



C O L U M N I S T S

Over the Horizons

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The Magic of Move Orders

When theoreticians list moves as transposing to another variation, they often fall into a professional routine. In quiet positions such an exhaustive approach can be boring for the reader. Many transpositions are in fact nothing special. It hardly seems to make a difference whether you choose the left or the right path – in both cases the outcome will be identical. At least this is what many books suggest. And after reaching the “critical/main/often-played” situation, the helpful author always puts a diagram, as though he wanted to say: “Awake, my dear reader, now we are coming to the interesting part of the whole affair.”

Instead of starting your analysis at move 17 or 23, it sometimes pays off to study the differences between the left and the right path. At first sight all these move orders may look too similar to result in a noticeable gain. But you will quickly find the first nuances, and suddenly the various alternatives are beginning to develop a character of their own. This doesn't necessarily lead to clear theoretical improvements, but even a playable new move can become a surprise weapon in your personal repertoire.

Take, for example, the various articles on **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 0-0** published in [Kaissiber](#) 22-25 by **Lev Gutman**. They are full of new ideas – here I'll repeat some of them with Gutman's kind permission. Sometimes Lev finds a tactical blow that changes the assessment of a long-established variation. But in effect many of these drastic solutions could also be described as mere final points, justifying a variation which modestly began as a slight difference in move order.

It has been claimed that chess is 99 percent tactics. I'd rather say that in a perfect game of chess 90 percent of the moves can also – or even more easily – be found by a computer. Of the remaining 10 percent, however, much represents the magic of move orders.



Dr. Max Lange (1832-1899)

1. The Max Lange Attack

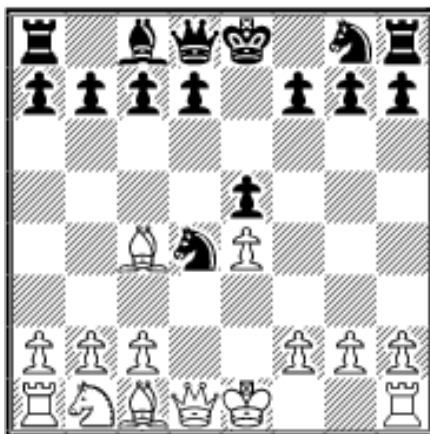
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 0-0

Castling has never been as popular as 4 c3. But when the Möller Attack fails (as Tim Harding's [articles](#) seem to indicate), perhaps the German master Max Lange was right in preferring 4 0-0?

4...Nf6 5 d4 exd4

The following tactical solution, starting with 6 e5, is the so-called Max Lange Attack. It can also be reached via the Two Knights Defense (3...Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 0-0 Bc5) or, in rarer cases, via the Scotch Gambit, the Bishop's Opening or the Center Game.

In recent months Lev Gutman has also discussed 5...Bxd4 6 Nxd4 Nxd4 7 f4 d6, the Max Lange Gambit, in two articles: [\[3\]](#), [\[5\]](#). In his main line 8 fxe5 dxe5 9 Bg5 Qe7, White exerts plenty of pressure on Black's position and apparently gets enough compensation for his sacrificed pawn. This is another rich source for move order subtleties, but for now it may suffice to say that you can easily spend hours on the question whether 5 d4 Bxd4 or 4 d4 Bxd4 (4...exd4 would be a version of the Scotch Gambit) 5 Nxd4 Nxd4 offers White better prospects.



(a) 6 f4? d5! 7 exd5 Qh4+ 8 g3 Qh3 9 Bf1 Qf5 10 Bd3 e4 was advantageous for Black in Fahrni – Spielmann, Baden-Baden 1914

(b) 6 0-0 d6 7 f4 Be6 (7...Nf6 transposes to the Max Lange Gambit) 8 Na3! Nf6 9 fxe5, and again we return to the territory of the Max Lange Gambit. But Black can try the independent continuation 8...Qe7!, envisaging to castle long.

So the question remains open – it wouldn't be easy to decide whether 4 d4 or 5 d4 is the more precise course for White.

6 e5 d5 7 exf6 dxc4



8 fxg7!

The overwhelming majority of authors consider 8 Re1+? Be6? 9 Ng5? as the main line of the Max Lange Attack, which leads to great complications – and some advantage for Black. But according to Gutman these three “main” moves are just three consecutive mistakes. Instead of 9 Ng5?, White has to play 9 fxg7, transposing to our main line, which

is good for White. Black's reaction 8...Be6 is also wrong, because 8...Kf8! 9 Ng5! equalizes (cf. the analyses by Gutman in [\[1\]](#)).

Nowadays the strength of the traditional reply 8...Kf8! is greatly underestimated. And the “books” do not even consider the correct answer 9 Ng5!.

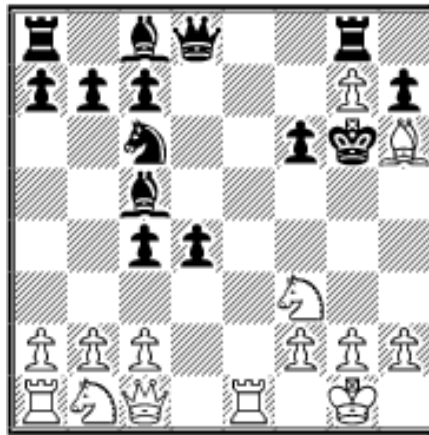
It is another astonishing fact that Max Lange's original analysis (1854) came nearer to the truth than practically any modern source. His main line had been 8 Re1+ Kf8. Commenting on 8 Re1+, he wrote: “Even stronger perhaps is the continuation 8 fxg7 Rg8 9 Bg5 Be7 (best) 10 Bxe7 Nxe7...”

8...Rg8 9 Re1+!

Even Gutman sometimes misses the precise move order. In [\[1\]](#) he didn't see a difference and presented the sequence 9 Bg5 Be7 10 Bxe7 Kxe7 11 Re1+ Be6 as his main line. The last move transposes to the main line of the present article. But as **Klaus Kögler** (Dorfen/ Germany) points out in [\[2\]](#), Black has an interesting option in 11...Kf6! 12 Na3 Kxg7 13

Nxc4 Kh8 14 Nce5 Nxe5 15 Nxe5 Qd5 16 Qf3 Qxf3 17 Nxf3 c5 (=, 52) Løvholt – Kögler, Correspondence 2004. White may nevertheless be able to demonstrate an advantage: 12 c3! Kg7 (12...dxc3 13 Qc1!) 13. Nxd4 Nxd4 14 cxd4 Kh8 15 Nc3! Qf6 16 Ne4 Qg7 17 Ng3 Be6 18 Re5 Rad8 19 f4 += Gutman. White has no weaknesses and can play for a win without risk.

However, Black has another, even more convincing reply at his disposal: 9 Bg5 f6! 10 Re1+ Kf7 11 Bh6 Kg6 12 Qc1 (so far analysis by Gutman in [\[1\]](#))



12...Qd5! (a significant improvement by **Volker Hergert**, Switzerland) 13 c3 d3 (13...Bg4 14 Nh4+ Kf7, Hergert) 14 Nh4+ Kf7, unclear (Hergert) [\[2\]](#).

9...Be6

9...Be7 10 Bg5 Rxc7 11 Bxe7 Nxe7 [\[1\]](#) 12 Qe2! (Bücker) appears to be good for White, e.g. 12...Bh3 13 g3 Qd6 14 Na3 d3 15 Qe3! +=, analysis

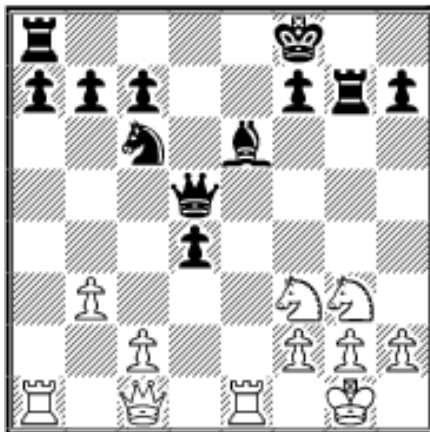
by **Jörg Simons** (France) and Bücker [\[2\]](#).

10 Bg5 Be7! 11 Bxe7 Kxe7

Returning to the line found by Tassilo von der Lasa in his *Handbuch*, 1858 (9 Bg5 Be7 10 Bxe7 Kxe7! 11 Re1+ Be6).

12 Re4!

Carl Schlechter's move in the 8th edition of the *Handbuch*. 12 Nbd2 (Jacques Mieses) can also lead to fascinating positions, e.g. 12...Qd5 (12...Kf6!? +=) 13 b3! cxb3 14 axb3 (better than 14 Nxb3 in Mieses – Teichmann, St. Petersburg 1909, but 14 cxb3 [\[1\]](#) comes into consideration) 14...Rxc7 15 Ne4 Kf8 16 Qc1 Qf5 (16...Rc8!?) 17 Ng3 Qd5



18 h3! Kg8 19 Qf4 Kh8 20 Rad1
Rag8 21 Nxd4 Nxd4 22 Rxd4 Qc5
23 c4 +/-, analysis by
Gutman/Bücker [\[1\]](#).

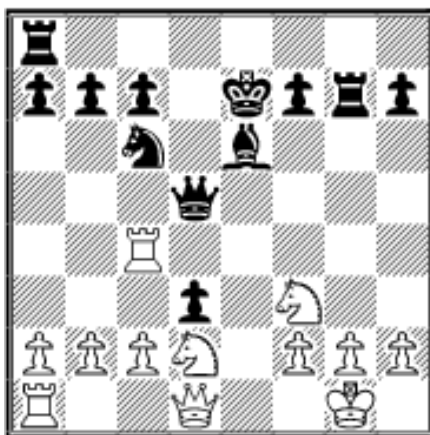
12...d3 13 Nbd2!

Mentioned by Al Horowitz in *Chess Review* 1957. He preferred 13 Ng5, but after 13...Qd5 14 h4 Rad8 15 Nc3 Qf5 White is in difficulties [\[1\]](#).

13...Qd5 14 Rxc4!

Another move recommended by Horowitz (1957). In 2005, **Michael Goeller** (USA) suggested 14 Rf4, but Black can solve his problems by means of 14...Qd6! 15 Re4 (15 Rxc4?! Bxc4 16 Nxc4 Qb4! 17 Qxd3 Rxc7 18 a3 Qc5 19 Re1+ Kf8 =) 15...Rad8! 16 Nxc4 dxc2 17 Qxc2 Qd3 18 Qxd3 Rxd3 19 Ne3 Kf6 = [\[1\]](#).

14...Rxc7



15 cxd3

15 Rc3?! (Horowitz) was convincingly refuted by 15...Rxc2+!! 16 Kxc2 Rg8+ 17 Kh1 Bh3 18 Rxd3 Bg2+ 19 Kg1 Bxf3+ =+, analysis by Goeller.

15...Qxd3

The d-pawn isn't too important, so 15...Rd8 comes to mind. But White has an adequate reply: 16 Qb3! Qxd3 17 Qxb7 Bxc4 18 Qxc6 +/-, Bücker.

16 Rc3 Qd5



At first sight the position seems harmless, but the fact that Black's kingside is weaker than White's has two unpleasant consequences for the defender: his king doesn't find a secure shelter. And, the lack of weaknesses in the white camp makes it very difficult for Black to achieve any counterplay. But such counterplay would be essential, to deflect White's attention from building up threats against Black's

king. It sounds a bit premature, but very probably Black's position is simply lost.

17 Qe1 Rag8 18 g3 Rg4

What else can Black do against the threat of Ne4?

19 Qe3! Qf5 20 Re1

Combining various threats, like 21 Ne4, 21 Nb3 and 21 Nc4 (intending further attacks: Nc5, Rc5 or Ne3), which Black can no longer parry.

20...Kd8

There is nothing better. Black wants to play Kc8, to protect b7 with his king. But...



21 Rxc6! bxc6 22 Ne5 Ra4

22...R4g7? 23 Qd4+ etc.

23 Qc5 Ra6 24 Nxc6+ Kd7 25 Re5 Qg4

None of the alternatives works:
25...Rxc6 26 Qd4+ Rd6 27 Qa4+;
25...Qf6 26 Ne4; 25...Qf4 26 Nb8+;
26...Qd3 27 Rxe6.

26 Rd5+ Kc8 27 Ne7+ Kb8 28 Rd4 +-. Analysis by Gutman/Bücker [\[1\]](#).

In the Max Lange Attack the dominant overtone is tactics, and you cannot find the precise move order without extensively checking variations. The following example is the opposite. Here you can only

detect the move order subtleties, when you overcome the tactical temptations – either by intuition or (like Lev Gutman) by concrete analysis.

2. Italian Game 4...d6 5 c3 Bg4

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 0-0 d6

Another critical variation, considered by many authors as the best reaction on 4 0-0. After castling too early, they believe, White will have difficulties to get rid of the pinning Bg4. But as Gutman has demonstrated in [6], this is just another common prejudice.

5 c3 Bg4



6 b4!

The complications arising from 6 d4 or 6 Qb3 fascinated the theoreticians of the past, from Staunton to Keres. But the positional approach seems more appropriate. The following main line is based on analyses by Gutman in [6]. However, once again we are tempted to vary the move order a bit and find our own interpretation.

Lev Gutman's preferred line 6 h3 Bh5 7 b4 Bb6 8 a4 (Gutman [6]) may in fact be less precise because of 8...a5 9 b5 Nce7. With his bishop already on the square h5, Black no longer has to fear the tactical blow Bxf7+ (f7 is now protected by Bh5).

6...Bb6 7 a4 a6

An important point of White's move order was suggested to me by **Martin Bennedik** (Germany): 7...a5 8 b5 Nce7? is punished by means of 9 Bxf7+. Therefore in move eight Black's Nc6 would have to retreat to b8, which at least gives White a slight plus.

8 h3

Stronger than 8 d3? (Levitzky – Alekhine, St. Petersburg 1913) 8...Qf6! (Bennedik) 9 Nbd2 Nge7 10 h3?! h5!. Obviously White's concept has failed and he has to be careful to avoid getting into serious trouble. After the text move the analogous 8...h5? 9 d3 Qf6? would be too risky: 10 hxg4 hxg4 11 Ng5! g3 (what else?) 12 Ra2 +/- . So it

seems probable that Black's bishop has to move. The square h5 looks like the most logical choice.

8...Bh5 9 d3 Nf6



By a different order of moves, we have reached the game Levitzky – Alekhine, St. Petersburg 1913. Instead of developing the knight to f6, Bennedik suggests 9...Nge7, but White should have an advantage after 10 Nbd2 (10 Qb3? Bxf3! 11 Bxf7+ Kf8 12 gxf3 Ng6! =) 10...0-0 11 Qb3, e.g.:
(a) 11...Kh8 12 Bb2 Qe8 13 Rae1 f6 14 d4 Ng6 15 g3. Playing in “Steinitz style” doesn’t lose by

force, nevertheless the assessment += seems fully justified.

(b) 11...Qd7 12 Nh4 Rad8 13 Ndf3, and I prefer White.

10 Re1 h6 11 Nbd2 g5

Criticized by Alekhine, who claimed that Black would have had a good game after 11...0-0 12 Nf1 d5. But Gutman proved that he was wrong: 12 a5! Ba7 13 Nf1 d5 14 exd5 Nxd5 15 Bd2 Re8 16 Ng3 Bg6 17 Qb3 Nf4 (17...Nf6? 18 Nh4) 18 Bxf4 exf4 19 Ne4 +/-, e.g. 19...Ne5 20 Nxe5 Rxe5 21 Nd2. White threatens to push the Ba7 offside by means of d3-d4. 21...Rxe1+ 22 Rxe1 b5 is no solution either because of 23 axb6 Bxb6 24 Nf3 +/-[\[6\]](#).

Alekhine is correct in saying that Black's plan of opening the g-file leads to serious weaknesses in his own camp. But significant improvements should better be searched at an earlier stage of the game. Here the situation was already clearly superior for White.

12 Nf1

Or 12 a5 Ba7 13 b5! axb5 14 Bxb5 0-0 15 Bxc6 bxc6 16 Nf1 +/- Gutman/Bücker.

12...g4 13 hxg4 Nxg4



14 Ra2! +/-, Gutman [6].

A more precise solution than 14 Be3? Nxe3 15 Nxe3 Bxe3? 16 fxe3 (1:0, 54) in Levitzky – Alekhine, St. Petersburg 1913 (7th match game). In spite of the open g-file White isn't forced to simplify matters. After the text move, 14...Qd7 15 Ng3 Bg6 16 Nh4 could follow, and White dominates the position [6].

To see that the venerable Max Lange Attack can be revived was a major surprise. Few gambits are favorable for the attacker. The second line is less spectacular, but if practice confirms the assessments above, it could be of similar importance for the theory of 4 0-0.

Sources:

- [1] L. Gutman: *Eine alte Räubergeschichte* (Max Lange Attack), in [Kaissiber 22](#) (2006).
- [2] S. Bucker: *Der Max-Lange-Angriff* (readers' reactions), in [Kaissiber 23](#) (2006).
- [3] L. Gutman: *Italienisch in freiem Stil* (Max Lange Gambit I, in [Kaissiber 23](#) (2006).
- [4] N. Leisner: *Das Gambit 4 d4 ist eine Alternative* (reader's reaction), in [Kaissiber 24](#) (2006).
- [5] L. Gutman: *Italienische Spezialsysteme* (Max Lange Gambit II), in [Kaissiber 24](#) (2006).
- [6] L. Gutman: *Mit Lewitzki aus der Sackgasse* (Italian Game 4...d6), in [Kaissiber 25](#) (2006).

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