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1 Intro

The Catalan Opening is a chess opening where White plays d4 and c4, fianchettoes the white bishop on g2, and aims for long-term positional pressure in the center and on Black's queenside. It combines the space-gaining moves d4 and c4 with g3, putting pressure mainly on the queenside while hoping to keep the white king safe. The strategic goal of the Catalan is to deal with disadvantageous features without too much awkwardness, aiming for a subtle positional advantage. It's not the easiest opening for either side to play, requiring a significant amount of finesse. The Catalan is suitable for players who enjoy positional chess and can lead to small and nagging edges with very technical endgames. Some notable experts in the Catalan Opening are Vladimir Kramnik, Ding Liren, Anish Giri, Boris Gelfand, and Daniil Dubov and Magnus Carlsen.

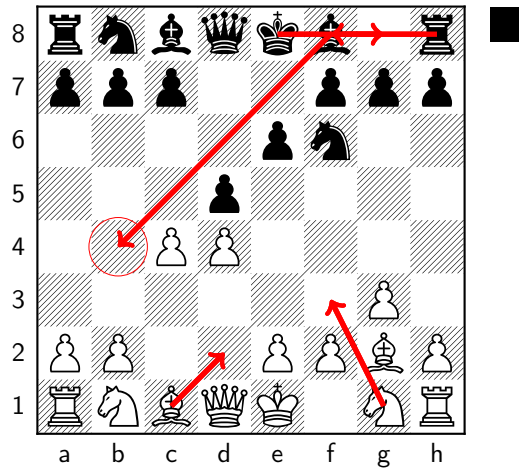
Personal Note:

I came to the creation of this notebook, hoping to get better understanding (if not master) the Catalan opening. I enjoy more quick complicated -full of tacticals- games, but the safe approach in a tournament, especially if you are new, is a long term positional game. Catalan is a great choice of white, because it allows him to go on without immediate confrontation. It won't be an all out game, or a great showdown, some may call it boring. Best case scenario black goes into the open Catalan, where white can apply more pressure with his "catalan" bishop, and black will have a hard time -though the game is equal. The finesse mentioned above goes for the endgame. Please be aware that any tiny pawn movement or trade will have great affect on the endgame. Having said all these, please enjoy and let the notebook teach the reader a thing or two.

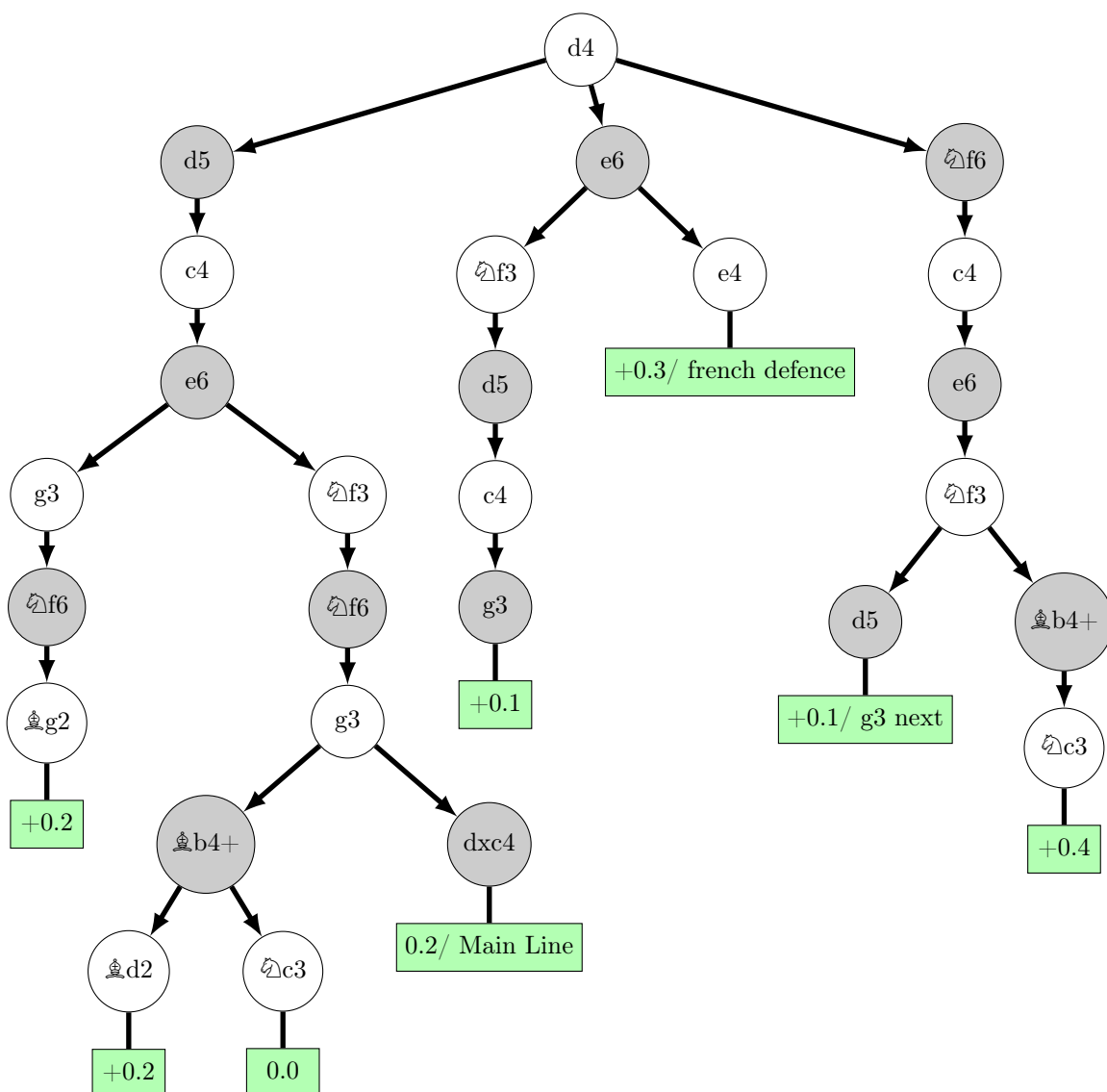
DISCLAIMER: May the reader choose the opening if he wants to avoid direct confrontation and can be described as more of a positional player than tactical. Under no circumstances is implied that Catalan needs less thought or time. It is a hard opening.

2 Open Catalan

2.1 Starting Position



2.2 Transpositions Tree



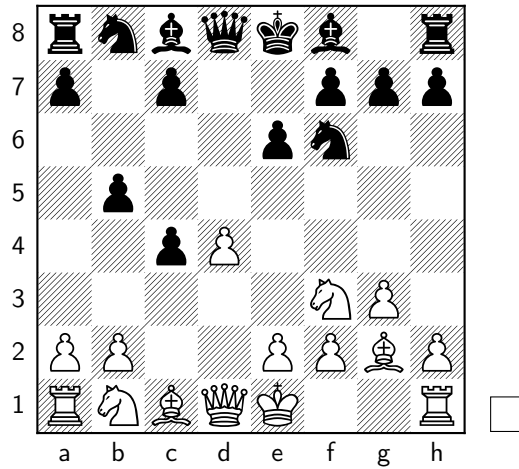
So, in this part, we are gonna analyse the game continuing from where we left. Firstly the main line. Then comes the exploration of the most common response for black with 4. ..., Bb4+ and the choice of blocking the check with ♙d2 or ♘c3. The difference in the lines where ♙b4+ comes with ♘on f3 or ♙on g2 will be ignored, since it's the same.

The reader shall encounter side lines like:
 5. ♙d2, a5, 4. ..., ♘c6, 4. ...,c6
 and the main line in open catalan with 4. ...,dxc4.

2.3 Main Line/ 4)...,dxc4

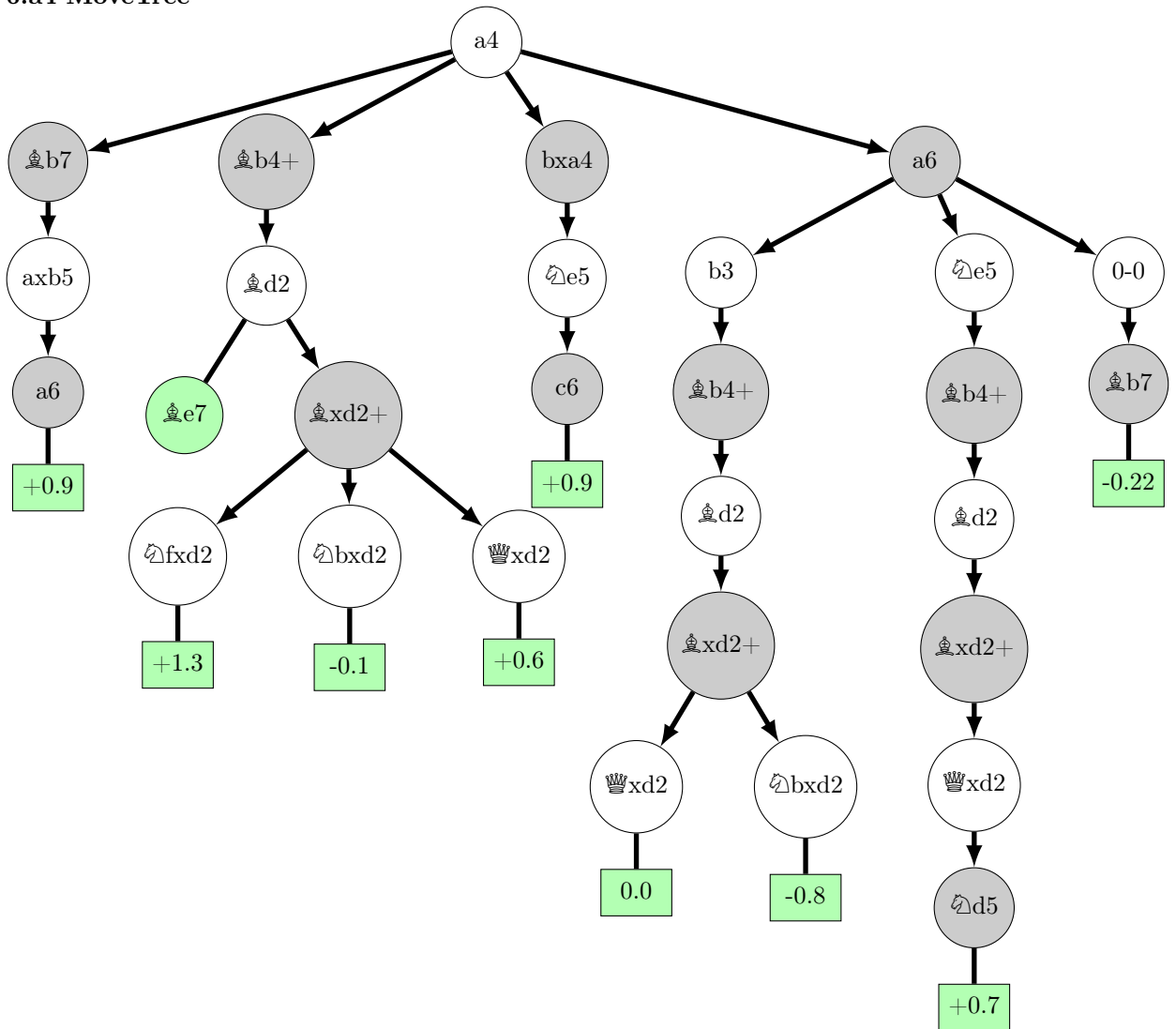
Main Line: 1. d4,d5 2. c4,e6 3. Nf3,Nf6 4. g3,dxc4 5. Bg2,b5 6. a4 or Ne5

Good thing in the open Catalan is that the white diagonal will always be opened, and black will have trouble defending. White can threaten the Rook on a8 anytime he wants, and many variants will be explored.



the trees below explores continuations of the top moves (a4 and Ne5)

6.a4 MoveTree



The analysis of the lines follows, informing the reader about the strategy and follow ups

Bb7 Black gives back the pawn he earlier grabbed and tries to develop his white squared bishop. White takes, black goes a6 since he shouldn't let white build up too much on the queen side -although temporarily ignoring it with moves Be7 to castle next move is also playable. Black must be careful of losing his c4 pawn and white can defend with ♜c3. So the main line is a6, bxa6, ♜xa6. the file is opened, so the diagonal, so accurate play is demanded. Usually black advances to move the knight, trade rooks, and places his queen on a8. So now the diagonal is protected and the game is kinda equal. In the mean time, white has developed his white squared bishop on g5, pinning the knight to the queen, and after ♞xa8 white usually trades his bishop for the knight and the doubled pawn

structure. Even if whites blacks squared bishop takes before the rook trade, black can't but take with the pawn since he wants the queen to protect the bishop in case of a surprising knight move. Queens will be trades and white will be one pawn up, but maintaining the advantage is difficult. Stockfish 16 Lite with depth=20 gives +0.17 for white. Though for human players it's easy to draw as black and to lose, depending on the slightest inaccuracy. All in all a chill line for white, not that much competitive. Just white calling the shots and being a pawn up. I personally wouldn't worry going in this line, since I would always be the one applying pressure, and have a relaxing time playing.

Line: 6. a4, ♖b7 7. axb5, a6 8. bxa6, ♗xa6 9. ♕g5, ♗b4 10. ♕xf6, gxf6 -else: Qxf6 white trades rooks and holds the advantage (+0.5) of a discovered attack on the white diagonal- 11. ♖xa8, ♗xa8 12. 0-0, ♕e7 13. ♗c1, 0-0 14. ♗bd2, ♖d8 15. ♗xc4, ♗a7 16. ♗d2 -covering the other knight (in case of black plays ♕xf3) so the d4 pawn won't fall- ... c5 17. dxc5, ♕a6 18. ♗c3, ♗xc5 19. ♗xc5, ♕xc5 20. ♖c1 -planning e2 in the future Else:

9. 0-0 -leads to the same exact game (black plays ♗b4), but this time black doesn't have the doubled f pawns, also white has the option of going ♖a4 or a3, trying to provoke an exchange leaving him with a passed pawn. Stockfish 16 Lite with depth=20 gives +0.17 for white.

Bb4+

2.4 Side Line/ 4) ..., Nc6

2.5 Side Line/ 4) ..., c6

2.6 Side Line/ 5) ..., a5

3 Closed Catalan

3.1 Starting Position

3.2 Transpositions Tree

3.3 Main Line

4 Neo Catalan -English

4.1 Starting Position

4.2 Transpositions Tree

4.3 Main Line