



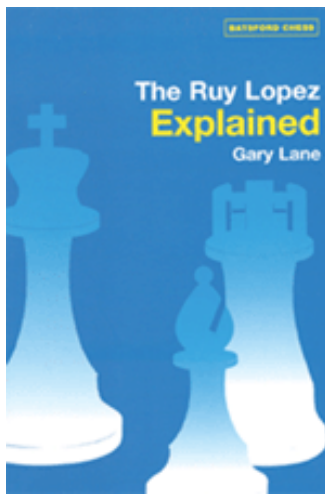
Opening Lanes is based in large part on readers' questions. Do you have a question about a particular opening line? Baffled by a branch of the Benoni or Budapest? Submit your questions (with you full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Gary will reply in his next *Chess Cafe* column...

[Yes, I have a question for Gary!](#)

COLUMNISTS

Opening Lanes

Gary Lane



The Ruy Lopez Explained

by Gary Lane

The Books of Questions

The first question that casual players tend to ask is, "How do I beat my chess computer?" My standard reaction is to look deep and meaningful, before suggesting they pull out the plug. This might now change, because **Marc Lacrosse** from **Belgium** has generated a bright idea. The quick solution is to play odd openings to baffle their positional sense and the long answer is contained in the following question: "I like to practice with (slightly) unorthodox openings in correspondence play. It's amusing that, in these times of encyclopaedic databases and monster computer programs, it is still possible to get good results (and funny games!) with disreputable openings. I can just imagine some opponents agonizing, "How can *Fritz* be of no help against *this* horrible opening?" Lately, I have had some pleasant experiences with highly tactical lines after 1 Nc3, which is at best considered to be an unambitious transpositional trick. The first game is a miniature, where White sacrifices a bishop at move 5! In the second game, White gives the bishop pair at move 8 and sacrifices pawns at move 10 and 11, while Black seems busy playing reasonable moves. But when White sacrifices the exchange at move 17 everything is over. These games were played at correspondence time controls against experienced players, who could get advice from their favourite chess programs."

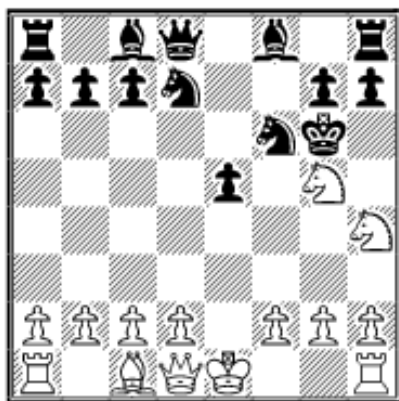
Well, surely correspondence players would not use computer programs, would they? Anyway, I rather like the idea of playing something silly in the opening to confuse a computer.

Marc Lacrosse-Eduardo Parodi Internet 2004
1 Nc3 d5 2 e4 dxe4 3 Nxe4 Nd7 4 Bc4 Ngf6?



You can hardly blame Black for not bothering to check his moves with the computer, since the game has hardly begun, but it is now effectively over. In the recent game V.Biliy-A.Kislinsky, Alushta 2006, Black saw the danger and acted promptly to curtail it: 4...e6 5 Nf3 Ngf6 6 d3 Be7 (6...a6 7 a4 b6 8 0-0 Bb7 9 Ng3 Bd6 with a balanced position, A.Spice-G.Wall, 4NCL-British Team Championship 1997) 7

0-0 0-0 8 Qe2 a6 9 a4 b6 10 Nxf6+ Bxf6 11 c3 Bb7 12 Bf4 with roughly equal chances. **5 Bxf7+!** A great move to play, as it draws the king into the open to allow a white knight to exploit the white squares and usually occupy the e6-square. **5...Kxf7 6 Ng5+ Kg6?** This is just asking for trouble because White can ignore material gain and concentrate on mate. 6...Kg8 7 Ne6 Qe8 8 Nxc7 and now: a) 8...Qf7 9 Nxa8 is just good for White because the knight can safely escape via the c7-square. b) 8...Qd8!? 9 Nxa8 e5!? 10 d4 Bd6 11 Nf3 e4 12 Ng5 h6 (12...b6 to try and grab the knight on a8 fails to impress upon 13 Ne6 Qe7 14 d5, which is better for White) 13 Ne6 Qe7 14 Nf4 Kh7 15 Be3 (15 h4 is the correct choice, when 15...b6 16 h5 Bb7? 17 Ng6 wins) 15...b6 16 c3 Bb7 17 Nxb6 Nxb6, when Black has survived the onslaught with a real battle likely for middlegame supremacy, A.Spice-T.Hinks Edwards, 4NCL-British team Championship 1997. c) 8...Qg6 9 Nxa8 is good for White, but Black has some chances, if he can quickly snare the knight in the corner. For example: 9...Qxg2 10 Qf3 Qxf3 11 Nxf3 Ne8 12 a4 b6 13 a5 (13 Nxb6! is the precise move, when 13...axb6 14 a5 is better for White) 13...Bb7 14 Ke2 (14 Nxb6 falls victim to 14...Bxf3, when Black is on top) 14...Bxa8 15 axb6 Bxf3+ 16 Kxf3 axb6 is about equal, A.Van den Berg-H.Hicker, Lignano Sabbiadoro 2005. **7 N1f3!** This is played in the proper spirit because it seeks to hound the black king to mate. Also possible is 7 Ne6 Qe8 8 Nxc7 Qf7 9 Nxa8 with a winning advantage. **7...e5** This move is suggested by computer software, but a few seconds later it changes its mind! Other moves do not offer much resistance: a) 7...Ng4 8 Nh4+ Kh5 (or 8...Kxg5 9 d4+ Kh5 10 h3 wins easily) 9 Nf7 Qe8 10 h3 and Black can go home. b) 7...h6 8 Nh4+ Kxg5 9 d4+ Kxh4 10 h3 with mate next move. c) 7...Ne4 8 Ne6 Qe8 9 Nxc7 and White can look forward to victory. **8 Nh4+ 1-0**

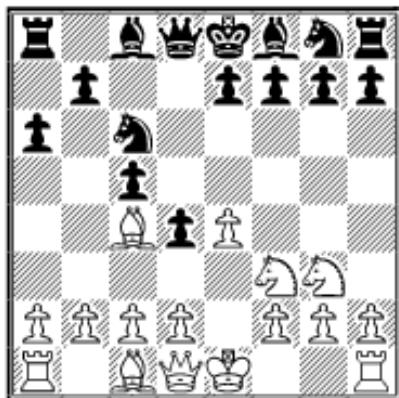


The correspondence player has the delight of now being able to declare a forced mate: 8...Kxg5 (or 8...Kh6 allows 9 Nf7 mate) 9 d4+ Kxh4 10 h3! Bb4+ 11 c3 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 e4 13 g3 mate.

Here is another example of Monsieur Lacrosse playing to win with 1 Nc3.

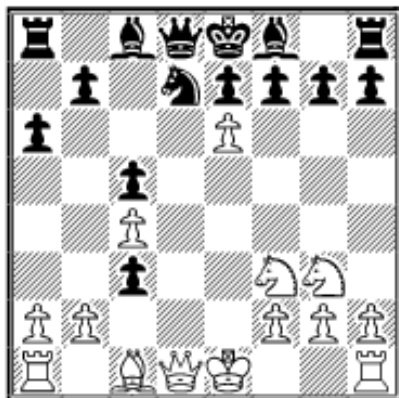
Marc Lacrosse-Peter Strike 2005

1 Nc3 d5 2 e4 d4 After 2...e6, would White dare play 3 d4 and enter the French? **3 Nce2 c5** Or 3...e5 4 Ng3 Be6 5 Nf3 f6 6 c3 d3 7 Nxe5!? (IM Harald Keilhack's favourite sacrificial line) 7...fxe5 8 Qh5+ (this is the idea, to start picking up some pawns) 8...Bf7 9 Qxe5+ Ne7 10 Qb5+ Nd7 11 Qxd3 Ng6 (11...c5 is a possibility) 12 Qc2 c5 13 d3 Qc7 (13...Be7 is met by 14 Be2 intending to castle kingside) 14 Nf5 with three pawns for a piece; White has compensation, but I would favour Black, M.Lacrosse-F.Mignon, Correspondence 2006. **4 Ng3 Nc6 5 Nf3 a6 6 Bc4**



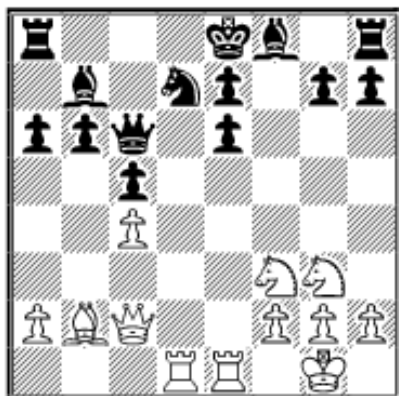
6...Nf6 Other moves: a) 6...b5!? 7 Bd5 Bb7 8 a4 is equal. b) 6...e6 7 d3 Bd6 (or 7...b5 8 Bb3 Qc7 9 0-0 Nf6 10 Nh4 Be7 11 f4 with vague threats of e4-e5 and f4-f5, A.Paal-Z.Nagy, Budapest 2003) 8 0-0 Nge7 9 c3 (White seeks to undermine Black's extended pawn chain) 9...Ng6 10 cxd4 cxd4 11 Bb3 0-0 12 Bg5 Qa5 13 Bd2 led to equal chances in V.Zatonskih-S.Movsesian, Hlohovec 1995. c) 6...e5 7 a4 (White puts a temporary stop to queenside pawn expansion) 7...g6 8 d3 h6 9 h3 (instead 9 0-0 Bg7 10 Ne1 intending f2-f4 is interesting) 9...Bg7 10 0-0 Nge7 11 Bd2 0-0 12 Nh2 Kh7 13 a5 Bd7 14 Ng4 Ng8 (or 14...f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 Nh2 b5 17 axb6 Qxb6 18 b3 offers equal chances) 15 f4 exf4 16 Bxf4 led to decent kingside play in A.Gremm-C.Piesnack, Berlin 2000. **7 d3 Na5** Also possible is 7...Bg4 8 e5!? And now a) 8...Bxf3 9 Qxf3 Nxe5 10 Qxb7 Nxc4 11 Qc6+ Nd7 12 dxc4 leads to roughly equal chances. b) 8...Nxe5?? is most amusing because of 9 Nxe5 Bxd1 10 Bxf7 mate. c) 8...b5? is inaccurate because of 9 Bxf7+ Kxf7 10 exf6 exf6 11 Ng5+! (this exposes the black king) 11...fxg5 12 Qxg4 Qd5 13 Ne4 h6 14 0-0 favours White. c) 8...Nd5 9 e6!? (a careful approach is 9 h3 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 e6 11 Qh5 with equal chances) 9...Bxe6 (instead 9...fxe6 10 h3 Bf5 11 Nh4 g6 12 Nxf5 exf5 13 Nxf5! gxf5? 14 Qh5+ Kd7 15 Bxd5 is good for White) 10 Ng5 Qd7 11 N3e4 b6 12 Nxe6 Qxe6 13 0-0 Ne5 14 Bb3 with a balanced position. **8 e5 Nxc4** Black is happy to exchange the light-squared bishop, which often poses a problem in this variation. Other moves: a) 8...Nd5 9 Ng5 Nxc4 (9...b6?? 10 Nxf7! Kxf7 11 Qf3+ Ke6 12 Qf5 mate) 10 dxc4 Nb4 (or 10...h6 11 Nxf7 Kxf7 12 Qf3+ Nf6 13 exf6 exf6 14 0-0 with a level position) 11 e6 Bxe6 12 Nxe6 fxe6 13 0-0 (White has given up the pawn to stifle Black's kingside development, which promises practical chances) 13...g6 14 Ne4 Qb6 15 c3 Nc6 16 Qg4 Nd8 17 b4! gives White an edge; 8...Ng8 9 0-0 e6 10 Bg5 Qc7 is equal. b) 8...b5!? 9 exf6 (9 Bxf7+ Kxf7 10 Ng5+ Kg8 11 0-0 Ne8? [11...Qd5!? works out to be level despite the temporary position of the black king] 12 Qf3 wins) 9...bxc4 10 fxg7 Bxg7 11 Nh5 Bf8 12 Qe2 cxd3?? (well, you never know!) 13 Nf6 mate. **9 dxc4** White can try 9 exf6. For example: a) 9...Qa5+ 10 c3 Nd6 11 Bd2 is level. b) 9...Nb6 10 fxg7 Bxg7 11 Nh5 Bf8 12 Ng5 h6 13 Qe2 hxg5?? (an obvious improvement is 13...Nd5 14 Ne4 Qb6 with a balanced position) 14 Nf6 mate. **9...Nd7** Instead 9...Ng4 10 h3 Nh6 11 Bxh6 gxh6 12 Qd2 is slightly better. **10 c3!? dxc3** Black is happy to gain material, even

though the majority of his pieces have yet to move. a) 10...Qb6!? 11 cxd4 Qb4+ (or 11...cxd4 12 0-0 e6 13 b3 Bc5 14 Bb2 0-0 15 Ne4, when the d4-pawn will soon be won by White) 12 Qd2 (12 Bd2 Qxc4 13 b3 Qd5 14 Be3 is worth a closer look) 12...Qxd2+ (12...Qxc4 13 b3 Qd5 (14 dxc5 e6 15 Bb2 Qxd2+ 16 Nxd2 Nxc5 is level) 13 Bxd2 cxd4 14 e6! (a theme that can be found in the main game) 14...Nc5 15 exf7+ Kxf7 16 b3 gives White a superior ending. b) 10...Qa5?! is met by 11 b4!, when 11...cxb4 12 cxd4 rewards White with a strong pawn centre. **11 e6!?**



A clever idea that gives up a pawn in return for slowing down Black's kingside development. **11...fxe6** If Black tries to be clever, then 11...Nf6?? would have White laughing aloud after 12 exf7+ Kxf7 13 Qxd8 winning. **12 0-0 Qb6 13 Qc2 cxb2?** One can hardly fault Black for wanting to be three pawns up, but White does have plenty of counterplay, so he should try and get his kingside pieces into play. For

instance: 13...g6!? to allow a kingside fianchetto is a logical idea, when play might continue: 14 Qxc3 e5 15 Nxe5!? (or 15 b3 Bg7 16 Bb2 0-0 17 Qe3 Qe6 18 Rfe1 gives White an initiative) 15...Qf6 (of course 15...Bg7?? is hopeless because of 16 Nxd7 Bxc3 17 Nxb6, when Black can resign) 16 f4 Bg7 17 Re1 Nxe5 18 fxe5 Qe6 19 Bg5 0-0, when Black would argue he has a slight edge, as he can seek to undermine the e5-pawn. **14 Bxb2 Qc6** The queen gets out of the way to allow a queenside fianchetto. The problem is that White already has all his pieces well-placed to create tactical chances. **15 Rfe1 b6** It is a difficult position for Black and easy to go wrong: a) 15...b5 16 cxb5 axb5 17 Nd4 with an advantage; 15...e5 16 Rad1 b5 17 Bxe5 gives White the superior chances. **16 Rad1 Bb7**



Or 16...e5 17 Ne4 h6 18 Bxe5 with excellent chances. **17 Rxd7! 1-0**

As usual in correspondence games, Black gives up early because he can work out his own demise. For example: 17...Qxd7 (of course 17...Kxd7 allows the knight fork 18 Ne5+ winning the queen) 18 Ne5 Qc7 (or 18...Qd6 19 Rd1 Qc7 20 Qa4+ wins) 19 Qa4+ b5 20 cxb5 0-0-0 (20...Qb6 21 bxa6+ Bc6 22

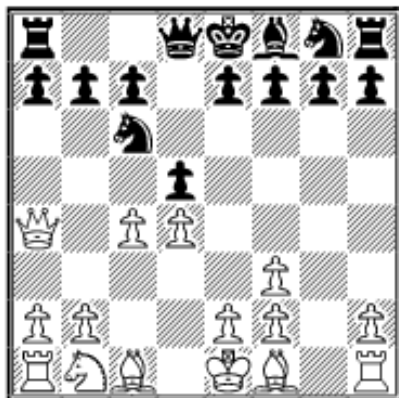
Nxc6 Rxa6 23 Na5+ Kf7 24 Qf4+ with a big advantage) 21 bxa6 Bd5 22 Bc3 with a crushing attack.

Geoff Pais from London has been spending time studying a game that I commented on and thinks he might have changed the assessment of an important line in the Chigorin: "I have a problem in regard to the game Etchegaray-Bukal, Cannes 1997. Isn't the line 5...e5!? refuted by 6 Nc3

exd4 7 cxd5! (as opposed to your suggestion of 7 Nxd5) 7...dxc3 8 dxc6 b6 9 Bh3 Bd6 10 bxc3 Nf6 11 Rg1 Kf8 12 Bf4 Bxf4 13 Qxf4 Qe7 14.Rd1 and White is ahead. Could you suggest something against this? Or is 5...e5 more '?!' than '!?', and 5...e6 the better option?"

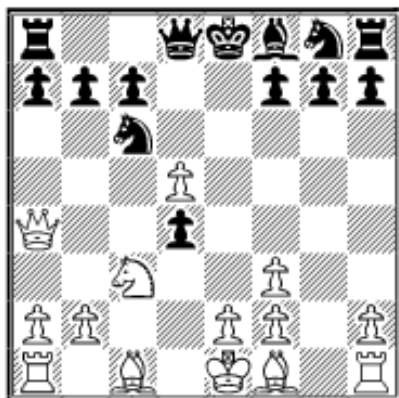
Patrice Etchegaray-Vladimir Bukal Cannes 1997

1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 Nf3 Bg4 4 Qa4 Bxf3 5 gxf3



5...e5!? Perhaps Mr. Pais will soon be looking for an alternative at this junction, so here are a couple of suggestions: 6 e3 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Nge7 8 Bd2 dxc4 (8...a6!? is another possibility; 8...0-0 9 0-0-0 a6 10 Qc2 Ba5 11 Kb1 Kh8 12 f4 Rb8 13 Rg1 b5 14 cxd5 exd5, when the position offers even chances, I.Novikov-S.Skembris, Saint Vincent 2000) 9 Bxc4 a6 10 Qc2 Qd7 11 0-0-0 0-0-0 with a level position,

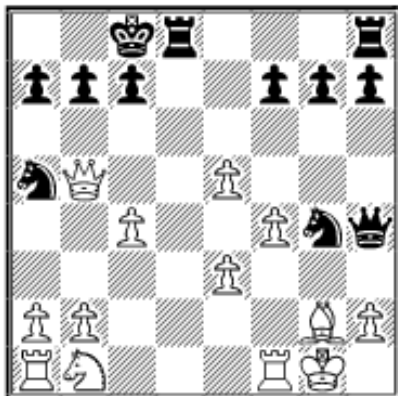
M.Olszewski-M.Tazbir, Laczna 2002. b) 5...Nf6 6 Nc3 e6 7 Bg5 dxc4 8 0-0-0 Be7 9 Qxc4 (or 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 d5 exd5 11 Nxd5 0-0 12 Qxc4 Ne5 intending ...c7-c6 with equal chances) 9...Nd5! with equality, L.Portisch-V.Smyslov, Portoroz 1971. **6 dxe5** I think Mr. Pais is correct in his analysis and Black may have to reconsider this adventurous variation. 6 Nc3 and now: a) 6...Nge7 7 dxe5 d4 8 Ne4 Ng6 9 f4 Qd7 10 c5 (10 Qb3! to hit the b-pawn is promising 10...Na5 11 Qb5 Qxb5 12 cxb5 Rd8 13 e3 looks fine for White) 10...Ncxe5 11 Qb3 Nc6 12 Bh3 f5 13 Qxb7 Rb8 14 Qa6 Nb4 15 Qxa7 Rd8 is actually better for Black. b) 6...Qd7 and now b1) 7 dxe5 dxc4 8 Qxc4 0-0-0 9 f4 Nd4 10 Qd3 Qc6 11 Rg1 with an unclear position because White has an extra pawn, but his pieces lack harmony. b2) 7 Bh3! (this looks like a star move and is a cause for concern for Black) 7...Qxh3 8 cxd5 Qg2 9 Rf1 Nge7 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 dxe5 is good for White. c) 6...exd4 7 cxd5



This is the new suggestion and it does seem to give Black problems in the opening: 7...dxc3 8 dxc6 b6 9 Bh3 Bd6 10 bxc3 Nf6 11 Rg1 Kf8 12 Bf4 Bxf4 13 Qxf4 Qe7 14 Rd1 with the better chances. **6...Qh4!** The queen is useful here because it stops White's ideas along the fourth rank. **7 Bg2** White is ready to castle kingside. Other moves: a) 7 Rg1 Qxh2 8 cxd5 Qxg1 9 dxc6 b6 10 Be3 Nh6 11 Nc3 with a double-edged

position, Dubinka-A.Segal, Rotterdam 1998. b) 7 Nc3 Bc5 (instead 7...Qxc4 8 Qxc4 dxc4 9 Bf4 is equal) 8 cxd5 Qxf2+ 9 Kd1 0-0-0 10 Qe4 (10 Qg4+ is interesting in view of 10...Kb8 11 Bd2 f5 12 Qxf5 Nge7 when black's active pieces offer some compensation for the pawns) 10...Nge7 11 Bd2 Nxd5 12 Nxd5 Rxd5 13 Qxd5 Rd8 14 Bh3+ Kb8 15 Bd7 Bb4 16 Re1? Bxd2 17 Qxd2 Nxe5 led to equal chances in T.Kohler-

M.Muse, Berlin 1995. 7...0-0-0 8 0-0 Bc5 9 f4 Nh6 10 e3 d4! Black is aiming to upset White's pawns structure. 11 Qb3 Na5 12 Qb5 If 12 Qc2, then 12...dxe3 13 fxe3 Ng4 is good for Black. 12...dxe3 13 Bxe3 Bxe3 14 fxe3 Ng4



The threats of ...Nxe3 and ...Qxh2+ spell disaster for White. 15 h3 Nxe3 16 c5 Qg3 17 Qe2 Nxf1 Black has a large material advantage, which dictates the outcome of the game. 18 Qxf1 Nc4 19 Nc3 Or 19 Qxc4 Rd1+ 20 Qf1 Rxf1+ 21 Kxf1 Qxf4+ is awful for White. 19...Ne3 20 Qf3 Qxg2+ 21 Qxg2 Nxe2 22 Kxe2 Rd2+ 23 Kf3 Rxb2 24 Rg1 Rd8 25 Ke3 g6 26 f5 Rc2 27 Ne2 Rxc5 0-1

Jerry Guillot from the USA has survived wild storms and now has to get back to the lighter side of life and worry about the King's Gambit. He writes: "We in the New Orleans area are finally getting back to some degree of normalcy, and are resuming our chess clubs. Two of the members (myself included) play the King's Gambit and have run into the following line: 1 e4 e5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 exf4?. I favor 4 Bb5+ and have been met with 4...c6 5 dxc6 bxc6?? Black now has a weakened pawn structure, but I've not been able to exploit it. The move 5...bxc6 is being played by a 1900 rated player! Any ideas?"

Well, New Orleans is the home of Paul Morphy. His old home is still there as well as his gravesite. I know all this because a wife of a friend pointedly informed me that her husband spent a long weekend there and left her at the hotel, while he looked up chess history. Anyway, in the King's Gambit you have to watch out for transpositions and I think you have gone astray here.

Jerome Gasior-Jean Michaud Reims 2003

1 e4 e5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 exf4



4 Bb5+ This is the move you have been testing, but I am not sure if it is the correct response, if you want to secure an opening advantage. I recommend 4 Nf3, because such a position is well-charted when it arises after 1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 d5 4 exd5. For example: a) 4...Qxd5 5 Nc3, when White has gained time attacking the queen, ensuring an edge. b) 4...c6 5 d4 (White ignores the pawn exchange because after 5 dxc6 then 5...Nxc6 will bring another piece into play) 5...Bd6 6 dxc6 Nxc6 7 Be2 (7 Bb5!? is also possible) 7...Nge7 8 0-0 0-0 9 c4 Bg4 10 Nc3 gave White an edge in F.Ruiz Manchon-E.Garcia Garrido, La Poble de Lillet 2005. c) 4...Nf6 5 Bb5+ and now: c1) 5...Bd7 6 Bc4 (6 Qe2+

Qe7 7 Bxd7+ Nbx7 8 Qxe7+ Bxe7 9 c4 (White is relying on his queenside pawn majority to eventually create a passed pawn, while his king will help to stop Black quickly advancing the kingside pawns. Well, that is the grand plan, but the position is evenly balanced.) 9...0-0 10 d4 Bb4+ 11 Kf1 Nh5 12 a3 Be7 13 Nc3 h6 14 Kf2 offers White a promising ending, J.Graf-E.Kirchmayr, Vienna 1999) 6...Qe7+! 7 Qe2 Qxe2+ 8 Kxe2 Bd6 9 Re1 0-0 10 Kf1 with level chances, A.Jackson-T.Nixon, 4NCL-British Team Championship 2005. c2) 5...c6 6 dxc6 Nxc6 7 d4 Qa5+ (I like 7...Bd6 to hang on to the f4-pawn, when 8 0-0 0-0 9 Nbd2 Bg4 10 Nc4 Bc7 11 Bxc6 bxc6 12 Qd3 is about equal) 8 Nc3 Bb4 (of course the threat is 9...Qxb5, you can but hope, if you are Black) 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bxc6 Bxc3! 11 bxc3 bxc6 12 Bxf4 (probably 12 c4!? is simple and good) 12...Qxc3 13 Qd2 (not every King's Gambit player will like to give up a potential attack for an ending, but sometimes you have to adapt to the circumstances) 13...Qxd2 14 Nxd2 Nd5 15 Bd6 Rd8 16 Bc5 Ne3 17 Rfc1 Bf5 18 c3 Rab8 19 Nf1 Nc4 (or 19...Nc2!? 20 Ng3 Bd3 21 Rab1 is roughly equal) 20 Bxa7 Rb2 21 Re1 Be6 22 Reb1 Rc2 23 Rc1 Rb2 24 Rcb1 (not 24 a4? because of 24...Bd5, when White's position collapses) 24...Re2 25 Re1 Rc2 26 Rec1 ½-½, E.Moser-M.Godena, Mallorca 2004.

4...c6 5 dxc6 bxc6 6 Qf3 This active queen move is closer to the spirit of the King's Gambit; the idea would be to develop the king's knight to e2, followed by castling. Or 6 Bc4 Qh4+ 7 Kf1 is about level, but looks strange, which is typical in the King's Gambit. **6...Qc7 7 d4 Bd6** Black just needs to defend the f-pawn before expanding on the kingside. **8 Bc4 Nf6 9 Ne2 Bg4 10 Qf2 g5!?**



The energetic 10...Ne4 is good because 11 Qf1 looks bad for White, as it blocks in the king's rook, when 11...g5 preserves the f4-pawn. **11 Nbc3** The knight does a good job by preventing ...Ne4, hitting the queen. **11...Nbd7 12 h4! 0-0-0?!** Black tends to castle kingside in this variation, so something has gone wrong. The point is that the lone pawn on c6 is hardly a strong shield of defence. Or 12...Nb6 13 Bd3 gxh4 14 Bxf4 favours White. **13 hxg5 Rde8** At first sight, 13...Nh5 is an obvious choice to hang on to the f-pawn, but Black's position disintegrates upon 14 Rh4! Bxe2 15 Bxe2 Ng7 16 Bxf4 when the two extra pawns means things are bleak for Black. **14 gxf6 f3 15 gxf3** White accepts the challenge of giving up the queen in return for three minor pieces. 15 Kf1 fxe2+ 16 Nxe2 is also good for White. **15...Bg3 16 fxe2 Nxf6** There is no rush to take on f2, and if White was in desperate time-trouble, he might still have a chance to cause an upset. **17 Ba6+ Kd7**



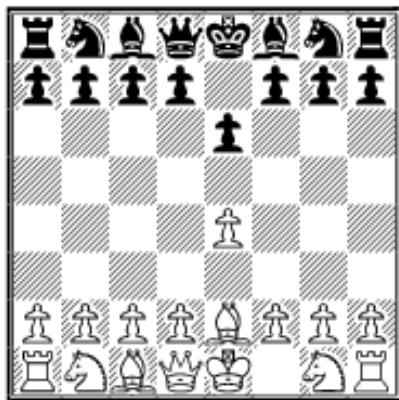
18 0-0 Gasior has the novel experience of castling on the eighteenth move with the knowledge he will lose his queen! **18...Bxf2+ 19 Rxf2 Nxc4** After **19...Re6**, White can play **20 Bg5** with a clear advantage. **20 Rxf7+ Re7 21 Rxe7+ Kxe7 22 Bf4 Qb6 23 Bc4** The three pieces are hunting the black king, which is severely exposed. **23...Rf8 24 Rf1** White prepares **Bd6+** as well as various attacking options. **24...Kd7 25 Na4 Qd8 26 Nc5+ Ke8** The king has run out of decent squares: **26...Kc8 27 Ba6** mate; **26...Ke7 27 Bg5+ Nf6 28 Ne4** with a big advantage. **27 Ne6 1-0**

Finally, if you play the French Defence, have you had anything weird played on move two? **Paul Lowry** from **South Carolina** has: "I am a devotee of the French Defence. In a recent game, I ran into a move I have never encountered previously. After **1 e4 e6** my opponent played **2 Be2** and I replied **2...d5**. Has **2 Be2** been essayed before? It sure took me aback."

There is seemingly nothing new in chess when you discuss move two options, but it is very unusual. This is probably because White has better alternatives, but you can understand that some players are fed up with the main lines and want to do their own thing. The best example I could track down is a nice miniature, which was played in England.

M.Elliott-R. Power Bognor Regis 1965

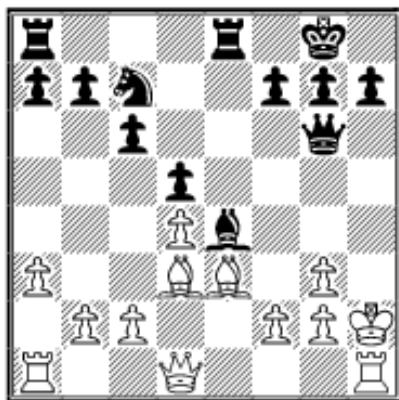
1 e4 e6 2 Be2



There are many decent second moves against the French, but this is not one of them. The best rare alternatives are **2 Qe2** and **2 d3**, aiming for a King's Indian Attack formation. **2...d5** When you are confronted by something different, the first thing is not to panic that you do not know the "book" move. Sometimes you just have to use common sense.

Therefore, advance in the centre as usual with **...d7-d5** and **...c7-c5**, followed by steadily developing the kingside. **3 Bf3** This looks a bit awkward, but at least it gets the game out of the standard book lines. For instance: a) **3 d3 Nf6** (**3...dxe4** is a worry for White, as it is dead equal after **4 dxe4 Qxd1+ 5 Bxd1 4 Nd2** (White is now playing in a similar fashion to the King's Indian Attack) **4...Be7 5 Ngf3 0-0 6 0-0 c5** (as usual Black challenges for control of the centre) **7 c3 Nc6 8 Qc2 b5 9 a4** (White makes an effort to stop Black from cementing a space advantage on the queenside) **9...bxa4 10 Qxa4 Qc7 11 Re1** led to equal play in *V.Mitrovic-S.Milanovic, Obrenovac 2005*. b) **3 exd5 exd5 4 d4** (this is a

realistic attempt to get something out of the opening by playing an Exchange French) 4...Nf6 5 Bg5 Be7 6 Nf3 Nbd7 (Black is carrying on with developing and is hardly under threat, so has been awarded instant equality) 7 0-0 Ne4 8 Bxe7 Qxe7 9 Nc3 Ndf6 10 Bb5+ c6 11 Bd3 Be6 when the position was level in J.David-D.Lallemand, Saint Quentin 1998. c) 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d3 (4 e5 Nfd7 5 d4 c5 looks like a normal French, except that the bishop is arguably misplaced) 4...Be7 5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 Nbd7 (6...c5 intending ...Nc6 seems sensible and ensures a level position) 7 e5 Ne8 8 d4 when White has somehow contrived to secure a slight edge, C.Duran-B.Marquez, Santa Marta 1999. **3...Nf6 3...dxe4 4 Bxe4 Nf6 5 Bf3 Bd6** is fine for Black. **4 exd5 exd5 5 d4 Bf5 6 Ne2 Bd6** Black is under no pressure, so he can get his bishops into decent positions before castling kingside. It sounds easy and it is, because 2 Be2 makes it so. **7 Nbc3 c6** Black supports the d5-pawn and prevents a knight from intruding on the b5-square. OK, it is obvious, but it stops White from exchanging the d6-bishop. **8 Ng3 Bg6 9 0-0 0-0 10 Be3 Na6** An interesting idea, to bring the knight into the game via c7. There is nothing wrong with it, but ...Nbd7, followed by ...Rfe8, and ...Nf8 is worth investigating. **11 a3?!** No black piece is going to hop onto the b4-square, so this is fairly pointless. **11...Nc7 12 Be2 Re8 13 Bd3 Bxg3 14 hxg3 Ne4** Black enjoys a slight spatial advantage, but it shouldn't be fatal for White. Then again, having played the unambitious 2 Be2, it is hardly surprising that he is struggling. **15 Nxe4 Bxe4 16 Kh2?** I wonder if he touched the king by accident! Of course, the reality is that he is trying to be clever, by shifting his king's rook to the h-file for some sort of hopeful attack. **16...Qd6 17 Rh1 Qg6**



18 f3? A clear blunder, but these things happen. Perhaps 18 Bxe4 Rxe4 19 Kg1 is logical to get the rook into play, although I still prefer Black. **18...Bxd3 19 cxd3 Rxe3 0-1**

An Apology!

In last month's [column](#), Santoro Osmar from Argentina asked about the Grob (1 g4) and mentioned that Skembris and Basman had played it. I duly noted that Spyridon Skembris

had played it when he was young, but I made a Freudian slip and instead put Spyridon Grivas, which is the surname of another Greek grandmaster. Then again who would notice because the mistake was corrected shortly after it was posted. Yet one very important person had seen it, because I received an e-mail from the man himself! "It is Spyridon Skembris and not Spyridon Grivas. My name is **Efstratios Grivas** and I never played the Grob in my life!"

Well, it is now official that Grivas is no fan of the Grob; however, he does like the Sicilian, so to make it up to him you should check out his book [A Complete Guide to the Grivas Sicilian](#) published by Gambit.

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Gary wants your questions on openings!! Send it along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence. Yes, I have a question for Gary!



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