

Play the King's Indian Attack!
A Learn-Less, Win-More
Repertoire for White

Cyrus Lakdawala

Play the King's Indian Attack! – A Learn-Less, Win-More Repertoire for White

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Index of Games and Variations

Game	White	Black	Variation	Year
Chapter 1: The Reversed King's Indian				
1	Fischer	Seidman	Exchange Variation, without a queen trade	1956
2	Lakdawala	Krishnan, V.	Exchange Variation, with a queen trade, 11...0-0	2011
3	Lakdawala	Crisologo	Exchange Variation, with a queen trade, 11...Rd3?!	2008
4	Korobov	Thybo	Petrosian Variation, without pinning with ...Bg4	2022
5	Lakdawala	Rivera	Petrosian Variation, with the pinning ...Bg4	2025
6	Kramnik	Van Foreest, J.	Petrosian Variation, with 6.Qe1 and 7.e4	2019
7	Piket	Timman	Petrosian Variation, without pinning ...Bg4. Black sets up with ...Qc7 and ...Be6	1996
8	Minasian	Wojtaszek	Saemisch Variation, Reversed Benoni Formation	2005
9	Lakdawala	Tarjan	Fianchetto Variation with 9.Qb3, where White doesn't exchange on d5	1980
10	Sunye Neto	Matsuura	Fianchetto Variation, White exchanges in the centre with 9.exd5	1995
11	Vujadinovic	Kracunov	Four Pawns Attack, White responds with a Reversed Benoni, with 7.e3	2011
Chapter 2: The Reversed Pirc				
12	Carlsen	Hovhannisyan	Fianchetto Variation, Black exchanges on e4 and trades queens, 10.Re1	2024
13	Giri	Ding	Fianchetto Variation, Black exchanges on e4 and trades queens, 10.Nbd2	2022
14	Hillarp	Hector	Austrian Attack, met with 6.c4!	1997
15	Dzindzichashvili	Ljubojevic	Classical Variation, White plays 6.c3, 7.Qc2, 8.Nbd2 and 9.e4	1985
16	Lenic	Prusikin	150 Attack, White plays 6.Qb3, targeting the b7 pawn	2015
17	Gufeld	Lakdawala	Quiet Variation, White plays 8.b3	2002
18	Mamedov	Faizrakhmanov	Quiet Variation, White plays 10.b3	2021
Chapter 3: KIA vs ...d5 ...c6 and ...Bxf3				
19	Fischer	Ibrahimoglu	Black sets up with 3...g6 and 4...Bg7	1970
20	Morozevich	Kasimdzhanov	White plays 12.b3	2013
21	Kasparov	Zarnicki	Black sets up a pawn wall with ...e6, with a kingside fianchetto	1998
22	Kasparov	Comp Deep Blue	Black sets up a pawn wall with ...e6, no kingside fianchetto	1997
23	Botvinnik	Szilagyi	Black seizes central control at the cost of bishop pair and plays ...e5	1966
24	Lakdawala	Krishnan, A.	Black sets up a pawn wall with ...e6, White plays Nc3	2015
25	Lakdawala, C.	Lakdawala, J.	Black sets up a pawn wall with ...e6, White plays Nd2	2025
26	Lakdawala	Jezierska	Black seizes central control with ...e5	2025

Chapter 4: KIA vs ...d5 ...c6 and ...Bh5

27	Sjugirov	Jakovenko	White opens the center with 8.exd5 and 9.c4	2015
28	Sasikiran	Anand	White double fianchettoes and plays c4	2002
29	Kasparov	Comp Deep Blue	White double fianchettoes without c4	1997
30	Svidler	Kramnik	White hunts down the bishop pair with 7.g4 and 8.Nh4. Black responds with 8...e6	2011
31	Nakamura	Gukesh	White hunts down the bishop pair with 7.g4 and 8.Nh4. Black responds with 8...e5	2023
32	Movsesian	Gyimesi	White plays 7.Qe1 and 8.e4	2001
33	Lakdawala	Frye	Black tries queenside castling with opposite wing attacks plan	2024
34	Kramnik	Vachier-Lagrave	White plays 7.Qe1 and 8.e4. White then plays 11.Nh4	2015

Chapter 5: KIA vs Reversed London System

35	Miles	Petursson	White plays 6.Nbd2, 7.Qe1 and 8.e4	1979
36	Kramnik	Adhiban	White chases down Black's f5-bishop with 6.Nh4, 7.h3, 8.Qe1 and 9.f4. Black responds with 9...Nfd7	2016
37	Stefanova	Kosteniuk	White chases down Black's f5-bishop with 6.Nh4, 7.h3, 8.Qe1 and 9.f4. Black responds with 9...h6	2015
38	Nakamura	Solak	Black meets 6.Nh4 with 6...Bg6. Black exchanges in the centre and White responds with 10.dxe4	2012
39	Markowski	Langheinrich	Black meets 6.Nh4 with 6...Bg6. Black exchanges in the centre and White responds with 10.Nxe4	2002
40	Kuzubov	Parligras	White meets the attempt to preserve the f5 bishop 6...h6 and 7...Nbd7?! with the pawn sacrifice 8.Nbd2 and 9.e4!	2017
41	Firouzja	Nepomniachtchi	Black plays ...c5 instead of ...c6	2024

Chapter 6: KIA vs French Defence

42	Fischer	Feuerstein	Black sets up with 8...Qc7, 9...Rd8 and meets 10.e5 with 10...Ne8?!	1957
43	Polugaevsky	Boutteville	Black sets up with 8...Qc7 and 9...Re8	1966
44	Carlsen	Erigaisi	Black sets up with 7...Qc7 and delays castling until move 9	2023
45	Fischer	Geller, U.	Black counters in the center with 12...Nd4	1968
46	Fischer	Myagmarsuren	Black meets 8.e5 with 8...Nd7 and 9...b5	1967
47	Landaw	Lakdawala	8.e5 is met with 8...Ne8. White later plays 11.a3!	2008
48	Harikrishna	Naiditsch	9.e5 is met with 9...Ne8. White later plays 11.h4	2010
49	Polugaevsky	Lilienthal	Black fianchettoes on the queenside and castles queenside with opposing wing attacks. White builds in the centre with c3 and d4.	1967

50	Norwood	Marsh	Black fianchettoes on the queenside and castles queenside with opposing wing attacks. White responds with the plan a3 and c4	1992
51	Nakamura	Bacrot	White meets the queenside fianchetto plan with 7.e4!	2017
52	Kozul	Yildiz	Black plays a Reversed Orangutan Opening with 1...Nf6 and 2...b5	2015
53	Fischer	Di Camillo	Black sets up with ...d5, ...c5, ...Nc6, ...Bd6 and ...Nge7, White avoids Nh4	1957
54	Fischer	Ivov	Black sets up with ...d5, ...c5, ...Nc6, ...Bd6 and ...Nge7, which is met with 8.Nh4 intending 9.f4. Black releases central pawn tension with 9...dxe4.	1966
55	Saulespurens	Lakdawala	Black sets up with ...d5, ...c5, ...Nc6, ...Bd6 and ...Nge7, which is met with 8.Nh4 intending 9.f4. Black maintains central pawn tension	1998

Chapter 7: KIA vs ...e5/...d6 Structures

56	Fischer	Fauber	Black copies White's moves and attempts to maintain the symmetry. White plays for a pawn break on f4	1957
57	Tiviakov	Mollema	Black copies White's moves and attempts to maintain the symmetry. White plays for queenside expansion with c3 and b4	2019
58	Lakdawala	Bell	Black meets KIA with a Reversed Philidor setup with ...e5, ...d6 and ...Be7	2005
59	Gukesh	Praggnanandhaa	Black sets up with ...e5, ...Nc6, ...Nf6 and ...Bc5	2024

Chapter 8: KIA vs Reversed English Formations

60	Fischer	Green	White meets Reversed English Formation with the plan a4, Nbd2, Nc4 and e5	1957
61	Petrosian	Stahlberg	White meets Reversed English Formation with the plan Nbd2, a4, Nc4, Re1 and c3	1953
62	Golubov	Rey	White meets Reversed English Formation with Re1, Nbd2, c3, a3, and d4	2016
63	Nakamura	Kamsky	White meets Reversed English Formation with 9.Nc3 rather than placing the knight on d2	2015
64	Yuffa	Gabrielian	White meets Reversed English Formation with Re1, c3, Nbd2 and a4	2017
65	Piket	Van der Wiel	Black plays a double fianchetto	2000
66	Petrosian	Pachman	Black plays ...e6 and ...Nge7	1961
67	Fischer	Mednis	Black plays ...e6, ...Nge7 and ...d5	1957
68	Fischer	Panno	Black plays ...e6, ...Nge7 and ...d6	1970
69	Fischer	Durao	Black plays ...e6, ...Nge7 and ...d6. White meets the plan by relieving central tension with c3, d4 and dxc5	1966
70	Fischer	Rodriguez	Black plays ...e6, ...Nge7, ...d5. White meets it with c3, Qe2 and e5	1967

71	Sadler	Klapwijk	Black plays ...e6, ...Nge7, ...d5 and follows with ...b6	2017
72	Amin	Glek	Black plays a Reversed Botvinnik Formation	2022
73	Amin	Bulski	White meets Reversed Botvinnik Formation with the plan c3, a3 and b4	2017
74	Amin	Nasuta	Black suppresses White's break on b4 with ...a5	2020
75	Amin	Negi	Black plays ...Bg4 and Bxf3	2008
76	Miroshnichenko	Krasenkow	Black sets up with ...c5, ...e5 and holds back on playing ...d6	2004

Appendix: Avoid the KIA vs the Dutch Defence

77	Kasparov	Ziglio	Black sets up with ...f5, ...d6, ...e5, ...Nf6 and ...Be7	1991
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*For my King's Indian Attack students Ivona, Jonathan, Tom, Varun,
Elkaei and Shivam*

Introduction

When I was a kid, chess players were malnourished by the scarcity of chess literature. Today, it's the opposite problem where our collective brains are flooded with information overload from a glut of chess books, databases, powerful chess engines, videos and other online chess resources. Data continues to expand exponentially yet, for the club level player, memory-power remains depressingly finite. The trouble with guessing to fill in gaps in ultra-complex lines is that we may inadvertently lapse into fiction.

How do we overcome the issue? Is there such a thing as an opening theory utopia for the club-level player? The answer may be to master a single-structure conceptual opening repertoire, as opposed to multiple opening structures. There is no such thing as a universally beloved opening, since we are all born with different styles and natural abilities. Sometimes the dowry we pay to wed a new opening is loss. Our partnership to our line must suit our style or likely it will be a miserable marriage.

Just as important as learning our opening's hidden truths is to be aware of its lies. White doesn't always win with a dazzling attack, culminating with a shower of sacrifices. We shouldn't come into every KIA enraptured by the false idea that we will deliver mate every game. We won't.

This is an easy-to-understand repertoire, which doesn't automatically mean it's the chess version of fast food since the King's Indian Attack subtleties feel endless. For club players, it isn't necessary to be a master of all pawn structures. Mastery of just one works fine. In this book, a clear understanding of the King's Indian Attack structures will be your safe space and realm of competence. There is no need to commit every line to memory. Just a clear comprehension of the basic structures, typical plans and tactical ideas is enough. In fact, it's perfectly fine to play over the games and read the explanations while skipping the optional hive of the detailed notes.

What Power Binds Us to Our Opening?

"I am a fiercely independent person!" we proclaim, as we struggle to follow 23 moves of theory, never daring to veer until memory fails us. There are two ways to pick our opening repertoire:

1. Repertoire diversity, where we play many different, unrelated opening systems.

2. Embrace a narrow, structurally themed repertoire.

Both come with benefits and flaws. We must ask ourselves the questions: do people who play the same structure all their lives lack intellectual curiosity? Or are they perfectionists who seek to understand their narrow field as deeply as possible?

It's more difficult for opponents to prepare for us if we choose number 1 on the list. On the other hand, the diversity folk aren't able to deeply absorb all the subtleties of so many unrelated opening systems. The King's Indian Attack falls under number 2 on the list (as do 1.b3, 1.f4, 1.g3 and 1.c4/ 2.g3). Our opponents see us coming and can prepare. Yet it's unlikely they will comprehend the subtleties, tactical ideas, plans and structure as well as we do, due to our massive experience advantage of playing the structure over and over. When we learn a new opening, we normally walk within a vast hall of mirrors where every line appears dizzyingly different from all the others. With the KIA, our stabilizing factor will be that *our* side's structure remains the same. Just because opening theory comes to an end doesn't automatically mean that we are now confused and left to our own devices. One purpose of this book is to assist the reader in going past the range of theory to cultivate a deep understanding of the ensuing middlegame plans and typical tactical themes of *all* King's Indian structures.

For a year or so, there will be a period of accumulation, which is expedited via study of the opening and then playing the positions in online blitz games. After a few years, it's highly unlikely that any of your rivals will understand the KIA as well as you do. My longtime friend, GM Max Illingworth, wrote this advice on his Facebook feed: "Club Player - Stick to a relatively narrow repertoire, so that you can build up experience and get a good understanding of the middlegame positions through reviewing your games afterwards." The King's Indian Attack certainly falls into the "narrow repertoire" category.

A Slow Death for Our Opponents

Not all poisons work instantly. Some envenom their victims over a long period of time, especially when secretly administered in fractional doses. This way the victim appears to have died of natural causes rather than through foul play. The King's Indian Attack works on this same principle. Our coming kingside attack's deadly nature is often disguised and underestimated by its geriatric slowness, as we patiently mass our forces around the black king. We also often win by creeping forward and gaining space on either wing, as demonstrated in several games in the book.

Who Should Patronize the King's Indian Attack?

All opening lines come with a powerful sense of identity. When we play a line which doesn't suit our style, we are forced to abide by chafing rules which go against our natural stylistic inclinations. Which kind of player is well suited to play the KIA?

1. The KIA comes with its peculiar brand of outer innocence/inner violence, the way an innocent looking face and body language can still camouflage a sociopath's carefully concealed manipulation and malevolence.

2. Memory loss is the fate of those who grow old. At age 65, I am no longer able to remember theory-intensive, sharp openings which require heavy memorization. I can, however, remember the middlegame plans arising out of a single, specialized structure, like the King's Indian, or in our case the KIA. In our modern era, the dissemination of data has gone well beyond the memory limits of the average human. Understanding, however, is still within our grasp, as long as we limit it to certain familiar structures where we mapped out typical plans and tactics in a comprehensible form.

3. For a club level player with limited time for study, an opening repertoire with a narrow structural focus like the King's Indian Attack may be the optimal choice.

4. You must be adept in closed pawn structures, at least for the opening and early middlegame stages.

5. Your understanding of pawn structures in general should be high when juxtaposed with players and rivals in your rating range, since the KIA is full of subtle pawn structural shifts.

6. In many cases, we must be willing to build a slow attack against the enemy king while our position on the other side of the board threatens to crumble! KIAs often turn into races between our attack and the opponent's counterattack on the queenside. This means we need steady/strong nerves to play the KIA.

7. It would be helpful, but by no means essential, if you were already well-versed in the King's Indian from Black's side, since we are essentially playing a King's Indian a move up.

8. "My love for you is eternal!" my young students murmur to their new fad/semi-sound opening gambit, which they "studied" in not one, but two YouTube chess videos. Then next month they give up the opening and leave her, only to fall into the arms of some other fad opening line. With the King's Indian Attack, you can rest easily with the knowledge that the line and structure are completely sound. If we lose, it's our own fault, and not that of the opening!

I promise to tell the reader the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I would be guilty of malpractice if I didn't warn you of some of the KIA's intrinsic problems: don't expect to extract a plus from the KIA in the opening stage. It's too mild an opening to demand what some consider White's birthright "+=" edge. Instead, we plan to win due to our superior experience, understanding of structure and typical middlegame plans.

When it comes to modern-day opening lines, the product is sold to one of the following categories:

1. A customer who likes the product.
2. A dependent/addict who *must* have the product.

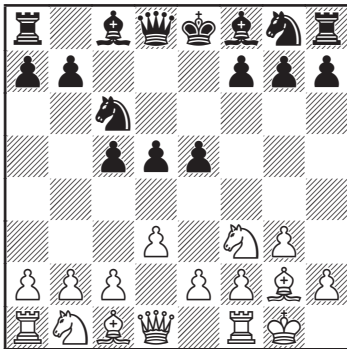
Trendy lines with a heavy memorization load and constant shifts in the theory are sold to category 2, while the KIA fits the 1st.

Critical Tabiya Positions You Will Encounter in the King's Indian Attack

Here are some of the positions you are likely to face on the white side of a King's Indian Attack:

Reversed King's Indian

1.♠f3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.♙g2 ♘c6 4.0-0
e5 5.d3



If this position looks familiar, it's because we are playing a King's Indian Defence, but a full move up as White. Many of our opponents will meet our King's Indian Attack this way. This

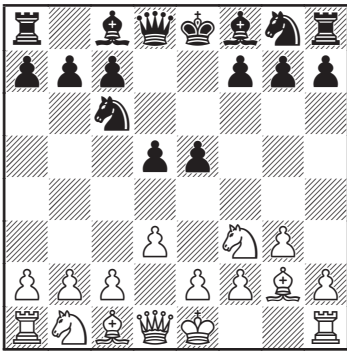
means that we should be familiar with the black side of the King's Indian. It would be useful to master the line's vast complexities, yet we have a greater leeway since we are playing the opening a move up over normal, with the white pieces. My advice is for you to study the black-side King's Indian games of Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. We don't require deep specifics of the lines. Just a general idea of the typical plans, pawn breaks and tactical themes will be enough. Remember that we are cushioned by the luxury of our extra tempo over the normal black lines. Black's choices of lines are: the Exchange, Classical, Petrosian, Saemisch, Fianchetto, and even Four Pawns Attack, which means we need to be ready for them all, which are covered in the book.

Reversed Pirc

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♙g2

We King's Indian Attackers live life on the periphery. Of course, White has the option 3.d4 which leads to a Queen's Gambit Chigorin, which is beyond the scope of this book.

3...e5 4.d3



It's worthwhile for the King's Indian Attack player to study Pirc and Modern formations, since we reach such positions a move up. From this position, Black's choices are:

a) 4...♘f6. Reversed Pirc, Classical Variation.

b) 4...f6. Reversed Pirc, 150 Attack.

c) 4...♙e6. This flexible move will lead to either the 150 Attack if Black plays ...f7–f6, a Classical if Black develops the g8–knight to f6, or an Austrian Attack formation if Black dares to play ...f7–f5.

d) 4...f5. Keep in mind that the sharper the position, the less sound it is to play a reversed version a move down. Black enters the super-sharp

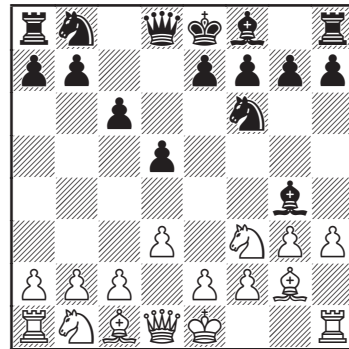
Austrian Attack a full move down, which I feel is just barely playable for Black.

e) 4...g6 is the solid Fianchetto Variation, but a move down for Black.

King's Indian Attack versus ...d5 ...c6 ...Bg4

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 c6 3.♙g2 ♙g4 4.d3

♘f6 5.h3



Here, one of two things will happen:

1. Black will back the bishop to h5.

2. Black will trade bishop for knight on f3, followed by ...e7–e6. Black can also push to e5, which turns the game into a Reversed Pirc, with White picking up the bishop pair.

If Black opts for number 1 on the list and backs the bishop to h5, we have the option of playing g3–g4 and Nh4, hunting down the bishop pair with a coming Nxc6. We also can play more slowly and conservatively by castling, Nbd2 and e2–e4. By modestly pushing to e6, Black hopes for the following:

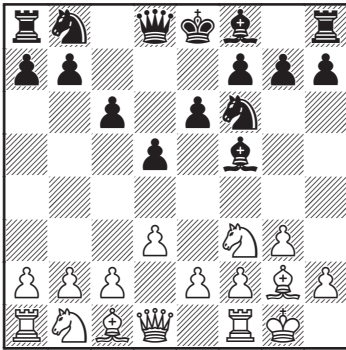
1. White's light-squared bishop is for now blunted, hitting a pawn-wall on d5.

2. Black switched the pawn structure to favour his remaining bishop. His pawns control light squares, while his bishop controls dark ones.

3. Our goal is to make something of our bishop pair later and enhanced light-square control.

King's Indian Attack vs Reversed London System

1.♭f3 ♭f6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♗f5 4.0-0 c6 5.d3 e6



The Reversed London System is one of the most solid ways to meet our King's Indian Attack. We have a choice of two plans:

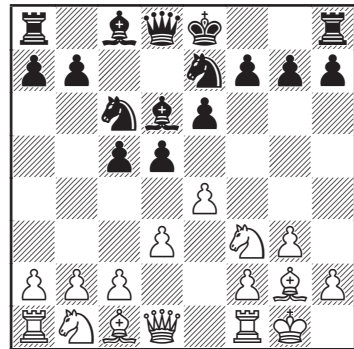
1. We can logically play for e2–e4, since that gains a tempo on Black's f5–bishop. We can accomplish this simply with Nbd2, Qe1 and e2–e4.

2. We can play for a funky hybrid Reversed Leningrad Dutch (favoured by both Kramnik and Nakamura)

with 6.♖h4 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗h5 and now 8.f4!?. Black must watch out for g3–g4. Also, we can play Qe1 followed by e2–e4.

King's Indian Attack vs French Defence

1.♭f3 d5 2.g3 ♭f6 2...c5 3.♗g2 ♖c6 4.0-0 e6 5.d3 ♗d6 6.e4 ♖ge7

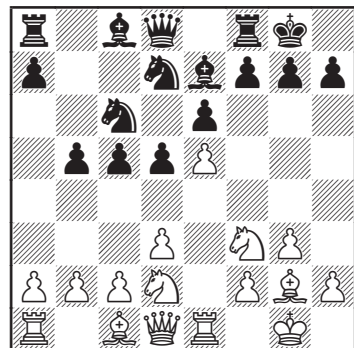


This is another critical tabiya position that we examine in the KIA versus French Defence chapter.

3.♗g2 c5 4.0-0 ♖c6 5.d3 e6 6.♖bd2 ♗e7 7.e4 0-0 8.e5 ♖d7

In the book we also examine 8...♖e8.

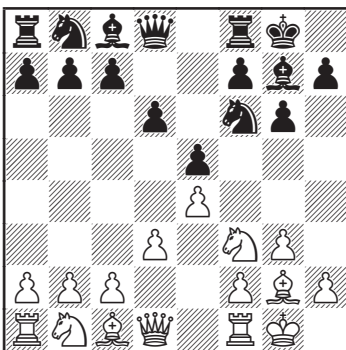
9.♗e1 b5



The forecast is war. Black's last move floods the queenside with pawns, which will be pushed forward to try to create confrontation in what is traditionally Black's stronger wing in such KIA versus French Defence structures. Most KIA positions don't require heavy theoretical preparation. This heavily analyzed tabiya position is an exception, and I strongly advise you to be well prepared here, since theory runs long and deep. One misstep, and our once promising kingside attack can stall, which allows Black to overwhelm us on the queenside. Our goal is simple: Mass force on the kingside with Nf1, h2–h4, Qe2, and Bf4. Then we must find a way to get at the black king before our own position falls apart on the queenside.

King's Indian Attack vs. Symmetrical ...e5/...d6.

1.♘f3 d6 2.g3 e5 3.d3 g6 4.♙g2
♙g7 5.0-0 ♘f6 6.e4 0-0



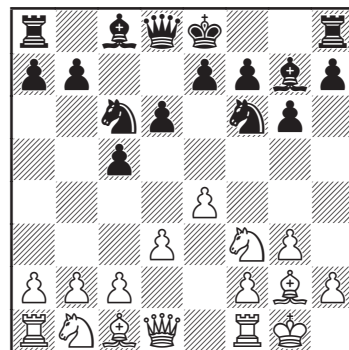
We all hate copycats, don't we? Don't worry. A strong cup of coffee

(maybe add a shot of espresso) will keep impending sleep at bay. Black isn't exactly playing the opening like an outlaw. On the other hand, it's not so easy for White to prove even an edge with his extra move within the symmetry. We have three viable plans:

1. Play for c2–c3, Re1, Nbd2 and d3–d4, gaining central space.
2. Play for queenside expansion with c2–c3, a2–a3 and b2–b4.
3. At some point, move the knight from f3 and play for f2–f4.

KIA Versus Reversed English Formations

1.♘f3 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♙g2 g6 4.0-0
♙g7 5.d3 d6 6.e4 ♘f6

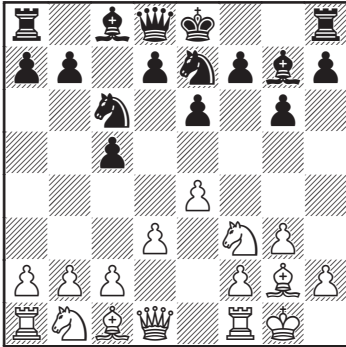


White's plans:

1. Play Re1, c2–c3 and an eventual d3–d4.
2. Play Nc3 (note that this is one of the few KIA set ups where our knight may actually be better off on c3, rather than d2) and play either for a break on d4 later on with h2–h3,

Be3, Qd2 and Bh6. Or White can go for a pure kingside attack with Nc3, Nh4 and f2–f4.

1.♘f3 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♙g2 g6 4.0-0
♙g7 5.d3 e6 6.e4 ♘ge7

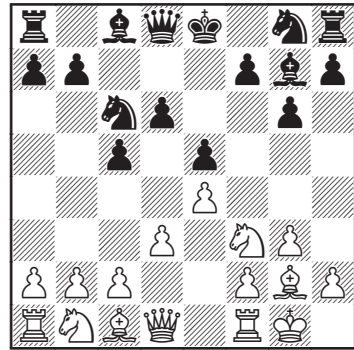


This is another popular setup for Black in the KIA versus the Reversed English, due to its flexibility:

1. Black can hold back the d-pawn and place it on d6 later.
2. Black can push the d-pawn two squares, to d5, as well.
3. We as White need to factor in ...f7–f5, which can dampen our future attacking chances.

I believe that White's best plan is to play Re1, c2–c3 and an eventual push to d4.

1.♘f3 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♙g2 g6 4.0-0
♙g7 5.d3 d6 6.e4 e5



In our final setup, Black plays a Reversed version of Botvinnik's "V" formation against our KIA. A hole is created on d5, which isn't all that significant since White can't occupy it without Black swapping the invading piece away. This leads to d5 being plugged with a white pawn, rather than a piece. I believe that White's optimal plan is to play for a break on b4, with c2–c3, a2–a3 and then push to b4. Note that if Black tosses in ...a7–a5 attempting to hinder our plan, then we play a3–a4!, creating holes on the c4 and b5–squares which can be occupied by our b1–knight, via a3.

Are you ready to build an unshakable foundation which guarantees us a playable and rich middlegame? Great, then let's learn the opening!

Chapter 1

The Reversed King's Indian

If you play the King's Indian as Black, then you will love the Reversed King's Indian lines as White, since you will be a full move up over positions you normally play on the black side. I don't have room in the book to cover every single Reversed King's Indian position with a full game, but we cover the most commonly played ones and leave the others in the notes.

(1) R.J.Fischer-H.Seidman

Third Rosenwald Trophy New York

1956

*Reversed King's Indian Exchange
Variation*

1.♘f3

We all love celebrity endorsements of our opening lines. While the present is far more popular than yesterday, I don't have a problem with adding older games in my opening books, especially in lines like the King's Indian Attack, for these reasons:

1. White's essential plans haven't altered all that much in three quarters of a century. Only the details shift slightly.

2. That which is old, is ripe for rediscovery. Sometimes older variations can surprise an opponent who mainly prepares for current, trendy theory.

3. The opening phase may sometimes feel outdated to the reader, yet the middlegames and endings won't since the ideas and plans are imbibed with a timeless quality. A deep familiarity of the structures,

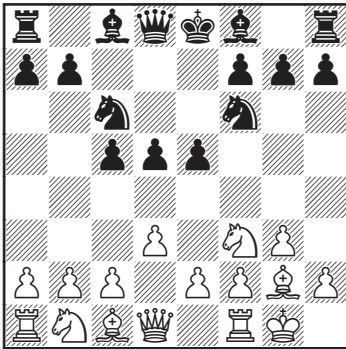
plans and typical tactics - *not* the details - which arise from the KIA is the main goal of this book. Great players tend to be originals, rather than copies of anyone else. If I had to compare Fischer's style, then to my mind it is a hybrid of Paul Morphy and Jose Raul Capablanca, with clarity of the position's essence as the guiding principle. There is no place as distant on earth as our childhood. The loss of our sense of wonder is a sign that the child has grown to adulthood. Yet I feel the same sense of awe at playing over Fischer's games at age 65, as I did when I was age eight. There is an almost transcendental feel to Bobby Fischer's chess, which inspires an almost religious worship from his fans (i.e. me!). I promise you that the study of his games really does come with a transformative power for our own chess.

1...♗f6 2.g3

In my opinion, Fischer grasped the intricacies of King's Indian formations better than any other player of his era. The King's Indian Attack, a line for the busy middle

classes more than aristocrats, was Bobby Fischer's early white weapon of choice. As Black, he relied on the King's Indian for his entire career. The club level player's relationship with modern opening theory tends to be one of a hungry infant, sucking away at its mother's nipple. We can break this dependency on sharp opening lines which require long memorization if we choose the King's Indian Attack.

2...c5 3.♘g2 ♖c6 4.0-0 e5 5.d3 d5



6.e4 ♗e7 7.♘bd2

This is the pure King's Indian Attack move. 7.♘c3 is a King's Indian Reversed. 7...d4 (7...dxe4 8.dxe4 ♗xd1 9.♘xd1 reaches another variant of the Exchange Variation. The position is inherently even. It's our job to win from superior understanding of the structure.) 8.♘e2 0-0 9.♘e1 ♗e8 10.f4 f6 11.f5 ♘d6 12.g4 ♗d7 13.♘g3 ♗c8 14.h4 b5 15.♗f2. This is a typical manoeuvre when Black plays a normal Classical King's Indian. 15...c4 16.♗f1 a5 17.♗g2 ♖h8. White's chances to

deliver mate are about the same as Black winning on the other side of the board, 1-0 Ubilava,E -Natalicchio Escalante,N Maspalomas op 2000.

7...0-0 8.♗e1

8.c3 is perhaps slightly more accurate, since White's rook doesn't want to be on e1 when Black pushes ...d5-d4.

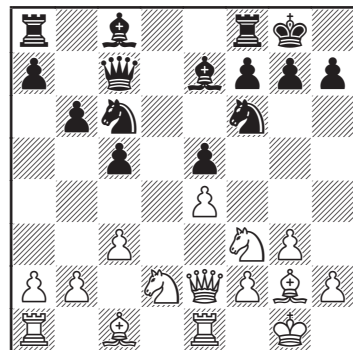
8...dxe4

The Exchange Variation, which is the darling of those who are playing for a draw. Fischer goes on to show that a draw isn't an automatic result for Black. 8...d4! is more thematic, since in this structure, White's rook belongs on f1 as the natural pawn break will be f2-f4. We look at this structure later in the chapter.

9.dxe4 ♗c7 10.c3 b6

10...♗d8 is played more often today.

11.♗e2



11...a5?

It's virtually impossible for us to understand the decision-making process of games from a past era,

since our minds are biased from the accumulated knowledge denied to the players of old. Mistakes which are obvious to us today were not so obvious to players of past eras. So we must try to interpret their moves in the context of their time, not ours. Think of it as a world where people didn't have access to today's level of books and online resources. A novelty, and a bad one. Seidman was strong enough to realize that he was creating holes on both b5 and c4. He mistakenly felt that his light-squared bishop on a6 compensates. Fischer convincingly proves that it doesn't. Correct was 11...♙b7 12.♘f1 ♖ad8 13.♘h4 g6 14.♙g5 ♘b8, 1–0 Feuerstein,A-Seidman,H New York Rosenwald–03 1956. I like White's position after 15.♘e3!. Black is unable to play 15...♘xe4? 16.♙xe7 ♜xe7 17.♘ef5! ♜e6 18.♙xe4 ♙xe4 19.♜xe4 gxf5 20.♘xf5 with a strategically wretched position for Black.

12.a4 ♙a6 13.♘c4!

Fischer sees that Black has no way to exploit the self-pin.

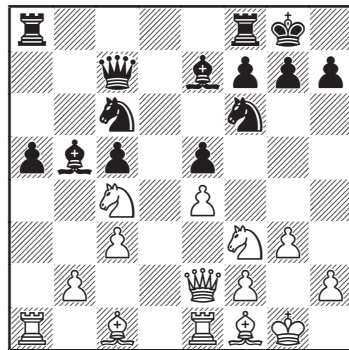
13...b5

This means a level of disfigurement for Black's structure, since the a5 and c5–pawns will be isolated. In compensation, the b-file is opened for Black's rooks.

14.axb5 ♙xb5 15.♙f1!

Tip: There is no law which says the KIA Attack player must play all out for mate every game. Fischer begins a systematic campaign to

seize control over the queenside light squares. After his last move, Fischer intends to escape the pin on his c4–knight with Qc2. Seidman must have expected the less accurate 15.♘fd2 a4 16.♜f3 ♘a5. Black is generating some play on the queenside and looks okay.



15...♖ad8?!

Surely this is the wrong rook, since now Black's a-pawn is deprived of a defender. Slightly more accurate is 15...a4 16.♜c2! ♖fd8 17.♙g5 ♘d7 18.♘e3! c4!? 19.♘d5 ♜d6 20.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 21.♘d2 ♘b6 22.♙e3 ♘ec8 23.♘b1!. White pressures the c4–pawn and also owns the bishop pair, with a pleasant strategic advantage.

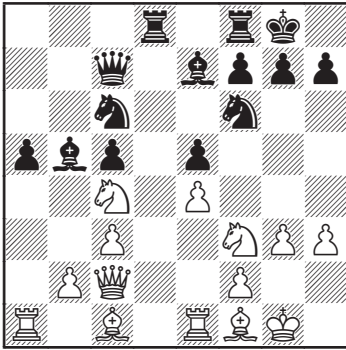
16.♜c2 ♘g4?!

This is a sign that Black doesn't know what to do. The move wastes time. Surely it was better to try 16...♖a8.

17.h3

Hit the road, Jack!

17...♘f6



Please keep in mind that in 1956, Fischer was not yet Fischer! In this position, he missed a tactic which by 1960, he likely would have spotted in a flash.

Exercise (combination alert): How can White win material?

Answer: Discovered attack, by taking the a5—pawn with the c4—knight.

18. ♖fd2?!

Bobby either missed or possibly incorrectly rejected 18. ♖xa5! ♕xf1 19. ♖xc6 ♕xh3 (19... ♖xc6 20. ♖xf1 ♖d7 21. ♕e3 leaves Black down a pawn for zero compensation) 20. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 21. ♖a4. Black is down a full exchange and his light-square potential on the kingside just isn't enough compensation.

18... ♖fe8?

This allows another tactic, which Bobby again misses or rejects! 18... ♖a8 was correct.

19. ♖b3?

Kid-Bobby should have played the discovered attack shot 19. ♖d6! ♖xd6 20. ♕xb5 with light-square domination for White.

19... ♖c8

Threatening ...Bxc4, followed by ...Qxh3. 19...a4 is better.

20. ♖h2

Stronger is 20. ♖b6! ♖a6 21. c4! ♖d4 22. ♖xd4 cxd4 23. cxb5 ♖xb6 24. ♕d2 ♕b4 25. ♕xb4 axb4 26. ♖a6 ♖b7 27. ♖c6. White achieved a strategically won game.

20... ♖e6

20...a4 21. ♖bd2 ♖b7 22. ♖b1! intending Nba3, which in turn induces 22... ♕xc4 23. ♕xc4 ♖a5 24. ♕f1 ♖b3 25. ♖xa4 ♖xc1 26. ♖xc1. Black is down a pawn, with weak light squares.

21. ♖bxa5

Black's surgery was unsuccessful. Bye-bye a-pawn.

21... ♖xa5 22. ♖xa5 ♕xf1 23. ♖xf1 c4!?

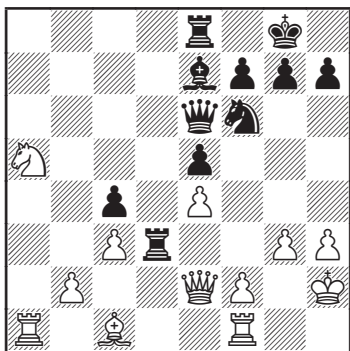
Seidman counted on this move, hoping to isolate White's knight on the rim. Fischer proves that his knight is not so badly placed and that it is Black's c-pawn which is in danger. 23... ♖a8 is safer.

24. ♖e2?!

24. ♖a4! ♖c8 25. ♕g5 ♖d7 26. ♕xe7 ♖xe7 27. ♖b4 ♖b6 28. ♖d1 ♖a7 29. ♖d2! ♖xa5 30. ♖d8+ ♖e8 31. ♖xb6 ♖ac5 32. ♖d5 and Black is busted.

24... ♖d3?

This is a miscalculation which hangs the c4—pawn. 24... ♖a8! 25. ♕g5 ♖ec8 26. ♕xf6! ♖xf6 27. ♖a4 ♖c5 28. ♖fa1 ♖ac8 won't be so easy to convert for White, since his knight remains offside on a5.

**25. Ra4! Rxd8**

If 25...Rc8 26. Rxc4! Undermining. 26...Rxc4 27. Wxd3 wins a second pawn, since if 27...Rxe4 28. Wb5! there is no remedy to the coming f2–f3, trapping Black's rook.

26. dxc4

Black's queenside pawns have been whittled away and Seidman is minus two, with zero counterplay to show for the missing material.

26...h6 27. Re1 dxc5 28. g2 g5

Well, why not. A person scheduled to be executed in two hours isn't going to worry about high cholesterol in the final meal.

29. d2?!

Fischer had two superior options with

a) 29. dxe3! dxe4 30. Ra8! f8 (30...Wxc4?? hangs material to the simple 31. Rxd8+) 31. Rxd8 Rxd8 32. dxc1 f5 33. f3 dxc5 34. dxe5 Re8 35. Wc2 wins.

b) 29. de3! Wd7 30. Ra5 dxe3 31. dxe3 Wc7 32. Ra4 Wc6 33. Rea1. White consolidates, since 33...dxe4? fails to 34. Wf3 f5 35. Ra6! Wd5 36. Wxf5! There is no effective discovered check

for Black. 36...dc5+ 37. dh2 dxa6 38. Rxa6 Rd6 39. Ra7 Rd7 40. Wg6+ wins.

29... Wd7?

Black would still have a prayer had he found 29...g4! 30. hxg4 dxf2 31. Wxf2 dxc4 32. We2 Re3 33. Wxc3 dxe3+ 34. Rxe3. Although still technically lost, Black's position regained consciousness and there is some fight left.

30. Ra5 dxb6 31. Ra6 Wb7 32. Ra1 Wd7 33. dxc4 dxf2?

Okay then, let's go with a strategy of outright hysteria. Seidman tries a desperado which misses by a mile. This attempted attacking debauchery is over before it begins, mainly since Black runs out of pieces to give away. 33...We6 34. Ra6 Wxc4 35. Rxb6 consolidates.

34. dxf2 dh5 35. dxe5

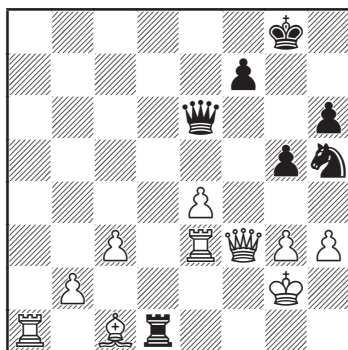
Also winning is 35. de3 Wc6 36. d5.

35... We6 36. dxd3 Rxd3 37. Re3

White's king is surrounded by armed bodyguards, which is every would-be assassin's nightmare.

37... Rd1

This is a blunder in an already dead lost position.

38. Wf3!

Double attack.

38...♖b3 39.♖xh5

1–0

(2) C.Lakdawala-V.Krishnan

San Diego Gambito G/40 rapid 2011
*Reversed King's Indian Exchange
Variation*

My student Varun earned the IM title in 2024. I craftily played him when he was still in the low 2200 range and when I could still beat him! Today, I would likely be an underdog if I faced him across the board! Luckily for me, I retired from tournament play, so I'm safe.

1.♟f3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.♙g2 ♟c6 4.0-0 e5 5.d3

By playing into a King's Indian structure, we marry into a royal family, whose bloodline goes back to multiple world champions, the most notable of whom are Fischer and Kasparov.

5...♟f6 6.e4

If you want to keep queens on the board with White, then play the move order 6.♟bd2 ♙e7 7.e4.

6...dxe4

Principle: *Don't play in a counterfeited manner.* Be faithful to your natural style. I was delighted by Varun's choice of opening, since he is a ferocious player when on the attack, with the initiative or in irrationally complex positions. He doesn't do as well in more closed positions which move with funeral dirge-like slowness. This position is controlled, strategic and intuitive, all of which are the opposite of Varun's natural strengths.

We can no longer embrace alienation from theory, as could players of past eras. Varun plays for a draw. However, the Exchange Variation, which emphasizes solidity over ostentation, doesn't guarantee Black one. There is actually quite a bit of theory on how to handle such endings. 6...♙e7. Here we can play a pure Classical King's Indian a move up with 7.♟c3 or we can try to exploit our development lead with 7.exd5 ♟xd5 8.♖e1 f6 9.c3. The engine calls it even, while I don't trust Black's position due to:

1. Black lags in development.

2. White can open with d3–d4 at a favourable moment.

3. Black must watch out for Qb3 tricks.

7.dxe4 ♖xd1 8.♖xd1 ♙g4

Playing the white side of the Reversed King's Indian Exchange - even up a tempo over normal - one shouldn't expect thrills in such a rustic setting. Our primary goal is to avoid a loss. The secondary one is to win, should an opportunity arise. 8...♟xe4? 9.♟xe5! ♟xe5 10.♙xe4 ♙g4 11.♖d5 leaves Black lagging in development.

