd5 ♗xd5 – see [Manik,M–Oral,T/Trencin 1995 \(19\)](#).

Another way to go for a reversed Hanham Variation of the Philidor is with 3 ♗e2 – for the overreaction with 3...f5?! (3... ♗f6 4 d3 d5 5 ♗bd2 should transpose into 3.c3 Nf6 4.d3)

4 d4 fxe4 5 ♖xe5 see [Kreuzkamp,R–Michalczak,T/Bundesliga, Germany 1996 \(17\)](#).

3...♗f6

3...d5 4 ♖a4 (White can also play 4 d3 as after 4...dxe4 5 dxe4 ♖xd1+ 6 ♗xd1 the endgame may be slightly better for White. The fact that Black's knight is on c6 stops him playing a pawn to that square and defending d5.) 4...♗d7 5 exd5 ♗d4 6 ♖d1 ♗xf3+ 7 ♖xf3 ♗f6 8 ♗c4 ♗d6 9 d3 ♖e7 (9...c6 10 ♗g5 was also better for White in [Upton,T–Akca,E/Marmaris Open, Turkey 2002 \(19\)](#)) 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗xf6 gxf6 and Black's ugly pawn structure led to him being sensationally beaten in [Surtees,M–Hebden,M/County Match 1998 \(38\)](#)).

4 d4

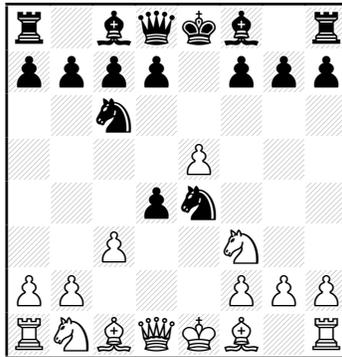
My personal view is that the most testing move for Black in practice is 4 d3 for example 4...♗e7 (4...d5 5 ♗bd2 ♗e7 6 ♗e2 0-0 7 0-0 h6 8 b4 is [Benko,P–Alexander,C/Dublin 1957 \(42\)](#)) 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 0-0 d5 7 ♖c2 a5 8 ♗bd2 ♖e8 (for 8...♗g4 9 ♖e1 h6 10 b3 ♖e8 11 ♗b2 ♗f8 12 a3 see [Pachman,L–Minev,N/Prague Zonal 1954 \(48\)](#)) 9 ♖e1 ♗f8 10 b3 b6 11 a3 ♗b7 12 ♗b2 and White's restrained set-up was shown to contain a lot of venom in [Csom,I–Cooper,J/Nice 1974 \(42\)](#).

4...exd4

This is a good practical way for Black to meet both the 'Open Ponziani' (with 4.d4) and the Goring Gambit (3.d4 exd4 4.c3), not least because it kills two birds with one stone. After 4...♗xe4 5 d5 ♗e7 (5...♗c5!? was mentioned by Bronstein in his '200 Open Games', 6 dxc6 ♗xf2+ 7 ♗e2 bxc6 8 ♖a4 f5 9 ♗bd2 0-0 with an attack, see the notes to the Tony K game) 6 ♗xe5 White has an annoying space advantage, for example 6...♗g6 7 ♗xg6 (For 7 ♖f3!? see [Upton,T–Norri,J/European Team Ch., Spain 2001 \(21\)](#)), 7 ♗d3 ♗xe5 8 ♗xe4 ♗c5 9 ♖h5 was the game [Kuijf,M–Anand,V/Wijk aan Zee 1990 \(24\)](#).) 7...hxg6 8 ♗d2!?

Black can play solidly with 4...d6 but after 5 h3 he should avoid the 5...exd4 (5...♗e7 is a sound move) 6 cxd4 ♗xe4 of [Zeidler,S–Littlewood,J/Four Nations Chess League, Eng 2002 \(15\)](#).

5 e5 ♗e4



The sharp line.

Black can also play 5...♞d5 as in [Sermek,D–Rogic,D/Dresden 1998 \(61\)](#).

6 ♖e2 f5 7 exf6 d5 8 ♞bd2 d3

8...♜xf6 9 ♞xe4 dxe4 10 ♜xe4+ was a bit better for White in [Upton,T–Flear,G/Lloyds Bank Masters 1982 \(30\)](#).

9 ♜e3 ♟c5 10 ♞d4

10 fxg7 is critical, 10...♞g8 11 ♞d4 ♜e7 12 ♟xd3 and objectively White is better, [Grabinsky,V–Potapov,A, Pardubice 2005](#).

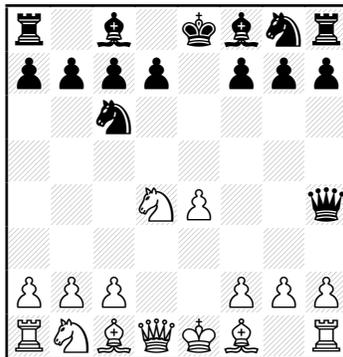
10...♟xd4 11 cxd4 0-0

and White had serious problems with his development in [Upton,T–Lalic,B/Metz 1998 \(22\)](#).

Scotch Game 4...Qh4 & Others [C45]

Last updated: 12/05/09 by Victor Mikhalevski

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♚h4!?



This move of Steinitz actually wins a pawn for Black, though naturally it is risky to develop the queen so early.

Black has several reasonable alternatives:

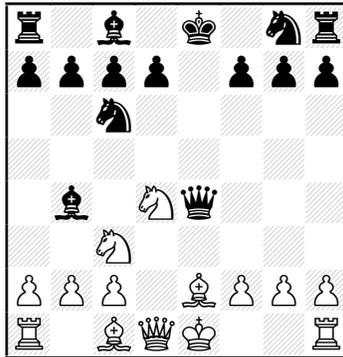
- a) 4...g6 5 ♗e3 (5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 ♗d3 ♗g7 was fine for Black in [Bolt,G–Berry,S/Leuven Open, Belgium 2000](#) (17)) 5...♗g7 6 c3 (6 ♘c3 is the critical move after which 6...d6 7 ♗e2 ♘f6?! 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 e5 gave White a strong initiative in [De la Riva,O–Colas,R/Spanish Championship 1999](#) (20)) 6...♘f6 7 ♘d2 0-0 8 ♗e2 ♗e8 9 ♚c2 d5 and Black stood well in [Bensdorp,L–Hendriks,R/AKN Haarlem Open, Holland 2000](#) (26)
- b) 4...♗b4+ allows White to gain a tempo with 5 c3 but the pawn prevents a White knight from coming to c3. This looks like a very reasonable way to "decline" the Scotch, for example 5...♗c5 (5...♗e7 is also quite playable – see [De la Paz,F–Bruzon,L/Holguin City CUB 2002](#) (29)) 6 ♗e3 ♗b6 7 ♘xc6 (7 ♗c4 d6 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 ♚f3 ♚f6 was fine for Black in [Motylev,A–Zviagintsev,V/Anibal Open, Linares 2000](#) (21)) 7...bxc6 8 ♗d4 ♚h4!? (8...♘f6 9 e5 ♘d5 was fine for Black in [Sutovsky,E–Onischuk,A/Polanica Zdroj 1999](#) (23)) 9 ♗d3 ♘e7 10 0-0 0-0 [Llaneza Vega,M–Sokolov,I/Budapest HUN 2009](#).
- c) 4...♘ge7 looks rather artificial but it has been played by such notables as Ivan Sokolov. Play might continue 5 ♘c3 ♘xd4 6 ♚xd4 ♘c6 7 ♚e3 and now 7...♗b4 may be Black's best (7...b6 turned out badly for Black in [Svidler,P–Wissmann,R/Darmstadt GER 2000](#) (20))

5 ♖c3

White's main alternative is 5 ♗b5, for example 5...♙c5 (5...♙b4+ 6 ♗d2?! ♚xe4+ 7 ♙e2 ♚xg2! was good for Black in [Stassen,A–Graig,C/Correspondence, 1997](#) 1997 (17)) 6 ♚e2 ♗d4 7 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 and Black was very comfortably placed in [Schuermans,H–Lane,G/Le Touquet, France 1991](#) (23)

5 ♚d3 is passive and artificial, White finding himself in serious trouble after 5...♗f6 6 ♗d2 ♗g4 in the game [Prueger,K–Dyckhoff,E/Correspondence 1930](#) (9)

5...♙b4 6 ♙e2 ♚xe4



6...♗f6 7 0-0 ♙xc3 8 ♗f5 ♚xe4 also looks very risky for Black – see [Karjakin,S–Malinin,V/Sudak 2002](#) (20)

7 ♗db5 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♗d8 9 0-0 ♗f6

9...a6 10 ♙f3 ♚c4 11 ♗d6! gave White a very strong attack in [Oral,T–Kantorik,S/Team Championship, Slovakia 2001](#) (16)

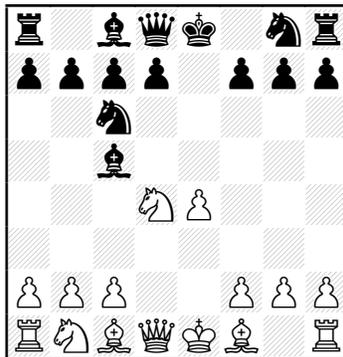
10 ♚b1 a6 11 ♗d4!? ♗xd4 12 cxd4

and White had long-term pressure for his pawn in [Van der Wiel,J–Pliester,L/Enschede NED 2003](#) (47). Black's problem is that his king position is going to be a constant headache.

Scotch Game 4...Bc5 [C45]

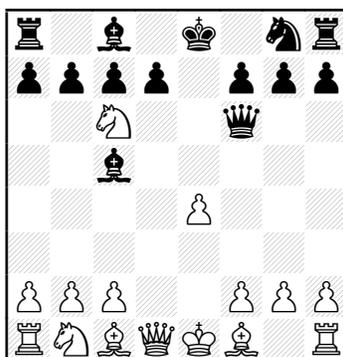
Last updated: 12/03/11 by Victor Mikhalevski

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♙c5



5.♙e3

The main alternative to this is 5.♘xc6 ♖f6



(5...bxc6!? is rare, but playable, 6.♙d3 ♖h4 7.♗e2 ♘f6 [Carlsen,M–Kamsky,G/Khanty–Mansiysk RUS 2007](#)) 6.♗f3!? this is now White's preferred move, (6.♗d2 dxc6 7.♘c3 ♙d4! a strong prophylactic move, introduced by V. Tkachiev, which seems to be the modern antidote (After 7... ♘e7 8.♗f4 ♙e6!? 9.♗xf6 gxf6 Black's fast development compensated for his weak pawns in the games [Magem,J–Kovalev,A/Europ. Team](#)

Ch., Batumi 1999 (44) and Haslinger,S–Lalic,B/Telford ENG 2003 (32), and 7...♞e7!?, making room for the knight on f6, was played in Landa,K–Ibragimov,I/St Petersburg 1998 (22)) 8.♙d3 (8.♙c4 ♘e6 9.♙xe6 fxe6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♞e2 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♞xc3 led to complex play in Nataf,I–Beliavsky,A/Istanbul TUR 2003 (49),. 8.f4 ♘h6! featured in Danin,A–Geller,J/Vladimir RUS 2002 (19)) 8...♘e7 9.0-0 ♘g6 10.♞e1!? ♘e5 11.♙e2 0-0 (11...g5 and both sides had chances in Rublevsky,S–Marcelin,C/Istanbul TUR 2003 (35).) 12.♙h1 ♘g4 White now has to give one of the bishops to get rid of the grip, Houska,J–Qin Kanying/Ekaterinburg RUS 2006.) 6...bxc6

a) 6...dxc6 7.♞xf6 (7.♘c3 ♙e6 8.♘a4 ♙b4+! closes the return gate for the a4–knight, Sadvakasov,D–Mamedyarov,S/Astana KAZ 2006) 7...♘xf6 8.f3 ♙e6 is dynamically balanced, Nataf,I–Postny,E/Kreuzberg GER 2006

b) 6...♞xf3 7.gxf3 bxc6 8.♙c3 ♙xe3 (Black should certainly not play 8...♙b6?! 9.c4 Savchenko,B–Georgiev,K/Moscow RUS 2006) 9.fxe3 ♘e7 10.♘c3 d6 11.♞g1 led to a shock White win in Valmana Canto,J–Harikrishna,P/San Sebastian ESP 2006

7.♞g3

a) 7.♘d2 ♞xf3 8.♘xf3 ♘f6 9.♙d3 d5 should be equal, see Ni Hua–Rowson,J/Liverpool ENG 2007

b) 7.♘c3 prepares quick development of the queenside, 7...d6 8.♞g3 ♞g6 9.♙d2 ♞b8 this move was introduced by Sargissian, (9...♘f6 Morozevich,A–Leko,P/Moscow RUS 2009, 9...♘e7 is Postny's recommendation, 10.f3 Nepomniachtchi,I–Tomashevsky,E/Moscow RUS 2010) 10.♙d3 ♙d4! Morozevich,A–Laznicka,V/Khanty–Mansiysk RUS 2009

7...h5! This both embarrasses the white queen, and prepares to develop the black knight to h6, where it would eye f5 and g4, 8.h4 (8.♘c3!? White allows the h–pawn to rush on, 8...h4 9.♞f3 h3 10.♘a4 ♙d6 11.♙e3 Radjabov,T–Inarkiev,E/FIDE Grand–Prix, Baku 2008) 8...♘h6 9.f3 d5 10.♘c3 ♙d4! Rublevsky,S–Grischuk,A/Elista RUS 2007.

At one time 5.♘b3 used to be popular, but Black defuses this with 5...♙b6 (5...♙b4+ is also possible – see Efimov,I–Romanishin,O/Reggio Emilia, Italy 2001 (24)) 6.♘c3

a) 6.a4 a6 (6...a5 now White will no longer be able to play a5 and ♞a4, but on the other hand the pawn might be a little weak, Sveshnikov,E–Krustkalns,K/Riga LAT 2006) 7.♘c3 ♘f6 was also fine for Black in Prandstetter,E–Hort,V/ (Former) Czechoslovakia, 1984 (26)

b) 6.♞e2 is rare, but Carlsen has several times used it to good effect, 6...♘ge7 (6...d6 7.♙e3 ♘f6 see Carlsen,M–Naiditsch,A/Moscow RUS 2009) 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♙e3 f5! Kotronias,V–Kamsky,G/Moscow RUS 2011.

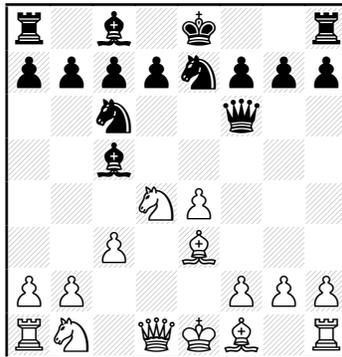
6...♘f6 (For 6...♞f6 see Sanchez Alvarez,E–Reyes Barragan,M/Hermosillo MEX 2002 (21), 6...d6 7.♙e2 ♘ge7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘a4 f5 and Black had good counterplay in Mathe,G–Yakovich,Y/Kecskemet, Hungary 1991 (22).) 7.♙g5 h6 8.♙h4 d6 and now 9.a4? loses to a brilliant queen sac, see Ahn,M–Ruck,T/Belgium BEL 2007. (9.♞e2 is best)

The tricky 5.♘f5 requires accurate and energetic play from Black with 5...d5! (5...♞f6 6.♘c3 ♘ge7 7.♘e3 was better for White in Hort,V–Zindel,E/Davos SUI 2002 (15)) 6.♘xg7+ ♙f8 7.♘h5 ♞h4 as in Minchin,J–Wayte,W/London ~1900 (17).

5...♞f6 6.c3

Mieses's forgotten 6.♘b5?! has now been shown to be a mistake: 6...♙xe3 7.fxe3 ♖h4+ played to weaken the h3-square (7...♗d8 8.♗g4 – see [Zelcic,R–Kuba,G/Pula CRO 2003 \(41\)](#).) 8.g3 ♗d8! 9.♗g4 g6 10.♗f4 d6 11.♙c4 ♘e5 12.0-0 ♙h3!! see [Wang Hao–Harikrishna,P/Tiayuan CHN 2005](#).

6...♘ge7



After the less popular 6...♗g6!? White should probably play 7.♗f3 (7.♗e2 ♘xd4 8.♙xd4 ♙xd4 9.cxd4 ♘e7 intending a later ...d7–d5 gave Black quite good play in [Schmittiel,E–Kupreichik,V/Bad Endbach 1995 \(19\)](#), and 7.♘d2 ♘f6 8.♘f5 ♙xe3 9.♘xe3 0-0 left Black with no problems in [Bin–Sattar,R–Ibragimov,I/Mind Sports Masters 1999 \(24\)](#)) when 7...♙b6?! 8.♘b5! gave White a strong initiative in [Sutovsky,E–Hector,J/Malmo SWE 2003 \(27\)](#).

7.♙c4

7.g3 I wonder why so many players are attracted to this line? It is tricky and solid but not so difficult to play with Black. 7...d5 8.♙g2 dxe4 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘d2 ♙b6 11.♘xe4 (11.♙e1!? [Nedev,T–Tkachiev,V/Feugen AUT 2006](#).) 11...♗g6 12.♙e1 ♙g4 with good play, [Pavasovic,D–Lautier,J/Turin ITA 2006](#).

7...♘e5

7...♗g6?! looks dubious after 8.♘xc6 (though he scored a quick win after 8.0-0 d6 in [Dutreeuw,M–Van Eert,F/Veurne Simul 1999 \(14\)](#).)

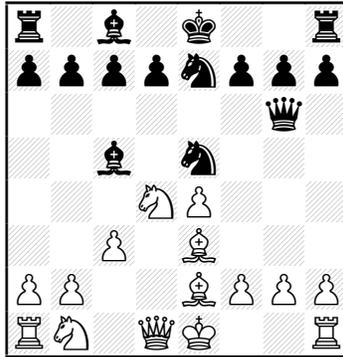
Black has a little explored but interesting gambit possibility in 7...d5!? 8.exd5 ♘e5 as in [Rodrigues,N–Damaso,R/Lisbon Open, Portugal 2000 \(22\)](#).

7...0-0 8.0-0 ♘e5 should transpose.

8.♙e2

8.♙b3!? ♖g6 (8...0-0 9.0-0 d6 10.f3 ♕e6 quickly led to a small Black advantage in [Morozevich,A–Svidler,P/Mexico City MEX 2007.](#)) 9.0-0 d5! and Black was fine in [Morozevich,A–Leko,P/Mexico City MEX 2007.](#)

8...♗g6



For the energetic 8...d5!? see [Fontaine,A–Motwani,P/Training game, Brussels 2001 \(22\).](#)

9.0-0 d6 10.f3

After 10.♔h1!? Black can play 10...♗xe4! (10...0-0 11.♘d2 [Naiditsch,A–Jakovenko,D/Odessa UKR 2009](#), 11...♘g4) 11.♘d2 ♖g6 12.♘b5 this is the point, White regains the pawn while weakening the black structure. (12.♙h5 ♗d3 (12...♙g4!? 13.♗a4+ ♕d7 14.♗d1 also repeats) 13.♙e2 is a well-known 'GM draw'.) 12...0-0 13.♘xc7 ♖b8 14.♙h5 ♗f5! (14...♗d3?! 15.♖e1 ♘7c6 16.♘e4! [Ni Hua–Kunte,A/Cebu City PHI 2007](#)) 15.f4! (15.♘b5?! ♘d3! [Minyeyevtsev,S–Lacrosse,M/A–group, Borgerhout 2002.](#)) 15...♘5c6! 16.♘c4 b5!? [Rublevsky,S–Khenkin,I/Russian Team Championship 2008.](#)

10.f4!? Chigorin's move is less popular than the two alternatives, but seems to be more challenging, 10...♗xe4 11.♙f2 ♕xd4 12.cxd4 ♘5g6 13.g3 0-0 14.♘c3 ♗f5 15.d5 with good compensation, [Carlsen,M–Leko,P/Nanjing CHN 2009.](#)

10...0-0 11.♘d2

11.♔h1 White moves the king away from the x-ray of the dark-squared bishop, 11...d5 12.f4!? ♗xe4 13.b4! [Amonatov,F–Aleksandrov,A/Zvenigorod RUS 2008.](#)

11...♙b6!?

11...d5 12.♔h1 dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♙b6 14.♖e1 ♙f5 allowed Black to equalise easily, [Rublevsky,S–Grishchuk,A, Elista RUS 2007.](#)

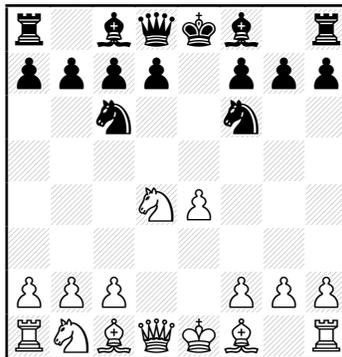
12.♘c4 ♘xc4 13.♙xc4 ♙e6

was fine for Black in [Pavasovic,D-Beliavsky,A/Istanbul TUR 2003](#) (49).

Scotch Game 4...Nf6 5.Nxc6 [C45]

Last updated: 12/03/11 by Victor Mikhalevski

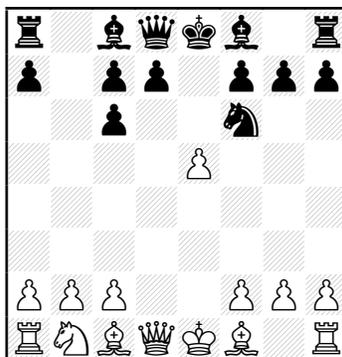
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6



5.♘xc6

White can get a Scotch Four Knights with 5 ♘c3, but in recent years the capture on c6 has been more popular.

5...bxc6 6.e5



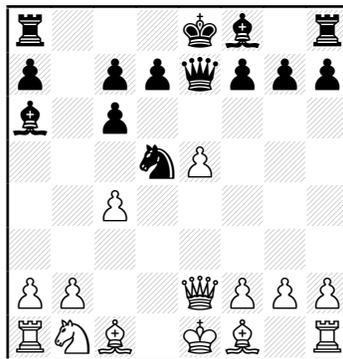
This has been all the rage.

6. ♖d4 looks odd, but White won quickly in [Matjushin,G–Matjushin,O/Caissa Open, Kharkov, Ukraine 2000](#).

6... ♖e7 7. ♖e2 ♘d5 8. c4

8. ♘d2 is a relatively rare continuation. White is delaying c4 and asking Black to make a useful move. 8... ♙b7 (8... g6 used to be the main line) 9. ♘f3 ♖b4+ 10. ♖d2 ♖e4+ 11. ♙c2 (11. ♖e2 offers to repeat) 11... ♙a6 [Vallejo Pons,F–Onischuk,A/Reggio Emilia ITA 2011](#).

8... ♙a6



Black maintains the knight on d5 by tactical means, and this will dictate his future play. As long as the c4–pawn stays where it is the black bishop is simply 'biting on granite', and can often turn out to be misplaced.

Black can also play the immediate 8... ♘b6, the so–called Mieses Variation. After 9. ♘c3 a) 9. b3 ♖e6 (9... ♙b7 prevents 10. g3, which would be met by 10... c5, 10. ♙b2 g6! 11. ♘d2 ♙g7 [Nepomniachtchi,I–Karjakin,S/Moscow RUS 2010](#)) 10. ♙b2 a5 11. ♘d2 a4 gave Black counterplay in [Sutovsky,E–Ivanisevic,I/Istanbul TUR 2003](#) (36).

b) 9. ♘d2 ♙b7 10. b3 a5 [Radjabov,T–Ivanchuk,V/Cap d'Agde FRA 2008](#)

9... ♖e6 (9... ♙b7 10. ♘d2 g6 leads to a double–edged position, 11. ♘e4! 0-0-0! see the exciting game [Shirov,A–Kramnik,V/Wijk aan Zee NED 2011](#).) 10. ♖c4 (10. ♘d2 ♙a6 11. b3 ♙c5 12. ♖e4 0-0-0 13. ♙e2 ♖de8 14. f4 f6 15. a4 d6 and Black's activity compensated for his weak pawns in [Van der Wiel,J–Van den Doel,E/Leeuwarden NED 2003](#)) 10... ♙a6 (10... g6 is the most popular, 11. f4 d5 12. ♖c2!? [Nabaty,T–Mikhalevski,V/Haifa 2010](#)) 11. b3 (11. c5 ♙xf1 12. cxb6 ♙c4 13. bxc7 d5! 14. exd6 ♙xd6= is good for Black.) 11... 0-0-0 (11... ♙b4 is an attempt to solve Black's opening problems with some tactics. 12. ♘d2 ♙xc3 13. ♙xc3 d5 14. ♖h4 dxc4 see [Carlsen,M–Karjakin,S/Moscow RUS 2010](#)) 12. ♙b2 ♙b7 13. 0-0-0 ♖e8 14. f4 d5 was first played by Adams against Kasparov, Black can get rid of his doubled pawn like this, although his pawn structure remains weaker than White's, anyway, see [Zelcic,R–Van den Doel,E/Crete GRE 2007](#).

9. b3

White has a large array of alternatives in this position, for example there is 9.♘d2 g6 this is the most natural,

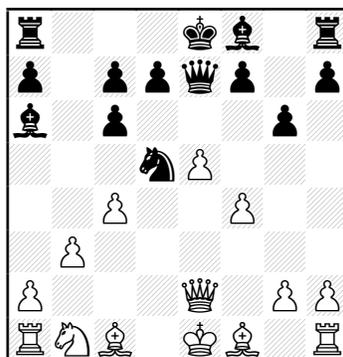
- a) 9...0-0-0 10.b3 [Radjabov,T–Topalov,V/Nanjing CHN 2009](#), when 10...f6 is the mainline
- b) 9...♗b4 10.♗f3 c5 (10...d5 11.a3! ♕xc4 12.♖d1 ♕xf1 13.♗xf1 ♗a6 14.♖a4 was very good for White in [Janssen,H–Euwe,M/Holland 1979](#).) 11.g3? d5 left White without a good move in [Heidrich,R–Jenni,F/Bundesliga, Germany 2002](#) (15)
- 10.b3 ♕g7 11.♕b2 ♗b4 (11...0-0 used to be the main line.) 12.0-0-0!? [Carlsen,M–Aronian,L/Wijk aan Zee NED 2011](#).

9...g6

9...0-0-0!? One of the sharpest lines, the king moves straight to 'relative' safety. Obviously the weakened structure in front of the king is a problem, but Black hopes to counterbalance this with his quicker development. 10.g3 g5 (10...♖b4+!? 11.♕d2 ♖b6 [Carlsen,M–Sulskis,S/Khanty–Mansiysk RUS 2010](#)) 11.♕b2 (11.h4!? [Vitoux,C–Kosten,A/Pau FRA 2008](#)) 11...♕g7 12.♗d2 the knight heads for f3 to bolster e5, (12.♕g2!? ♜de8 13.0-0 ♕xe5 14.♖xe5 ♖xe5 15.♕xe5 ♞xe5 16.cxd5 ♕xf1 17.♗xf1 cxd5 is a theoretical endgame that is considered fine for Black, see [Morozevich,A–Mikhalevski,V/Zürich 2009](#)) 12...♗b4 13.♗f3 (13.0-0-0!? offers the a2–pawn to ease White's development problems, 13...c5 (13...♗xa2+ 14.♗b1 ♗b4 15.f4 and ♗e4 with good compensation) 14.f4 ♕b7 15.♕g2 ♗d3+ 16.♖xd3 ♕xg2 17.♞he1 gxf4 18.gxf4 ♕h6 19.♞e2 ♕c6 20.♞f1! (20.f5?! see the exciting game [Abergel,T–Maze,S/Pau FRA 2008](#)) 20...♖h4 [Kolev,A–Postny,E/Kallithea GRE 2009](#).) 13...♞he8 Black finishes his development and is ready to answer attacks on his b4–knight with tactics. 14.a3 (14.♕h3?! h5 15.a3 ♗d5! favours Black, [Jones,G–Gajewski,G/Crete GRE 2007](#)) 14...g4! 15.axb4!? gxf3 16.♖e3 ♖xb4+ with complications, see [Rublevsky,S–Onischuk,A/Foros 2007](#).

9...g5 (as famously played by Anand against Kasparov) 10.g3 ♕g7 11.♕b2 0-0-0 transposes.

10.f4



10.g3 ♖g7 11.♗b2 0-0 12.♘d2!? Unusual, (12.♗g2 is most common, when 12...♞ae8 13.0-0 ♗xe5 14.♞xe5 ♞xe5 15.♗xe5 ♞xe5 16.cxd5 ♗xf1 17.♙xf1 cxd5 leads to a similar ending to the one examined briefly in the note to move 12 of Jones–Gajewski, except that here the black king is on a worse square, and Black has no kingside counterplay.) 12...♞ae8 13.0-0-0! ♘b6 14.f4 solidly defending e5, [Jones,G–Ragger,M/Yerevan ARM 2007](#).

10...f6

10...♗g7 11.♞f2 ♘b6 12.c5 ♗xf1 13.cxb6 ♗a6 14.♗a3 ♞d8 15.bxc7 ♞xc7 16.♗d6 ♞a5+ 17.♞d2 gave White the better endgame in [Tseshkovsky,V–Harikrishna,P/Hastings ENG 2002](#) (42) though he was unable to convert this to a win

An alternative for Black is 10...♞b4+ 11.♗d2 ♞b6 so as to free the way for his king's bishop to develop – see [Haslinger,S–Addison,B/Millfield School ENG 2003](#) (43).

10...g5!? introduced by Ivanchuk in 2002, see [Macieja,B–Grandelius,N/Stockholm SWE 2011](#), when 11.♗a3 seems to be the critical test.

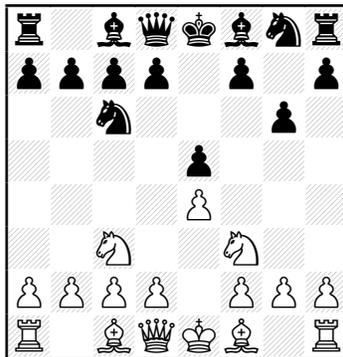
11.♗a3 ♞f7 12.♞d2 ♘b6 13.c5 ♗xf1 14.cxb6 ♗a6 15.bxc7 fxe5!

was fine for Black in [Grayland,S–McLaughlin,K/BCCA Correspondence Championship 1999](#) (43).

Three Knights [C46]

Last updated: 15/08/03 by Nigel Davies

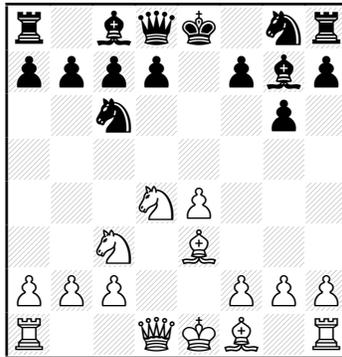
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 g6



Probably the most respectable attempt to avoid the 'drawish' Four Knights. Other tries are as follows:

- 3...d6 4 d4 exd4 (4...g4) 5 ♘xd4 g6? 6 ♘d5! was very unpleasant for Black in [Christensen,T–Jacobsen,B/Aarhus 1991](#) (9).
- 3...b4 4 ♘d5 a5 (4...f6 5 c3 e7 6 d4) also left Black cramped in [Motwani,P–Kotliar,M/Netanya 1987](#) (26) 5 c4 f6 6 0-0 d6 7 c3 c7 8 ♘xe7 and now Black had to play 8...xe7 in [Afek,Y–Kotliar,M/Israeli Championship, 1986](#) (12) (8...xe7 loses the bishop on a5 after 9 a4+)
- 3...c5 4 ♘xe5 xf2+?! (Relatively best is 4...xe5 5 d4 d6 6 dxe5 xe5 though this too looks somewhat better for White) 5 xf2 ♘xe5 6 d4 and White's strong centre and bishop pair more than compensated for the slight misplacement of his king in [Motwani,P–Bathie,N/Scottish Championship 1999](#) (42).

4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 g7 6 e3



6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Qd3 Nf6 allowed Black to develop very smoothly in Fritz 5–
[Motwani,P/Man v. Machine, Wolvertem, Apr 2000](#) (33).

6... Nge7

Rather than put the knight on this passive square, Black should consider either sacrificing a
 pawn with 6... Nf6 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 e5 Nd5
 or playing 6... d6 followed by ... Nf6 or even ... Nh6 .

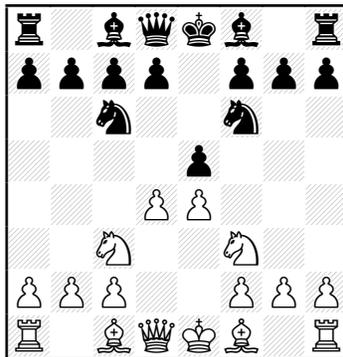
7 Qd2 0-0 8 0-0-0 d6 9 h4

and Black was under serious pressure in [Muniz,R–Martinez,M/Ch. of Uruguay, Montevideo 2000](#) (20).

Scotch Four Knights [C47]

Last updated: 11/12/07 by Tony Kosten

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 d4



The Scotch Four Knights, which can also arise via a 3.d4 move order. Besides Glek's 4.g3, White has tried several alternatives:

- a) 4 d3 d5 5 exd5 ♘xd5 6 ♙e2 is very passive, for example [Kosolapov,N-Nezhmetdinov,R/Kazan 1936](#) (24).
- b) 4 a3 is quite a useful move, but should really be regarded as a loss of tempo if Black plays something in which it is irrelevant. 4...d5! best. (4...♙c5 5 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 6 d4 has the interesting point that Black cannot play 6...♙b4 – see [Armanda,I-Kolar,S/Bled Open 1999](#) (25), 4...g6 looks very sensible to me, taking play into a reversed Glek Variation 5 ♘xe5!? ♘xe5 6 d4 ♘c6 7 d5 ♙g7! prudently returning the piece, [Polzin,R-Levin,F/Bundesliga 2005](#), 4...♙e7 a solid approach, 5 d4 d6 6 ♙e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♙g4 8 d5 and White had the better game in [Hort,V-Quast,M/Bundesliga, Germany 1996](#) (22).) 5 exd5 (5 ♙b5 ♘xe4 is fine for Black, see the notes to the Short game) 5...♘xd5 6 ♙b5 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 ♙d6 with a reversed Scotch Four Knights and easy equality for Black, see [Short,N-Wang Yue/Liverpool ENG 2007](#).

4...exd4

Black's main alternative is 4...♙b4!? after which 5 ♘xe5 0-0!

Others:

- a) 5...♙e7!? 6 ♙d3! (6 ♘xc6 ♙xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♙xe4+ transposes to the Svidler game below)
- 6...♘xe5 (6...♘xd4 7 ♙xd4 c5!? is very interesting – see [Rausis,I-Kogan,A/Paris Open](#)

1998 (14)) 7 dxe5 ♖xe5 8 ♕d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 d6 10 f4!? Black will now face the kind of attack that White is looking for in the Center Game, [Rublevsky,S-Onischuk,A/Moscow 1994](#).

b) 5... ♕xc3+?! 6 bxc3 ♖e7 7 ♕d3! this idea is very strong, (7 ♖xc6 ♖xe4+ 8 ♕e2 dxc6 9 0-0 White has a slightly better position, [Rublevsky,S-Svidler,P/St Petersburg 1994](#)) 7... ♖xe5 8 dxe5 ♖xe5 9 0-0 d6 10 ♖c1! threatening f4 with a big plus, [Egorov,E-Iuldachev,S/Aden 2002](#).

c) 5... ♖xc4 leads to sharp play, 6 ♖g4! ♖xc3 7 ♖xg7 ♖f8 8 a3 ♕a5 this is the only move, (8... ♖xd4? [Rublevsky,S-Gabriel,C/World U-18 Ch., Duisburg, Germ 1992 \(19\)](#)) 9 ♖xc6 dxc6 10 ♖e5+ ♖e7 11 ♖xc7+ ♖xe7 12 ♕d2 ♕f5 13 bxc3! with the advantage in this endgame, see the instructive game [Nadyrhanov,S-Safin,S/Bishkek 1993](#).

6 ♖d3 this is the most dangerous try, White plans to play ♕d2 and 0-0-0. 6... ♖e8 7 ♕d2 d5! (7... ♖xd4!? 8 ♖xd4 c5 9 ♖d3 ♖xe5 10 0-0-0 d5 11 ♖xd5 is the refutation of the whole line, 11... ♖xd5 [Rade,M-Azarov,S/Sibenik CRO 2005](#), 12 ♕f4!) 8 ♖xc6 bxc6 9 e5 c5 10 0-0-0 ♖g4 11 ♕e1 ♖g5+! 12 ♖b1 [Yurtaev,L-Kochyev,A/Frunze 1979](#), and now 12...cxd4 to break the white center immediately.

5 ♖xd4

A safe answer to the Belgrade Gambit with 5 ♖d5 is 5... ♕e7 (or 5... ♖b4 – see for example the game [Ilic,L-Mitkov,N/Gevgelija MKD 2002 \(18\)](#).) 6 ♖xd4 0-0 see [Toufighi,H-Howell,D/WYb18 Kemer TUR 2007](#).

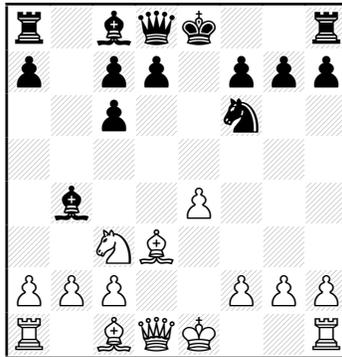
5... ♕b4

Black habitually plays the bishop here but it's not the only move.

5... ♕c5 is worth considering – see [Vedder,R-Klip,H/Belgian Interclubs 2000 \(24\)](#).

There's a spectacular alternative for Black in 5... ♖xe4, for example 6 ♖xe4 (6 ♖xc6 ♖xc3 7 ♖xd8 ♖xd1 8 ♖xf7 ♖xf2 was fine for Black in [Bogoljubow,E-Schmid,L/Bad Pyrmont 1949 \(25\)](#)) 6... ♖e7 7 f3 d5 8 ♕b5 ♕d7 9 ♕xc6 bxc6 10 0-0 dxe4 11 ♖e1 (11 ♖xe4!? is also dangerous as in [Adams,P-Marden,L/County match, UK 2004 \(17\)](#)) 11...0-0-0 12 ♖xe4 ♖f6 was [Zak,U-Mikhalevski,A/Israel 1996 \(44\)](#), but although the position is complicated it must surely be better for White.

6 ♖xc6 bxc6 7 ♕d3



7 ♖d4 looks artificial after 7...♗e7 – see [Bondarevsky,I–Smyslov,V/Moscow Ch. 1944 \(22\)](#).

7...d5

It makes some sense to play 7...0-0 8 0-0 ♖e8, exerting some pressure on the e4 pawn rather than exchanging it off with ...d7–d5. Ivan Sokolov has played this way, for example 9 ♗g5 (For 9 ♗e1 see [Furness,R–Brindle,G/Manchester League, England 1967 \(17\)](#)) 9...h6 10 ♗h4 ♖b8 11 ♗f3 g5 12 ♗g3 d6 13 ♘a4 c5 gave Black an active game in [Reinderman,D–Sokolov,I/Amsterdam 1995 \(24\)](#).

7...d6!? 8 0-0 ♘g4 is also interesting.

8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗g5 c6 11 ♘a4

The blunt 11 ♗f3 needs careful handling by Black, 11...♗e7 12 h3 (12 ♖fe1 h6? a plausible looking move, but it meets with a crushing refutation, (12...♖e8!) 13 ♗xh6! [Rasmussen,A–Jessen,S/Copenhagen DEN 2002](#)) 12...h6 13 ♗f4 ♗d6 14 b3 a5!? [Ghaem Maghami,E–Sasikiran,K/Esfahan IRI 2005](#).

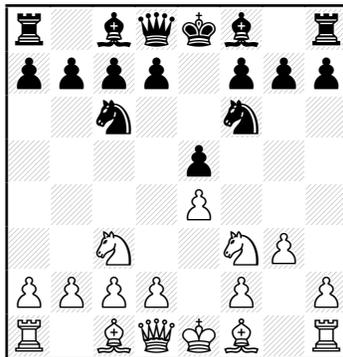
11...h6 12 ♗h4 ♖e8 13 c4 ♗d6

and Black had adequate counterplay in [Svidler,P–Malaniuk,V/St Petersburg 1994 \(17\)](#).

Four Knights – 4.g3 [C47]

Last updated: 12/06/09 by Victor Mikhalevski

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 g3



This was pioneered by Igor Glek but has now captured the attention of many other players. White develops quietly, intending to either expand in the centre with d2–d4 or play on the kingside with a later f2–f4.

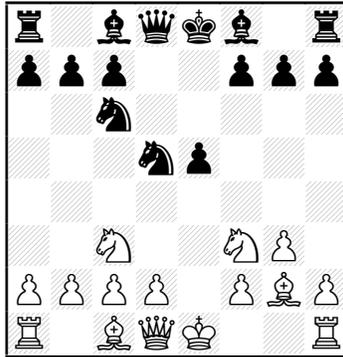
4...d5

The most direct and popular reply, but Black can consider a number of alternatives:

- 4...♗b4 is a sound looking developing move, but does little to cut across White's plans. After 5 ♗g2 d6 (5...♗xc3 6 dxc3 d6 7 ♖e2 h6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘h4 was better for White in [Rozentalis,E–Komljenovic,D/FRA 2003](#) (32)) 6 d3 ♗g4 7 h3 White had the better game in [Glek,I–Van den Broek,R/Vlissingen NED 2002](#) (25).
- 4...♗c5 is a sensible approach and after 5 ♗g2 d6 6 d3 ♘d4!? (Black safeguarded his king's bishop with 6...a6 in the game [Rashkovsky,N–Kuzmin,A/SUI 2003](#) (57).) 7 h3 ♗e6 8 ♘a4 ♘xf3+ 9 ♗xf3 ♗b6 10 ♘xb6 axb6 11 ♗g2 d5! It was clear that Black had solved his opening problems with ease in [Harikrishna,P–Eljanov,P/Sarajevo BIH 2009](#).
- The copycat 4...g6 gives White a space advantage after 5 d4 exd4 6 ♘xd4 ♗g7 7 ♘de2 – see [Polivanov,A–Hatchatrian,S/UKR 2003](#) (34).
- 4...d6!? 5 h3 (5 d4 ♗g4!) 5...g6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 8 ♖xd4 ♗g7 9 ♗c3 0-0 10 ♖d2 ♗d7 11 ♗g2 ♗c6 was fine for Black in [Hector,J–Giorgadze,G/Lanzarote ESP 2003](#) (73).

e) The wild 4...♖xe4!? actually leads to positions which arise from 4...d5, for example 5 ♖xe4 d5 6 ♖c3 d4 7 ♙g2 (7 ♖b1!?) 7...dxc3 8 bxc3 ♙d6 as in [Sedina,E-Carlsen,M/Saint Vincent ITA 2003 \(51\)](#).

5 exd5 ♖xd5 6 ♙g2



6...♖de7!?

The most economical move is 6...♖xc3 but after 7 bxc3 White strengthens his centre and has an open b-file. After 7...♙d6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖b1 (9 d3 ♙g4 10 h3 ♙h5 11 ♖b1 ♖b8 12 g4 ♙g6 13 ♖g5 ♙e7 14 ♖e4 f5 15 ♖g3 was the interesting continuation of [Ehlvest,J-Kaidanov,G/Los Angeles USA 2003 \(34\)](#)) 9...♖b8 10 d4 White had a nice game in [Motwani,P-Lane,G/Anderlecht rapid-play 1999 \(28\)](#).

7 0-0

7 d3 g6!? 8 ♙g5 ♙g7 9 ♗d2 h6 10 ♙e3 ♖d4 and Black had a good game in [Dorin,M-Slipak,S/Mercosur Cup, Argentina 2001 \(15\)](#).

7...g6!? 8 ♖e1

8 d4!? is interesting and quite dangerous for Black.

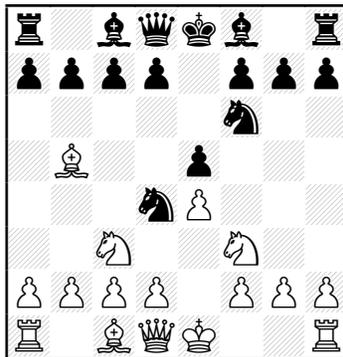
8...♙g7

and Black had supplied solid protection to the e5 pawn and d4 square in [Lammens,T-Safin,S/Gent Open 2002 \(31\)](#).

Four Knights – 4 Bb5 Intro [C48]

Last updated: 21/02/11 by Victor Mikhalevski

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c3 ♘f6 4 ♖b5 ♗d4



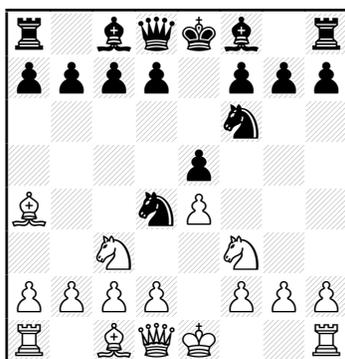
Rubinstein's line, which for many years put the Four Knights under a cloud.

Black can also play 4...a6 as after 5 ♖xc6 dxc6 6 ♗xe5 (6 d3 is possible) 6...♗xe4 7 ♗xe4 ♖d4 the position looked OK for Black in [Michiels,B–Van der Burgh,A/Belgian Interclubs 2002](#) (15).

Another possibility is 4...♗c5 when the main line runs 5 ♗xe5 (5 0-0 0-0 6 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 7 d4 ♗d6 8 dxe5 ♗xe5 9 ♗d3 ♖e8 10 ♗g5 c6 11 ♖f3 d6 12 h3 ♗e6 was fine for Black in [Reinaldo Castineira,R–Zarnicki,P/ICC INT 2003](#) (43)) 5...♗xe5 6 d4 ♗d6 7 f4 ♗g6 8 e5 as in [Osterman,G–Kivijarvi,J/FIN 2001](#) (20).

Last but not least Black can try the odd-looking 4...♗d6 after which 5 0-0 (5 a3 0-0 6 ♗c4 ♗d4 7 d3 c6 8 ♗xd4 exd4 9 ♗e2 ♗c7 10 0-0 d5 gave Black adequate counterchances in [Keitlinghaus,L–Van den Doel,E/Baden Oos GER 2003](#), 5 ♗xc6!? dxc6 6 d4 needs to be handled with care, [Zaitsev,M–Kosten,A/Mainz 2008](#), 5 d3 a6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 h3 ♗d7 with good play in [Sutovsky,E–Eljanov,P/Novi Sad SRB 2009](#)) 5...0-0 (5...a6 6 ♗c4 0-0 7 a3 h6 8 d3 ♖e8 9 ♗h4!? trying to put some life into this quiet opening, [Polgar,J–Sasikiran,K/Canada de Calatrava ESP 2007](#)) 6 d3 ♖e8 7 ♖e1 (7 ♗g5 ♗d4!) 7...a6!? [Carlsen,M–Aronian,L/Nice FRA 2010](#).

5 ♗a4



The mainline.

5 ♖c4 is another popular option: 5...♗c5

a) 5...d6!? following Kramnik, 6 ♘xd4 White damages Black's pawn structure (6 ♘g5 d5 7 exd5 h6 is reminiscent of the Two Knights Defence, see [Najer,E–Mastrovasilis,D/Dresden GER 2007](#), 6 d3?! ♗g4! [Shirov,A–Bacrot,E/Odessa UKR 2010](#)) 6...exd4 7 ♘d5 ♘d7 8 0-0 g6 9 a3!? [Svidler,P–Gelfand,B/Astrakhan RUS 2010](#).

b) 5...c6 6 ♘xe5 d5 is also good

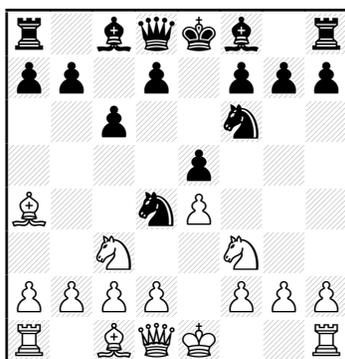
c) 5...♗xf3+ 6 gxf3! Najer introduced this interesting recapture at the GM level and won at least three games with it, 6...♗c5 7 ♖g1!? [Bacrot,E–Sargissian,G/Antwerp BEL 2009](#)

6 ♘xe5 ♖e7 (Tkachiev uncorked 6...d5!? and scored a quick win in [Spangenberg,H–Tkachiev,V/Villa Martelli 1997](#) (12).) 7 ♘f3 d5 8 ♗xd5 ♗g4 9 d3 0-0-0!? 10 ♗c3 Vallejo's idea, (10 ♗g5 is not as good, [Sutovsky,E–Kramnik,V/Baku AZE 2010](#)) 10...♘xd5 11 ♘xd5 ♖xd5! 12 exd5 ♖e8 13 0-0 (13 c3 ♘xf3+ 14 gxf3 ♖h4 15 ♘d2 ♖xe3 led to an exciting draw in [Vallejo Pons,F–Dominguez,L/Cuernavaca MEX 2006](#).) 13...♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♗d6 15 f4 ♖h4 in my opinion, Black's initiative is sufficient for at least equality, [Motylev,A–Radjabov,T/Khanty–Mansiysk RUS 2010](#).

The variation 5 ♘xd4 exd4 6 e5 is notoriously drawish 6...dxc3 7 exf6 ♖xf6 (7...cxd2+ is too risky – see [White,A–Black,A/Edinburgh 1996](#) (16)) 8 dxc3 ♗c5 (After 8...♖e5+ 9 ♗e2 ♗c5 10 0-0 Black still had to be careful in [Yuldashev,S–Georgadze,G/Elista Olympiad 1998](#) (25).) 9 ♖e2+ ♖c6 10 ♗f4 c6 11 ♗d3 d5 12 0-0 ♖xe2 13 ♗xe2 ♗f5 14 ♗d3 ♗xd3 15 cxd3 ♘d7 and Black had what chances were going in [Campora,D–Onischuk,A/Buenos Aires ARG 2003](#) (56).

5 ♘xe5 ♘xb5? (the main line is 5...♖e7! 6 f4 ♘xb5 7 ♘xb5 d6) 6 ♘xb5 c6 7 ♘c3 ♖e7 8 ♘f3 ♘xe4 9 0-0 White's development advantage is overwhelming and already Black experiences serious problems, [Short,N–L'Ami,E/Wijk aan Zee NED 2009](#).

5...c6



Another line is 5...♙c5 6 ♘xe5 0-0 7 ♗d3 ♙b6 8 e5 ♗e8 (8...c6!? is an astonishing move! 9 0-0 (9 exf6 ♗e8+ 10 ♗f1 ♗xf6 is the acid – test when White has an extra piece but badly gummed-up development) 9...♗e8 10 ♗e2 ♗h4 11 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 12 ♙b3 d5 with good compensation, [Motylev,A–Carlsen,M/Wijk aan Zee NED 2007](#)) 9 ♗d5 d6 10 ♗e3 c5 (10...♗g5 11 f4 ♗g6 is also possible – see [Volkmann,F–Dervishi,E/4th IECC Istanbul TUR 2003](#) (50)) 11 c3 ♗f5 12 exd6 ♗xd6 13 ♙c2 ♗f6 and Black had good compensation for the pawn in [Acs,P–Khalifman,A/Essent tournament, Hoogeveen 2002](#) (31).

5...♗xf3+ also looks playable, 6 ♗xf3 c6 7 0-0 [Short,N–Mikhalevski,V/Gibraltar 2011](#).

6 ♗xe5

Accepting the challenge.

6 0-0 ♙c5 7 ♗xe5 d6 8 ♗d3 ♙g4 9 ♗e1 ♗f3+ set in motion a winning attack in [Abonyi,A–Hromadka,K/Prague 1908](#) (13).

6...d6

6...d5 is popular at the moment, 7 d3 ♙d6 8 ♗f3 ♙g4 (long-time Rubinstein variation advocate Mark Hebden prefers 8...♗xf3+ e.g. 9 gxf3 (9 ♗xf3? fails to 9...d4 winning material due to the threat of ...♙g4) 9...0-0 10 ♙b3 ♗h5) 9 ♙e3 dxe4 (9...♗xf3+ 10 gxf3 ♙h5 11 exd5! [Ivanchuk,V–Caruana,F/Biel SUI 2009](#)) 10 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 11 ♙xd4 ♗a5+ 12 c3 ♗g5 13 ♙e3 ♙xf3 14 gxf3 ♗f5 with excellent play, [Shanava,K–Khenkin,I/Dresden GER 2007](#).

7 ♗f3 ♙g4 8 d3 ♗d7 9 ♙e3 ♗xf3+ 10 gxf3 ♙h5

and Black had compensation for the pawn in [Acs,P–Karakechajov,S/World Junior Ch., Athens, Greece 2001](#) (24).

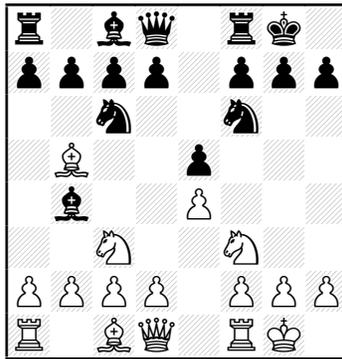
Four Knights – 4 Bb5 Bb4 [C49]

Last updated: 01/12/10 by Victor Mikhalevski

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♞b5

This line used to be popular, but then acquired a reputation for being drawish.

4...♞b4 5.0-0 0-0

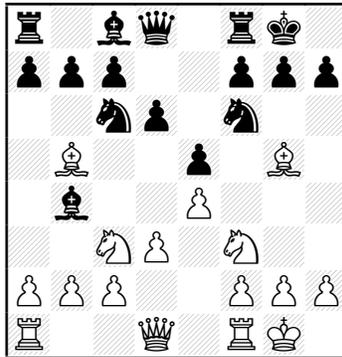


6.d3

White can also play 6.♞xc6 dxc6 (6...bxc6 7.♗xe5 makes it more difficult for Black to equalize) 7.d3 but then 7...♞d6 is fine for Black as in [Winter,W-Capablanca,J/Hastings 1919 \(29\)](#).

6...d6 7.♞g5

The mainline.

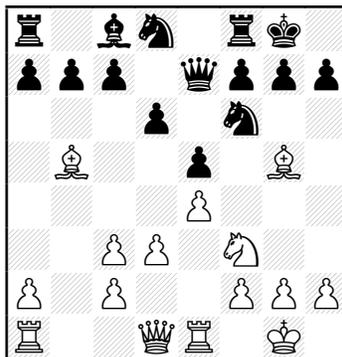


7...♙xc3

For many years 7...♙g4 has been condemned as an instructive error, but matters are far from clear. See [Ponomariov,R–Azarov,S/Verdun 1995](#) (44) for details.

7...♘e7!? is underrated, 8.♘h4 c6 9.♙c4 d5 this move was introduced by Yates in 1912, almost a hundred years ago. 10.♙b3 (10.♙xf6 gxf6 with a good game, [Nisipeanu,L–Ponomariov,R/Bazna 2010](#)) 10...♚d6 11.f4 ♙xc3 12.bxc3 dxe4 13.fxe5 ♚xe5 [Caruana,F–Aronian,L/Moscow RUS 2010](#).

8.bxc3 ♚e7 9.♙e1 ♘d8



9...h6 10.♙h4 g5? 11.♘xg5! was very unpleasant for Black in [Yeo,M–Pisakov,I/Alushta 2002](#) (18).

10.d4 ♘e6

An alternative here is 10...♙g4 .

11.♙c1

11.♔d2! is rare, but may be even stronger, see [Cheparinov,I–Jakovenko,D/Jermuk ARM 2009](#).

11...c5 12.♔f1 ♖d8 13.d5 ♗f8

and Black's knights are quite good in this closed position – see [Gallagher,J–Lane,G/British Championship 1999 \(24\)](#).

Italian Game – 3.Bc4 Others [C50]

Last updated: 22/09/09 by Victor Mikhalevski

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 ♕c4 ♕c5

Black has tried some other third moves with very mixed results:

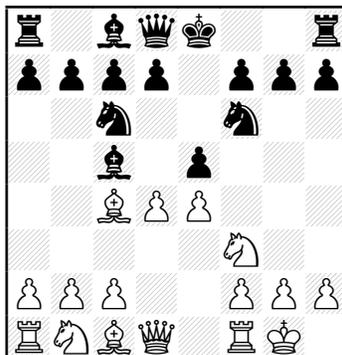
- 3...♕e7 4 0-0 (4 d4 should be met by 4...d6 – for 4...exd4 see [Hoffmann,R–Heilmann,A/Berlin 1904](#) (9)) 4...♗f6 5 d3 is covered under C55.
- 3...h6 4 d4 (4 0-0 ♕c5?! 5 b4 brought about a suped up form of the Evans Gambit in [Nash,R–Colebrook,M/County Match, England 1972](#) (13)) 4...exd4 5 c3 ♜e7?! lost too much time in the game [Verheyen,N–Regniers,G/Mechelen, Belgium 2001](#) (17).
- 3...d6 is an unusual move which has attracted the attention of some strong players. One example went 4 c3 g6 5 d3 ♕g7 6 ♗g5 ♗h6 7 h4 ♜e7 8 ♜b3 ♗d8 and White's pieces were soon driven back in [Polzin,R–Graf,A/Koelln GER 2002](#) (26).

4 0-0

This quiet looking alternative to 4.c3 or 4.b4 is usually followed by a pawn offer.

The genuinely quiet 4 d3 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 is a relatively rare continuation, though Black has to be precise in order to equalize, (5 0-0 d6 6 a4?! ♕g4 7 h3 ♕h5 gave Black a good game in [Morrison,C–Horner,J/British Championship 1985](#) (25).) 5...d6 6 ♕g5 (6 ♗a4 gains the bishop pair, 6...♕b6 7 c3 ♗e7 8 0-0 ♗g6 9 ♜e1 0-0 [Ivanchuk,V–Aronian,L/Jermuk ARM 2009](#)) 6...h6 7 ♕xf6 ♜xf6 8 ♗d5 ♜d8 9 c3 a6 10 d4 [Lupulescu,C–Georgiev,K/Dresden GER 2008](#).

4...♗f6 5 d4!?



5...♗xd4 6 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 7 f4 d6

Black needs to be careful, for example 7...♗c6 is answered by 8 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 9 fxe5 ♖f8 (9...♗xe5 10 ♗d5+ wins back the piece with a good game) 10 exf6 and Black was in serious trouble in [Ciesla,A–Bloch,P/Zakopane POL 2001 \(14\)](#).

8 c3 ♗c6

Koltanowski used this line to great effect in simultaneous displays. Although White's compensation looks nebulous at this point, he has long-term compensation because of the difficulty Black will have in finding a safe place for his king.

8...♗e6 9 f5 ♗c5 similarly gave White play for the pawn in [Stephenson,N–Ledger,D/British Championship, Torquay 1998 \(41\)](#).

9 f5 ♗d7 10 ♗g5 ♖e7 11 ♗d2 0-0-0 12 b4

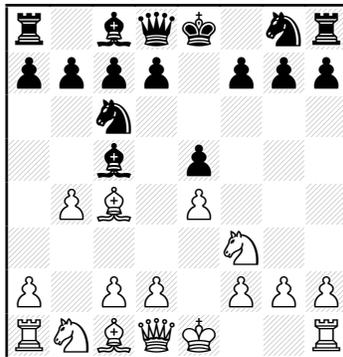
and Black's king proved to be precariously placed in [Aldebol,N–NN/Internet Chess Club, 2001 \(30\)](#).

Evans Gambit [C52]

Last updated: 21/02/11 by Victor Mikhalevski

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 ♕c4 ♕c5 4 b4

Captain Evans' gambit aims to secure a strong centre and a development advantage in return for the b-pawn.



4...♕xb4

I prefer the modest 4...♕b6, which doesn't mean it's better than the text.

5 c3 ♕a5

The so-called Stone-Ware Defence with 5...♕d6!? was recently revived by Mikhalchishin – 6 d4 ♗f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖e1 h6 9 ♗bd2 ♖e8 10 ♕d3 (10 ♗b3 ♖e7!? [Petrosian,T-Volokitin,A/Budva MNE 2009](#), when 11 ♕d3 is safest) 10...exd4 11 cxd4 ♕f8 left the onus on White to justify his pawn sac in [Sermek,D-Mikhalchishin,A/Bled SLO 2002](#) (32) (see C51).

5...♕e7 is another popular line, 6 d4 ♗a5! 7 ♗xe5 ♗xc4 8 ♗xc4 d5 9 exd5 ♗xd5 10 ♗e3 which was fairly equal in [Fressinet,L-Efimenko,Z/Wijk aan Zee NED 2011](#).

6 d4 exd4

6...d6 is the traditional mainline. 7 ♗b3 ♗d7 to defend f7, (7...♗xd4!? is interesting – see [Gikas,B-Kosashvili,Y/Curacao AHO 2002](#) (33).) 8 ♗bd2!? (8 dxe5 is normal) 8...♕b6

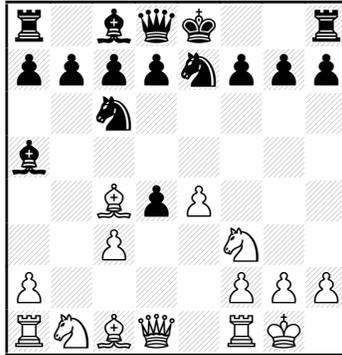
9 a4 and White went on to win easily in [Short,N–Sargissian,G/Wijk aan Zee NED 2008](#).

7 0-0

7 ♖b3! has been used by Short a few times.

7...♗ge7

The safest line.



7...♗b6 8 cxd4 d6 is the old line, 9 ♗c3 ♗f6? 10 e5 gave White a strong attack in [Lehmann,H–Muller,P/Germany–Switzerland match, Luc 1952 \(20\)](#) (see C51).

8 ♗g5

The critical line.

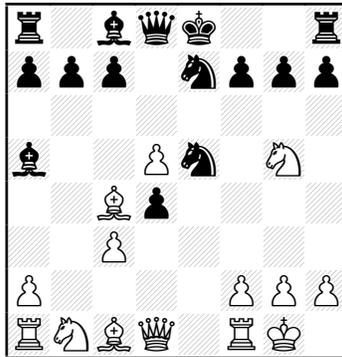
8 cxd4 d5 9 exd5 ♗xd5 10 ♖b3 ♗e6 left White struggling to find enough for the pawn in [Ilczuk,P–Ostrowski,L/Polish Team Ch. 1999 \(18\)](#).

and 8 ♖b3? 0-0 9 cxd4 ♗b6 was good for Black in [Verheyen,N–Motwani,P/Training Game, Strombeek, Belg 2001 \(13\)](#).

8...d5

8...♗e5 is also reasonable, and might be more accurate, 9 ♗xf7 (9 ♗b3 d5 10 exd5 transposes to the mainline, whilst avoiding the next note) 9...♗xf7 10 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 11 ♖h5+ g6 12 ♖xa5 d5 and Black should be fine.

9 exd5 ♗e5



10 ♖b3

10 ♖xd4 is probably stronger, 10...♗7g6 (Marin prefers 10...f6 11 ♖e1 ♖b6 12 ♖h4 ♗xc4 13 ♖xc4 fxg5 unclear) 11 ♖e1 f6! is complicated, but should be OK for Black, 12 d6 ♖b6 13 ♖d5 ♖d7 with sharp play.

10...0-0 11 ♗xh7

11 cxd4 ♗g4 12 ♖f3 ♗f6 13 ♖a3 h6 14 ♗e4 ♗xe4 15 ♖xe4 ♖e8 left White struggling in [Morozevich,A-Adams,M/Wijk aan Zee 2001 \(27\)](#).

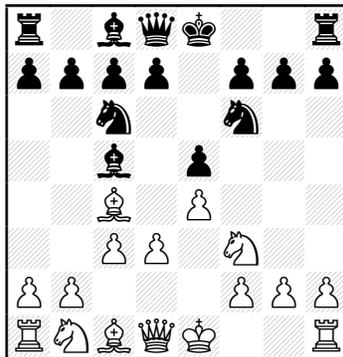
11...♔xh7 12 ♖h5+ ♔g8 13 ♖xe5 ♗f5!

was fine for Black in [Short,N-Adams,M/Bosna SuperGM, Sarajevo 2000 \(18\)](#).

Giuoco Piano 4.c3 [C54]

Last updated: 12/03/11 by Victor Mikhalevski

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♝c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3 ♞f6 5.d3



This quiet line has superseded the old sharp lines with good reason – it offers a similar game to the Ruy Lopez whilst the sharp lines give White nothing:

5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4

a) White has tried a couple of alternatives but neither of them offer him anything if Black knows what he's doing: 6.e5 d5 7.♙b5 ♞e4 8.♞xd4 (8.cxd4 ♙b4+ 9.♙d2 ♞xd2 10.♞bxd2 ♙d7 was also nice for Black in [Kogan,A–Miles,A/Biel Open, Switzerland 1994 \(32\)](#)) 8...0-0 9.♙xc6 bxc6 10.0-0 f6 and Black had very active play in [Hautot,S–Motwani,P/Anderlecht rapid–play 1999 \(25\)](#).

b) 6.0-0 d6!?! (6...♞xe4 7.cxd4 d5) 7.cxd4 ♙b6 threatened 8...♙g4 and 8...♞xe4, putting White's centre under pressure in [Ruiz Alcaide,J–Rizouk,A/Dos Hermanas ESP 2002 \(14\)](#).

6...♙b4+ 7.♙d2 This quiet line is White's best.

a) For analysis of the old 7.♞c3?! ♞xe4 (7...0-0? [Sporrer,B–Kiefersbeck,A/Bezirksliga 2000](#)) 8.0-0 ♙xc3! (8...♞xc3 9.bxc3 ♙xc3 10.♙b3!) 9.d5 ♞e5 (9...♙f6 is the most popular continuation) 10.♙e2 (10.bxc3 ♞xc4 11.♙d4 f5) 10...0-0 11.bxc3 ♞xc4 12.♙xc4 ♞d6 see [Gashimov,V–Dominguez Perez,L/Nice FRA 2010](#)

b) 7.♞bd2 is the Pomtow Attack, and was the subject of a Kaissiber Competition on the ChessPub Forum.

7...♞xe4!?! (7...♙xd2+ 8.♞bxd2 d5 9.exd5 ♞xd5 is the old way to play it – see [Rossolimo,N–Reisman,O/San Juan 1967 \(24\)](#)) 8.♙xb4 ♞xb4 9.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 10.♙b3+ ♔f8! and Black had a good game in [Coleman,D–Parker,J/Isle of Man 1999 \(31\)](#).

5...a6

As Black usually needs this move sooner or later it makes sense to play this now and keep open the option of either ...d7–d6 or ...d7–d5.

Of course 5...d6 is also possible after which 6.0-0 0-0 7.♠bd2 (7.b4 ♘b6 8.a4 a6 9.♠bd2 ♠e7!?) is a noteworthy idea, routing the knight towards the kingside and preparing ...c7–c6 followed by ...d6–d5 – see [Wehmeier,S–Campora,D/Andorra AND 2001 \(17\)](#)) 7...a6 (7...♘b6 8.♘b3 ♠e7 9.♠c4 showed the negative side of omitting ...a7–a6 in [Zhelnin,V–Novikov,M/Tula RUS 2002 \(22\)](#) – Black had to surrender his dark square bishop leaving White with a dangerous bishop pair.) 8.♘b3 ♘a7 9.♠c4 ♘e6 10.♘g5 h6 11.♘h4 g5 12.♘g3 ♠e7 brought about a complex game in [Nunn,J–Parker,J/4NCL, England 2000 \(35\)](#).

5...0-0 to play ...d5 in one move, 6.b4 (6.♘b3 d5 7.♞e2 a5!? [Radjabov,T–Shirov,A/Baku AZE 2009](#).) 6...♘e7 (6...♘b6 is more popular.) 7.0-0 d5 a temporary pawn sacrifice, 8.exd5 ♠xd5 9.b5 ♠a5 10.♘xd5 ♞xd5 11.c4 ♞d7! with good play, [Macieja,B–Fressinet,L/Wattenscheid GER 2011](#).

6.♘b3

A useful prophylactic measure against ...d7–d5 by Black.

White should be careful to avoid routine play, for example he got into serious trouble after 6.0-0 ♘a7 7.♠bd2 0-0 8.♞e1?! d6 9.♘b3 ♠g4 10.♞c2 ♠h8 11.h3 ♠h6 12.♠f1 f5 in the game [Bus,M–Dubiel,J/Polish Team Ch. 1999 \(25\)](#).

6...♘a7

A more direct plan is 6...0-0 7.0-0 (For 7.♠bd2 d6 8.♠c4 see [Burnett,R–Naylor,J/Coulsdon 1999 \(29\)](#)) 7...d5 but there too Black's task is not easy after 8.exd5 ♠xd5 9.h3 ♠b6 10.♞e1 h6 11.♠bd2 ♞xd3 12.♠xe5 ♞g3 13.♞f3! ♞xf3 14.♠dxf3 with an edge for White in [Kramnik,V–Krasenkow,M/Wijk aan Zee 2003 \(80\)](#).

7.♠bd2

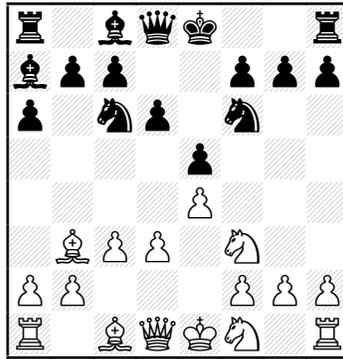
7.h3 h6! transposes.

7.0-0 d6 8.h3 (8.♞e1 will transpose below) 8...0-0 is more normal, (8...h6 9.♞e1 g5!?) planning ...g4 to open the g–file, [Adams,M–Shirov,A/Elista RUS 2007](#).) 9.♠bd2 ♠h5 Black is trying to fight for the initiative from the very beginning, (here Marin recommends 9...♘e6 as played in [Karpov,A–Kortschnoj,V, Merano 1981](#), with close to equality.) 10.♞e1 ♞f6 11.♠f1 ♠f4 (11...♞g6 12.♠h4 ♞f6 13.♠f3 ♞g6! would force a draw. (13...♠f4 transposes)) 12.♘e3 ♘e6 13.d4! (13.♘c2 [Lahno,K–Ivanchuk,V/Cap d'Agde FRA 2008](#).) 13...♘b3 14.axb3 ♞fe8 15.♠g3 Black experiences some problems in this line, see [Hou,Y–Karpov,A/Cap d'Agde FRA 2008](#).

7...d6

Another order of moves is 7...0-0 8.h3 (White can also consider 8. ♘f1 ♘g4 9. ♗e3) 8...h6 9.0-0 (Here too 9. ♘f1 is possible) 9...d6 10. ♖e1 ♗h5 the most ambitious, aiming for f4, (10...♖e8 11. ♘f1 ♗e6 is solid, 12. ♗e3 (12. ♗3h2 d5 worked well for Black in [Efimenko,Z–Navara,D/Bremen GER 2006](#)) 12...♗xe3 13. ♘xe3 ♖d7 see [Ivanchuk,V–Svidler,P/Beer Sheva ISR 2005](#)) 11. ♘f1 ♖f6 12. ♗e3 (12. ♗e3 ♗f4 13. ♗d5 ♗xd5 14. exd5 ♗e7 gave Black good chances on the kingside in [Shaked,T–Kaidanov,G/Philadelphia 1993 \(23\)](#)) 12...♗f4 13. ♗h2 ♗e6 brought about a rich and complex middlegame in [Nevednichy,V–Moldovan,D/Andorra Open 2002 \(32\)](#).

8. ♘f1



Trying to save as much time as possible – White omits h3 and gets his knight round to g3 before castling so that he doesn't have to move the rook from f1.

White can also try to delay castling with 8.h3 0-0 9. ♘f1 and after 9...d5 keep the centre closed with 10. ♖e2. As an example of this plan see [Gonzalez,Y–Gomez,F/Holguin City CUB 2002 \(25\)](#).

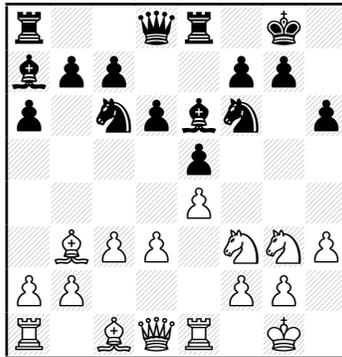
8...0-0

Black can also try to exploit the omission of h2–h3 by White by exchanging a couple of minor pieces with 8... ♘g4 9. ♗e3 ♗xe3 10. ♗xe3 ♗xe3 but he was still slightly worse after 11. fx3 0-0 12.0-0 in [Tiviakov,S–Van den Doel,E/Dutch Championship, Rotterdam 2000 \(28\)](#). White has an extra centre pawn and the half open f–file.

9. ♘g3 ♗e6 10.0-0 ♖e8 11.h3

11. ♖e1 h6 12. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.h3 d5 is equal, [Anand,V–Hammer,J/Kristiansund NOR 2010](#).

11...h6 12. ♖e1



12...♙xb3!

This exchange liberates the e6-square for the rook which can be useful to defend the knight on f6.

12...d5 13.exd5!? ♙xd5 14.♙c2 gave White dangerous attacking chances in [Hamdouchi,H-Van Hoolandt,P/Nice FRA 2002 \(27\)](#).

13.♙xb3 ♜b8 14.♙e3 ♙xe3 15.fxe3 ♘e7

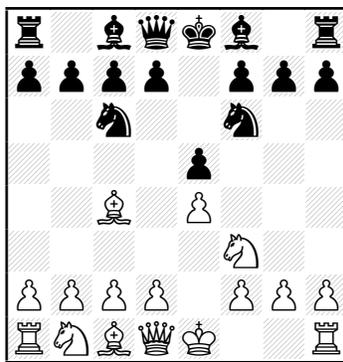
See [Vorobiov,E-Grischuk,A/Moscow 2004](#), where Black shows how to handle this structure.

Bishop's Opening [C55]

Last updated: 19/10/10 by Victor Mikhalevski

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 ♕c4 ♘f6

A sensible reply, developing the second knight.

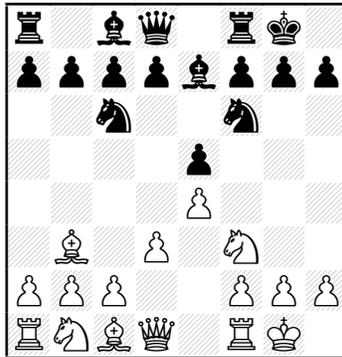


4 d4

4 d3 is more solid and aims for closed play, 4...♕e7

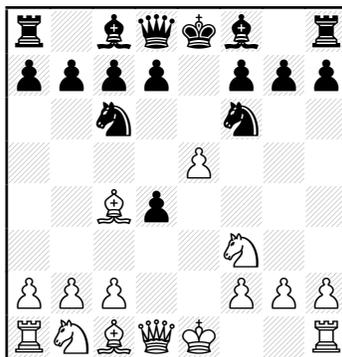
- a) Black can also fianchetto his king's bishop, though first he needs to prevent ♗f3–g5 with 4...h6. Play might continue 5 0-0 d6 6 c3 g6 7 d4 (7 ♖e1 ♕g7 8 a4 was much less to the point – see [Belotti,B–Malaniuk,V/Europ. Team Ch., Batumi 1999 \(40\)](#)) 7...♗e7 8 ♖e1 ♕g7 9 ♗bd2 0-0 10 h3 and Black will not find it easy to free his game – see for example [Heberla,B–Cheparinov,I/European Youth Ch., Greece 1999 \(23\)](#).
- b) 4...♕c5 transposes into C54.

5 0-0 (Delayed castling with 5 c3 0-0 6 ♕b3 is less appropriate in this position as Black can strike immediately in the centre with 6...d5. See [Slaby,J–Ehrenfeucht,W/Polish Ch., Polanczyk, Poland 2000 \(15\)](#).) 5...0-0 6 ♕b3 White needs to be able to play c3 and ♕c2 as soon as Black defends e5 with his d–pawn, as he would then threaten ...♗a5.



(Another interesting possibility is *6 a4* which gains space on the queenside and makes room for the bishop on a2. Play might continue with *6...d6 7 c3 ♖a5 8 ♙a2 c5 9 ♗bd2 ♙e6 10 b4* and White had a promising game in [Inkiöv, V–Karadimov, M/Borovec BUL 2002 \(21\)](#)., *6 ♜e1 d6 7 a4* is [Malakhov, V–Predojevic, B/Sarajevo BIH 2006](#)) *6...d6* (*6...d5* is an interesting line, Kasparov played it twice against Kramnik in 1995, *7 exd5 ♗xd5 8 h3 Radjabov, T–Ponomariov, R/Medias ROU 2010*) *7 c3 ♗a5 8 ♙c2 c5 9 ♜e1 ♗c6 10 ♗bd2 ♜e8* (*10...♙g4 11 h3 ♙h5 12 ♗f1 ♗e8 13 g4 ♙g6 14 ♗g3* left Black's queen's bishop out of play in [Nevednichy, V–Negulescu, A/Romanian Ch., Lasi 1999](#).) *11 ♗f1 h6 12 ♗c3 ♙f8 13 h3* brought about a position much akin to the Spanish in [Emms, J–Davies, N/Gibraltar 2004 \(63\)](#).)

4...exd4 5 e5



Or *5 0-0* when Black's main alternative to [C56] is *5...♙c5* (*5...d5* is dubious after *6 exd5 ♗xd5 7 ♗g5* with a nasty threat to f7 – see [Sveshnikov, E–Ivanov, I/Cheliabinsk 1976 \(16\)](#).) *6 e5 d5* (*6...♗g4* is an alternative, *7 ♙f4* (*7 ♙xf7+?! ♗xf7 8 ♗g5+ ♗g8 9 ♗xg4 d5*) *7...0-0 8 h3 ♗h6 9 ♙xh6 gxf6 10 c3 d5*) *7 exf6 dxc4* which is the massively complicated Max Lange Attack. *8 fxf7* (The main line goes *8 ♜e1+ ♙e6 9 ♗g5* (or *9 fxf7 ♜g8*) *9...♗d5 10 ♗c3 ♗f5*) *8...♜g8 9 ♙g5* (*9 ♜e1+ ♙e7 10 ♙g5 ♙e6 11 ♙xe7 ♗xe7* transposes) *9...♙e7* (*9...f6* is probably an inaccuracy, see [Short, N–Fressinet, L/Khanty–Mansiysk](#)

RUS 2010) 10 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 11 ♞e1+ ♕c6 12 ♞e4 Ker,A–Croad,N/Christchurch NZL 2001.

5...d5

The mainline, but there are good alternatives:

5...♗g4 is also completely sound and Black should equalize without any great difficulty. 6 ♞e2

a) 6 0-0 d6 7 exd6 ♕xd6 8 ♞e1+ ♗f8! at first White seems to have classic compensation (a pawn for a bad king), but in fact Black has active pieces and in many lines can even take the initiative, 9 c3 (9 ♕b5 Pap,M–Kosten,A/Avoine 2008) 9...♞f6! see [Alsbirk,J–Kristensen,B/Tonder 1993](#).

b) 6 ♕xf7+? is a "trick", which is simply bad for White, [Efsthopoulos,P–Mihailidis,A/Halkidiki GRE 2002](#)

6...♞e7 7 ♕f4 d6 8 exd6 ♞xe2+ instead, with (8...cxd6 Black tries to avoid too much simplification, 9 ♗a3 a6 10 ♞d1 ♞xe2+ 11 ♗xe2 ♕e6 12 ♗xd4 d5 and Black is doing well, [Sveshnikov,E–Kuzmin,A/Yerevan 1996](#)) 9 ♕xc2 ♕xd6 10 ♕xd6 cxd6 11 ♗a3 ♗ge5! equalising, [Fernandez Garcia,J–Ivkov,B/Corunha 1990](#).

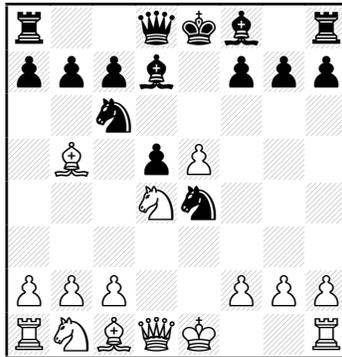
Black can also deviate from the 5...d5 theory with 5...♗e4 although this line is very sharp Black should be O.K., for example after 6 ♞e2 Black has to be very accurate to keep the balance here,

a) 6 ♕d5 ♗c5 (6...♕b4+!? is [De Boer,A–Dumont,G/Creon 2003](#)) 7 ♕xc6 dxc6 8 ♞xd4 ♕f5 Black had a very good game in [Kozakov,M–Jonkman,H/Lvov 2001](#) (34).

b) 6 0-0 is the least dangerous option, 6...d5 7 exd6 ♗xd6 8 ♕d5 ♗f5 (8...♕e7!?) 9 ♞e1+ ♕e7 10 ♕xc6+ bxc6 11 g4 ♗h6!?

6...♗c5 7 0-0 ♗e6! (7...♕e7 8 ♞d1 d5?! this move is extremely ambitious and is, in fact, dubious, [Stevic,H–Beliavsky,A/Celje SLO 2004](#)) 8 ♕xe6 dxe6 (8...fxe6! is a more dynamic approach to the position) 9 ♞d1 ♕e7 10 ♕e3 ♕d7 11 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 12 ♗xd4 0-0 13 ♗c3 White has the advantage in space in a closed position and the two knights are in no way inferior to the pair of bishops, see [Tzermiadianos,A–Gligoric,S/Panormo \(zt\) 1998](#).

6 ♕b5 ♗e4 7 ♗xd4 ♕d7



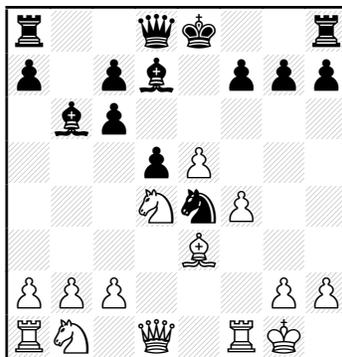
The more adventurous 7...c5! might be stronger, 8 e3 best,

a) 8 dxc6!? is greedy, 8...xf2+ 9 f1 (9 e2!? g4+ 10 f1 Wh4 11 Wxd5 [Arnott,J-Hebden,M/Halifax 2003](#), and now 11...b6 is right) 9...Wh4 10 d4+ c6 11 f3 g3+ 12 xf2 e4+ led to a draw in [Fister,B-Wagner,B/France 2002](#).

b) 8 0-0 0-0 9 xc6 bxc6 10 e3 (10 dxc6!? Wd7 11 d4 a6 12 e1 ae8! is good for Black, see [Vianin,P-Lurje,P/Geneve 1995](#)) 10...We8! Keres' move, 11 c3 f6! with good play, [Vejcel-Poleshchuk/corr 1978](#).

8...d7 (8...xd4 9 Wxd4 0-0 is possible, 10 xc6 bxc6 11 c3 g5 12 Wa4 d7 13 0-0-0 (13 f4!? [Two Knight's Analysis/2006](#)) 13...e6 14 Wa3 with a typical position for this line, [Estrin,Y-Brglez,F/corr ICCF 1972](#)) 9 xc6 bxc6 10 0-0 and now 10...0-0, but Black has an independent try in 10...We7. Even so it seems that White has a small advantage after 11 f3 d6 12 f2 f5 13 c3 0-0 14 e1 b6 (14...ab8 15 b4!? b6 16 b3 xf2+ 17 xf2 Wh4+ 18 g1 was also better for White in Em.Agdestein – O'Toole, Gibraltar Masters 2004) 15 Wc2 Wg5 16 Wd2 Wg6 17 a3 ad8 18 b4 fe8 19 ac2 a5 20 bxa5 xa5 21 db3 b6 22 c5 and White's grip on the c5 square and passed a-pawn gave him an edge in [Sveshnikov – R.Bjerke, Gausdal 1992](#).

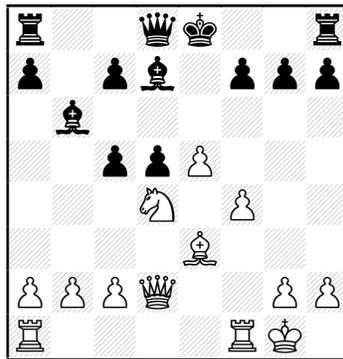
8 xc6 bxc6 9 0-0 e3 10 f3 g5 11 f4 e4 12 e3 b6



13 ♖d2

Dzhinzhischavili's suggestion of 13 ♖c3 doesn't look like anything for White after 13...♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♕e7 (The nonchalant 14...0-0 seems OK too – see [Andres Gonzalez,I–Rodriguez Fernandez,J/Norena 2001 \(55\)](#)) 15 ♖d2 (15 f5 is [Kovachev,D–Ashton,A/Port Erin IOM 2003 \(38\)](#)), and 15 ♖f3 was played in [Radovanovic,D–Brenjo,S/Leskovac YUG 2002 \(30\)](#)) 15...0-0 16 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 17 ♗b3 ♕f5 and Black had a good game in [Radovanovic,D–Pilgaard,K/Backa Palanka YUG 2002 \(30\)](#).

13...♗xd2 14 ♕xd2 c5



15 ♗f3

15 ♗b3 d4 16 ♕f2 ♕b5 17 ♖fe1 ♖d5 18 f5 h6 was deemed to be poor for White on the basis of [Sveshnikov,E–Agzamov,G/Tashkent 1984 \(41\)](#) but he can improve on this game with 19 ♖f4 (Instead of 19 ♖h1)
15 ♗e2 is interesting as in [Zelcic,R–Ivic,M/Omis CRO 2004 \(35\)](#).

15...d4

15...♕f5 16 c3 gave White some prospects of an edge in [Gurevich,V–Polovodin,I/USSR 1987](#).

16 ♕f2 ♕c6 17 ♕h4 ♖d7 18 f5 ♖xf5 19 ♗g5 ♖g6 20 ♖xf7 h6 21 ♖af1 0-0-0 22 ♗h3 ♖de8 23 ♕g3 c4

was [Masternak,G–Klovans,J/Katowice 1993 \(32\)](#) and now

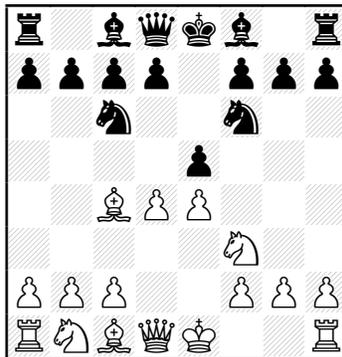
24 ♖h1

would have been far from clear.

Two Knights – 4.d4 [C56]

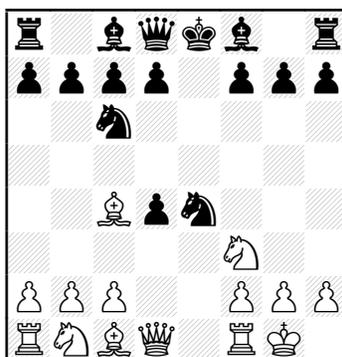
Last updated: 13/05/06 by Olivier Renet

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d4



4...exd4 5 0-0 Nxe4

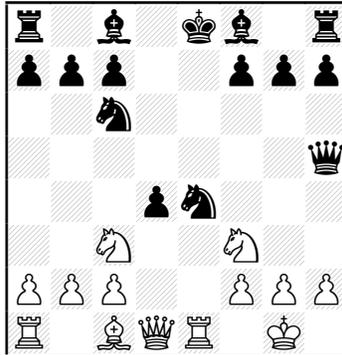
Apparently greedy, but correct.



6 Bxe1 d5 7 Bxd5 Qxd5

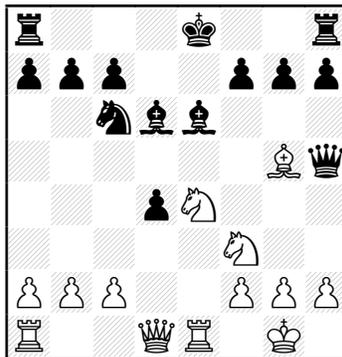
This line doesn't give Black any theoretical problems. Nevertheless, it is a very solid line and if White wants to make a draw it isn't so easy for Black to create complications.

8 ♖c3 ♚h5



Another good move is 8...♚a5 9 ♖xd4?! (9 ♖xe4 is best.) 9...♖xd4 10 ♚xd4 ♚f5 and Black won a classic miniature in the game [Euwe,M–Reti,R/Amsterdam 1920 \(22\)](#).

9 ♖xe4 ♙e6 10 ♙g5 ♙d6!?



This move is safe and it sets a positional trap.

10...h6 11 ♙f6 ♚g6 12 ♖h4 ♚h7 – see [Kuntz,P–Godena,M/Cannes 1992 \(21\)](#).

11 ♖xd6+

11 ♙f6? ♙xh2+! and should win, as 12 ♖xh2 ♚xd1 13 ♚axd1 gxf6

11...cxd6 12 ♙f4 ♚d5 13 c3 ♖d7!

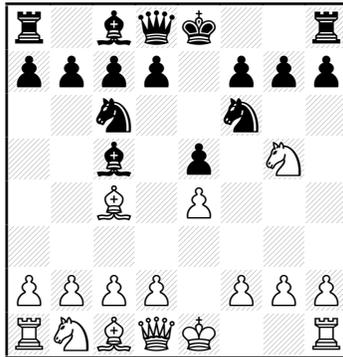
This strange-looking move has been played several times by Hector who showed that the position isn't completely dead.

14 ♚a4 ♚c4 with an edge, [Mogranzini,R–Godena,M/Frascati ITA 2006](#).

Two Knights – 4.Ng5 Intro [C57]

Last updated: 25/06/08 by Tony Kosten

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♘f6 4 ♘g5 ♙c5!?



The Wilkes–Barre Variation leads to fascinating complications which are far from fully explored to this day.

After 4...d5 5 exd5 Black has a couple of interesting alternatives to the main line with 5...♗a5 (see C59) in 5...b5 (Black can also play 5...♞d4 6 c3 b5 the Fritz Variation—see [Stenzel,H–Nikolayev,I/New York State Ch. 1999 \(26\)](#)), 5...♞xd5 6 ♞xf7!? is the famous 'Fried Liver Attack' – see [Balkany,A–Longuski,J/Michigan 1973 \(13\)](#). But 6.d4 may be stronger if less spectacular.) 6 ♙f1! (6 dxc6 bxc4 7 ♞c3 h6 8 ♞ge4 ♞xe4 9 ♞xe4 ♗d5 10 ♗f3 ♙e6 11 0-0 0-0-0 and Black had compensation for the pawn in this wild position in the game [Bahram,N–Hector,J/Stockholm SWE 1998 \(22\)](#).) 6...h6!? 7 ♞xf7! ♞xf7 8 dxc6 see [Vallejo Pons,F–Naiditsch,A/Crete GRE 2007](#).

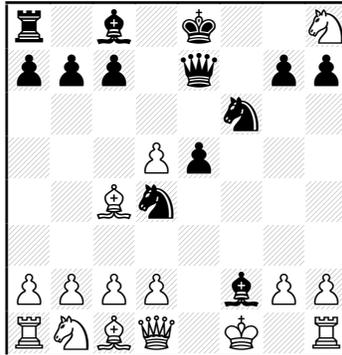
5 ♞xf7

5 ♙xf7+ ♔e7 (5...♔f8!? is an interesting move which has been neglected by theory – see [McMurray,A–Kussman,G/New York 1937 \(13\)](#)) 6 ♙d5 ♗f8 7 ♗f1 (7 0-0) 7...♗e8 and Black had dangerous attacking chances in [Efimov,I–Shirov,A/Gausdal Arnold Cup, Norway 1991 \(15\)](#).

5...♙xf2+ 6 ♔f1

For 6 ♔xf2 see [Neikirkh,O–Galiris,N/Correspondence 1969 \(13\)](#).

6...♙e7 7 ♘xh8 d5 8 exd5 ♘d4



8...♙g4 is also worth investigating – see [Abdullaev,A–Razmolodin,V/Tashkent 1967](#) (13).

9 c3

9 h3 ♙g3 10 c3 ♘f5 11 d4 ♙d7 12 ♚e2 ♙h2! won beautifully for Black in [Estrin,Y–Nun,J/Correspondence Game, 1965](#) (16).

9...♙g4 10 ♚a4+ ♘d7 11 ♙xf2 ♚h4+ 12 g3 ♚f6+ 13 ♙e1 ♚f3!?

13...0-0-0! is an interesting alternative

whilst 13...♘f3+ 14 ♙d1 ♘d4+ resulted in a draw by repetition in [Valgardsson,G–Johannesson,I/Reykjavik Open, Iceland 2000](#) (16).

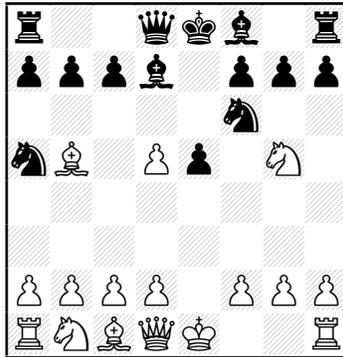
14 ♚f1 ♚e4+ 15 ♙f2 0-0-0

gave Black a ferocious attack in [Shaw,D–Yeo,M/Rd08–West Bromwich 2004](#) (29).

Two Knights – 6 Bb5+ Bd7 & Intro [C58]

Last updated: 28/08/08 by Tony Kosten

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♘f6 4 ♘g5 d5 5 exd5 ♘a5 6 ♙b5+ ♙d7



A number of strong GMs have used this, it is an interesting alternative to the more common 6...c6 when 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 ♖f3!? (8 ♙e2 is the mainline, C59), is well met by 8...♗b8 9 ♙d3 (9 ♙xc6+?! ♘xc6 10 ♖xc6+ ♘d7! 11 d3 (11 ♘f3 ♗b6!? [Mathe,I–Demian,V/cr EEC Cup 2007](#)) 11...♙e7 with plenty of compensation, [Demian,V–Oprisor,R/cr EEC Cup 2007](#)) 9...h6!? (9...♙e7 10 ♘c3 0-0 [Vallejo Pons,F–Inarkiev,E/Khanty–Mansiysk RUS 2007](#), 9...♙d6 can also be a real hassle for White to meet.) 10 ♘e4 ♘d5 11 b3! g6 12 ♙b2 ♙g7 13 ♖g3 0-0!? sacrificing a second pawn for some open lines for his rooks and active squares for his pieces, [Zhang Zhong–Ganguly,S/Sydney AUS 2008](#).

7 ♖e2

7 ♙e2!? is a rare alternative, 7...♘xd5 8 d4 ♙e7! 9 ♘f3 exd4 10 ♖xd4 [Mamedyarov,S–Naiditsch,A/Dortmund GER 2007](#), when I like 10...♘b4

7...♙e7

Another possibility is 7...♙d6!?, for example 8 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 9 ♘c3 c6 10 dxc6 ♘xc6 as in [Rausis,I–Islam,K/Mumbai IND 2003](#) (23).

8 ♘c3

For 8 d4 see [Sax,G–Hector,J/Hamburg GER 2002 \(42\)](#).

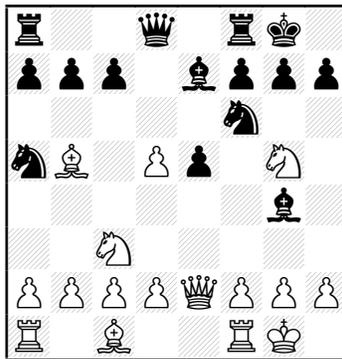
8...0-0

8...♙xb5!? sacrifices a pawn for some attack, 9 ♖xb5+ c6 10 dxc6 ♘xc6 11 ♖xb7!? ♘d4 [Gorbatov,A–Yandemirov,V/Moscow RUS 2007](#).

9 0-0

A more solid way to play it is with 9 ♙xd7 ♖xd7 10 0-0 but then Black equalised with 10...♗fe8 11 d3 (11 ♖xe5!?) 11...♙b4 in the game [Sokolov,A–Kunte,A/Bled SLO 2002 \(14\)](#).

9...♙g4!?



This leads to very complex and intricate play. Black has tried several alternatives here: 9...♗e8 10 ♘ge4 c6 11 dxc6 ♘xc6 12 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 13 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 gave Black compensation for his pawn in [Felgaer,R–Skembris,S/Lido Estensi ITA 2003 \(39\)](#).

9...c6 10 dxc6 ♘xc6 11 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 12 d3 ♗e8 also gave Black pressure for the pawn in [Gikas,B–Skembris,S/Athens GRE 2003 \(34\)](#).

9...♙xb5!? is again possible, 10 ♖xb5 c6 11 dxc6 ♘xc6 12 ♖xb7! ♘d4 see the notes to the [Yandemirov](#) game.

10 f3

The immediate 10 ♖xe5 fared badly after 10...♙d6 11 ♖d4 c5! in [Short,N–Xie Jun/Jinan CHN 2002 \(43\)](#).

10...♙h5 11 ♖xe5 ♙g6 12 ♘ge4 a6 13 ♙e2

13 ♙d3 ♗e8 gave Black excellent counterplay in [Short,N–Hector,J/Lanzarote ESP 2003 \(44\)](#).

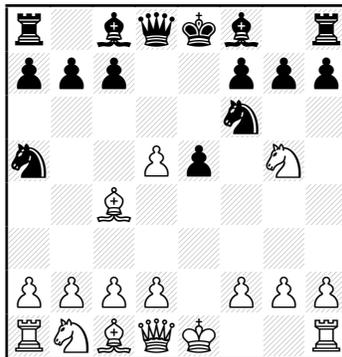
13...b5 14 a3 ♘d7 15 ♙d4 f5

was very complex and difficult to assess in the game [Pavasovic,D–Hector,J/Plovdiv BUL 2003 \(104\)](#).

Two Knights – Main Line [C59]

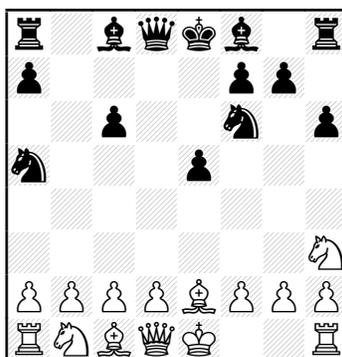
Last updated: 01/08/06 by Olivier Renet

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♝c6 3 ♚c4 ♞f6 4 ♞g5 d5 5 exd5 ♞a5



Chigorin's move, which has long been the most reliable of Black's gambits.

6 ♚b5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 ♚e2 h6 9 ♞h3



Steinitz's move makes an interesting change and also gained the support of Bobby Fischer.

White can get his kingside pawn structure damaged with ...♚c8xh3, but that will give him the bishop pair and meanwhile he's a pawn up.

9 ♞f3 is standard, 9...e4 10 ♞e5 ♚d6 the normal move, (10...♞d4!? this idea is less played but it should be investigated in the light of recent games. Black sacrifices some

tempi but White will lose the right to castle, 11 f4 ♖c5 12 ♜f1 ♚d8!? Kriventsov,S–Becerra Rivero,J/San Diego USA 2006) 11 d4 exd3 12 ♘xd3 ♚c7 13 b3 0-0 14 ♖b2 ♘c4 Black creates a strong outpost on e4, see the instructive Yakovich,Y–Tomashevsky,E/Sochi RUS 2006.

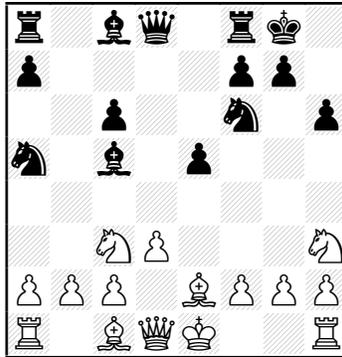
9...♖c5

9...g5 is an ambitious attempt to keep White's knight on h3 out of the game – see Timoshenko,G–Kosikov,A/Kyiv 2003 (29).

10 d3

10 0-0 0-0 (10...g5!? is an argument in favour of 10.d3) 11 d3 ♖xh3!? 12 gxh3 ♚d7 13 ♖f3 ♚xh3 14 ♘d2 and White's bishop pair gave him the better of it in Fischer,R–Bisguier,A/Poughskeepie 1963 (29).

10...0-0 11 ♘c3



11...♘d5 12 ♘a4?!

Simply 12 0-0 is better.

12...♖d6 13 ♘g1 f5!

and Black had good attacking chances in the game Steinitz,W–Chigorin,M/corr 1890 (38).