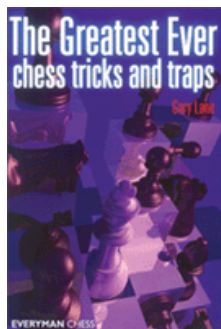




COLUMNISTS

Opening Lanes

Gary Lane



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Let's Learn French

Is it really possible to find and develop a new idea in a famous opening? **Harvey Kelly** from **Scotland** has come up with a startling idea in the French Defence that could have chess authors rushing off to rewrite their books.

He e-mailed to say "I'm learning the French Winawer for white, using the sharp 7 Qg4, and a friend showed me the remarkable 12...e5 in the main line: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Ne7 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 Qg4 O-O 8 Bd3 f5 9 exf6 Rxf6 10 Bg5 Rf7 11 Qh5 g6 12 Qd1, and now 12...e5 instead of the more usual 12...Nbc6. I haven't been able to find a single game played with this line in any database, nor is it mentioned in Khalifman's *Opening for White According to Anand Volume 7*. My computer wants to play 13 dxe5 Nbc6 14 Bf6 Qc7 15 f4 c4 16 Be2 Nf5, which it evaluates as roughly equal - but I think I'd much rather play the black pieces. Is there a secret refutation, or is this actually very good for Black, which is my own opinion?"

It seems incredible that Black could suddenly play a gambit in a position that has been monitored for decades by top players. However, there is something in the suggestion and as usual the latest chess software allows everyone to have the equivalent of a grandmaster helping him or her analyse. I eventually tracked down a couple of games by David Myers who has been brave enough to experiment with 12...e5 with encouraging results. I think they are correspondence games played via the Internet, which means you have a couple of days for each move. After seeing the following example, maybe the gambit will be adopted by other players:

Fritz Fleischanderl-David Myers Internet 2005

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 This looks very aggressive and has been the subject of intense interest ever since Alexander beat Botvinnik in 1946. The basic idea is to show up the deficit of not having a dark-squared bishop by attacking the pawn on g7 in the hope of Black having to compromise his position. **7...0-0** Instead 7...Qc7 is tricky, but the current general opinion is that White is doing well in such lines. **8 Bd3**

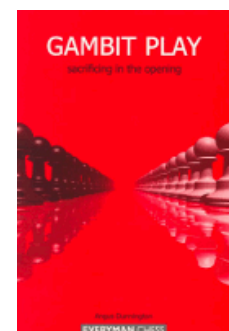


The bishop points towards the h7-pawn in anticipation of an attack. 8 Nf3 is considered the main alternative. Of course 8 Bh6?! fails to impress in view of 8...Nf5 defending g7 and forcing the bishop to retreat. **8...f5** If you play this line with White, then attention also has to focus on the alternative 8...Nbc6. **9 exf6 Rxf6 10 Bg5 Rf7 11 Qh5 g6 12 Qd1** Instead 12 Qh4 certainly looks logical, but 12...Qa5! is the answer when 13 Bd2 (13 Ne2 Nbc6 threatening ... c5-c4 is awkward for White) 13...Nbc6 14 Nf3 c4 15 Be2 Nf5 offers equal opportunities. **12...e5?!**

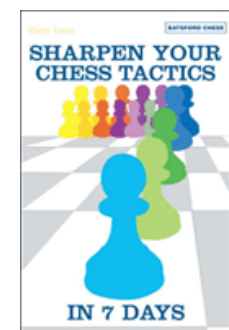
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The start of a revolution in the French? A wild looking move that is guaranteed to make your opponent start thinking. The only thing is will he or she be thinking that is a free pawn or whether this is a hot new move from Moscow? I reckon on the Internet in a blitz game it would be perfect to unsettle an opponent, at a weekend tournament it would make the opponent think of a plan for some time. However, I warn everyone not to play it at your local club because after 12...e5 the friendly response will be to ask if you want to take your move back? After all you are losing a pawn, it is not mentioned in any books so what is going on? Well, the obvious intention is to play ...e5-e4 with a good game so White is obliged to accept the gambit. Also possible is a) 12 ...Qa5 apparently Kindermann is the player who championed this move in modern times 13 Bd2 (I have to say that I have a few players casually play 13 Ne2? and are red faced after 13...c4 trapping the bishop) 13...Nbc6 14 Nf3 Qc7 (Black wants to play ...e6-e5) 15 0-0 e5 16 Nxe5 (or 16 Ng5 Rf8 17 c4 cxd4 18 cxd5 Nxd5 19 Bc4 Nce7 seems good for Black) 16...Nxe5 17 dxe5 Qxe5 18 Qe1!? (18 Rb1 is worth considering but the position is level) 18...Qd6 19 c4 Bf5 20 Bg5 Bxd3 21 cxd3 Nf5 gave Black the better chances in A. Genzling-A.Barsov, Bischwiller 2009, although the game was eventually drawn. b) 12...Nbc6 this is the move that reader Mr. Kelly rightly says is recommended by Khalifman 13 Nf3 Qf8 14 0-0 c4 15 Be2 h6 16 Bc1 and now b1) 16...Kh7 17 a4 Bd7 18 Ba3 Qb8 19 Qd2 (perhaps 19 Rb1 with the idea of 19...b6 20 a5! Nxa5? 21 Ne5 winning) 19...Qc7 20 Bc1 Rh8 21 h3 g5 22 h4 g4 23 Ne5 Nxe5 24 dxe5 h5 1/2-1/2, A.Brkcic-M.Drasko, Zadar 2009. b2) 16...Qg7 17 a4 Bd7 18 Qd2 Kh7 19 Ba3 gave White the initiative in A. Shabalov-D.Shmeliiov, Sturbridge 2009. **13 dxe5** The only way to refute a gambit is to accept it. Black would argue that his light-squared bishop is now free to roam on the c8-h3 diagonal and Black will have some momentum, but I doubt if it should be enough for the pawn. **13...Nbc6 14 Bf6** After 14 f4 c4 15 Be2 Qb6, Black would argue that the queen does a useful role in stopping White castling kingside and can eye up the opportunity of invading at some point on the e3-square. Still, I have faith in White's position, so maybe 16 Rb1 is worth a try when 16...Qc5 (16...Qe3 can be met by 17 Qd2 and Black would be brave to volunteer to exchange queens a pawn down) 17 Qd2! Qxa3?! (or 17...Nf5 is probably better when 18 Nf3 gives White a slight edge) 18 Nf3 the point of giving up the a-pawn is to have time to get the kingside pieces into play 18...Qc5 19 Nd4 with the advantage. **14...Qc7 15 f4** 15 Nf3 is well met by 15...Bg4 when White will struggle to contain Black's active play. **15...c4 16 Be2**



16...Nf5!? This is the move recommended by the reader's computer. It could be that Myers found it himself. If 16...Qb6, then 17 Rb1 Qc5 18 Bf3! looks good for White. For example, 18...Be6 (or 18...Qxa3 19 Ne2 aiming to castle

kingside seems a good play for White) 19 Rxb7 Bf5 (instead 19...Nf5 20 Rxf7 Kxf7 21 Qc1 intending to develop with Ne2 leaves White with a couple of extra pawns) I am not sure about the effort to target the b7-pawn, but the line is in its infancy and different moves are bound to be tried in the future. **17 Rb1** I wanted to try 17 Bf3, but after 17...Ne3 18 Qd2 Qb6 it is not clear how White makes progress because 19 Bxd5 Nxd5 20 Qxd5 Qb2 (20...Qe3+ 21 Ne2 Bg4 22 Qd2 is better for White) 21 Rd1 Qxc3+ 22 Rd2 is not clear (while 22 Kf2 might be fine 22...Qxc2+ 23 Ne2 Bf5 24 Rc1 Qb3 25 Qxc4 Qxa3 26 Rhd1 Qb4 and now 27 Qxb4 (and now 27 Qd5 a5 is doubled-edged) 27...Nxb4 28 Kg3 a5 M.Monasterio-D.Myers, Internet 2004 is not entirely clear, but I prefer White's practical chances although the game was drawn after fifty-six moves. 17 Qd2 Qb6 18 Bf3 transposes to the previous note. **17... Qa5** Myers attacks the a- and c-pawns. Or 17...Ne3 18 Qd2 Nxg2+ 19 Kf2 Nxf4 20 Qxf4 Bf5 (or 20...Nxe5 when 21 Kg2 Qc6 22 Qxe5 Rxf6 23 Bf3 is better for White) 21 Kg3! Nd8 22 Bxd8 (22 Bf3 Ne6 23 Qh4 g5! 24 Qh6 Rxf6 25 Qxf6 Rf8 26 Qh6 Qxe5+ is good for Black) 22...Rxd8 23 Qd4 and the extra piece should be enough to allow White to survive the onslaught. **18 Qd2 Qc5** 18...Qxa3 runs into 19 Nf3, intending Ng5, with the superior chances. **19 Bf3** White needs to test 19 Nf3 in the future. **19...d4?!** An attempt to complicate matters, but surely 19...Ne3 looks more tricky for White to handle. **20 Ne2 dxc3 21 Qxc3?!** The obvious 21 Nxc3 seems good for White. **21...Ne3 22 a4** Or 22 Rb3!? to shift the knight on e3, but after 22...Ng4 things are still complicated. For instance, 23 Rb2 Qf2+ 24 Kd1 Ne3+ 25 Kc1 Nxg2 26 h4 with roughly equal play. **22...a6 23 Ng3 Bf5 24 Nxf5 Nxf5 25 g4 Ne3 26 g5** Or 26 Kd2 Nd4! 27 Qxe3 Rd7 28 Kc1 c3 (28...Ne2+? 29 Qxe2 Qa3+ 30 Rb2 Qa1+ 31 Rb1 Qa3+ drawing) 29 Qd3 Ne2+ 30 Qxe2 Qa3+ 31 Rb2 Qxb2 checkmate. **26...Rd7 27 Be4** Or 27 e6 Rd6 28 e7 Re6 29 Qd2 Nxe7 and Black is winning. **27...Nd4!**



28 h3 Things are very difficult for White: a) 28 Rxb7 Rxb7 29 Bxb7 Rb8 30 Bxa6 Rb1+! 31 Kf2 Rxh1 32 Qxe3 Rxh2+ 33 Kg3 Nf5 + wins. b) 28 h4 Ndx2+ 29 Bxc2 Nxc2+ 30 Qxc2 Qe3+ 31 Qe2 Qg3+ 32 Kf1 Rd4 with a big advantage. **28...Ndx2+! 0-1** White resigned in view of 29 Bxc2 (29 Ke2 Nd4 + 30 Ke1 Rb8, but admittedly Black still needs to prove how to win) 29...Nxc2 +! 30 Qxc2 Qe3+ 31 Qe2 Qg3+ 32 Qf2 Qd3 33 Rc1 Rd4 winning.

This line impresses me, but who else is willing to be different and play 12...e5 to win?

Richard Pitts from **Scotland** wants to play something special in the Sicilian after only two moves. He writes, "I've done alright with 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6!/? in rapid games and correspondence and want to look at this further. What is its current theoretical status?"

I believe that it is best to examine the main lines to make sure it is even playable. I will start with a variation that used to be thought critical because there were so many tactics flying around. The test of time has seen White come out on top as long as you know what you are doing in advance:

Everaldo Matsuura-Dragan Stamenkovic Paulista do Interior Santos Championship 2008

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 This position is known as the Nimzowitsch Variation and is popular amongst players who want to try something different in the opening. It is occasionally played by grandmasters, but tends to be a surprise weapon

amongst top players. **3 e5** 3 Nc3 is also playable when Black tends to respond with 3...d5. **3...Nd5** Instead 3...Ng4 is met by 4 h3 Nh6 5 d4 with advantage to White. **4 Nc3** This is considered the main line, so it has to be the critical continuation. Instead 4 c3 transposes to the c3 Sicilian. That is fine if you already play the opening with white, but in that case why start with 2 Nf3. Therefore, I think Black will be better prepared to take on the c3 Sicilian in such a position. **4...e6 5 Nxd5 exd5 6 d4 Nc6** This is the accepted way to create an initiative by sacrificing a pawn. In the past 6...d6 has been tested, but 7 Bb5+ is regarded as a good reply ensuring that White is better. **7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 Qxd5 Qb6**



This is an old move that immediately puts White under pressure. If White is unaware of what is going on, then he is likely to plunge into time-trouble and allow his position to go downhill. Then again, if White has prepared well, then the current thinking is that Black will suffer. The alternative 8...d6 9 exd6 Qb6 is a superior version of 8...Qb6 and is discussed in the next game. **9 Bc4 Bxf2+ 10 Ke2 0-0** Simply to defend the f7-pawn. **11 Rf1 Bc5** Black has won back the pawn, but in return has granted White tremendous play against the f7-pawn. **12 Ng5 Nd4+ 13 Kd1 Ne6 14 Ne4 d6** Also possible is a) 14...Bg1 15 c3 (to stop ...Qd4+) 15...Bxh2 16 Kc2 (16 g3 Bg1 17 Kc2 looks good for White) 16...Qc6 (I prefer 16...Qc7 when after 17 g3 Black can strike back with 17...b5!, intending ...Bb7, which will cause White trouble) 17 g3 b5 18 Qxc6 dxc6 19 Bb3 c5 20 Bd5 Rb8 21 Be3 Rd8 22 c4 g6? (or 22...bxc4 23 Bxc4 Rb4 24 b3 Bb7 is about equal) 23 Rf2 bxc4 24 Rxh2 Nd4+ 25 Bxd4 Bf5 26 Bc3 Rxd5 27 Re1 Rbd8 28 g4 1-0, C.Wallis-F.Zulfic, Australian Junior Championships 2008. b) 14...Be7 15 Bd2 (maybe 15 c3!?) 15...Qc6 (15...Qxb2 needs to be tested) 16 a4 Qxd5 17 Bxd5 Rb8 18 a5 a6 19 Be3 gave White an excellent game because Black has problems developing smoothly, A. Frolov-I.Volodin, Perm 2006. **15 exd6**



15...Be3 A top tip is to watch out for 15...Bxd6? which looks good at first glance, but the combination is fatally flawed. For instance, 16 Nxd6 Rd8 17 Bf4 Nxf4 18 Qxf7+ Kh8 19 Qg8+! Rxg8 20 Nf7 checkmate. After 15...Rd8, White is fine after 16 Bd3. For instance, 16...Bxd6 17 Qh5 Bc7!? (or 17...f5 18 Nxd6 Qxd6 19 Qxf5 Qxh2 20 Qf7+ Kh8 21 Bg5! is better for White) 18 Qxf7+ Kh8 19 Qh5! (19 Bg5 runs into 19...Nf4! 20 Rxf4 Be6 and the queen is trapped) 19...g6 20 Qh6 with good play. **16 Qd3!** This seems to stop any of Black's ambitions to make the most of White's exposed king leaving White a pawn up. **16...Bxc1 17 Kxc1 Bd7 18 b3** An obvious choice to make room for the rook on b2 in order to unite the rooks. **18...Bc6 19 Kb2 Bxe4 20 Qxe4 Qxd6** Stamenkovic has finally won the pawn back, but his position is weak. **21 Rad1 Qe7**



Of course, 21...Qxh2? is an awful decision: 22 Bxe6 (22 Rh1 Ng5 23 Qe3 Qxg2 24 Rdg1 Rae8 25 Qxe8 Qxh1 26 Qxf8+ Kxf8 27 Rxh1 also wins) 22... fxe6 23 Rh1 wins. **22 Rxf7!** A clever way to win a pawn in spectacular fashion. **22...Kxf7** Or 22...Rxf7 23 Qxe6 Qxe6 24 Bxe6 Raf8 25 Rd7! is very strong. **23 Bxe6+ Qxe6 24 Rf1+ Qf6+** The alternative 24...Ke7 does not help in view of 25 Qxb7+ Kd6 26 Rd1+ Ke5 27 Re1+ Kf6 28 Rxe6+ Kxe6 29 Qxg7 gives White a big advantage. **25 Rxf6+ gxf6 26 Qxh7+ Ke6 27 Qxb7** The extra three pawns means that Black can never give up the two rooks for a queen because the ending would still be lost. **27...Rfd8 28 a4 a5 29 g4 Rh8 30 h4 Rag8 31 Qe4+ Kf7 32 g5 fxg5 33 Qf5+ 1-0**

The next game considers the main line and it seems that Black can hope for active play leading to equality. Maybe White will try more side lines to gain an advantage, but it is still worth knowing that the main line mentioned in all the books is fine when you start having to play the opening. I should point out that in the notes I have sprinkled plenty of games by Yochanan Afek from Israel because he is an expert on this opening:

Miroslav Zuffic-Zoran Majeric, Zadar 2007

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 Nc3 e6 4...Nxc3 5 dxc3 e6 is also possible. **5 Nxd5 exd5 6 d4 Nc6 7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 Qxd5 d6**



This is the twist on the old variation. Black gives away a pawn so that his light-squared bishop can be active. Of course 8...Qb6 is discussed in the previous main game. **9 exd6 Qb6 10 Qe4+** The difference with the previous game is that Black now has the option of ...Be6 at the right moment. For example, a) 10 Bc4 0-0 11 d7? Bxf2+ 12 Kf1 Bxd7 13 Qxd7 Rad8 14 Qg4 Rd1+ 15 Ke2 Rxh1 wins. b) 10 Be3?! is well met by 10...Qxb2. c) 10 Bd3!? Bxf2+ (perhaps 10...Be6 to start with is worth considering) 11 Ke2 Be6! 12 Qb5! 0-0-0 13 Qxb6 (13 Bf4 is the best bet to play for an advantage) 13... Bxb6 14 Bf4 Bc5 led to equal chances in Pribyl-Rothen, Eksjo 1983. **10...Be6** Black is wise to block the check because 10...Kd8 is a poor choice, as the king is stuck precariously in the centre of the board. 11 Bg5+ f6 12 0-0-0! Re8 13 Qh4 is excellent for White. **11 Qh4** White defends the f2-pawn and temporarily stops Black from castling queenside. The old move 11 Bc4 is not really seen anymore, but there is always time for a revival: a) 11...Qb4+ 12 Nd2 0-0 13 0-0 (13 Bxe6?! is well met by 13...Rfe8 offering equal chances) 13...Rae8 14 c3 (14 Bd3 f5!) 14...Qb6 15 Nf3 h6 (or 15...Bxc4 16 Qxc4 Bxd6 17 b4 and White's extra pawn ensures the advantage) 16 b4 Bxd6 17 Be3 Qc7 18 Bxe6 Rxe6 19 Qc4 Rfe8 20 Rad1! with the brighter prospects, J. Van der Wiel-N.Short, Wijk aan Zee 1990. b) 11...Bxf2+! This is the best and as usual

it is Afek who gives it his seal of approval: 12 Ke2 0-0 (12...0-0 13 Bxe6+ fxe6 14 Rd1 with the advantage) 13 Bxe6 (13 Ng5? is not impressive in view of 13...Bxc4+ 14 Qxc4 Rfe8+ 15 Kd1 Ne5 and Black is in control) 13...Rae8 14 Ng5 Rxe6 15 Nxe6 Re8 16 Rf1 Rxe6 17 Qxe6 fxe6 (or 17...Nd4+ 18 Kxf2 Nxe6+ 19 Be3 Qxd6 20 Kg1! with a level position, M.Khachian-E. Mnatsakanian, Yerevan 1992) 18 Rxf2 Qb5+ (18...Nd4+ 19 Kf1 Qxd6 20 Bf4 Qc6 21 Kg1 led to an intriguing position in M. Sebag-O.Sikorova, Varna 2002, but White eventually won.) 19 Ke1 Qe5+ (I suspect the best practical idea is for Black to hunt for a draw before White can coordinate his rooks) 20 Kf1 Qxh2 21 d7 Qh1+ 22 Ke2 Qh5+ 23 Ke1 Qh1+ 24 Ke2 Qh5+ 25 Ke1 ½-½, N.Ninov-Y.Afek, La Fere 2007. **11...Bxd6** Instead 11...f6!? has also been tested to facilitate queenside castling when 12 Bd3 0-0-0 13 0-0 is double-edged. **12 Bd3**



White does stop Black from castling kingside. Maybe 12 Be2 is worth a go just to help White to castle kingside: 12...Bf5 (12...Nb4 to copy the main game is an error in view of 13 0-0! Nxc2? 14 Qa4+ and White wins, 12...Be7 13 Qe4 0-0-0 14 0-0 Bd5 15 Qg4+ favours White) 13 Bd1?! (it looks an ugly way to defend the c-pawn and likely to get in the way of the rest of his pieces, so I prefer 13 0-0) 13...0-0 14 0-0 Rfe8 15 b3 Bg6 16 Bb2 Rad8 17 Qh3 Bc5 with the initiative, F.Nijboer-Y.Afek, Amsterdam 2006. **12...Nb4** A key move which seeks to exchange the potentially aggressive bishop. **13 0-0 Nxd3 14 cxd3 0-0 15 b3** 15 Qe4 h6 (15...Qc5 is worth testing) 16 Be3 Qxb2 (16...Qa6 maintains the tension) 17 Rfb1 Qe2 18 h3 Rfe8 19 Nd4 Qh5 20 Rb5 with the superior chances, J. Van der Wiel-Y.Afek, Hoogeveen 2004. **15...Bf5** Perhaps 15...Bd5 should also be investigated. **16 Rd1** Or 16 Be3 Qa6 17 Rfd1 Rac8 (17...Bxd3?! 18 Qd4 Rad8! 19 Qxa7 {19 Qxd3? Bxh2+ winning} 19 Qxa7 Qxa7 20 Bxa7 with a superior ending thanks to the extra pawn) 18 a4 Bg6 19 b4 b6 20 b5 Qb7 21 h3 led to roughly equal play in L. Pliester-Y.Afek, Amsterdam 2006. **16...Rac8** Black has enough play for the pawn, which means the opening has been a success. **17 Bb2 f6 18 Rac1 Rfe8** 18...Qa6 looks promising. For instance, 19 Qd4 (threatening Qd5+) 19...Bg6 20 h3 with roughly equal chances. **19 Rc4 Be6 20 Rxc8 Rxc8 21 Nd4 Bd7 22 Qe4 Rc5**



Majeric has active play, which means that White has never enough time to try and use his extra pawn. **23 Nf3 Rc2 24 Qd5+ Kf8 25 Bd4** Or 25 Rd2 Rc5 26 Qd4 Qc6 27 Re2 Be5 is level because 28 Nxe5?? runs into 28...Rc1+ 29 Bxc1 Qxc1+ 30 Re1 Qxe1 checkmate. **25...Qc6 26 Qxc6 Bxc6 27 Ra1** 27 Rd2?? is met by 27 Rc1+. **27...Bxf3 28 gxf3 a6 29 Be3 Ba3 30 Kf1 Bb2 31 Rd1 Ba3 32 Rd2 Rxd2 33 Bxd2 Kf7 ½-½**

I hope that the reader Mr. Pitts is inspired to play the line and then e-mail his victories to this site.

Axel Eisengräber-Pabst from **Germany** "encountered an interesting variation in the Caro-Kann advance variation. 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 and now 4 Nd2, followed by 5 Nb3, with the idea of controlling d4 and c5. I could not find information on how to play this system with black. Maybe you have some ideas?"

The Advance Caro-Kann has always been known, but other main lines used to get all the attention in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. This is partly explained by the failure of the line in the great World Championship match between Tal and Botvinnik in 1961. This was probably why it was always in the background when discussing the best lines. True, Spassky has dabbled with it in the past, but it never really caught on. The difference was when 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 became the latest fashion and produced some amazing games. These lines still seem to be baffling the experts, so calmer waters were sought. It is to the credit of former World Championship candidate Nigel Short that he did so much to promote the positional line with 4 Be2. This has to be the inspiration behind 4 Nd2, which has been employed by Short, Kasparov, and a variety of other top grandmasters. Now I can hardly claim to refute the line for the reader, but I did notice an intriguing game where Black wins in style and that is the way to play your average weekend or rapid tournament.

Karen Asrian-Ekaterina Atalik, Greek Teams Championship 2009

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 This is the main move, but some enterprising players try 3...c5 at this point to make sure they get their variation on the board. Now after the meek 4 c3 Black gets a sort of improved Advance French because his bishop on c8 is still free to roam. The key continuation is 4 dxc5 accepting the gambit. **4 Nd2**



This is regarded as a positional line. It sounds simple, but the aim is to put the knight on b3 to help control the c5-square. After Black eventually breaks out with the traditional pawn advance, White either exchanges the knight on c5 or trades pawns and then plays Nbd4. **4...e6 5 Nb3 Nd7** There is an argument that says 5...c5 can be played safely straight-away. This is true, but the chances for Black to complicate the position are minimal. For instance, 6 dxc5 Bxc5 7 Nxc5 Qa5+ 8 c3 Qxc5 9 Nf3 Qc7 10 Bb5+ Nc6 led to equal opportunities in J.Friedel-G.Antal, Edmonton 2009. **6 Be3** Zepeda uses the bishop to exert extra control over the c5-square. The alternative 6 Nf3 is considered the main move. After 6...Ne7 7 Be2, play might continue a) 7...Bg6 8 0-0 Nf5 9 a4 Be7 10 a5 0-0 11 c4 (11 Bf4 is worth testing) 11...dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nh4 13 Nxh4 Bxh4 14 Qe2 with equal chances, S. Karjakin-P.Leko, Moscow 2009. b) 7...h6 8 0-0 g5 9 Ne1 c5 10 dxc5 (maybe 10 Nxc5 when the sample line 10...Nxc5 11 dxc5 Nc6 12 Bd3 favours White because of the better pawn structure) 10...Nc6 11 Bd3 Bxd3 12 Nxd3 Ndx5 13 Nxe5 Nxe5 14 f4 Nc4 15 Qh5 Qf6! led to double-edged play in M. Olszewski-M. Rodshtein, Puerto Madryn 2009. c) 7...Nc8 8 a4 Be7 9 a5 a6 10 0-0 0-0 (10...Na7 aiming to castle kingside followed by ...c6-c5 seems reasonable in the fight for equality) 11 c4 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Na7 13 Qe2 Bg6 14 Rd1 Nb5 15 h3 Nc7 16 Nbd2 Nd5 17 Ne4 favoured White because Black's pieces are still rather cramped, N.Kosintseva-V.Gunina, Moscow 2009. **6...f6!?**



Black attempts to undermine the advanced pawn centre, obliging White to make a major decision on how to continue. I found a couple of games by Nigel Short to demonstrate the solid alternatives: a) 6...a6 7 f4 Rc8 8 Nf3 c5 9 dxc5 Nxc5 10 c3 led to equal opportunities in N.Short-A.Dreev, Hyderabad 2002. b) 6...Qb6 7 f4 h5 8 Nf3 h4 9 Be2 Be7 10 0-0 with a level position, N. Short-G.Acar, Ajelat 2003. **7 exf6?!** It might seem harsh to condemn such a natural move, but it does not fit in with White's general plan. After all, the position now resembles a smart French Defence where Black has miraculously developed his bishop to an active square and the plan of opening the position with ...e6-e5 cannot be contained. Instead White should seek to bolster the e5-pawn: I prefer 7 f4 when play tends to continue with 7...Nh6 and now a) 8 Be2 Qc7 9 Nf3 0-0-0 10 0-0 Be7 11 a4 Nf7 12 Nfd2 c5 13 g4 Be4 14 Nxe4 dxe4 15 Qe1 fxe5 16 dxe5 with a slight edge, M.Bartel -K. Piorun, Warsaw 2007. b) 8 Nf3 Be7 9 Bd3 0-0 10 0-0 fxe5 11 fxe5 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 Nf5 13 Bf2 h5 14 c4 Nb6 15 c5 Nc4 16 Nbd2 Nxd2 17 Nxd2 b6 with roughly equal chances, J.Ashwin-S.Arun Prasad, Dubai 2009. It should be noted that 7 Nf3 is also a reasonable alternative: 7...fxe5 8 Nxe5 Ngf6 9 Be2 with a level position. **7...Nxf6 8 Nf3** If 8 Bf4 to stop a black bishop safely coming to the d6-square, then 8...Be7 9 Bd3 0-0 is better for Black. **8...Bd6 9 h3 0-0 10 Bd3 Qe7** The beauty of this line for Black is that the plan is so straightforward. The aim is to play ...e6-e5, but there is no rush, allowing time to improve the position of the black pieces such as coordinating the rooks. **11 0-0 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 e5 13 dxe5** Wishes to avoid the threat of the pawn fork ...e5-e4 and does not really have any constructive alternatives. 13 Ng5? runs into the simple 13...h6 when the knight cannot even safely retreat. Instead 13 Qd2 sees the line 13...Ne4 14 Qe2 Rae8 with the initiative. **13...Nxe5 14 Nxe5 Qxe5**



The threat of checkmate in the opening is always good to see. **15 g3?** A reflex move to stop the queen invading on h2, but it is not good enough. It seems wrong, but consideration had to be given to 15 f4 when after 15...Qe7 Black maintains the better chances, although White is still fighting for equality after 16 Nd4 Ne4. **15...Ne4!** The big threat now is to tear down White's defence with the threat of ...Nxf3. **16 Bd4** Also possible is a) 16 Bf4? Rxf4 17 gxf4 Qxf4 18 Rfe1 Qxf2+ 19 Kh1 Qh2 checkmate. b) 16 Bc1 to allow the white queen to help guard the g3-pawn: 16...Qe6 17 Kg2 Rf7 preparing to double rooks on the f-file with excellent play. **16...Qf5 17 Nd2 17 Kg2** is the obvious way to defend the precious h-pawn, but White's position is very poor after 17...c5 when White must lose material thanks to the threat of a pawn fork on c4. **17...Nxd2 18 Qxd2 Qxh3** The pawn advantage means White is in big trouble and Black still has a strong attack. **19 Qg5 Rf7** Yes, Black does need to defend against checkmate on g7. **20 Rae1 Bf8 21 Re3?!**



21...Rf5! 22 Qh4 Qxh4 23 gxf4 Rf4 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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