



## COLUMNISTS

### *Dutch Treat*

Hans Ree



## A Tenacious Patient

Each year the Staunton Chess Club in the Dutch city Groningen organises a gambit tournament, in the spirit of the great gambit tournaments of the early 20th century, though on a smaller scale. The Groningen tournament has only three rounds.

It is not always easy to find a suitable gambit. Last year the Albin Countergambit was chosen, 1. d4 d5 2. c4 e5 3. dxe5 d4, a gambit which I think is not quite good enough, certainly not for a three-round tournament. Playing the Albin as Black in two of your three games seems too much of a handicap.

The tournament that was played early this month had a better theme, the King's Gambit. I would call it the queen of gambits, though I know of different opinions. A cynic once described a gambit as "giving up a point to gain the public's sympathy as compensation."

In 1924 Rudolf Spielmann wrote his famous article *Vom Krankenlager des Königsgambit* (From the sickbed of the King's gambit). It was provoked by Spielmann's disappointing results in the tournaments of Karlsbad and Mährisch Ostrau 1923, where he had scored +1 -5 =0 with the King's Gambit, which in the past had served him well. In later years Spielman kept playing it, though only occasionally.

It is interesting to note that the black systems that were most feared by Spielmann are not considered so dangerous nowadays. Better for Black, according to Spielmann, were the following systems:

**A. 1. e4 e5 2. f4 Bc5 3. Nf3 d6 4. c3 Bg4**

But according to the Yugoslav *Encyclopaedia of Openings* White is slightly better after 5. h3. Another possibility for Black, 4...f5,

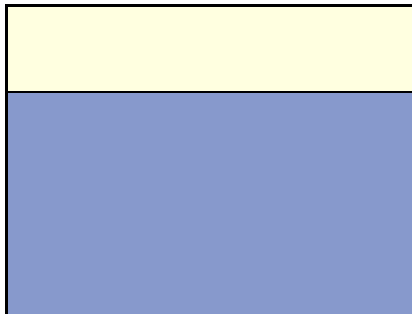


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Spielman calls "quite suspicious for White". Well, maybe. It's very complicated and "quite suspicious for Black" too. Few people dare to play this move.

**B. 1. e4 e5 2. f4 d5 3. exd5 e4 4. d3 Nf6 5. dxe4 Nxe4 6. Nf3 Bc5 7. Qe2 Bf5**

Modern theory says that after 8. Nc3 Qe7 9. Be3 White will get a better endgame.

**C. 1. e4 e5 2. f4 exf4 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. Nc3 c6**

This is still considered an excellent defense for Black, though Nigel Short has shown that White can get a comfortable equality. However, Spielmann's reason for not playing 3. Nf3 is not so convincing nowadays: he thought that the modern defense 3...d5 4. exd5 Nf6 would give Black an advantage.

Current opinion is that White has a comfortable equality at least. On the other hand, the positions that Spielmann said he would like to play as White, after 3...g5, are nowadays considered quite promising for Black. In fact this was the theme of the Groningen tournament.

From a modern perspective Spielmann's reasons for despair were not compelling, but he felt that his opening was assailed from all sides and repair work at one place would only show new holes at others.

I took the opportunity to look at my own sickbed: in the database I found seven games in which I had played the King's Gambit as White. My score had been 2½ out of 7. There must be better ways to use the advantage of the first move, but it has to be said that the games were enjoyable.

There have always been faithful knights of the King's Gambit and there always will be. Look at the chess scene of the James Bond film *From Russia with Love*, based on Spassky-Bronstein, USSR championship, Leningrad 1960. Very nice, isn't it?

The moves that were obligatory in Groningen were 1. e4 e5 2. f4 exf4 3. Nf3 g5.

Black plays the classical defense (or attack, you might say), centuries old, but in my opinion still the only try for a refutation

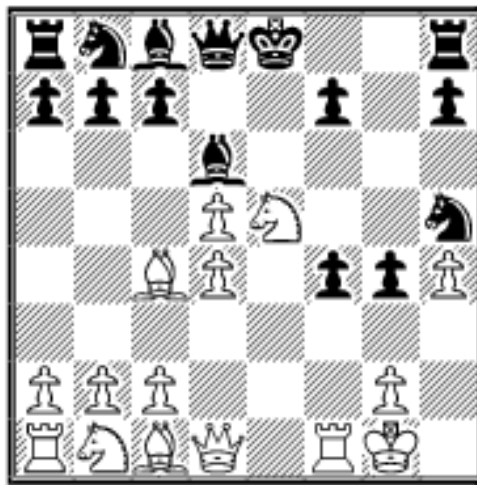
of the King's Gambit. Many "modern defenses" have come and gone, but this oldie seems still the best. I think Viktor Kortchnoi and Larry Evans have stated that the burden to prove equality is still on White in this variation and I agree.

There were 45 games played in the Groningen gambit tournament and White's score was a fine 56 percent. In the invitation group, won by the Frisian IM Sipke Ernst, White even scored 4 out of 6. Good news for the gambiteers. After a sickbed of almost eighty years the patient still clings to life and can bite nastily on occasion.

But percentages cannot prove correctness, so let's see how the gambit was handled in the top group, where the players had studied the opening seriously in advance.

**White: Brenninkmeijer Black: Ligterink, first round**

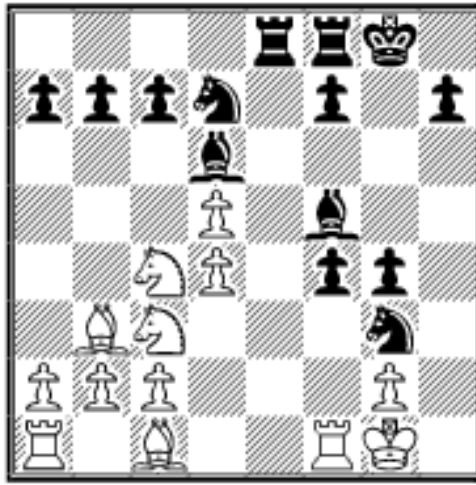
**1. e2-e4 e7-e5 2. f2-f4 e5xf4 3. Ng1-f3 g7-g5 4. h2-h4 g5-g4 5. Nf3-e5 Ng8-f6 6. Bf1-c4** The main line used to be 6. d4, which was played in a game in the next round. **6...d7-d5 7. e4xd5 Bf8-d6 8. d2-d4 Nf6-h5 9. 0-0**



**g1 Ng4xe3** and White resigned.

This position also appeared in Hoeksema-Ernst of the same round. There followed **9...0-0** The strongest move. **10. Ne5xg4 Qd8xh4 11. Ng4-h2 Nh5-g3 12. Rf1-f2 Rf8-e8 13. Nb1-c3 a7-a6 14. Bc1-d2 Nb8-d7 15. Qd1-c1 Nd7-f6 16. Rf2xf4 Bd6xf4 17. Bd2xf4 Ng3-h5 18. Bf4-e3 Re8xe3 19. Qc1xe3 Qh4xh2+ 20. Kg1xh2 Nf6-g4+ 21. Kh2-**

Back to Brenninkmeijer-Ligterink: **9...Qd8xh4 10. Qd1-e1 Qh4xe1 11. Rf1xe1 0-0 12. Bc4-b3 Bc8-f5 13. Nb1-c3 Nb8-d7 14. Ne5-c4** Black has no sensible plan here, wrote Ligterink later. **14...Ra8-e8 15. Re1-f1 Nh5-g3** This turns out badly, but White had a very good game anyway.



**16. Bc1xf4** Nice, but 16. Nxd6 cxd6 17. Bxf4 was more accurate. **16...Pg3xf1** For now White had to reckon with 16...Bxf4 17. Rxf4 b5, though 18. Kf2 seems quite alright for him. **17. Ta1xf1** Because Black's Bf5 is unprotected, White regains his Exchange with a clear advantage.

**18...Kg8-g7 19. Bf4xd6 Kg7-g6 20. Bd6xf8 Nd7xf8 21. d5-d6 Nf8-e6 22. Nc3-b5 Re8-d8 23. d4-d5 Ne6-c5 24. c2-c4 a7-a6 25. Nb5-d4 Bf5-d3 26. Bb3-c2 Bd3xc2 27. Nd4xc2 Rd8xd6 28. Nc2-e3 h7-h5 29. b2-b4 Nc5-d3 30. c4-c5 Rd6-f6 31. Rf1-d1 Nd3-f2 32. Rd1-d4 g4-g3 33. Ne3-f1** Black resigned.

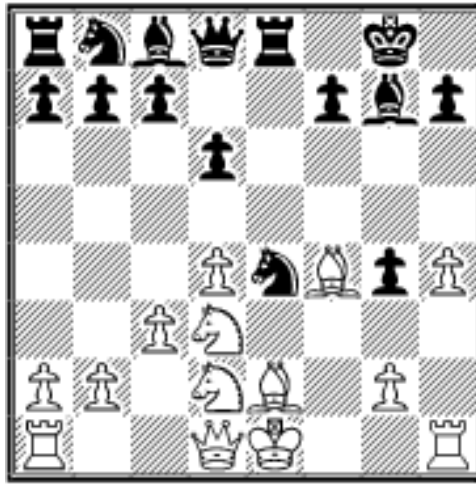
A nice game that evened the score for the King's Gambit, 1-1. However, theoretically Black was on top, for Hoeksema-Ernst needed an improvement for White badly.

In the second round this was tried in Brenninkmeijer-Hoeksema, where instead of Hoeksema's 12. Rf1-f2, Brenninkmeijer played **12. Rf1-e1** After **12...Bc8-f5 13. Nb1-d2 Nb8-d7 14. Nd2-f3 Qh4-h5** a position was reached that had already appeared in a game Freyman-Cohn from 1912. White's position is not very good and he eked out a draw with considerable effort.

In the other game of that round the main line of the Kieseritzky Gambit was played.

**White: Ligterink Black: Ernst**

**1. e2-e4 e7-e5 2. f2-f4 e5xf4 3. Nf1-f3 g7-g5 4. h2-h4 g5-g4 5. Nf3-e5 Ng8-f6 6. d2-d4** After the first round 6. Bc4 was under a cloud. **6...d7-d6 7. Ne5-d3 Nf6xe4 8. Bc1xf4 Bf8-g7 9. c2-c3 0-0 10. Nb1-d2 Rf8-e8 11. Bf1-e2**



**12...Bc8-f5 12. Nd2xe4 Bf5xe4 13. 0-0 Qd8xh4 14. Be2xg4 Nb8-c6 With 14...Bxd3 15. g3 Bc2 Black could reach an ending a pawn up, but White's compensation would be adequate. 15. Nd3-f2 Be4-g6 16. Qd1-d2 h7-h6 17. g2-g3 Qh4-e7 18. Bf4xh6 Bg7xh6 19. Qd2xh6 Qe7-e3 20. Qh6xe3 Re8xe3 21. Ra1-e1 Ra8-e8 22. Re1xe3**

**Re8xe3 23. Kg1-g2** This ending must be about equal, but White went on to win.

A playable endgame is nowadays what White is aiming for in the Kieseritzky gambit, so this can be considered a success, but a serious question remains: what would White have done if Black, in the diagrammed position, had played 12...g3, which discourages castling and sets up terrible threats like 13...Bg4.

Wortel-Kroeze, Sonnevank tournament, Wijk aan Zee 1998, went **11...g4-g3 12. Nd2xe4 Rxe4 12. Ke1-d2 c7-c5 14. d4xc5 d6xc5 15. Kd2-c1** and though White won this game his position looks horrible.

After two rounds the Kieseritzky gambit had scored fine for White, but objectively it still seemed rather shaky. So in the final round, both Whites opted for a different line.

**White: Hoeksema Black: Ligterink**

**1. e2-e4 e7-e5 2. f2-f4 e5xf4 3. Ng1-f3 g7-g5 4. Bf1-c4** Here White has to be willing to sacrifice a piece after **4...g4 5. 0-0 gxf3 6. Qxf3**, the Muzio gambit. In Groningen this line was played once, in a lower group, but the game had no theoretical significance. I had a quick look at the openings encyclopaedia to see what the current verdict is on the Muzio. Unclear, as it has always been. **4...Bf8-g7 5. d2-d4 d7-d6 6. 0-0** The Hanstein gambit. **6...h7-h6 7. g2-g3 Bc8-h3 8. Rf1-f2 Nb8-c6 9. c2-c3**



A well known position.  
According to theory Black has a big advantage after 9...Nf6. In the game, after 9...Qd8-d7 10. g3xf4 g5xf4 11. Bc1xf4 Ng8-f6 12. Nb1-d2 0-0-0 13. Bf4-g3 Nf6-h5 14. Nf3-h4 Nh5xg3 15. h2xg3 Rd8-f8 16. Nh4-f5 Bh3xf5 17. Rf2xf5 White got some advantage and almost won.

**White: Ernst Black: Brenninkmeijer**

1. e2-e4 e7-e5 2. f2-f4 e5xf4 3. Ng1-f3 g7-g5 4. Bf1-c4 Nb8-c6 5. 0-0 Bf8-g7 6. d2-d4 d7-d6 7. c2-c3 h7-h6 8. Qd1-a4



An interesting "novelty", in Kortchnoi's sense:  
"Everything old and well-forgotten is new." In fact, the move was played in a simul by McDonnell in 1839. White threatens 9. d5 and after 9...Bd7 he plays 10. Qb3, winning a pawn. So, Black has to move his King, after which White has something to play for. In fact he won quite

quickly, not so much because of a blunder by Black near the end, but mainly because Black couldn't find a good plan. 8...Ke8-f8 9. Nb1-a3 Ng8-e7 10. Bc1-d2 Ne7-g6 11. Kg1-h1 Bg7-f6 12. Nf3-g1 Kf8-g7 13. g2-g3 f4xg3 14. h2xg3 Rh8-f8 15. Rf1-f2 Nc6-e7 16. Ra1-f1 Ne7-g8 17. Na3-c2 c7-c6 18. Bc4-d3 b7-b5 19. Qa4-a3 c6-c5 20. Bd3xb5 Bc8-b7 21. d4-d5 Bf6-e5 22. Nc2-e3 Ng6-e7 23. c3-c4 Ng8-f6 24. Qa3-d3 Nf6-h5 25. Ng1-e2 Bb7-c8 26. Kh1-g2 Ne7-g6 27. Ne3-f5+ Bc8xf5 28. e4xf5 Black resigned. After 28...Ne7 or 28...Nh8 follows 29. f6 Nxf6 30. Rxf6 Bxf6 31. Rxf6 and White wins.

So what's the current state of the King's Gambit Accepted? It seems to me that in the Kieseritzky gambit, always considered White's most reliable line, he is aiming for an equality that is by

no means guaranteed. There is more fun to be had in the Hanstein gambit, but my personal opinion is that Black should be better. The patient is still kicking, but a complete recovery is very much in doubt.

The Bishop gambit, 1. e4 e5 2. f4 exf4 3. Bc4, which was not allowed in the Groningen tournament, is another matter. I think White is OK there, but in a rather boring way.

All games from the Groningen tournament can be downloaded in PGN format at [www.sgstaunton.nl](http://www.sgstaunton.nl) or by clicking [here](#).

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