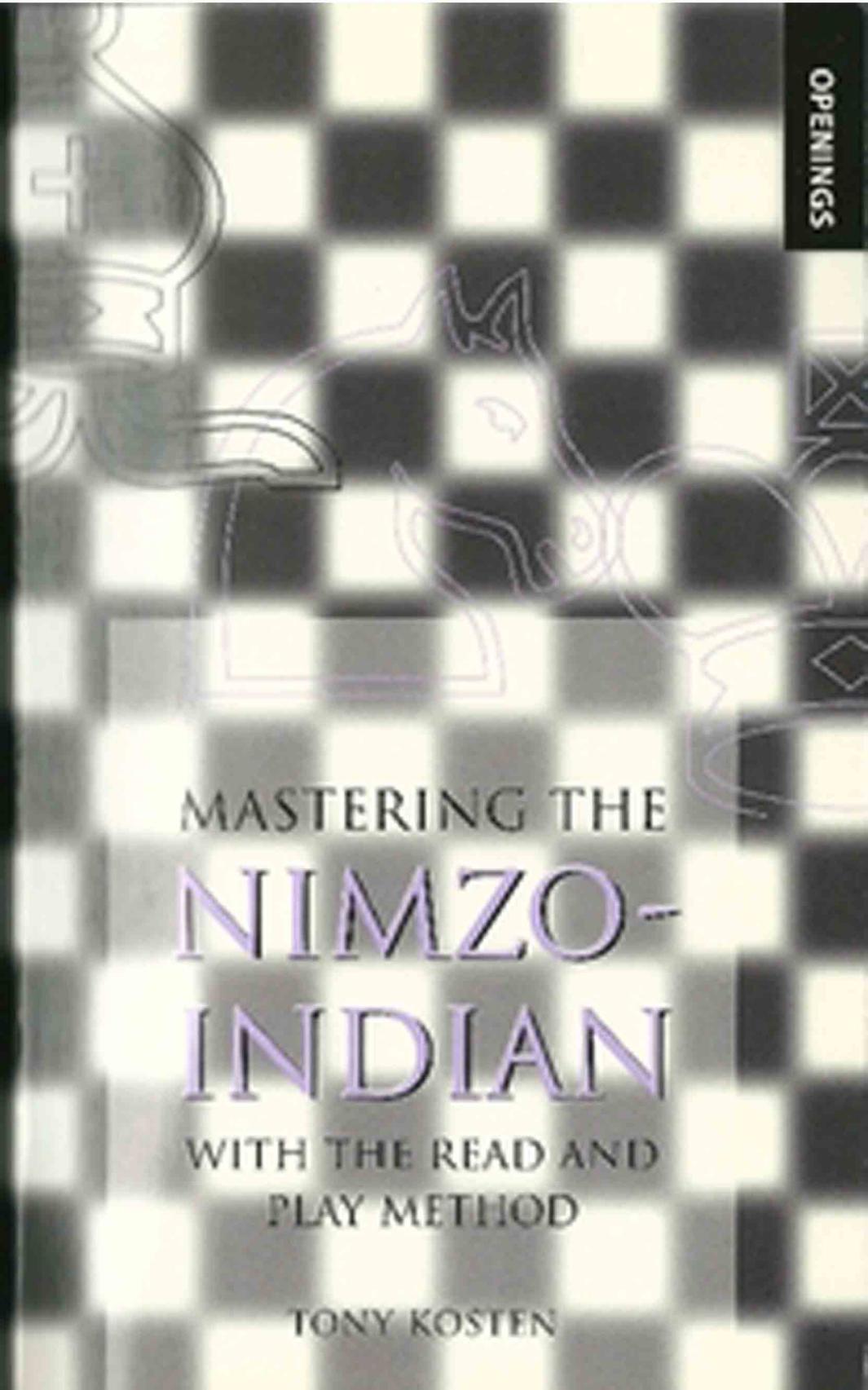


OPENINGS



MASTERING THE
NIMZO-
INDIAN
WITH THE READ AND
PLAY METHOD

TONY KOSTEN

Mastering the Nimzo-Indian

Tony Kosten

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*This work is dedicated to the memory of my Father, who taught me the
moves of this wonderful game one day, many years ago, and opened
the door to a lifetime's fulfilment.*

A BATSFORD CHESS BOOK

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Symbols

+	Check
++	Double check
#	Mate
!	Good move
!!	Excellent move
?	Bad move
??	Blunder
!?	Interesting move
?!	Dubious move
1-0	White wins
0-1	Black wins
½-½	Draw
Ch	Championship
tt	Team tournament
OL	Olympiad
Z	Zonal
IZ	Interzonal
Ct	Candidates event
Wch	World championship
Cht	Team championship
Echt	European team championship
Wcht	World team championship
jr	Junior event
wom	Women's event
tpd	Rapid game
corr.	Postal game
(n)	nth match game
(D)	Diagram follows

Preface

This work aims to examine the Nimzo-Indian Defence in terms of typical pawn structures and ideas, paying scant regard to ‘theory’. Having grasped the basic plans and stratagems in any given opening, a player is well on the way to mastering that opening. No-one is capable of finding the best move in every position, but knowing appropriate plans for any given formation will make it much easier to find good moves, and will save a lot of time on the clock.

I have never believed that rote learning of theoretical lines leads to chess mastery. I progressed as a youngster, despite owning few openings books, simply by playing through well-annotated games played by the leading players of yesteryear. I still rarely bother to learn any theory and shy clear of those openings – the Dragon Sicilian, for example – that require vast amounts of work. When I do decide to play a new opening, I prefer to play through some well-played games first, so that I can obtain a feel for the characteristic middle-game stratagems.

I remember reading *How to Play the Nimzo-Indian Defence*, when I was younger, wherein Keene discusses basing his middlegame play

against Rantanen, Havana OL 1966, on a plan he had himself previously studied (the game Reshevsky-Donner, Santa Monica 1966). I did not think too much about this until two or three years later, when I myself prepared for an opponent by studying several well-played games. I actually managed to implement a plan I had seen in one of them, to powerful effect. Although the opening was entirely different to the Keene one, by simply copying someone else’s plan I achieved a dominating position. Knowing how to play any given position proffers a huge advantage on any player.

The reader may be somewhat surprised at my super-classifications – although they seem natural to me. For example, Hübner’s Variation, which leads to closed positions with black pawns on dark squares and white pawns on light squares (this structure is considered in Chapter 13, The Hübner Centre), and Karpov’s Variation, which is fluid and where the white centre pawns are on dark squares and black’s on light squares (Chapter 5, The Isolated Pawn Tandem) both start with the same initial moves. In ‘normal’ openings books they would be close to-

gether, and yet they are about as alike as chalk and cheese. If we are concerned with the pawn structure and strategic ideas, it makes more sense to categorise them separately. Therefore each section deals with similar themes, starts by introducing the ideas common to all, and then discusses the individual differences in the succeeding chapters.

Most chapters contain at least one full game by way of illustration. One of the things I have deliberately set out to do is to pick examples taken from recent years. You might be wondering why? Well, there are three main reasons. Firstly, anyone who has any older book on the Nimzo-Indian Defence will hardly want to see the same hackneyed examples reproduced (although this would have been somewhat simpler for the author, of course). Secondly, more modern games will involve more topical lines, which, although certainly a little outside the scope of this book, will undoubtedly prove useful to the reader.

Thirdly, the standard of play at the higher levels has improved markedly over the last ten or fifteen years, therefore the games should be even more instructive.

This last statement may appear somewhat controversial at first sight, but it is the inevitable result of a number of factors – not the least of which being the almost uni-

form use by serious chess players of chess databases. Only a few years ago Garry Kasparov told me that, whilst examining previous World championship matches, he was amazed at the poor standard of play, and realised just how much chess had advanced since. In addition, he even recognised that his own play had improved in the previous ten years.

Despite the title, I do not think that anyone reading this book will really be able to completely master the Nimzo-Indian Defence afterwards. It is such a strategically complex opening. On the other hand, I hope that the reader will gain many useful insights into the secrets of this popular opening and will be able to turn this knowledge to good advantage. Remember, also, that many of the pawn structures and ideas in the Nimzo-Indian occur in many other openings, and understanding of these will be of lasting use.

The book is not all encompassing, as I have had to leave out some minor variations and position-types. In particular I have omitted those overly tactical variations that rely very heavily on accurate memorisation and which are prone to wild changes in assessment every two months depending on the result of a recent master game. I felt that these lines were outside the scope of this work. I have tried to include those positions that crop-

up most often and prove most useful. The lines covered in the book should be sufficient to form a complete and sound repertoire for the Nimzo-Indian player and, indeed, to equip players of both

colours with a thorough understanding.

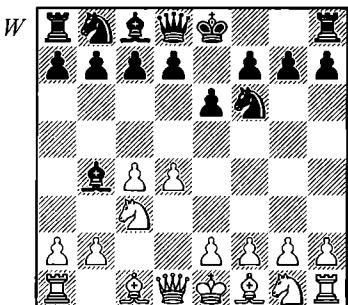
Tony Kosten

Chamalières

April 1998

Part One: Strategic Overview

- | | | |
|---|----|--------|
| 1 | d4 | f6 |
| 2 | e4 | e6 |
| 3 | c3 | b4 (D) |



The Nimzo-Indian Defence is one of the most rewarding defences that Black can play against 1 d4. It is sufficiently complex, both strategically and tactically, to satisfy the strongest of players and has been an important weapon of many World champions.

Following 1 d4 and 2 c4 White would like to complete his imposing central constellation by playing e2-e4. To this end he plays 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$. Black's third move, 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$, pins this c3-knight and maintains Black's control over the e4-square started by 1...f6. Black is prepared to concede his dark-squared bishop by capturing the c3-knight when appropriate. Now, Tartakower is reputed to have stated that 'the worst knight is better than the

best knight' and there is certainly more than a grain of truth in this. Bishops really are better than knights in the majority of situations. It is sometimes suggested that bishops are worth 3 1/3 pawns whereas the knight is valued at a little less, three pawns. Why then is Black prepared to concede such an advantage to White right from the kick-off?

Firstly, Black hopes that he will be able to inflict a serious queen-side weakness on the white pawn structure – the 'dreaded' doubled pawns. Secondly, if White tries to avoid this, Black will expect to gain time to complete his development successfully. Thirdly, Black can aim for a closed type of position where the static nature of the pawn structure will impede the white bishops' effectiveness.

White, meanwhile, will also try to complete his development, advance his central pawns, and open the position, to obtain the maximum benefit for his bishop pair. It is not that all closed positions are better for knights, or that all open positions favour the bishops, there are always exceptions. However, these exceptions tend to be rare and the secret of playing good, sane chess is to follow well-established rules as often as possible. Occa-

sional tactical quirks will upset one law or other, but when that happens, more often than not, it is because a stronger law has taken precedence.

A Tale of Two Bishops

Yes, the Nimzo-Indian Defence really is a story of two pieces. The two bishops in question being Black's dark-squared bishop, which rarely stays long on the board, yet whose manner of leaving is crucial, and White's dark-squared counterpart.

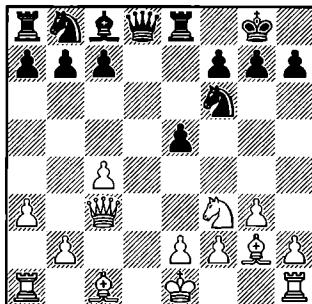
When does Black take the knight on c3, and when not? Most of these decisions are made for us – theory has already worked out whether or not Black can capture the knight in any given position. Normally, and assuming that Black has a choice, he will hope for something in exchange as stated above.

The white dark-squared bishop is a particularly important piece as its power on the dark squares can be decisive – there being no way of countering this pressure along the diagonal other than by placing lots of pawns in the way.

Black can ignore this at his peril. In my game (as Black) against the Italian player Arlandi, Imperia 1992, following 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 5 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 6 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ d6 7 g3 e5 8 dx5 dx5 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D), I foolishly pushed my e-pawn to e4, hoping to generate some play around the

white king, but this opened the diagonal a1-h8 of course.

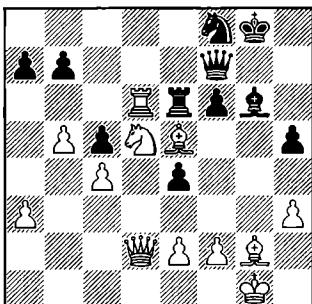
B



10...e4?! The sort of move that is quickly played, and slowly regretted! 11 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ c5 12 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13 h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14 b4! $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15 g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18 b5 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20 0-0 h5? I felt obliged to generate some play, but this just exacerbates matters, 20...h6 was better, although still not very good. 21 g5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

Unfortunately, I had little choice now but to protect my pinned knight with the grovelling 24...f6 25 gxf6 gxf6 26 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (D)

B



Actually, 29 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$! $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ would have been the most thematic way of continuing, e.g. 31... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 32 $exf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}c8+\mathbb{Q}g7$ 35 $fxe4$ although even after the game continuation, 29... $fxe5$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}d8$, White had a crushing advantage, and soon won.

1 The Doubled Pawns

- Loss of flexibility
- Loss of mobility
- Block the advanced pawn!
- I can c4 miles

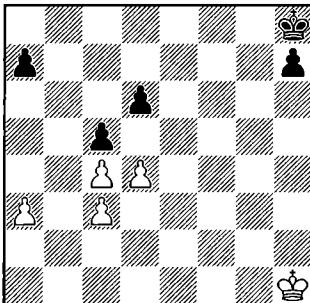
Black's key idea is to 'sacrifice' his king's bishop for the knight on c3 and hope for some compensation. This can take one of two forms. Black can thereby obtain a lead in development, but the more important goal is to double the White c-pawns or in some way to cause a long-term structural weakness.

There has been a definite tendency by White during the last decade or more to avoid the doubled pawns. To this end, White has to support his queen's knight with another piece. Firstly, in the eighties by playing his king's knight to e2 (e.g. in the line 4 e3 c5 5 ♘e2) and secondly, in the nineties by playing his queen to c2 (4 ♕c2).

Loss of flexibility

What is so wrong with these doubled-pawn complexes? One serious disadvantage is the inflexibility inflicted on the pawn structure. A chain of pawns containing doubled pawns is of less

value than one without. A most graphic example of this can be seen below.

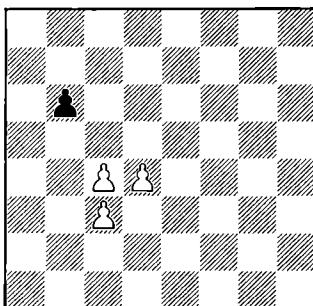


Despite equal material, White will lose. His majority on the queenside is quite useless as he is unable to create a passed pawn from it. Two of the pawns are essentially fulfilling the same task, and this duplication has a devitalising effect. It should not need mentioning that if the doubled pawns are also isolated they are even more hopeless.

Loss of mobility

It can be very difficult to advance a doubled pawn complex successfully. In the following diagram, were White to advance his d4-pawn, then the c4 and c3-pawns would become backward and unable to progress without being lost,

further the c5-square would be delivered into Black's hands.



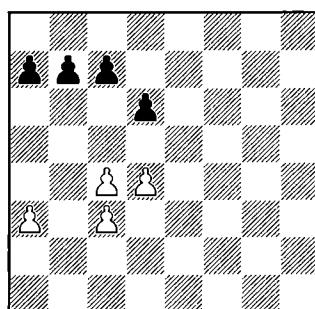
Moving the c4-pawn to c5 is better as the rear c-pawn is then able to control d5 and b5 if necessary. Unfortunately, Black would then capture the c5-pawn and White, by recapturing with his d-pawn, would be the not-so-proud possessor of two isolated pawns. Therefore, White normally tries to keep his c- and d-pawns abreast as long as possible so that they control the important central squares c5, d5 and e5. Black will hope to force one of these pawns forward, in particular the d4-pawn, to exploit the weaknesses created.

It is interesting to note that this loss of mobility can spread 'virus-like' to the other pieces! As the pawns cannot advance, they are unable to free diagonals for the bishops, and consequently restrict their own pieces' activity. This is the reason that White is often happy to sacrifice one of his c-pawns early on, in order to free an important diagonal.

That said, if White can recapture on c5 with a piece, then by playing c4-c5 he would be able to eradicate one of the doubled pawns. Thus, we come to an important idea: the doubled pawn may not be weak if White's pieces are sufficiently active, and he is able to advance and swap the forward doubled pawn.

Block the advanced pawn!

The last section brings us on to one of Black's key concepts. If he is playing a closed, blockading game, where he plans to exploit the weakness of the doubled pawns in the fullness of time (the endgame, for instance) then he must stop the advance of White's forward c-pawn.



This is achieved by playing the move ...c7-c5. Evidently, after this move, the white c-pawns are unlikely to move again, ever. Their only possibility of taking a useful part in the proceedings is by somehow removing the c5-pawn or if

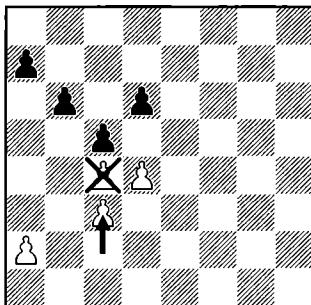
they can recapture a piece, on d5 perhaps.

Once reduced to such immobility the c-pawns can only await their fate, which often comes in the ending.

I can c4 miles

There is no doubt about it - the c4-square is the most important one on the board in many Nimzo-Indian positions. This is almost invariably White's Achilles' heel in those positions where he has been forced to accept doubled pawns, as he is unable to defend the pawn from the rear with a rook. Even where he has managed to exchange his forward c-pawn the square can remain altogether weak. If Black can gain control over it, whether or not he wins the c4-pawn in the

process, he will hold the advantage on the queenside. If White can control the c4-square successfully then he should be able to advance his centre.



In the game Yusupov – Karpov (game 15) we see a graphic example of the lasting nature of the pawn weakness. The doubled pawns have disappeared, but the flaw remains.

2 The Two Bishops

- Where should White place his pawns?
- Taming the Bishops
- A Golden Rule
- Raking bishops
- Good knight, bad bishop

Perhaps before continuing it is worthwhile reiterating just why the bishop pair is such a force, and only then consider how it can best be neutralised.

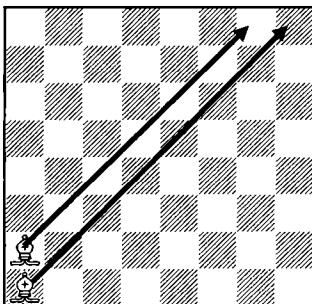
The bishop is a long-range piece that can exert a strong sway even from its starting position. However, it also suffers from a weakness, which is its inability to operate on more than one colour square. For example, should the play take place entirely on the light squares then the dark-squared bishop will prove rather ineffectual, of course.

The bishop pair controls both dark and light squares so that the whole board can remain under their surveillance.

Where should White place his pawns?

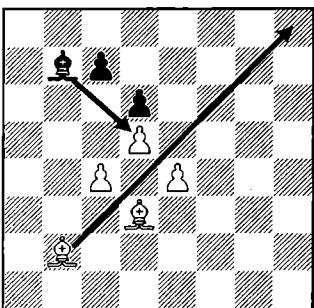
On an open board, with few pawns in the centre, the two bishops will be able to sit at home, even

as far back as White's first and second ranks, and yet exert a powerful effect all the way to Black's first rank.



The only drawback is the large number of pawns that start the game lying on these bishops' diagonals, they literally get in the way. How then should White play to maximise his bishops' potential, where should he place his pawns? There is a simple answer: the pawns should go on the same colour squares as the opponent's remaining bishop. That is, in the Nimzo-Indian, as Black will probably have exchanged his dark-squared bishop on c3, and be left with his light-squared bishop, White should therefore place his pawns on light squares. The reasoning behind this is simple. On light squares, the white pawns will hinder Black's bishop, and al-

though they will also hamper White's light-squared bishop, this will be more than offset by the possibilities opened up for White's dark-squared bishop. Another advantage for White will be noticeable if Black manages to exchange the light-squared bishops: White will be left with a good bishop (that is, one that operates on different colour squares to those occupied by his pawns).

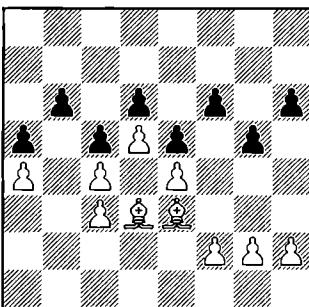


It is for these reasons that much of White's play in this book revolves around the possibility of playing moves such as f3, e4, and d5.

Taming the Bishops

It is extremely important that Black does not allow these pieces' power to get out of control. On an open board, the bishops can exercise a potent influence. The pawns that do most to hinder the bishop are the central pawns, which should be obvious if we examine a chessboard! If the centre is blocked

and static, the bishops may find their diagonals obstructed and they will be starved of influence.

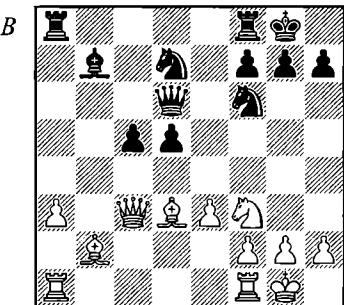


In the diagram position, the c4- and e4-pawns trap the d3-bishop and the c5- and g5-pawns restrict the e3-bishop.

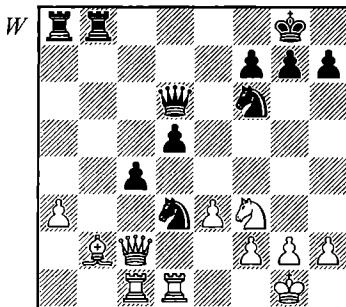
A Golden Rule

In many situations, the fight against the two bishops relies on a simple expedient: the exchange of one of the bishops. Once one of these potential monsters is off the board, it is far easier to plan the play against the remaining bishop.

This position is from Yusupov – Dautov, Nussloch 1996.



White's last move was $\mathbb{W}c3$, pointing his queen and bishops aggressively towards the black king-side. Black hastens to exchange one of the bishops. 17... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ 18 $\mathbb{E}fd1 \mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19 $\mathbb{E}xd3 \mathbb{E}fb8$ 20 $\mathbb{E}c1$. Having taken the teeth out of the white attack before it began, Black can concentrate on playing against the remaining bishop and brings a knight to the wonderful square d3. 20... $c4$ 21 $\mathbb{E}dd1 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 22 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (D)

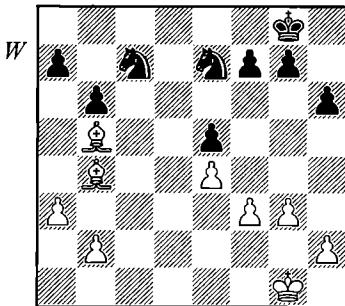


Black has a significant advantage.

Raking bishops

There are two 'thematic' endings involving White's bishops and Black's knights. Firstly, there is a position with pawns on both wings but devoid of pawns in the centre. This is ideal for White's bishops as they will be able to dominate the board.

Here the two white bishops are facing two knights, this position is taken from the game Shirov – Onischuk, Tilburg 1997.



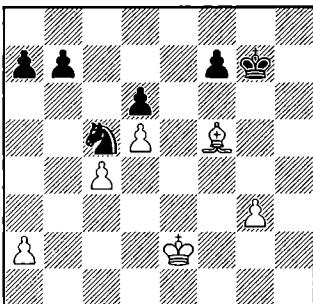
Black has no real weaknesses, but with pawns on both sides of the board, the bishops' long-range capabilities shine out. 30 $\mathbb{Q}d7 \mathbb{Q}g6$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}e6$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}b8 \mathbb{Q}c5$. If instead 32... $a6$ then 33 $\mathbb{Q}c8 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}c7 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ also wins one of the black queenside pawns. Note how the bishops can attack the pawns on both light and dark squares. With only one bishop, Black would be able to place his pawns on the other colour squares. 33 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $a5$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}a7 \mathbb{Q}a4$ 35 $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 36 $b4$ $axb4$ 37 $axb4 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 38 $b5 \mathbb{Q}c7$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}d7 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ when White had won a pawn and soon forced resignation.

Good knight, bad bishop

The second typical ending shows the other side of the coin. This is the position that Black seeks from the off: 'good knight versus bad bishop'. This is typically a position where White has only one bishop left, and one which is severely restricted by

White's very own pawns, fighting against a knight that can make good use of the opposite colour complex of squares.

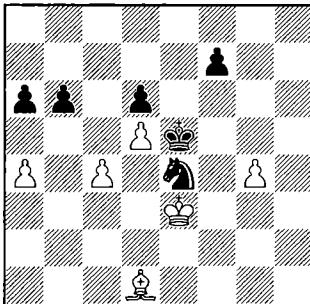
B



The diagram position, from Hartureau – Knezević, Argenteuil 1997, is typical. Material is equal, but three of the white pawns are on light squares – the same colour as White's bishop. If the d-pawn were on d4 instead, White would be fine. The black knight has the beautiful square c5 and the black king a route to the heart of the position via the dark squares f6, e5 and d4. $39\diamond f6$ $40\blacklozenge c2$ $\blacklozenge e5$ $41\blacklozenge e3$ $a6$

42 a4. Black was threatening the move ...b5, winning the d5-pawn, but now the a4-pawn becomes another problem. $42\diamond b6$ $43\blacklozenge d1$ $\blacklozenge e4$ $44\text{g4} (D)$

B



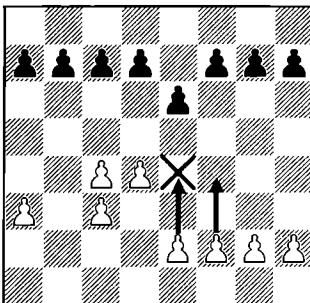
Now all White's pawns are on light squares! Sometimes a bad position just gets worse and worse. $44\diamond g5$ $45\blacklozenge c2$ $\blacklozenge h3$ $46\blacklozenge e4$ $\blacklozenge f4$ $47\blacklozenge f3$ $\blacklozenge g6$ $48\blacklozenge e4$ $\blacklozenge h4$ $49\blacklozenge h1$, and now $49\diamond f6$ $50\blacklozenge e4$ $\blacklozenge g5$ $51\blacklozenge f3$ $\blacklozenge g6$ and ... $\blacklozenge e5$ would have shortened White's suffering somewhat. As it happened, Black took his time but the result was inevitable.

3 The White Pawn Centre

- Preparing the central advance
- Sweeping all before it
- The Blockade

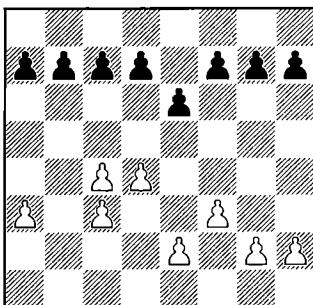
Everyone is aware of the importance of the centre, and in particular the central squares d4, d5, e4 and e5. If one side is able to control these squares, and place his pawns on them, then he will enjoy an advantage in space, more mobility for his pieces, and can attack where he wishes.

An important theme, that recurs all the time in the Nimzo-Indian Defence, is White's attempt to construct a powerful and mobile centre. To achieve this, White must first curtail Black's hold over the e4-square, started by Black's opening moves, and to this end, White trains as many pieces on e4 as necessary, or possible. Once constructed, there is a real risk that this centre will sweep forward, pushing back the black pieces, and opening diagonals for White's bishops. If Black is unable to restrain the White central pawns successfully then he must seek his chances elsewhere, either by destroying the centre, or by exploiting its advance to create squares for his pieces.



Preparing the central advance

Often a battle occurs over the possible advance of the white centre. Black will be trying to hinder its progression, or at the very least make sure he is well-placed to take benefit from any weaknesses thereby created.



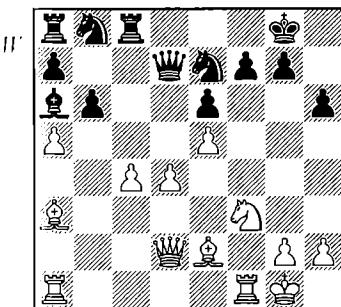
The simplest, and most common, plan is for White to play f2-f3. This threatens an immediate e2-e4 and

the only way Black can counter this is by playing ...d7-d5, which allows White to exchange one of his c-pawns, or ...f7-f5 which weakens Black's kingside. Although this move f2-f3 may render the dark squares e3 and g3 fragile, as Black rarely maintains his dark-squared bishop on the board for long in the Nimzo-Indian, this is not often too serious a problem for White.

Other ideas include White playing e2-e3 and ♕f1-d3, ♘g1-e2-g3, Rook (either) to e1 and ♖d1-c2. All of these moves support e4, although not all of them will be appropriate in any given position.

Sweeping all before it

Once constructed and mobile, the centre will allow its owner to build up his pieces calmly behind it. On achieving this, the centre will be like a battering ram, able to sweep forward, scattering defensive pieces, and opening a breach for infiltration by the friendly army.



This position occurred after the twentieth move of the game Sakaev – Yudasin, St Petersburg 1997. White is fully developed and has constructed a powerful centre, it simply remains to set it in motion and reap the benefits. Following the incisive 21 d5! exd5 22 e6! ♖xe6 23 ♕ae1 White had managed to carve open both diagonals and files and Black is already lost. The game continued 23...♘g6 24 ♔d3 ♖g4 25 ♕xg6 ♖xg6 26 ♘e5 ♖g5 27 ♖xd5 ♖xc4 28 ♖xa8 ♘xf1 29 ♔xf1 and Black had insufficient compensation for his piece, White going on to win easily. Now, this is a complicated example, but the tactical niceties were irrelevant as far as the reader is concerned, it is the general idea that is important.

The Blockade

The blockade is a much-used term in this book, and, indeed, all others on the Nimzo-Indian Defence. What does it mean? In order to hinder or completely stop the advance of the white pawns, Black can construct a barricade against their further advance. There is a very real possibility that should the white pawns be immobilised, then the static position that results will favour Black's knights. Therefore, from Black's point of view it makes sense to keep as many

pawns on the board as possible, in particular the central pawns. Knights are often more effective pieces than bishops at the beginning of the game simply because the bishops are so restricted by all those pawns. The bishops really come into their own when there is a lot of space, when pawns have been exchanged and diagonals opened.

After White has placed his pawns on d4 and e3, the c1-bishop is impeded. If White then advances with e3-e4, the c1-bishop is free to move from its confines but the d3-bishop becomes blocked. Notice that in lines where White plays g2-g3 this is not a problem. Remember, also, that White's queenside position often starts the game severely compromised.

Game 1
Short – Karpov
Dortmund 1997

1	d4	♘f6
2	c4	e6
3	♗c3	♗b4
4	♕c2	0-0
5	e4	d6
6	a3	♗xc3+
7	bx _c 3	

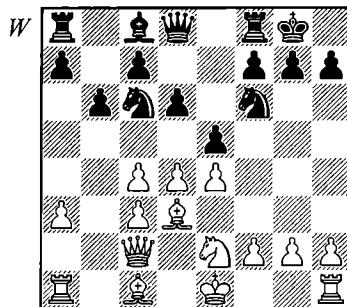
The game turns into a sort of Sämisch (see Chapter 16) where, because White has played ♕c2, he has managed to bring about e2-e4 in one go.

7	...	e5
---	-----	----

8 ♘d3 ♗c6

Black has elected to play without ...c7-c5, as in the Zurich Centre: (Chapter 17).

9 ♘e2 b6 (D)



Black plans an immediate siege of the c4-pawn using the standard plan ...♗c8-a6 and ...♗c6-a5.

10 0-0 ♗a6

11 f4

It is very common, in these dark-squared blockade positions, for White to attempt to open the game on the kingside with this f4 lever.

11 ... ♘d7

12 ♘e3 ♗a5

13 c5

The doubled pawn is not blockaded, and therefore advances. This is a much more active approach than 13 ♔a2, the queen should have more to do than defend a mere pawn.

13 ... ♗c4

This is logical, in a sense, as although the c4-pawn has moved, the c4-square remains weak and so Black occupies it. However, bearing in mind what we know about

the bishop pair, it would surely have been better to take the opportunity of exchanging one of them by 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 14 $\mathbb{W}xd3$. Black should then continue 14... $exf4$ 15 $\mathbb{K}xf4$ $bxc5$, with unclear play, rather than 14... $exd4$?! 15 $cxd4$ $dxc5$ when White will play 16 d5 and set-up a powerful, mobile, centre.

14 $cxd6$ $cxd6$

Although Black did not himself capture on c5, by allowing White to capture on d6 Black does obtain a different advantage: he can post a rook on the opened c-file to support c4, and pressurize the c3-pawn. Even though it managed to exchange itself for a healthy pawn, the doubled c-pawn still leaves behind a negative trace.

15 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

16 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

17 $\mathbb{R}f3$

White ignores his crippled queenside and attempts to mount a successful kingside attack. Black should probably now take some prophylactic counter-measures against this before it is too late, with 17...f6 for instance.

17 ... $\mathbb{R}ac8??!$

18 $\mathbb{R}af1?!$

This is a logical move, but White should have exploited Black's omission by playing the tactical 18 $\mathbb{R}h3$, when 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ meets with the powerful retreat 20 $\mathbb{W}d1$. White then threatens the standard mating combination

21 $\mathbb{R}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 22 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ mate.

18 ... **f6**

19 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ **b5**

Black follows his plan, and fixes the White queenside on dark-squares ready for the endgame.

20 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ **a6**

21 **h4** $\mathbb{Q}f7$

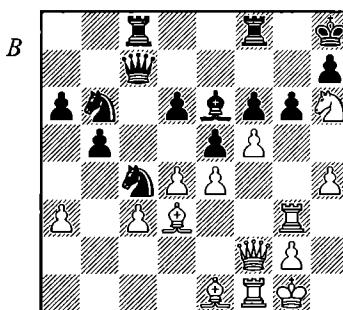
22 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

23 $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac4$

24 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ **g6**

25 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

26 **f5 (D)**



Although his queenside position is beyond hope, White's kingside attack begins to make inroads into the adversary's defence.

26 ... $\mathbb{g}f5$

27 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8?$

This is a blunder, allowing a simple combination, but as there was no immediate threat Black should have tried 27... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$.

28 $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ $\mathbb{R}cf8$

Unfortunately for Black, 28... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 29 $\mathbb{W}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 30 $\mathbb{R}xg7$ $\mathbb{W}xg7$ 31 $\mathbb{W}xe6$ wins easily for

White, as does 28... $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}xd3$ 30 $\mathbb{W}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 31 $\mathbb{W}xe6$.

29 $\mathbb{W}xg8+$ $\mathbb{Q}xg8$

30 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

31 $\mathbb{W}g3+?!$

A time-trouble imprecision, the line 31 $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 32 d5 was clearer.

31 ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$

32 d5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

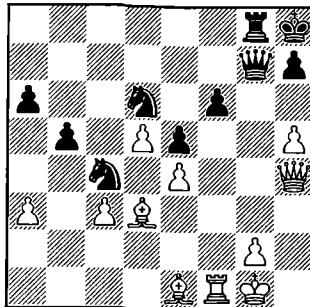
33 $\mathbb{B}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

34 $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}bc4$

35 h5 $\mathbb{W}g7$

36 $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{B}g8?$ (D)

W



The same mistake, but this time with the other rook! Once again,

Black's best chance lay in 36... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$.

37 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$

38 $\mathbb{W}xg7+?$

A pity, 38 $\mathbb{Q}h4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 39 h6 $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ would have been the pretty way of finishing this game.

38 ... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

39 $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ec4$

It is true that the black knights are well placed, but, not only does White have the pair of bishops, but two extra pawns.

40 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$

41 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$

42 $\mathbb{B}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$

43 $\mathbb{B}f5+$

Sacrificing the exchange to free the mighty bishops!

43 ... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

44 exf5 $\mathbb{B}g4$

This move loses on the spot, but 44... $\mathbb{B}b6$ 45 f6 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 46 $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ was also hopeless.

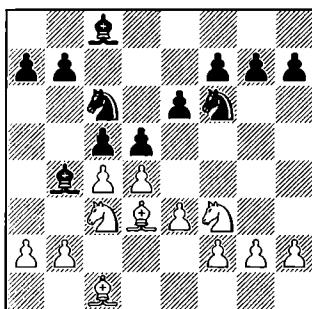
1–0

As the rook is pinned by 45 $\mathbb{Q}e2$. The first move of this piece since move 8 will be decisive.

Part Two: Resolving the Central Tension

A question of move order

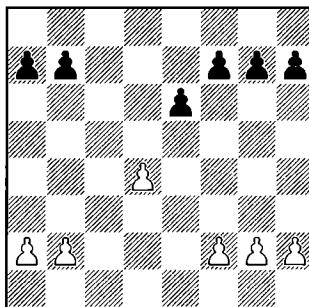
Although not compatible with Nimzowitsch's original concept, Black often plays a fluid game, advancing both d- and c-pawns to the fifth rank, much as in the Tarrasch Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined.



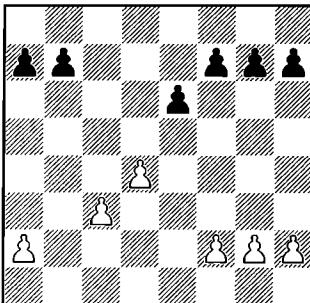
This position is of a transient type, eventually one side will have to resolve the central tension. Actually, as 4 e3 was the most important line for many years these positions were the Nimzo-Indian player's staple diet for a long time. Nevertheless, an understanding of these structures is just as important nowadays as these positions regularly arise from other lines as well, particularly the 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ variations which are currently so popular.

Whereas many of the following structures tend to arise later in the game when 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ is played, with 4 e3 it is often around the eighth to tenth moves. It is when White has almost completed his development and decides to resolve the pressure on his position by playing a2-a3, 'putting the question' to Black's king's bishop, that the future shape of the game will be decided. Therefore, we have the following choice:

- Black captures on c4 and on d4, White recapturing with his e-pawn, which leads to Chapter 4, The Isolated Queen's Pawn.

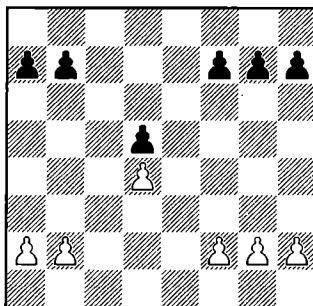
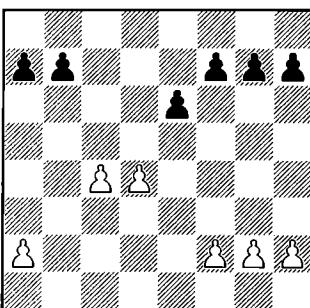


- As above, but Black then takes on c3 as well, White recapturing with his b-pawn, this leads to Chapter 5, The Isolated Pawn Tandem.

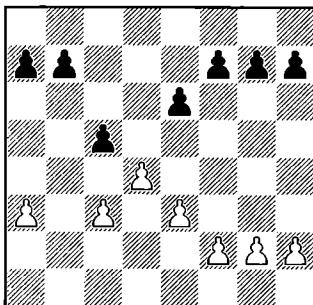


- Black captures on d4, White recapturing with his e-pawn and then White captures on d5, Black recapturing with his e-pawn. If he recaptures with a piece instead, this will lead to the IQP positions of Chapter 4. This type of structure is dealt with in Chapter 8, The Symmetric Pawn Centre.

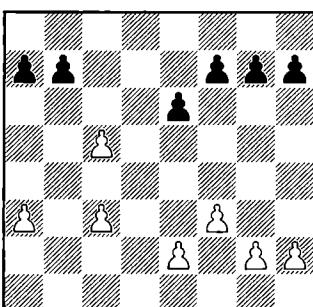
- As above but White later advances his c-pawn to c4, Chapter 6, Hanging Pawns.



- Black captures on c4 and then takes the c3-knight with his bishop, White recapturing with his b-pawn, Chapter 7, The Classical Centre.

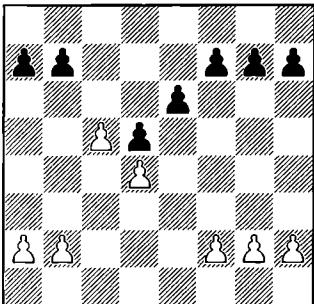


- Black takes the knight on c3 with his bishop, White retaking with his b-pawn and later White takes the c5-pawn, Chapter 9; The Isolated Doubled c-Pawn Centre.

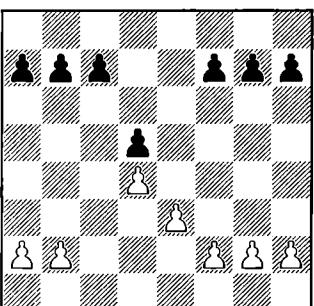


- Black captures on d4, White recapturing with his e-pawn, White

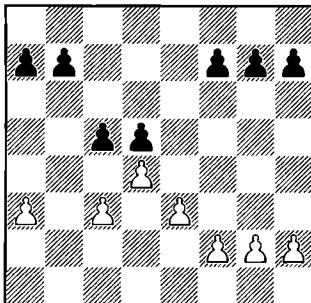
later advances his c-pawn to c5 creating a queenside majority, Chapter 10, The Queenside Pawn Majority.



- White takes the d5-pawn, Black recapturing with his e-pawn, but Black does not play ...c7-c5 immediately (or sometimes at all), Chapter 11, The QGD Exchange Centre.



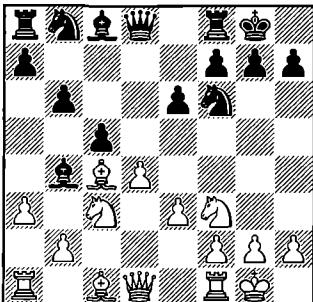
- Black takes the knight on c3 with his bishop, White retaking with his b-pawn, White takes the d5-pawn, Black recapturing with his e-pawn, Chapter 12, The Light-Squared Blockade.



To a certain extent, both players have a choice in how the game develops, with respect to the structure. Any player wishing to play a certain type of position may well be able to ‘force’ this if he considers his opening moves with due attention. Black has to take care with his move order, for instance if he wishes to aim for a hanging pawn position he can easily play his moves the wrong way round. In the following position he must first play ...cxd4 and only on exd4 can he capture on c3. If he takes the knight first, then after bxc3 he would be unwise to capture on d4 for White will probably retake with his c-pawn, of course, retaining a compact pawn structure. With the two bishops and a strong centre White would already enjoy a clear plus.

Of course, White has other options. He can reply to 8...cxd4 with 9 axb4 dxc3 10 bxc3, although this is inferior because White’s c1-bishop is locked-in by the white pawns, and the backward c3-pawn may be exposed, lying on an open file.

B

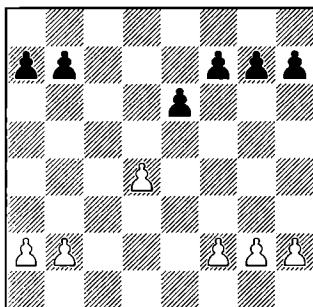


Another idea, if there is no black knight on c6, is answering White's move $cxd5$ with ... $cxd4$, attacking the c3-knight, and only on $exd4$ recapturing on d5 with a piece.

Theory offers a certain amount of help in these cases, but common sense and a bit of thought are at least as important.

4 The Isolated Queen's Pawn

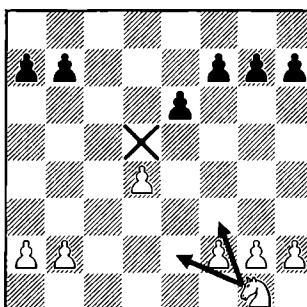
- ☐ The fight for d5
- ☐ Binding the defenders
- ☐ The d5 breakthrough
- ☐ The c5 outpost
- ☐ The attack on e6 and f7
- ☐ The d7 knight fork
- ☐ The kingside battery
- ☐ The last resort, ...f5
- ☐ A good square for a knight
- ☐ The temporary pawn sacrifice



The isolated queen's pawn, commonly referred to as the IQP for short, has a special place in chess. Unlike other isolated pawns which are normally weaknesses and well worth avoiding, the IQP is often strong and is brought about deliberately. It offers the owner two good outposts on e5 and c5, and the two open e-

and c-files. It occurs surprisingly often in the Nimzo-Indian Defence from all sorts of disparate move orders.

As Richard Réti pointed out, the IQP is not wanting in itself, since it is easily defended, it is the square in front of it that is weak. However, although it is a static weakness it may also be a dynamic strength.



There are two clearly distinct types of IQP positions that arise from the Nimzo-Indian, those with the white king's knight on f3 and those with it on e2.

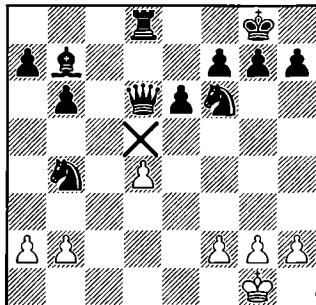
The first type is very typical of IQP positions in general. White obtains a space advantage and a harmonious piece development at the cost of his pawn structure. Black will try to ensure that he has a firm hold on d5 (to avoid any unpleasant

d4-d5 breakthrough), develop his pieces, taking care to keep his king well defended, and attempt to gradually exchange pieces. The ending is generally favourable for Black, and it is normally a good idea for White to keep queens on the board.

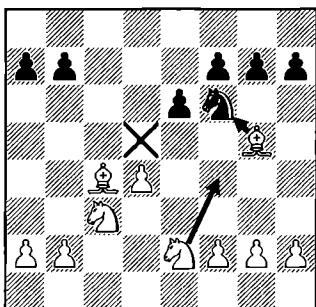
The fight for d5

It is of primordial importance that both players pay attention to the control of d5 – the result of the game often depends on mastery of this square. Even if Black appears to have this square well covered, it may not stop an eventual d4-d5. To stop this possibility, either Black has to be extremely vigilant, or he should prefer putting a piece on d5. Ideally, this would be a knight as this piece will be able to exert considerable pressure on key squares in White's camp. The bishop is often just as effective on b7, and major pieces tend to make poor blockaders as once threatened by a lesser force they are obliged to move and give up the blockade.

Black can control the d5-square many times with his pieces, the black queen starts off with it in view and on their natural squares, f6 and b7, the king's knight and queen's bishop both keep an eye on this square. Further, playing the c6-knight to b4 or e7 brings an additional unit to bear.



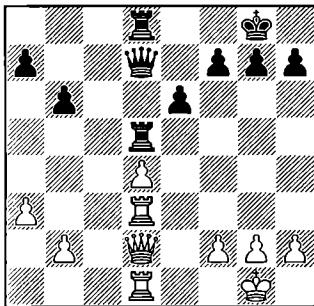
Apart from the c3-knight and the king's bishop, placed on a2 or b3, in lines where White has played $\mathbb{Q}g1-e2$ he can also bring extra pressure to bear on d5 by playing this knight to f4.



Binding the defenders

Once Black has managed to swap off a few pieces and averted the possibility of attack, he can turn his attention to the d-pawn.

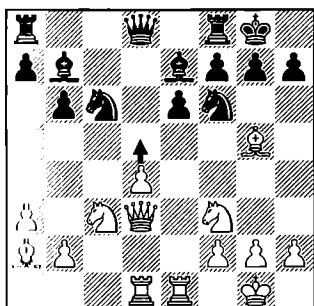
If this pawn is stoutly blockaded, then every time it is attacked it will need to be defended. Once White is tied down to defending this pawn the outlook for him will be bleak.



A typical position where the d-pawn is well blockaded and the white major pieces completely passive. By playing ...e5, Black wins the hapless pawn, although Black can even afford to make some preparatory moves first as the pawn will not run away.

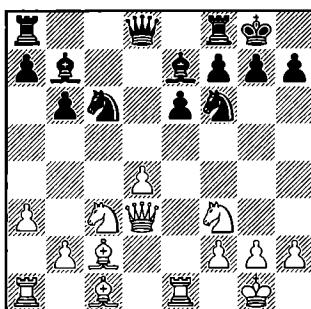
The d5 breakthrough

A thematic and well-prepared d1-d5 advance releases all the latent power of White's position. Even if Black has many pieces covering d5, this breakthrough is often devastating.



White will have both rooks trained down the central files, in addition to his other pieces, and should Black recapture with his e6-pawn the black kingside will be weakened.

Note that White should only play this d5-move when he is fully developed. Here is a position that occurs repeatedly and serves to illustrate this key theme.



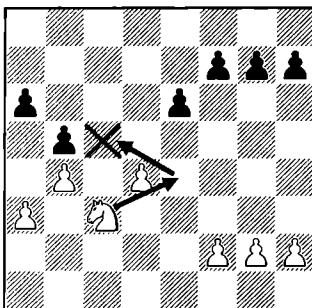
Black must play 13...g6, as after 13... $\mathbb{B}c8?$ say, White wins by 14 d5! exd5 15 $\mathbb{Q}g5$. If then 15...g6 then 16 $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ wins, so Black is forced to try 15... $\mathbb{Q}e4$, although after 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dx $e4$ 17 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ g6 18 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ White has a swift crush in sight.

The c5 outpost

One problem for Black is whether to fianchetto his c8-bishop on b7 by playing ...b7-b6, or by ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5. The first possibility is the most solid, and keeps

pawn control over c5. The second is more aggressive, ...b5-b4 might be a useful threat displacing the c3-knight, and c4 may provide a fine outpost for a black piece, particularly the knight.

However, the flip side is the extra time taken to complete mobilisation (one extra tempo used in the opening can make an enormous difference) and the weakening of c5. Therefore, Black should consider playing for ...b7-b5 whenever White has wasted time in the opening or has a less aggressive set-up.



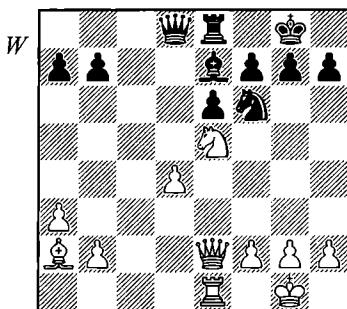
A white knight planted on c5, and supported by b4, will be very strong. White can quickly turn his attention to the queenside as his greater space and mobility allow him to switch his forces from one side to the other, by doubling rooks on the c-file, for example.

The attack on e6 and f7

In those variations where the knight starts on f3, the d4-pawn

provides good support for this knight when it jumps to e5. From this square the knight threatens the important squares f7, d7 and c6. Should Black decide to evict this piece with ...f7-f6, he will have to consider the consequent weakening of the e6-pawn.

Particularly in those positions where the white queen is on e2 or h3, pointing at e6, and the king's bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal, the e5-knight can sacrifice itself on f7 to open up this same diagonal.

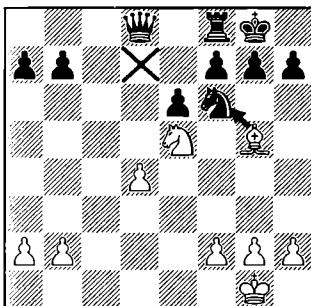


In the given position the black set-up seems solid enough, but after 1 $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 2 $\mathbb{W}xe6+$ the black king is dragged to its doom by 2... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 3 $\mathbb{B}e3$ etc., as 2... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ allows 3 $\mathbb{W}f7$ mate.

The d7 knight fork

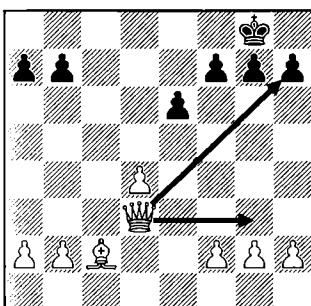
A common theme whenever White has a knight on e5 and a bishop on g5 is the capture of the f6-knight. If Black recaptures with the queen then $\mathbb{Q}e5-d7$ will fork

the queen and f8-rook, whilst if Black recaptures with the g-pawn his kingside pawn formation will be severely compromised.



The kingside battery

Occasionally the white queen goes to e2 in order to reinforce the pressure along the e-file. More often the queen goes to d3, providing extra force to any d5 push, but more importantly pointing towards the sensitive h7-square.



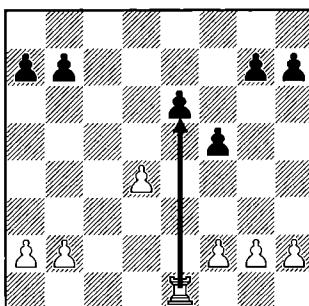
The queen may also utilise the third rank to good effect, both g3

and h3 are good squares from which to launch an attack.

Incidentally, it is often a good idea, as we saw above, for Black to answer this battery by playing an immediate ...g7-g6, but only if Black can still defend his dark squares with his dark-squared bishop. Otherwise, he may put a piece in the way, if possible. Naturally, if Black has to play ...g7-g6 but cannot defend his dark squares from intrusion he will be in serious trouble.

The last resort, ...f5

There is one other method whereby Black can fend off an attack along the b1-h7 diagonal, playing ...f7-f5, but it is the most radical. The potential problems should be obvious, both the e6-pawn and e5-square lie on the open e-file, and will be severely weakened.



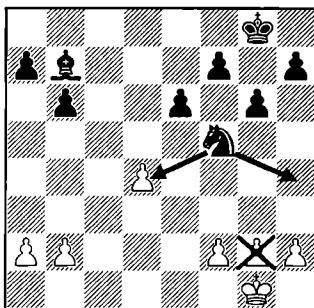
It should be clear that, unless he really has no choice in the matter,

Black would only play this if he has e6 well-defended and good control over e5.

A good square for a knight

Bearing in mind that White no longer possesses an e-pawn, and therefore can only obtain pawn-control of the f5-square by playing the horribly weakening move g2-g4, f5 turns out to be an admirable square for a black knight. From here the knight not only menaces the d4-pawn, but also lends a helping hand to the defence of the king.

Occasionally, when Black has fended off any threats and has started to take the initiative, this knight can hop to h4, combining with the queen's bishop to attack the g2-pawn.



The temporary pawn sacrifice

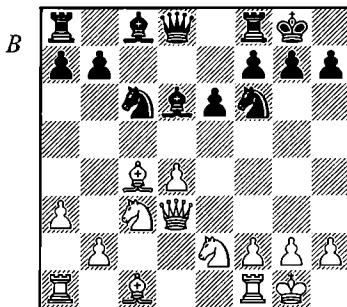
Even where there is no direct attack or tactical continuation

White can still sometimes push his d-pawn to d5. Given that Black recaptures with the e-pawn White might be able to use the positional advantages gained.

The d4-square becomes available to his knights. In fact, it is as though White 'reverses' the position (with a pawn less), taking advantage of his greater mobility and space to convert a positional edge into something more concrete.

The equalising ...e5

A peculiarity of lines where the White king's knight is on e2, and exerts no influence over the e5-square, is that Black has the additional resource ...e6-e5.



This almost inevitably leads to an exchange of central pawns, a resolution of the central tension and a level position. Naturally, this is unlikely to be the move one would play if aiming to win, but it has led to certain of White's options declining in popularity. In the

above position, Bareev – Podlesnik, Ljubljana 1989, instead of exchanging pawns, White tried for more by answering 11...e5 with 12 d5. 12 dx_e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ is very good for Black, of course. However, Black was on his toes, and after 12...e4! 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ had a wonderfully active position.

Game 2
Yusupov – Lobron
Nussloch 1996

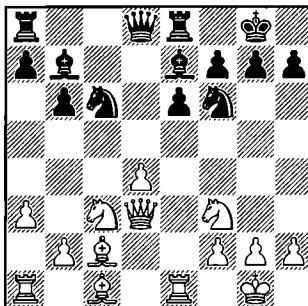
- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 d4 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 2 c4 | e6 |
| 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b4$ |
| 4 e3 | 0-0 |
| 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ | d5 |
| 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ | c5 |
| 7 0-0 | cx _d 4 |
| 8 ex _d 4 | dx _c 4 |
| 9 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ | b6 |

A move order popular with Karpov, although he prefers to capture on c3 and play against the isolated pawn couple structure. In this game, Black opts to keep his dark-squared bishop.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 10 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ | $\mathbb{Q}b7$ |
| 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ | $\mathbb{Q}c6$ |
| 12 a3 | $\mathbb{Q}e7$ |
| 13 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ | $\mathbb{Q}e8$ |
| 14 $\mathbb{W}d3$ (D) | |

A crucial moment; as we have seen, d4-d5 is a serious threat when combined with the thinly veiled attack against h7, which explains Black's next, prophylactic, move.

B



- 14 ... g6
 15 h4

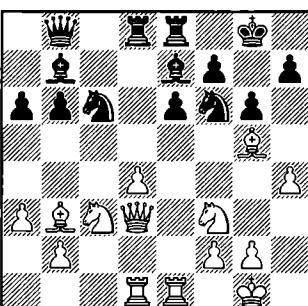
White always plays aggressively in IQP positions. If this pawn can get to h5, and capture on g6, the Black kingside will become vulnerable. Of course, this might also backfire - the h-pawn may become a weakness.

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 15 ... | $\mathbb{W}d6$ |
| 16 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ | $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ |
| 17 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ | $\mathbb{Q}b8$ |
| 18 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ | |

The bishop has served its purpose on the b1-h7 diagonal and so White turns to the thematic fight for control of d5.

- 18 ... a6? (D)

W



Black plans ...b5-b4, but he no longer has control over d5 and for this he is punished. 18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ was better although, even here, 19 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 is to White's advantage as the b7-bishop would be passively placed on such a closed diagonal.

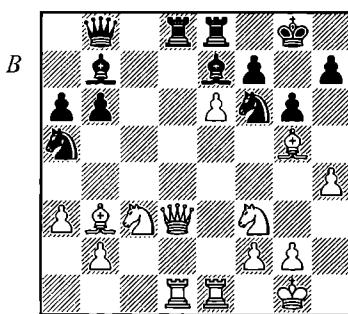
19 d5!

Of course!

19 ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

Black was perhaps relying on this resource as now the d-pawn is pinned along the d-file, but White has seen further. Anyway, the alternatives are no better, for instance 19...exd5 loses to 20 $\mathbb{Q}xe7$! and 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!? $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ exd5 22 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ leaves the black king rather exposed, as the kingside dark squares are bared and he has no defensive units to aid his survival.

20 dxe6!! (D)



A dream move, offering to sacrifice the queen. Actually, whenever I dream about chess my play is horrible and I always lose!

20 ... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$

After this move White wins easily, but capturing the queen also seems to lose. 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ and after 23... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ White had seen 24 $\mathbb{Q}de3$ when the pin on the e7-bishop wins, e.g. 24... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}d7+$ with two extra pawns.

21 $\mathbb{Q}xf7+??$

In retrospect, 21 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ seems even stronger, e.g. 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ threatening the knight on b3, and if 23... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ is crushing.

21 ... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$

22 $\mathbb{Q}c4+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

23 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Another important point, 23 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ would allow Black some chances.

23 ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$

If 23... $\mathbb{Q}d5$! then 24 $\mathbb{Q}h6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ (26... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ might offer some small hope) 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ wins, because of 27... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, attacking both queen and b3-knight.

24 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

25 $\mathbb{Q}f7+$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

26 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

27 $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

Although White is only a pawn to the good, his attack is not yet finished and soon decides the game.

27 ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

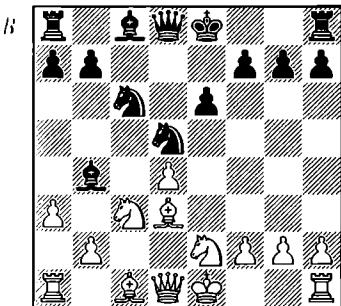
28 ♜xe7

1-0

On 28...♜xe7, 29 ♜f7+ ♛g7 30 ♜xc7 wins immediately.

Game 3
Milov – Gelfand
Biel 1997

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1 d4 | ♞f6 |
| 2 c4 | e6 |
| 3 ♜c3 | ♝b4 |
| 4 e3 | c5 |
| 5 ♜d3 | ♝c6 |
| 6 ♜e2 | cxsd4 |
| 7 exd4 | d5 |
| 8 cxd5 | ♝xd5 |
| 9 a3 (D) | |



Offering Black a choice, as apart from the move played, 9...♝xc3 10 ♜xc3 ♜d6 is also perfectly viable, transposing into an isolated pawn couple position. A later ...e7-e5 will be possible.

9 ... ♜d6

10 ♜e4

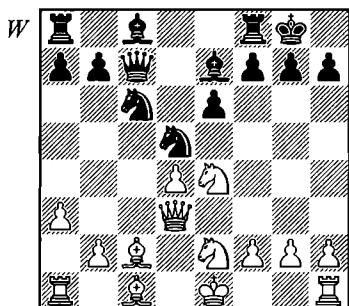
White can force a symmetric pawn structure by capturing on d5, 10 ♜xd5 cxd5, but this would be

erroneous as the resulting position is at best equal – Black's knight is more actively placed than White's.

10 ... ♜e7

It may seem odd that Black is happy to move his dark-squared bishop a third time, but he has thereby weakened White's control over d5.

- | | |
|--------|----------|
| 11 ♜c2 | 0-0 |
| 12 ♜d3 | ♛c7! (D) |



This is more accurate than the panicky move 12...f5, when the position after 13 ♜d3 should be to White's taste as he has provoked weaknesses on e6 and e5.

13 0-0

Obviously Black has to take great care here lest the e4-knight hops away and discovers the threat of ♜xh7 mate, but there is no immediate advantage to be gained, e.g. 13 ♜f6+?? ♜xf6. Black does well to retain the utmost flexibility and solidity in his kingside pawn structure.

13 ... ♜d8

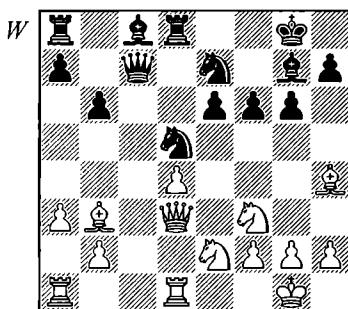
The point of Black's previous move, he both allows his king a

little breathing space, and brings an extra piece to bear on the key squares d5 and d4.

- 14 ♘g5 g6
- 15 ♙b3 ♘f8
- 16 ♖d1 ♘g7
- 17 ♘f3 b6

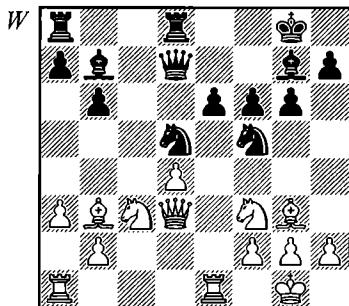
Having parried White's threats, it is time for Black to complete his development in the most efficient way possible. Not only will Black's light-squared bishop be more actively placed on the a8-h1 diagonal, but it will further strengthen Black's hold over the primordial d5-square.

- 18 ♘g5 f6
- 19 ♙h4 ♘ce7 (D)



A common idea, both strengthening control over d5 and ready to bring an extra piece over to the kingside. The square f5 is frequently a useful one for a black knight, there being no white pawn on e4 in these IQP positions, of course.

- 20 ♘g3 ♕d7
- 21 ♖e1 ♘b7
- 22 ♘c3 ♘f5 (D)

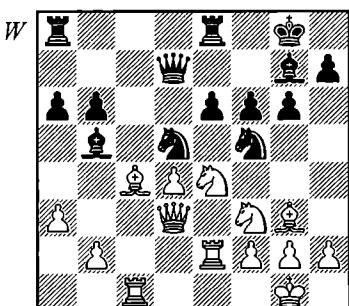


Black has finished his development. He has a sound pawn structure and has obtained good squares for his minor pieces. The next phase of his play consists of warding off any white threats and attempting to exchange pieces, particularly the light-squared bishops.

- 23 ♖e2

White has succeeded in weakening the e6-pawn – the f-pawn no longer defends it – and therefore gets ready to double his rooks on the e-file to bring the maximum pressure to bear.

- 23 ... ♖e8
- 24 ♖e4 ♖c6
- 25 ♖c4 a6
- 26 ♖c1 ♖b5 (D)



The exchange of White's better bishop is often positionally desirable for Black. He will not be so keen on taking the g3-bishop as this piece is restricted by the d4-pawn, which is also on a dark square.

- 27 $\mathbb{B}ec2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
 28 $\mathbb{B}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}ec8$

Black prepares further exchanges. These customarily favour Black who dreams of an endgame with a superior pawn formation, and a strong knight on d5.

- 29 $h3?$

The move 29 b3 would have been much better, when Black would be loath to capture on c4. If he did, White would then recapture with his b-pawn when his mobile centre would dislodge the sturdy black d5-knight and would offer him good play.

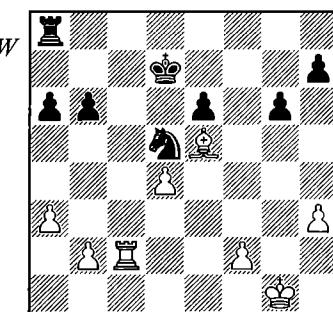
- 29 ... $\mathbb{B}xc4$
 30 $\mathbb{B}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}b5$

Again, Black provokes an exchange. The doubled b-pawns resulting from 31 $\mathbb{B}xb5$ axb5 are not a serious weakness as White cannot attack them, and Black will be able to proceed with ...b4 and utilise the a-file.

- 31 $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$
 32 $\mathbb{B}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 33 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 34 $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 35 $\mathbb{B}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe7$
 36 $\mathbb{Q}d6?$

This is White's final mistake. He had one last chance to activate his

pieces by 36 g5! as the obvious reply 36...f5?! allows the pawn sacrifice 37 $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$. This deflects the d5-knight from its defence of c7, e.g. 37... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 38 $\mathbb{B}c7+\mathbb{Q}d8$ 39 $gxf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 40 $\mathbb{B}b7$ when the white pieces have obtained a considerable amount of activity at small cost. Therefore, Black would have replied 36... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 37 $gxf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 39 $\mathbb{Q}e5+$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 40 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ (D), reaching the following diagram.



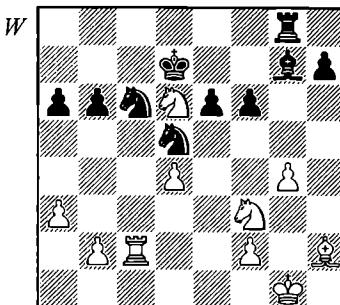
This is an instructive position, as although White has won control of the e5-square and established his bishop there, Black retains an edge. This is because of his powerful knight and again, better pawn structure (three islands against four for White).

- 36 ... $g5!$

Stopping White from ever obtaining the e5-square by the glancing blow g4-g5.

- 37 $h4$ $gxh4$
 38 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 39 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ (D)

Black can now exploit his better position and quickly gobble-up the loose white pawns.



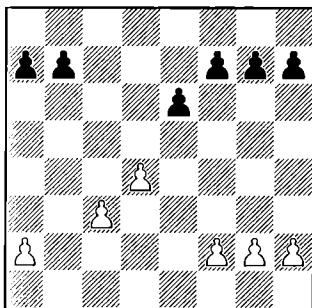
40	Qf1	Qf8
41	Qc4	Rxg4
42	Qe3	Re4
43	Qxd5	exd5
44	Rc3	Qe7
45	Rd3	h5
46	Rg3	Qd8
47	a4	b5
48	axb5	axb5
49	Rd1	Qb6
50	Rg2	Qxd4

0–1

It seems appropriate that the last move of the game should be the capture of the IQP.

5 The Isolated Pawn Tandem

- Black's strategy
- Exchanging White's better bishop
- Re-deploying the dark-squared bishop
- The minority attack
- Re-conversion to IQP?
- White's e5-square



The isolated pawn tandem, or pawn couple, is an extended form of the isolated pawn, and shares many of the same characteristics. It generally arises from said, after the exchange of a black piece for White's c3-knight. In many openings, such as the Tarrasch Defence (GD), this will be an exchange of black's knight via d5. In the Nimzo-Indian though, it is most often the black dark-squared bishop. This leads to a slightly dif-

ferent type of position, obviously, since White obtains the bishop pair.

It may later become a hanging pawn position, should White force through the c3-c4 advance. I have decided to deal with this separately, in the next chapter, as although many of the ideas are similar, many are not and are specific to one formation or the other.

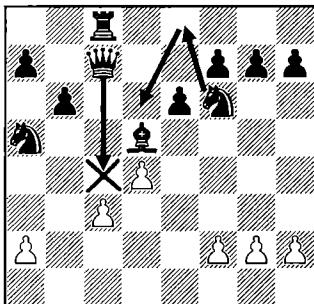
Black's strategy

Notice that both white central pawns are exposed to pressure from the black rooks on open files, and that c4 and d5 present two wonderful squares for black minor pieces.

As far as White is concerned, it is once more a case of that c4 square rearing its ugly head. Black's first objective should be to attempt to fix the backward pawn on the c3-square. There is only one way to do this in the long-term, and that is by controlling the c4-square with pawns and/or pieces and then by establishing a piece on this outpost.

Black can command c4 quickly with many of his pieces. Typically he will place a rook on c8, his queen on c7, while his queen's

knight normally goes to a5 from c6, his queen's bishop to d5 (or a6 if White's king's bishop is no longer on the f1-a6 diagonal), and to further increase the pressure the f6-knight can come to d6.



At some point Black will be able to add pawn support by playing ...b5, controlling both c4 and a4.

Once Black has established a piece on c4, d5 falls automatically into his hands (obviously, if Black puts a piece on d5 without sufficient control over c4 it will be driven back, with loss of tempo, should White advance his c-pawn). If Black manages to obtain his ideal set-up then he will enjoy a large queenside space advantage, and a harmonious piece placement.

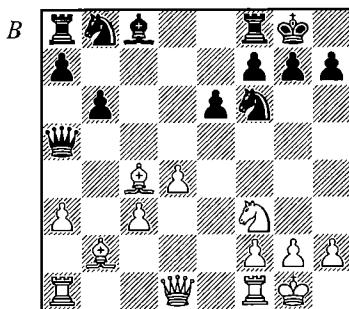
Unfortunately, Black is not always able to have things all his own way. For instance, if White plays his bishop to g5 then, in the absence of his dark-squared bishop, Black has to give his f6-knight extra protection by way of

... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, and this puts this piece a long way from the c4-square.

Exchanging White's better bishop

As in the IQP positions considered in the previous chapter, piece exchanges tend to favour Black, who will have a very enjoyable ending. One exchange has a particular significance, though, and this is that of White's better bishop, the one that is not inhibited by the pawns on dark squares, the king's bishop. This will be achieved either by playing ... $\mathbb{Q}b7-d5-c4$, or more simply ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, assuming a6 is defended by another black piece.

In the game Milov – Granda Zuniga, Buenos Aires 1996:

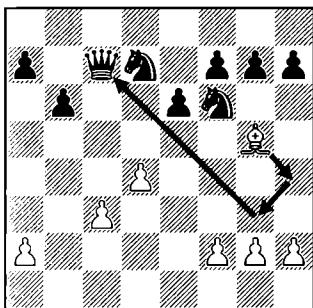


Black played 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$, achieving the desired exchange, and continued with 15... $b5$, taking a firm hold on c4. If a black knight were now in a position to go to c4 White's position would be well nigh hopeless.

Re-deploying the dark-squared bishop

As mentioned above, White can put his dark-squared bishop to good use on g5, pinning the f6-knight, where it is outside the dark-squared pawn chain (c3/d4). A likely scenario is that Black will probably play ... \mathbb{Q} b6 to allow his queen to go to c7, thus breaking the pin. If he does not then White has various tactics to exploit this.

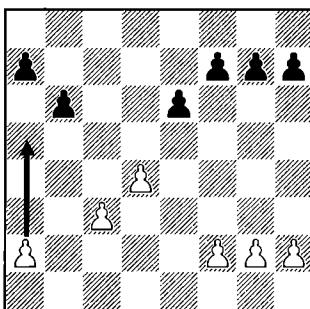
Having achieved its objective – force Black into a more passive posture – the g5-bishop can then move on to fresh pastures. White normally plays the manoeuvre $\mathbb{Q}g5-h4-g3$, where it takes control of the h2-b8 diagonal and at the same time attacks the black queen.



The minority attack

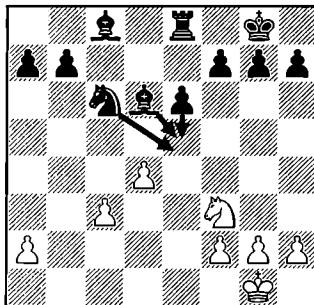
Other than the advance of the c pawn or the kingside build-up, White can play more positionally. If Black has played ...b7-b6, to fianchetto his c8-bishop, White can advance his singleton a-pawn to

a5, with a view to changing it on b6. The a-pawn often constitutes a serious problem for White in the ending, and the benefits of this manoeuvre, if successful, should be evident: White rids himself of his biggest weakness and creates a black defect instead.



Re-conversion to IQP?

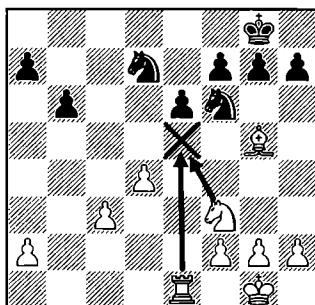
Black often plays moves like ... $\hat{F}f8-e8$ to add defence to the e6-square, but there is also the possibility of playing the ...e6-e5 break at some juncture if Black has satisfactory control over the e5-square. As in the previous chapter, this can often equalise for Black, who will have more of a say in the centre. He would then be able to capture on d4 and revert to an IQP position, or even play ...e5-e4. If ...e6-e5 is played early enough, the c8-bishop may be able to take-up a more active position directly. It is more likely that Black can achieve this liberating push in lines where the white king's knight is on e2, as White has less control over e5.



On the other hand, it may well prove more effective if the white king's knight is on f3 (and the bishop on d3) as there may be the supplementary threat of ...e4, forking two pieces.

White's e5-square

Whenever there is a white knight on f3, White can side-step Black's intention of playing ...e6-e5 by playing his knight there first. If Black captures this piece, assuming that dx_e5 does not win the pinned f6-knight, White will recapture with his e1-rook, ready to switch this piece to the kingside or queenside as necessary.



Game 4
Bareev – Karpov
Tilburg 1994

1	d4	f6
2	c4	e6
3	f3	b6
4	e3	b7
5	c3	b4
6	d3	c5
7	0-0	0-0
8	d2	d5

The game features an unusual series of opening moves, becoming first a Queen's Indian then a Nimzo-Indian with an early ...b6. This illustrates – better than any explanation I can give – the importance of knowing **plans** rather than **precise sequences of opening moves** in the Nimzo-Indian Defence.

9 cxd5 exd4

White captured on d5 but, as there was no piece immediately attacked, Black can use a common device – capturing first on d4 and only then on d5 – to force an IQP position.

10 exd4 ♖xc3

There is nothing wrong with capturing on d5 with the knight, but Karpov prefers the isolated pawn couple position, and he is the greatest living specialist on these structures.

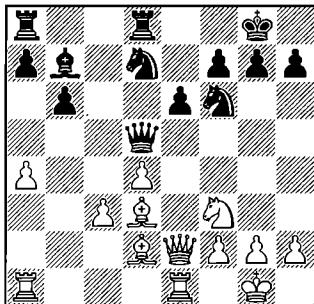
11 bxc3 ♕xd5

More accurate than 11...♘xd5, as after a later c4 the knight would have to return to f6; now the move

c3-c4 will be answered by Queen to d6 or c6 and Black gains a move.

- 12 ♕e1 ♔bd7
- 13 ♕e2 ♔fd8
- 14 a4 (D)

B



A typical isolated pawn couple position, White forsakes the immediate transposition into a hanging-pawn situation, and instead hastens to rid himself of his isolated a-pawn.

- 14 ... ♔c6

In order to answer White's a4-a5 with ...b6-b5, and a blockade of c4.

- 15 ♕f1!

Black's pressure along the a8-h1 diagonal is an important factor that reduces White's aggressive possibilities. White's last move is very strong, obviously he is unable to play ♔e5 directly, as ...♕xg2 mate would follow, so he defends g2 first.

- 15 ... ♔d6
- 16 ♔e5 ♔xe5
- 17 ♔xe5

Certainly not the fork 17 dxe5?? ♕xd3.

- 17 ... ♔g4

- 18 ♔h5 ♔f6
- 19 ♔h4 e5

If White did not want to allow a perpetual attack on his rook, he had little choice but to place his rook offside and allow Black this freeing move.

- 20 ♔e3 h6?!

A risky move, the kingside weakness proves a problem, but Black's subsequent defence is very resourceful.

- 21 ♕c1! ♔f8!?

The king gets ready to evacuate the danger zone, and with reason, for 21...exd4? 22 ♔xh6 dxc3 23 ♔xg7 leads to a quick mate.

- 22 dxe5 ♕xe5

- 23 ♔d4

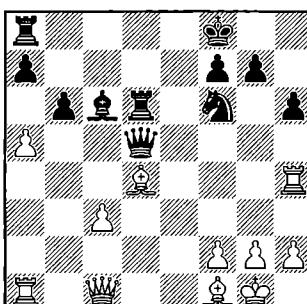
Just what Black does not want in the Nimzo-Indian, the dark-squared bishop reaches a powerful post in the middle of the board.

- 23 ... ♔d5

- 24 ♔f1 ♔d6

- 25 a5! (D)

B



White manages continual progress by combining standard stra-

tegic themes. It is not so difficult when you know what you are supposed to do in any given position.

25 ... ♕e4!?

26 ♜g4 g5!

A good move, both defending g7 and threatening to surround the white rook. The move 26...♜g5 is tempting, but after 27 axb6 ♜f3+ White can parity the threats along the diagonal by 28 ♜h1 ♜h5 29 ♜xg7+ ♜e8 30 h3.

27 axb6 axb6

28 ♜xa8+ ♜xa8

29 ♜a3 ♜a5

The best move, and not falling for the trick 29...f5? 30 ♜xe4 fxe4 when 31 ♜c4 would deflect the queen from the defence of the d6-rook, and win. Despite White's incisive play, Black makes the most of his possibilities.

30 ♜xa5 bxa5

31 f3 f5

32 fxe4 ♜xd4

Steering the game towards a draw, and rather better than 32...fxg4?? 33 ♜c5 ♜e7, when 34 e5 wins.

33 cxd4 fxg4

34 ♜d3 a4

35 d5 ♜e7

36 ♜f2 ♜d6

37 ♜e3 a3

38 ♜b1 g3

39 hxg3 ♜e5

The a-pawn and blockade of the white central pawns on dark squares render the ending drawn, but Black must take care, and so 39...♜c5! 40 ♜d3 ♜b7 might have been simpler.

40 ♜d3 ♜b7

41 ♜c4 ♜c8

42 ♜b4

42 ♜c5 leads to an instructive line where, after 42...h5 43 ♜c6 h4 44 gxh4 gxh4 45 d6 h3 46 gxh3 ♜xh3 47 d7, Black first gives up his bishop, 47...♜xd7+ 48 ♜xd7, and then his a-pawn, 48...a2 49 ♜xa2, to take White's last pawn, 49...♜xe4.

42 ... ♜g4??

Black's first, and last, serious mistake. The only move was 42...h5 43 ♜xa3 ♜a6! 44 ♜b4 ♜f1 45 ♜c5 ♜xg2 46 d6 ♜h3 47 ♜c6 h4 48 gxh4 gxh4 49 ♜d3 ♜e6 50 ♜c4 when 50...h3 just holds the draw.

43 ♜xa3 ♜e2

44 ♜b4 ♜f1

45 ♜c5 ♜xg2

46 ♜d3 ♜f3

47 d6 ♜g4

48 ♜c6 ♜c8

49 ♜c7 ♜e6

50 ♜c4 ♜g4

51 ♜e2 ♜e6

52 ♜f3 g4

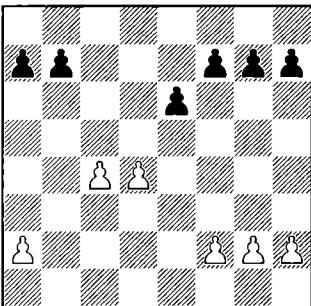
53 ♜g2 h5

54 d7

1-0

6 Hanging Pawns

- Black's No.1 resource — piece exchanges
- The d5-thrust
- Fixing the b-pawn
- The ...e5 jab
- The queen sortie



Continuing logically from the previous chapter, should Black fail to achieve his blockade of c4 then he will allow White to push this pawn to c4, assuming that this is part of White's plans.

This is not the end of the story by any means. A new battle now commences. White will build his forces up behind the cover of his d-and e-pawns, aiming for an eventual breakthrough that exploits the potential power released if one of these pawns is advanced under the right circumstances.

Black's play is more complicated than before. In general, he should put as much pressure on one or both of the pawns as possible, tying White down to their defence. Sometimes he may be able to win one of the pawns by direct attack. However, remembering that the more advanced a pawn the easier it is to defend from the rear, more likely he will only be able to extract other concessions, if any at all. In this respect, he may be able to force one of the pawns forward, in which case Black should be prepared to blockade the pawn and install a piece on any square no longer dominated by these white pawns.

Black's No.1 resource— piece exchanges

The two connected central pawns offer two immediately noticeable benefits. Firstly, the control of the b5, c5, d5, and e5 squares, and secondly, a space advantage. The result of the first is that Black's pieces are confined to the first two or three ranks, and the second that White can build-up his pieces behind his pawns at his leisure.

Now, the more pieces there are on the board, the more cramped a

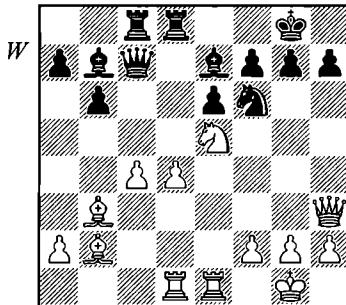
player will be if he has little space. The obvious solution for Black is to exchange some pieces, so that the space he owns is sufficient to house his pieces in comfort. In particular, it is desirable to try and trade queens, as the prospect of being mated is thereby lessened.

The d5-thrust

As in the previous two chapters this formation, whilst statically weak, has a great dynamic strength. In fact, hanging pawn formations illustrate both extremes. Both pawns are now exposed to direct attack, there being no pawns to help them except if one or other of them advances.

Well-supported, the d-pawn can create disarray in the defender's camp by its advance. Following suitable preparation White will force through his d4-pawn to clear a route for his pieces towards the opposing king. We saw, in Chapter 4 (The Isolated Queen's Pawn), just how dangerous this d5-thrust could be for Black, and here this is even more so, as the d-pawn is additionally defended by the c-pawn.

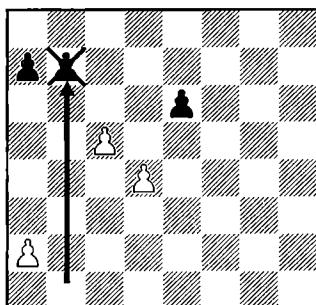
In particular, the dark-squared bishop's diagonal can be prised open to powerful effect, witness the game Bricard – Sharif, French Ch. Chambery 1994.



The game continued: 21 d5! exd5 22 cxd5 ♕xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♜xd5 24 ♜xd5 ♛xd5 25 ♛xf7! (the point) 25...♔xf7 26 ♜h5+ ♔f8 27 ♜xd5 with a clear plus because of the exposed black king.

Fixing the b-pawn

If the b-pawn is unmoved it is sometimes possible to play the surprising move c4-c5 (actually this occurs more often for Black, with ...c5-c4, of course), intending to exploit the open b-file and later pressurise the effectively backward b-pawn.

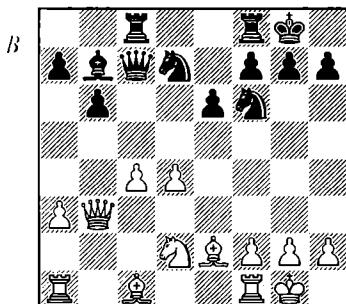


This type of decision is very difficult to make, however, as the c-pawn no longer controls d5 and Black will hurry to place a knight there. It is a matter for good judgement, or alternatively it might be the result of a tactical decision. White may be able to post a knight on d6, or win the b-pawn and create a powerful, passed c-pawn, for example.

The ...e5 jab

This is not always easy to achieve as White may have the e5 square under firm control, but it is even more effective here than in the previous two chapters. It would be difficult for White to tolerate Black capturing on d4 as White can no longer recapture with a pawn. Otherwise, if White is obliged to advance his d-pawn, Black can post his minor pieces on the c5 and d6 squares.

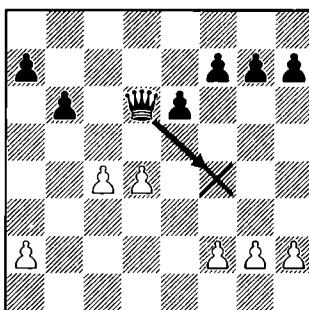
A typical example is the game Mikhalevski – Chuchelov, Leeuwarden 1995.



White's pieces are passively placed and after 15...e5 16 d5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ Black had a pleasant position, and could even have considered playing his f6-knight to d6 via e8, if he had wished.

The queen sortie

With the white bishop on b2, Black disposes of an interesting possibility to activate his queen: he can use the f4-square (arriving via c7 or d6). This is doubly useful in that the black queen reaches an aggressive post, possibly combining with the b7-bishop to intimidate the f3-knight, for instance, and leaves a little more space for the other black pieces 'behind the lines'.



Interestingly, it can prove surprisingly difficult to dislodge the black queen with minor pieces, and White often resorts to playing $\mathbb{W}e3$. This offers the exchange of queens, which should be to Black's taste, but in return it does strengthen the white centre.

Game 5
Arlandi – Almasi
Bukfurdo 1995

1 d4	Qf6
2 c4	e6
3 Qc3	Qb4
4 Qc2	0-0
5 a3	Qxc3+
6 Qxc3	b6
7 Qg5	Qb7
8 Qh3	

The principal idea behind this move is to lend extra support to an eventual e2-e4 advance after f2-f3 and Qh3-f2. However, it is less natural than the alternatives, as it is well known that knights abhor being stuck on the side of the board. A game of chess can be likened to a continual striving for the truth, illogic is often punished.

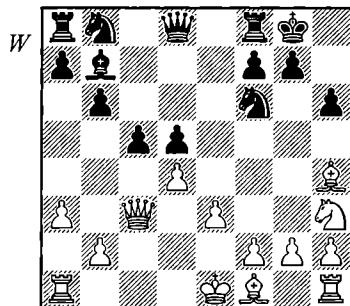
8 ...	h6
9 Qh4	d5
10 cxd5	exd5
11 e3	

At first glance, 11 Qxf6 Wxf6 12 Wxc7 seems to win a pawn, but White rarely takes such pawns. He may get into trouble after 12...Qa6, because of Black's marked lead in development. In fact, in this particular position, Black can even play 12...Wxd4! 13 Wxb7 Wxb2 14 Qd1 Wc3+ 15 Qd2 Wc1+ with an immediate draw if he desires.

11 ...	c5 (D)
--------	--------

This is typical, Black tries to use his lead in development quickly,

before White castles, and therefore seeks to break open the centre.



12 Qd3

White wisely attempts to complete his mobilisation, 12 dxc5 d4 13 Wxd4 Wxd4 14 exd4 Qe8+ has proven most unpleasant for White as his king is very exposed.

12 ...	Qc6
13 dxc5	d4
14 Wc2	Qe5
15 0-0	bxec5!

Just to emphasise that ‘what is good for the goose, is good for the gander’, here it is Black, not White, who transposes into a hanging pawn situation. One where he has already secured the ...d5-d4 advance, boasts very active minor pieces, and has threats along the a8-g2 diagonal.

16 Qh7+	Qh8
17 Qf5	Wb6!

The absence of pawns on the third rank means that Black can unpin his knight in this manner whilst still supporting it.

18 exd4	cxsd4
---------	-------

19 ♜ac1?! d3!

After transforming the position into an IQP situation, Black exploits a tactical motif to force the passed d-pawn up the board, if 20 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 21 ♜xd3 then 21...♜a6 wins the exchange.

20 ♜c3

20 ... ♜fe8

21 ♜fe1?

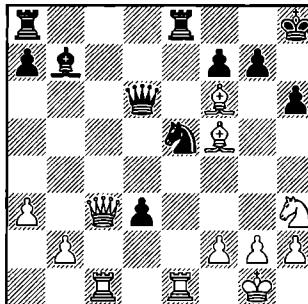
Unfortunately, White did not take the previous warning seriously enough. He encourages the further advance of the d-pawn, but this time with even more unpleasant consequences.

21 ... ♜d6!

22 ♜xf6 (D)

The lines 22 ♜d2 ♜xg2!, and 22) c3 ♜d5 23 ♜d4 ♜xe3! 24 ♜xd6 ♜xf5, sacrificing the queen but winning many pieces in return, offer little relief to White.

B



22 ... d2!

23 ♜xe5 ♜xe5!

24 ♜xe5 dxc1♛+

25 ♜xc1 ♜xe5

Black has won the exchange, White may have had some small chances were it not for his sad knight, still marooned on the edge.

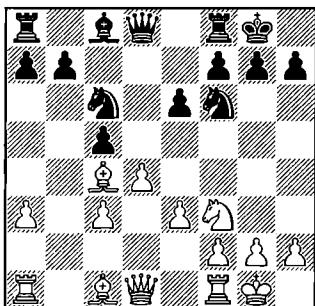
26 ♜d3?! ♜xg2

Decisive; 27 ♜xg2 ♜d5+ 28 f3 ♜xd3 is too easy for Black.

0–1

7 The Classical Centre

- Black gains a foothold in the centre
- The placement of White's king's bishop
- The ...c4 tactic
- The ...e4 tactic
- The bishop deflection tactic
- The white centre



Instead of capturing one of White's two central pawns, Black continues his development (after, say, 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 e3 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 7 0-0) by 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$. Against this, White will use a move to obtain the bishop pair, 8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3, and now Black plays 9...dxc4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$. Considered the mainline for a long time, this was particularly popular in the fifties. However, as Black's resources were found to be more

than adequate, it declined in popularity amongst players of the white pieces. Another disadvantage for White is that this move order allows Black to play other promising lines, such as Hübner's variation.

Black enjoys a solid pawn structure, can pressurise the white centre with his c5-and e5-pawns, and completes his development in a rational manner by placing both rooks on open, central files. As there are not a great deal of pawn levers for Black, he relies almost entirely on active piece play.

Note that Black never takes on d4 with his c5-pawn unless there is some tactical advantage to be gained – White will simply recapture with his c3-pawn and realise his central advantage. Black would prefer White to capture himself, with dx c 5, as even if this wins a pawn it will only be temporary – Black will soon regain it – and in the meantime White has wrecked his pawn structure.

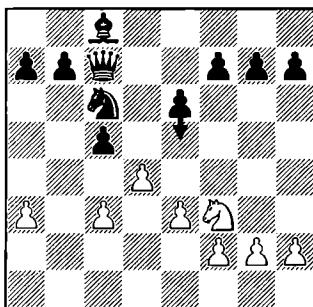
There are also similar lines where White plays an early a3, a type of Sämisch variation, and the same position-type is reached except that the white knight is on e2 not f3. In this case play will be similar. Black will play ...e6-e5, and he will be able to play this even

more quickly as the white knight has no control over e5. One piece less will be exchanged and White may be able to set his pawn centre in motion more easily.

There is sometimes an exception to the rule of the previous paragraph, when Black plays a quick $\mathbb{W}d8-a5$. Here Black really can capture on d4, since the c3-pawn is pinned against the white king. We then reach an isolated pawn couple position because White must recapture with the e-pawn.

Black gains a foothold in the centre

It is possible for Black to fianchetto his queen's bishop on b7, but this is passive and does little to stop White from erecting a strong centre. So he almost invariably plays ...e6-e5 as quickly as possible, after preparation by ... $\mathbb{W}d8-c7$ (or occasionally ... $\mathbb{W}d8-e7$). From the early fifties until the rebirth of $\mathbb{W}c2$, this was considered the key structure in the Nimzo-Indian Defence.

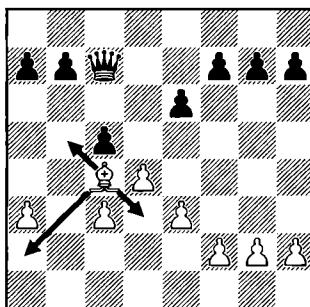


Not only does this allow Black to develop his c8-bishop actively, but it also restricts White's possibilities somewhat. With the white bishop on d3, there is an immediate threat of ...e5-e4, winning a piece. So White must either capture on e5, or further control the e4-square by way of $\mathbb{W}c2$. Personally I then like the look of ... $\mathbb{B}f8-e8$, renewing the threat to win a piece, and obliging White to finally acquiesce to the capture on e5.

This leads to a typical position in this line. Black can then play his queen's bishop to c6 via d7, and his queen's rook to d8, when he enjoys a harmonious development and good squares for all his pieces.

The placement of White's king's bishop

This is often the first crucial choice that White has to make in the game. In the diagram position, Black's previous move (10... $\mathbb{W}c7$) contains veiled threats along the c-file requiring White to either defend his c4-bishop, or move it.



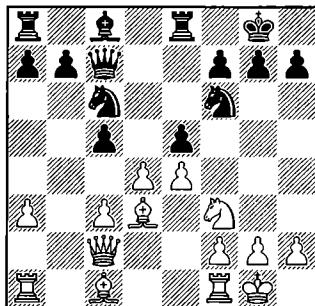
Often it is a matter of personal taste, Yusupov prefers to play his bishop to d3 whilst others prefer a2. A very popular idea is 11 $\mathbb{B}b5$. The thinking behind it is that Black wishes to play ...e6-e5, so this move temporarily stops that as 11...e5? would be met by 12 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ and $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, so Black must first play 11...a6. White does not intend to take the knight, of course, but retreats to d3. Thus, the point is revealed — White has created a weakness in the black queenside, the b6 square, which will promise him additional prospects along the open b-file.

The ...c4 tactic

This is a very common device in these lines which deflects White's light-squared bishop onto the exposed c4-square, where various combinations can occur. For instance, if White has played f2-f3 and e3-e4 then $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ might not be possible because of ... $\mathbb{W}c5+$ forking king and bishop.

In the theoretical line 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 e3 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 6 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ e5 12 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13 e4, (D) Black can forcibly stop White from building a strong centre by playing 13...c4! 14 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ exd4 15 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ (or 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$) 16 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with near equality.

B



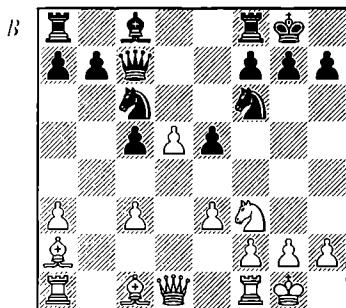
Black should not be too munificent with this possibility, though. If there is no immediate gain involved, and if White can simply retreat his bishop at no cost, then there may be no reason to play it. In fact, it may be downright bad as the pawn was well-placed on c5, and on c4 no longer controls the d4-square. White can often put this square to good use later, it makes an ideal square for his dark-squared bishop, for instance, from whose vantage point he can survey both kingside and queenside. To see an example of this look at Game 5 below.

The ...e4 tactic

Apart from the obvious threat to win a piece mentioned earlier, the ...e4 move can also serve other purposes. Again, Black should only avail himself of this move if he achieves something concrete thereby. Otherwise, White may be able to use the e4-pawn to his advantage, pressurising it with his

pieces and then playing f3 to open the f-file and construct a strong centre.

Two possible reasons for playing ...e5-e4 are if the e5 square becomes available to his knight, if White has played d4-d5 for example, and if it is associated with an attack on the kingside with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ - $\mathbb{Q}g4$. For instance, in the line 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 e3 0-0 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e5 7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ e5 12 d5, (D)

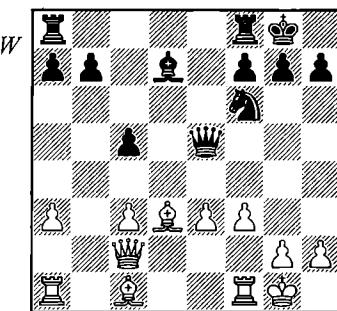


Black is not content to let White form a large centre but replies 12...e4!, and after 13 dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 14 h3 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ b5 16 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ exf3, enjoys a powerful attack.

The bishop deflection tactic

With the black queen on e5 there is sometimes the possibility of diverting the white queen to a4 by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ -a4, followed either by capturing the bishop on d3, or by fork- ing rook and bishop by ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$.

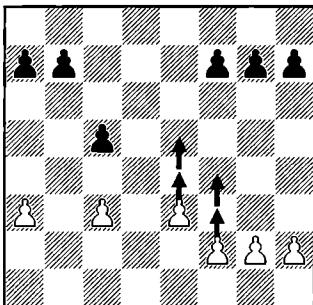
From the diagram, a position that occurred in the game Geller – Spassky, Amsterdam 1956,



White should have reacted to Black's last move, 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, with 16 a4. Instead, after the game continuation 16 $\mathbb{Q}e1?$, Black countered with 16... $\mathbb{Q}a4!$, and as on 17 $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ Black would have a clear pawn more, White was obliged to grovel around with 17 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f1$.

The white centre

Following the opening, White suffers from a slightly weakened queenside. The a- and c-pawns are isolated, although not exposed on open files, but he possesses the two bishops and an extra central pawn, and the future of these two factors is clearly intertwined. Despite Black's free development, I feel that White should have a slight edge in the long term, but in practice, Black does well.

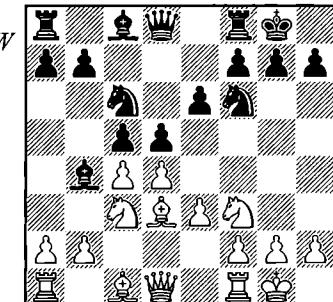


White needs to expand in the centre to gain space for his pieces to operate, but this needs care and preparation. If the f-pawn is advanced to f4 first, without sufficient forethought, then Black is well positioned to command the e4-square. Therefore, it can only be done in situations where a black piece is hit, so that White is able to bring the e-pawn up on the next move. Normally White plays e3-e4 first, after preparation by f2-f3, although even here he must be careful not to allow Black to exploit the dark squares with ... $\mathbb{Q}h5-f4$, and there is sometimes the problem of the ...c5-c4 tactic as before.

Game 6
Kamsky – Tiviakov
Groningen 1995

- | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | d4 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | $\mathbb{Q}c3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b4$ |
| 4 | e3 | 0-0 |
| 5 | $\mathbb{Q}d3$ | d5 |
| 6 | $\mathbb{Q}f3$ | c5 |

7 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)



The starting position for the Classical Main Line resembles a Queen's Gambit Declined, Semi-Tarrasch Variation, except that the black dark-squared bishop is outside the black pawn chain. In fact, were White to now play 8 cxd5 exd5 9 dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ we would indeed reach one of the typical IQP positions that arises from this opening, with the reservation that the white queen's bishop is not ideally placed on d3.

Regarding the move order, there is no ‘best’ method of reaching this position, Black can play the moves ...0-0, ...d7-d5 and ...c7-c5 in any order – it is very much a question of taste. Normally the choice depends on how Black would prefer to play against those lines where White plays his king’s knight to e2.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| 8 | a3 | $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ |
| 9 | bx c 3 | $dxc4$ |
| 10 | $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ | $\mathbb{W}c7$ |
| 11 | $\mathbb{Q}b5$ | a6 |
| 12 | $\mathbb{Q}d3$ | e5 |

13 ♜c2

Having first provoked ...a7-a6, White now defends against the c5-e4 threat, and plans taking control of the centre himself with the c3-e4 advance.

13 ... ♜e8

14 ♜xe5 ♜xe5

15 dxе5 ♜xe5

16 f3 ♜d7

17 ♜b1

Defending against the threat of ...♜a4, with tempo, by attacking the b7-pawn. As we saw earlier, 17 ♜e1?! would be faulty because of the tactic 17...♜a4!, answering 18 ♜xa4 with the fork 18...♜xc3. The move 17 e4 would be premature as well, Black could play 17...c4!?, the point being that 18 ♜xc4?? is impossible because of 18...♜c5+. After the further 18 ♜e2 Black can try 18...♝d5 19 ♜xc4 ♜xc3 20 ♜e3 ♜ac8 21 ♜b3 ♜a4 22 ♜xf7+ ♜f8 23 ♜xb7 ♜c7, with interesting complications.

17 ... ♜c6

18 ♜e1

More careful preparation, and a useful lesson for anyone wishing to play such positions as White. This time the move 18 e4?? even loses to 18...c4!, as not even 19 ♜e2 is possible because of the typical reply: 19...♝xe4! 20 fxe4 ♜xe4 21 ♜b2 ♜xb1 22 ♜xb1 ♜xe2 winning.

18 ... ♜ad8

19 ♜f1 ♜d7

Black has completed his mobilisation, but has no real targets to

attack. Perhaps he should double rooks on the open d-file, but instead decides to try another way.

20 e4

Finally, the time has come to enforce White's key plan – realising his central majority.

20 ... c4

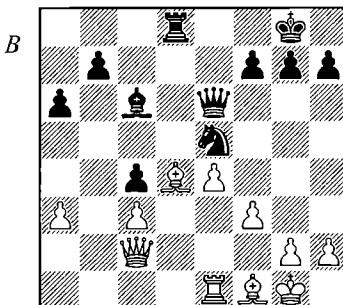
A double-edged decision, on the one hand ...♝c5-d3 becomes feasible, but on the other d4 is deprived of black pawn control.

21 ♜e3 ♜e6?!

22 ♜bd1 ♜e5

23 ♜xd8 ♜xd8

24 ♜d4 (D)



White's unopposed bishop finds its ideal spot. Not only does this close the d-file to Black, but White can now contemplate attacking on either side of the board using the d4-bishop's influence on both the g1-a7 and d4-g7 diagonals.

24 ... ♜d6

25 ♜a1 b5

26 ♜f2 f6

27 ♜e3 ♜e6

28 ♜e2

- 29 $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 30 $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$
 31 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$
 32 $\mathbb{W}c1!$

White unhesitatingly increases the pressure, he intends masking the frail a3-pawn with $\mathbb{W}c1$ -b2-b4, knowing that his bishop pair will give him an edge in the long term.

- 32 ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 33 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
 34 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$
 35 $\mathbb{W}b2!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$
 36 $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$
 37 $axb4$

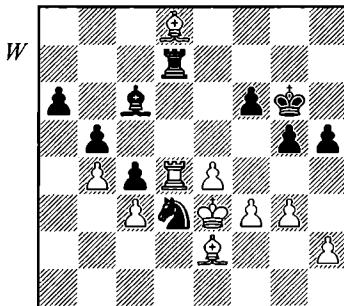
Now White enjoys a serious plus, his a-pawn is no longer isolated, in fact it is the black a6-pawn that has become backward.

- 37 ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 38 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $g5?!$
 39 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $h5?!$
 40 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}e7$
 41 $\mathbb{B}d4$ $\mathbb{B}b7$
 42 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{B}d7$
 43 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$
 44 $g3$

Naturally, White is not to be bought off with a mere pawn! After 44 $\mathbb{Q}xd3?$ cxd3 45 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ Black would have saved the game because of the opposite-coloured bishops.

- 44 ... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ (*D*)

Black can hardly capture on d4 as this would simplify White's play by offering him a powerful passed pawn, i.e. 44... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 45 cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 46 d5. Supported by the bishops, this pawn will become a queen.



- 45 $\mathbb{Q}xd7?!$

Hardly necessary, 45 h3, intending f3-f4, would have retained the advantage. Now Black takes his chance and steers the game to a draw.

- 45 ... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$
 46 $h4$ $g4!$

By depriving the e4-pawn of support, Black ties the white king to its defence and manages to set up a solid blockade.

- 47 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
 48 $fxg4$ $hxg4!$
 49 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$
 50 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8!$
 51 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
 52 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
 53 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$
 54 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 55 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
 56 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

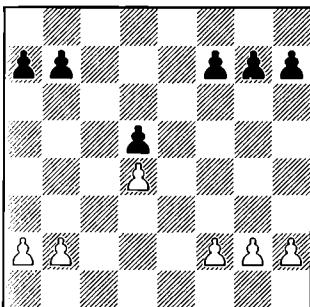
Black finally obtains the opposite-coloured bishops, and a draw.

- 56 ... $cxd3$
 57 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
 58 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 59 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

8 The Symmetric Pawn Centre

- A question of development
- The good bishop exchange
- The positional d-pawn sacrifice



I suppose there must be many different types of pawn centre that are symmetric in some sense, but here I take it to mean the genre of position where both sides have an isolated queen's pawn. Two distinct types occur naturally from the Nimzo-Indian.

Firstly, there are the positions where the black d-pawn is on d5. Normally this will arise from similar openings to IQP ones, except that Black recaptures on d5 with the e6-pawn and not with his knight. Alternatively, from a pure IQP position, a piece is later captured on d5 and Black is obliged to

recapture with his e-pawn. These positions can tend to drawishness, much like the Exchange Variation of the French Defence, as with two fully open files, the possibility of a wholesale exchange of the major pieces is significant.

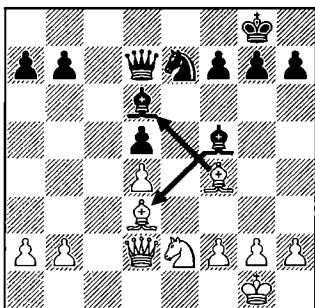
A question of development

The most important principle in such positions is to develop your pieces as quickly as possible, to the most active squares available, whilst simultaneously trying to stop your opponent from doing the same. White should certainly have the edge in this respect, as his extra move allows him the first bite of the cherry.

The good bishop exchange

One positional device always worth considering is the exchange of one side's lesser bishop for the opponent's better bishop. In the case of White, he will desire the exchange of his queen's bishop for Black's king's bishop, and vice versa. This is most often achieved by White playing his bishop to f4, if the black bishop is

on d6, and by Black playing ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$, the white bishop being on d3. There are a number of ways to support this manoeuvre, but most commonly, it is by the king's knight or queen.



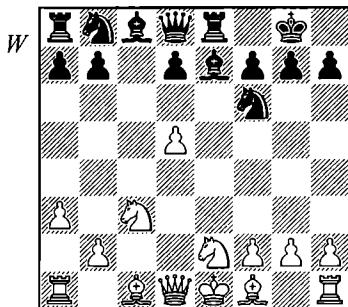
Another possibility, that is most commonly utilised by Black, is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}g4-h5-g6$, not fearing the doubled g-pawns should White capture on g6. It is for this reason that White often plays a swift h3, to keep the black queen's bishop 'behind bars'. Of course, the result of these exchanges is hardly going to be the end of the world, but the fact that the remaining bishop is just a little inhibited by his d-pawn, might be just enough to tip the balance.

The positional d-pawn sacrifice

The second type of Symmetric Pawn Centre position occurs when the white pawn advances to d5 first. Now, Black will probably be

unwilling to advance his d-pawn to d6 as this will shut-in his king's bishop. So he will probably try either to immediately place the bishop on c5, where it is both outside Black's pawn chain and on a commanding diagonal pointing directly at f2, or he will try to complete his kingside development first, and only then play ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-c5$.

In this second case, White has at his disposal an interesting possibility of sacrificing a pawn for a lasting initiative by playing d5-d6. After 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 4 e3 c5 5 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ cxd4 6 exd4 0-0 7 a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 d5 exd5 9 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (D)



The theoretical continuation here is 10 d6 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 11 g3, when Black normally tries to round up the d6-pawn by 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$. To get an idea of the problems Black faces afterwards, let's follow the game Makarov – Xu Jun, Belgrade 1988, 12 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17

End 1 when White had completed his mobilisation and Black was under strong pressure.

Game 7
I.Sokolov – Epishin
FIDE World Ch.,
Groningen 1997

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 1 | d4 | Qf6 |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | Qc3 | Qb4 |
| 4 | e3 | c5 |
| 5 | Qe2 | cx d4 |
| 6 | exd4 | 0-0 |
| 7 | a3 | Qe7 |
| 8 | Qf4 | |

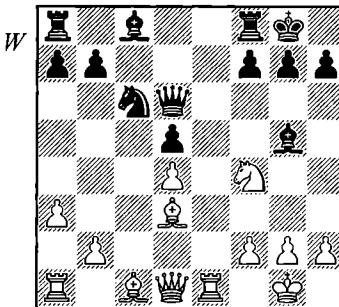
The more popular alternative 8 d5 cxd5 9 cxd5, would also lead to a 'double IQP' position, except with a more advanced white d-pawn.

- | | | |
|---|------|------|
| 8 | ... | d5 |
| 9 | exd5 | Qxd5 |

Swapping off a pair of knights. The alternative 9...exd5 leads to the same general position, except that there are more pieces on the board. It is generally a good idea to exchange pieces where the opponent has more space, as this liberates the defence. Here, and as is often the case with symmetric positions, White's extra space does not come from the structure, but from his better quality of development. His bishop will be on d3 whereas Black's is on the less active square e7, for example.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 10 | Qxd5 | exd5 |
| 11 | Qd3 | Qg5 |

- | | | |
|----|-----|---------|
| 12 | 0-0 | Qc6 |
| 13 | Qe1 | Qd6 (D) |



The d-pawn is not really *en prise*, as 13...Qxd4 meets the reply 14 Qxh7+ Qxh7 15 Qxd4 when, although Black can introduce opposite-coloured bishops by 15...Qxf4 16 Qxf4 Qe6, White has a clear advantage. He enjoys the better pawn structure, safer king, and more active pieces. With queens on the board the drawish nature of opposite-coloured bishops is diminished. In fact, it offers the player with the initiative good attacking chances, as his opponent will be less able to defend on the adverse bishop's colour complex.

However, the text is not much better as White gains the bishop pair, perhaps 13...h6 was safest.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 14 | Qe6! | Qxe6 |
| 15 | Qxg5 | Qd7 |
| 16 | Qc1 | |

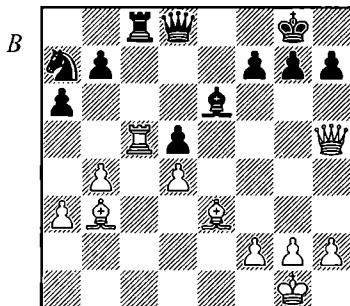
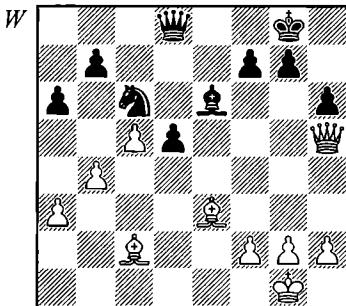
White places his other rook on the other open file. As is so often the case, simple chess is effective chess.

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 16 | ... | Qfe8 |
|----|-----|------|

- 17 ♕b5 ♘f5
 18 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8
 19 b4

The position is still symmetric in nature, and Black has no real weaknesses. So, White gains space on the queenside and prepares to attack the d5-pawn with ♜c5.

- 19 ... ♜c8
 20 ♜e3 a6
 21 ♜a4 ♜d8
 22 ♜b3 ♜a7
 23 ♜c5 ♜e6
 24 ♜h5 (D)



White is attempting to put pressure on the d5-pawn. Nevertheless, Black should be loath to capture on c5 as this ‘irons-out’ the white pawn structure. The move 24...h6 was both possible and preferable, as 25 ♜xd5?? loses to 25...♜xc5.

- 24 ... ♜xc5?!
 25 dxcc5 ♜c6
 26 ♜c2 h6 (D)

Having made progress on the queen’s wing, White turns his attention to the black king.

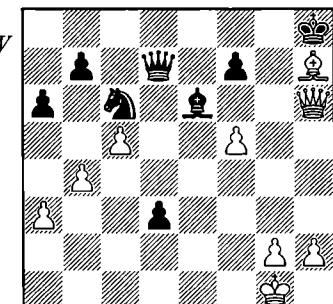
- 27 ♜xh6! gxh6
 28 ♜xh6 ♜d7
 29 ♜h7+ ♜h8
 30 f4

The point, threatening f5. White has no immediate forced win, but the possibility of the bishop’s discovered check at any moment leaves remarkably few potential defensive moves for Black against White’s simple plan f4-f5-f6.

- 30 ... d4?

This loses immediately, but even after the superior 30...♜e8 31 ♜f2! ♜d7 32 ♜e4+ ♜g8 33 ♜h7+ ♜f8 34 ♜xd5, White has three pawns and a good position for the piece.

- 31 f5 d3 (D)



The situation is hopeless,
 31... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ allows mate in three: 32
 16 $\mathbb{W}g4$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 34 $\mathbb{W}g7$
 mate.

32 fxe6?

I imagine that both players were
 in time trouble, otherwise White
 would certainly have found the
 pretty finish 32 $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 33
 $\mathbb{W}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 34 $\mathbb{W}h8+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 35 f6
 mate.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 32 ... | $\mathbb{W}d4+$ |
| 33 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ | $\mathbb{W}a1+$ |
| 34 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ | $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ |
| 35 $\mathbb{Q}xd3+?!$ | |

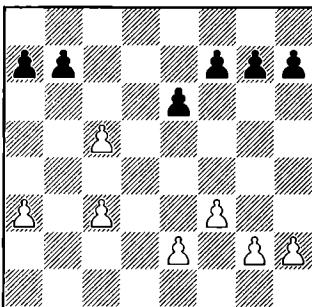
An unimportant inexactitude, 35
 $\mathbb{Q}g6+\mathbb{Q}g8$ 36 exf7+ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 37 $\mathbb{W}h7+$
 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 38 $\mathbb{W}xf7$ mate was quicker.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 35 ... | $\mathbb{Q}g8$ |
| 36 $\mathbb{Q}h7+$ | $\mathbb{Q}h8$ |
| 37 $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ | |

1-0

9 The Isolated Doubled c-Pawn Centre

- Black plays ...e5
- The b-pawn sacrifice



Whilst it is normally a faulty decision to capture the black c5-pawn as it leaves the white pawn structure severely damaged, there are situations when this is possible and even, sometimes, necessary.

This is most likely because the pressure on the white centre, particularly d4, is becoming too strong and this often occurs in the Sämisch (4 a3), and also in the 4 f3 variation. White hopes to gain time to develop his pieces satisfactorily and expand in the centre. It is unlikely that White will be capable of hanging on to his forward c-pawn forever, but he will defend it for a while, hoping that Black will have

to waste time trying to recapture it. White can also hope to exploit the d6-square and pressure along the b-file.

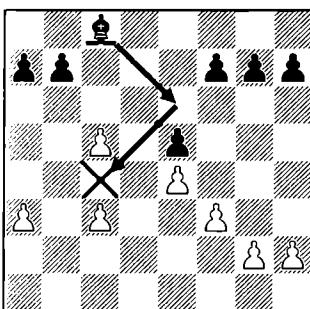
If Black can take the c5-pawn easily, with a knight, he will probably be better as the knight will be very well-placed, and the c-file and c4 squares will soon be in Black's hands as well.

A second line where this set-up occurs is after 4 g3. In this case, the forward c-pawn is on c4, not c5. White has little choice about these positions as Black can force the queenside weakness by pressurising the c3-knight.

Black plays ...e5

It is important that Black plays ...e7-e5 quite soon, to gain some influence in the centre. This also makes sure that White cannot take the centre with pawns on e4 and f4 and eventually play e4-e5. It also opens a route for the c8-bishop. This piece can then take part in the fight for c4 from its most natural square, e6. One possible problem with ...e5 is the ensuing frailty of d5, but it is not normally too serious – White might be able to put

his king's bishop on d5, but very rarely can he get a knight there.



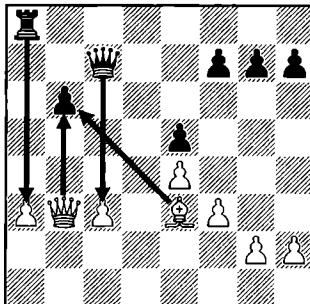
If Black leaves it too late to play ...e6-e5, then White having already played e2-e4 and f3-f4, may be in a position to either capture on e5, or answer with f4-f5, confining the e8-bishop and gaining space on the kingside.

The b-pawn sacrifice

A situation often arises where Black cannot recapture the c5-pawn without incurring other problems and a radical, but effective, measure is to play ...b7-b6. White will capture and Black will recapture with the a-pawn when, in return for the pawn, Black will have good play down the a- and c-files.

The disadvantage, assuming that Black is looking for more than a draw, is that the likely further exchanges of weakling pawns will lead to a fairly drawish type of position. His b6-pawn is just as

likely to be lost as White's a-and c-pawns.



Game 8
Dreev – Anand,
Madras Ct (1) 1991

- | | | |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| 1 | d4 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | $\mathbb{Q}c3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b4$ |
| 4 | f3 | d5 |
| 5 | a3 | $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ |
| 6 | bxc3 | c5 |
| 7 | cx d5 | $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ |
| 8 | dxc5 | |

An anti-positional move, in many respects, but probably the best that White has. The problem is that the pressure on the white centre is very strong. Firstly, the c3-pawn needs defending. For example, 8 e4? $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 $\mathbb{W}d3$ cxd4 just wins two pawns for nothing. White has tried 8 $\mathbb{W}d3$ instead, to support both c3 and d4, but 8...b6 with the menacing idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ is awkward.

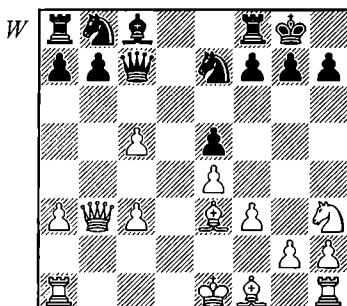
- | | | |
|---|-----|----------------|
| 8 | ... | $\mathbb{W}a5$ |
| 9 | e4 | $\mathbb{Q}e7$ |

10 ♜e3 0-0

Pawn grabbing with 10...♝xc3+? 11 ♜f2 is very bad for Black. His real aim is not to immediately regain his material, as the c-pawns will always be there, but to first complete his development and then pick them off at his leisure.

11 ♜b3 ♜c7

12 ♜h3 e5 (D)



Black plays an important move with gain of tempo – the h3-knight is attacked.

13 ♜f2 ♜ec6

This is all part of Black's subtle plan. He intends playing ...♜e6 and ...♞d7 to capture the c5-pawn, but first he prepares to gain control of the c4-square, when appropriate, with ...♞ec6-a5.

14 ♜d3 ♜e6

15 ♜b5 ♜d7

16 ♜e2

The line 16 ♜b4?! a6 17 ♜a4 ♜a5 18 ♜d5 ♜xd5 19 exd5 ♜xc5 is instructive, as although White

has managed to bring a knight to d5 and has thereby swapped both black bishops for his knights, he is worse. He is behind in development and the black knights are well-placed. If we continue this line further: 20 ♜b4 ♜ac8!, the threat is ...♞cb3 and ...♝xc3+, and as 21 d6? fails to 21...♝xd6 22 ♜xa5 ♜b3, White will probably try 21 c4 ♜ab3 22 ♜d1 ♜d4 when he will not want to dislodge the huge d4-knight for fear of opening the e-file.

16 ... ♜a5

17 0-0 ♜ac8

18 ♜fd1 ♜b3?

An inaccuracy, the immediate 18...♞c4! 19 ♜b4 ♜b8 is better, and leads to an equal position.

19 ♜d2

Missing his chance to offer an interesting exchange sacrifice that presents White with good prospects: 19 ♜b4!? ♜xd1 20 ♜xd1 ♜c6 21 ♜d5 ♜b8 22 ♜b1.

19 ... ♜c4

Black is back on track.

20 ♜b4 ♜b8!

A wonderful move, Black brings the knight to a6 to drive away the white queen for good.

21 ♜b1 ♜a6

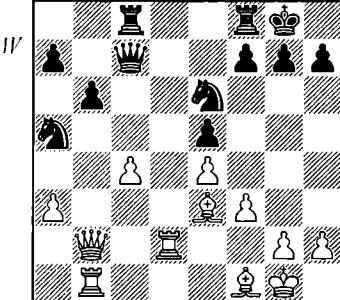
22 ♜b2 ♜xd3

23 ♜xd3 ♜xc5

24 ♜f1 b6

25 c4 ♜e6 (D)

Once again, a position is reached where the black knights are the equals of the white bishops.



- 26 $\mathbb{B}bd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
 27 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$
 28 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}b3$
 29 $\mathbb{B}d3$ $\mathbb{W}a2!$
 30 $\mathbb{W}d5??$

White should have tried 30 $\mathbb{W}a1$, with a level position.

- 30 ... $\mathbb{W}e2!$
 31 $\mathbb{W}d6??$

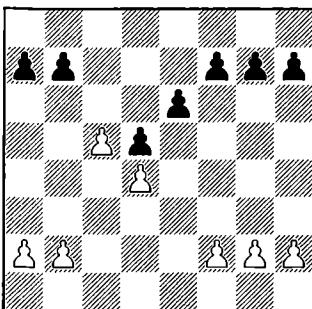
A time trouble mistake that loses the queen, 31 $\mathbb{W}f5$ was better, although Black has a clear plus following 31... $\mathbb{B}c2$ 32 $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{B}c3!$ 33 $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xd1+$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{B}d8$.

- 31 ... $\mathbb{B}cd8$
 32 $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$
 33 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}a2$
 34 $\mathbb{B}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$
 35 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $h6$
 36 $\mathbb{B}8d7$ $\mathbb{B}c8$

0–1

10 The Queenside Pawn Majority

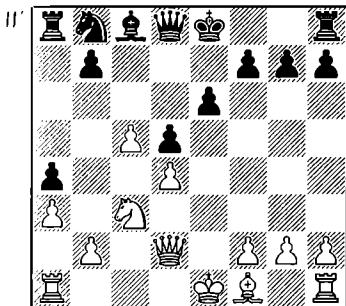
- Undermining the pawn chain
- Blockading the pawns
- White's kingside attack
- The mobile majority
- The knight sacrifice



A very effective idea that occurs in many queenside openings is the advance of the unopposed c-pawn to obtain a majority of pawns on the queenside – three against two. The simple, but telling, point is to create a passed pawn, protected if possible, ready to make a queen later-on. Botvinnik himself was very fond of this plan and scored many points with it. Endgames are often favourable for White as one of the most accomplished ‘stoppers’ of pawns, the king, is far, far away and the superiority in num-

bers on the queenside can quickly be converted into a deadly passed pawn.

This majority can occur in the Nimzo-Indian for either side, but most frequently for White in the line 1 $d4 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $c4 e6$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 $e3 c5$. That is, if White wishes to avoid the dreaded doubled pawns with the move 5 $\mathbb{Q}e2$, and Black wishes to conserve his dark-squared bishop by 5... $cxd4$ – allowing his bishop a line of retreat (otherwise he would be obliged to concede the bishop pair without ruining the white queenside pawn structure, of course). The line continues 6 $exd4 d5$ 7 $c5$ (7 $a3 \mathbb{Q}e7$ 8 $c5$ is another, similar, idea) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}xd2$ 9 $\mathbb{W}xd2$. In this position, Black has two main choices. Firstly, he can continue his idea of conserving his bishops by playing 9... $\mathbb{W}f6$ or 9... $\mathbb{W}d7$, intending to re-route his bishop via d8 to the kingside. This allows White a full queenside pawn majority after 10 $a3 \mathbb{Q}a5$ 11 $b4$. Alternatively, Black can take immediate measures against the formation of this mass of pawns by playing 9... $a5$. After 10 $a3 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3 a4 (D)$ he will have fixed the white b-pawn so that it is no longer able to advance and support his fellow on c5.

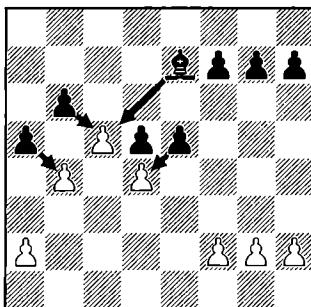


Let us look at this position in more detail. Black enjoys the better pawn formation, his five kingside pawns are intact, but he is a little cramped. In particular it is not easy for him to defend his kingside adequately, and his bishop is somewhat inhibited by the pawns, also on light squares. White, on the other hand, has more space and can attack on both sides of the board.

Undermining the pawn chain

Eventually, Black must attempt to liquidate the c5-pawn that asserts such a cramping effect on his queenside. As the saying goes, the pawn chain must be attacked at its base. If the white b-pawn is on b4 then Black can try to undermine the chain on one side by ...a7-a5 and ...b7-b6 and on the other by ...e6-e5. This last move is particularly effective when White has not had sufficient time to reinforce his c5-pawn by b2-b4, and where Black

can reply to dxe5 by capturing the c-pawn. Although this leads to a position where Black has an isolated d-pawn, it normally frees his position considerably.



Where Black has already played his a-pawn to a4, then ...b7-b6 by itself will suffice. If he can complete this freeing move successfully, he will enjoy the advantage.

Remember that the white b2-pawn is backward, and will provide a tempting target for Black along the b-file. Furthermore, the d4-pawn may become a liability, needing constant defence, should Black manage to attack it by means of ... $\mathbb{W}d8-b6$, ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6$, etc.

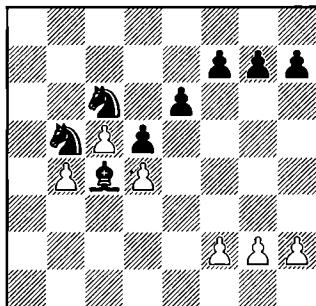
Unfortunately for Black, carrying out this plan is not very easy. First, he must parry White's kingside aspirations. Secondly, White will take prophylactic measures against these freeing moves. He can play f2-f4 to clamp down on e5, and play b2-b4, and $\mathbb{E}a1-b1$ to support his c5-pawn on the queen-side.

Blockading the pawns

If Black is unable to destroy the queenside pawns, then he must make haste to blockade them to ensure that they are unable to advance. He must try to do this as quickly as possible for otherwise, if he cannot find any counterplay, Black may well find he is pinned down on the queenside. He will have little choice but to wait and watch whilst White gradually builds-up his position.

On top of that, the further advanced the pawns are, the more dangerous they are, and any blockade will be doomed to failure. In a recent game I managed to obtain a protected passed pawn on c7. During the game, I felt that this one pawn was probably worth more than a rook, and in fact, it ultimately cost my opponent his queen!

Unfortunately, constructing a successful blockade is easier said than done! As far as Black is concerned, the blockade will probably have to happen on the light squares, in particular he will have to swap off a-pawns and take a firm grip of the b5-square. One such possibility is to place the queen's bishop on c4, outside the pawn chain, and a knight on b5. He can then bring the other knight to c6 where it exerts pressure on b4 and d4.

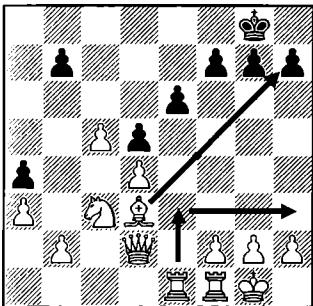


Once achieved, Black should be able to advance his central pawns unhindered, for yes, he has a large central pawn majority.

White's kingside attack

The possessor of a pawn majority will normally proceed on that side of the board, with a view to creating a well supported, powerful passed pawn. However, with the black pawn on a4, White's prospects on the queenside are severely compromised, in fact, he can soon find himself suffering sever positional problems.

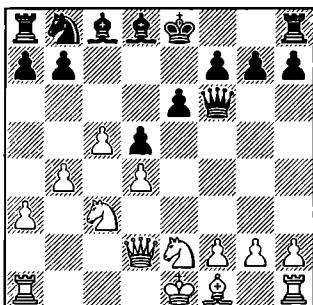
However, the situation is far from bleak. His bishop has far greater prospects than Black's as it is in no way impeded by his pawn structure, White's central pawns occupying dark squares. It is also pointing conveniently at h7, and by way of $\mathbb{E}e1-e3-g3$ or $h3$ and by bringing his queen to f4 or g5 he can build up a dangerous attack. While this may not be sufficient to decide the game in itself, it may produce other plusses.



The mobile majority

This is one of those rare positions in the Nimzo-Indian where it is Black who possesses the bishop pair. Still, this has not been obtained at small cost, Black has wasted considerable time with his manoeuvres. Meanwhile, White has been allowed to build-up an impressive, mobile majority on the queenside.

This position, which actually occurred in I.Sokolov – Van der Wiel, Holland Ch. 1996, is characteristic.



White's first concern is to complete his development whilst at the

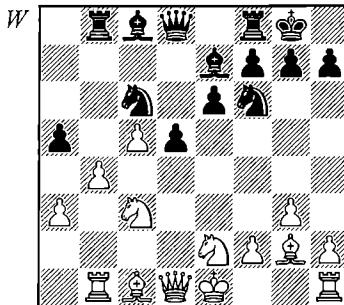
same time restricting Black's possible counterplay. This is normally achieved by playing the g1-knight to e2 to defend the d-pawn, and by fianchettoing the king's bishop on g2 to deter Black from playing ...e6-e5, as the d5-pawn will be hanging. He can later put paid to this possibility forever by playing f2-f4.

White next combines the prospect of advancing his majority, by ensuring that his queenside pawns are well supported – by rooks on a1 and b1 for example – with possible infiltration of any holes in the black queenside.

The knight sacrifice

The player attempting to demolish a queenside pawn chain has to beware of one problem that is particularly prevalent in these positions, it is the old 'one-two'. If Black has a knight on c6, for instance, and plays ...b7-b6, then White might be able to reply b4-b5, attacking the knight, and then c5-c6. This could be disastrous for the defender who will have assisted his opponent in acquiring a beautiful passed pawn.

However, things may not be so bleak, for sometimes this is the best way of combating the pawn majority. For instance, in the game Salov – M.Gurevich, Leningrad 1987, Black has just played the provocative, if strong, move 13... \mathbb{N} b8! (D)



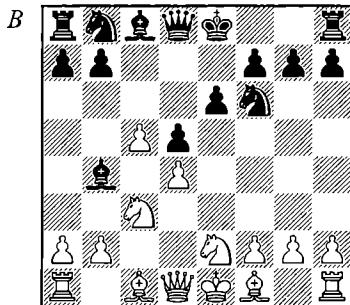
His intention is to answer the obvious 14 b5 with 14... $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$ 15 bxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, attacking both b1 and f2 simultaneously, and if then 17 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 18 fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$. White saw this, of course, and decided to avoid it.

There are also one or two other cases where this ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ move can prove effective. For example, if White has played g2-g3, but not $\mathbb{Q}g2$, Black might be able to provoke b4-b5, and answer it with ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, threatening both ... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ and the c-pawn.

Game 9 Sherbakov – Ramesh Linares 1996

1	d4	$\mathbb{Q}f6$
2	c4	e6
3	$\mathbb{Q}c3$	$\mathbb{Q}b4$
4	e3	c5
5	$\mathbb{Q}e2$	cx $\mathbb{d}4$
6	$\mathbb{Q}xd4$	d5
7	c5 (D)	

White makes his intentions known, he creates a queenside pawn majority of three to two forthwith.



7 ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The most common move, hoping to wreck the white queenside structure anyway. Attacking the pawn chain immediately by 7...e5! is also possible, the latest idea after 8 dx $\mathbb{e}5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$, is 9 e6 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with a slight edge for White.

8 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$
9 $\mathbb{W}xd2$ a5

Probably the best move, Black consents to giving up his dark-squared bishop, but starts immediate action against the white queenside.

10 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
11 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ a4

Here is the point, the b2-pawn can no longer support the c5-pawn as long as Black's a-pawn is on the board.

12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
13 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$
14 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
15 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ b6??

Black attacks the c-pawn head-on. If White was obliged to capture on b6 his queenside would become very vulnerable, but he is just in time to create a diversion on the other side of the board.

16 ♕g5!

Threatening the g-pawn and tying the d8-queen to the defence of c7.

16 ... 0-0

17 cxb6

Only now does White capture the b-pawn, when Black is unable to recapture it, because after 17...♕xb6? his knight is hanging. Still, the move played is not much better, as it turns out, and so perhaps Black should try...h6 18 ♘h4 ♜e8, although even here he has troubles.

17 ... ♔g6?!

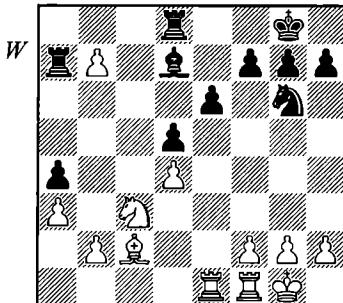
18 ♕xd8 ♜fxd8

19 b7 ♜a7 (D)

If only Black could play ...♜b8 and ...♜8xb7, but he has not enough time.

20 ♜xa4!!

Sacrificing a piece to save the b7-pawn, this wins at a canter and illustrates just why the queenside pawn majority can be so effective.



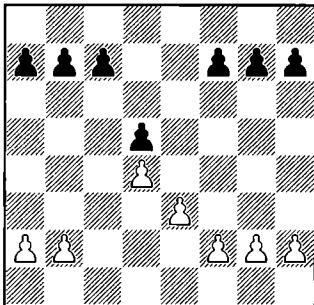
- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 20 ... | ♜xa4 |
| 21 ♜xa4 | ♜xa4 |
| 22 ♜c1 | ♜c4 |
| 23 b3! | ♜xc1 |
| 24 ♜xc1 | ♝e7 |
| 25 a4 | ♜b8 |
| 26 ♜c7 | |

1-0

The position is hopeless after 26...♚f8 27 a5 ♚e8 28 a6 ♚d8 29 ♜xe7 and, as is well-known, two pawns on the sixth rank beat a rook. Here one is even on the seventh rank, and he is joined by a fellow after 29...♝xe7 30 a7.

11 The QGD Exchange Centre

- The Minority Attack
- The Central Push
- The Pillsbury Attack

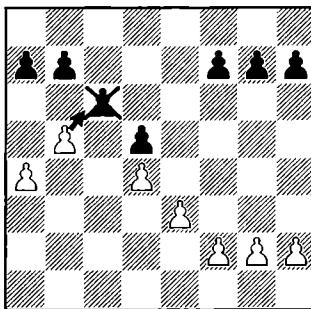


This structure, typical of the Exchange Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined (QGD), occurs whenever Black plays ...d7-d5, White captures cxd5 and Black recaptures with his e-pawn. Black often continues with ...c7-c6, supporting his d-pawn, or more combatively with ...c7-c5, attacking d4. But there is also a similar line in the 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ Variation where, after 4...d5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, Black continues 6...h6 7 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ c5 8 dxc5 g5 9 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathcal{Q}e4$ 10 e3 $\mathbb{W}a5$, with a lead in development and a certain pressure on the c3-knight in return for his ragged pawn structure. To my mind in order to play this line, and similar ones, a theoretical knowl-

edge is paramount. Strategic ideas are subordinate to tactical ones, and a feel for the initiative, therefore I have concentrated on other positions.

The Minority Attack

This is a well-known positional device designed to create weaknesses in the opposing queenside pawn majority. White will advance his minority with the intention of playing b4-b5. This presents Black with a problem as every possible reply will leave him saddled with a defect of some sort:



- If he plays ...c7-c5 then White will take this with his d-pawn and Black will have an IQP.
- If he answers ...cxb5 then, after the reply axb5, the d5-pawn will be isolated and the a7-pawn exposed on an open file.

- If he allows White to capture on c6 then, assuming he recaptures with the b-pawn, he will suffer from a backward pawn (c6) on an open file.

One way to avoid the worst is for Black to play ...a7-a6 before White pushes his b-pawn to b5 so that a further pair of queenside pawns will be exchanged. Otherwise Black will try to seek chances on the kingside, he can often use the open e-file, although the White kingside pawn structure is very robust.

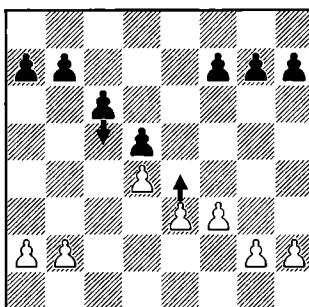
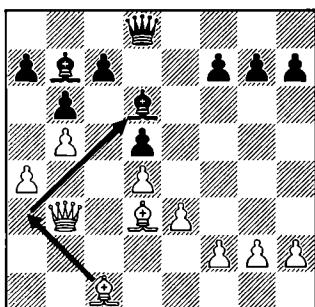
One major difference between the Nimzo-Indian Defence and other QGD positions is that in the Nimzo-Indian White's dark-squared bishop is often still on c1, rather than on f4 or g5, and this tends to subtly alter the possible plans. In Tal's Variation, where Black plays ...d7-d5 and ...b7-b6, the minority attack is often used both to stop Black's freeing c5-advance (as b4-b5 gains control over the c6-square) but also, and more importantly, to exchange the dark-squared bishops.

Obviously, this can only be achieved if the a3-f8 diagonal is opened and if the a3-square is supported. If White can successfully follow this blueprint, he will almost certainly have the edge, as of the two remaining bishops his is decidedly the more active.

The Central Push

In those positions where the white king's knight is on e2, the advance of the f-pawn is unhindered and White can consider trying to utilise his extra central pawn to set-up a strong, mobile, centre.

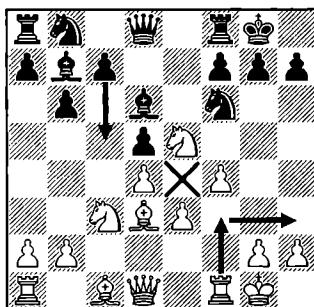
First he will finish his kingside development and then play f2-f3. Allowing White to continue with e3-e4 will be very risky for Black as the centre might sweep everything in its path, so Black should **always** reply ...c5!. By thereby putting pressure on the white centre Black not only avoids White's central expansion, but he also makes certain that White's queen's bishop stays on the inactive side of the white pawn structure.



White is unlikely to be able to take the c5-pawn as Black will recapture with his bishop on c5 and the pressure on the e3-pawn, both along the a7-g1 diagonal and the c8-e1 file, will be very unpleasant. In this type of structure White would prefer Black to capture on d4, as White then would be able to free his dark-squared bishop by recapturing with his e3-pawn. Otherwise, White can consider the plan ♖c1-d2-e1-g3 as a means of bringing this piece into the fray.

The Pillsbury Attack

This classic attack occurs most commonly in Tal's Variation (where Black combines ...d7-d5 and ...b7-b6). Having captured on d5, White then proceeds to play ♜c5 and f4. The idea is quite crude in that White enfeebles his pawn structure but intends to use his extra space on the kingside to start a direct attack. The centre is closed, White's king's bishop and knight are already thereabouts, and White can play ♘f3-h3 as well.



The disadvantage is that the white pawn structure is somewhat compromised, the e4-square is weakened and the queen's bishop is restricted.

Black should be careful, though, as the white attack can break through before he is able to exploit his positional plusses. He should react by playing ...c7-c5, putting pressure on d4, and attempting to exploit the c-file. He can often put an end to the white attack by playing ...♝f6-e4 at a choice moment – even if this is at the cost of a pawn.

Game 10
Bareev – Renet
Yerevan OL 1996

- | | | |
|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | d4 | ♝f6 |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | ♝c3 | ♝b4 |
| 4 | e3 | 0-0 |
| 5 | ♞d3 | d5 |
| 6 | ♝f3 | b6 |
| 7 | 0-0 | ♝b7 |
| 8 | cx d5 | |

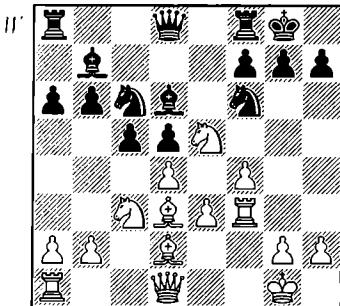
It makes sense to capture on d5 now that Black's light-squared bishop is on b7. If White had done this a move earlier, Black would have been able to develop this piece directly to the more active square g4.

- | | | |
|---|-----|------|
| 8 | ... | exd5 |
| 9 | ♝e5 | a6?! |

Against the Pillsbury formation, Black can rarely afford to

waste time, 9...c5 is more to the point.

- | | |
|--------|----------|
| 10 ♕d2 | ♕d6 |
| 11 f4 | c5 |
| 12 ♜f3 | ♝c6? (D) |



Already a losing blunder, which just goes to show how dangerous this apparently crude set-up of White's can be. However, even after the more circumspect 12...♝e4, the white rook swings over to h3 with the threat of ♘h5, and Black's kingside appears short of defence.

13 ♘xd5!

It seems that the f6-knight is needed to defend h7, and therefore d5 is en prise.

13 ... ♘xe5

The only move, but still inadequate. Neither 13...♝xd5 14 ♘xh7+ ♘xh7 15 ♘h3+ ♘g8 16 ♘h5 with mate in two moves, nor 13...♝xe5 14 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15 dx5 ♘xf3 16 gxf3! ♘xe5 17 fxe5 ♘xe5 when the two bishops are too strong for one rook, are worth consideration.

14 ♘xf6+

A counter-blunder and played immediately! Was White in a rush to finish this game? The elementary 14 fxe5 ♘xd5 15 ♘xh7+ ♘xh7 (15...♝h8 16 ♘h3 wins easily) 16 ♘h3+ ♘g8 17 ♘h5 f5 18 e6 leads to mate in two.

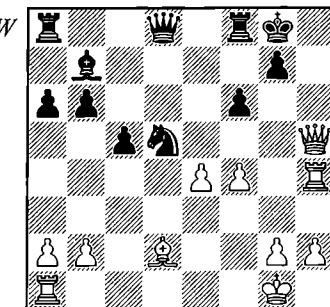
- | | |
|----------|------|
| 14 ... | ♘xf6 |
| 15 ♘xh7+ | ♘xh7 |
| 16 ♘h3+ | ♘g8 |
| 17 ♘h5 | ♘h4 |

The only move, but sufficient, perhaps White had simply forgotten that it was possible.

- | | |
|---------|-----|
| 18 ♘xh4 | f6 |
| 19 d5 | ♝e7 |
| 20 e4 | |

Despite his mistake, White retains a strong attack and an impressive centre for his piece.

20 ... ♘xd5?! (D)



Black overlooks White's, far from obvious, reply. If he wanted to draw (and this would have allowed the French team to draw their match against the mighty Russians) he should have played 20...♝xd5!, when 21 ♘d1 meets 21...♝xe4, and Black's kingside

light squares are guarded. Therefore, White must play 21 $\mathbb{W}h7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ with a perpetual, or risk being worse after 22 $\mathbb{B}g4$ $\mathbb{B}g8$ 23 exd5 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 24 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$.

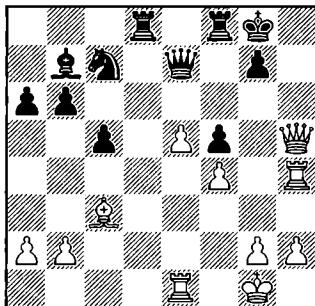
21 $\mathbb{B}d1!$

This may not be provably winning, but the surprise value and the fact that Black was short of time meant that it was *effectively* winning.

21 ...	$\mathbb{Q}c7$
22 $\mathbb{Q}c3$	$\mathbb{W}e7$
23 e5	$\mathbb{B}ad8$
24 $\mathbb{B}e1!$	f5? (D)

This move loses, but 24...fxe5 25 $\mathbb{W}h7+!$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26 $\mathbb{B}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (26... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$) 27 $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 28 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 29 $\mathbb{B}xe8$ was far from pleasant anyway.

W



25 $\mathbb{W}h7+$	$\mathbb{Q}f7$
26 e6+	$\mathbb{Q}xe6$
27 $\mathbb{B}xg7$	$\mathbb{Q}e8$
28 $\mathbb{B}xf8$	$\mathbb{W}xh7$
29 $\mathbb{B}xe6+!$	$\mathbb{Q}d7$

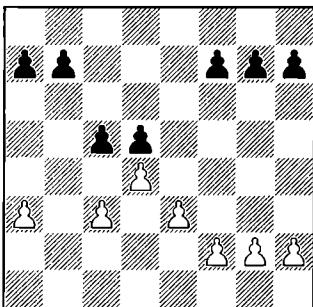
Desperation, but if 29... $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ then 30 $\mathbb{B}xh7$ would win immediately.

30 $\mathbb{B}d6+$

1–0

12 The Light-Squared Blockade

- The bishop exchange
- Preparing the central advance
- ...c4 or not ...c4?



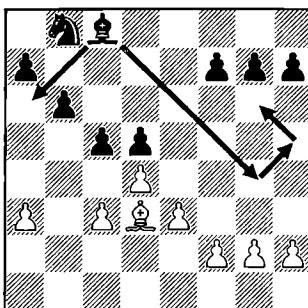
The point behind this plan is that if Black can fix White's pawns on dark squares then White's dark-squared bishop will have a bleak future, trapped inside its own confines. To carry out the strategy is not so simple, though. Black has to control several key light squares, c4 in particular, otherwise White will certainly advance his e-pawn and free his bishop.

The bishop exchange

An important element of this strategy is the exchange of light-squared bishops. If Black can maintain his

blockade and bring about a good knight versus bad bishop scenario, he will have every chance of triumphing. Alternatively, if he manages to obtain a blockade of the light squares, but does not exchange his queen's bishop, this piece may become every bit as bad as the white queen's bishop.

One common method is the manoeuvre ♕g4-h5-g6, nullifying a white bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal. Instead, in all positions where White has played f3, Black will seek the exchange of the light-squared bishops via a6.

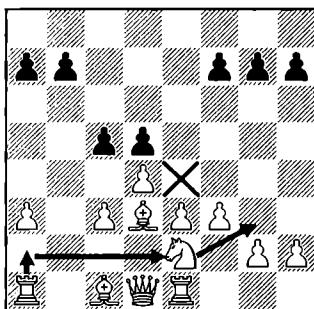


The first method seems more time-consuming, but, in fact, this may not be the case. After the exchange of bishops on a6 the black queen's knight finds itself misplaced and often has to spend several moves to find a good square.

Preparing the central advance

White's main idea is to use his extra central pawn. He must first play f2-f3, when there will be a battle for the control of the e4 - square. If Black can win the struggle he may be able to pin White down the whole game, if it is White who gains the upper hand, he will advance his pawn roller.

The white bishop is already on the b1-h7 diagonal, and the a-rook goes to e2 via a2, since going directly to e1 is impossible as there are too many white pieces on the back rank. The white knight must also participate, if it is on e2 then g3 will be the ideal square, if the knight starts on f3 then it normally moves to h4 and then f5, first.

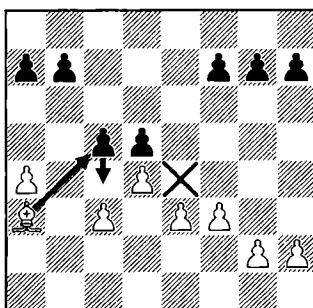


So what should Black do? First, he tries to exchange the light-squared bishops, as mentioned above, so there will be one less white piece controlling e4. Next he can double rooks on the open e-file, and also try to put pressure on

the d4-pawn. Playing ...f7-f5 is a possibility, but has to be considered with care as this move may control e4, but weakens the black kingside and shuts in the light-squared bishop (if it has not already been exchanged).

...c4 or not ...c4?

On the one hand, the move ...c4 fits in nicely with Black's plans to fix the white pawns on dark squares, as the c3-pawn will no longer be able to advance and free the a1-h8 diagonal. On the other, it reduces Black's potential pressure on d4 and possible counterplay along the c-file. Therefore, it is a move requiring good judgement. Anyway, Black should never play this if he intends to exchange the light-squared bishops on a6, obviously, as this would become impossible. And he should probably refrain from ...c4 if he cannot obtain good control over e4, as in this case he would find himself short of play.



In practice Black's choice is often made for him: White plays a4 and ♘a3 and Black's c-pawn either must advance or be captured by the bishop. A further reason for playing ...c4 is to set-up a queenside pawn majority. However, creating a passed pawn is somewhat more difficult here than in Chapter 10 (The Queen-side Pawn Majority), as the White b-pawn is now on c3 and White can play a3-a4, ♘c1-a3 and ♘a1-b1 with strong control of the queenside dark squares.

Game 11
Lautier – Kramnik
Tilburg 1997

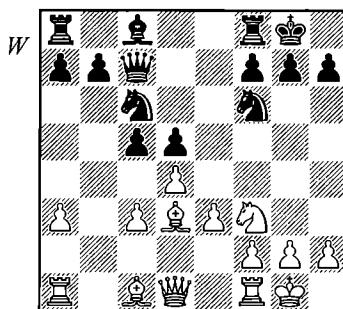
1	d4	♘f6
2	c4	e6
3	♗c3	♗b4
4	e3	0-0
5	♗d3	c5
6	♗f3	d5
7	0-0	♗c6
8	a3	♗xc3
9	bx _c 3	♕c7

Khasin's Variation aims to gain a tempo over the classical main line. For instance, following 10 ♕e2?! Black continues 10...dxc4 11 ♘xc4 e5 and White finds himself in an inferior line, so he has little choice with his next move.

10 cxd5 exd5 (D)

The key starting position, the first advantage of Black's move order is evident – the queen's

bishop is free to take up an aggressive post on g4.



11 ♘h4

This odd-looking move serves two purposes, the ...♗g4 pin is avoided and White prepares to both advance his central majority and can sometimes bring his knight to the aggressive f5-square.

11 ... ♘a5!

The latest idea, tying White down to the c3-pawn and restricting his possibilities; for instance, the plan ♘a2-e2 is no longer possible after White's next move.

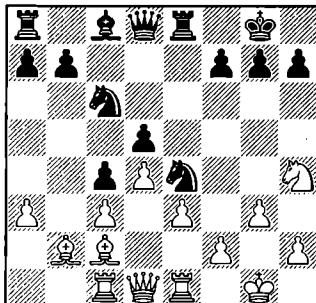
12	♗b2	♕e8
13	♗e1	c4
14	♗c2	♗e4
15	♗c1	

White indirectly defends his c-pawn. The battle-lines are clearly drawn, Black is attempting to achieve a complete light-squared blockade. If he can fix the white central pawns on dark-squares the b2-bishop will be completely stymied and it would simply remain to exchange light-squared bishops,

and win the resulting ‘good knight v bad bishop’ endgame.

- 15 ... $\mathbb{W}d8$
 16 g3 (D)

B



White is finally ready to chase the e4-knight away by f2-f3 and continue with pawn to e4, setting up his mobile centre and freeing his bishops – but Black moves first and can complete the remainder of his plan.

- 16 ... g5!
 17 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g4

Very instructive, Black has successfully achieved his light-squared blockade and must now think about exchanging his c8-bishop.

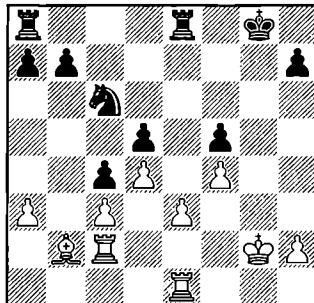
- 18 f3?! $\mathbb{Q}g5!$
 19 fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}h3+$
 20 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}g5$
 21 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$
 22 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!$

Black’s plan has indeed worked like clockwork, and he takes a firm grip of e4. In similar circumstances White should try to avoid the exchange of bishops at all costs, but here 23 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24 exf4 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 25

$\mathbb{Q}f3$ is answered by 25... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ when the black bishop is too powerful.

- 23 $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$
 24 gxf4 $\mathbb{W}xg2+$
 25 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$
 26 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ f5 (D)

W



Despite the material equality, White’s position is hopeless at this level. His central pawns are becalmed on the same colour squares as his bishop, and his e-pawn is backward on an open file.

- 27 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 28 a4 $\mathbb{Q}g8$
 29 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
 30 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b6
 31 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$
 32 $\mathbb{Q}cb2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
 33 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$
 34 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7+$
 35 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$
 36 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ h5
 37 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ h4
 38 a5 bxa5?

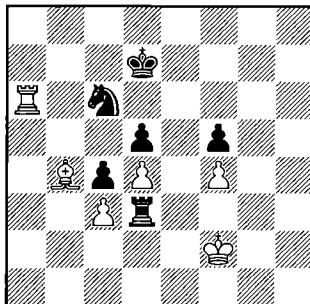
Not the best, 38... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 39 axb6 axb6 40 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ would have kept the stranglehold.

- 39 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
 40 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ h3

41	$\mathbb{Q}b5$	a4
42	$\mathbb{Q}c5$	$\mathbb{Q}b8$
43	$\mathbb{Q}a5$	a6
44	$\mathbb{Q}xa4$	$\mathbb{Q}g2$
45	$\mathbb{Q}b4$	$\mathbb{Q}xh2$
46	$\mathbb{Q}g3$	$\mathbb{Q}e2$
47	$\mathbb{Q}xh3$	$\mathbb{Q}xe3+$
48	$\mathbb{Q}g2$	$\mathbb{Q}c6!$
49	$\mathbb{Q}xa6$	$\mathbb{Q}d7$
50	$\mathbb{Q}f2$	$\mathbb{Q}d3$ (D)

In many ways, White has done well to get this far but, despite the reduced material, he cannot avoid losing his c- and d-pawns.

W

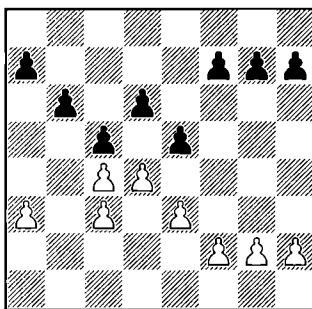


51	$\mathbb{Q}c5$	$\mathbb{Q}xc3$
52	$\mathbb{Q}b6$	$\mathbb{Q}b3$
53	$\mathbb{Q}a6$	$\mathbb{Q}d3$

0–1

Part Three: The Dark-Squared Blockade

This is very much the big idea behind the Nimzo-Indian Defence. The dark-squared blockade involves Black giving-up his dark-squared bishop, preferably inflicting doubled pawns on White at the same time, and then setting up a fortress of pawns on dark squares. This serves to both inhibit White's dark-squared bishop, as its diagonals will be shortened, and to allow free movement to Black's remaining bishop, which operates on light squares, of course. An additional plus might be that White's central pawns would be halted on light squares, thus limiting his other bishop.



Although Black will not have a great number of squares for his pieces, in general the sort of static position that arises will tend to fa-

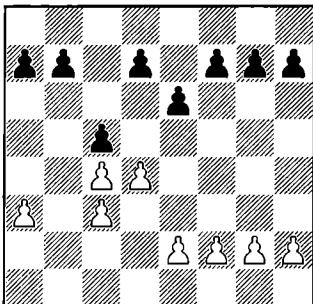
vour his 'hopping' knights, rather than the 'gliding' white bishops. When considering such cramped positions, it is always worth bearing in mind the general rule that a position is not favourable just because it appears good (e.g. White has an optically impressive space advantage), but only if it has the potential to be further improved in the future.

The ...c5 barricade

I suppose that in an ideal world Black would like his opponent to play d4-d5, when Black would have the square c5 all to himself and could plant a knight there. From such a vantage point this piece would laud it over the white position.

Unfortunately for Black, in practice White often steadfastly refuses to make this concession but prefers to keep his d- and c-pawns aligned on the fourth rank. Even when Black plays ...e6-e5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6$, to pressurise the d4-pawn, White will still try to keep his pawns intact, and may even prefer to play c4-c5. Therefore, Black usually plays ...c7-c5 himself at some

point. This pawn not only stops white's c-pawns from advancing, if sufficiently defended it acts as a substantial barrier to White's queen's bishop.

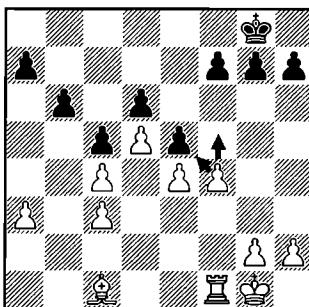


As an example, if White should play a3-a4 and $\mathbb{Q}c1-a3$ (very popular amongst less experienced players), then Black can simply reply ...b7-b6 and ...d7-d6 and the white a3-bishop will be completely stymied.

The f4 lever

White is normally not too well-placed on the queenside and must seek his chances elsewhere. If Black has set-up a wedge in the centre, White will experience difficulty making progress there, and so resorts to the kingside and the move f2-f4. This move has twin aims: to soften up the black centre, particularly on the dark squares, and to open the f-file for the white rooks. There is a possibility of further continuing f4-f5 when White has a space advantage. He will

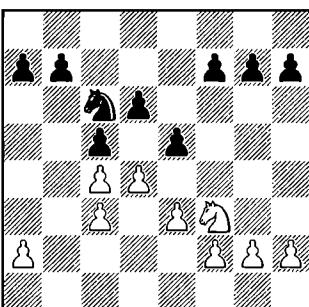
either continue g2-g4-g5 or, if circumstances permit, f5-f6, forcing a wedge through the black kingside.



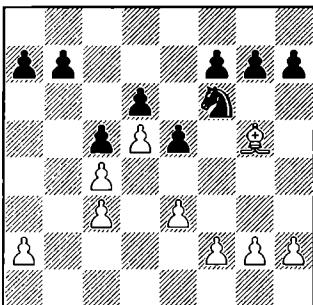
If Black captures on f4 then this will emancipate the White dark-squared bishop, which will recapture on f4 and point towards the weakened d6-pawn along the h2-b8 diagonal. Nevertheless, Black often does capture on f4, intending to place a knight on e5.

The following chapters deal with these typical structures:

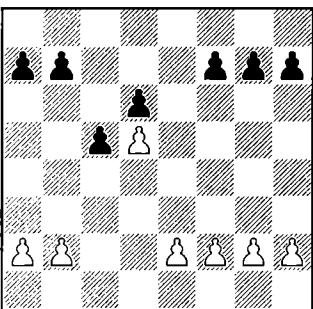
- The Hübner Centre, Chapter 13, where Black plays ...c7-c5 and ...e7-e5, and which mostly arises from Hübner's Variation, but has a certain affinity with other lines.



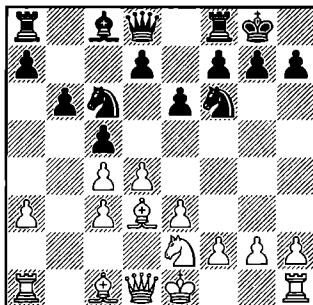
- The Leningrad Centre, Chapter 14, which is similar to the Hübner set-up in many respects, except that White's dark-squared bishop goes to g5 early in the opening.



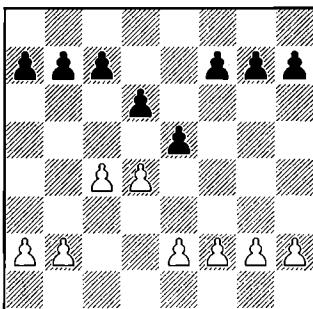
- The Benoni Set-up, Chapter 15, which is similar to the Modern Benoni structure, except that the black dark-squared bishop is not on g7.



- The Sämisch Centre, Chapter 16, which considers the structure arising from a main line Sämisch Variation, where Black plays ...c7-c5, but not ...e7-e5.



- And, finally, The Zurich Centre, Chapter 17, discusses those positions where Black plays the central thrust ...e7-e5 without also playing ...c7-c5.

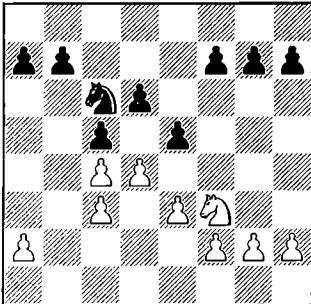


13 The Hübner Centre

- The fight for e4 and d5
- The ...a5 counter
- The ...f5 break

Nimzo-Indian Defence and the move towards avoiding the doubled pawns.

The fight for e4 and d5

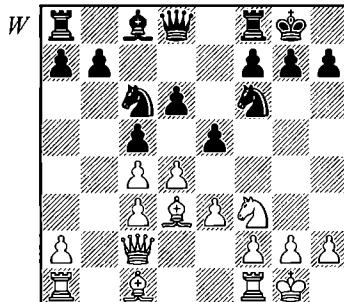


The Hübner Variation, reached after 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 e3 c5 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 7 bxc3, is one of those lines in the Nimzo-Indian where Black can afford to capture on c3 without waiting for White to play a3. The reason for this is that Black plans a dark-squared blockade and considers that White's knight is misplaced on f3. Were this piece on e2, as in certain Sämisch lines, White would be able to advance his e-and f-pawns very quickly, but now he has to lose time moving his king's knight.

The success of this system in the Seventies and early Eighties led to a fundamental re-assessment of the

Exploiting the space advantage that White gains, by playing d4-d5 and e3-e4, is still a very popular method for White, but many players have tried to keep the position fluid. Sometimes White plays f2-f4, with his e-pawn on e3, but a more popular idea, similar to plans championed by Botvinnik, is to exploit the e4 and d5 squares, both weakened by Black's ...e6-e5 move.

An example of this in action is seen in the game Yusupov – Ivanchuk, Brussels Ct (10) 1991, where White played:



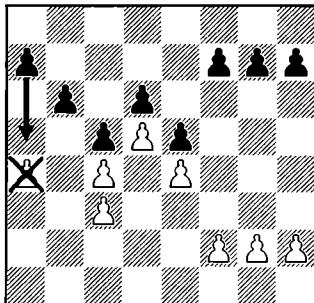
10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $h6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ and on 11...
 $b6$ exchanged the sole defender of

e4, and established his king's bishop on d5 (outside the pawn chain), 12 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 13 $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 14 $dxc5$ $dxc5$ 15 $\mathbb{B}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 16 e4, although, to be perfectly frank, he was even a little worse in this final position.

The ...a5 counter

In many similar positions where White plays d4-d5, hitting the c6-knight, Black plays this piece to a5 to augment the pressure against the c4-pawn, but in Hübner's Variation this knight prefers to go to e7 instead. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the black kingside needs the knight to assist in its defence. Secondly, as the white a-pawn is on a2 and not a3, White can play his knight to b3, when, should Black swap knights, White will recapture with the a-pawn, of course, 'tidying up' his pawn structure.

This set-up (after d4-d5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-e7$) does allow White the possibility of attacking the b7-pawn along the open b-file, and replying to ...b7-b6 by advancing his a-pawn, as a5 is no longer occupied, with a sort of minority attack against b6. Black often replies by playing the surprising ...a7-a5. He judges that the backward b6-pawn is easily defendable, and that it is better to keep the position closed. Further, the a4-pawn might later prove a tempting target for Black's d7-bishop.



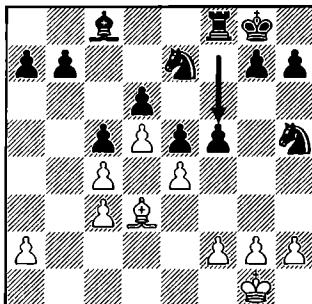
One small problem with this is that Black's chances of opening up the queenside are severely reduced, he can no longer break with ...b7-b5, for instance. If he has sufficient play on the kingside, however, this should not be too much of a problem.

The ...f5 break

Black should be very careful about castling if White has not yet castled, he might find that White unleashes a kingside pawn-storm – quite justified with a closed centre. Supposing that both sides have castled, Black is not obliged to sit and wait for White to come at him on the kingside, but can often take matters into his own hands.

An often essential counter-measure is the move ...f7-f5, possible because of the support of the e7-knight. This serves many purposes, opening up the f-file and lessening the force of any white f4-idea, exchanging light-squared bishops (as we know, this is the best tactic against the bishop

pair) and gaining some space on the kingside.



Black will first have to move his king's knight. This piece will either go to h5 (if the white f-pawn is on f3), or to h7 or e8, and then he can play ...f7-f5. White is obliged to capture, else Black will have the option of pushing the pawn to f4, and Black will recapture with his bishop.

Game 12 Balashov – Vaganian USSR Ch. 1989

1	d4	Qf6
2	c4	e6
3	Qc3	Qb4
4	e3	c5
5	Qd3	Qc6
6	Qf3	Qxc3+

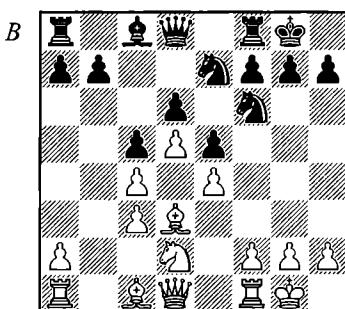
Note that Black only plays this move unprompted when the white king's knight is on f3; with the white king's knight on e2 he should wait for White to play a3.

7	bxc3	d6
8	0-0	e5

9 Qd2 0-0

Naturally, Black is not in the least bit interested in taking the d-pawn. After 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 exd4 11 exd4 Qxd4 12 Re1+ Qe6 13 Ra3 White is clearly better, he has managed to open the position for his two bishops and will soon reap the benefits. No, Black should never forget his main positional aim in the Nimzo-Indian – blockade the bishops!

10	d5	Qe7
11	e4 (D)	



So, a closed position is reached after all. Black will now wish to stop White's idea of attacking on the kingside before it even starts, and to this end, ...f5 is very effective. However, ...Qh5 is not possible, so Black can either first play ...Qe8, or the game continuation.

11	...	h6
12	Re1	Qh7!
13	Qf1	f5

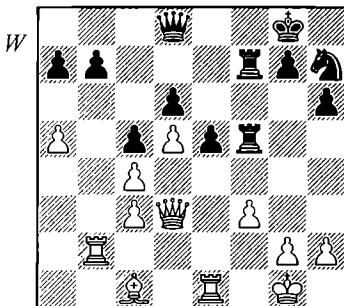
This is what Black was striving for. The move ...f4 is now a real possibility, so White must capture on f5 and then Black can put an end

to White's bishop pair by exchanging one of them.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| 14 | exf5 | $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ |
| 15 | $\mathbb{Q}g3$ | $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ |
| 16 | $\mathbb{W}xd3$ | $\mathbb{W}d7$ |
| 17 | a4 | $\mathbb{B}f7$ |

Black sees no need to stop the white a-pawn as he intends attacking on the kingside himself, a sort of role-reversal, as it were.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|---------------------|
| 18 | a5 | $\mathbb{B}af8$ |
| 19 | f3 | $\mathbb{Q}f5$ |
| 20 | $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ | $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ |
| 21 | $\mathbb{B}b1$ | $\mathbb{B}8f7$ |
| 22 | $\mathbb{B}b2?$ | $\mathbb{W}d8!$ (D) |



Exploiting a tactic to both attack a5 and transfer the queen to the kingside.

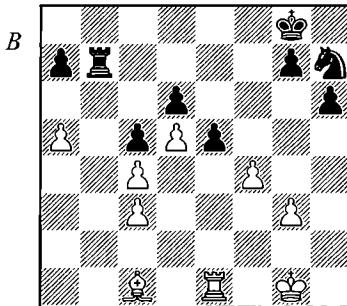
- 23 $\mathbb{B}xb7$

If instead 23 $\mathbb{B}b5$ then 23... $\mathbb{B}h5!$ with the threat of ... $\mathbb{W}h4$, and if 24 $\mathbb{B}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25 $\mathbb{B}e1$, Black can play the pawn sacrifice 25...e4!?. 26 fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ with the e5 square and a strong attack in prospect, i.e. 27 h3 $\mathbb{W}f6$! 28 $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 29 $\mathbb{B}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}h2+$ 30 $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h1+$ 31 $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xg2+$ 32 $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$.

- 23 ... $\mathbb{B}xf3$

A desperado rook.

- | | | |
|----|----------------|------------------|
| 24 | $gxf3$ | $\mathbb{B}xb7$ |
| 25 | f4!? | $\mathbb{W}h4!$ |
| 26 | $\mathbb{W}g3$ | $\mathbb{W}xg3+$ |
| 27 | $hxg3$ (D) | |



Play has transposed into an endgame, and these are often in Black's favour in Hübner's Variation as the weakness of White's pawn structure takes on greater importance.

- 27 ... e4!
28 f5!

This is better than 28 $\mathbb{B}xe4$?? when Black becomes very active: 28... $\mathbb{B}b1$ 29 $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 30 $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b2$ 31 $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

- | | | |
|----|----------------|----------------|
| 28 | ... | $\mathbb{B}b1$ |
| 29 | $\mathbb{Q}f1$ | $\mathbb{Q}f7$ |
| 30 | g4?! | |

Perhaps 30 $\mathbb{B}f4$! maintained the balance.

- | | | |
|----|------------------|-------------------|
| 30 | ... | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 31 | $\mathbb{Q}f4$ | $\mathbb{B}xe1+?$ |
| 32 | $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ | $\mathbb{Q}xg4!?$ |
| 33 | $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ | a6 |
| 34 | $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$ | |

This allows the knight to come to c5 and take the c4-pawn. From this square the knight will dominate both the white pawns and the bishop. 34 ♜e2! ♜f6 35 ♜xc5 ♜xf5 36 ♜f8! might still have saved the game.

- | | |
|--------|------|
| 34 ... | ♞e5 |
| 35 ♜d4 | ♞xc4 |
| 36 ♜f2 | g6! |

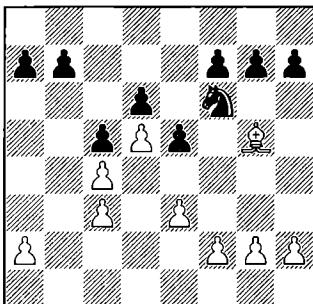
- | | | |
|----|-------|------|
| 37 | f×g6+ | ♝xg6 |
| 38 | ♝b6 | ♝f6! |
| 39 | ♝c7 | h5 |
| 40 | ♝g3 | ♝f5 |
| 41 | ♝f2 | h4 |

White is in zugzwang, and must give up the a5-pawn if he wants to stop the e- and h-pawns advancing.

0–1

14 The Leningrad Centre

- Breaking the pin**
- The side-step**
- The King Walk**
- Blunting the b-file pressure**

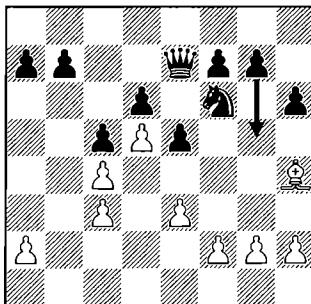


Most commonly reached through the Leningrad variation (4 $\mathbb{Q}g5$), this set-up is similar to the last chapter in terms of pawn structure (should White play d5 at some stage), but the fact that the white queen's bishop is outside the white pawn chain on g5, makes for a few, important, differences.

Breaking the pin

Black frequently has to deal with the uncomfortable pin of his king's knight – as in many lines of the Nimzo-Indian he cannot put a bishop on e7, of course. This is achieved by way of ...h7-h6, and

then either the manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-d7-f8-g6$, which is rather lengthy (and prone to tactical inconveniences) but does keep the pawns intact, or, more commonly, the drastic ...g7-g5.

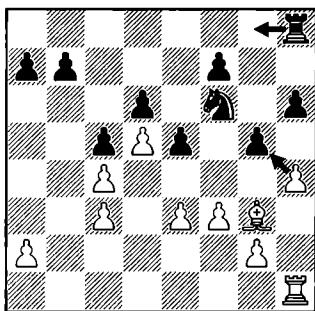


This normally entails Black renouncing the possibility of castling kingside, but does make it more difficult, if not impossible, for White to play f2-f4. Further, should White then castle short, Black can sometimes play ...h6-h5-h4 and attack on the kingside himself.

The side-step

In positions where Black has chased the dark-squared bishop away with ...g7-g5, White often tries to open up the h-file with the move h2-h4. Black can ill-afford to capture this pawn as the white

dark-squared bishop would spring back into life on h4 – it would render his ...g7-g5 move rather pointless. Similarly, Black cannot normally play ...g5-g4, as White would answer h4-h5, and return his bishop to h4 with a very permanent pin, indeed. Black cannot tolerate the opening of the h-file either, with his rook on h8, so he plays the move ... $\mathbb{H}h8-g8!$.

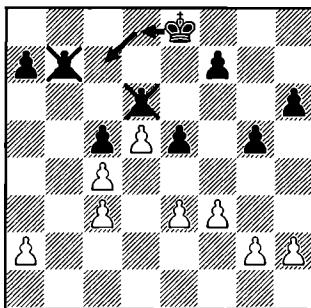


Although this permits White to capture on g5 and open the h-file, this may only be a temporary gain. Once Black has connected his rooks, he will be able to return his rook to h8, contesting, and possibly gaining control of, this file.

The King Walk

As stated before, Black is ill placed, having weakened his king-side, to castle short. This is a problem – castling on the other wing is also not without its risks as White has a ready-made attack along the semi-open b-file. However, all is

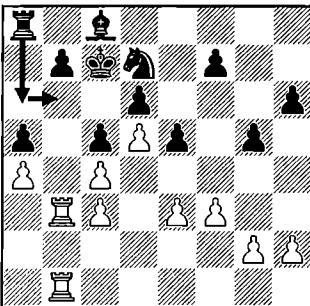
not lost, for Black has another plan at his disposal, and one that is very effective. Instead of castling, the black king often walks to c7 – via d8 or sometimes d7.



Not only does this connect the black rooks, but it also lends extra support to the b-pawn, which is on an open file, and possibly the d6-pawn, and brings the black king to a relatively safe spot.

Blunting the b-file pressure

With the black king on c7 and the black queen's bishop on its original square, c8, the b7-pawn is well defended, but White can easily triple his major pieces on the b-file and threaten various combinations. Once again, Black has an original stratagem to defend himself. He can use his queen's rook to counter any white pressure along the b-file, not by defending the b-pawn from the rear, as is normally the case, but from the front.



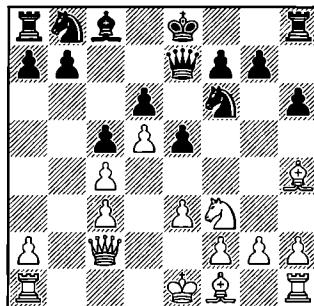
He needs to first play ...a7-a5, have his queen's knight on d7, and then the manoeuvre ... \mathbb{Q} a8-a6-b6 will force off a pair of rooks at least.

Game 13
Yusupov – Short
Novgorod 1995

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | d4 | \mathbb{Q} f6 |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | \mathbb{Q} c3 | \mathbb{Q} b4 |
| 4 | \mathbb{Q} g5 | c5 |
| 5 | d5 | d6 |
| 6 | e3 | h6 |
| 7 | \mathbb{Q} h4 | \mathbb{Q} xc3+ |
| 8 | bx \mathbb{Q} c3 | |

A very common position in the Leningrad Variation, Black has the basic choice between closing the position, as in the game, and taking on d5, which leads to a Benoni-type position (see the next chapter). Playing a non-committal move like ... \mathbb{Q} d8-e7 is also a possibility, intending to wait and see White's moves before deciding on a subsequent plan.

- 8 ... \mathbb{Q} e5
9 \mathbb{Q} c2 \mathbb{Q} e7
10 \mathbb{Q} f3 (D)



- 10 ... \mathbb{Q} d8

Black starts his king-march, the position has a closed nature and the time used is not too important. Black will be able to decide on the placement of his other pieces later.

- 11 \mathbb{Q} d2 \mathbb{Q} c7
12 \mathbb{Q} d3 g5

It is time to unpin the f6-knight. The weakness of the f5-square can sometimes be a problem for Black after this move, but at the moment White's knight is a long way away.

- 13 \mathbb{Q} g3 \mathbb{Q} h5
14 0-0-0

This is quite a common move here, as Black is unlikely to be able to open the queenside whilst his king is there. Still, the natural alternative 14 0-0! was also worthy of consideration as Black cannot pester the g3-bishop with an immediate ...h5-h4. After 14... \mathbb{Q} d7 15 \mathbb{Q} ae1 \mathbb{Q} df6 White can try the thematic 16 f4 break, and might have

a little edge on 16... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 17 $h \times g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, as the f-file will be opened.

14 ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

15 $\mathbb{Q}de1?$!

White wishes to play f4, but 15 h3! was better. After 15... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ the forced reply 16 $f \times g3$ may seem anti-positional, but allows White to exploit the open f-file again.

15 ... $\mathbb{Q}df6$

16 f3?! $\mathbb{Q}xg3$

17 $h \times g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

18 $\mathbb{Q}h2$

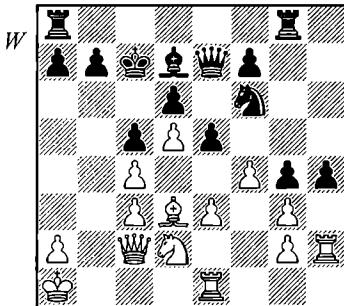
A strange move as there is nothing to be gained from doubling rooks on the h-file whilst the h6-pawn can advance. 18 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ seems more sensible.

18 ... h5

19 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ g4

20 $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}hg8$

21 f4 h4? (D)



Black cleverly exploits White's eighteenth move to achieve an interesting simplification.

22 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ exf4

23 gxf4

Obviously White cannot recapture with his e-pawn as the e1-rook is hanging, but now his brother on h4 is also loosely placed.

23 ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

24 $\mathbb{Q}hh1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

And Black has gained the advantage, avoiding the suicidal self-pin 24... $\mathbb{Q}xe3?$ when 25 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ wins.

25 e4 $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Black returns to gain control of the h-file, White preferring to avoid simplification whilst his structure is so ragged.

26 $\mathbb{Q}hf1$ $\mathbb{Q}h2$

27 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}ah8$

28 e5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

29 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

30 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6

Possibly 30... $\mathbb{Q}xc6?$ was better, but Black was a bit short of time and wished to avoid possible tactics.

31 $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

32 $\mathbb{Q}f5?$

This is a mistake; White had the powerful move 32 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ at his disposal when the situation after 32... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ is far from clear, but the tricky move 32... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ might be feasible.

32 ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

33 $\mathbb{Q}e7+$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

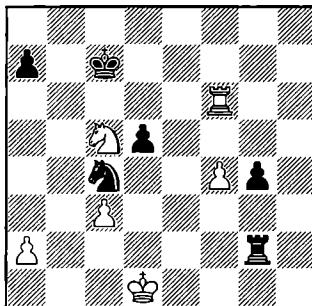
34 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5

35 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}h1$

The simplest move in *zeitnot*, swapping off a pair of rooks, but I imagine that, objectively, 35... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}8h2$, should be best.

- 36 $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}xb1+$
 37 $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{B}h1+$
 38 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{B}h2$
 39 $\mathbb{B}f6+$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$
 40 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{B}xg2+$
 41 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ (D)

B



The only move – 41 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ allows 41... $\mathbb{B}b2+$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{B}xa2+$ 43 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{B}b2+$ 44 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ g3 winning easily, and 41 $\mathbb{Q}d3??$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$ mate is obviously even worse.

41 ... g3?

Not the most accurate move, 41... $\mathbb{B}xa2$ 42 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ a5 was better, as the a-pawn is difficult to stop. Now Yusupov obtains some drawing chances.

- 42 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}d2+$
 43 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ g2
 44 $\mathbb{Q}e6+!$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

- 45 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{B}xa2$
 46 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ a5
 47 $\mathbb{B}xg2$ a4
 48 $\mathbb{Q}g7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 49 $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
 50 $\mathbb{B}a6$ a3
 51 $\mathbb{Q}d4?$

This time it is White's turn to err. It would have been better to have activated the king with 51 $\mathbb{Q}f2!$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ 52 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a2 53 f5 $\mathbb{Q}d2+$ 54 $\mathbb{Q}f4$, as if 54... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ then 55 $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ a1 \mathbb{W} 56 $\mathbb{B}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 57 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 58 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ would have held the draw.

- 51 ... $\mathbb{B}b2$
 52 $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$
 53 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ d4
 54 $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 55 $\mathbb{B}a6$ $\mathbb{Q}b1!$
 56 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
 57 $\mathbb{B}a7+$

White cannot exchange knights, for after 57 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ dxc3 58 $\mathbb{B}xa3$ $\mathbb{B}b1+$ 59 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c2 Black promotes his c-pawn.

- 57 ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$
 58 $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
 59 $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$
 60 $\mathbb{B}a6+$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

0–1

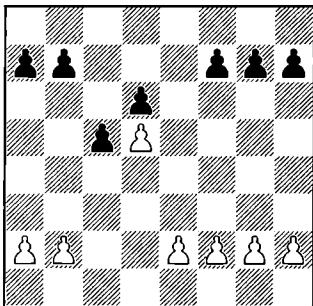
As 61 $\mathbb{B}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ wins the knight.

15 The Benoni Set-up

- Utilising the queenside pawn roller
- The white pawn centre
- Controlling White's expansion

instead of ...e6-e5, and from the f3 line whenever Black reacts with ...c7-c5.

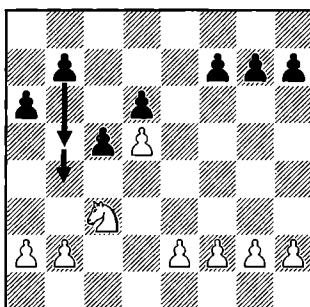
Utilising the queenside pawn roller



Actually, these positions are slightly untypical of the Benoni in that Black has no dark-squared bishop – normally this would be on g7, of course. It is more like the so-called ‘Snake’ whereby Black manoeuvres his bishop to a5 via d6 and c7. This is time-consuming, and the opening has a deservedly doubtful reputation, but in the Nimzo-Indian Black’s bishop is already on b4, so he achieves somewhat enhanced versions of this – normally he has at least four tempi more.

Mostly these type of positions come from the Leningrad Variation, where Black plays ...exd5

Just as in normal Benoni positions, Black is able to make use of his queenside pawn preponderance, by playing ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5. He may even be capable of playing ...b7-b5 in one go if there is a tactical justification. Not only are there long-term possibilities of making a passed pawn, and eventual promotion, but the formation is very useful for attacking the centre, by playing ...b5-b4 and threatening a knight on c3 for example.



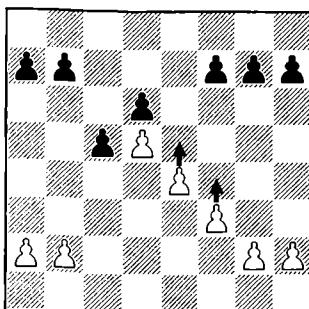
In the Nimzo-Indian White rarely tries to stop this expansion by playing a2-a4. He may want to play a2-a3 at some point, to molest

Black's dark-squared bishop if it is still on b4, and the c4-square is less important for him as he may be unable to establish a knight there anyway.

Occasionally, if Black still retains his dark-squared bishop, he may be able to bring this piece to the a7-g1 diagonal by playing ...b7-b5, ...c5-c4 and ... $\mathbb{B}a5-b6$. This will be still more effective if White has moved his f-pawn, thus weakening the a7-g1 diagonal.

The white pawn centre

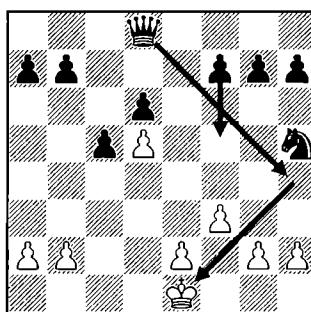
In effect, White has swapped his c-pawn for Black's e-pawn, and this gives him supremacy in the middle of the board. He will advance his e-pawn to e4, most likely supported by his f-pawn on f3. He should take care to keep this centre well protected, as then he can place his pieces behind it to take advantage of the cover and space it offers. Sometimes it will be advanced, driving away any opposing pieces and creating a passed d-pawn.



Controlling White's expansion

Particularly in those Benoni type positions obtained from the 4 f3 line, Black possesses a useful tactic which both slows-down White's central aspirations, and obtains some kingside play for Black.

Taking advantage of the twin problems with the move f2-f3, firstly, that the e1-h4 diagonal is a little frail, and secondly that the white queen is no longer surveying the h5-square, Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-h5$ with the awkward threat of playing ... $\mathbb{W}d8-h4+$. If White responds by playing either g2-g3 or $\mathbb{Q}g1-h3$ to counter this, Black then plays ...f7-f5.



Game 14
Schandorff – Rozentalis
Aarhus 1997

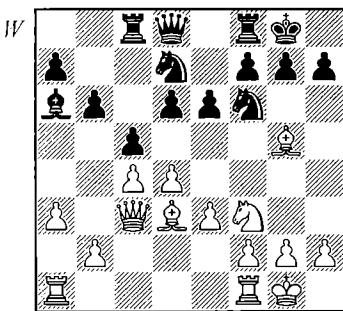
This is an interesting game, which amply demonstrates the inter-connectivity of strategic ideas. Against 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ Black plays the plan

indicated in Chapter 19 (The $\mathbb{W}c2$ Centre), White then decides to change course and plays d5, reaching a Benoni structure, finally Black advances his queenside pawns, much as in Chapter 10 (The Queenside Pawn Majority). The player who is conversant with all these structures will enjoy an undoubted benefit.

1	d4	$\mathbb{Q}f6$
2	c4	e6
3	$\mathbb{Q}c3$	$\mathbb{Q}b4$
4	$\mathbb{W}c2$	0-0
5	a3	$\mathbb{Q}xc3+$
6	$\mathbb{W}xc3$	b6
7	$\mathbb{Q}g5$	$\mathbb{Q}a6$

This game should also be compared to Chapter 19, to which it is related. Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ in one go – instead of first playing ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ – with the intention of putting quick pressure on the c4-pawn.

8	$\mathbb{Q}f3$	d6
9	e3	$\mathbb{Q}bd7$
10	$\mathbb{Q}d3$	c5
11	0-0	$\mathbb{Q}c8$ (D)



Reaching a typical position for the 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ variation. White has

the two bishops, but Black has a solid position, and a slight lead in development that permits him a temporary initiative.

12 d5

White decides to play a Benoni-style position. Another, and better, way to defend against the threats on c4 would be 12 $\mathbb{W}b3$ – diffusing the c-file pressure, and avoiding any tricks on c4.

12	...	$\mathbb{exd}5$
13	$\mathbb{cx}d5$	$\mathbb{Q}xd3$
14	$\mathbb{W}xd3$	$\mathbb{Q}e7$
15	$\mathbb{Q}fd1$	c4!

Before White manages to get his centre going, Black sets his queen-side pawn majority in motion.

16	$\mathbb{W}c2$	$\mathbb{Q}c5$
17	$\mathbb{Q}d4$	$\mathbb{Q}fc8$

Black cleverly ‘over-protects’ his advanced c4-pawn.

18	$\mathbb{Q}ad1$	h6
19	$\mathbb{Q}h4$	b5

Black’s play is very single-minded, he will play ...a5 and ...b4 and create an advanced, passed pawn.

20 b4

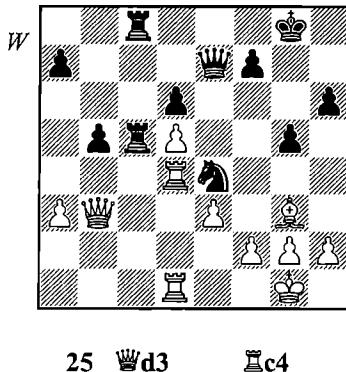
White is trying to stop the pawn roller, but Black is well-placed to exploit the newly opened c-file having far-sightedly doubled his rooks.

20	...	$\mathbb{cx}b3$
21	$\mathbb{W}xb3$	g5!

It is all a question of timing, earlier this would be a weakening gaffe, but now Black dominates the board and breaking the pin and

freeing his f6-knight is the most effective method of exploiting this.

- 22 ♕g3 ♗e4
 23 ♖d2 ♗df6
 24 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 (D)



- 26 ♗xc4 bxc4
 27 ♖c2 c3

Despite White's resistance, the passed pawn has been created and, being excellently supported, will decide the game.

- 28 ♗d4 ♗b7!
 29 h4

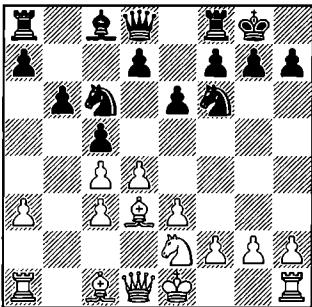
Hopeless, but so were the alternatives. As I mentioned before, the queen is a terrible blockader, after 29 ♗xe4 ♗b2 30 ♗d3 c2 the queen has to give herself up for the pawn.

- 29 ... ♗b2
 30 ♗xe4 c2
 31 ♗xd6 c1 ♗+

0–1

16 The Sämisch Centre

- The anti-pin
- The march of the f-pawn
- Laying siege to the c4-pawn

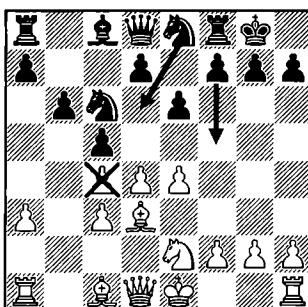


The Sämisch Variation (4 a3 taking the bishop pair immediately) can lead to a variety of closed positions discussed elsewhere in the book, but the most popular involves Black using a ‘dual’ blockade. Black constructs a barrier on the queenside dark squares with ...c5 and, later, on the kingside light squares with ...f5.

The anti-pin

An important, well nigh obligatory, move is the retreat ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$, in reply to White playing e4. The reason for this is that Black cannot tolerate having his f6-knight

pinned by $\mathbb{Q}c1-g5$ for, as we have seen in Chapter 14 (The Leningrad Centre), it can be very difficult to break this pin by normal means – in the absence of Black’s king’s bishop.

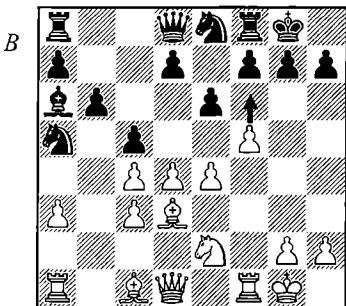


Actually, this move serves other purposes, both defensive and offensive. It allows Black to halt the advance of White’s f-pawn by a well-timed ...f5, and the knight may later come to d6, and add to the pressure on the c4-pawn.

The march of the f-pawn

White hastens to set his central pawns in motion. If Black allows them to become mobile they will cause serious difficulties, backed-up by White’s bishops. The advance of the white f-pawn is particularly dangerous; Black

should be ready to answer f2-f4 with ...f7-f5, and if not, reply to f4-f5 with ...f7-f6, *in extremis*.

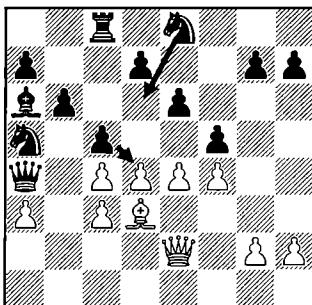


If instead, in the diagram position, Black greedily snatches the c-pawn, White will reply with the startling f5-f6!. On ... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ White will reveal the point behind his play: $\mathbb{R}c1-g5$, pinning the knight. After this Black cannot avoid having his kingside wrecked, the immediate threat would be e4-e5, and $\mathbb{Q}e2-g3-h5$ would also be on the cards.

Laying siege to the c4-pawn

In this line we see the Black attack on the c4-pawn in its element. Black is able to attack this pawn quickly with no less than five pieces! Firstly he plays his queen's bishop to a6, his queen's knight to a5, via c6, and next he can play his queen's rook to c8. This will threaten to capture the d4-pawn with ...cx d4, opening-

up the c-file, so that White may have to play d5, further blocking the position. If this is not enough Black can also play ... $\mathbb{Q}e8-d6$ and, if the d-pawn is no longer on d7, his queen to a4 from d7. White is hardly able to defend this pawn at all, but must seek his chances elsewhere.



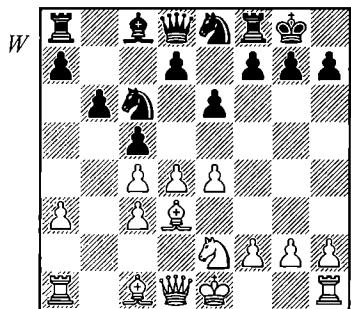
Black must just be careful to nullify White's central and kingside initiative first. Black must always remember that it does not matter how many pawns and pieces he wins, if he ends up being mated – and the c4-pawn will not run away! Black must also be wary of capturing the c4-pawn with his a5-knight first. Assuming the white king's bishop is on d3, Black's knight will then find itself pinned against his a6-bishop, there being no way for the c4-knight to move and defend the bishop. Better to take with the bishop first, exchange light-squared bishops, and then establish the black knight on the powerful square c4.

Game 15
Yusupov – Karpov
Linares 1993

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1 d4 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 2 c4 | e6 |
| 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b4$ |
| 4 e3 | c5 |

The first part of Black's blockading plan, even before inflicting doubled pawns on White he prepares to block the c-pawns.

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ | $\mathbb{Q}c6$ |
| 6 a3 | $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ |
| 7 bxc3 | 0-0 |
| 8 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ | b6 |
| 9 e4 | $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ (D) |

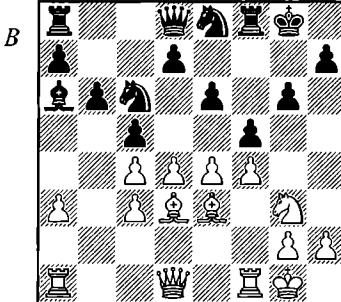


Perhaps rather surprising at first view, the knight retreats to avoid the unpleasant pin $\mathbb{Q}g5$, and to bring extra pressure to bear on c4, if necessary, by ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$. This is only possible because of the closed nature of the position, in an open position Black would probably pay heavily for such a move.

- | | |
|--------|----------------|
| 10 0-0 | $\mathbb{Q}a6$ |
| 11 f4 | f5! |

Another important blockading move, stopping the further advance of White's f-pawn. This is both strategically desirable, and tactically necessary, as 11...d6? 12 f5 e5 13 f6! led to a swift debacle for Black in Bronstein – Najdorf, Budapest 1950, 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ is met by the unpleasant 14 $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

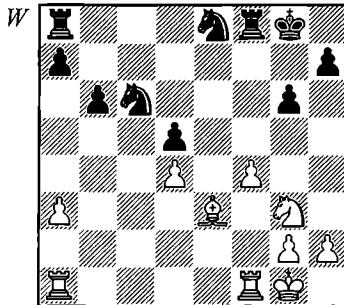
- | | |
|-----------------------|----|
| 12 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ | g6 |
| 13 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (D) | |



Now, apart from the blockading strategy customarily employed here, Black can exploit the permanent nature of the weak white structure in a more drastic manner.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 13 ... | $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ |
| 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ | d5?! |
| 15 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ | $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ |
| 16 $\mathbb{W}xd3$ | fxe4 |
| 17 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ | $\mathbb{W}xd5$ |
| 18 $\mathbb{W}xd5$ | $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ (D) |

After a series of forcing exchanges, the dust has cleared and Black enjoys a plus. He has good squares for his knights, his opponent's bishop is shut in, and d4 and a3 are potential targets.



- | | | |
|----|------------------|------------------|
| 19 | $\mathbb{R}ac1$ | $\mathbb{R}c8$ |
| 20 | f5 | $\mathcal{Q}d6$ |
| 21 | fxg6 | hxg6 |
| 22 | $\mathbb{R}xf8+$ | $\mathcal{Q}xf8$ |
| 23 | h4 | $\mathcal{Q}c4$ |
| 24 | $\mathcal{Q}g5$ | $\mathcal{Q}xd4$ |
| 25 | h5 | gxh5 |

- | | | |
|----|------------------|------------------|
| 26 | $\mathbb{R}f1+$ | $\mathcal{Q}e8$ |
| 27 | $\mathcal{Q}xh5$ | $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ |
| 28 | $\mathcal{Q}g7+$ | $\mathcal{Q}d7$ |
| 29 | $\mathbb{R}f7+$ | $\mathcal{Q}c6$ |
| 30 | $\mathbb{R}xa7$ | $\mathcal{Q}ac2$ |
| 31 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ | b5 |
| 32 | g4 | b4 |
| 33 | $\mathbb{R}a2$ | b3 |
| 34 | $\mathbb{R}b2$ | $\mathcal{Q}c5$ |
| 35 | $\mathcal{Q}f5$ | $\mathbb{R}g8$ |
| 36 | $\mathcal{Q}xd4$ | $\mathbb{R}xg4+$ |
| 37 | $\mathcal{Q}f2$ | $\mathcal{Q}xd4$ |
| 38 | $\mathbb{R}xd4+$ | $\mathcal{Q}xd4$ |
| 39 | $\mathbb{R}xb3$ | $\mathbb{R}e4$ |

Cutting off the white king leads to a simple technical win.

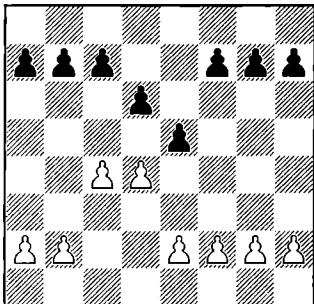
- | | | |
|----|----------------|----------------|
| 40 | $\mathbb{R}h3$ | $\mathbb{R}e8$ |
| | | 0-1 |

17 The Zurich Centre

- The forward c-pawn must advance
- To provoke ...h6, or not?
- Fixing the queenside
- Vacating the e5-square
- The ...e4 trick

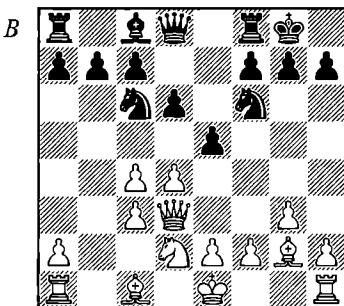
c5. In the event that White has the doubled-pawn complex; there are some similarities with the other chapters in this section, but also some important differences.

The forward c-pawn must advance



This structure commonly arises from the Zurich Variation (also sometimes called Milner-Barry's Variation), which is the reply 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ to the popular 4 $\mathbb{Q}c2$. It is a line where Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6$, ...0-0, ...d7-d6 and prepares a very quick ...e6-e5. He will have to give up his dark-squared bishop on c3, but is happy to place all his pawns on dark squares so as to optimise the potential of his one, remaining bishop. However I will also deal with all the positions where Black plays for ...d7-d6 and ...e7-e5 without playing the preliminary ...c7-

If Black has omitted to play ...c5 himself, it does mean that White is now able to advance his c4-pawn. The diagram is from the game Ward – Gulko, Copenhagen 1996. In this position, the basic pawn structure is similar to positions emanating from the Sämisch Variation, and others, although in fact it has arisen from a 4 g3 line.



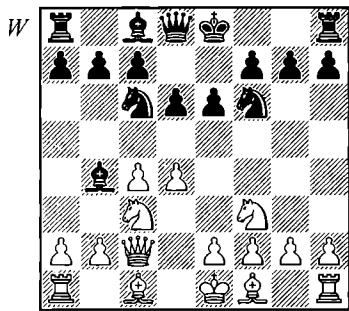
After the further 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10 $\mathbf{0-0}$ f5, the move 11 d5 would be a blunder, just what Black dreams of, when the d7-knight would jump to c5 and Black would be free to con-

centrate on his kingside attack. Instead, White tries to mess-up the Black pawn structure and free some diagonals for his bishops by 11 c5, when Black must keep the game closed. Grabbing the pawn by 11...dxc5?! 12 ♘b3 cxd4 13 cxd4 exd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♜xd4 would be the sort of variation White had in mind. For the sacrificed pawn, White has two sweeping bishops and excellent play.

Instead of this, the game continued 11...e4 12 ♜c4+ ♚h8 13 ♘b3 ♘f6 14 exd6 exd6 15 f3 with interesting play. Of course, if White does not have a queenside weakness, then the advance of the c-pawn, supported by the b-pawn, will be even more effective and White will then be able to open the c-file at his will.

To provoke ...h6, or not?

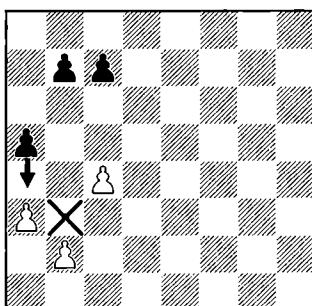
In the pure Zurich Variation, following 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘b4 4 ♜c2 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 d6, (D)



the immediate ♘d2 is possible as White intends playing a2-a3 and recapturing on c3 with his dark squared bishop, but White has another, interesting possibility to provoke a slight weakness in the black kingside. He can play the subtle 6 ♘g5, and only on 6...h6 7 ♘d2. It has to be said that playing this or not depends very much on White's subsequent intentions. Although he has created a slight weakness, the other side of the coin is that Black disposes of a 'bolt-hole' for his king, and this might be more important later.

Fixing the queenside

Whenever a position arises where White has avoided the doubled pawns, and yet has played a3 at some point to gain the bishop pair, Black possesses an interesting possibility to obstruct the white queenside pawns.



By playing first ...a7-a5 and then ...a5-a4, Black can fix the b-pawn

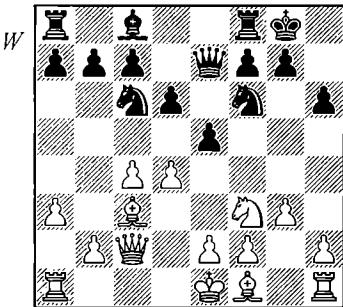
on b2. White will have difficulty advancing with b2-b4 as Black will reply ...axb3 *en passant* leaving the a-pawn isolated on an open file.

To avoid this White often answers ...a7-a5 with b2-b3, and then a further ...a5-a4 will meet b3-b4.

Vacating the e5-square

Black can make good use of the possibilities offered by his e5-pawn, he might be able to continue with an eventual ...f5-f4, for instance. One neat idea that is becoming increasingly popular is to answer White's d5-move with ...e5-e4, intending to bring the c6-knight to the active square e5, rather than retreating to b8 or d8.

To see an example of this in action, look at the position that arose in the game M.Gurevich – Torre, Jakarta 1996:

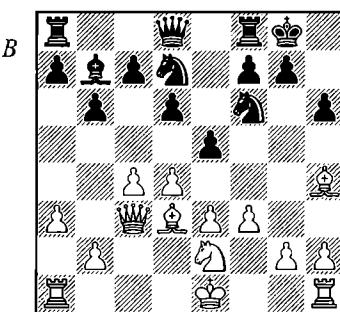


White can exchange on e5, but the most combative move is 11 d5 when normally Black would play

11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ or 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$. Conceivably this might continue 12 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ c6 14 0-0 cxd5 15 cxd5 $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16 f4, similar to another game of Gurevich's, against Timman, when White had a net advantage. So instead, Black played 11...e4!?, this is more audacious and after 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ e3!? 13 fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ Black had obtained good squares for his minor pieces and play along the e-file, albeit at the cost of a pawn.

The ...e4 trick

A similar idea can be utilised whenever White has a pawn on f3. The diagram is from Atalik – Alterman, Karditsa 1996.



This is a 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ position, except that Black has played for ...e5, and not ...c5 as in Chapter 19. White seems to be better, in fact he will play 0-0 and e3-e4 very soon, but it is Black to move and he plays 12...e4! 13 fxe4 $\mathbb{W}e8$ (13...g5

would be another way of retaking the e-pawn, but loosens the king's cover). Clearly White does not want to allow Black to capture on e4 as this square would fall into Black's hands and the e3 pawn would be somewhat exposed on the open e-file. So he must play 14 e5 although after 14...dxe5 15 0-0-0 exd4 16 exd4 $\mathbb{W}e3+$ 17 $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$, Black had taken a firm control of the open e-file and his active position brought him a level game.

Game 16
Lautier – Piket
Groningen 1995

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1 d4 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 2 c4 | e6 |
| 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b4$ |
| 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ | $\mathbb{Q}c6$ |
| 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ | d6 |
| 6 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ | |

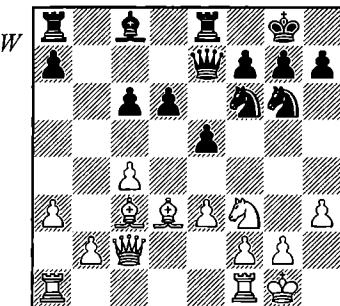
White decides that he would prefer the black h-pawn on h7.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 6 ... | 0-0 |
| 7 a3 | $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ |
| 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ | $\mathbb{Q}e8$ |
| 9 e3 | e5 |
| 10 d5 | $\mathbb{Q}e7$ |
| 11 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ | c6 |

A fine move, gaining a central preponderance. White is unable to reply with the natural 12 e4?, because Black can employ the tactic 12...cx d5 13 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}exd5!$ 14 exd5 e4, forking knight and bishop.

- | | |
|---------|-----------------|
| 12 dxc6 | $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ |
|---------|-----------------|

- | | |
|--------|--------------------|
| 13 0-0 | $\mathbb{Q}g6$ |
| 14 h3 | $\mathbb{W}e7$ (D) |



Black threatens ...e4, and if White defends against this by 15 $\mathbb{Q}d2$, then Black can further expand in the centre, with 15...d5.

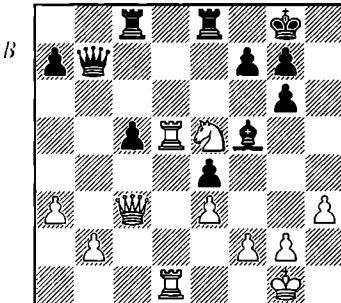
- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 15 $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ | |
|--------------------|--|

A clever device that allows White to attack the black pawn chain at its base, and destroy it.

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 15 ... | $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ |
| 16 c5! | $\mathbb{Q}f5$ |
| 17 cxd6 | $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ |
| 18 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ | $\mathbb{Q}c7$ |
| 19 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ | |

At the end of this forcing sequence White has ruined Black's pawn structure, but the opposite-coloured bishops are obviously going to make this difficult to win.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 19 ... | $\mathbb{Q}e4$ |
| 20 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ | c5 |
| 21 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ | $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ |
| 22 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ | $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ |
| 23 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b7$ |
| 24 $\mathbb{Q}cd1$ | e4 |
| 25 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ (D) | |



White appears to be gaining the ascendancy, so Black provokes some complications.

25 ... e4!?

26 ♜xc4?!

The game seems to fizz out after this. Perhaps White should keep the tension by 26 ♜d6, as then 26...♜b3 can be met by 27 ♜c6 followed by ♜d4 with a clear advantage.

26 ... ♜e6

27 ♜5d4 ♜xc4

28 ♜xc4 ♜xc4

29 ♜xc4 ♜xb2

The whole point of Black's play: the b2-pawn is en prise, and by capturing it Black gains access to White's back rank, and various checking possibilities.

30 ♜a4 ♜e7

31 ♜d4 ♜h7

32 ♜b4

The e-pawn is immune from capture, 32 ♜xe4?? loses to the fork 32...♜b1+, so the game peters-out.

32 ... ♜xb4

33 ♜xb4 f5

34 ♜a4 g5

35 ♜h2 g6

36 ♜g3 ♜h6

37 ♜a6 ♜c7

38 a4 ♜b7

39 a5 ♜c7

40 h4 ♜h5

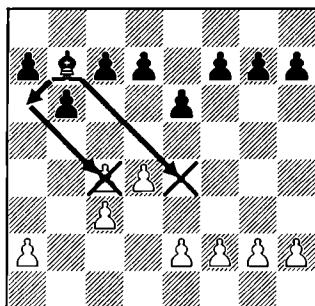
41 hxg5 ♜xg5

42 ♜h2

½-½

Part Four: The Black Queenside Fianchetto

There are many lines in the Nimzo-Indian Defence where Black plays ...b7-b6 in the opening, with the idea of placing his queen's bishop on the long diagonal a8-h1. Essentially this continues the fight for control of e4 that Black started on move one.

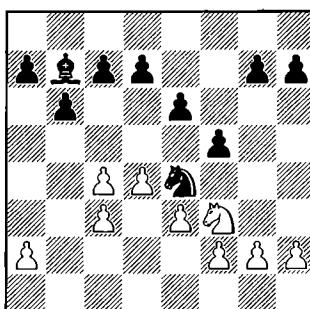


Occasionally Black will prefer to play his queen's bishop to a6 instead, to exert pressure on White's c4-pawn. Note, in passing, that if Black has already conceded one of his bishops it is rarely a good idea to capture a knight on f3 with the b7-bishop. Even if this gives White doubled pawns, to give up both bishops borders on the reckless! White often uses the opened g-file to

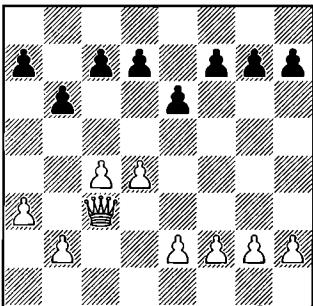
good effect, especially if, as is sometimes the case in the 4 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ variations, his queen and bishop are also lined-up against the g7-pawn.

The following characteristic types of positions, all involving the black queenside fianchetto, are covered in the corresponding chapters:

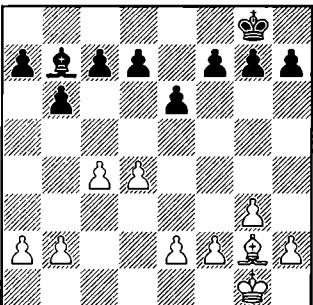
- Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-e4$ and reinforces his knight with ...f7-f5, leading to the Dutch Centre, covered in Chapter 18.



- White plays $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (usually on move 4) to avoid the doubled c-pawns, then continues with a2-a3 and after ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, recaptures with the queen on c3. See chapter 19, The 4 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ Centre.

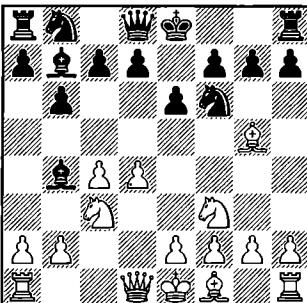


- White fianchettoes his king's bishop, leading to The Struggle of the Fianchettoed Bishops, Chapter 20.

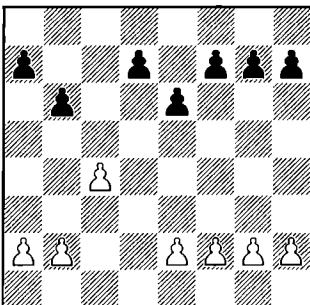


- White responds to Black's queenside fianchetto by placing his queen's bishop on g5. This set-up

is covered in Chapter 21, The Flexible Centre.



- Black plays ...c7-c5 and White captures with dxc5, resulting in The English Centre, which is covered in Chapter 22.



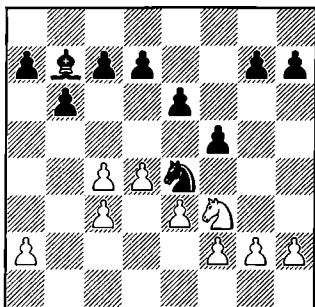
18 The Dutch Set-up

- The classical Black attack
- Black gains space on the kingside with ...e5
- White's hanging c-pawn
- Blunting the bishop
- The key f3-move

light-squared bishop pointing at g2, and we have all the makings of a deadly kingside attack for Black.

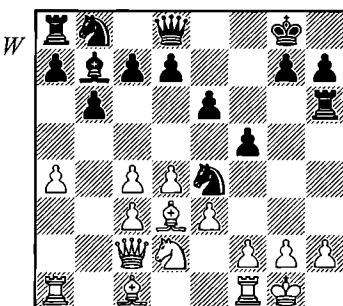
Bringing the black queen to g6 or h5 via e8 is also popular and accentuates Black's control over the light squares.

The classical Black attack



Black fianchettoes his queen's bishop on b7, advances his king's knight to e4, and supports this with ...f5. This establishes Black's control over the e4 square, and his influence along the a8-h1 diagonal. The f5-pawn also grants Black a certain space advantage on the kingside, and this allows him to commence various attacking ideas. The major pieces can be brought over to aggressive positions, the rook to f6 and then to g6 or h6, taking aim at g2 and h2. Combine this with the influence of an advanced black knight on e4, and

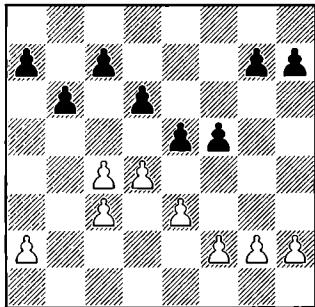
These attacks work like clockwork in so many games if White does not pay the utmost attention, that they can almost be classified by type. The bishop, knight, and queen are a deadly and well-known attacking combination, throw in the rook as well, and the white king is in danger. Here is a typical example: 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 e3 b6 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 6 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f5 8 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 0-0 10 a4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ (D).



Now, if White should decide to parry the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ by 12 g3?, he loses immediately to 12... $\mathbb{Q}h4!$, anyway, because, if White takes the black queen, by 13 gxh4, he is mated after 13... $\mathbb{Q}g6+$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$. Even after 13 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, Black can finish the game off in style by 13... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ 14 gxh4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ forcing 16 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$.

Black gains space on the kingside with ...e5

Strategically speaking, Black has a number of options. He can combine ...f7-f5 with ...c7-c5, which leads to a flexible configuration, or he can form a small centre by pushing ...e6-e5. The black f- and e-pawns form an effective duo together, although on the minus side the d5-square may be weakened.

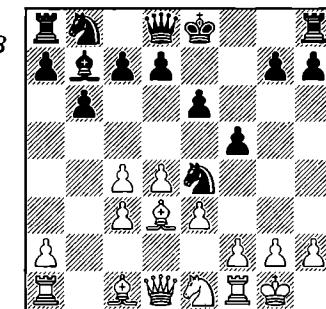


There is also the possibility that White may counter with c4-c5 at some point, upsetting the black

pawn structure. But, on the other hand, Black is well-placed to deal with the thrust d4-d5 as this puts the c5-square in his hands, and he can return his b7-bishop to c8 so that he might use it on the c8-g4 diagonal at some point.

White's hanging c-pawn

Long experience has demonstrated that if White can avoid wasting a tempo defending his c3-pawn in the opening, then he will enjoy somewhat improved prospects. So, in the diagram position, instead of playing the ‘automatic’ 9 $\mathbb{Q}c2$, White should instead leave the pawn to its own devices, and continue his development by 9 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (D), say.



Should Black ‘dare’ take the c3-pawn by 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, then after 10 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ g6 11 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12 f3 White has a superb position and the black knight is running short of squares. In some ways, the white position improves without the c3-pawn, as

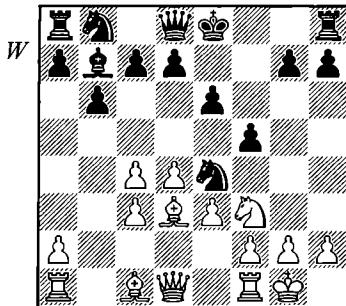
his dark-squared bishop will be able to use the a1-h8 diagonal.

It is in Black's interest to force $\mathbb{W}c2$, if he can. For instance, if after 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 4 e3 b6 White should play 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (instead of 5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$) then Black can capitalise on this by replying 5... $\mathbb{Q}e4$. Then 6 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is clearly no longer possible because of 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 7 bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$.

Blunting the bishop

White's main positional concern is often how to contain the powerful black light-squared bishop on b7, and how to profit from his bishop pair. As we have seen before, an important strategic idea for the possessor of the two bishops is to place his pawns on the same colour complex as his opponent's remaining bishop. This may snuff the life out of this piece, and allows free reign to the 'extra' bishop. However, Black has a strong hold on the light squares and will not allow White to acquire their control without a fight.

An idea that occurs with a remarkable regularity in these positions is the advance of the white d-pawn to d5, sometimes at the cost of its life. At the price of a pawn White opens the a1-h8 diagonal, weakens the a2-g8 diagonal, opens the c-file, and weakens the f5-pawn.



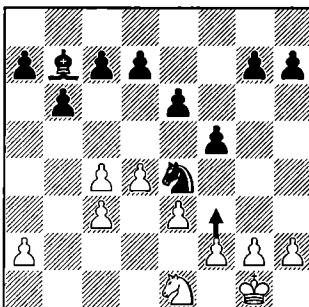
For instance in this opening position, the move 9 **d5** is quite popular. The line 9...exd5 10 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11 c4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 0-0 13 f3 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}c2$ is very good for White, so Black normally prefers to refuse the pawn offer with 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

The key f3-move

Another move that fits in well with White's stated strategic aims is f3. This simple, but effective, move shortens the black bishop's diagonal and fights for the all-important e4-square.

However, this is not its only virtue, in many positions it will be the only way to defend against Black's kingside build-up, as White will be able to provide lateral protection for his g-and h-pawns. Also, Black's imposing e4-knight will be forced to retreat. White can envisage the construction of a strong centre, provided he manages to support the e-pawn with enough pieces, for f2-f3 prepares this.

Once e3-e4 is played, d4-d5 will follow, completely stifling the b7-bishop and promising a fine future for White's dark-squared bishop. Once its diagonals are stripped of pawns, its power is assured.



The down sides of this f3-move are few. The weakening of the g1-a7 diagonal is rarely important, primarily because Black no longer has a dark-squared bishop, of course, and he will be hard-pressed to exploit the resultant frailty. The one problem is how can White actually play the move, for his king's knight is in the way. Therefore, White first has to move this knight, and it is possible to envisage two solutions, c1, and d2.

The first is the most ambitious move, for the coming f2-f3 will compel the e4-knight's retreat. In the second case, Black will enjoy the useful alternative of capturing on d2, thereby exchanging a pair of pieces and easing any cramp. On the other hand, the e1-square is not a particularly active one for a

knight, to say the least, and White has to be sure that he will have enough time to redeploy it effectively.

Game 17
Sadler – Ward
Hastings 1997

- | | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1 | d4 | Qf6 |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | Qc3 | Qb4 |
| 4 | e3 | b6 |
| 5 | Qd3 | Qb7 |
| 6 | Qf3 | Qe4 |
| 7 | 0-0 | |

White gambits his c-pawn, but as we have seen on the preceding pages, capturing it is not advisable.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|------|
| 7 | ... | f5 |
| 8 | d5 | Qxc3 |
| 9 | bx _c 3 | Qc5 |

Black prefers to keep the position static, naturally, and immediately occupies the vacant c5-square with his knight.

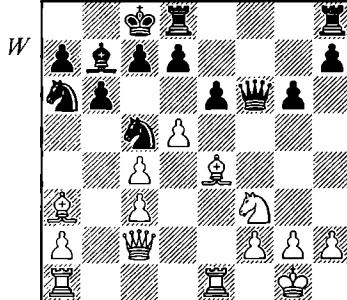
- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 10 | Qa3 | Qba6 |
|----|-----|------|

Not a particularly lively square for this knight, but Black wants to assure the future of the c5-knight.

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 11 | Qe1? | |
|----|------|--|

Normally White takes advantage of the d4-square by Qd4 and pressures the e6 and f5 squares, but White has another idea here, he wants to play a quick e3-e4.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----------|
| 11 | ... | Qf6 |
| 12 | Qc2 | g6 |
| 13 | e4 | fxe4 |
| 14 | Qxe4 | 0-0-0 (D) |



This seems to be safer than castling short, as the kingside dark squares are a little sensitive. The Black queenside does look very solid at the moment.

- 15 ♜d2 ♜de8
16 ♜ad1 ♜f7

By attacking d5, Black hopes to re-open the a8-h1 diagonal and liberate his light-squared bishop.

- 17 d6

Sadler likes to play sharp, attacking chess, so he starts nibbling away at Black's queenside defences.

- 17 ... ♜xe4
18 ♜xe4 ♜f5

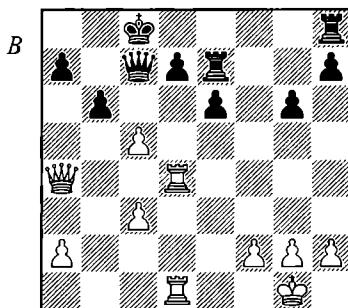
A good move; the obvious 18...c5 meets with 19 ♜a4, which tangles-up the black minor pieces, neither of which can move, and would be followed by ♜c1 – reactivating the bishop.

- 19 dxc7 ♜xe4
20 ♜xe4 ♜c5
21 ♜xc5

White had little choice about taking the knight, as retreating the rook and permitting the exchange

of queens would leave White defending an unpleasant endgame with tripled, isolated c-pawns.

- 21 ... ♜xc5
22 ♜ed4 ♜e7
23 ♜a4 ♜xc7
24 c5!? (D)



White allows Black no time to consolidate his position.

- 24 ... ♜xc5
25 ♜d6 ♜f8
26 ♜b5

Perhaps White wants a bit too much, as there is a tempting alternative in 26 ♜e4 ♜b7 27 ♜xb7+ ♜xb7 28 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 29 ♜xd7+ ♜b6 30 ♜xh7. Although Black will have some counterplay after 30...♜d8 31 h4 ♜d3, whether it is enough is questionable.

- 26 ... ♜f5
27 c4 h5
28 ♜b1

White is slowly trying to surround the black king and queen, cut off from the black rooks, but Black has many resources.

- 28 ... ♜d8

29 ♕a6

This threatens ♜b7, embarrassing the black queen.

29 ... ♜ef7

30 ♜b7

White acquiesces to a draw. If he plays for more by 30 f3, then after 30...♕e7 31 ♜dd1 ♔f6, the king escapes and Black will be able to counter-attack on the kingside.

30 ... ♜xf2!

31 ♜xd7+ **♕xd7**

32 ♜xd7+ **♔xd7**

33 ♕xa7+ **♔d6**

34 ♕b6+ **♔d7**

35 ♕b7+ **♔d6**

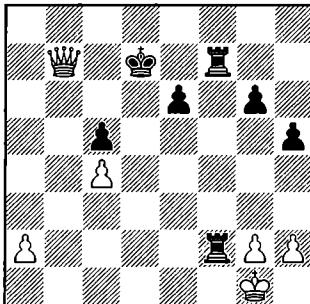
36 ♕b8+ **♔d7**

37 ♕b5+ **♔d6**

38 ♕b6+ ♔d7

39 ♕b7+ (D)

B



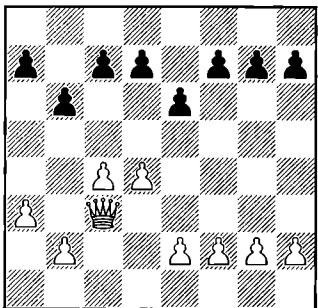
Owing to the threat of ...♜f1 mate, White does not have sufficient time to take the c-pawn.

39 ... ♔d6

½-½

19 The 4 ♕c2 Centre

- The dark-squared bishop's placement
- Putting the question: ...h6 or not?
- Capture on f6?
- The white centre
- When and why does White take on c5?
- The recapture on c5
- The pressure on the c-file
- The placement of the white knight
- The ...♘e4 trick
- The c4 tactic



4 ♕c2, or Capablanca's Variation, was popular in the twenties and thirties, but then fell into relative disuse, although a few GMs continued to persevere with it. This variation suddenly sprang back into prominence, and these last ten years it has been the principal line

against the Nimzo-Indian Defence. Any player wishing to play the Nimzo-Indian successfully must have a good working knowledge of this line.

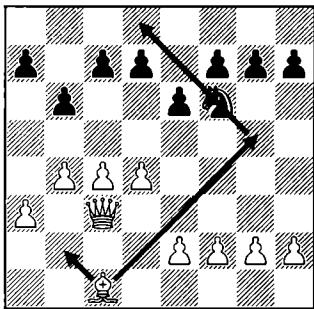
White tries to seize the bishop pair whilst keeping his pawn structure intact. The drawback is the number of moves made by the white queen. In the most popular line, 4 ♕c2 0-0 5 a3 ♖xc3+ 6 ♖xc3, White has already moved his queen two times in the opening, and may well have to move her again soon, as the c-file may prove exposed. All this before bringing any of the remaining minor pieces into play. Actually, should Black play 6...♘e4 7 ♕c2 f5, a line currently in vogue, the white queen makes her third move. This leads to a Dutch set-up (Chapter 18) where White has avoided the doubled pawns.

All this goes against the most basic of opening principles, which insist on the importance of developing the pieces as quickly as possible, starting with knights and then bishops. However, White now possesses the bishop pair and a strong presence in the centre, so Black must strike fast and make his lead in development count or else he will be worse. Aiming for a

blocked position makes less sense here, as White's pawn structure is much sounder and he can attack on both wings.

The dark-squared bishop's placement

As is so often the case in the Nimzo-Indian, much revolves around the power of this piece of whose services Black so blithely dispensed. For a long time White would handle these positions by playing b2-b3 or b2-b4, and developing his c1-bishop to b2, when the pressure along the diagonal is optically impressive. This is still possible and is often played, but does allow Black reasonable play. He can force the white queen off the diagonal by playing ...♝f6-e4, for instance, followed by ...f7-f5 and a 'Dutch' set-up.

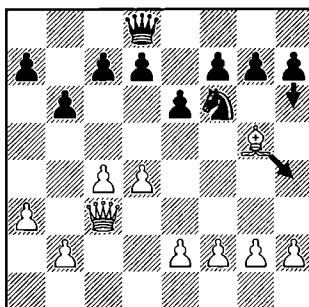


Recently g5 has become the square of choice. Black is unable to break the pin by playing his king's bishop to e7, of course, and so

White loosens Black's hold on the c4-square.

Putting the question: ...h6 or not?

With the bishop on g5, Black must endure an unpleasant pin on his f6-knight. One of the problems he must solve is whether to play ...h6 at some point. Bearing in mind that White normally replies by playing his bishop to h4, maintaining the pin, Black must decide whether he wants the bishop on h4 or on g5. Only rarely can Black continue ...g5, breaking the pin entirely, as his kingside dark squares will suffer too much. On the one hand ...h6 does give his king an extra square, but may weaken his kingside. Still, in general the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

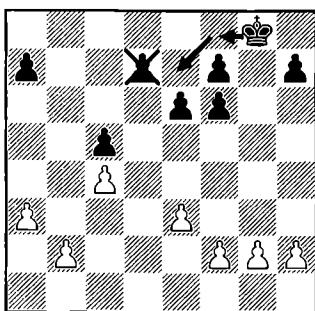


Sometimes a ...♝e4 trick (see later) may require the bishop on one square rather than another.

Capture on f6?

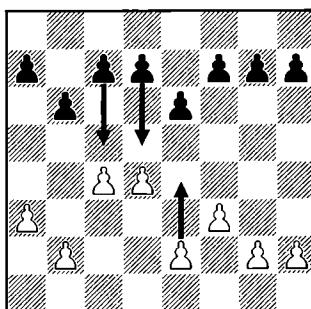
This is a very real possibility whenever the white d4-pawn moves, for one reason or another, but only in rare cases is it worth White's while to take the knight on f6. If Black is forced to recapture with the g-pawn then this is certainly a good idea, for the weakened black kingside will prove a tempting target for the white attack.

Therefore, if the black queen is still on d8 (or e7), Black will invariably recapture with his queen. If he has been forced to play ...gxf6 he should aim for an endgame, as although his h-pawn is isolated and his f-pawns are doubled, this is of less consequence when his king is less likely to suffer from the draft. In fact, the king can prove a very useful piece in these endings, lending support to the d-pawn, which may well be exposed on the open d-file.



The white centre

In an ideal world, White would probably wish to play f2-f3 and e2-e4 as soon as possible, and develop his pieces calmly behind such an imposing centre. However, Black is rarely so compliant as to allow this to happen and should White try an early f2-f3 then, rather than allow the continuation e2-e4, Black normally replies ...d7-d5 and ...c7-c5. Although Black may find himself with hanging pawns, his lead in development and the slight weakness of e3 and the a7-g1 diagonal created by f2-f3, grant Black lots of possibilities.



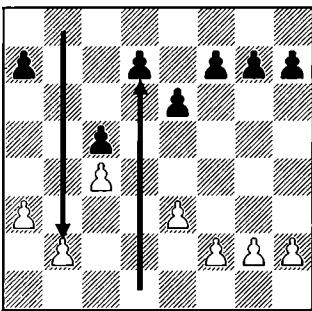
After much practice, White players came to the conclusion that first playing e3 and completing development was best, and only later playing f3 and, if possible, e4.

When and why does White take on c5?

Practice has shown that White should take the pawn on c5 when-

ever Black must recapture with the b-pawn. Odd as it may seem, for swapping White's d-pawn for Black's b-pawn would seem to contravene the rule concerning the added importance of central pawns.

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the White pressure on the d-file, bearing down on the d6-pawn, appears to count for a little more than Black's on the b2-pawn. Secondly, allowing Black to capture on d4 before White is fully prepared to defend his centre, seems to offer Black good counterplay. Black can often achieve a favourable resolution of the central tension, for example by taking on d4 and should White reply exd4, then continuing ...d7-d5.



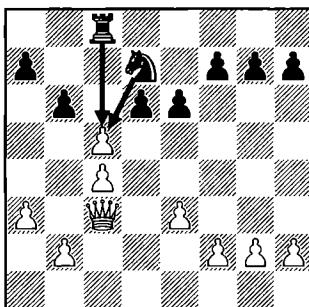
Normally White will post his rook on d1, but aggressive players sometimes castle long to add as much force as possible to the d-file, but there are drawbacks, naturally. Black must attempt to make good use of the b-file. His rook goes to b8 and his queen to b6, as soon as possible, tying two white pieces

down to b2's defence. Black will then continue ...a7-a5, and sometimes ...a5-a4, to fix the b-pawn, it would be a mistake to allow it to advance unhindered, all the time keeping an eye on the d6-pawn.

If Black is unable to defend d6, he will be able to advance this pawn to d5. Note that Black can often profit from not developing his bishop immediately on b7 as this merely hampers the attack down the open file.

The recapture on c5

In lines where Black plays a quick ...c5, and White takes this pawn, Black will have little choice but to retake with his b-pawn. Otherwise, it may be worth his while to recapture with another piece. Often, if he has played his rook to c8, he will want to exploit the half-open c-file, pressure on c4, and the *face-a-face* between this rook and the white queen.

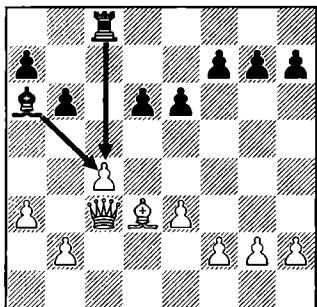


For this reason, White may well be unwilling to capture on c5 when

Black is capable of recapturing with a piece, and may prefer keeping the central tension.

The pressure on the c-file

Often, Black develops his c8-bishop on b7. This is quite a natural diagonal, after all, although if White plays f3 the bishop may not prove too effective here. Later the bishop finds itself going to a6, which accentuates the pressure on the white c4-pawn. However, why waste a move? Bringing the bishop directly to a6 has become increasingly popular recently.

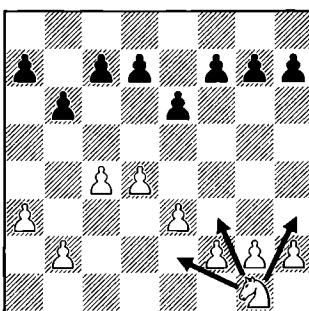


The position of White's queen opposite the black rook can lead to various problems for White, and so he often decides to move this piece to b3, out of the line of fire, whilst continuing to defend the c4-pawn. Another common possibility is b2-b4 which both restricts Black's options, in that the c5-square is no longer accessible to a black piece, and can allow White the possibility

of advancing his c-pawn in the event of Black playing ...d6-d5.

The placement of the white knight

An important choice for White in the opening is the placement of his remaining knight. Often this is as much a question of personal preference as current fashion.



The most natural square, after developing the f1-bishop to d3, is e2, adding support to the d4-square and ready to bring the knight to c3 later. The best square for the knight in the long term is often c3, as White will want to play the moves f2-f3 and e3-e4 at some point.

However, the square f3 is also popular. Originally, this was the invariable choice, when White would continue by fianchettoing his f1-bishop. Nowadays preference is given to more aggressive methods involving ♜c1-g5 and ♜f1-d3. Nevertheless, it was discovered that, although White often wants to play his pawn to f3 in the

opening, this is still possible, and the plan of playing ♜f3-d2, and then later playing the move f2-f3 has many adherents. Despite the loss of time involved, extra support is added to the c4-square.

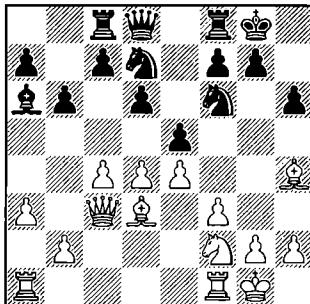
Finally, ♜g1-h3 is also possible, intending to bring this piece to f4 or f2. In this case though, the lack of support for the centre, and the fact that the knight often ‘gets in the way’ of the dark-squared bishop, counts against it.

The ...♜e4 trick

The only thing that stops the white queen and g5-bishop from the knight fork on e4, is the pin on the g5-d8 diagonal, of course. Yet Black can sometimes play ...♜f6-e4 anyway, and when the white bishop captures Black’s queen, answer by taking the white queen on c3. The assessment of this tactic depends on what happens next, and whether either side can continue with their desperado moves.

Anyway, if possible this move very often frees the black position to a remarkable extent. Therefore, both sides have to be continually aware of this possibility, which works only providing certain conditions are met. Firstly, it works well if White has his e-pawn on e4, as Black’s knight captures this important pawn immediately, as in the game Mozetic – Beliavsky, Belgrade 1993,

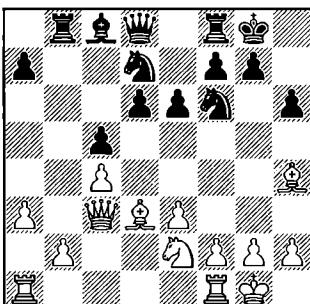
B



when 14...♞xe4! 15 ♕xd8 (obviously, if White recaptures on e4, Black will take the bishop on h4) 15...♝xc3 16 ♔e7 ♛fe8 17 ♔h4 g5 18 ♛g3 ♜a4 left Black a pawn to the good. Note that the a4-knight is a little misplaced here, though – if Black had not won a pawn he would be loath to play this way.

Secondly the combination works if there is a white piece on either e2 or d1, as in this case the black knight will not find itself misplaced on c3, but will be able to capture another piece. An example of this is the game Salov – Kamsky, Sanghi Nagar Ct (6) 1995:

B



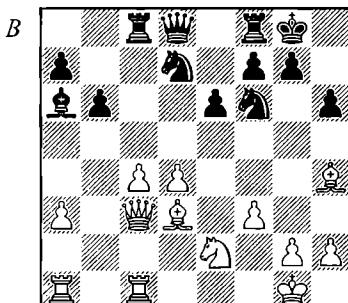
13... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2+$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{R}e8$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{R}xb2$ with advantage.

The combination does not work so well if White can ignore the newly-arrived knight on c3, and either capture the c7-pawn, or play $\mathbb{Q}d8-e7$, forking d6-pawn and f8-rook, unless, as in this last case, Black can also capture something. Sometimes the combination does not work at all, for instance if the white dark-squared bishop is sufficiently protected, or if the white queen can go to e1 to protect it (if his bishop is on h4).

Occasionally the related idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ is more effective, although this happens more rarely.

The c4 tactic

The pressure along the c-file has been mentioned several times, but to see a concrete example of this pressure in action look at the instructive game Granda Zuniga – Almasi, Buenos Aires 1996. It seems that White has quite a reasonable hanging pawn structure.



Firstly, note that if Black tries the ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-e4$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-d5$ tricks, then White can answer with $\mathbb{Q}c3-e1$, as mentioned above. Black might like to play 17...b5 to attack the c-pawn instead, but then White would reply 18 c5 when the b5-pawn may prove exposed. No, a far better idea is 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ when, following 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ b5, Black wins back his piece because of the pin along the c-file, and ruins White's pawn structure. The game continued 19 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ bxc4 20 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and Black enjoyed a clear edge.

If, in similar positions, White still has the option of replying with b2-b3, then we can see a hanging-pawn situation arise after this tactic, if not then, as here, an IQP position will ensue. To reiterate, it would be erroneous to play ...b5?! if White can happily push his c-pawn. The pressure along the c-file would become non-existent and White would enjoy a protected passed pawn.

Game 18
I.Sokolov – Hansen
Torshavn 1997

You should also compare this game to Game 5 and Game 14, two other fine examples of these 4 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 0-0 set-ups.

- | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | d4 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | $\mathbb{Q}c3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b4$ |

4	♕c2	0-0
5	a3	♗xc3+
6	♕xc3	b6
7	♗g5	♗b7
8	♘f3	d6
9	♘d2	

Ivan Sokolov's favourite plan, and he is a real expert in these positions. Although the white knight moves twice in the opening, and remember White is already behind in development, the justification lies in the possibility of playing e4 in one go, and the added defence for the c4-pawn and the b3-square.

9	...	♗bd7
10	f3	h6
11	♗h4	c5
12	dxc5	

This is clearly the moment to capture on c5, as 12...♗xc5 would allow 13 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 14 ♜xf6 gxf6. If White waits a move, it would allow Black the possibility of either capturing on d4, or playing ...♝c8 and then recapturing with the rook on c5, if need be.

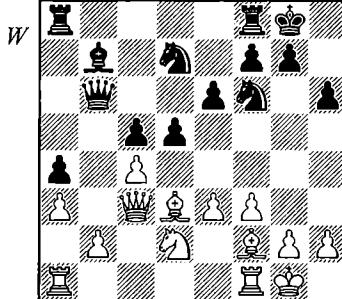
12	...	bx _c 5
13	e3	d5

Striking in the centre; alternatively Black can play the moves ...a5, to contain White's queenside, and ...♝b6, to bring the queen out of the pin and use the b-file.

14	♗d3	♝b6
15	♗f2	

Having served its purpose on h4, the bishop retreats to f2 to parry the threat of ...d4.

15	...	a5
16	0-0	a4 (D)



Despite Black's unusual order of moves, the players arrive at a typical structure after all. The a4-pawn fixes the b-pawn on b2 with a view to tying White down to its defence. The reader will again notice that memorising a sequence of moves is mostly irrelevant, but knowledge of the best plan is essential.

17	♖fe1	♖fd8
18	cx _d 5	ex _d 5

White has taken the game into a hanging pawn structure.

19	♖ac1	♗a6
----	------	-----

Of course, White has no desire to exchange one of his bishops as this would only aid Black.

20	♗f5	♖ab8
21	♖b1	

Clearly forced, but the rook's placement is passive – the rook is too strong a piece to concern itself solely with the defence of a mere pawn.

21	...	♕b5!
----	-----	------

Threatening ...d4, because of the veiled threat against the bishop on f5.

22 $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}b6?$

A normal move, defending along the third rank and hoping to triple on the b-file, but Black has overlooked White's next. In retrospect, 22... $\mathbb{W}a5$ would have been better.

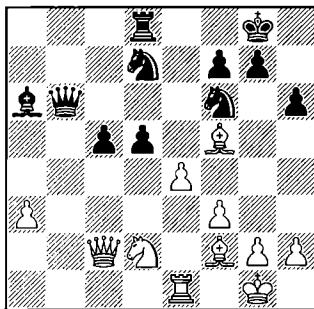
23 b4! axb3

24 $\mathbb{B}xb3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$

25 $\mathbb{B}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$

26 c4! (D)

B



The point, White can thus achieve the e4 'jab' and disorganise the Black central pawns (see Chapter 6, Hanging Pawns, The ...e5 jab).

26 ... dxe4

This is an undesirable concession from Black's viewpoint, isolating his c-pawn, but 26...d4

allows the awkward line 27 e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 28 e6.

27 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

28 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

29 $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

30 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

White has a large advantage. He has two bishops in an open position and the black knight is a rather sad piece.

30 ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Black decides that his best chance lies in exchanging one of the bishops, but at the cost of a pawn.

31 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

32 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$

33 a4??

White is too greedy, the elementary 33 $\mathbb{W}xf8+$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$ 34 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ allows White to post his rook behind the passed pawn by 35 $\mathbb{R}a1$ when, at this level, Black can safely resign.

33 ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

34 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Suddenly Black has some counterplay, and manages to pick up the a-pawn to complete a lucky escape.

35 $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$

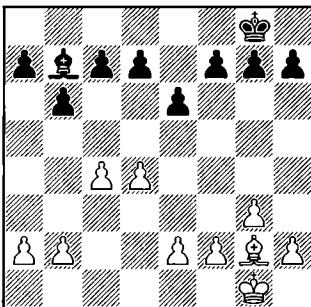
36 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$

37 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

20 The Struggle of the Fianchettoed Bishops

- Black's solid set-up
- The dark-squared plan
- The light-squared plan
- The battle of the bishops
- The $\mathbb{B}g5$ tactic



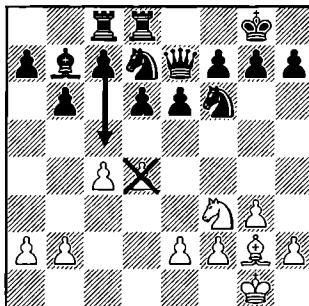
A common type of position that arises if White decides to fianchetto his king's bishop in order to oppose Black's pressure along the a8-h1 diagonal.

Black's solid set-up

As ever, White enjoys the advantage of the bishop pair, but the black position is very robust.

With the light-squared bishop fianchettoed on b7 and countering the g2-bishop along the diagonal, Black normally plays his queen's

knight to d7, supporting the f6-knight, and his queen to e7. This both supports the d6-pawn, and connects the two black rooks, which can be employed in the most effectual manner possible. Personally, I always found c8 and d8 to be the two best squares; a rook on c8 will prove useful if this file is opened, and a rook on d8 lends support to d6.



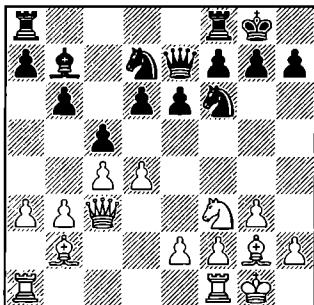
At some stage, probably sooner rather than later, Black will play ...c5, to put pressure on d4 and to have the option of opening the c-file.

The dark-squared plan

This is a plan I first saw in a game of Portisch's, and then managed to

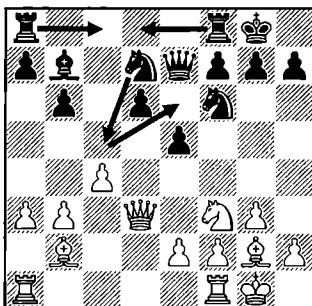
put to good use in many games of my own.

In the following, very typical, position Black plays 12... $\text{cxd}4$. White is unlikely to recapture with his knight, as this would permit Black to exchange light-squared bishops, thus putting an end to the white bishop pair. So he plays 13 $\text{Bxd}4$, when the black plan is revealed: 13...e5!, setting up a wall of pawns against White's dark-squared bishop.



A look at Black's position, after the queen returns to d3, reveals a harmonious set-up. He has his pawns on dark squares and a bishop on light squares, and this is always a good idea – no chance of a bad bishop in the ending! Black can continue with ... $\text{Qd}7-\text{c}5$, and should White try to evict this piece with b3-b4, the knight can retreat to the fine square e6. Then Black will be able to set his sights on the c4-pawn, now bereft of its fellow pawn's support.

White will try either to assail d6, or to gain control of the d5-square, although Black should be capable of fending this possibility off.

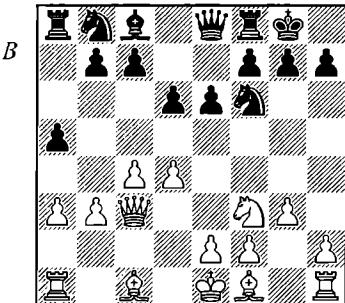


Note that, as is common in these positions, 14...e4 is not a threat as White replies 15 $\text{We}3$, pinning the e-pawn, and on 15... $\text{Bg}4$ 16 $\text{Wg}5$, attacking e7 and g7. Of course, if Black had a rook on e8, defending his queen, then that would be a different situation altogether!

The light-squared plan

If Black has e4 under control, would it not be a good idea to deflect the c4-pawn, thereby gaining control of d5 as well?

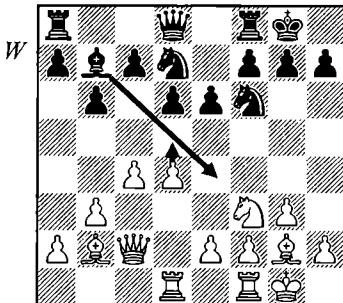
This idea, attempting to seize dominance of the light squares, can prove most effective under the right circumstances. However, the mechanics are quite complicated. In the following position, Hauchard – Bauer, French Ch. 1997, Black plays 9 ...a4, and on White's 10 b4 then 10...b5!



White is offered a choice: advance his c-pawn to c5, when he has closed the queenside and risks interring his queens bishop, or capture on b5. In this second case, Black replies ... $\mathbb{B}d5$, protecting c7 and preparing to recapture the b-pawn. The game continued: 11 c5 $\mathbb{B}b7$ 12 $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{B}e4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 14 0-0 $\mathbb{W}d5$ 15 $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and Black had an amazing light-squared control, and went on to win by direct attack.

The battle of the bishops

White may be able to play the thematic d5-thrust at some point, scotching Black's bishop. If Black cannot avert this threat, he might at least be able to render it ineffective. To this end, Black sometimes resorts to the move ... $\mathbb{B}b7-e4$, to put the bishop on the right side of the white d-pawn. This may well come with gain of tempo as well, if the white queen is on c2 or d3, and is possible because of the lack of a white knight on c3.



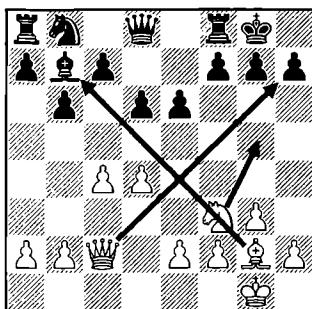
Against this, White will have to move his queen and can then acquiesce to the exchange of bishops, if he believes that he has more to gain from it than to lose. He can do this by $\mathbb{Q}f3-h4$, for instance, and on ... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ replying $\mathbb{Q}xg2$. His intention will be to bring this knight to e3, and possibly d5. More commonly, White will attempt to embarrass the black bishop. To do this he must first remove his king's knight and bishop from the h1-a8 diagonal, by $\mathbb{Q}g2-f1$ (or $\mathbb{Q}g2-h3$) and $\mathbb{Q}f3-h4$ for example, when he can then play f2-f3 and e2-e4.

This takes time of course, and Black should not strand idly by. He can try to cut across White's plan by hitting back in the centre, perhaps. If Black chooses his moment well, White might find his kingside pieces on poor squares when it counts.

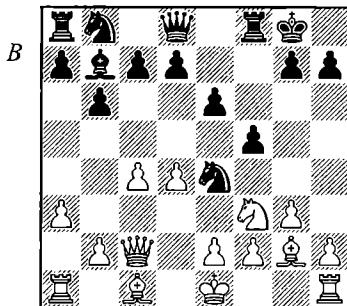
The $\mathbb{Q}g5$ tactic

The fight for supremacy on the h1-a8 diagonal is crucial to the

outcome. The g2-bishop defends the light squares around the white king whereas the b7-bishop defends Black's queenside light squares. White's g2-bishop is defended, Black's bishop on b7 is often not, which leads to various tactical possibilities. A common tactic revolves around the move $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5$. This is effective if the white queen is on c2 and the knight hopping to g5 discovers an attack on b7, as well as the more serious threat of mate on h7. Should Black's b8-knight be unmoved then this will trap the a8-rook, and win at least the exchange.



If there is a black knight on e4 then this same tactic will make use of the pin along the h1-a8 diagonal. To avoid this possibility, in the fashionable line with 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ 0-0 5 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 6 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 7 $\mathbb{W}c2$ f5 8 g3 b6 9 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D), usually Black plays the prophylactic retreat 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$.



Actually, in a recent game of mine I allowed this tactic, judging Black's resources to be sufficient after 10...d6!? 11 $\mathbb{Q}g5$, because of 11... $\mathbb{W}f6$. If White takes on e4, 12 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4, he is unable to take again because his f-pawn is *en prise*, and if 12 0-0 then the reply 12... $\mathbb{W}g6$ defends the e4-square. Black can then bring his b8-knight to f6.

Game 19 Altermann – Adams Yerevan OL 1996

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 | d4 | $\mathbb{Q}f6$ |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | $\mathbb{Q}c3$ | $\mathbb{Q}b4$ |
| 4 | $\mathbb{W}c2$ | 0-0 |
| 5 | a3 | $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ |
| 6 | $\mathbb{W}xc3$ | $\mathbb{Q}e4$ |

A recent addition to Black's armoury that has really caught on, he plays a type of Dutch formation, but this soon turns into a confrontation between the light-squared bishops.

- | | | |
|---|----------------|----|
| 7 | $\mathbb{W}c2$ | f5 |
|---|----------------|----|

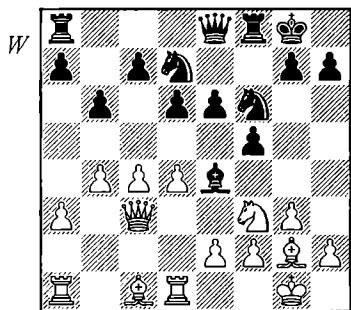
- 8 g3 b6
 9 ♕g2 ♕b7
 10 ♖f3 ♖f6

Directed against an awkward pin on the h1-a8 diagonal, before White can play ♗g5 or ♗d2.

- 11 0-0 ♘e4

Having castled, White was ready to play such moves as d5, e.g. 11...d6?! 12 d5 exd5 13 ♖d4 with threats of ♘e6 and ♖xf5, so Black brings his light-squared bishop to the ‘business’ side of the pawn structure, with gain of tempo.

- 12 ♕c3 d6
 13 b4 ♘bd7
 14 ♖d1 ♕e8 (D)



White would like to evict the e4-bishop from its powerful post by f2-f3, and then continue by taking a firm grip on the centre with e2-e4, but how?

- 15 ♕f1!?

The only way; sometimes ♕h3 will be better, but here that move would be answered by ...♕h5.

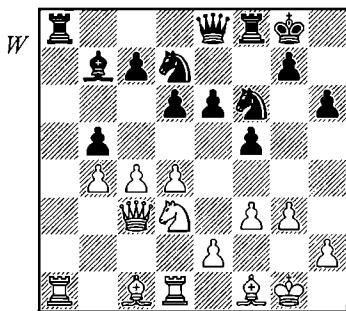
- 15 ... h6
 16 ♖e1

So, White is ready to play f2-f3, ♖f1-g2 and, eventually, e2-e4 when he will enjoy a significant space advantage. However, to achieve this he has, ironically, had to return his pieces to the back rank, so it is an ideal time for Black to strike.

- 16 ... ♕b7
 17 f3 a5!
 18 ♖d3!

White cannot avoid the opening of the a-file as 18 b5?! weakens White’s control of the c5-square. By deflecting the other pawn surveying this square, Black will obtain a perfect square for one of his knights, by 18...e5! 19 dxe5 ♕xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 and ...♘fd7-c5 with a clear plus.

- 18 ... axb4
 19 axb4 b5!? (D)



Black switches to the ‘light-squared plan’, this is more combative than 19...♖xa1 20 ♕xa1 ♕a8 21 ♕d2 ♕xa1 22 ♕xa1 ♕a8 23 ♕xa8+ ♕xa8 with wholesale exchanges, but a serious plus for White after 24 b5.

20 ♜xa8 ♜xa8

21 ♜f4!

White certainly does not want to play c4-c5, which both blocks the position and concedes the light squares without a fight. The move 21 cxb5 is not much better, as Black regains his pawn by 21...♜a4 22 ♜e1 ♜d5 23 ♜b2 ♜xb5, once again obtaining a firm hold on the light squares.

21 ... ♜a4

22 ♜e1 bxc4

23 ♜xc4

An instructive continuation is 23 ♜xe6?!, when Black can exploit the light squares, and the passively placed White pieces, by 23...♝d5! 24 ♜xc4 ♜7b6 25 ♜d3 ♜e8 26 ♜f4 ♜xb4 27 ♜xf5 ♜c2 28 ♜d1 ♜e3, winning the exchange.

23 ... ♜d5

The line 23...♝d5! 24 ♜xc7 ♜xb4 25 ♜d1 ♜b6 might have been simpler – Black is happy to play with two knights against two bishops when all the pawns are on one side, as the bishops' long-range power is irrelevant.

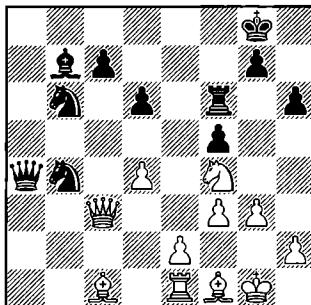
24 ♜xe6 ♜7b6

25 ♜d3 ♜f6

26 ♜f4 ♜xb4

27 ♜c3 (D)

B



27 ... ♜f7

Black is certainly OK, but misses a chance to simplify in an advantageous manner, by availing himself of the tactic 27...♝c2!, e.g. 28 ♜d1 ♜e3 when the d1-rook is hanging. After the further 29 ♜d3 ♜xf1 30 ♜xf1, Black's bishop might prove to be the more influential of the two.

28 ♜e3! ♜6d5

29 ♜xd5 ♜xd5

30 ♜d2 ♜xe3

31 ♜xe3 ♜d5!

32 ♜b1 ♜f8

33 ♜c3 ♜d7

34 ♜c1 c6

The position is completely level.

35 ♜d3 ♜e7

36 ♜a1 h5

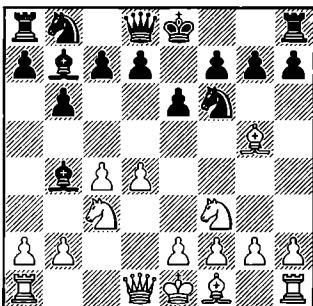
37 ♜g2 h4

38 e4

½-½

21 The Flexible Centre

- Breaking the pin
- The desperado c-pawn



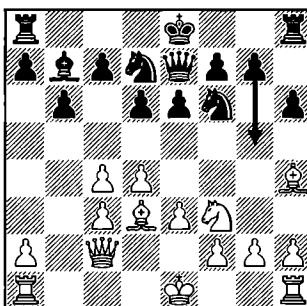
By judicious use of move order, White can play a sort of Leningrad Variation where Black is committed to fianchettoing his queen's bishop. From a Nimzo-Indian move order he can play the flexible move 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$, although Black is more likely to reply 4...c5 than 4...b6. However, it is probable that White will 'trick' Black into this system by playing 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (inviting a Queen's Indian), and only after 3...b6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$.

Black's first few moves are almost standardised, he takes on c3 (not waiting for White to play a2-a3, as he probably will not), plays ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-b7$, ...d7-d6, ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-d7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d8-e7$. The black position is solid and consistent, he has no real

flaws to speak of but lacks space. If it were not for the b7-bishop, this would be more consistent with the Dark-Squared Blockade, as Black often plays all his pawns to dark squares.

Breaking the pin

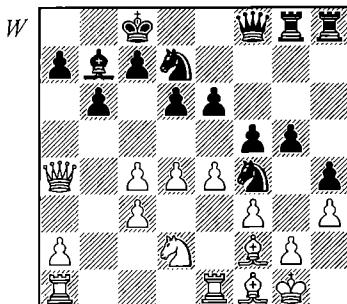
The main reason that Black does not want to castle immediately, is that he has to be careful that White is not able to castle queenside and launch his kingside pawns up the board. Black normally deals with the annoying pin of the dark-squared bishop on the g5-d8 diagonal first. The usual way to do this is to play the radical ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5, breaking it immediately. In this respect, the positions that arise are similar to those of the Leningrad Variation, except that Black has fianchettoed his queen's bishop.



Unlike the Leningrad Variation, here Black does not want to play ...c7-c5, for fear of weakening the h2-b8 diagonal, and so cannot play his king to c7, obviously. He resolves the problem of this piece's placement by castling kingside if it is safe, but more often by castling queenside, and then using his h- and g-pawns to attack.

The desperado c-pawn

In order to free some diagonals for his bishops and as his c4-pawn is not the most valuable of pawns, a particularly important idea for White is the well-timed c4-c5 thrust. I say well-timed because there has to be a solid justification for this move, tactical, positional or more likely both. The black structure may become enfeebled, White can use c4 for his minor pieces and b5 for his bishop, or more importantly, it is the precursor for an attack against the black king, if Black has castled long.



The diagram features a position from the game Barsov – Eslon, Linares 1997. The black attack is in full swing, yet by 20 c5 dxc5 21 exf5 exf5 22 ♜b5 ♜d8 23 ♜ad1 White had recaptured the initiative, and on the further 23...g4?! 24 dxc5 ♜d5 25 c6, he won a piece, and the game.

Game 20
Bareev – Leko
Dortmund 1995

1	d4	♘f6
2	c4	e6
3	♘f3	b6
4	♘c3	

This is the most common move order to reach this position. If Black continues 4....♗b7, then a Queen's Indian would be the result, but here Black takes advantage of the possibility of transposing into a Nimzo-Indian Defence.

4	...	♗b4
5	♗g5	♗b7
6	e3	h6
7	♗h4	♗xc3+

Black wishes to play ...d6 on his next move, and is therefore obliged to capture on c3 first. Otherwise, if 7...d6??, then 8 ♜a4+ ♜c6 9 d5 wins a piece.

8	bx _c 3	d6
9	♗d2	g5
10	♗g3	♗e7
11	h4	♗g8

Black must allow White to open the h-file at his leisure, but safe in the knowledge that it may be of little real use to White, bereft, as it will be, of any pieces.

12 ♘h2

Rather artificial, but White wants to defend g2 and develop his f1-bishop. Actually, White often sacrifices the g-pawn, hoping to make good use of the time wasted by Black in capturing it, in these positions.

12 ... ♘c6

The most natural move here is 12...♗bd7?!, of course, keeping the b7-bishop's diagonal open and further reinforcing the f6-knight. Unfortunately, in this case 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 ♕a4 would then be very awkward for Black, who would like to castle long but cannot, as the a7-pawn is *en prise*. This idea crops-up a lot in such positions.

13 ♘d3 0-0-0

14 ♕c2

The white queen must stay on the d1-h5 diagonal, for if 14 ♕c2? ♗h5 would be embarrassing for the dark-squared bishop, which cannot retreat because of the h2-rook.

14 ... ♔b8

Whenever a player castles on the long side this small shuffle of the king frequently turns out to be useful, and well-worth the move spent on it.

15 e4 ♔a8!

Positionally speaking, Black would like to set up a barrier of

dark-squared pawns by 15...e5?, but, because the white a-pawn is on a2, the continuation 16 d5 ♘a5 17 ♘b3! would be very awkward for Black. After the move 17...♘xb3 then 18 axb3 evens-out the white structure and opens the a-file.

16 ♘b3 e5

17 d5 ♘b8

Revealing the point of Black's subtle fifteenth move, the b8-square is available for the knight!

18 a4 a5

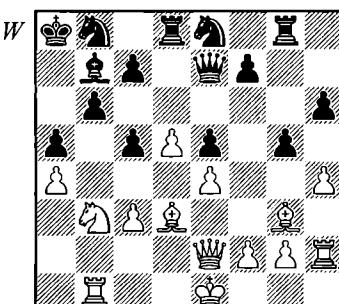
As in similar positions on the other side of the board (such as the Dragon Sicilian), it is dangerous to allow the opening of the rook's file.

19 c5?!

A typical blow, but it is doubtful in this position. White was worried about a black knight coming to the c5 square, as in the line 19 ♘b1 ♘fd7 20 f3 ♘a6. However, after the further 21 ♘f2 ♘dc5, White can exchange off the knights, and reach equality, by: 22 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 23 ♘xc5 dxс5.

19 ... dxc5

20 ♘b1 ♘e8! (D)



A fine prophylactic move, Black prepares to bring this piece to the blockading square d6, and strengthen his kingside with ...f6.

21 f3 ♖d6

22 ♖d2

However, not 22 ♖f2?, which allows the surprising tactic 22...c4! 23 ♖xc4 ♖xc4, when if 24 ♖xc4?? then 24...♖a6 traps the white queen in mid-board!

22 ... f6

23 ♖h1 ♖a7!

24 ♖f2 ♖a6!

Again playing simple, but effective, chess. Black exchanges one of White's bishops, and then torments the other.

25 g4 ♖xd3

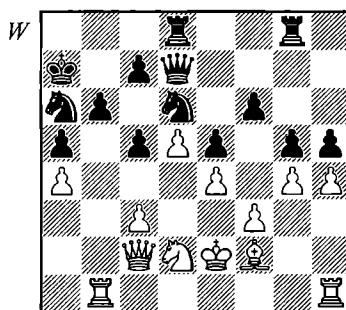
26 ♖xd3 ♖a6

27 ♖e2 ♖d7

28 ♖c2

White must defend his a-pawn. The line 28 hxg5 hxg5 29 ♖c2 is instructive, as Black is now in position to contest the h-file, so: 29...♖h8, with advantage.

28 ... h5! (D)



Having successfully consolidated the queenside, Black can turn his attention to the white king, and thus starts a line-opening sequence.

29 gxh5 g4

30 ♖bg1 gxf3+

31 ♖xf3 ♖h7!

32 ♖d2 ♖xh5+

33 ♖e1 f5!

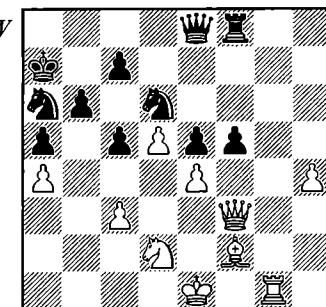
White is allowed no respite.

34 ♖d1 ♖f7

35 ♖xg8 ♖xg8

36 ♖g1 ♖f8

37 ♖f3 ♖e8! (D)



Black attacks on both wings, a sure sign that he is on top.

38 ♖g5 fxе4

39 ♖g3 ♖xa4

40 ♖xe5 ♖c4!

41 ♖xc4

Taking the e-pawn by 41 ♖xe4 fails to 41...♖a1+ 42 ♖e2 ♖xd2 43 ♖xd2 ♖b2+ 44 ♖e3 ♖xc3+, which is even worse than the game.

41 ... ♖xc4

42 ♖e3 a4

White is unable to oppose the onward march of the a-pawn.

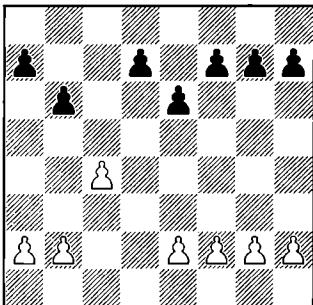
0–1

22 The English Centre

- The big choice:
knight or bishop?
- Maintaining the pin
- The black pawn barrier
- The Hedgehog
- The crude ... $\mathbb{W}b6$

4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ was discarded for so long. White is virtually obliged to capture on c5, else quick Black pressure on d4 will allow him a comfortable game.

The big choice: knight or bishop?

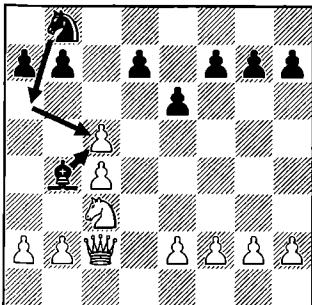


The chapter title does not refer to any affinity with the 'English Chess School', if such a thing exists, but instead the similarity between this structure and ones that commonly arise from the English Opening.

This type of position has occurred rather often during this last decade, owing to the popularity of the 4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ line. Apart from the time lost with the white queen, another potential problem with this move is the fact that this same white queen no longer defends the d4-pawn. This is why 4...c5 is such a logical reply, and one of the main reasons

Eventually, Black has to decide how he wishes to recapture the c5-pawn. He may castle first, so as to keep the options open, but this will only postpone the decision a move or two.

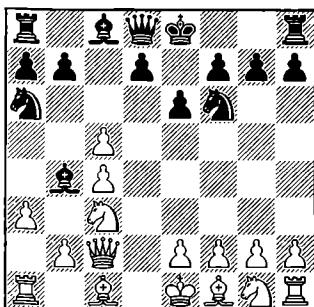
The most logical plan is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-a6$, intending to recapture with the knight. The main drawback to this is it virtually condemns the dark-squared bishop to inevitable exchange on c3, as the knight on c5 will be impeding the bishop's retreat. As he is giving White the two bishops, he must look for something in return, and this is his quick development. The c5-knight often gains another tempo if it goes to e4, attacking the white queen. He must not balk at material sacrifice either. After White plays a2-a3 and recaptures the bishop with the queen, he will be well-placed to drive back the black knights with moves like f2-f3 and b2-b4, so Black must strike fast in the centre.



A more solid possibility is to recapture with the bishop, either immediately or after castling, with the intention of returning the bishop to e7 and setting-up a Hedgehog-style position.

Maintaining the pin

Having played ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-a6$, if Black is loath to surrender his king's bishop without a fight, he can answer White's a2-a3 with ... $\mathbb{W}d8-a5$, pinning the a-pawn against the a1-rook.

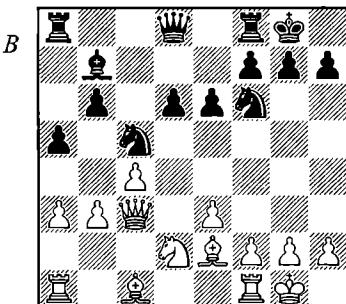


This leads to an ending that is playable, if a bit better for White.

White will have to defend c3 by $\mathbb{Q}d2$, and will play his queen's rook away from the a-file next move. This really threatens to take on b4, so Black is then obliged to capture on c3, but, in reply to $\mathbb{Q}xc3$, he can play ... $\mathbb{W}a4$, and force off the queens.

The black pawn barrier

A similar idea to one used in Chapter 20 (The Struggle of The Fianchettoed Bishops), is to recapture on c5 with the queen's knight, give up the dark-squared bishop, castle, play ...b7-b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-b7$, then ...d7-d6 and ...e6-e5. This sets-up a barrier of dark-squared pawns against the b2-bishop. Sometimes Black can continue the dark-squared plan by playing ...a5 as well at some point, although he must be careful about defending his b6-pawn. This position was reached in the game Hertneck – Lutz, Munich 1994, where Black continued 13...e5 14 f3 $\mathbb{We}7$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}b2 \mathbb{Fc}8$ with an equal game.



See Game 21 below for another example also involving Hertneck. These types of plans are simple to play, can be very effective, and can crop-up from any number of openings. Well worth remembering.

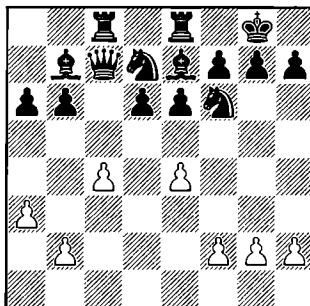
The Hedgehog

If Black captures on c5 with his bishop he can then return this piece to e7 later, with the idea of playing ...d6 and reaching a Hedgehog-style position. In fact, Black might have to play the bishop back to e7 anyway, as on the c5-square this piece is exposed to moves like b2-b4.

Entire books could be written about these positions. In brief, Black will play (not necessarily in this order) ...a7-a6, ... \mathbb{Q} b4-e7, ...d7-d6, ...b7-b6, ...0-0, ... \mathbb{Q} c8-b7, ... \mathbb{Q} b8-d7 and ... \mathbb{W} d8-c7, and follow this by developing his rooks in the centre. The black position is solid and full of dynamic counter chances, he will try to pressurise e4 and c4, break on the wing with ...b7-b5 or (especially) in the middle with ...e6-e5 or ...d7-d5. White, on the other hand, will try to exploit his space advantage and attack where Black is weakest.

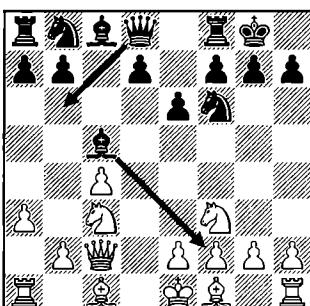
Actually, White has to be very careful about how he goes about exploiting his space advantage as Black will be very much on the

lookout for any weakening pawn moves. It is just when the white position is over-extended that Black will strike.



The crude ... \mathbb{W} b6

Many Black players prefer to play these Hedgehog positions without the possibility of White playing his queen's bishop to g5, which offers White various aggressive possibilities, and to this end they follow ... \mathbb{Q} xc5 with ... \mathbb{W} d8-b6 threatening f2.



White must reply e2-e3 and thus Black achieves his aim. Unfortu-

nately, this is time-consuming – the black queen will soon have to move again, and the bishop too – and White's c1-bishop is often just as aggressively placed on b2. Further, White can later leave his e-pawn on e3 and attack with his f-pawn anyway, not wasting a move on e3-e4.

Game 21
Hertneck – Karpov
Germany 1994

1 d4	Qf6
2 c4	e6
3 Qc3	Qb4
4 Qc2	0-0
5 Qf3	c5
6 dxc5	Qa6
7 e3	Qxc5
8 Qd2	b6
9 a3	Qxc3
10 Qxc3	Qb7
11 Qe2	d6

If Black is happy to make a quick draw, then 11...Qce4 followed by capturing the c3-bishop would be simplest, but Black wants more.

12 0-0 e5

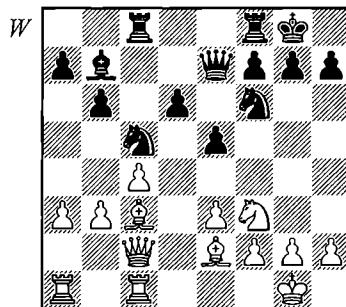
A perfectly sound move, the d6-pawn may be backward on an open file, but long experience has shown that it is rarely a weakness.

13 b3 Qc8

Placing the rook on the same line as the white queen is always a good idea, all sorts of combinative ideas spring from this alignment.

14 Qfc1 Qe7 (D)

Black connects his rooks and continues his straightforward development.



A more aggressive player might be tempted by 14...Qfe4 15 Qe1 f5 16 b4 Qe6 with various kingside possibilities.

15 b4

This chases the c5-knight from its station, but leaves the white c4-pawn bereft of pawn support.

15 ... Qce4

16 Qe1 Qc7!

There is no need to play 16...Qfd8 here, as there is no threat to the d6-pawn, instead Karpov intends exerting maximum pressure along the semi-open c-file.

17 Qb2 Qe6

18 a4 Qa6

This might seem like a waste of time as the bishop must return immediately whence it came. In fact, Black forces the advance of the b4-pawn so that it no longer controls c5, and the c4-pawn becomes a serious problem.

19 b5 Qb7

20 a5 h6

- 21 $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{E}fc8$
 22 h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Defending the e5-pawn introduces the possibility of ...d5 – Black is well-placed to exploit the resultant opening of the c-file.

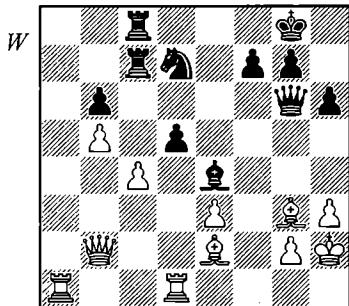
- 23 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ec5!$
 24 axb6 axb6
 25 f3

White is hoping to play e4 and emancipate his dark-squared bishop, but Black moves first.

- 25 ... e4!
 26 fxe4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 27 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Black could win the e3-pawn after 27... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3+$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}f2$, but it is not worth the trouble as at the same time this frees the white bishops.

- 28 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}g6$
 29 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ d5! (D)



Obviously the g3-bishop is pinned against the g2-pawn, and cannot take the c7-rook, and the c4-pawn is also pinned, as White could not possibly allow the opening of the c-file.

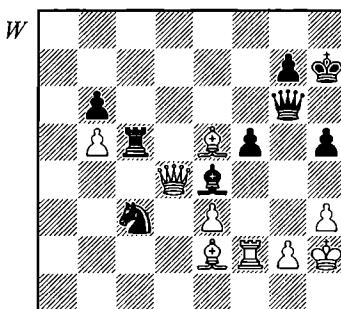
- 30 $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 31 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{E}c5$

As White had defended his g2-pawn the c7-rook really was attacked, and had to move.

- 32 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$
 33 $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$
 34 $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$
 35 $\mathbb{E}d2$ h5
 36 $\mathbb{E}f2$ f6
 37 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 38 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$
 39 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5

Black enjoys the better pawn structure and active pieces.

- 40 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (D)



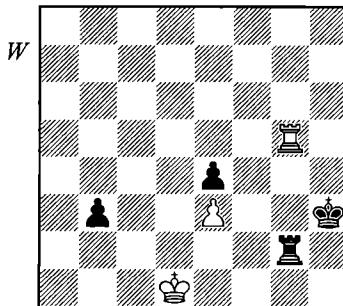
Black has kept to his style, and without necessarily searching for the sharpest or most incisive continuation, has gradually acquired certain small advantages. Now, for instance, 40... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 41 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ was possible, and good.

- 41 $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

Finally, Black harvests the fruit of his work, White's weakling b5-pawn drops.

- 42 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$
 43 $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$

44	g3?	h4!
45	♕e5	♗c1!
46	♗f4	hxg3+
47	♗xg3	♗xg3+
48	♔xg3	g5!
49	♕a6	♗g1+
50	♔h2	♗b1
51	♔f1	♗b3
52	♔g2	♗g6
53	♔xe4	fxe4
54	♔g2	b5
55	♔c2	♗h5
56	♔f2	♗h4
57	♔c5	♗b2+
58	♔e1	b4
59	♔d1	b3
60	♔b5	♗xh3
61	♔xg5	♗g2! (D)



0-1

The continuation would be something like 62 ♗b5 b2 63 ♗b4 ♘g3 64 ♗b7 ♘f3 65 ♗b3 when 65...b1♛+ 66 ♗xb1 ♗g1+ 67 ♘c2 ♗xb1 68 ♘xb1 ♘xe3 69 ♘c2 ♘f2 wins simply.

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Table of Variations

This short guide is intended as a means of facilitating the Reader's orientation. Note that the most important Chapters are in **bold**, and ones that might also be of interest are in *italics*. 'Game references' are only those complete games that feature the particular opening moves from the box 'Opening moves'.

Following the quintessential opening moves 1 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 c4 e6 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (or any other way of reaching this position, like 1 c4 e6 2 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 3 d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ for example) we have:

4 e3 (Rubinstein's Variation)

4 e3 0-0.

Opening moves	Variation name	ECO code	Chapters of interest	Game references
5 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ d5	Reshevsky	E46	11 (The QGD Exchange Centre)	
5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ d5 6 a3	Borvinnik	E49	7 (The Classical Centre), 12 (The Light-squared Blockade)	
6 cxd5, 6 $\mathbb{Q}e2$		E48	11 (The QGD Exchange Centre), 4 (The IQP), 5 (The Isolated Pawn Tandem)	
6 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c5 7 0-0 dx $c4$ /cx $d4$	Karpov	E54/55	4 (The IQP), 5 (The Isolated Pawn Tandem) & E57 & 6 (<i>Hanging Pawns</i>)	2, 4
7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9 bxc3 dx $c4$	Classical 1 Main Line	E59	7 (The Classical Centre)	6
9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$, 9...b6	Khasin, (& Nimzowitsch)	E58	12 (The Light-Squared Blockade), 7 (The Classical Centre)	11

4 e3 c5.

Opening moves	Variation name	ECO code	Chapters of interest	Game references
5 ♕d3 ♖c6 6 ♖f3 ♘xc3+	Hübner	E41	13 (The Hübner Centre) & 4 (The IQP), 5 (The Isolated Pawn Tandem)	12
6 ♖e2		E41	4 (The IQP), 5 (The Isolated Pawn Tandem), 6 (Hanging Pawns)	3
5 ♖e2 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 c5		E42	10 (The Queenside Pawn Majority)	9
7 a3 ♖e7		E42	10 (The Queenside Pawn Majority), 8 (The Symmetric Centre)	7
6...0-0 7 a3 ♖e7		E42	9 (The Isolated Doubled c-pawn Centre)	

4 e3 b6.

Opening moves	Variation name	ECO code	Chapters of interest	Games references
5 ♕d3 ♖b7 6 ♖f3 ♖e4	Dutch	E43	18 (The Dutch Set-up)	17
6...0-0 7 0-0 c5	Keres	E43	4 (The IQP), 5 (The Isolated Pawn Tandem) & 6 (Hanging Pawns)	
7...d5	Tal	E52	11 (The QGD Exchange Centre)	10
5 ♖e2 c5		E42	5 (The Isolated Pawn Tandem), 15 (The Benoni Set-up)	
5 ♖e2 ♖a6	Fischer	E45	11 (The QGD Exchange Centre) & 4 (The IQP), 15 (The Benoni Set-up)	

4 $\mathbb{W}c2$ (Capablanca's Variation).

Opening moves	Variation name	ECO code	Chapters of interest	Game references
4...0-0 5 a3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ 6 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ b6 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$	E32	19 (The $\mathbb{W}c2$ Centre), 4 (The IQP), 5 (The Isolated Pawn Tandem) & 22 (The English Centre), 15 (The Benoni Set-up)	5, 14, 18	
7 $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 8 g3	E32	20 (The Struggle of the Fianchettoed Bishops)		
6... $\mathfrak{Q}e4$	E32	18 (The Dutch Set-up), 20 (The Struggle of the Fianchettoed Bishops)	19	
4...c5	E38/9	22 (The English Centre)	21	
4... $\mathfrak{Q}c6$	E33	17 (The Zurich Centre)	16	
4...d5	E34/35/36/37	11 (The QGD Exchange Centre), 4 (The IQP)		

Other variations.

Opening moves	Variation name	ECO code	Chapters of interest	Game references
4 f3 d5		E24/25	9 (The Isolated Doubled c-pawn Centre) & 12 (The Light-Squared Blockade)	8
4 f3 c5		E20	15 (The Benoni Set-up)	
4 a3	Sämisch	E26/27/28/29	16 (The Sämisch Centre) & 12 (The Light-Squared Blockade), 13 (The Hübner Centre), 17 (The Zurich Centre)	1, 15
4 $\mathbb{Q}g5$	Leningrad	E30/31	14 (The Leningrad Centre), 15 (The Benoni Set-up) & 13 (The Hübner Centre), 21 (The Flexible Centre)	13
4 $\mathfrak{Q}f3$ b6 5 $\mathbb{Q}g5$	Alekhine	E12/13	21 (The Flexible Centre)	20
4 g3		E20	9 (The Isolated Doubled C-pawn Centre), 17 (The Zurich Centre), 20 (The Struggle of the Fianchettoed Bishops), 22 (The English Centre),	
4 $\mathbb{W}b3$	Spielmann	E22/23	19 (The $\mathbb{W}c2$ Centre), 22 (The English Centre)	

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