

The Kaufman

Repertoire

for Black

& White

LARRY
KAUFMAN

A Complete, Sound
and User-friendly Chess
Opening Repertoire

NEW  IN CHESS



The Kaufman Repertoire for Black and White

Eight years after his acclaimed *The Chess Advantage in Black and White*, grandmaster Larry Kaufman is back with a completely new repertoire book, covering the entire scope of chess openings for both White and Black, in one tome.

Using the latest versions of top engines like Komodo and Houdini, the former Senior World Champion and computer expert has refined his analysis of ready-to-go and easy-to-digest lines almost to perfection. His main new conviction is that 1.d4 gives White better chances of an advantage than 1.e4, and he has changed his recommendations accordingly.

Larry Kaufman has based his repertoire on sound, practical lines that do not outdate rapidly and are suitable for masters while accessible for amateurs. He regularly and successfully uses the openings he recommends himself.

The Kaufman Repertoire for Black and White contains many improvements on existing opening theory and offers a good balance between narrative and variations.

Acclaim for *The Chess Advantage in Black and White*:

“The author has done a very good job at presenting a playable and interesting repertoire for both Black and White.”

Carsten Hansen, ChessCafe

“Simply the best comprehensive repertoire book that I have ever seen.”

John Watson, The Week in Chess

The Kaufman Repertoire for Black and White

A Complete, Sound and User-friendly Chess Opening Repertoire

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The Structure of this Book

This book looks at the opening from two sides, and therefore I have decided to give two sides to it. If you just read on from the preliminary chapters after this page, you enter the 'White section': my repertoire for the white player. To read my repertoire for the black player, you should just turn the book around and start from the beginning again!

Larry Kaufman

October 2011

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Engines

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Houdini 1.5
Rybka 4
Critic 1.2
Stockfish 2.1

Introduction

This book started out to be an update of my 2003 opening repertoire book *The Chess Advantage in Black and White*. However I quickly concluded that so much had changed in eight years that I should just start from scratch and write a whole new book. The concept is similar to the original book, but the openings chosen are mostly different. The basic idea is to provide a complete set of openings for both colors, with some variety included, that will give you everything you can reasonably be expected to remember against all serious lines the opponent might throw at you. I make no attempt to be encyclopedic; a reasonably full repertoire just for Black against the Queen's Gambit took grandmaster Avrukh two volumes, so a truly encyclopedic one for both colors would take about ten. In my opinion few people can remember everything in even one book (I know I can't), so I don't see much point in trying to cover everything in a repertoire in multiple volumes, except to aid correspondence players. The openings chosen are the ones I actually play right now, and I have not kept anything 'secret' from the readers. It may cost me a game or two in the future, but I'm confident that I'll win more games from the work I did on this book than I'll lose due to opponents preparing for me with my own book, especially since I give some variety at many junctures.

What has changed in eight years? In 2003, pc programs were already roughly on a par with the human World Champion, but they achieved this level by being much stronger in tactics whereas they were only at strong amateur level positionally. Now the best programs are far stronger still tactically, but vastly better positionally – maybe in the low grandmaster range, though this is very subjective. Any of the top programs can now give a pawn handicap to the strongest human players, as has been demonstrated several times now. Furthermore I now use a twelve core computer whereas I only had single core back then. Finally, other software is now available that permits analysis to go on 24 hours a day using each core for a different position and putting everything in a nice tree. The bottom line is that the quality of computer analysis used in this book is several hundred rating points stronger than what I could do back in 2003. On top of all this, I myself am a stronger player now than in 2003 despite my age (64 when this book comes out), probably because of all this work I do with these super-strong engines.

This book is intended for a wide range of chess players. The basic idea is that the chosen variations are suitable even for the strongest grandmasters, but are also fine for average tournament and club players. The analysis is at an extremely high level, not so much because of my own chess skills but rather because of the way in which computers were used, as explained in the chapter on that topic. However, the explanations of why each terminal position in a line is evaluated as it is are written for average club players, and are concise due to the amount of material being covered. If you are an average player I hope you will learn from these explanations more about how to evaluate

positions. If you are a grandmaster, feel free to ignore my explanations and just study the analysis; I think you will find it to be at a very high level. I am confident that this book will be helpful to many grandmasters; at least I know it was very helpful to one (your author!).

One idea I have retained to some degree from the original book is my belief that you should opt for the second-best move in the opening in those cases where it is nearly as good as the best one but cuts down substantially on how much you need to learn. However, it turns out that quite often the best move is not the most often played one, primarily because the best move may have only been discovered with the aid of super-strong computer programs in the last few years. So very often we can 'have our cake and eat it too', meaning we can choose the best move and at the same time one that is not so often played or well-known. This was rarely the case eight years ago.

The book is full of new moves, so-called theoretical novelties, generally marked with 'N'. This is not because I am an especially original player, but rather reflects the heavy use of computer analysis. Note that I often only consulted a database of serious master games, so perhaps some of the moves marked 'N' are not truly new if they were played by players too weak to make the database, or were played in blitz events or other events not qualifying for the database.

The goal is to provide a reasonably complete repertoire for all moves you are likely to face in the opening as White or Black. Because I cover both colors, and because I often give alternatives so you won't be totally predictable just because you use this book, I have to limit myself at each juncture to the frequently played moves by the opponent. So you won't find analysis on how to beat the Grob (1.g4?) or any other obviously inferior move at any point, and I may not always point out why some seemingly good move is not played. Usually the answer is some elementary tactic; if you can't find it yourself ask any modern engine to solve the question for you. In most cases where you don't see a move mentioned, you can just play whatever move your engine likes and you will be fine.

As for the choice of openings, the Black repertoire is mostly that of the world's highest rated player (as of this writing), Magnus Carlsen. Current and six-time Russian champion and now World Champion Candidate Peter Svidler is also a model for much of the Black openings, being the premier exponent of the Grünfeld. For White I don't follow any one particular star. Most of the choices were played by Garry Kasparov when he was active. I would particularly like to mention grandmaster Georgi Kacheishvili and his star students Grandmaster Alex Lenderman and International Master Irina Krush, as they play many of my chosen lines and were the inspiration for my primary choice against the King's Indian Defense. I also want to thank Grandmaster Roman Dzindzichashvili for his very helpful analysis of a critical line in the Slav Defense.

Chess is not a fair game. White starts out with a significant advantage due to moving first, and of decisive games White wins nearly two for each black win in high-level play. The goal as White is to reach a favorable position where your winning chances sub-

stantially exceed Black's winning chances. I believe that most if not all of the lines in the book do so. As Black my goal is to reach a position where Black has some winning chances and White does not have far more winning chances. So I had to reject all defenses which were either dubious or excessively draw-seeking, as well as any (such as the Zaitsev in the Spanish) which allow an obvious draw by White. I think the chosen defenses (Breyer and Grünfeld) accomplish this goal fairly well. Naturally there is the question of what happens when both colors follow my advice. The result, as it should be, is a very small white advantage in a position which either side might win.

I would also like to mention that although I did of course consult other relevant books, I primarily did this just to get more positions for my computer to analyze in depth. When the computers confirm the findings of other authors, I give their analysis; when they don't (assuming I agree), I give my own. Because of the heavy reliance on computer analysis, I don't generally take the time to look up who might have first played the moves of a sideline up to the point where I give a new move, which also saves a lot of space. I do on occasion disagree with the engines (even my own) and substitute my own analysis, but I generally only do so when I am fairly confident that the engines are wrong.

Since this is a book about openings, I have frequently given a recommended but unplayed move as the main line while consigning the remainder of the actual game (in full or in part) to a note. In many cases the game chosen is of no real interest, it is merely chosen because the moves I consider best were played up to some point. In such cases I usually only give a few moves after the first error by 'my' side. In many other cases the game is an interesting one, and in those cases I usually give the game until the result is clear or until one side made an error that makes the remaining moves irrelevant.

I should probably tell you a bit about myself, since although I am well-known in American chess circles I may not be so well-known in Europe. I learned chess at age 7 from my father (who played until the day before his death at 96), and had my first chess lesson at age 8 from Harold Phillips, who had been a New York champion in 1895!! My first major accomplishment in chess was winning the American Open Championship back in 1966. In 1980 I earned the International Master title by taking second and third places in international tournaments in New York. My career back then was in the stock market, I was not a chess pro. In 1986 I retired from the financial world and got involved with computer chess; later I got back into playing and also teaching chess. In the last few years I have mostly been involved with developing computer chess programs Rybka and now Komodo. In 2008 I surprised almost everyone by winning the World Senior Championship in Germany right after reaching the required age 60, and thus became a Grandmaster. I have three children, the oldest of whom, Raymond Kaufman, is an International Master. I'm still quite active as a player, and have so far shown no sign of the decline in playing strength normally associated with players of my age. My most recent victories are the 2011 Virginia Open Championship, the 2011 Maryland

blitz championship, and a tie for first (fourth on tiebreak) in the 2010 World Senior. I live in Potomac, Maryland with my wife Priscilla and my youngest daughter. I may be 'old', but I hope this book does justice to the name of the publisher, NEW in Chess!

Larry Kaufman
October 2011

Material Values

Throughout this book you will find positions with unbalanced material. I believe it is very important to evaluate the material situation properly before even considering the position of the pieces on the board (once tactics have been resolved), because you must know how much one side has sacrificed in return for whatever positional compensation the other side has obtained.

Most beginners are taught that the values of the pieces (given that a pawn is 1) are: Knight 3, Bishop 3 (or perhaps 3+ or $3\frac{1}{4}$), Rook 5, Queen 9. These values are surprisingly reliable in reduced endgames, primarily those in which at least one side has no more than one piece (plus pawns). But they are increasingly wrong as you add pieces to the board, and can give quite misleading results on a fairly full board. As this is a book on openings, not on endgames, I felt I must address this issue.

Having researched this issue more than almost anyone on earth, using all kinds of computer analysis, here are some of my conclusions:

1. There are some differences between the best values for humans and the best values for computers. In particular, the best values for computers seem to give slightly higher values to the major pieces relative to the minor pieces than the best values for humans, and computers prefer (unpaired) bishops over knights more clearly than humans do.

2. The bishop pair is worth half a pawn! This rule, first given with supporting data by me in a 1999 *Chess Life* article, has proven to be quite reliable. Most of the top computer programs use something close to this rule, with the clarification that this half-pawn includes any superiority assumed for single bishop over knight. It does not seem to matter very much what phase of the game you are in, although the two bishops do gain slightly in value as the pieces come off, so the half-pawn value is a slight exaggeration in the opening. Surprisingly, it does not even matter very much whether the position is open or closed. It's just that in closed positions the knights are worth more than bishops, but having both bishops still deserves the half-pawn bonus. In other words, even in a very closed position if you have bishop and knight vs. two bishops, you gain a lot by trading bishops. Whether you would trade a knight for one of the two bishops in a closed position is a closer call, as you are giving up the stronger piece to **kill** the half-pawn advantage of the pair. I think it is only a slight exaggeration to say that the main goal of the opening is to obtain the two-bishop advantage; certainly that is the main goal for many of the lines recommended for White in this book.

3. For human players, I think the most reliable values to use for the pieces in the middle game are:

Piece	Value
Knight	3½
Bishop (unpaired)	3½
Rook	5¼
Two Bishops	7½
Queen	10

This will give the right answers to exchange decisions almost all of the time, assuming neither side has significant positional advantages. Any reference I make in the book to a numerical material advantage is based on this table.

4. On a crowded board, the minor pieces and queen are worth a bit more relative to rooks and pawns than the above scale indicates, and on a fairly empty board the converse is true.

Some conclusions from the above table:

Two pawns are usually a bit better than the exchange, and one pawn plus the bishop pair is almost but not quite enough for the exchange.

Two minor pieces are a bit inferior to rook and two pawns (much inferior on a fairly empty board), but if the side with the two minor pieces has the bishop pair, they are a bit superior.

Two rooks are on average better than a queen (but not on a crowded board) but worse than a queen plus pawn (not on an otherwise nearly empty board).

Two rooks are equal to three minor pieces without the bishop pair but inferior to same with the bishop pair.

Queen is a bit stronger than rook plus minor piece plus pawn, but a bit weaker if the minor piece gives a bishop pair advantage.

Queen is inferior to three minor pieces even without the bishop pair, and if the three minors include the bishop pair they are equal to queen and pawn (on a crowded board they are superior).

This should give you a good starting point for an evaluation. The hard part is to judge whether some positional advantage(s) is (are) worth ¼ pawn, half a pawn, or whatever the material gap might be. I hope that my comments in the games will help the reader to acquire or improve this skill.

The Role of Computers in this Book

Every chess book author these days uses computers to check analysis and often to give ideas, but this book is probably unique in terms of how computers were used. Let me explain.

Although I am a grandmaster, I am not as strong a player as some other recent opening book authors, such as grandmasters Avrukh, Delchev, Agrest, Khalifman, Ivan Sokolov and Bologan for example. However I am the only grandmaster who is also a co-creator (with programmer Don Dailey) of a super-strong chess engine, namely Komodo (previously I was responsible for the evaluation function of Rybka 3). Komodo basically incorporates almost everything I know about chess opening and middlegame evaluation, except for certain things that were too hard to formalize. While most programs are optimized solely to beat other programs, we made a conscious effort with Komodo not to sacrifice reasonable evaluation in pursuit of rating points, and despite this we currently occupy the number 2 spot on the rating lists, behind only Houdini (which itself appears to use a similar evaluation function to the one I worked on for Rybka 3). Hopefully by the time you read this Komodo may be number 1, but in any case I relied primarily on Komodo for this book as I trust its evaluations. Since I know everything about Komodo's evaluation, I am generally able to explain in words why it evaluates a position as '+.29' for example. I am also generally able to identify those cases in which I should not trust Komodo's evaluation, which are usually the cases where all programs go wrong. They mostly fall into two categories: closed positions, where long-term plans are dominant rather than variations, and endgames, where it is often possible for a grandmaster to predict that the result will be a draw or a win, while the computer just gives a verdict of advantage.

My basic method was to use the 'Aquarium' software 'IdeA' mode, which allowed me to input literally hundreds of thousands of positions to be analyzed one by one. I have an eight-core computer dedicated 24 hours a day to this task, with each core analyzing one position for an average of 15 minutes. A little arithmetic will tell you that this allows for the analysis of about 5,000 positions per week, so you can see how nearly every position in this book could have been analyzed so thoroughly. Recently I have been using a twelve core machine for this. Except for clerical errors or cases where a line was extended without the usual full 15 minute search, there should be no tactical errors other than those of sufficient subtlety to escape a 15-minute search by a program that is hundreds of Elo points stronger than any human on earth. There will be positional errors due to the limits of program chess knowledge; I have done my best to catch these myself, but I am not Carlsen or Anand, and most of what I know about chess is already in Komodo.

The Aquarium software performs a 'Minimax' operation on the data on request. What this does is to tell us what the evaluation of a given move would be if we assume that both sides play the best moves from that point on, as determined by the Komodo

analysis. The result is that if, for example, the move 1.d4 shows a 0.18 pawn advantage after the minimax operation, it does not just mean that Komodo evaluates the position after 1.d4 as +.18. Rather, it means that based on all the hundreds of thousands of positions analyzed, this is the result of perfect play as far as can be determined. Komodo might analyze to say 24 ply (12 moves) in 15 minutes, but the verdict on 1.d4 is effectively based on roughly twice as deep a search as this. So I really do have a lot of confidence in the conclusions from this work, subject only to the caveat that in very closed openings (the French comes to mind, but that's not in this book) the engine evaluations aren't very trustworthy as the incredible calculating power goes largely to waste.

When actually writing up a line I usually kept Houdini running in the background, both to give a second opinion and to extend lines a bit deeper when I thought this necessary. Sometimes the two programs would disagree, forcing me to decide which was right, and although I more often agreed with Komodo (as you would expect since it more closely follows my own eval) there were plenty of exceptions to this. On occasion I used the number 3 program 'Critter' or Rybka 4 for a third opinion.

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White Introduction

In Chess Advantage (CA) I based the White repertoire on the opening move 1.e4, but this time I start with 1.d4, intending c4 next. This is partly because I have transitioned from using both moves to playing almost exclusively 1.d4, and it is partly because I believe that 1.d4 is by far the more practical choice for the vast majority of players. In order to demonstrate any advantage as White after 1.e4, you must play very sharply in many openings, especially the Sicilian Defense. One wrong move will likely give you an inferior or even lost game. In CA I tried to prove a white advantage against the Sicilian with lines not based on the sharp 3.d4, but a major novelty by grandmaster Ivanchuk right after my deadline showed easy equality against the Moscow Variation (3.♗b5+). I also had to conclude eventually that the Spanish Exchange (recommended in CA) fails to give any advantage in the main line recommended in the Black portion of this book. So unless I wanted to give the main lines of the Najdorf and Spanish for White, which would entail a huge book and very little advantage against best play, I had to make the switch to 1.d4.

My own results improved dramatically once I switched to almost exclusively playing 1.d4. One reason is that in most lines, if White makes a mistake he usually keeps the draw in hand, which is not so likely to be true with 1.e4. But the biggest reason is that I have discovered that the vast majority of amateur players (even including masters) are simply much better prepared against 1.e4 than against 1.d4. In game after game against competent opposition rated in the 2000 to 2400 range I am simply much better or even winning by around moves 12-15. This rarely happened with 1.e4.

What is the goal of the closed game (playing the lines in this book starting with 1.d4)? Simply put, it is to achieve one of the following advantages:

1. An extra center pawn. This is the normal outcome of the Queen's Gambit Declined, the Slav, the Queen's Gambit Accepted, the Modern Benoni, the Chigorin, and the Grünfeld.

2. More space. This is the normal outcome of the King's Indian and Old Indian defenses and the Pirc and Modern Defenses.

3. More material (including the bishop pair). This is the normal outcome of the Benko (and other) Gambits, the Budapest, the Semi-Slav with 4...dxc4 or 5...dxc4, the Nimzo-Indian, and our line against the ...e6 Dutch.

4. Superior development. This is the normal outcome of the 1...f5 Dutch and the Semi-Slav with 5...h6, though in the second case we have to sacrifice either a pawn on the bishop pair to achieve this outcome.

I believe that White should always achieve at least one of these goals, and should be able to do so without paying a 'fair' price. Generally speaking, the smallest of these achievements is an extra center pawn, so Black can be satisfied if he concedes only this

one advantage to White. Usually though, Black concedes some development along with the extra center pawn.

After 1.d4, the main alternatives to the usual 1...d5 and 1...♟f6 are 1...f5, 1...e6, and 1...d6 (1...g6 should transpose to 1...d6), in the latter two cases possibly intending 2...f5 against 2.c4 or 2.♟f3. The Dutch Defense (either 1...f5 or 2...f5) is surprisingly popular among amateurs, though rare at top level, with only Hikaru Nakamura playing it often. I don't think that White should fall in with Black's plans by playing the usual c4, g3, and ♟g2. Instead I advocate 2.♟g5 against 1...f5, 2.e4 against 1...d6, and after 1...e6 to play 2.c4 f5 3.♟f3 ♟f6 4.♟c3 ♟b4 5.♟d2 (or 5.♟b3). In all cases I believe White retains his opening advantage. See Chapter 1.

After 1...d5 2.c4 there are a few sidelines. After 2...♟f5 (Baltic), 3.cxd5 ♟xb1 4.♟a4+ should leave White up the bishop pair for nothing. After 2...e5 (Albin) 3.dxe5 d4 4.♟f3 ♟c6 5.a3, White either keeps the pawn or else gets superior development and an extra center pawn. Against the Chigorin 2...♟c6, I favor 3.♟c3, which either wins a piece for three pawns, gets a large space advantage, or achieves central dominance. See Chapter 2.

There are several gambits Black can try after 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4. They include the Budapest 2...e5 3.dxe5 ♟g4 (3...♟e4 4.a3 is the Fajarowicz) 4.♟f4, the Blumenfeld 2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 b5 which we meet by the rare 5.♟f4!, and of course the popular Benko Gambit 2...c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6, which we accept, based on the plan of exchanging bishops by an eventual e2-e4, castling by hand, and playing a timely a2-a4 and ♟b5. White either keeps his pawn for insufficient compensation or returns it for a positional advantage in all of these lines.

The modern Benoni (2...c5 3.d5 e6 followed by exchanging pawns, ...d6, and ...g6) is fairly popular but seems to be very well met by the ♟f4 system I give. Black can easily get a lost game quickly, and even with perfect play White retains the advantages of an extra center pawn and more space.

The Old Indian (2...d6 without a subsequent ...g6) we meet by 3.♟f3. If Black refuses to play ...g6 he ends up with a similar position to lines we look at under the King's Indian, but with less counterplay.

The Queen's Gambit Accepted (1...d5 2.c4 dxc4) is much less popular than it used to be, primarily due to 3.e4 which I recommend. I also give a simple alternative (7.dxc5) that gives a slight edge with little risk, as White gains a tempo on top of his initial initiative.

The Queen's Gambit Declined (2...e6) is very popular at all levels, and it is not easy for White to get much of an edge. I recommend the Exchange Variation, though I also give

an alternate plan with $\text{d}f3$, $\text{d}c3$, $\text{e}f4$, and $\text{c}c1$ in the chapter 'Avoiding the Nimzo-Indian Defense'. The exchange guarantees White the advantage of an extra pawn in the center, which is often the basis for a minority attack on the queenside (b2-b4-b5) aiming to give Black an isolated or backward pawn. White can also use his extra center pawn directly by a well-prepared e2-e4.

The Slav (2...c6 3.d3 d6 4.d3 dxc4) I meet by 5.a4 e5 6.d5, which either leads to a material imbalance in White's favor (bishop for three pawns or rook for four pawns!) or to the usual plus of an extra center pawn along with more space. I also give a safe way to avoid it by 4.b3 or 4.c2. The Chebanenko (4...a6) I meet by 5.a4 followed by a king's fianchetto.

The Semi-Slav (4...e6) I meet by 5.g5, aiming for the Exchange Variation against 5...bd7, a nice lead in development and space at the price of the bishop pair after 5...h6 6.xf6, or the win of a pawn (at least temporarily) after 5...dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5, the notoriously complex Botvinnik Variation. White typically ends up returning the pawn for a positional advantage, or winning the exchange but having to suffer a bit for it. I also give ways to avoid the Semi-Slav regardless of Black's move order for those not relishing such complications.

Against the defense recommended for Black in this book, the Grünfeld, I give the Russian system (4.d3 e7 5.b3), which if met by the usually recommended lines should give White the bishop pair at little cost. The cost is somewhat higher if Black plays my recommended Hungarian Defense to this, but still White should be for choice.

The King's Indian is fairly rare in top level play but not at lower levels. I give two rather rare lines against it, a very bold line popularized by grandmaster Kacheishvili in which White submits to being attacked but usually wins material on the queenside, and a safe line based on refusing to play d4-d5. Both seem to favor White as far as I can tell.

My main repertoire choice is to allow the Nimzo-Indian by 3.d3 and to meet the pin by 4.c2, aiming to win the bishop pair without allowing structural damage. Black can avoid this in various ways, but all have disadvantages. I also give lines for White if he prefers to allow the Queen's Indian (3.d3 b6), against which we play 4.g3 and on the 7th move of the main line e1 rather than the traditional 7.d3. White should get a nice space advantage or the advantage of an extra center pawn, depending on whether Black refrains from ...d7-d5.

Finally I conclude the White book with a discussion of the merits of aiming for the Queen's Gambit with 1.d3. Those interested should also study the chapter on avoiding the Nimzo-Indian, as there are likely transpositions.

Chapter 1

Chigorin et al

In this chapter we consider all Black's alternative moves after **1.d4 d5 2.c4** other than **2...e6**, **2...c6**, and **2...dxc4**. By far the most important of these is the Chigorin, **2...♘c6**.

In Game 1 we look at all the other options, namely the Marshall (**2...♗f6**), the Symmetrical or Austrian (**2...c5**), and the Baltic (**2...♗f5**). They are all pretty bad, but you need to know how to meet them.

After **2...♗f6**,



you should remember to exchange pawns **3.cxd5 ♗xd5** and then play **4.♗f3!** rather than the more obvious but less effective **4.e4**. The best Black can do is to reach a standard Grünfeld position a tempo down.

The Symmetrical or Austrian **2...c5**



is met by 3.cxd5 ♟f6 4.e4 ♟e4 5.dxc5 ♟xc5 6.♟f3 e6 7.♟c3 exd5 8.♟xd5, when White's superior development on an open board gives him a definite advantage.

The Baltic 2...♟f5



is met by 3.cxd5 ♟xb1 4.♟a4+! c6 5.♟xb1 ♟xd5 6.♟f3 ♟d7 7.♟d2 ♟gf6 8.e3 ♟b6, when White has the pleasant choice between a modest positional edge with 9.♟a5 or a very promising gambit with the untried 9.♟c2.

Now we come to the Chigorin (2...♟c6), which gained a certain amount of popularity when top-level grandmaster Morozevich used it often in the '90s.



Black aims for piece play and is generally willing to surrender the bishop pair for it. I really like the reply 3.♟c3, with which I believe I have scored 100%, once beating a master in ten moves! Black has only two consistent replies. In Game 1.2 we examine 3...♟f6, against which 4.♟f3 is generally recommended and played, but I advocate the number 2 reply, 4.cxd5 ♟xd5 5.♟f3. Black has several options here, but in every case White obtains some advantage, though the nature of this advantage varies widely. In the main line White gets a dominating center without allowing Black the kind of counterplay against it he gets in the Grünfeld.

So next we look at 3...dxc4, which we meet by 4.d5. In Game 1.3 Black replies 4...♟a5, which loses a piece for three pawns to 5.♞a4+. In the middlegame this counts as a half-pawn gain for White, but it's even better than this for White here as Black has some tactical problems to meet. So Black should prefer 4...♞e5 (Game 1.4). Now 5.♟f3 keeps a small edge safely, but our main line is the more critical 5.f4. Black has three playable knight moves, all of which are met by 6.e4. After 5...♞d7 and 5...♞g6 White keeps a positional advantage by simple means, but 5...♞g4 is tactical and must be learned.

The Chigorin is not completely refuted, but I think White obtains a larger advantage than he does after the three most reputable second moves.

VO 13.6 (D06)

Game 1.1

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Kragujevac ch-SRB, 2011 (5)

1. d2-d4 d7-d5
2. c2-c4 ♟c8-f5

The Baltic Defense. 2...♟f6 is one of Frank Marshall's less successful opening ideas: 3.cxd5 ♟xd5 (in the event of 3...g6 4.♞a4+ c6 5.dxc6 ♟xc6 6.♟f3 ♟g7 7.♟c3 0-0 8.e3 ♟f5 9.♟e2 Black has just a little lead in development for the pawn; after 3...c6 4.dxc6 ♟xc6 5.♟f3 e5 6.e3 Black has just a tempo for the pawn) 4.♟f3! (after 4.e4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 e5 6.♟f3 exd4 7.♞xd4 ♞xd4 8.♟xd4 ♟b4 9.f3 White has a modest edge in space) 4...♟f5 (4...g6 5.e4 ♟b6 6.h3 ♟g7 7.♟c3 0-0 8.♟e3 – this is a position from the Exchange Grünfeld with ♟d2 where White has saved a tempo in getting his bishop to e3 in one move instead of two. This swings the evaluation from equal to a clear plus for White; 4...♟g4 5.♟e5; 4...♟f6 5.♟c3 ♟f5 6.♞b3) 5.♟bd2 ♟f6 (after 5...♟g6 6.e4 ♟b6 7.h4N Black has problems meeting this) 6.♞b3 ♞c8 7.e4 ♟xe4 8.♟xe4 ♟xe4 9.♟g5



Analysis diagram

9...♟g6 (9...♞f5? 10.g4 ♞g6 11.f3 ♟c6 12.d5 wins a piece) 10.♟c4 e6 11.d5 ♟e7 12.dxe6 f6 13.♟f3 0-0 14.0-0 and the mighty passed pawn gives White an obvious advantage; 2...c5 This symmetric variation is not very good. 3.cxd5



Analysis diagram

A) 3...♖xd5 4.♟f3 cxd4 5.♞c3 ♗a5 6.♞xd4 ♟f6 (6...e5 7.♞b3 ♗c7 8.♞b5 with advantage—Avrukh) 7.♞b3 (Bronznik recommends 7.♗b3 e5 8.♗b5+ in his book *1.d4 – Beat the Guerrillas!*) 7...♗c7 8.e4N ♞c6 9.♟e2 e6 10.0-0 ♟e7 11.♗c2 0-0 12.♟e3 – just compare the two queen’s bishops to see White’s advantage;

B) 3...♟f6 4.e4 ♞xe4 5.dxc5 ♞xc5 (or 5...♗a5+ 6.♟d2 ♞xd2 7.♗xd2 ♗xc5 8.♞a3 ♟d7 9.♞c1 ♗b6 10.♞c4 and White has a serious lead in development) 6.♟f3 (White prevents ...e7-e5) 6...e6 7.♞c3 exd5 8.♗xd5 ♟e7 (8...♗xd5 9.♞xd5 ♞e6 10.♟e3 Bronznik; White’s development is far superior) 9.♗xd8+ ♟xd8 10.♟e3 ♞e6 11.♟e2N and White’s large lead in development in this open position gives him an obvious plus.

3. c4xd5

This usually leads to White’s winning the bishop pair at no cost.

3. ... ♟f5xb1

3...♟f6 4.♟f3 ♞xd5 5.♞bd2 transposes to 2...♟f6 above.

4. ♗d1-a4+! c7-c6



5. ♞a1xb1

An alternative is 5.dxc6 ♞xc6 6.♞xb1 ♗xd4 (after 6...e5 7.♟d2 ♗xd4 8.♗xd4 exd4 9.g3 ♟c5 10.♟g2 White has the bishops plus pressure down the long diagonal) 7.♗xd4 ♞xd4 8.e3 ♞c6 9.♟f3. White has a clean bishop pair advantage, but the symmetric pawn structure makes it harder to exploit than the game continuation.

- 5. ... ♗d8xd5
- 6. ♞g1-f3 ♞b8-d7
- 7. ♟c1-d2 ♞g8-f6

7...♞b6 8.♗c2 ♟f6 (8...♗xa2 9.e4) 9.a3 (or 9.e3, transposing to 9.♗c2 in the game) 9...♞e4 10.♟c3N e6 11.e3 ♟e7 12.♟d3 ♞xc3 13.bxc3 g6 (in case of 13...♟xa3 14.c4 ♗a5+ 15.♞e2 ♟b4 16.♞hc1 g6 17.♗b3 ♟e7 18.c5 ♞d5 19.♗xb7 0-0 20.♞f1 White will win the c6 pawn) 14.0-0 0-0 15.c4 ♗d7 16.a4 and White is much better, with ideas like a4-a5 followed by c4-c5, or ♞e5.

8. e2-e3 ♞d7-b6



9. ♗a4-a5

An excellent untried gambit line is 9.♗c2N ♗xa2 10.♟d3 g6 11.e4 ♟g7 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♞a1 0-0 14.♞a3 ♗c8 15.♞fa1 a6 16.h3. Now White has more

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