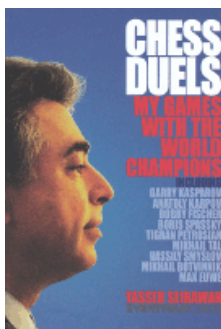




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Inside Chess

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Inside Chess, 1988/6

Inside Track Theoretical
by John Donaldson

Meran 8.Be2 Bb7 [D47]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/p2n1ppp/2p1pn2/1p6/
2BP4/2N1PN2/PP3PPP/R1BQK2R w KQkq b6 0 8"]

Those White players who wish to avoid the heavily analyzed lines of these variations or 10.e5 find attractive the relatively unanalyzed:

8.Be2

Capablanca originated this move primarily as a weapon for peace. Polish IM Krysztuf Pytel adopted and refined it in the 1970s after receiving a lesson in its trickiness from GM Benko at Hastings 1973/74. Recently Nogueiras, Seirawan, Portisch, and Polgar have employed the innocent-looking 8.Be2. It combines practicality and poison.

In recent years the Meran has undergone a revival. The Reynolds Variation 8. Bd3 a6 9.e4 c5 10.d5 has wrapped well for Black after 10...c4 11.dxe6 and now 11...cxd3 (11...fxe6 12.Bc2 Qc7 13.0-0 Bc5) 12.exd7+ Qxd7.

8...Bb7

Black can play 8...Be7, 8...b4, or 8...a6, but theory's favorite and Kasparov's choice in K-K I, game twenty-nine, was this move.

9.0-0

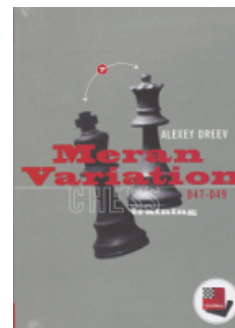


[FEN "r2qkb1r/pb1n1ppp/2p1pn2/1p6/3P4/
2N1PN2/PP2BPPP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 0 9"]

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by Lawrence Trent



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This natural-looking move has only recently caught on.

Two moves have caused Black few troubles: Karpov continued 9.a3 b4 10. Na4 bxa3 11.bxa3 Be7 12.0-0 0-0 13.Bb2 (13.Bd2 c5) 13...c5 Draw, Karpov-Kasparov, Moscow (M/29) 1984/85.

9.e4 b4 10.e5 bxc3 11.exf6 cxb2 12.fxg7 bxa1Q 13.gxh8Q Qa5+ 14.Bd2 (14. Nd2 Q5xa2 15.0-0 Ba6 16.Bxa6 Qxa6 17.Nb3 Qb1 18.Nc5 Qab5 19.Bh6 Qxd1 20.Rxd1 0-0-0 -/+ Barshauskas - Kholmov, Lithuanian Ch., 1955.) 14... Qxd1+ 15.Bxd1 Qf5 16.0-0 0-0-0 17.Qg8 Be7 18.Qg7 Qg6 19.Qxg6 hxg6 = Chekhover - Suetin, USSR 1951.

9...b4

9...Be7

a) 10.e4 The most direct. 10...b4 11.e5 bxc3 12.exf6

a1) 12...Nxf6 13.bxc3 0-0 14.Rb1



[FEN "r2q1rk1/pb2bPPP/2p1pn2/8/3P4/2P2N2/P3BPPP/1RBQ1RK1 b - - 0 14"]

a1a) 14...Qc7 15.Bf4 Qxf4 16.Rxb7 (+/= Chernin) 16...Bd6 17.g3 Qf5 18.Qa4 Ne4! 19.Rc1 g5 (19...c5 20.Qc2 Qd5! Draw, Portisch - Chernin, Reggio Emilia. 1986/87. If 21.Rb3 Nf6! 22.c4 Qc6 23.d5! exd5 24.cxd5 Qc7! = Chernin.) 20.Qc2! g4 21.Bd3 +/- Chernin.)

a1b) 14...Qc8 15.Qb3 Ba6 16.Bxa6 Qxa6 17.Bg5 +/- Chernin.)

a2) 12...Bxf6 13.bxc3 c5 14.dxc5 0-0 15.Ba3 Be7 16.Qd4 Bd5 17.c4 Bc6 18. Rab1 Rc8 19.Ne5 Nxe5 20.Qxe5 Qc7 21.Qxc7 Rxc7 22.Rfd1 +/- Seirawan - Petursson, N.Y. Open 1987.) 10...0-0

b) 10.a3



[FEN "r2qk2r/pb1nbPPP/2p1pn2/1p6/3P4/P1N1PN2/1P2BPPP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 0 10"]

b1) 10...a6 11.e4 (11.b4 a5 12.Rb1 axb4 13.axb4 Nd5 14.Nxd5 exd5 This position, usually reached by 8...Bb7 9.a3, normally has the black bishop posted more actively on d6. Here 15.Ne5 or 15.Bd3 should give White a very tiny advantage.) 11...c5 12.d5 (12.e5 Nd5 Black is doing well. He has

exchanged ...Be7 for a3. Compare with the main line.) 12...exd5 13.exd5 (13.e5 Ne4 14.Nxd5 Nxe5!) 13...Bd6 14.Bg5 Qb8=.

b2) 10...a5 This move, preventing b4 while reviving the threat to play ...b4 himself, makes it impossible for White to obtain an advantage. 11.e4 b4 12.e5 (12.axb4 axb4 13.Rxa8 Bxa8 14.e5 bxc3 15.exf6 Nxf6 16.bxc3 0-0=) 12...bxc3 13.exf6 Nxf6 (13...Bxf6 14.bxc3 c5 as in Seirawan - Petursson, N.Y. Open 1987, but with the inclusion of a3 and a5, which helps Black — no Ba3 for White.) 14.bxc3 0-0 15.Rb1 Qc7 16.Bf4 Qxf4 17.Rxb7 as in Portisch - Chernin, Reggio Emilia 1986/87 — except that now with a3/a5 the P/a3 hangs.

b3) 10...0-0 11.e4 a6 12.e5 Nd5 13.Nxd5 cxd5 14.Re1 Re8 15.Bd3 Nf8 16.Bd2 Qb6 17.Qe2 +/- Pytel - T.Horvath, Virovitica 1979.

9...a6 The alternatives are worth close examination — both on their own merit and because the most common move, 9...a6, has met with setbacks. 10.e4 (10.b3 c5 11.Bb2 Be7 = Andersson - Yusupov, Tilburg 1987.) 10...c5 (10...b4 11.e5 bxc3 12.exf6 cxb2 13.fxg7 Bxg7 14.Bxb2 0-0 15.Rb1! intending 16.d5 — Nogueiras.)

a) 11.e5 Nd5 (One of the virtues of 8.Be2 — increased control of d4 (compared to 8.Bd3) — is revealed after 11...cxd4 12.Qxd4 Bc5 13.Qh4 Nd5 14.Qg3 +/-) 12.a4 White undermines the N/d5 more energetically. (12.Bg5 Nxc3 13.bxc3 Be7 = Ratner - Simagin, USSR (ch) 1949.; 12.Ne4 c4!? 13.Bg5 Qb6 14.a4 h6 15.Bd2 Rc8 16.axb5 axb5 17.Qb1 Be7 18.Rc1 0-0 19.Ng3 Ra8 =/+ Terzic - Smagin, Zenica 1987.)



[FEN "r2qkb1r/1b1n1ppp/p3p3/1ppnP3/P2P4/2N2N2/1P2BPPP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq a3 0 12"]

a1) 12...b4!? deserves attention. It arose in Keres - Book, Helsinki OL, 1952 from the move order 8.Be2 a6 9.0-0 Bb7. After 13.Ne4 Rc8 14.Bg5 Qb6 15.Nfd2 cxd4 16.Nc4 Black sacrificed the exchange for a couple of pawns: 16...Rxc4 17.Bxc4 Nxe5 18.a5 Qa7 19.Rc1 f5 20.Ng3 Kf7 21.Bxd5 (21.Bb3) 21...Bxd5 22.Rc8 +/- Euwe in Chess Archives March 1953; but matters don't seem so clear after 22...Qb7 answering 23.Qc2 with 23...Bc6.

a2) 12...Nxc3 13.bxc3 c4

a2a) 14.Bg5 was the main line until recently, but never gave Black that many difficulties; e.g., 14...Be7 15.Bxe7 Qxe7 16.axb5 (16.Qb1 Rb8 17.axb5 axb5 18.Ne1 0-0 19.Bf3 Bxf3 20.Nxf3 b4 Portisch - Flear, Szirak IZT 1987.) 16...axb5 17.Rxa8+ Bxa8 18.Qa1 0-0 19.Qa6 Rb8 20.Rb1 Bb7! +/- or = Nogueiras - Tatai, Thessaloniki Ol 1984.

a2b) 14.Ng5! An important theoretical novelty. 14...Be7 15.Bf3 Bxf3 16.Qxf3 0-0 17.Qg4 The position Christiansen was aiming for with 14.Ng5. His P/e5 constricts Black and the bishop, knight, and queen will soon be joined by a rook in the attack. 17...Nb6 18.axb5 axb5 19.Rxa8 Nxa8 20.Ne4 White has an uncontested advantage, but it is hard to believe that Black will be mated in just five more moves! 20...Kh8 21.Re1 Black must now play 21...Nc7, intending ...f5, as soon as possible to create breathing room on the kingside. 21...b4? 22.Re3 bxc3 23.Rh3 g6 In view of the threat of 24.Qh5 h6 25.Bxh6. 24.Qf4 g5 25.Nf6! 1-0, Christiansen - Flear, Szirak IZT 1987. If 25...Bxf6 26.Qe4.

b) 11.d5 exd5 12.e5 (12.exd5 Bd6 13.Bg5 Qb8! 14.Bd3 0-0 = Nogueiras.) 12... Ne4 13.Nxe4 (13.Nxd5 Nxe5!) 13...dxe4 14.e6 exf3 (14...fxe6 15.Ng5 Bd5 has yet to be tried.) 15.Bxf3 Bxf3 16.exd7+ Qxd7 17.Qxf3 Ra7 18.Bg5 Qc8 19. Rfe1+ +/- Lisenkov - Sharov, corr 1976-78.

10.Na4



[FEN "r2qkb1r/pb1n1ppp/2p1pn2/8/Np1P4/4PN2/PP2BPPP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 0 10"]

This may transpose to 8.Be2 b4.

10...Rc8

10...c5 11.dxc5 Nxc5 12.Nd4 (12.Bb5+ +/-) 12...Qd5 13.f3 0-0-0 unclear I. Ivanov - Doroshkevich, USSR 1975.

10...Be7

a) 11.Bd2 0-0



[FEN "r2q1rk1/pb1nbppp/2p1pn2/8/Np1P4/4PN2/PP1BBPPP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 0 12"]

a1) 12.Qc2 a5 13.Rfd1 c5 14.Nxc5 (14.dxc5 Qc7 15.a3 Be4 16.Bd3 Bxd3 17. Qxd3 Nxc5 18.Qc4 bxa3 19.Rxa3 Rfc8 = Portisch - Tal, Reykjavik 1987.) 14... Nxc5 15.dxc5 Qc7 16.Rdc1 Rac8 = Doroshkevich - Klován, USSR (ch) 1975.

a2) 12.Rc1 a5 13.Ne1 (13.Qb3 c5 14.dxc5 Bd5 15.Bc4 Bxf3 16.gxf3 Ne5 17. Kg2 Ng6 with compensation — Chernin.) 13...Ne4 14.Nd3 c5 15.dxc5 Rc8 16. Rc2 Ndx5 17.Naxc5 Nxc5 18.Nxc5 Rxc5 19.Rxc5 Bxc5 20.Qc2 Qg5 +/- Malaniuk - Chernin, USSR (ch) 1987.)

b) In Marszalek - Kirov, Pernik 1981, White got nothing after 11.a3 bxa3 12. bxa3 (A possible improvement for the first player is 12.b3 when 12...0-0 13. Bxa3 Bxa3 14.Rxa3 Qe7 15.Qc1 Rfc8 16.Nc5 is +/-.) 12...0-0 13.Bd2 c5.

11.b3 Be7 12.Bb2 0-0 13.Rc1 c5 14.Ne5 cxd4 15.Nxd7 Qxd7 16.Qxd4 Rxc1 17.Rxc1 Rc8 18.Rxc8+ Bxc8 19.f3 Qc7 20.e4 +/- Bonsch - Chekhov, Dresden 1985.

Conclusion

Black has many more problems against **8.Be2** than was originally thought.

After the best reply, **8...Bb7**, White's most challenging line is **9.0-0**. Against this continuation, Black has three alternatives: 9...b4, 9...a6, 9...Be7. The first is well answered by 10.Na4 Be7 11.a3!, intending 11...bxa3 12.b3 0-0 13. Bxa3 Bxa3 14.Rxa3 Qe7 15.Qc1, controlling c5.

The theoretical main line, 9...a6, seems to land Black in serious difficulties. The play arising from 10.e4 c5 11.e5 Nd5 12.a4 Nc3 13.bxc3 seems very dangerous for Black. If Nogueiras - Tatai wasn't enough to cast suspicions on Black's setup, then Christiansen - Flear surely is. It is a mystery why Andersson, several months after the Interzonal, chose to avoid the successful 10.e4 against Yusupov at Tilburg. And did Yusupov intend to revive Book's forgotten 12...b4!?

Black's third alternative, the developing **9...Be7**, looks to be his safest continuation. The latest word, Portisch - Chernin, Reggio Emilia 1986/87, is okay for Black. More tournament tests are needed to see if 8.Be2 is useful only as a surprise weapon or if it deserves to be considered as a major variation.

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