

Flank Openings

In this section I try to give an answer to the problem of what to do if White chooses to play something other than 1 e4 or 1 d4. Now there are some openings that have a decent pedigree, such as the King's Indian Attack, but knowledge of a crafty move-order can tip the balance in securing equality in the opening. Of course, openings such as 1 g4 might bring a smile to a master's face but in the rough and tumble of tournament conditions with fast time-limits it has to be respected. Indeed White is likely to be a specialist and therefore I will offer guidance on how to respond. I have to be realistic and cannot promise to refute all the openings in a space of a few pages. However the positive results of Black's play in the main games are intended to inspire and it is worth remembering that some of these lines are obscure because they are not much good!

Larsen's Opening 1 b3

This opening has a sizeable following and its popularity tends to fluctuate. However it does allow White to get by on only one opening and thereby cut down on learning a mass of moves.

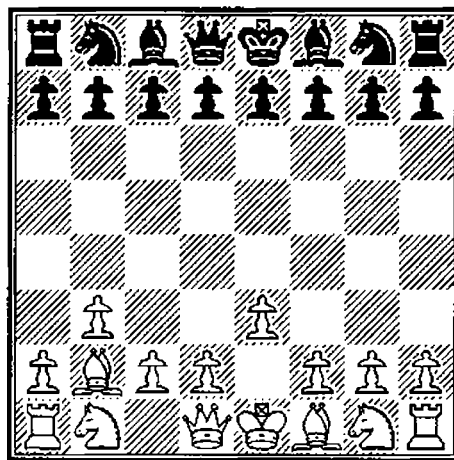
History of Larsen's Opening

Larsen's Opening is also known as the Nimzo-Larsen. This is

because the world class player Aaron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935) played it for some time, though usually via the move-order 1 Qf3 and then 2 b3. The modern treatment owes a lot to Danish grandmaster Bent Larsen who played the opening successfully and at the highest level in the 1970/80s.

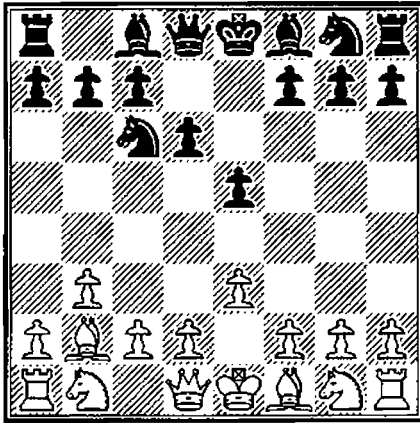
Ideas Behind the Opening

White aims to fianchetto on the queenside and then undermine Black's pawn centre.



How to Beat Larsen's Opening

I tried to find a line which hampers White's opening intentions of undermining the centre and went for a system that I have employed with success.



Black blocks the influence of the dark-squared bishop by placing a pawn on e5 and then supporting it with the d-pawn and knight. It is easier to understand the potential of Black's game by seeing how a world class player handles it:

Minasian – Adams
Debrecen 1992

1 b3 e5 2 ♗b2 ♘c6 3 e3 d6

This system, which adds support to the e5 pawn, is annoying for White who usually likes to dominate the a1-h8 diagonal. The main line is considered to be 3...d5 when 4 ♗b5 increases the pressure on the e5 pawn.

4 ♗b5!?

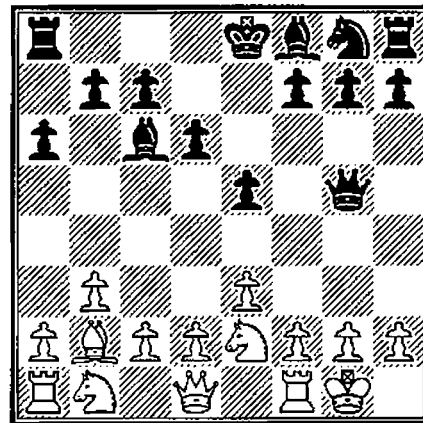
Pinning the knight is the sharpest move and Minasian has in the past been successful with this continuation. The positional approach with 4 c4 is the main alternative: then 4...♗f6 5 ♗f3 e4 6 ♗d4 ♗e5 (I think this well placed knight is a sign that White's opening has been ineffective – chances are now equal) 7 ♗e2 c5 8 ♗b5 a6 9 ♗5c3 ♗g4 (perhaps 9...♗f5, to add support to the e-pawn, is worth

considering) 10 0-0 ♗xe2 11 ♖xe2 ♗e7 12 ♗a3 0-0 13 ♗c2 ♗d3 14 ♗a3 d5 gave Black an edge in T.Wall-Lane, British Team Championship 1999.

4...♗d7 5 ♗e2

White is intending to play f2-f4 so as to try and increase the power of the dark-squared bishop. Also possible is 5 ♗f3 intending to challenge the centre with d2-d4. The game Kalajzic-Zhang Zhong, Ulaanbaatar 2002, continued 5...a6 6 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 7 d4 e4 8 d5 ♗d7 9 ♗fd2 ♖g5 (a familiar theme in this line – the queen makes an early excursion in an effort to create havoc) 10 ♗xe4 ♖xg2 11 ♗g3 ♗h6 gave Black an edge due to his active queen.

5...a6 6 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 7 0-0 ♖g5!



I like this aggressive move which immediately poses White problems in the opening. It might seem rash to expose the black queen but it is not easy for White to attack it. In his collection of best games, *Chess in the Fast Lane*, Adams explains his opening choice "I had resolved to follow some half-remembered game Sadler-Lane, which I sat next

to at Lloyds Bank Masters several years before”.

8 f3!?

White wishes to blunt the influence of the bishop on c5 while 8 g3 encourages 8...h5 with a strong initiative.

8... f6

It is worth quoting Adams to understand his thought process at this point. “I remembered all this from the Lane game and also Gary’s next move 8...h5, but at the board it seemed to me that 9 c4 h4 10 e4 h3 11 g3 would be rather messy. Although the advanced h-pawn is uncomfortable for White, his increased central control is important. My move is more flexible as it is always possible to advance the h-pawn later.” Here is the game he saw being played: 8...h5 9 f2 f6 10 c4 d5 11 cxd5 xd5 12 bc3 b4 13 c1 0-0-0 (Black has a comfortable game due to his active pieces while White is rather passive) 14 a3 d5 15 c2 f6 16 le2 h6 (I could see that there was nothing to be feared in White’s play so I decided on a direct approach) 17 c1 g6 18 g3 h4 19 ge4 xe4 20 xe4 h5 21 b4 f5 22 c5 h3 23 g3 f4! (it is necessary to pursue the initiative by undermining White’s kingside pawn barrier) 24 xe5 fxg3 25 xg3 d6 26 f4 d5 27 e4 d4 28 e1 xf4 (Black is now winning but White started to rush his moves because I was in time-trouble – but this soon backfires) 29 b3 d6 30 e5 d5 31 xf4 g2 mate, Sadler-Lane, London 1989.

9 c4

Minasian employs a familiar idea in Larsen’s Opening and tries to influence the centre. The idea is to play e3-e4 followed by bc3-d5 .

9...d5!

Black is in no mood to wait and see what will happen. Therefore he makes a bid for more space in the centre. This would also be the response against 9 e4.

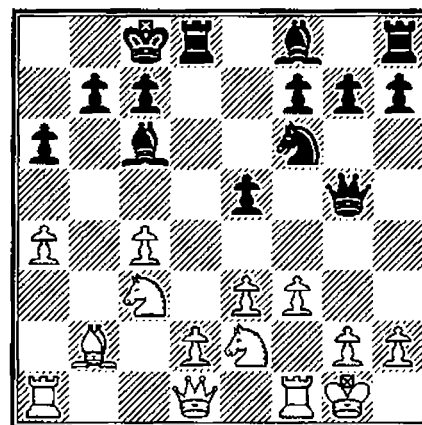
10 bc3 ?

Perhaps 10 f4! is the best choice but Black is also on top after 10...exf4 11 xf4 dxc4 12 bxc4 d6 (Black simply threatens to take on f4 followed by mate on g2) 13 xf6 xf6 14 c3 g5 with the initiative.

10...0-0-0 11 a4?

White is naturally more concerned with his own plan of trying to provoke a compromise on the queenside. Instead 11 cxd5 xd5 12 xd5 xd5 13 c3 d7 is better for Black who is threatening ... c5 with similar play to the game.

11...dxc4 12 bxc4



12...♙c5!

It suddenly becomes clear that Adams has prepared a clever combination. The twin threats are ...♖xd2 and, after the queen recaptures, ...♙xe3+ winning, and also the immediate ...♙xe3+ would take advantage of the pin on the d-file.

13 ♖h1 ♙xe3 14 ♙c1 ♙xd2 15 ♘b5!?

White is two pawns down but the Armenian grandmaster seeks complications to unsettle Black.

15...♙b8

A quiet move but necessary because 15...♙xc1?! allows White to wreck the queenside pawn structure by 16 ♘a7+ ♙b8 17 ♘xc6+ bxc6 when 18 ♖b3+ ♙a8 19 ♖axc1 gives White some compensation for the pawns. If 15...axb5 then 16 axb5 is fine for White who is threatening ♖a8+.

16 ♘ed4

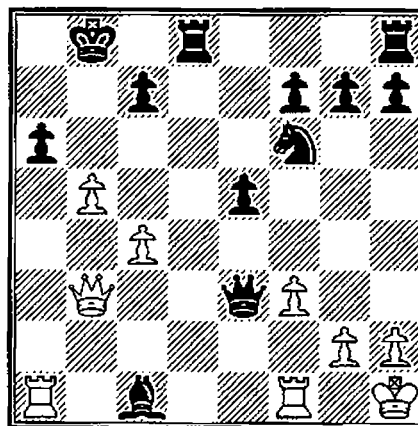
Or 16 ♘bd4 exd4 17 ♙xd2 ♖c5 is good for Black.

16...♙xc1 17 ♘xc6+ bxc6 18 ♖b3

After 18 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 19 ♖axc1 cxb5 White should count the pieces and then resign.

18...cxb5 19 axb5 ♖e3!

This had to be seen in advance and thwarts White's attack. Not only is a queen exchange threatened but it is also possible to swing across to the queenside for defensive purposes.



20 ♖a4 ♙b2 21 ♖xa6

White can keep fighting with 21 ♖a2!? when 21...♖b6 22 ♖xb2 ♘d7 leaves Black with a stout defence and more importantly an extra piece.

21...♙xa1 22 ♖xa1 ♖d1+

Black's plan is revealed because mate is avoided and an exchange of queens forced.

23 ♖xd1 ♖a7 24 ♖c6 ♖b6 25 c5 ♖xc6 26 bxc6 ♖e8 27 g4 h6 28 h4 g5

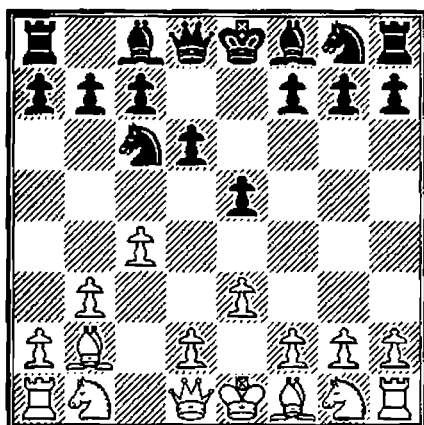
Adams ensures the knight cannot be knocked off its perch on f6 so that the white rook is unable to invade the seventh rank. The game is effectively over.

29 hxg5 hxg5 30 ♙g2 ♙c8 0-1

It is also possible to adopt another approach with 4 c4 rather than pin the queen's knight.

Bauer – Lautier
Cannes 2001

1 b3 e5 2 ♙b2 ♘c6 3 e3 d6 4 c4



White decides to adopt a more positional approach by contesting the centre with the c-pawn. After 4 d4 exd4 5 exd4 Black can achieve equality by 5...d5! which blocks in White's dark squared bishop. For instance, after 6 ♖f3, play might proceed 6...♙d6 7 ♙e2 ♖f6 8 0-0 0-0 9 c4 ♙g4 10 c5 ♙f4 11 h3 ♙xf3 12 ♙xf3 ♙e8 with equal chances, Blatny-Miton, Los Angeles 2000.

4...g6 5 g3

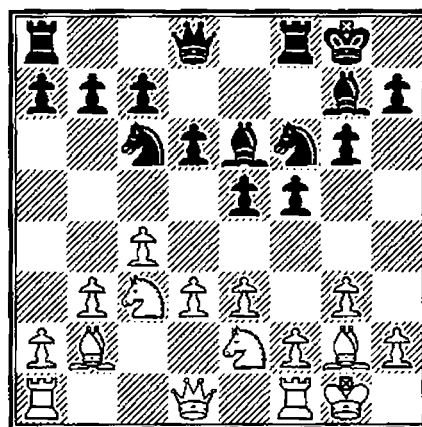
Once again 5 d4 is an option and with a pawn on c4 it is more awkward to insert ...d6-d5. Play might continue 5...exd4 6 ♖f3 ♙g4 7 ♙e2 ♙g7 8 ♖xd4 (8 exd4 can be met by 8...♖h6 heading for the f5 square to exert pressure on the d4 pawn) 8...♙xe2 9 ♙xe2 ♖xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 11 exd4+ ♙e7 12 ♖c3 ♖f6 13 ♙xe7+ ♙xe7 14 0-0-0 ♖d7 when the game is heading towards a draw, Jadoul-Middelburg, Dutch Team Championship 2001.

5...♙g7 6 ♙g2 f5 7 d3 ♖f6 8 ♖e2

White is content to develop and castle on the kingside. Instead 8

♖c3, to help control the d5 square, has to be taken seriously: 8...0-0 9 ♖ge2 ♙h8 10 0-0 g5 (10...♙e6 11 ♖d5 ♙b8, intending ...♖ce7 to oust the knight, is worth considering) 11 ♖d5 ♖e7 12 ♖xf6 ♙xf6 13 f4 (White blocks the advance of black pawns and helps to increase the influence of his dark-squared bishop) 13...♖g6 14 fxg5 ♙xg5 15 ♖f4! c6 16 ♙h1 ♙g8 with a level position, Vavrak-Lipka, Slovakia 1998.

8...0-0 9 0-0 ♙e6 10 ♖bc3



10...d5!?

In a bid for more space and before White can install a knight on d5, Lautier expands in the centre.

11 cxd5

Black needs to know what to do if White should decline the exchange of pawns. For example, after 11 ♙d2? dxc4 12 bxc4 ♙xc4 the pin on the d-file leaves Black a pawn up. Instead 11 a3 ♙d7 12 ♙c2 ♙ad8, intending ...g6-g5, is roughly equal.

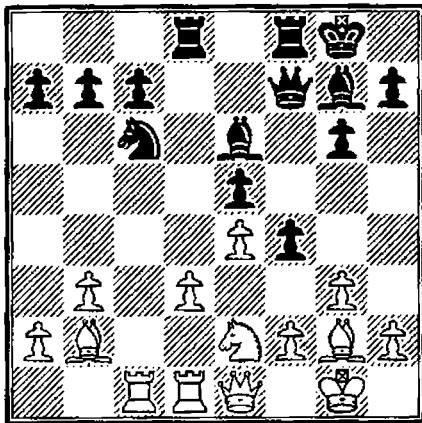
11...♖xd5 12 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 13 e4 ♙e6

Or 13...fxe4 14 dxe4 ♖e6 15 f4 ♜e7 with a level position.

14 ♜d2 ♜d7

Now the rooks are co-ordinated and Black has the possibility of playing a future ...♗h3 after the f-pawn is exchanged on e4 or the f-pawn is advanced.

15 ♜ac1 ♜ad8 16 ♜fd1 ♜f7 17 ♜e1 f4!?



I like this advance because it gives Black excellent tactical chances and White will have to be a first-class defender to cope with the various threats starting with the obvious ...f4-f3.

18 gxf4

If White blocks with 18 f3 then 18...fxg3 19 hxg3 ♜d7 gives Black an edge

18...exf4 19 ♗xg7 ♜xg7 20 f3 g5 21 ♗h1?!

The looming attack indicates that White should try to sort things out by offering a trade of queens by 21 ♜c3! with a double-edged game

after 21...♜g6, contemplating ...g5-g4.

21...♜f7 22 ♜c3 ♗d4 23 ♗xd4 ♜xd4 24 ♜g1 ♜fd7 25 ♗f1 h6

This allows White to activate his queen so 25...b6 should be preferred – with an edge, and if 26 h4 then a sample line runs 26...h6 27 ♜c2 c5 28 ♜cg2 ♗f8 29 hxg5 hxg5 30 ♜xg5? ♜h6+ and White loses.

26 ♜c5 b6 27 ♜c6 ♗f7?

Black charitably gives away a free pawn so 27...♗f7! is necessary to preserve Black's slight advantage.

28 ♜a8+ ♜f8 29 ♜xa7 ♜d8 30 ♜c6

Perhaps 30 ♜a6 is worth a go, hoping for 30...c5? (30...♜7d6, intending ...c7-c5, offers equal opportunities) when White crashes though with 31 ♜xc5! bxc5 32 ♜xh6 and Black can go home.

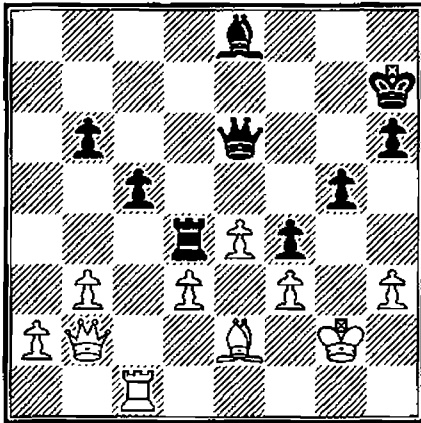
30...♗g7 31 ♜a3 ♗h5 32 ♗g2 ♗h7 33 ♜b2

Not 33 b4? due to the combination 33...♗xf3+! when 34 ♗xf3 ♜xd3+ 35 ♗xd3 ♜xd3+ 36 ♜xd3 ♜xd3+ gives Black a clear advantage.

33...♜7d6 34 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 35 ♗e2 c5

Black secures the rook and reminds White of the passive nature of his position.

36 ♜c1 ♜e6 37 h3 ♗e8



38 ♖c4?

In time-trouble Bauer makes a fatal mistake. Instead 38 ♕f1!? should be selected when 38...♕b5 39 ♖c2 is equal.

38...♕d7 39 ♖xd4 ♖xh3+ 0-1

White resigned in view of 40 ♔g1 ♖g3+ 41 ♔h1 cxd4 42 ♖xd4 ♖e1+ 43 ♔g2 ♖xe2+ 44 ♔g1 ♖e1+ 45 ♔g2 ♖g3+ with an easy win.

The King's Indian Attack

This opening is for players who want to learn a system based on thematic ideas rather than memorising a lot of moves. The aim is to develop carefully behind one's pawns before trying to create a kingside attack in the middlegame.

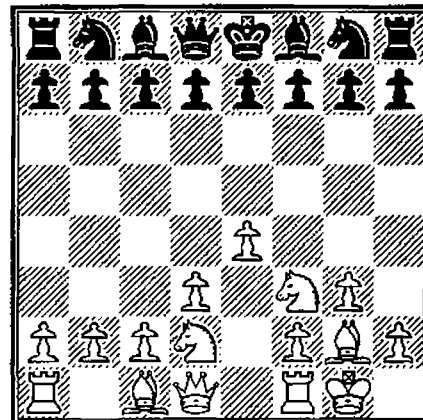
History of the King's Indian Attack

The American chess legend Bobby Fischer was responsible for a boost in the King's Indian Attack's popularity after successful-

ly using it in the 1960s, especially against the French Defence. It had also been adopted earlier in the USA by Larry Evans, thus consolidating it as a modern opening weapon. Since then it has been attractive to those with limited time for study and who wish to play the same system against all major openings.

Ideas Behind the Opening

White plays a certain system of moves almost regardless of what Black does in reply.



This assumption is based on *Modern Chess Openings* which gives the position as one for White to strive for. The same recommendation is made in *The Ultimate King's Indian Attack* by Angus Dunnington.

How to Beat the King's Indian Attack

I think Black should aim to occupy the centre with his pawns which will make it easier to develop his pieces smoothly.