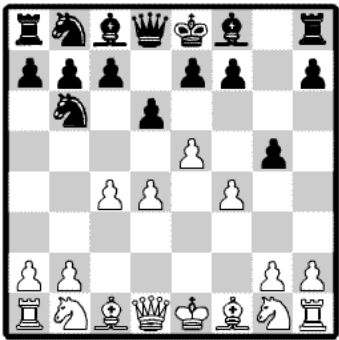


ALEKHINE'S DEFENSE FOUR PAWNS ATTACK

FROM CRAIG EVANS: I have played Alekhine's Defense for much of my career, and against the four pawns I used to play the wild ...c5 lines until I stumbled across a little sideline in 5...g5. I have excellent results using this line, and most of the established refutations (6.Qh5, 6.exd6 and 6.Nf3 to name just a few) are actually quite nice to play for Black I think, besides the odds of any opponents at my level (1800ish) knowing that 6.Qh5 is a difficult move to play against as Black, for example, is quite low. I've found about 60 games in this line now, and Black still seems to score well. Is 5...g5 playable?

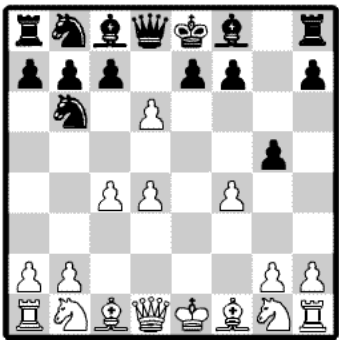


IS THIS INSANE MOVE PLAYABLE?

SILMAN REPLIES: Craig, it hasn't been refuted in many, many years, few players know it even exists, AND it's used in postal chess with good results. So yes, it is at the very least a highly interesting practical choice. Personally, I can't believe a clear way to a white advantage won't eventually be discovered, but until that time arrives you should enjoy the unexplored and highly interesting positions that result from this fantasy line against the Four Pawns.

Here's a little analysis I've put together. Remember: trust nothing! Everything must be checked and double-checked.

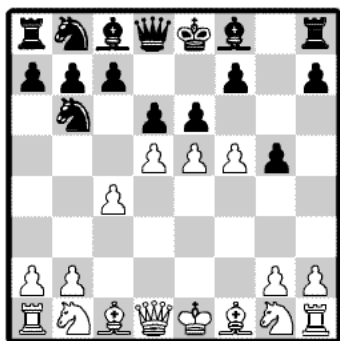
1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 Nb6 5.f4 g5 6.exd6



IS THIS BEST?

This simple capture is now recognized as White's best chance for an advantage. Other lines are:

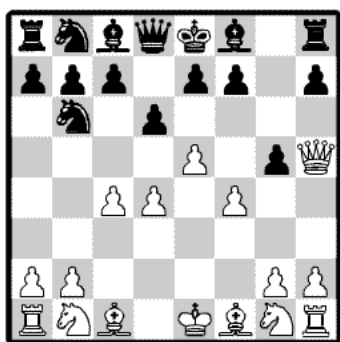
- 1) 6.fxg5 dxe5 7.d5 (7.dxe5 Qxd1+ 8.Kxd1 Nc6 9.Bf4 Bg7 10.Nf3 Bg4 11.Be2 0-0-0+ is a game of R Keene's from a simultaneous exhibition in Cheshire 1968.) 7...e6 8.Nf3 exd5 9.Be2 e4 10.Ne5 Qe7 11.Ng4 Bxg4 12.Bxg4 Qb4+ 13.Nc3 Qxc4 14.Be2 Qc5 15.Qd2 Nc6 16.Bg4 Ne5 17.Be2 0-0-0 18.h4 Bg7 19.Rf1 Rhe8 20.Nb5 Nd3+.
- 2) 6.Nf3 g4 7.Ng5 h6 8.Ne4 f5 9.exf6 exf6 10.Qe2 Kf7 11.Qc2 f5 12.Ng3 Qf6 is okay for Black.
- 3) 6.Nc3 gxh4 7.Bxf4 dxe5 8.Bxe5 Rg8 9.d5 c6 10.Nf3 Bg4 11.Bd3 e6 12.0-0 Bc5+ 13.Kh1 cxd5 unclear, P Bucker - Kebekkus.
- 4) 6.d5 e6 (6...gxh4 7.e6) 7.f5 is a bit odd.



WHITE GOES BERSERK

7...exf5 (One source gave 7...Qe7 8.f6 as being very strong for White, though 8...Qd8 leaves White's center crumbling. Something like 8.fxe6 fxe6 9.exd6 cxd6 10.Qh5+ Qf7 11.Qxf7+ Kxf7 12.Nc3 seems like a better response, but I'm sure this is just the tip of the iceberg.) 8.e6 Qf6 9.exf7+ Kxf7 10.Qh5+ Qg6 11.Qxg5 Bg7, Ermakov - Keene, corr. 1971/72. Black's position is preferable here.

4) So far our alternatives to 6.exd6 don't seem very threatening. However, one move that deserves a serious look is 6.Qh5.



SERIOUS STUFF

After 6.Qh5 Black should play 6...dxe5 when White has two choices:

4.a) 7.Nf3 (Simple, strong, and to the point.) 7...Bf5 8.fxe5 (8.Nxe5 Bg6 9.Nxg6 fxxg6 10.Qf3 leads to many unexplored, exciting variations. However, I have more faith in the less trigger-happy 8.fxe5.) 8...Nc6 9.Qxg5 e6 (9...Bxb1 10.d5 Bg6 11.dxc6 bxc6 12.Be3) 10.Be3 Nb4 11.Na3 might prove promising for White: 11...Be7 (11...Qxg5 12.Bxg5) 12.Qg7 Rf8 13.Rd1.

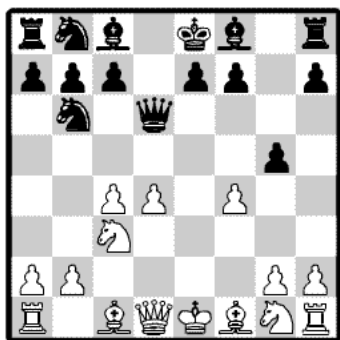
4.b) 7.c5?! (I don't believe in this move) 7...Nd5 8.fxe5 Nf4? (8...Nb4! looks very strong and leads me to believe that 7.c5 is an error. In other words, 7.Nf3 should be preferred.) 9.Bxf4 gxf4 10.Bc4 e6 11.Ne2 Nc6 12.Nbc3 (12.Bb5 is also good), Durao - Pomar, Madrid 1982. Black's in terrible trouble.

6...Qxd6!

The older 6...gxf4 is now known to be good for White after 7.dxc7! (Worse is 7.Bxf4 cxd6 8.Nc3 Bg7 9.Nf3 Bg4 10.Rc1 (10.Be2 Nc6 11.Be3 Bxf3 12.Bxf3 e6, Black stood well in Krstev - Planinc, Skopje 1967.) 10...Nc6 11.d5 Nd4 12.Qd3 Nxf3+ 13.gxf3 Bh5 14.Rg1 Bg6 15.Qe3 0-0, Black stood better in Lewtschenkov - Grigorian, 1971) 7...Qxc7 8.Nc3 e5 (8...e6 9.c5) 9.dxe5 Nc6 10.Bxf4 Be6 11.Ne4 Bb4+ 12.Kf2 Nxc4 13.Bxc4 Bxc4 14.Nf3 and White was winning in Tringov - Planinc, Varna 1970.

7.c5

This threatening advance is usually given as best, but a case can be made for the far simpler 7.Nc3.



SIMPLE DEVELOPMENT

7...gxf4 (7...Nc6 8.d5 is good for White.) 8.Be2 Qg6 (even worse is 8...c5 9.Nb5) 9.c5 N6d7 10.Bf3

and White's position looks quite nice.

Though I'm enthused by 7.Nc3, I'm far less attracted to 7.Be2 c5 8.Nc3 Qxd4 9.Qb3. Here the books gloss over Black's 9...Nc6?! (9...g4! is much stronger.) 10.Nf3 Qd8 11.fxg5 Bf5 12.0-0 Nb4 13.Ne1 Qd4+, Blackstock-Trangmar, Oxford 1970, calling it "unclear". I feel that Black is in serious trouble: 14.Kh1 (14.Rf2!?) 14...Be6 (14...Bg6 15.Bf4) 15.Nf3 and Black's position sucks.

7...Qe6+ 8.Kf2

8.Qe2 doesn't have a good reputation: 8...Nd5 9.Qxe6 (9.fxg5 Bg7 10.Nf3 0-0 11.Nc3 Nc6 12.Qxe6 Bxe6 13.Nxd5 Bxd5 14.Be3 Bxf3 15.gxf3 Bxd4 16.Bxd4 Nxd4 17.0-0-0 =) 9...Bxe6 10.fxg5 Bg7 11.Nf3 Nc6 12.Bb5 Ndb4 13.Na3 0-0-0 14.Bxc6 Nxc6 15.Nc2 Bf5 16.Ne3 Bd3 17.Kd2 Be4 18.Nc2 Bxf3 19.gxf3 Nxd4 20.Nxd4 Rxd4+ 21.Ke2 Rc4 22.Be3 Rc2+ 23.Kd3 Rxb2, 0-1, Zoels-Schirmer, 1993.

8...Nd5 9.Bc4

9.fxg5 is thought to be bad thanks to the following game: 9...Bg7 10.Bc4 Nc6 11.Nf3 Qf5 12.Be3 Nxe3 13.Kxe3 Nxd4 14.Nxd4 Qxg5+ 15.Kd3 Bf5+ 16.Kc3 Qe3+, winning for Black, Blake-Schirmer, corr. 1994. However, White played horribly. The critical test of Black's play was 12.Bxd5 Qxd5 13.Nc3 Qc4 14.Be3 Bg4 15.Qe2 Qxe2+ 16.Nxe2.

9...gxf4 10.Qf3 c6 11.Bxf4

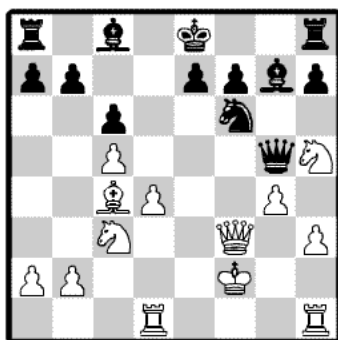
11.Ne2!?

11...Bg7

11...Qg6!? is an interesting recommendation of Davies that deserves some practical tests.

12.Ne2 Nd7 13.Nbc3 N7f6 14.h3 Qd7 15.Rad1 Nxf4 16.Nxf4 Qf5 17.g4 Qg5 18.Rhg1

If White wants to claim an advantage, he has to try 18.Nh5.



NO EQUALITY FOR BLACK!

Not excited by the slight endgame inferiority Black will get after 18...Nhx5 19.Qxf7+ Kd8 20.Qxh5 Rf8+ 21.Kg2 Qxh5 22.gxh5, Nigel Davies (in his excellent 2001 book on the ALEKHINE'S DEFENSE [click [HERE](#) to see Bauer's review]) recommended 18...Qh4+ 19.Kg2 Rg8 as being "messy." Though I agreed with my old friend throughout most of his book, here I had to take exception. There seem to be two ways to refute Black's scheme:

1) 20.d5 Nxh5 21.dxc6 e6 22.Nb5 Be5 (22...Qg3+ is forced and let's Black defend a very unpleasant position after 23.Qxg3 Nxg3 24.Kxg3 Be5+ 25.Kf3 bxc6 26.Rhe1 Bb7 27.Nd6+ Bxd6 28.Rxd6) 23.Nd6+ Bxd6 24.cxd6 Nf4+ 25.Qxf4 bxc6 26.Rhf1 f5 27.Qe5 fxg4 28.Bxe6 Qxh3+ 29.Kg1 gin.

2) 20.Ne4 Nd5 21.Bxd5 cxd5 22.Nc3 seems much too strong for White: 22...Be6 (22...Bd7 23.Nxd5 Bc6 24.Nc7+ Kd8 25.d5) 23.Nb5.

18...0-0 19.Rge1 Rd8 20.Kg3 h5 21.Re5

White might still have a little something with 21.Ne4 Nxe4+ 22.Qxe4.

21...hxg4 22.Qe3??

The last chance to retain a small initiative was 22.Rxg5 gxf3 23.Ng6 (Davies) 23...e6 24.Ne5.

22...Bf5. Suddenly White is lost and he promptly resigned in Mischke-Schirmer, corr. 1995.

I'm sure I've made many errors in these lines. Please feel free to share your observations and ideas on this interesting variation with other readers.

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