

opening repertoire

1 e4

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About the Author

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the US.

Also by the Author:

Play the London System

A Ferocious Opening Repertoire

The Slav: Move by Move

1...d6: Move by Move

The Caro-Kann: Move by Move

The Four Knights: Move by Move

Capablanca: Move by Move

The Modern Defence: Move by Move

Kramnik: Move by Move

The Colle: Move by Move

The Scandinavian: Move by Move

Botvinnik: Move by Move

The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move

Korchnoi: Move by Move

The Alekhine Defence: Move by Move

The Trompowsky Attack: Move by Move

Carlsen: Move by Move

The Classical French: Move by Move

Larsen: Move by Move

1...b6: Move by Move

Bird's Opening: Move by Move

Petroff Defence: Move by Move

Fischer: Move by Move

Anti-Sicilians: Move by Move

Opening Repertoire: ...c6

First Steps: the Modern

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Introduction

The Ten Commandments say you should “Honour thy Father and thy Mother.” Yet I routinely violate my dad’s advice. (My father was so bossy that his “advice” always felt like a commandment.) He told me to open with 1 e4 (he always said “pawn to king’s four”), claiming it was “clearly White’s best opening move”. My mother doesn’t play chess and doesn’t really care if I open with 1 e4 or not. Throughout my career I disobeyed dad, and in the vast majority of my games I open with either 1 ♘f3 or 1 d4. For me, pushing my e-pawn two squares on the first move is my version of wearing a disguise.

When we meet someone from another country, and another culture and religion, allowances are made for the difference in custom and core belief. Most 1 e4 players I know are – from my perspective – foreigners to my own style. When we return to our old opening, long abandoned, we in a sense become foreigners in our own country of birth. When I first learned chess at age eight, it never occurred to me that White had any other option but to open with the king’s pawn. Later I discovered other first moves and drifted away from pushing the e-pawn. I do return home from time to time and still play 1 e4.

Look, when it comes to calm, strategic openings like the Colle, London System, and 1 ♘f3, I’m your Yoda. So when I got the desire to write a 1 e4 book, I designed a repertoire suited to the quiet strategist, who wants to squeeze, rather than brawl. Mostly, anyway.

To believe the white pieces should extract a “+” edge is an uncontroversial assumption. The argument begins with which move we choose to play first. A bit before writing this book I looked up my stats: 1 d4 – 82.1%, not bad; 1 ♘f3 – 83.5%, even better; and then I looked up 1 e4 and braced myself for a failing grade – 89.0%. What? I didn’t see that coming! In many of my other books I jokingly refer to the e-pawn push with the annotation “1 e4?!”. Was Bobby Fischer right when he called 1 e4! “Best by test”? So I asked Byron Jacobs if Everyman would be interested in a 1 e4! repertoire book for the positional player.

Now I may score well with 1 e4, yet I feel intensely uncomfortable, since the positions tend to be sharper than the ones I’m normally accustomed to. However, remember this: the more we expose ourselves to a toxin, the more immunity we build up. In sharper openings even a tactically-challenged dullard like me can play complex lines if I comp them first, study them deeply into the middlegame (and, yes, even into the endings if necessary), play them in online blitz and then, finally, dare to play 1 e4! over the board.

In this book I deliberately chose lines for White which are felt, rather than measured – much like the difference between the vaguely comforting “glass of water”, when juxtaposed with the scientist’s statement “10 fluid ounces of water”. Is there such a thing as being over-educated? In chess I think there is, especially in our comped/database era of information overload, and it’s often no fun for the average club player.

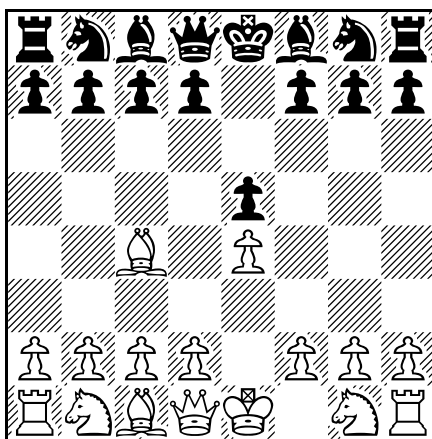
When we read a chess book, we shouldn’t feel like tourists in a strange land, asking halting directions and then getting undecipherable answers from the native speaker. Our memory, which reconstructs yet doesn’t necessarily comprehend, tends to work like a storage chest: when it is too full, something old must be removed to make room for the new. So very few of the lines picked for this book are elaborate theoretical climbs. Instead, the repertoire was constructed with an eye to reaching two kinds of positions:

- ♁ Those where our side grabs extra space. Our opening philosophy is based on the blunt declaration: “If you allow me to seize space, then I will do just that.”
- ♁ Clear positions, perfectly suited to the natural strategist. In this repertoire our goal is to play 1 e4 like a peasant who seeks a simple, uninspiring life. Our repertoire in general steers clear of the super-fashionable and merely seeks a solid foundation.

Opening fads change back and forth over the decades, yet with strategic lines the core tends to remain the same. I have picked lines where, for the most part, our overall plan is self-evident from the core structure.

Let’s take a look at our various battlegrounds:

Double King’s Pawn



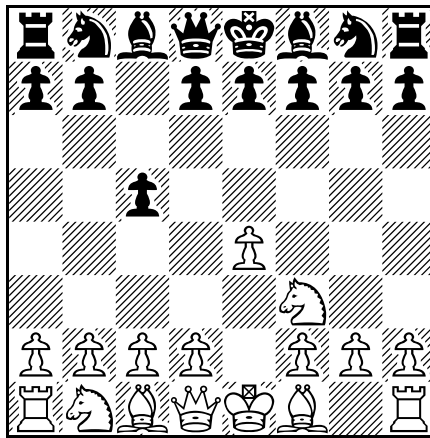
Look, this book isn’t the house of Christian Dior, where fashion is everything. By posting our bishop on c4 we violate the old wives’ tale/principle: *Develop your knights before your*

bishops. Having said that, the Bishop's Opening, a place where the ancient coexists with the modern, is no fringe line only punted by coffeehouse players at Starbucks on Sunday afternoons. The opening sits on the border of two opposing counties: if White plays an early ♘c3 , the positions resemble the Vienna Game; if White plays an early d2-d3 and c2-c3 , we get Ruy-Lopez-like manoeuvring games, except without the mountain of theory.

The value of the Bishop's Opening lines lies not so much in the expectation of a concrete advantage, as much as its practicality. First of all, we don't need to study a line against the Petroff's Defence, which can arise from a 2 ♗f3 move order. Secondly, the Bishop's Opening is dwarfed in popularity by lines like the Ruy Lopez and Scotch Game. This means that your opponents are less likely to be up on the nuances.

You'll notice that I have also included the Frankenstein-Dracula variation, which certainly cannot be described as "positional". That's because I think it's unsound, so the positional player shouldn't back off from playing the white side, even if it goes against our natural style. But the reader is given a choice in any case, so you can always avoid it and stick to d2-d3 and c2-c3 systems if you prefer.

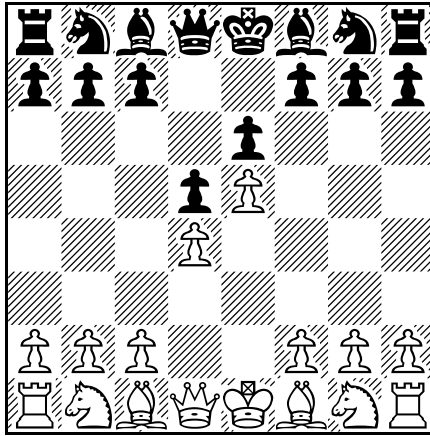
Sicilian Defence



Against the Sicilian we stay away from the mosquito-breeding waters of Open lines and instead play a multi-tiered system:

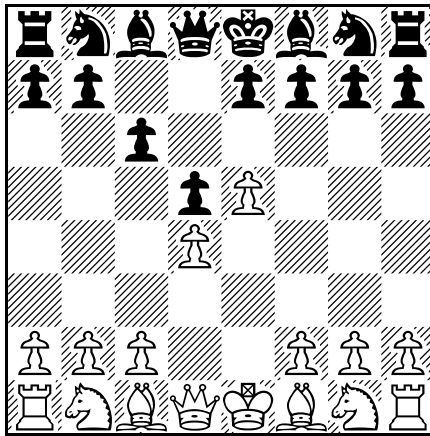
1. On $2...d6$ we enter the Moscow Variation with 3 ♗b5+ .
2. On $2...♘c6$ we similarly play 3 ♗b5 , the Rossolimo Variation.
3. On $2...e6$ we opt for 3 c3 , transposing to a line of the c3 Sicilian.

French Defence



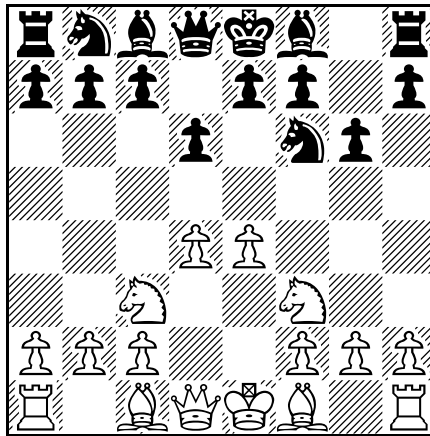
In our treatment of the French and Caro-Kann, space is what passes as currency. When an enemy pawn – even a harmless-looking one like White’s pawn on e5 – enters your territory, it’s the same as trying to go to sleep when you suspect there is a mouse in your bedroom. The mouse can’t hurt you, yet there is no way you will get even a blink of sleep that night.

Caro-Kann Defence



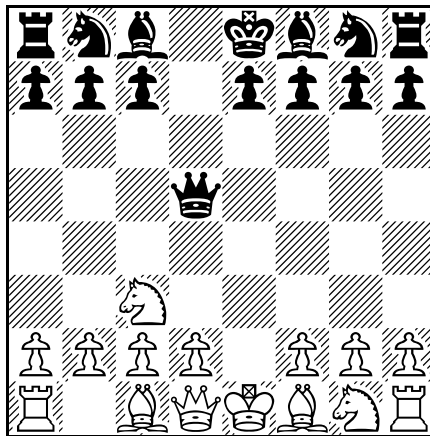
The Advance Caro-Kann and Advance French are in fact different species, yet still about as closely related as Cro-Magnon was to the Neanderthal.

Pirc, Modern and Philidor Defences



I like Ulf Andersson's ultra-solid Classical treatment of the Pirc and Modern. Against the Philidor, which can arise via 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 e5, we go straight down the main lines, where we can be confident of extracting a "+=".

Scandinavian Defence

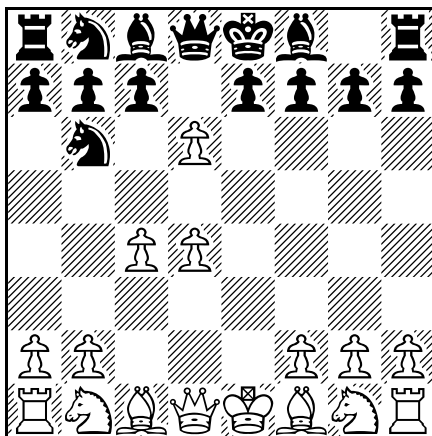


Be aware that Black's play in the Scandinavian is more suspicious than actually criminal. With 1...d5 and 2...♙xd5 Black opens a wormhole to an alternative reality, where development doesn't matter. At least that is what all Scandinavian players – including me – secretly believe! When I begin showing students my Scandinavian games, they always ask: "But, but, but, didn't you say *not* to bring out our queen early?" And I never have a good answer to that question, except for: "Do as I say, not as I do!"

If you are looking for an opening utopia where we dodge the main lines in every varia-

tion, I have to tell you that there is no such thing. Every system has its irritating limitations. In my opinion, the best way to meet Scandinavian is via the sharpest main lines, so in this chapter we must know our theory quite well.

Alekhine's Defence

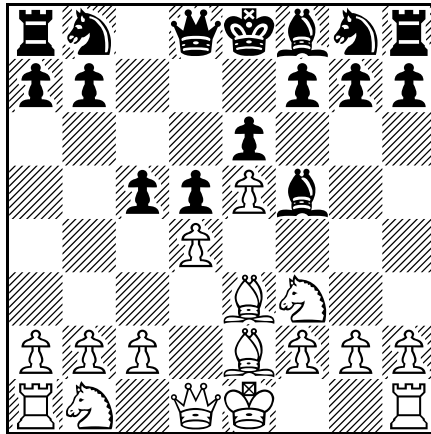


Here I advocate the Exchange Variation. I used to play the Alekhine as my main black weapon versus 1 e4, back in the 1980s and '90s. I finally discarded it from vast irritation that everyone began playing the Exchange against it. If Black recaptures on d6 with the c7-pawn, it becomes theoretically very difficult to equalize; but recapturing with the e7-pawn leaves Black with a difficult-to-win/no fun Petroff-type position. In either case White enjoys a healthy surplus of central space.

And there you have it. May we squeeze our opponents with 1 e4!.

Game 27
F.Caruaana-M.Vachier-Lagrave
 Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis 2014

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♟f5 4 ♞f3 e6 5 ♙e2 c5 6 ♙e3



This is currently considered the most testing line. Instead of simply castling (as we saw in the previous two games) or backing up d4 with c2-c3, White brings out another piece, increasing his lead in development. Yet there are clear dangers involved as well.

Question: What dangers? How can developing be hazardous?

Answer: By bringing out the c1-bishop early, White is vulnerable to ideas of ...♞b6 and ...♟xb2, plundering a pawn.

6...♞b6!?

Sure, let's go pawn grabbing and fall further behind in development. What could go wrong? Despite its suicidal appearance, the engines assure us this move is still playable for Black. We'll look at less greedy – and perhaps less critical – alternatives in the next game.

7 ♞c3!

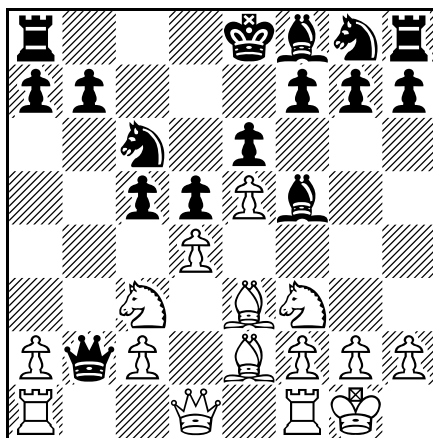
White's most principled reply. This is our go-ahead-make-my-day moment. We offer the b2-pawn, and even the c2- or a2-pawns, aiming to exploit our lead in development.

7...♞c6

The immediate 7...♟xb2 is also possible; for example, 8 ♞b5 (8 ♟b1!? is another option) 8...c4! (8...♞a6 9 dxc5! ♙xc2 10 ♟c1 is good for White) 9 ♟b1 ♟xa2 10 ♞c7+ ♙d8 11 ♞xa8 ♙xc2 12 ♟xb7!?! (12 ♟a1 ♙b4+ 13 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 14 ♙xd2! c3+ 15 ♙e3 ♟b2 16 ♟c1 ♞c6 is an irrational mess, unhelpfully rated "0.00" by the engine) 12...♙xd1 13 ♟xb8+ ♙d7 14 ♙xd1 ♞e7 15 0-0 h6 16 ♙d2 with another crazy position that the comp calls even, though I prefer

White's pieces over Black's queen and pawns, A.Areshchenko-Ba.Jobava, Burgas 2012.

8 0-0 ♖xb2



Both sides set out their agendas, the origins of which are independent of each other. Great. Thanks for making our day! Some of our opponents will meet our gambit with hearty approval. On the surface it feels as if Black's potential for reward is rather paltry in comparison to the magnitude of the risk taken. What do the comps think? Well, they helpfully tell us the position is unclear!

Question: Hey, what are you getting us into? Our b-pawn fell and our c-pawn is next. Isn't this supposed to be a "positional" opening repertoire for White?

Answer: Trust in our initiative! If this line works out well for Black, then a development lead in an open position doesn't matter and Morphy was either a liar or a fool! I'm normally a writer who consistently refuses to heed my own counsel, but with this pawn sacrifice I will make an exception and vow to play it as White if I get the chance. One warning to Black too: Wealth does a person no good if you have no lifespan remaining to spend it!

9 ♖e1!

In my opinion, the most accurate move, which is dual-purpose:

1. White protects his c3-knight.
2. White evades a queen swap after Black's coming ...♙xc2.

The alternative is to play 9 ♖b5 again, but here after 9...c4! 10 ♖c7+ ♔d7 11 ♖xa8 ♙xc2, I like Black who will eventually win the a8-knight and emerge with several pawns for the exchange, S.Karjakin-A.Morozevich, Nice (blindfold rapid) 2009.

9...cxd4

Black's attempts to clog the centre with 9...c4 won't stop White from opening the queenside: 10 ♖b1 ♙xc2 11 ♖xb7 ♙b4 12 ♖xb4! ♖xb4 13 ♙d1 ♙d3 14 ♙a4+ ♔f8 15 ♙a1 ♙g4 16 ♙b2 ♖b8 17 ♖b1 ♙xf3 18 ♙c2! saw Black's queen weirdly trapped mid-board and

he didn't get enough for it, S.Karjakin-V.Laznicka, Poikovsky 2011.

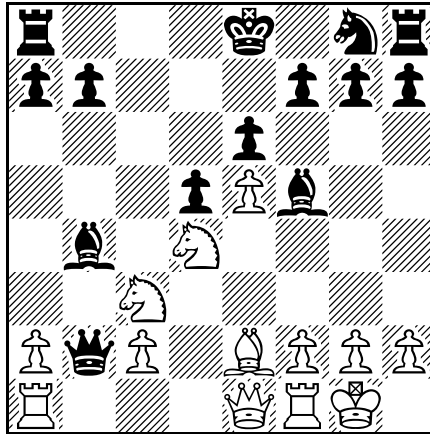
10 ♟xd4!

10 ♟xd4?! ♟b4 11 ♟xf5 ♚xc3 12 ♟d6+ ♔f8! favours Black.

10...♟xd4!

Black needs to exchange knights first. 10...♟b4?! leaves him dangerously behind in development after 11 ♚b1 ♚a3 12 ♚b3 ♚a5 13 a3! ♟xc3 14 ♟xc3 ♚c7 15 ♟d4 ♟xd4 16 ♟xd4.

11 ♟xd4 ♟b4



12 ♟db5

I might prefer 12 ♚b1 ♟xc3 (12...♚xc3 13 ♚xb4 ♚xe1 14 ♚xe1 is much the same) 13 ♚xb2 ♟xe1 14 ♚xe1 b6 15 ♟b5+ ♔f8 16 ♟xf5 exf5 17 ♚b3 ♟e7 18 ♚c3 a6 19 ♟d7 g6 20 ♚c7, followed by 21 e6 with excellent play for the pawn, V.Gashimov-V.Ivanchuk, Reggio Emilia 2010/11.

12...♟a5

Covering c7 while maintaining the pin on the c3-knight. If 12...♟xc3?! 13 ♟xc3 a6 14 ♚b1 ♚a3 15 ♚xb7 ♟e7, there is 16 ♟b5+! ♔f8 17 ♟d3 ♚c8 18 ♟e2 with a clear advantage for White, S.Karjakin-A.Tukhaev, European Cup, Plovdiv 2010.

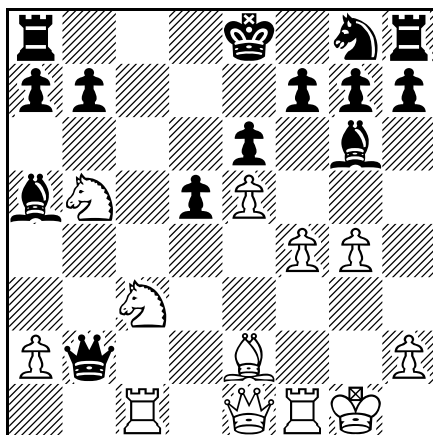
13 ♚b1 ♚xc2 14 ♚c1

Deviating from his earlier 14 ♚b3 ♟e7 15 ♟d6+ ♔f8 16 ♟xb7 ♟b6 17 ♟d6 ♟a5 18 ♟f3, S.Karjakin-D.Fridman, Dortmund 2012, where 18...h6!, intending ...g7-g5, looks to give Black a decent position.

14...♚b2 15 g4!?

No draw! The risky idea is to follow with f2-f4-f5. After 15 ♟a4 ♟xe1 16 ♟xb2 ♟a5 17 ♟d6+ ♔e7 18 ♟xb7 (or 18 ♟xf5+ exf5 19 ♚c5 ♟b6 20 ♚xd5 ♟h6) 18...♟b6, Black was okay in S.Vidit-R.Svane, Moscow 2018.

15...♟g6 16 f4



A concept which strategists/logicians (like me) consistently fail to grasp is that intellect has its limits. The comps call this position even. From a practical standpoint, I think Black's game is more difficult to play, since strong defensive moves tend not to be as natural and easy to find as strong attacking moves.

16...♙e4

Another option is to reinforce the d5-square with 16...♘e7; for example, 17 ♘d6+ ♙f8 18 f5 exf5 19 gxf5 ♗xf5 20 ♗xf5 ♖c8 21 ♗xd5! ♚xc1 22 ♚xa5 ♚c5+ 23 ♚xc5+ ♗xc5 24 ♗fe3 and the comp calls this messy ending dead level.

17 ♗f2!

The rook is that ordinary, unremarkable stranger passing through town last week, who you later discovered, by watching the news, is a wanted serial killer. Black's queen is greatly endangered by its presence on the same rank. White also sets a devilish trap.

17...♞h6?

There is no way to thrust normalcy into an environment where it can't possibly exist. The knight is out of play on h6.

The actual damage to Black's position is far less than MVL may have believed. Afterwards Caruana suggested the improvement 17...♙f8! 18 ♙d3 ♚b4, which was shown to offer Black equal chances in S.Azarov-A.Shimanov, St. Louis 2017.

Question: What's wrong with playing ...♙b6 and pinning the rook?

Answer: That was Caruana's trap: 17...♙b6?? walks into 18 ♗a4! ♙xf2+ 19 ♙xf2 ♚xa2 20 ♚b4! with a decisive attack for White.

18 ♙d3! ♚b4?!

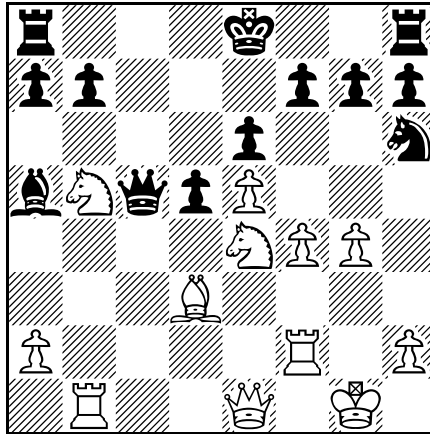
When you get hit by an unexpected shot (17 ♗f2!), make certain that the damage sustained is merely physical. Stay calm and don't add psychological trauma to it as well. Black had to try 18...♙b6 19 ♗xe4 dxe4 20 ♖cc2! (the black queen is trapped – this is as awkward

as that time a drunken Kanye West accosted Taylor Swift at the music awards) 20...♔xc2 21 ♙xc2 ♜xg4 22 ♜d6+ ♚f8 23 ♜xe4 g6, when he remains in deep trouble yet can continue to offer resistance.

19 ♜b1 ♚c5

This loses material for no compensation. Equally hopeless is 19...♚e7 20 ♜d6+ ♚f8 21 ♙xe4 dxe4 22 g5! (not 22 ♜xb7? ♚h4) 22...♜f5 23 ♜xb7 ♚d8 24 ♜xf7+ ♚g8 25 ♜xf5! exf5 26 ♚d1 and the queen's appearance on d5 is decisive.

20 ♜xe4!



The c3-pin is conveniently broken, as 20...♙xe1 21 ♜bd6+ ♚f8 22 ♜xc5 ♙xf2+ 23 ♚xf2

20...dxe4 21 ♚xa5

Threatening deadly discovered checks to win the queen.

21...0-0 22 ♙e2 e3 23 ♜ff1 ♜fc8 24 ♚e1

Caruana has consolidated and the rest is easy.

24...♚d5 25 ♜b2 f6 26 ♚g3

For what it's worth, the comp gives 26 exf6! gxf6 27 ♚h4 as stronger.

26...fxe5 27 fxe5 ♜f8 28 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 29 ♚xe3 ♜f7 30 ♜c3 1-0

Black's resistance is over since the ending is dead lost if his queen chops the e5-pawn.

Summary: When (or if) you opt for the dynamic 6 ♙e3, be prepared to sacrifice a pawn or two for a dangerous lead in development.

Game 28

S.Karjakin-W.So

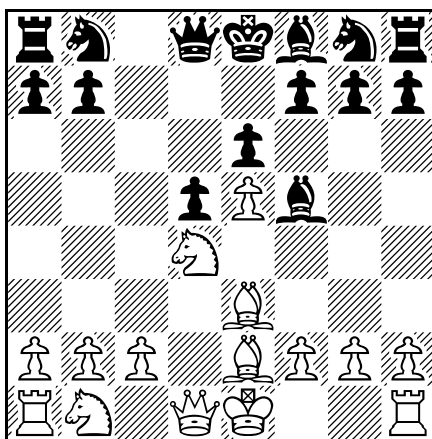
FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♙f5 4 ♜f3 e6 5 ♙e2 c5 6 ♙e3 cxd4

This seems a safer option than the ...♖b6 and ...♖xb2 plan of the previous game. Black resolves the pressure on c5 by trading pawns. On the other hand, it also brings the white knight powerfully into the centre.

I don't believe Black equalizes with 6...♘d7, which is rather passive; for example, 7 ♘bd2 ♘e7 8 c4! (principle: *Open the game when leading in development*) 8...♘c6 (8...cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘xe5!?) 10 cxd5 ♖xd5 11 0-0 offers White loads of compensation for the missing pawn) 9 0-0 ♙e7 10 cxd5 exd5 11 dxc5 0-0 12 ♘b3 ♘dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘d4 with advantage to White, who controls d4, owns a valuable queenside majority, and can also play against Black's isolated queen's pawn, A.Grischuk-M.Roiz, World Team Championship, Ningbo 2011.

7 ♘xd4



7...♘e7

N.Short-V.Malisauskas, Moscow Olympiad 1994, saw 7...♙g6 8 0-0 ♘c6 9 c4! ♘ge7 10 ♘c3 ♘xd4 (not 10...♘xe5? 11 cxd5 exd5 12 ♙b5+ ♘7c6 13 ♖e1 and Black is unable to survive) 11 ♙xd4 dxc4 12 ♘b5 ♘c6 13 ♙xc4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♙c5 15 ♖a4+ ♗e7 16 ♘b3, when Black's king found himself in deep trouble.

8 ♘d2

This knight will transfer to f3, reinforcing its colleague on d4. After 8 c4 ♘bc6 9 ♖a4 a6 10 ♘a3 ♖a5+ 11 ♖xa5 ♘xa5, Black is not significantly worse.

8...♘bc6 9 ♘2f3 ♙e4

Obviously 9...♙g4 10 0-0 ♙xf3 comes to the same thing.

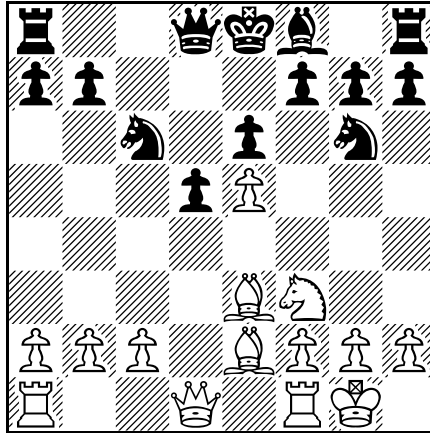
10 0-0 ♙xf3

Black's idea is to swap off the bad "French" bishop and leave himself with a remaining "good" bishop, while destroying one of White's key defenders of e5. The downside is that Black hands over the bishop pair in a semi-open position.

Then again, if Black plays 10...♘g6 at once, then 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♘g5! picks up the bishop pair in any case: 12...♙e7 (not 12...♘xe5?! 13 ♖d4 or 12...♙f5?! 13 g4 ♙e4 14 f3 ♙e7

15 ♖xf7!, which both favour White) 13 ♘e4 dxe4 14 ♖d4 ♖d5 15 ♙h5 ♘xe5 16 ♜ad1 O-O 17 ♜c3 and White had full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, F.Caruana-V.Laznicka, New Delhi 2011.

11 ♖xf3 ♘g6



We note an ideological crossover. The position looks as if it arose from a French Defence, rather than a Caro-Kann.

Question: Isn't our side losing an important pawn?

Answer: Our e5-pawn rests dangerously and is the shard of the broken bottle, just daring some foot to step on it. If Black grabs the pawn we get great compensation in the form of:

1. The bishop pair.
2. An increasing lead in development.
3. Yet more open lines, to augment those arising from our forthcoming pawn break.

12 c4!

Principles: *Open the position and create confrontation when leading in development – and in possession of the bishop pair.*

12...dxc4 13 ♙xc4 ♖c7

Question: I see the subject, but where is the predicate? Why didn't Black swap queens and simply grab the e5-pawn?

Answer: Doing so merely enhances our development lead, even into the ending: 13...♜xd1 14 ♜fxd1 a6 (or 14...♘gxe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♙b5+ ♘c6 17 ♜ac1) 15 ♙d3! ♘gxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♙e4 ♘c6 18 ♜ac1 ♜c8 19 ♜d3 and in the four games in my database from this position, Black managed to hold just one draw.

14 ♜b3

Applying pressure against b7, in case Black decides to take the e-pawn. Previously White played more conservatively with 14 ♖b5 ♙e7 15 ♔a4 0-0 16 ♙xc6 bxc6 17 ♗e4 ♜ab8 18 ♙d4, when Black's pressure on the b-file and control over d5 made up for his weak c6-pawn, D.Navara-V.Laznicka, Novy Bor (4th matchgame) 2011.

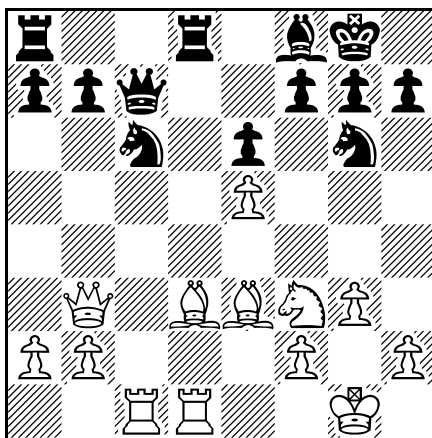
14...♙e7 15 ♜ac1 0-0 16 ♙d3

The bishop wasn't doing much on c4 and is better posted on the b1-h7 diagonal.

16...♜fd8

Black must weigh the happiness of profit with the dangers of survival. So he continues to treat White's e5-pawn with deference, refusing to snatch it, believing that security takes precedence over adventure. Of course, by *not* taking the pawn, Black is in violation of the psychological principle: *Don't issue a threat you are unable or unprepared to carry out, since in doing so, you lose credibility.*

17 ♜fd1 ♙f8 18 g3



18...♜d7

I just don't see an easy path for Black to equalize. If 18...♜gxe5 19 ♜xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♗xb7 ♜b4 21 ♙e4 ♜xa2, then 22 ♙f4 ♗f6 23 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 24 ♜c7 g6 25 h4 h6 26 h5! leaves Black in danger, since 26...gxh5?? loses at once to 27 ♙h7+! ♙g6 28 ♜xf7+! ♗xf7 29 ♙e5+ etc.

19 ♙e4

Quiet signals of an undercurrent of hostility are sent at Black's queenside and pinned c6-knight. It becomes clear that control has passed into White's hands.

19...♜xd1+ 20 ♜xd1 ♜c8 21 ♙g2

White's seemingly unstealable e5-pawn is one of those cheap motel rooms where everything of value is bolted to the floor. GM Milos Pavlovic wrote: "What I find remarkable in this line is that the white pawn is simply doomed on e5 but still White has strong pressure that is not easy to shake off. Such positions you don't see often in openings. Some similarities are the Benko or Catalan."

21...♜a5?

So's position dips further after this move as White liquidates into a winning endgame. Black had to try 21...a6 22 ♖c1, which still looks unpleasant but not as much as in the game.

22 ♗a4 b6

Or 22...♗c4 23 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 24 ♙xa7 ♖gxe5 25 ♙xb7 ♖c7 26 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 27 ♙b8 ♖xb7 28 ♙xe5 with a technical win for White.

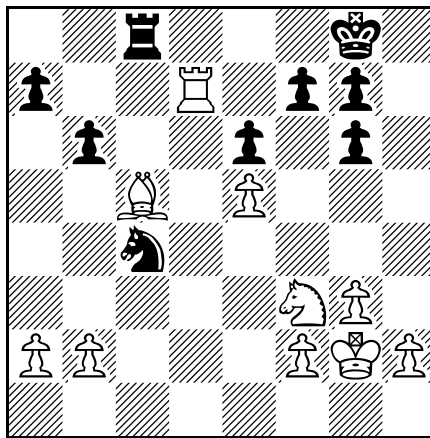
23 ♜d7

Seizing control over the seventh rank is decisive.

23...♗c4 24 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 25 ♙d4 ♙c5

If 25...a5 then 26 b3 ejects the defender of b6 and Black loses material.

26 ♙xg6! hxg6 27 ♙xc5



27...bxc5

Forced. 27...♖xc5? would be more than just a mild faux pas on Black's part, in view of 28 ♜d8+ ♙h7 29 ♘g5+ ♙h6 30 ♘xf7+ ♙h5 31 ♖h8+ ♙g4 32 ♖h4+ ♙f5 33 ♖f4 mate.

28 b3 ♘b6 29 ♖xa7

White has won a clean pawn, which will soon advance down the board.

29...c4 30 bxc4 ♘xc4 31 a4 f6

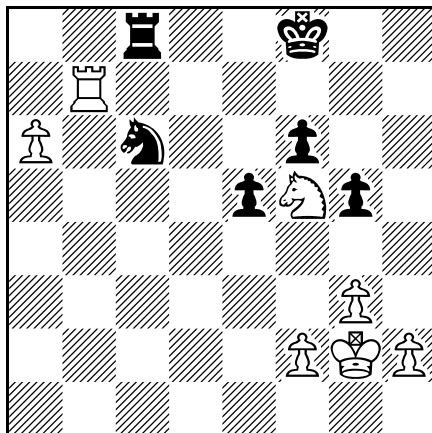
So feels that the damaged kingside conduit must be prodded into functioning again. If Black doesn't play this, his back rank remains vulnerable. If he does, he allows White's knight more influence.

32 exf6 gxf6 33 a5 e5 34 a6 ♘a5 35 ♘h4!

Creating a further puncture in Black's kingside which the white knight can enter.

35...♘c6 36 ♖b7 g5 37 ♘f5 ♙f8

One move is as good as another. If 37...♖a8 then 38 ♖c7! is decisive, since 38...♖xa6 loses to 39 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 40 ♘e7+ etc.



Exercise (combination alert): Or perhaps that should be “trick alert”.
One strong move induces Black’s resignation.

Answer: Attraction/simplification.

38 ♕f7+! 1-0

Such shocking moves are the satisfying click of the silencer being attached to the hit man’s pistol. After 38...♕xf7 39 ♖d6+ ♔e6 40 ♖xc8, there is clearly a shortfall in Black’s account, since White’s advanced a-pawn costs Black his remaining knight.

Summary: In the 6...cxd4 line, our e5-pawn is often doomed, but we get tremendous compensation if Black decides to take it.

Game 29

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San Diego (rapid) 2011

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♖f3 e6 5 ♗e2 ♖d7