



The Safest Scandinavian Reloaded

**A Black Repertoire with
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♔xd5 3.♘c3 ♔d6**

Vassilios Kotronias

Chess Stars Publishing
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The Safest Scandinavian Reloaded

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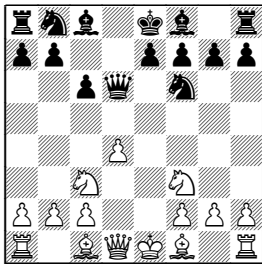
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Introduction

In the beginning of 2015 a good friend of mine, Mrs. Efi Georgopoulou, suggested to me to create an opening repertoire against 1.e4 that would be based on clearcut plans while avoiding the tons of theory the Spanish and the Caro-Kann are associated with. Such a repertoire would be suitable for both professionals and amateurs only if it could combine asymmetrical pawn structure (with the deriving from it complex play) with relative solidity. Thus I had basically no choice – my attention was immediately drawn to the 3...♔d6 Scandinavian:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♔xd5 3.♘c3 ♔d6
4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 c6



Intense investigation and practical

usage by GM Sergei Tiviakov have turned it into a respectable weapon, known for its clear and strategically sound plans. I remember when Sergei chose this system for the first time back in 2006. Of course, it had been played before, but not against super grandmasters as Anand and Grischuk! And Black obtained the upper hand in both games ever since the opening – that was a real shock in the chess world. Then Anatoly Karpov and Vassily Ivanchuk also employed it in fast time controls. I have played the Scandinavian myself in about 40 tournament games, half of them on the White side, including one against Tiviakov! I have spent so many hours trying to find an advantage for White that finally I have learned all Black's tricks and the finest nuances of his set-up.

When I was young, I just could not believe that this opening could be any good. After all, Black gives the enemy free tempi and I have

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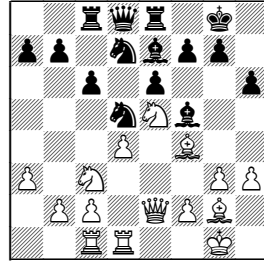
always valued time very much. However, from the experience I acquired afterwards, I realised that this time could not be easily exploited. The asymmetrical pawn structure gives Black the important resource of turning the d5-square into a fortress. He would just need two further elements to achieve complete equality: develop the light-squared bishop outside the pawn structure, and find a good place for his queen. To be honest, in the beginning I thought, like almost every GM in the world, that the black queen should go to a5 to pin the c3-knight. But chess is evolving, and in the past years the games of Sergei Tiviakov and other strong players showed that perhaps 3...♙d6 could be after all the best option. It is certainly the safest flavour of the Scandinavian. All Black's forces exert a restraining effect on the enemy's centre. The queen pressurises d4, thus enhancing the impact of the bishop sortie to g4. As a result White is unable to build a mobile pawn pair c4+d4, and play often takes the Classical Caro-Kann shape.

Here are two typical scenarios:

M.Ali-Tiviakov Jakarta 2015

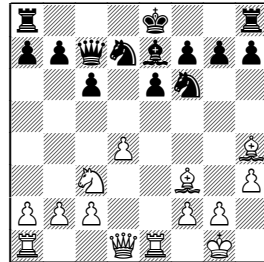
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 3.♘c3 ♙d6
4.d4 c6 5.♘f3 ♙f5 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♙g2

e6 8.0-0 h6 9.a3 ♙e7 10.♙f4 ♙d8
11.♙e2 0-0 12.♞fd1 ♘bd7 13.♘e5
♞c8 14.♞ac1 ♞e8 15.h3 ♘d5...



Movsesian-Tiviakov Wijk aan Zee 2013

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 3.♘c3 ♙d6
4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♙g4 (5...c6!) 6.♙e2
c6 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.h3 ♙h5 9.♙g5 e6
10.♙h4 ♙xf3 11.♙xf3 ♙c7 12.♞e1
♙e7



After the main move 4.d4 it is beyond doubt that White controls more space in the centre, but at the same time the pawn provides us with a target.

A look at the diagrams can lead to a few useful tips and conclusions about the type of play.

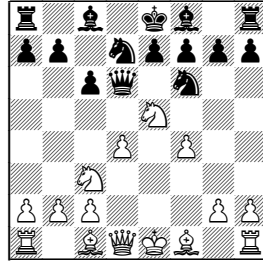
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- This is surely a light-squared opening, so much will depend upon the effective development of the ♕c8.
- White controls more space, so Black should seek exchanges to ensure more breathing space.
- The fight will mainly revolve around the two important squares d5 and e5.
- The d4 pawn could become a target to attack – directly, or with the breakthrough ...c6-c5 or ...e6-e5.
- The ♖d6 cannot be effectively attacked as it has many squares to flee to: c7, d7, d8, b4 or even e6. An important rule of thumb is that every exchange of a minor piece makes its position in the centre safer.
- White has a slight lead in development, which allows him to dictate the course of events and choose which side to castle. Black should try to hinder his plans by guerrilla tactics: a) offering a queen trade or exchanges in general and b) attacking certain weak points, which could be d4, c2, g2, to name a few.
- A bishop on c4 would almost certainly end up biting on granite after ...e7-e6, so this development is usually good news for Black.
- Endings are rarely better for White if nothing really cata-

strophic had happened to our pawn formation.

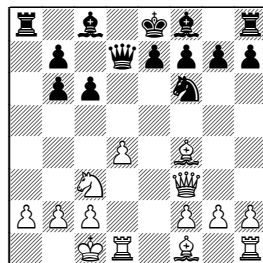
Several lines are very sharp and, in my opinion, critical.

5. ♖f3 c6 6. ♗e5 ♖bd7 7. f4!?



The Shirov plan is underestimated, and its coverage by theoreticians and annotators is overall wrong. I devoted the better part of Chapter 7 to it, where I present a new method of defence.

5. ♖f3 c6 6. ♗e5 ♖bd7 7. ♗c4 ♖c7 8. ♖f3 ♖b6 9. ♗f4 ♖d7 10. ♗xb6 axb6 11. 0-0-0, Kotronias-Tivjakov, 2011.



I got an edge in this game and that only confirmed my opinion that Black was struggling in this particular line. Until I discovered the

Introduction

right way to strike back! It goes well beyond move 30 and is really vital for Black.

Today I believe that the 3...♖d6 Scandinavian is a safe and sound opening for all levels. I have spent so many hours trying to refute it, bashing my head against its solid walls, only to end up respecting it

myself. The fruits of my work and analyses are presented below.

I would like to thank my editor Semko Semkov for accepting my idea to create a repertoire based on this system, and then helping me with the analysis of some positions.

*Vassilios Kotronias
Athens, January 2016*

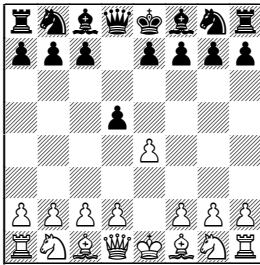
Seven years have passed since I wrote these words, and they still hold true. Instead of reprinting the book, the publisher offered me to make a new, revised edition. It took me almost a year to analyse all the new developments and repertoire books that proposed dangerous new weapons against the ♖d6 Scandinavian. Meanwhile the AI engines surged, with their original view on some positions. The result is a completely rewritten book, with major corrections, especially in its second half. The structure of variations remained the same, but I introduced many improvements in the subsequent play. I also added some games of mine from the last year.

*Vassilios Kotronias
Athens, October 2023*

Chapter 1. 1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves

Main Ideas

1.e4 d5

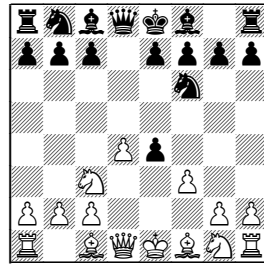


By hitting the unprotected e4 pawn right away, Black wants to achieve two objectives:

- Create an asymmetrical pawn structure;
- Obtain free piece play in a position with open centre.

The main disadvantage of this plan is that in most lines the queen comes into the centre as early as on move two, which spells loss of time. So it is automatically good news for us if White refrains from 2.exd5 as the biggest drawback of our scheme vanishes. We still have to know a few key points about White's rare second move alternatives. Let's begin with the Blackmar-Diemer gambit:

A. 2.d4?!. Of course we should take the gift – **2...dxe4 3.♘c3 ♖f6 4.f3!**,



but here we should take an important decision. While it is clear that White's compensation would be quite arguable after 4...exf3, his position is not entirely devoid of resources. I did not want to invest a lot of time trying to refute this gambit, so I decided to rely on common sense. My suggestion is to avoid giving the enemy an initiative:

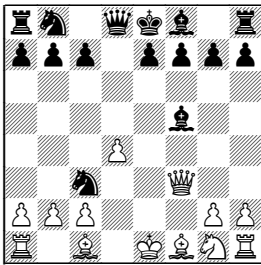
4...♙f5!? This natural developing move keeps the pawn wedge on e4. Gambiteers like open lines and fast-paced play so it is a good idea, for psychological reasons, to keep their pieces as much restrained as possible.

5.fxe4

5.g4?! ♖g6 6.g5 neglects development, and we can safely keep the extra pawn with 6...♗d5 7.fxe4 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♙xe4.

5.♙g5 ♗bd7 6.♙c4 h6 7.♙h4 ♗b6 8.♙b3 e3!♣ is also better for Black. It will take White quite some time to capture this pawn. In the meantime we can prepare a strike at the centre with ...c7-c5. See the annotated **Game 1** Kurylo-Stankevičius, 2000.

5...♗xe4 6.♙f3! ♗xc3!

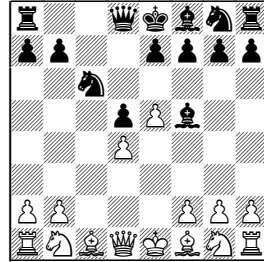


We return the pawn but take over the initiative: 7.bxc3 (7.♙xf5 e6 8.♙d3 ♗d5 9.♗f3 ♙e7 10.c4 ♗f6 does not offer enough compensation.) 7...e6 8.♙xb7 ♗d7♣. White's kingside is weakened and the b7-queen is far from it.

B. 2.e5 gains space but at the cost of a tempo. After **2...c5** White should choose a way of defending the advanced pawn.

a) The move **3.c3**, followed by d2-d4, would create a target on d4.

3...♗c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 ♙f5!



Black's play is easy – see **Game 3** Agdestein-Wang, Amsterdam 2008. His only problem is where to put the dark-squared bishop after ...♗g8-e7. If White plays ♙d3, the answer is obvious since the f5-square will be vacated after ...♙xd3 and the knight will occupy a striking position on f5. In the event of 6.♗c3 e6 7.a3 ♗ge7 8.♗f3 Black can rearrange his pieces with 8...♙g4 9.♙e2 ♗f5 10.♙e3 ♙e7.

b) **3.f4** has other drawbacks – it weakens the kingside. Black develops as in **Game 2** Punt-Landa, Vlissingen 2015:

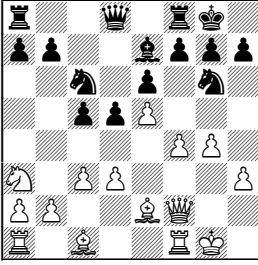
3...♗c6 4.c3 ♙f5 5.♗f3 e6 6.♙e2 ♗h6! 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.d3 ♙g6! 9.♗a3 0-0 10.♗c2 f6! or leads the bishop to g4 in the event of:

4.♗f3 ♙g4! 5.h3 ♙xf3 6.♙xf3 e6 7.c3 ♗ge7. White's position lacks harmony. A possible continuation is 8.♗a3

8.♙d3?! g5!♣ is a motif to remember, undermining White's centre.

8...♗f5 9.g4 ♗h4! 10.♙f2 ♙e7 11.♙e2 ♗g6 12.0-0 0-0 13.d3

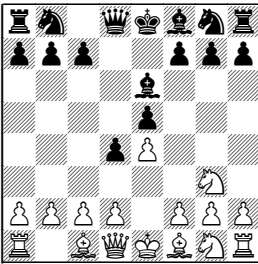
1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves



Now the thematic break 13... f6 14.exf6 ♖xf6↑ underlines the weakness of White's castling position. You should remember about this structure that Black's counterplay is based on either ...f7-f6 or ...g7-g5, depending on the circumstances.

C. 2.♘c3?! immediately passes the initiative to Black as it surrenders the centre:

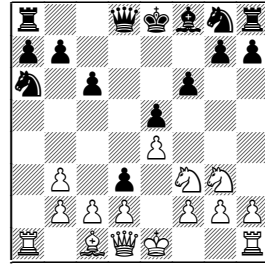
2...d4! 3.♘ce2 e5 4.♘g3 ♙e6



White cannot even continue in the KID style as the knight on g3 bans g3. Thus he must try to develop the bishop on the queenside, but the e6-bishop takes away the square c4. The only solution is

♙f1-b5-a4-b3. However, this manoeuvre is slow and allows ...d3 at the end of it:

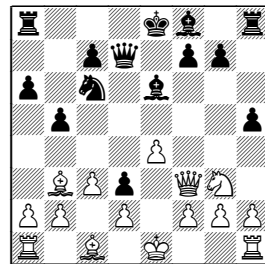
5.♘f3 f6 6.♙b5+ c6 7.♙a4 ♘a6
8.♙b3 ♙xb3 9.axb3 d3♣



5.c3 looks like a clever waiting move, intending to meet 5...♘c6! by 6.♙b5, but then White faces problems down the d-file. After 6...♘ge7 he either plays:

7.d3, when Black castles long – 7...♚d6 8.♘f3 f6 9.0-0 a6 10.♙a4 dxc3 11.bxc3 0-0-0♣, or allows ...d3, for example:

7.♘f3?! a6 8.♙a4 d3! 9.♘xe5 b5 10.♘xc6 ♘xc6 11.♙b3 h5 12.♚f3 ♚d7♣.

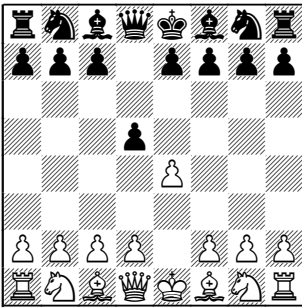


White will have to play without the whole left wing.

Chapter 1. 1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves

Step by Step

1.e4 d5



I consider in this chapter three minor alternatives to the main move 2.exd5:

A. 2.d4?!; **B.** 2.e5; **C.** 2.♘c3

A. 2.d4?!

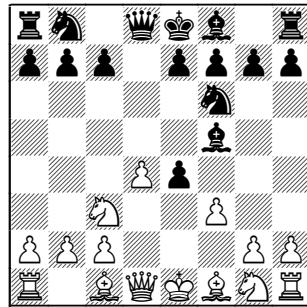
This is the dubious Blackmar-Diemer Gambit. Black should accept it of course:

2...dxe4 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.f3!

Without this move White's central activity would have been entirely meaningless. White is trying to get tempi for development and to open files on the kingside.

4.♗g5 ♕f5 should transpose as he should undermine the e4-pawn sooner or later.

4...♗f5!?



4...exf3 is six times more frequent, so our answer could be a little surprise. I feel that we should avoid playing on the opponent's territory by clutching to the extra pawn. On the opposite – we should always consider returning it whenever possible in order to acquire positional gains or obtain a counterattack.

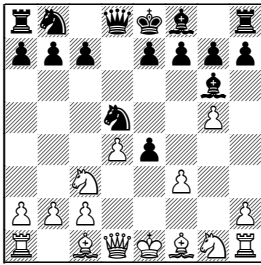
5.fxe4

Gaining access to the f3-square for his forces. Alternatively:

1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves

a) 5.g4?! is an attempt of grabbing space, but White is overextended on the kingside after:

5...♙g6 6.g5
6.h4?! h6! 7.♖h3 ♘c6! 8.d5
♘e5 9.fxe4 ♘xe4 10.♙g2 ♘xc3
11.bxc3 e6♣; 6.f4?! e6♣.
6...♘d5



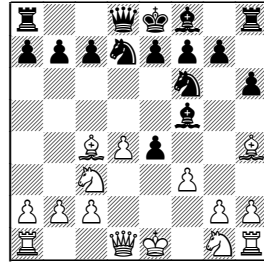
7.♘xe4
7.fxe4 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♙xe4 9.♖f3
e6♣.
7...e6 8.h4
8.c4?! ♘b6 9.♙e3 ♘c6♣.
8...♙e7 9.h5
9.c4 ♘b6♣ creates an extra target for Black on d4.
9.♙g2 h6! exposes White's kingside weaknesses.
9.♖e2 ♘c6 will transpose to 9.h5.
9...♙f5 10.♖e2 ♘c6 11.♖2g3 h6
12.f4 hxg5 13.fxg5 ♙d7 14.c3
0-0-0. Black is ready to counter-attack.

b) 5.♙g5. A logical move, which aims to make us take on f3. But we should not oblige:

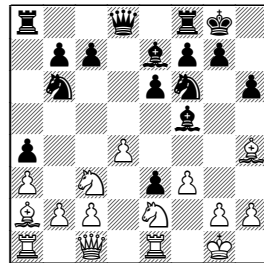
5...♘bd7! 6.♙c4
6.♙e2 will finally force us capture on f3, but we are ready to

finish development with 6...exf3 7.♘xf3 c6 8.0-0-0 g6 or 8...♙a5.

6...h6 7.♙h4



7...♘b6! 8.♙b3 e3!. Continuing the tactic of hindering the enemy's development. Now he will have to invest time in regaining the sacrificed pawn. Black is better after 9.♖ge2 e6. **Game 1** Kurylo-Stankevicius, 2000, went on: 10.0-0 ♙e7 11.♖e1 a5 12.a3 0-0 13.♙c1 a4 14.♙a2



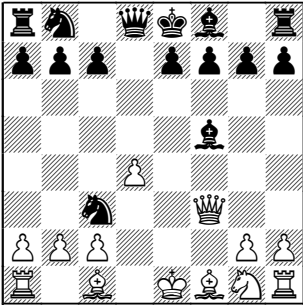
It saw further 14...♙d6, and Black went on to win. Perhaps it was even better to open the centre with 14...c5.

5...♘xe4 6.♙f3!

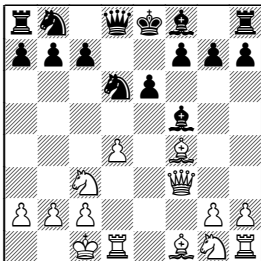
White brings the queen out with tempo and enables long castling.

His only hope for success is to create concrete threats before Black consolidated. In correspondence chess the more conventional 6.♘f3?! e6 7.♙c4 ♘b4 8.0-0 had brought White a good amount of victories in the pre-computer years, but it has then faded out of fashion as White's compensation turned out to be insufficient. I recommend 8...♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♙xc3 10.♞b1 (10.♙a3 ♗c6 11.♞b1 ♗xd4 12.♞xb7 ♙e4 13.♞b1 ♗xf3+ 14.gxf3 ♞d4+-+) 10...♗c6! 11.♙e3 0-0♠.

6...♗xc3!



The most challenging continuation. In the first edition I proposed the well tested 6...♗d6 7.♙f4 e6 8.0-0-0



8...c6

White would like to open lines with d4-d5, so the text is thoroughly logical. However, it could be even better to insert first 8...h5!? 9.h3 c6. This idea occurred in the correspondence game Diemer-Dahl, 1956. The variation's godfather lost it, but somehow 8...h5 has not caught up.

9.g4 ♙g6=

Having entrenched d5, we are now ready to continue our development with ...♗b8-d7-b6, ...♙f8-e7. Whenever White resorts to h2-h4, we might respond with ...h7-h5, creating new weaknesses in his camp, the f5-square in particular. Still, White has probably just about enough compensation for the missing pawn, if he plays the best moves. The game jordache2-bosico, gameknot.com 2011, went:

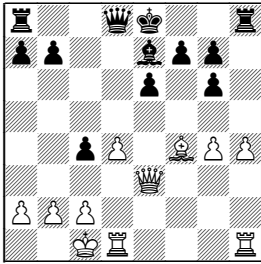
10.h4 h5 11.g5 ♞a5 12.♙d3 ♙xd3 13.♞xd3 ♗a6 14.a3 ♗c4 15.♗e4, when 15...♞e1+ 16.♞d1 ♞a5 would have been a draw by repetition. Instead Black fought on with 15...♗b4!? 16.♞b3 0-0-0.

White's most popular try is:

10.♞e3 ♙e7 11.♗f3 ♗d7 12.h4 12.♗e5 ♗b6 13.h4 ♗d5 comes to the same thing. 12.d5 eliminates to a draw end-game after 12...cxd5 13.♗xd5 exd5 14.♙xd6 ♙e4 15.♙d3 ♙xd6 16.♙xe4 ♞b6. 12...♗f6 13.♗e5 ♗d5 14.♗xd5

1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves

cxd5 15.♖xg6 hxg6 16.♙d3 ♘c4
17.♙xc4 dxc4



18.d5! exd5 19.♗de1 ♔f8 20.h5
g5 21.♙e5 ♖h6 22.♙xg7+ ♔xg7
23.♗xe7 ♗xe7 24.♗xe7 ♖f6
25.♗d1=, and the players agreed
a draw in Laisebein-Jethan, corr.
2008.

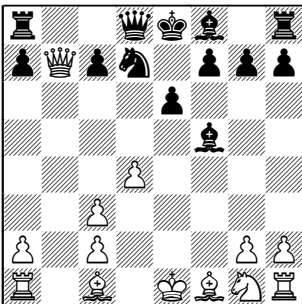
7.bxc3

After 7.♗xf5 e6 White is a clear
pawn down without apparent
compensation – 8.♗d3

Or 8.♗h3 ♘d5 9.♘f3 ♘b4
10.♙b5+ ♘8c6 11.♙a4 b5
12.♙g5 ♗d5 13.♙b3 ♗e4+.

8...♘d5 9.c4 ♘f6 10.♘f3 ♙b4+
11.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 12.♗xd2 c5.

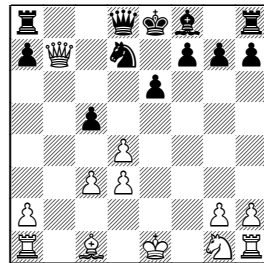
7...e6 8.♗xb7 ♘d7↑



The tide has turned. Pawns are
even, but Black is better devel-
oped and has the much safer
king. An immediate threat is
...♗h4+, so 9.♘f3 looks consis-
tent. Then 9...♗b8 10.♗xa7 ♙xc2
11.♙c4 ♙d6 12.0-0-0 13.♙g5 ♗e8
proved to be in Black's favour as
the white queen is cut off from the
kingside. Twitchell-Doxey, ICCF
2016, went 14.♗a5 h6 15.♙h4 ♘b6
16.♙b5 c6 17.♙a6 ♘d5 18.♖fc1 ♙e4
19.♘d2 f5 20.♘xe4 fxe4 21.♖cb1
♙xh2+, and White's resistance did
not last long.

9.♙b5 ♖b8 10.♙xd7+ is pointless
as 10...♔xd7 11.♗xa7 ♗h4+ 12.♔f1
♙d6 assures Black of a winning at-
tack.

Perhaps the most resilient is
9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.cxd3 c5

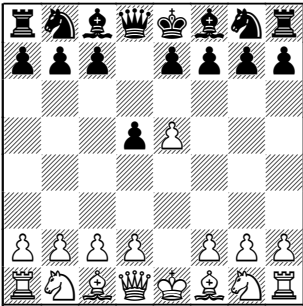


11.♘f3

After 11.♙e3 cxd4 12.♙xd4
Black won both correspon-
dence games following 12...♙c5
and 12...e5. The modern en-
gines claim that it is stronger
to insert 12...♖b8!, e.g. 13.♗xa7
♗g5 or 13.♗f3 ♙c5 14.♙xg7?

♠g8 15.♗d4 ♚a5-+.
 11...cxd4 12.♖xd4 ♗c5 13.♘c6
 ♜c8. White has escaped a rout,
 but his pieces are uncoordinated.
 Black can seize space with 15...e5,
 followed by ...0-0 and ...f5.

B. 2.e5



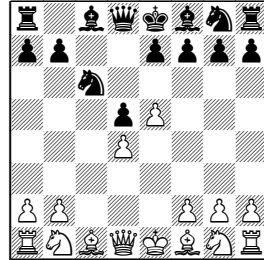
This move surrenders the control of f5 to Black. And loses time at that – not a good combination indeed! No wonder I consider it anti-positional or in the best of cases completely harmless. First of all we take control of the centre.

2...c5 3.f4

If White goes for a set-up involving the moves c2-c3 and d3-d4, he will find himself with a weak pawn on d4 but without the prospects for a kingside attack, which are so inherent to the French structures: 3.c3

The Scandinavian approach could be contagious – only that way can I explain the amaz-

ing number of games which saw 3.d4?! cxd4 4.♜xd4. After 4...♘c6 5.♜f4 g6 Black is already on top.
 3...♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4



This position commonly arises after the Caro-Kann move order 1.e4 c6 2.c4 d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.e5 ♘c6 5.d4. Black's best approach is:

5...♗f5!

The hasty 5...♜b6, intending 6.♘f3? ♗g4, fails to 6.♘c3! ♜xd4 7.♜xd4 ♖xd4 8.♖xd5.

6.♗d3

A difficult positional decision. White admits that he cannot make any progress on the kingside without this trade. The alternative set-up is 6.♘c3 e6 7.a3 ♖ge7 (The pressure against the d-pawn becomes annoying following 8.♘f3? ♗g4 or 8.♗e2 ♜b6 9.♘f3 ♗g4) 8.♗e3 a6 9.♖ge2 ♗g6 (9...h5) 10.♖f4 ♖f5=.

6...♗xd3 7.♜xd3 e6 8.♘f3 ♖ge7 9.0-0

The thematic 9.h4 was tried in Lie-Bu, Dresden 2008. After 9...♜b6 10.♘c3 ♖f5 11.♗e3 (11.

1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves

♖xd5 ♜a5+ 12.♗c3 ♜d8 13.♙e3
 ♖xd4=) Black had to take the
 pawn – 11...♝xb2! – not to win
 material as White can easily
 regain it, but because he is the
 strongest side on the left wing
 and he should gladly shift the
 game focus to that flank, e.g.
 12.♞b1 ♜a3 13.♞xb7?! ♙b4
 14.♙d2 h5⚡.

9...♗f5 10.♗c3 ♙e7

Black's task is easy – see **Game 3** Agdestein-Wang, Amsterdam 2008.

3...♗c6 4.♗f3

4.c3 ♙f5 5.♗f3 e6 6.♙e2 ♗h6!
 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.d3 ♙g6! 9.♗a3 0-0
 10.♗c2 f6! 11.d4 ♝b6 was an ex-
 ample of excellent opening play.
 See **Game 2** Punt-Landa, Vlis-
 singen 2015, for more details.

4...♙g4

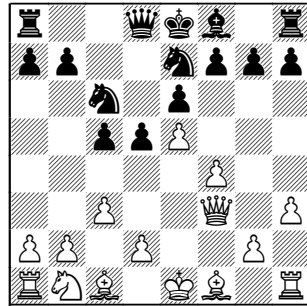
Of course this is the most consistent move, but 4...♙f5 5.♙b5 ♞c8 or 4...♗h6 5.c3 ♙g4 are no worse,

5.h3

5.♙e2 e6 6.0-0 ♗ge7 7.c3 ♗f5
 8.♗a3 is more frequent, but 8...
 h5! 9.♗c2 d4 10.cxd4 ♙e7! opens
 the centre in favour of Black's ac-
 tive pieces. The idea is not to take
 on d4 by pawn, but develop.

5...♙xf3 6.♝xf3 e6 7.c3 ♗ge7⚡

Black owns the centre and is visibly better. He can continue with such typical moves like ...h7-h5, ...♗e7-f5, ...♙f8-e7 and perhaps even ...g7-g5 if White allows it. Achieving this thrust would open lines and highlight the slight disharmony in White's position.



8.♗a3

White has not abandoned the idea of playing d2-d4, so the knight is heading for c2.

An awkward method of trying to prevent ...♗e7-f5 is 8.♙d3?!, when 8...g5! 9.0-0 c4 10.♙c2 ♗g6⚡ looks like a good antidote.

8.d3 ♗f5 9.g4 is best met with 9...♗h4!

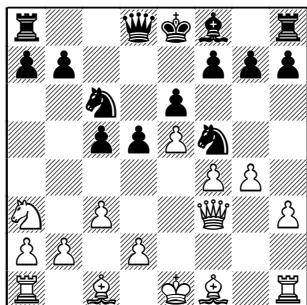
The check trades queens, which only helps White's defence.

10.♝f2 ♙e7 11.♗d2 0-0⚡. The threat is ...♗g6, followed by ...f6.

8...♗f5

8...g5! 9.♙b5 ♙g7 looks also excellent for Black.

9.g4



9...♘h4!

Black did not react well in the game Pirisi-Bokros, Hungary 2007, 9...♘h4+?!, and had to trade queens after 10.♙f2=. White's king was able to breathe easier without the strongest pieces.

10.♙f2 ♘e7 11.♙e2 ♘g6 12.0-0
0-0 13.d3 f6 14.exf6 ♗xf6

Black has the better chances as the ♘a3 is too far away from the weak f4-pawn. For instance, 15.g5 ♗f8 16.h4 ♙d6, taking over the initiative.

C. 2.♘c3?!

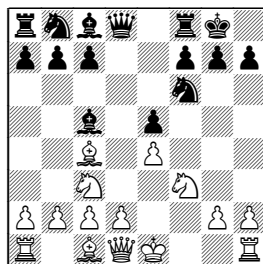
This move defies all the principles of opening play – the opponent offers us to seize space, and even with a tempo!

2...d4!

This advance is objectively much better than taking on e4. Still, keeping the position open is not bad, and since the Scandinavian fans love free piece play, I will also cover:

2...dxe4 3.♘xe4

It seems most prudent for White to recapture the pawn. 3.♙c4 ♘f6 4.f3 is similar to the gambit from line A. The only difference is that White has saved a tempo by omitting the move d2-d4. My suggestion here is to avoid capturing on f3. We should continue development of our pieces, aiming for quick castling – 4...e5!?. After this move Black's position becomes slightly preferable. A possible continuation is 5.fxe4 ♙c5 6.♘f3 0-0=, when Black has gotten a good version of the King's Gambit Declined.



The game Domont-Vuilleumier, Switzerland 2011, continued 7.d3 c6!? 8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 b5!

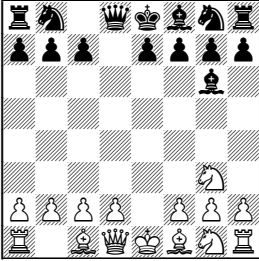
3...♙f5 4.♘g3

Best. Unnatural seems 4.♙f3?! ♙g6! 5.♙c4 ♘d7!, and the an-

1.e4 d5 Rare Second Moves

noying threat ...♗d7-e5 is already on the cards.

4...♙g6



A typical Caro-Kann structure has arisen. Black has every reason to feel that he has gained something over that opening's main line as he can hit the centre with a direct ...c7-c5. Having said that, he should precede this idea with good preparatory moves. A sample line follows:

5.h4 h6 6.♗f3 ♗d7 7.d4 e6 8.h5 ♙h7 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♖xd3 ♗gf6 11.♙d2. This is an appropriate moment for the afore-mentioned advance:

11...c5! 12.0-0-0 ♖c7=. Black is ready to develop his bishop on d6, putting pressure on ♗g3. Then he may choose, according to his style of play, short or long castling, with fully equal chances. Another idea is the positionally well motivated ...c5-c4, all the more so if it comes with a tempo. Such a move could establish a long term initiative by turning d5 into a stronghold for Black's pieces. White can oppose this scenario by different means. 13.♖e2 discourages 13...c4 in

view of the possible knight jumps 14.♗f5 b5 15.♗e3 or 14.♗e5!? ♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♗d5 16.♗e4. Instead Black can castle long, but I believe that castling short is more challenging:

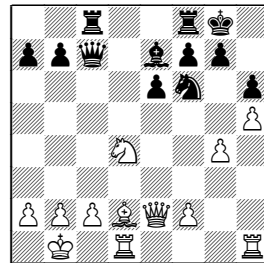
13...♙e7! 14.♖b1 0-0!♞

After analysing a lot of such positions from White's point of view in the standard Caro-Kann, I think that with an extra tempo our king should be perfectly safe:

15.♗e4

Or 15.♗e5 ♖fd8 16.♖he1 ♖b6 17.♙e3 ♗d5.

15...cxd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xe4 17.♖xe4 ♗f6 18.♖e2 ♖ac8 19.g4



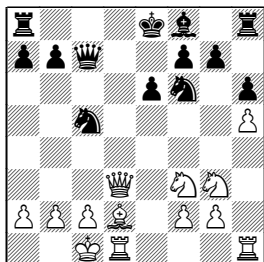
Black has strong counterplay in the centre: 19...♗d5 20.c3 ♖fd8 21.♗dg1 ♖b6.

Note that the plan with short castling is also possible after 13.♖he1, when besides 13...c4 we have 13...♙e7!?, intending ...0-0. White could prevent it by 14.d5 ♗xd5 15.♗f5, but then 15...0-0-0 16.c4 ♙f6 is equal.

The above analysis explains why White commonly opts for 13.dxc5,

when 13...♙xc5 14.♘e4 ♘xe4
15.♚xe4 0-0 is unclear.

13...♘xc5 is certainly safer as it
keeps the g3-knight before the g2-
pawn.

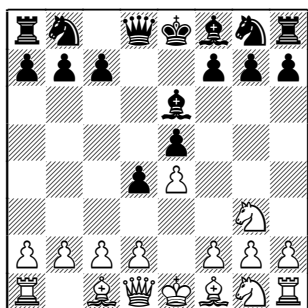


After 14.♚b5+ Black can choose
between 14...♚d7 15.♚c4 ♚d5=
and the sharper 14...♘cd7.

3.♘ce2 e5 4.♘g3

4.♘f3 f6 5.♘g3 ♙e6 6.♙b5+ trans-
poses.

4...♙e6



5.♘f3

It is important to remember to
meet 5...♘c6! 6.♙b5 ♘ge7,
keeping the space advantage.

White is unable to force us recap-
ture on d4 by pawn:

7.cxd4 ♚xd4 8.♘f3 ♚b6.

It is bad to insist, since 7.♘f3?!
a6 8.♙a4 d3! 9.♘xe5 wins
a pawn but leaves White's
queenside clogged after 9...
b5 10.♘xc6 ♘xc6 11.♙b3 h5
12.♚f3 ♚d7+.

As you see, ...d3 is a nasty
positional threat, so:

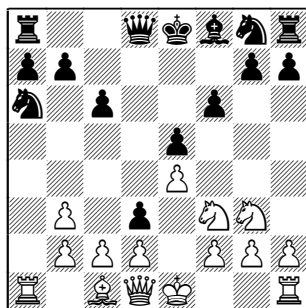
7.d3 looks logical. Then we pre-
pare long castling with 7...♚d6
8.♘f3 f6 9.0-0 a6 10.♙a4 dxc3
11.bxc3 0-0-0+.

White is in a similar predicament
after 5.♙b5+ c6 6.♙a4 ♘a6 7.♙b3
♙xb3 8.axb3 d3!+.

5...f6 6.♙b5+

Again, 6.c3? runs into 6...d3.

6...c6 7.♙a4 ♘a6 8.♙b3 ♙xb3 9.axb3 d3+



White is clearly worse – 10.c3 ♘e7
11.0-0 h5 12.♙e1 ♚d7+ or 10.0-0
♘b4+.