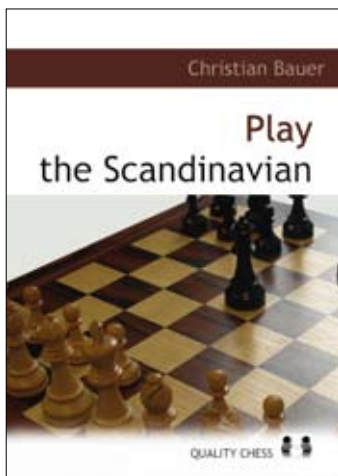


# Play The Scandinavian

By

**Christian Bauer**



Quality Chess  
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First edition 2010 by Quality Chess UK Ltd

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## Play the Scandinavian

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Paperback ISBN 978-1-906552-55-8

Hardcover ISBN 978-1-906552-11-4

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Distributed in US and Canada by SCB Distributors, Gardena, California, US  
[www.scbdistributors.com](http://www.scbdistributors.com)

Distributed in Rest of the World by Quality Chess UK Ltd through  
Sunrise Handicrafts, Smyczkova 4/98, 20-844 Lublin, Poland

Typeset by Jacob Aagaard

Proofreading by Colin McNab

Edited by Andrew Greet

Cover design by Vjatseslav Tsekatovski

Printed in Estonia by Tallinna Raamatutrükikoja LLC

# Contents

Key to Symbols used & Bibliography	4
Introduction	5
Chapter 1 – Main line 8.♘e4 & 8.♘d5	7
Chapter 2 – Main line 8.♖e2	63
Chapter 3 – White 8th Move Alternatives	91
Chapter 4 – White 6th and 7th Move Alternatives	105
Chapter 5 – 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 Unusual options for Black	121
Chapter 6 – 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♙d2	139
Chapter 7 – 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♙c4	167
Chapter 8 – Black delays ...♘f6: Die Königspringerzurückhaltungspolitik	187
Chapter 9 – 4.♙c4 ♘f6 5.d3	197
Chapter 10 – 4.♘f3 (and 4.h3)	215
Chapter 11 – Flank Attacks	221
Chapter 12 – 3.d4 and 3.♘f3	235
Chapter 13 – 2.♘c3	275
Chapter 14 – 2nd Move Sidelines	285
Variations Index	299

# Key to symbols used

±	White is slightly better
∓	Black is slightly better
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
±	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
∅	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

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Chess Informant

MegaBase

New In Chess Magazine

New In Chess Yearbooks (especially Prie)

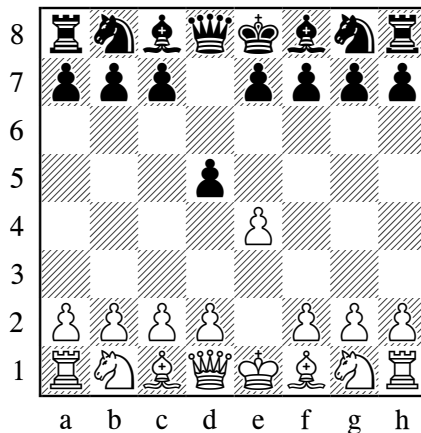
The Week in Chess

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# Introduction

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## 1.e4 d5



Of all the possible replies to 1.e4, the Scandinavian is the only reputable option which creates an immediate pawn clash in the centre. This means that it differs from most other openings where a variety of pawn structures can be reached. For example, the French Defence is noted for thematic positions with a rigid pawn chain (where the white phalanx d4-e5 is blocked by Black's d5-e6) but many other structures can also be reached. In contrast, in the Scandinavian, right from the start Black breaks up the pawn structure. We will see that 2.exd5 constitutes White's only worthy reply, so players using the Scandinavian can be sure of reaching their favourite scheme. This point should be underlined, since it is a unique case among 1.e4 openings.

The Scandinavian highlights the activity of the pieces and this factor is predominant in the first phase. Indeed, the usual pawn structure – d4 for White vs. the black duo of e6 and c6 – is unlikely to evolve in the near future. As we will see throughout this work, the assessment of the position greatly depends on the circumstances in which the d4-d5 push may be achieved. Black is often slightly behind in development, a consequence of the queen's early outing, and he must therefore be especially cautious about this central thrust, as it would open the game in favour of the white forces.

The main drawback of the Scandinavian, these lost tempos by the queen which lead to Black being behind in development, is the reason why some claim this opening is dubious. It is true

that Black disobeys two major chess principles: he commits his queen early (2...♖xd5) and then he moves the same piece again (3...♖a5).

Despite these sins, the Scandinavian should not be dismissed, as Black acquires numerous advantages from the main line introduced by 3...♖a5. In essence, Black hankers after an improved Classical Caro-Kann (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♕f5) while having avoided various White divergences on move three, notably the critical Advance Variation and the Panov Attack. If Black succeeds in developing his light-squared bishop and then completes his development without harm, he will have a perfectly sound position, without any 'bad' pieces.

Another element that one should mention in favour of the Scandinavian compared to the Caro-Kann, in addition to avoiding the need to study sharp theoretical systems such as the Advance Variation, concerns the white c-pawn. If White chases the enemy queen from the centre with 3.♘c3, then the c-pawn is blocked on its original square. In consequence, White has less potential activity than in the main line of the Caro-Kann, and so it is difficult to profit from any extra tempos.

In this book, after 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3, I shall analyse only 3...♖a5 and not 3...♖d6 or any of the sidelines such as 3...♖d8 or 3...♖e5†. The latter two moves are certainly inferior, but the reader may wonder why I have studied 3...♖a5 and not 3...♖d6, which is also popular. There is no consensus on the respective value of these two queen moves. For example, Nigel Short seems convinced that 3...♖a5 is inferior due to his system (4.♕c4 and next 5.d3), while Eric Prié swears by 3...♖a5. As for me, I am certain that these two moves have roughly equal merit. As 3...♖d6 appeared more recently at grandmaster level, the theory of this variation is less developed. This has pros and cons: a greater chance of innovations but also more difficulties learning what each side should avoid. Regardless, there is plenty of interesting material to consider with 3...♖a5 without adding more about other moves.

The Scandinavian has served me well for many years. I hope the reader is equally fortunate.

Christian Bauer

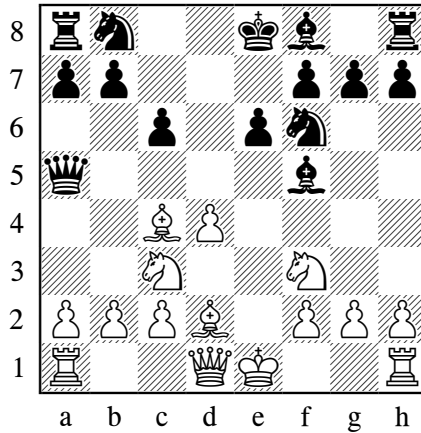
Montpellier, France, September 2010

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# Chapter 1

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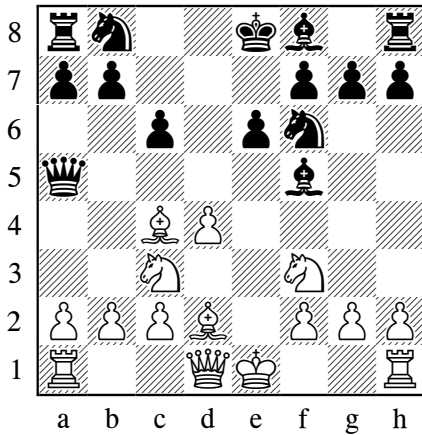
## Main line 8. ♘e4 & 8. ♘d5



1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 3.♘c3 ♙a5  
4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♙f5 6.♙c4 e6 7.♙d2 c6

A) 8. ♘e4	8
A1) 8... ♙d8?!	8
A2) 8... ♙c7	11
A3) 8... ♙b6 9. ♘xf6† gxf6	18
B) 8. ♘d5 ♙d8 9. ♘xf6†	27
B1) 9... ♙xf6 10. ♙e2!	27
B2) 9... gxf6	36
B24) 10.c3	45
B25) 10. ♙b3 ♘d7	49
B251) 11. ♘h4	50
B252) 11. ♙e2	51

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗a5 4.d4 ♘f6  
5.♘f3 ♙f5 6.♙c4 c6 7.♙d2 e6



In this, the first chapter of the book, we are jumping straight in at the deep end and analysing the variation that is most likely to appear on a Scandinavian player's board nowadays.

In the above position White normally chooses between the related, yet quite distinct continuations of **A) 8.♘e4** and **B) 8.♘d5**, which will be analysed in turn.

The other main option is 8.♗e2, which will form the subject of Chapter 2, while the remaining alternatives will be covered in Chapter 3.

Why is the idea of exchanging knights so popular for White? For one thing, the c3-knight is traditionally a poor piece in the Scandinavian, so it is logical to take the opportunity to exchange it for the more active one on f6. Furthermore, after the subsequent ♘xf6† Black will have to make a difficult decision: either he compromises his pawn structure or allows his queen to be drawn out into an exposed position.

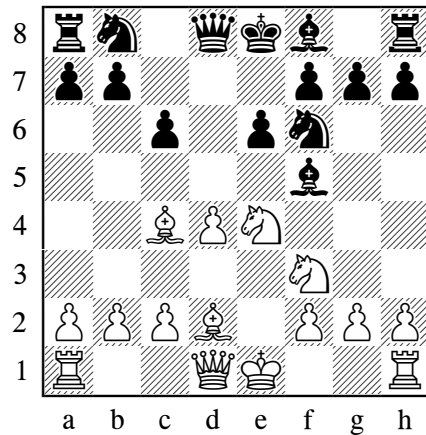
In general terms, White's position is sound and relatively easy to handle, at least for the next few moves. From Black's point of view

the major argument lies in the solidity of his formation. Without further delay, let's see how the game may develop after the first of the aforementioned knight hops.

**A) 8.♘e4**

After this move Black must choose between **A1) 8...♗d8?!**, **A2) 8...♗c7** and **A3) 8...♗b6**.

**A1) 8...♗d8?!**



By choosing this square Black is visibly hoping for 9.♘xf6†, which would transpose into line B with 8.♘d5 ♗d8. Unfortunately for Black, the queen is less than ideally placed on its original post, which enables White to profit from avoiding the transposition.

**9.♘g3! ♙g6**

Safer is:

9...♙g4

The bishop will have to exchange itself for the knight on f3 in the near future, but Black's position will remain solid and only a little worse.

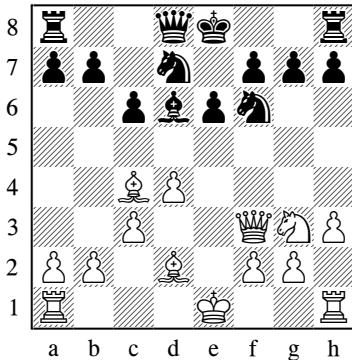
10.c3 ♘bd7

10...♘h5?! 11.♗b3 ♘xg3 12.hxg3 ♙xf3 was tried in Golod – Sergeev, Hlohovec 1994. Here White's strongest reply would have been 13.gxf3!N (The game continuation of 13.♗xb7 ♙xg2 14.♗h2 ♘d7 15.♗xg2 was



enough for a nice edge, but the text is even more promising.) A sample continuation might be 13...♞b6?! 14.♙xe6! fxe6 15.♞xe6† ♙e7 16.0–0–0 with a raging attack.

11.h3 ♙xf3 12.♞xf3 ♙d6



We have reached a position resembling those that may arise from the Caro-Kann, as well as the “Fort Knox” variation of the French Defence (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 dxe4 4.♖xe4 ♙d7, intending ...♙c6). The bishop pair confers on White a slight but risk-free advantage, although at the same time the black fortifications are hard to shake. (There is a reason why the aforementioned variation of the French Defence received that particular moniker...)

13.♖e2 ♞c7 14.g4

White is not forced to act so energetically, and he may have been better off playing more patiently with 13.0–0–0 14.♞fe1.

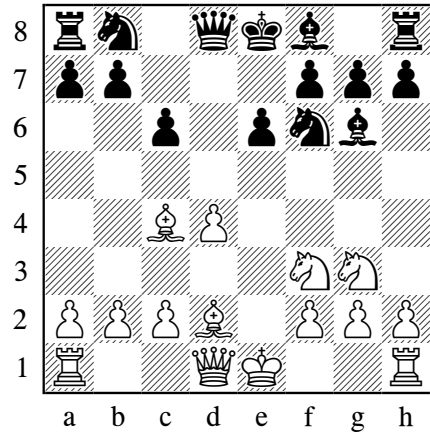
14...♖d5

Another game continued 14...0–0 15.g5 ♖d5 16.0–0–0 b5 17.♙d3 c5 18.♙b1 c4 19.♙e4 ♖7b6 20.h4 ♞ae8 21.♞dg1 b4 with decent counterplay for Black, Bologan – Ionov, Kazan 1995.

15.a4 a5 16.g5 ♖5b6 17.♙b3 c5 18.h4 c4 19.♙c2 ♖d5 20.h5

½–½ Movsesian – Istratescu, Ohrid 2001.

Obviously there is a lot of play in the position, but presumably White offered a draw on the basis that he lacked any real advantage.



**10.h4!**

This aggressive move highlights the drawback of Black’s decision to retreat his bishop rather than exchange it. Instead the timid 10.c3?! would be good enough for equality after 10...♖bd7.

**10...♖h5!?**

This creative solution is unfortunately insufficient to solve Black’s problems, although his position is already quite dangerous.

He should certainly avoid: 10...h5? 11.♖e5 ♙h7 12.♞e2±

10...♙d6!?! This rare move may be the least of the evils. 11.h5 ♙c4 (11...♙xg3?? 12.hxg6 ♙c7 13.gxf7†+–) 12.♖xe4 (12.h6!?!N) 12...♖xe4 13.♙e3 (13.h6!?!N) White maintained an edge in Zelic – Fierro Baquero, Cannes 2007, but at least Black’s position is not about to collapse any time soon.

Black’s most common reply has been:

10...h6

But this has not brought him much success.

11.♖e5 ♙h7

11...♞xd4? 12.♖xg6 fxg6 13.♞e2±

12.♞e2

We have reached the same position as in the game Nedev – Slovineanu (see variation A

in Chapter 8) except that the white knight is on e5 rather than f4, turning an already promising position into an even better one.

12...♘d5

12...♙d6?? loses trivially after: 13.♘xf7 ♖xf7

14.♚xe6† ♙g6 15.h5#

13.0–0–0

13.♚h5!?!N also looks dangerous.

13...♘d7 14.f4 ♘xe5

Relatively best. 14...♙e7?! 15.♘h5 0–0 16.♚g4 g6 17.♘g3 is clearly unappetizing for Black.

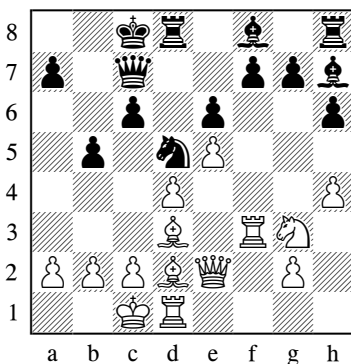
15.fx5

15.dxe5?! would spoil a good part of White's advantage. 15...♚c7 16.♖hf1 0–0–0 17.f5 Arakhamia – Olbrich, Yerevan (ol) 1996. Now Black could have got out of the woods with 17...♖b8!N (instead the game continuation of 17...♙xf5 18.♘xf5 exf5 19.♖xf5 g6 20.♖f3 ♙g7 21.e6! yielded White a big plus) 18.♚g4 ♙c5 with a decent game.

15...♚c7 16.♖hf1 0–0–0 17.♖f3 b5

This radical measure weakens the black queenside, but also secures the position of the knight on d5. The alternative was 17...♖b8 18.♖df1 ♖d7 followed by passive defence.

18.♙d3



18...♙g8?

After this ugly move Black soon finds himself overrun on the queenside. The superior

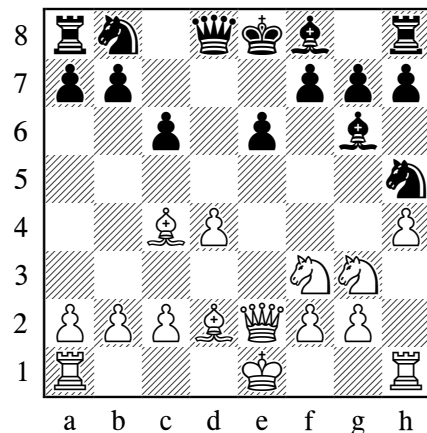
18...♙d3N 19.♚xd3 f5 20.exf6 gxf6 leaves White with some advantage, but a long fight lies ahead.

19.c4 bxc4 20.♙xc4 ♙e7 21.♘e4 ♘b6 22.♙a5 ♙xh4 23.♖c3

1–0 Emms – Dunnington, London 1997. Black decided here to throw in the towel in view of the impending ♙b5. It was perhaps a bit early to resign, but in any case the whole game provided a useful illustration of the kind of trouble Black must strive to avoid.

11.♚e2!

White does best to ignore the cheeky knight, as the exchange on g3 can bring him certain benefits.



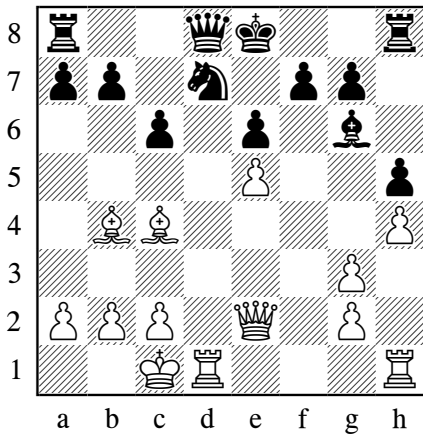
11...♘d7

The immediate exchange on g3 would have increased White's options: 11...♘g3?! 12.fxg3 ♘d7 (12...♙xc2? loses fast: 13.♘g5! ♙e7 14.♘f7 ♖xf7 15.♚xe6† ♖e8 16.♖c1 ♙a4 [or 16...♙g6 17.h5] 17.♚f7† ♘d7 18.b3 ♙b5 19.♙xb5 cxb5 20.♚f5† ♖e8 21.♖c8+–) 13.0–0–0 ♘b6 14.h5 ♙f5 15.♙b3 Intending ♘e5 followed by g4. 15...a5 (15...♙g4 runs into 16.♖h4 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 with a great edge for White.) 16.a3 a4 17.♙a2 The counterplay was only temporary, and Black must once again worry about the opponent's easy kingside play.

12.0–0–0 ♘d6 13.♖e5! ♗xg3 14.fxg3 ♙xe5  
15.dxe5 h5

Better than 15...h6, since White's kingside options are reduced and the bishop on g6 gains some stability.

16.♙b4!



It may already be too late for Black to escape, as indicated by the remainder of the present game.

16...♗b6 17.♗e1! ♙f5

17...0–0–0 does not help due to: 18.♙a5 ♗c5 19.♗c3!± The rook on d8 is under fire, and if it moves then 20.♖xd7 wins immediately, while 19...b6? is also hopeless due to 20.♙b4+–.

18.♖f1

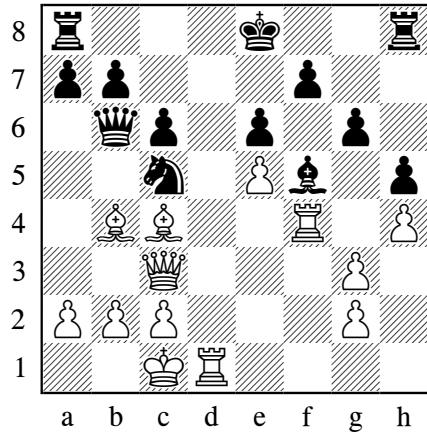
Threatening ♖xf5.

18...g6

Other tries would also have been fruitless, for instance: 18...♖xe5? 19.♖xf5 ♖xc4 20.♖xf7!+–; 18...0–0–0 19.♙a5 ♗c5 20.♗c3!±; and finally 18...a5 19.♙d6±.

19.♗c3 ♖c5 20.♖f4

The precipitous 20.♙a5? would have squandered almost all White's advantage after: 20...♖a4 21.♗b4 ♗xb4 22.♙xb4 ♖b6±



20...♖e4

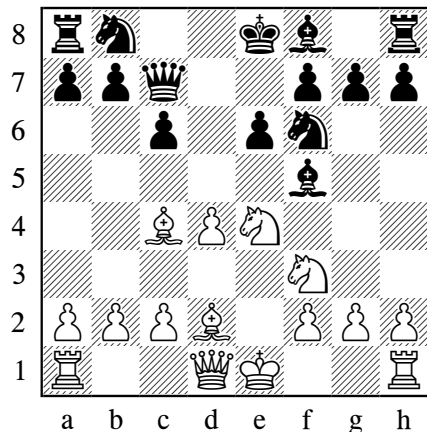
20...a5 would not have improved Black's fate after 21.♙a3 ♖d7 (or 21...♖a4 22.♗e1) 22.♖fd4 0–0–0 23.♙e7, when White's victory would only be a matter of time.

21.♗e1 ♖h7 22.♙a5 ♗c5 23.♙d3 ♖xg3  
24.♙b4

1–0

Svidler – Oll, Ter Apel 1996.

A2) 8...♗c7



Although the queen is neither exerting pressure against d4 nor on b2, this retreat is nevertheless quite okay. Indeed, Black will not have to waste another tempo with his queen and he can soon castle long after ...♖d7.