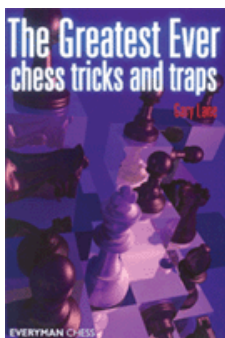




COLUMNISTS

Opening Lanes

Gary Lane



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Left Behind

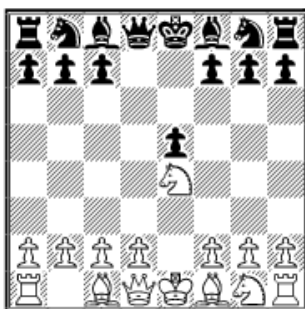
It is great to strive for the win, but it is difficult to have a perfect response to every opening. There will be times when you have to fight your opponent on his territory, otherwise you will be left behind at the bottom of the tournament. This is certainly the case when playing Black, because White can usually dictate certain types of play since he has the first move.

Matt Lasley from the **USA** wants to change all that and have a great response available. He writes, "I typically play the Scandinavian. I've seen 1 e4 d5 2 Nc3 several times, and now recognize it as a transposition to the Dunst (a.k.a Van Geet, Linkspringer): 1 Nc3 d5 2 e4. I've read how 2...e5 is considered risky and plays into a Dunster's plans. What is the prudent Scandinavian to proceed with? One master suggested 2...dxe4 3 Nxe4 Nd7 for Black, saying it offers sensible development comparable to the Caro-Kann or French Rubinstein. Well, I hate those defenses and try to avoid the transpositions. Besides, 3...Nd7 just looks timid to me. In your [December 2005](#) article you touch on an unrelated line (1 Nc3 d6) and then in [June 2006](#) you dealt with 1 Nc3 again, one using the 3...Nd7 line where Black falls in a trap, and another game where Black pushes the pawn (2...e5) into main Linkspringer lines. In the [October 2006](#) follow up to a related question, you investigate the trap line with a different king move, but it's still no help to me, as I don't like 3...Nd7. Tim Harding wrote a [June 1998 Kibitzer](#) article called "Who Dunst it?" saying: 'If Black captures on e4 instead at move two, the character of the game is totally different. The position is very fluid with the emphasis on rapid development and therefore although this maybe one of Black's best lines, it does not suit everybody. *Ove Ekebjerg-Luba Kristol* 14th CC World Ch Final 1994-97 went **1 Nc3 d5 2 e4 dxe4 3 Nxe4 e5 4 Bc4 Nc6 5 d3 Bf5** (a more solid line for Black is 5...Be7 6 Nf3 Bg4 7 h3 Bh5 8 Ng3 Bg6 9 0-0 Bd6! Keast-Franzen, Australia-Slovakia corr 1993-97).' Talk of "fluid," "rapid development" and "Black's best lines" all sounds suitable to me. I'll be looking at 3...e5 to possibly replace my 3...Bf5. What other options does Black have to play a Scandinavian-like game staying away from Caro-Kann, French, or other such moves?"

I know you like aggressive positions, so 3...e5 is a good candidate to encourage your opponent to have a tactical game. However, there is a certain amount of risk and you can get left behind in development while White goes on a rampage. Here is a game that should serve as a warning.

Steven Stinis-Pieter Claesen Leuven 2002

1 Nc3 d5 2 e4 dxe4 3 Nxe4 e5



This is the position that Mr. Lasley is so keen to play as Black. **4 Bc4 Bf5!** A natural looking move, but surprisingly it is wrong and Black soon plunges into trouble after only a handful of moves. The superior 4...Nc6!? is discussed in the next game. Here are some other games where Black went wrong: a) 4...Qh4 5 d3 Bg4 6 Nf3 Be7? (6...Qh5 7 Neg5 Nh6 8 0-0 is good for White who has better placed pieces) 7 Bxf7+! Kf8 (or 7...Kxf7 8 Nxe5+ Kf8 9 Nxe4 winning) 8 Bxe8 Kxe8 9 Nxe4 Bxd1 10 Nf5 Bxc2 11 Nxe7+ Kf8 12 Nd5 1-0, J.Nobs-M.Schmid, Biel 1988. b) 4...Nd7 5 Nf3 Be7 6 d3 Ngf6? (it looks like an obvious developing move, but it loses; in contrast 6...h6 might look meek, but in the circumstances is arguably essential) 7 Nfg5 0-0 (if 7...Rf8, then 8 Bxf7+! Rxf7 9 Ne6 traps the black queen) 8 Nxf7 Rxf7 9 Ng5 Nd5 10 Nxf7 Kxf7 11 Bxd5+ 1-0, S.Blasco Marques-J.Lopez Juan, Pref 1992. c) 4...Nf6? 5 Ng5 (the simple ploy of attacking the f7-pawn reaps dividends time after time in this variation with 3...e5) 5...Nd5 6 Qf3! Qxg5 7 Bxd5 f5 8 Nh3! (8 Bxb7? runs into 8...e4 cutting off the queen from defending the bishop) 8...Qg4 9 Qxg4 fxg4 10 Ng5 with the brighter prospects. d) 4...Be7? 5 Qh5 (yes, sometimes it can be this simple. White will win at least a pawn

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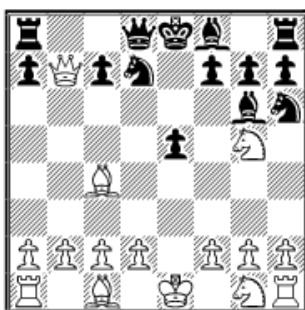


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thanks to the threats against the e5- and f7-pawns) 5...Nh6 6 d3 0-0 7 Bxh6 gxf6 8 Nf3 Nc6 9 Nxe5 1-0, L.Trabert-J.Perez, Germany Team Championship 2007. e) 4...f5 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 d3 g6 (or 6...Nf6 7 Nf3 when once again the prospect of Ng5 is irritating for Black) 7 Nf3 Bg7 8 0-0 Qe7 9 Bg5 Nf6 10 Re1 Bd7 11 Nd5 (White missed the pretty combination 11 Nxe5! Nxe5 12 d4 Nxc4 13 Rxe7+ Kxe7 14 Qe2+ winning) 11...Qd6 12 Nxf6+ Bxf6 13 Bxf6 Qxf6 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 Qe2 0-0-0 16 Qxe5 Qg5 17 Be6 Kb8? 18 Bxd7 Rxd7? (oops) 19 Qxh8+ 1-0, L.Fontana Sotomayour-R.Llanes Luno, Aragon 2007. **5 Qf3!** This is the power move that brings Black's opening into question. The simple fact is that 5... Bxe4?? allows 6 Qxf7 checkmate. **5...Bg6** Also possible is a) 5...Qc8!? it makes sense to defend the bishop and also keep an eye on the b7-pawn because of White's threats of Qf3-b3 is some variations: 6 Ng5 Nh6 7 Qb3 Bg6 8 h4 (I prefer 8 N1f3 when 8...Bd6 9 0-0 0-0 10 d3 favours White) 8...Be7 9 N1f3 Bxg5?! (9...0-0!? is the best defensive try) 10 hxg5 Ng4 (if 10...Nf5, then 11 Nxe5 wins) 11 Nh4 Bh5 (or 11...0-0? 12 Nxg6 hxg6 13 Qh3 and Black can resign) 12 g6! a crafty way to block the bishop on h5 from defending the f7-pawn 12...Bxg6 (or 12...fxg6 13 Be6 Nd7 14 Bxg4 Bxg4 15 Nxg6 winning) 13 Nxg6 fxg6 14 Be6 Qd8 15 Bxg4 with a massive advantage, A.Voge-I.Kostowski, Goch 2003. b) 5... Nh6 6 d3 Bxe4 7 Qxe4 Nc6 8 Bxh6 gxf6 9 Nf3 (9 Bb5 Qd6 10 Nf3 can also be considered by White) 9...Bg7 10 0-0-0 favours White. **6 Ng5** A simple, but good response. The discovered attack against the b7-pawn is ominous because Black's first duty is to look after his king by making sure the pawn on f7 is safe. **6...Nh6** I have to admit that 6...Nf6 looks like the obvious move, but can Black play on after 7 Qb3 when the threats to the pawns on b7 and f7 dictate that he should give up. **7 Qxb7 Nd7**



8 Be6?! Well, White is keen to win in style. A more routine, but stronger approach would be 8 d3! to support the king's knight and aid development leaving White a safe pawn up. **8...Be7** Instead 8...fxe6 9 Nxe6 Rb8! (9...Qb8 10 Qxa8 Qxa8 11 Nxc7+ Kf7 12 Nxa8 Bd6 13 d3 favours White because of the material advantage) 10 Nxd8 (10 Nxc7+ Ke7! 11 Qc6 Bf5 12 d4 seems awful for Black if you are trying to look ahead, but without the pressure of sitting in front of such a position, then 12...Rc8! secures Black's advantage because the white attack is feeble) 10...Rxb7 11 Nxb7 Be4! I assume Black missed this star move, which rescues the position because of the threats against the pawn on g2 and the knight on b7. **9 Bxd7+ Kxd7** A sad necessity because 9...Qxd7 fails to 10 Qxa8+ winning easily. The sorry state of Black's position seems incredible for such an international master, especially because he has a reputation for being solid in the opening. Perhaps the computer database has it wrong and it is really his brother Jeroen playing black. He loves complicated, crazy games. Can someone let me know? **10 N1f3 f6 11 Qd5** +

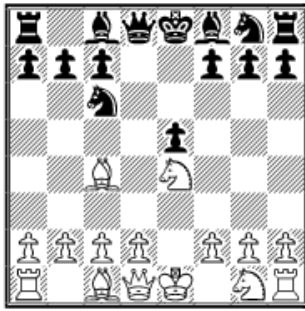


11...Ke8? I can't blame Black for going wrong, because just about anybody would be shell-shocked by such an opening disaster. Still, 11... Bd6 is the best chance in such dire circumstances, when 12 Ne4 confirms White's superiority. **12 Qc6+ 1-0**

It is clear that Black has to be careful in this variation or face an onslaught in the opening. A safer route to equality is promised by 4...Nc6. In the next example an Australian correspondence player gets the chance to attack with the black pieces. This will surely encourage Mr. Lasley.

Mats Larsson-Stephen Kerr Correspondence 2004

1 Nc3 d5 2 e4 dxe4 3 Nxe4 e5 4 Bc4 Nc6

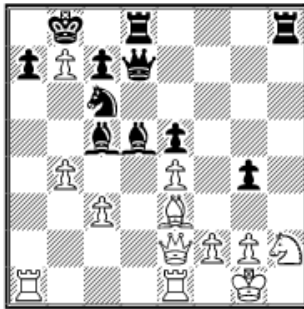


Black safeguards the e5-pawn, gets a piece into play, but crucially the queen on d8 is able to cover the g5-square, which White would like to use for his knight. **5 d3 Be7** A straightforward approach of making sure that the white king's knight cannot safely occupy the g5-square. **6 Nf3 Nf6** Mr. Lasley mentions 6...Bg4, but I think White has a slight edge upon 7 h3 Bh5 8 Ng3 Bg6 9 0-0 (9 h4 to hassle the bishop is easily stopped by 9...h5 when White loses momentum) 9...h5? Black should concentrate on getting his pieces out rather than hopefully advancing the h-pawn (9...Nf6 is an obvious alternative, although after 10 Bb5 Qd6 11 Re1 White has decent pressure against the weak e5-pawn) 10 Bb5 h4 11 Ne4 Bh5 (or 11...Bxe4 12 dxe4 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 Bd6 14 Bg5 gives an excellent ending because the pawn on h4 will soon be captured) 12 Qe2 gave White the better chances in P.Isler-J.Sucher, Triesen 2004. **7 Neg5 Nd5!**



It might look odd to move the king's knight again, but blocking the bishop on c4 from having access to the f7-pawn is the correct way to proceed. In the past 7...0-0 has given White a terrific attack: 8 Nxf7 Rxf7 9 Ng5 Nd5 10 Nxf7 Kxf7 11 Qf3+ Ke6 this position naturally reminds me of the Fried Liver Attack in the Two Knights, which occurs after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 d5 5 exd5 Nxd5 6 Nxf7 Kxf7 7 Qf3+ Ke6 12 Be3 (this seems to be the best continuation just to maintain the initiative. It would be very difficult to defend over the board and is more likely to be tested in correspondence chess where the computer software can help the defence, but 12 Qh3+ Kd6 13 Qxh7 Nd4! is roughly equal) 12...Ncb4 (12...Nd4? runs into 13 Bxd4 exd4 14 Qe4+ Kf6 15 Bxd5 winning easily, although 12...Na5 might be a sterner, but after 13 0-0-0 I prefer White) 13 0-0-0 Qf8 14 Qxf8? (White has a great attack, so it is imperative that he pick the right time to exchange queens. In this case, unless you get the piece back quickly, then something like 14 Qg3 looks good, intending a3 or Rhe1 with excellent prospects) 14...Bxf8 15 f4 b5 16 Bb3 a5 when Black has survived the onslaught and soon went on to win in A.Strik-N.Drel, Haarlem 1999. **8 Qe2 f6** Black defends the e5-pawn with the slight drawback of opening up the a2-g8 diagonal, which in some circumstances might make castling kingside prone to tactical tricks. The alternative 8...h6?! is not so convincing upon 9 Qe4! Bxg5 (9...Bb4+ is worth investigating in view of 10 Bd2 (10 Kf1! Nce7 11 Bxd5 Qxd5 12 Qxb4 hxg5 13 Nxc5 f6 with compensation for the pawn) 10...Bxd2+ 11 Nxd2 Nf6 12 Qh4 0-0 is fine for Black) 10 Bxd5 Bf6 11 0-0 0-0 12 Bxc6 bxc6 13 Nxe5 Re8 14 Qxc6 (maybe 14 Bf4 is the safe option to keep control of the position, because taking on c6 allows the black light-squared bishop to be activated on the a8-h1 diagonal) 14...Rb8 15 Nc4 Bb7 16 Qc5 Qd7 17 Bf4 with the advantage, L.Tinture-B.Dieu, Internet 1999. **9 Ne4** I will leave it to others to test 9 0-0!? when 9...fxg5 10 Nxe5 is suitably complicated; a sample line runs 10...Kf8 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Qf3 + Kg8 13 Re1 when White has some play, but I can't see a clear breakthrough. **9...Bg4** The obvious threat is ...Nd4; therefore, White needs to take evasive action. **10 c3 Qd7** Or 10...Nb6 11 Bb3 Qd7 intending to castle queenside looks like a good plan. **11 h3 Be6 12 0-0 0-0-0!** One has to admire Black's desire to win, because opposite side castling is an invitation for both sides to attack. **13 Re1 Rhe8 14 a4** I suspect 14 b4 is also met by 14...g5 15 a4 Rg8 when it looks easier for Black to step up a gear by preparing ...g5-g4. **14...g5 15 a5 h5 16 a6 g4** 16...b6 is the safety first approach, but 17 Bb5 might cause Black some anxiety on the queenside light squares. **17 hxg4 hxg4 18 axb7+ Kb8 19 Bxd5** Or 19 Nh2 Rh8 20 Ng3 f5 21 Ngf1 f4 with a tremendous initiative. **19...Bxd5 20 Nh2 f5 21 b4** Top marks for resourcefulness. This tricky move might have worked over-the-board; however, in correspondence chess you have days of study to work out the best and safest continuation. **21...Rh8** It is not obvious, but 21...fxe4!? creates wild complications. For instance, 22 dxe4 Be6 23 Qa6 (23 b5 is met by 23...g3 24 fxg3 Bc5+ 25 Be3 Nd4 26 cxd4 exd4 27 Bf2 Rh8 when I would rather be black) when the big threat is b4-b5 to dislodge the defence of the a7-pawn, although maybe 23...Bc5! turns the tables in view of 24 bxc5 Rh8, which allows Black to hang

on and frankly looks better. 22 Be3 fxe4 23 dxe4 Bc5!



A stunning response that looks amazing, but once the idea of transferring the black queen to the h-file is noticed it all becomes rather logical. 23... Bxe4?? leads to instant ruin upon 24 Qa6 when the threat of Bxa7+ should lead to Black putting his pieces back into the box. 24 exd5 Qh7 25 Kf1 Naturally, 25 Bxc5?? runs into 25...Qxh2+ 26 Kf1 Qh1 checkmate. 25...Qxh2 26 Qa2 Bxe3 27 Rxe3 Rxd5 0-1 White resigned because of the variation 28 Qxd5 Qh1+ 29 Ke2 Qxa1 30 Qxc6 (otherwise White is just a piece down) 30...Rd8 threatening Qd1+ with a massive advantage.

Dr. Jeff Mullins from the USA writes, "I am thinking of playing the Center-Counter with 2...Nf6 instead of Qxd5. I have been trying to find information on the line 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 c4 c6 4 dxc6 Nxc6. The material that I find says that this gambit is good for Black and gives at least equality, if not a better game for Black, and thus no serious player plays this (but weak club players probably will). How exactly does Black go about expressing his advantage (if there is one)? I realize that the main problem for White is being down a tempo with a backward d-pawn (that also will block in his king bishop after playing d3), but I also realize that these can be temporary disadvantages and if White can get in d4 and finish his development, he will be a pawn ahead. Thus, vigorous action is called for on the part of Black. How should Black proceed to achieve equality or better (if that is possible)?"

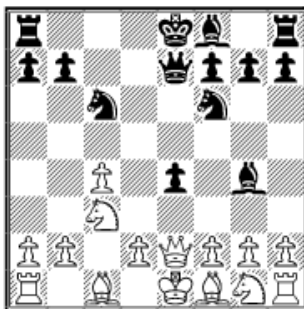
You are completely right that theory tends to dismiss 4 dxc6, but even I have noticed that many club players give it a go and often have success. I certainly believe Black is better after giving up a pawn and here is a miniature to encourage you:

Arman Monir-William Paschall Budapest 2009

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 c4 c6



4 dxc6?! This is rightly frowned upon by strong players, but it is still tested because Black needs to respond actively otherwise he will simply be a pawn down. Instead 4 Nc3 cxd5 5 d4 or 4 d4 cxd5 5 Nc3 transposes to the Caro-Kann and the variation known as the Panov-Botvinnik Attack. 4...Nxc6 5 Nf3 e5 6 Nc3?! 6 d3 is usually played to lessen the impact of ... e5-e4. 6...e4 7 Qe2? The queen is misplaced here; the threat against the e4-pawn is temporary, which means in future lines ...Nd4 could be ominous. 7 Ng5 is met by 7...Bf5 with the better prospects; a sample line runs 8 Be2 h6 9 Nh3 Bxh3 10 gxh3 Qd7 11 Bg4 Qd3 12 Qe2 Ne5 with decent chances. 7 Nh4 g5 traps the knight and 7 Ng1 is hardly a good advertisement for White's development, when 7...Bc5 is the first step towards a good position. For example, 8 d3 0-0 9 dxe4 Qb6 with a clear advantage. 7...Qe7 8 Ng1 Bg4 0-1



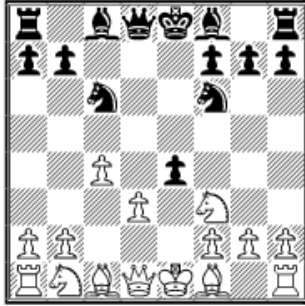
It is amazing that White can resign after just eight moves, but it is justified if you examine the lines: 9 f3 (if 9 Qe3, then 9...Nb4 is deadly because White can do nothing to diminish the impact of a fork on c2. 9...

Nd4 10 Qd1 exf3+ 11 Kf2 fxe2 and it is a horror position for White.

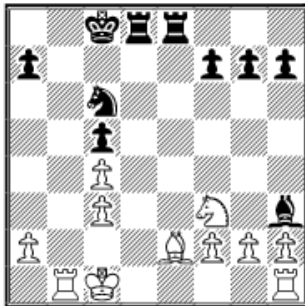
The game that really put me off this line for White was the following grandmaster struggle:

Murray Chandler-Michael Adams Hastings 1989-90

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 c4 c6 If you want to play something different, 3... e6 is known as the Icelandic Gambit and invites wild complications. **4 dxc6?! Nxc6 5 Nf3 e5 6 d3 e4!**



The advance of the e-pawn is the easiest way to gain a small, but lasting advantage. 6...Bc5 is also worth investigating along with 6...Bf5. **7 dxe4** It is worth noting that 7 Qe2? has been known for sometime as being an error and gifts Black a point: 7...Bb4+! 8 Bd2 0-0 9 dxe4 Nxe4 10 Qd1 (10 Bxb4 is met by 10...Re8!) 10...Re8 (Black is for choice because 10... Bc5 also wins) 11 Be2 Nxd2 12 Nbx2 Bg4 13 Kf1 Bxd2 14 Ng1 Bxe2+ 15 Nxe2 Qd3 0-1, A.Shah-M.Pearson, San Francisco 2005. **7...Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Nxe4** Black might be a pawn down, but his active play gives him sufficient compensation, especially as the white king is poorly placed. **9 Be3 Bf5 10 Nh4** Or 10 Nfd2 0-0-0! 11 a4 Bc5 12 Ke1 Rhe8 (12...Nxd2! 13 Nxd2 Nd4 is excellent for Black) 13 Nxe4 Bxe3 14 fxe3 Rxe4 gave Black an edge in K. Al Harazi-A.Jalal, Amman 2008. **10...0-0-0+ 11 Kc1** 11 Ke2 Be6 12 b3 (if 12 Kf3, then f5 looks good for White) 12...g5 13 Nf3 Bg7 wins. **11...Be6 12 Nc3** Or 12 Nd2 Nxd2 13 Bxd2 Ne5 14 b3 Be7 15 Nf3? (15 g3 is necessary) 15...Ba3+ 16 Kc2 Bf5+ 17 Kd1 Nxf3 18 gxf3 Bb4 0-1, S.Brodie-K.Maslak, Dos Hermanas 2004. **12...Nxc3 13 bxc3 b6** White might have an extra pawn, but now it is less of a worry for Black because of the doubled c-pawns negating the material advantage. **14 Nf3 Bc5 15 Bxc5 bxc5 16 Rb1 Rhe8 17 Be2 Bh3!**



A lovely move that helps to heap misery on White because his pawn structure will end up a mess. A good player like Chandler might normally salvage a draw, but Adams is in a different class when he has a positional advantage. **18 gxh3** If 18 Bf1, then 18...Bg4 threatens to exchange on f3 to double the f-pawns, while 19 Ng1? falls victim to 19...Re1+ 20 Kb2 Rxb1+ 21 Kxb1 Rd1+ 22 Kb2 Rxf1 winning. **18...Rxe2 19 Rb2 Rxb2 20 Kxb2 Rd3 21 Ng5 Rd2+ 22 Ka3 Rxf2** Adams regains his pawn and has a magnificent ending thanks to White's doubled c- and h-pawns. White never really recovers from this position and Black grinds out the win in expert fashion. **23 Rd1 h6 24 Ne4 Rxh2 25 Rg1 Re2 26 Nxc5 g6 27 Rg3 Ne5 28 Kb3 Kc7 29 Na6+ Kb6 30 Nb4 Re4 31 Rg1 a5 32 Nd5+ Kc5 33 Rd1 Nxc4** Now Black is a pawn up and has to make sure nothing goes wrong before the time-control. **34 Nf6 Rf4 35 Nd7+ Kc6 36 a4 g5 37 Nb8 + Kc7 38 Nd7 Nd6 39 Ne5 Rf5 40 Ng4 h5 41 Ne3 Rf3 42 Nd5+ Kc6 43 h4 gxh4** It is now two pawns to the good and the final result is certain. **44 Ne7+ Kd7 45 Nc8 Kxc8 46 Rxd6 h3 47 Rd4 h2 48 Rh4 Rf2 49 Rxh5 f5 50 Kc4 Rd2 51 Kc5 f4 52 Kc6 Kd8 53 c4 f3 54 e5 Rg2** 54...f2 also wins, but that would just give White the excuse to play on a little longer upon 55 Rxh2 f1Q 56 Rxd2+. **55 Kb6 Rb2+ 56 Kc6 f2 0-1**

Opening Lanes is based on readers' questions. Do you have a question about a particular opening line? Baffled by a branch of the Benoni or Budapest? Submit your questions (with your full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Gary will reply in his next ChessCafe.com column...

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