

“Chess: Four Articles in Opening Theory”

by James A. Riechel

(penname: James Alan York)

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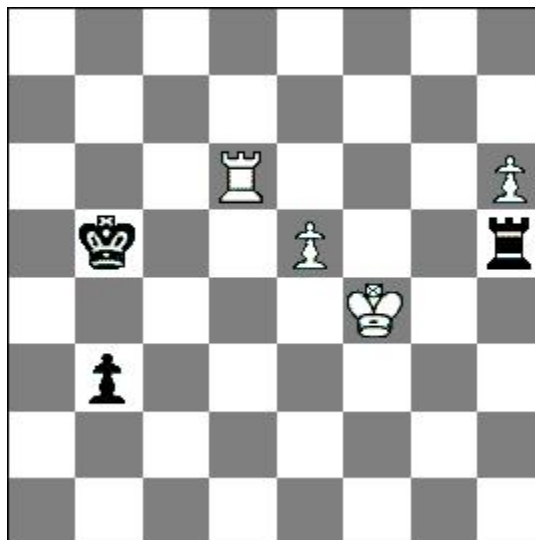
9. ... Qa3 10. Nb5 in the French: A Theoretical Draw?



Position after 10. ... Qa4!!

Besides the main line, 11. Nc7+ (see below), there is 11. Bd6 to consider. For example:

11. Bd6 Na6 12. Nc7+ Nxc7 13. Bxc7 Qxb4+ 14. Qd2 Qxd2+ 15. Kxd2 Nc5 16. Bb5+ (16. Bd3 is also possible) 16. ... Bd7 17. Bxd7 Kxd7 18. Ba5 b6 19. Bb4 a5 20. Ba3 (stronger than 20. Bxc5) 20. ... Rhc8 21. Ng5 Ne4+ 22. Nxe4 dxe4 23. Bb2 e3+ 24. Kd3 exf2 25. Bxd4 Kc6 26. Ke4 b5 27. Rhf1 b4 28. Rxf2 Rc7 29. Raf1 Rf8 30. h5 Kb5 31. g4 Rc4 32. Rxf7 (stronger than 32. Rd1) 32. ... Rxf7 33. Rxf7 Rxc2 34. Rxc2 h6 35. Rg6 Rg2 36. Rxe6 (36. Be3 Rxa2 is an option) 36. ... Rxc2 37. Kf5 Rxd4 38. Rxh6 a4 39. Rd6 Rh4 40. h6 Rh5+ 41. Kf4 b3 42. axb3 axb3, and we have reached a clearly drawn position:



Position after 42. ... axb3

Other drawn positions were possible.

Returning to the main line: 11. Nc7+ Kxe7 12. Nxa8



Position after 12. Nxa8

Black has only a single pawn for the sacrificed rook. Certainly, Black must be lost.

12. ... Qxb4+ 13. Qd2 Nc6



Position after 13. ... Nc6

Black allows the queen trade even though he is at a significant material disadvantage.

14. Qxb4 Nxb4 15. Bd3



Position after 15. Bd3

White defends c2, blockades the central Black pawn majority, and prepares for castling on either side of the board. Since White is ahead in material, he invites the exchange ... Nxd3.

15. ... Nxe5

As always in the French, Black demolishes the White center at the first opportunity.

16. Kd2

White ensures that the doubled d-pawns are permanently blockaded by both king and pawn.



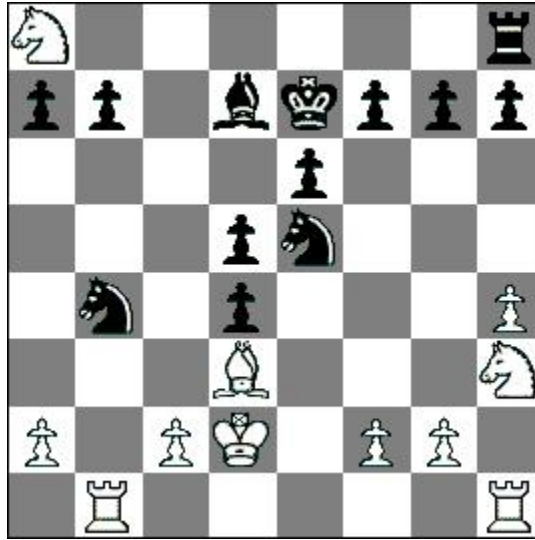
Position after 16. Kd2

16. ... Bd7

Black completes his development, and threatens to recapture the a8 knight.

17. Rab1

There are other choices, but White chooses to attack the b4 knight and the b7 pawn behind it.



Position after 17. Rab1

17. ... Nbx d3

White has forced Black to make this capture. There are no other good squares for the knight. The trade accentuates White's material advantage.

18. Rxb7

White presses the attack.

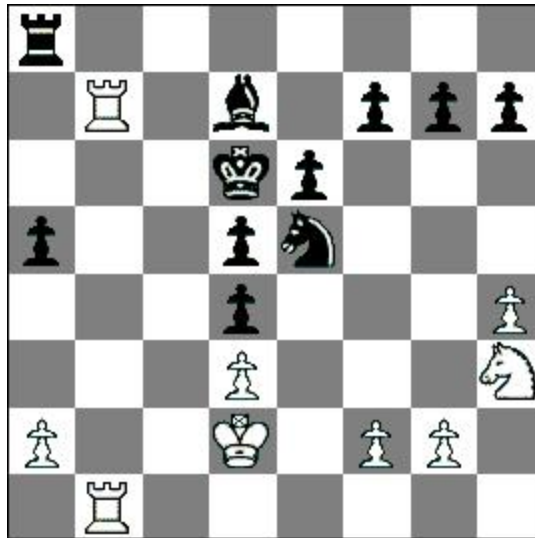
18. ... Rxa8 19. cxd3

The doubled d-pawns are now permanently blockaded by king and pawn.

19. ... Kd6

Black steps out of the pin.

20. Rhb1 a5



Position after 20. ... a5

Black now has two pawns for the exchange, while White dominates the b-file with rooks. Is the Black king in danger?

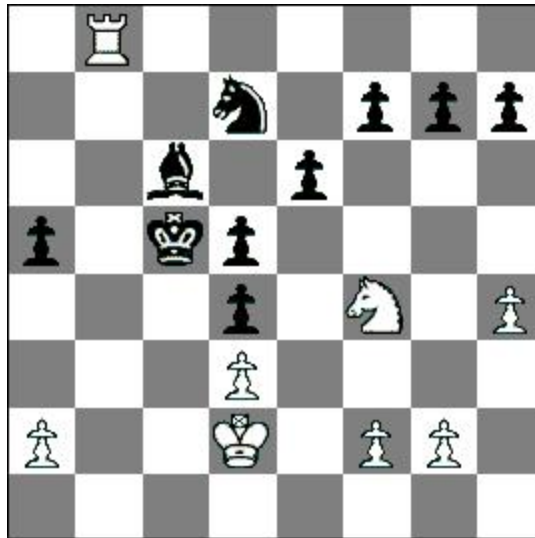
21. Rb6+ Kc5 22. Nf4



Position after 22. Nf4

All of White's pieces are now optimally placed. Is the win possible?

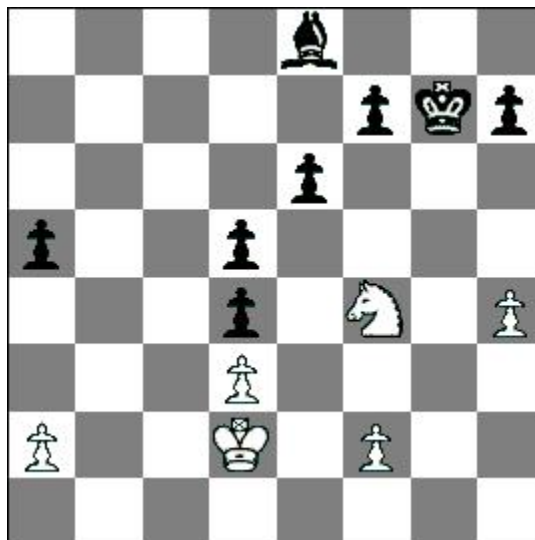
22. ... Bc6 23. Rb8 Rxb8 24. Rxb8 Nd7



Position after 24. ... Nd7

White now has two choices: 25. Rh8 and 25. Rb1.

25. Rh8 fails: 25. ... Nf6 26. Rf8 Be8 27. g4 Kd6 28. g5 Ke7 29. gxf6+ Kxf8 30. fxg7+ Kxg7, and Black has a winning endgame:



Position after 30. ... Kxg7

So White must choose 25. Rb1. This is the result:



Position after 25. Rb1

Neither White nor Black can make progress without creating fatal weakness in their respective positions. A truce or draw is declared.

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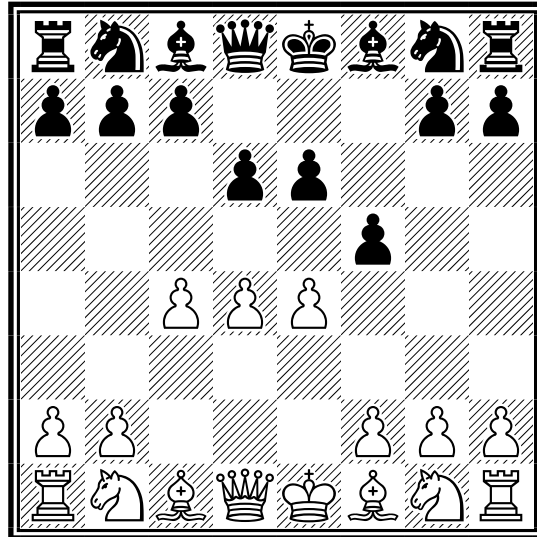
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Analysis of the York Variation of the Dutch Defense

Analysis of the York Variation of the Dutch Defense

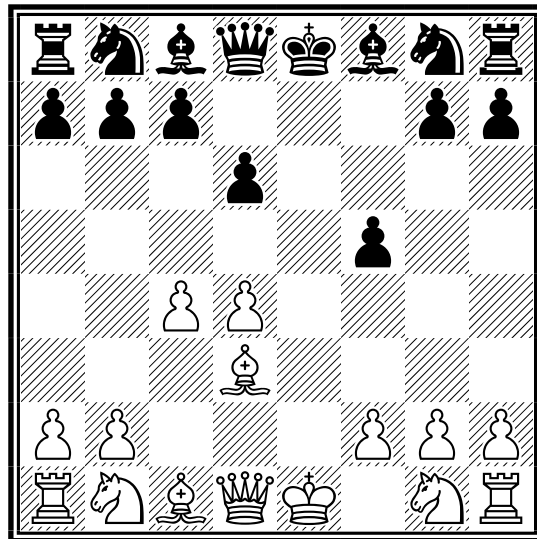
by James A. Riechel (*pennname*: James A. York)

1. d4 e6 2. c4 d6 3. e4 f5



The York Variation of the Dutch Defense

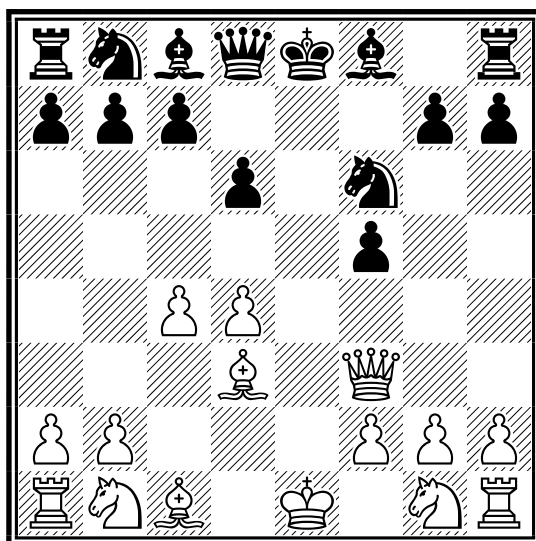
4. exf5 exf5 5. Bd3



Position after 5. Bd3

White targets the f5 pawn. It is not easily defended, but Black has resources.

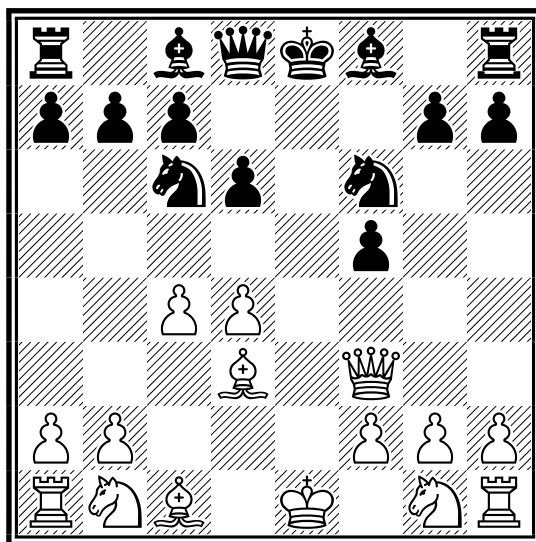
5. ... Nf6! 6. Qf3



Position after 6. Qf3

Unless Black weakens his position with 6. ... g6, the f5 pawn is sure to fall. How can Black defend himself?

6. ... Nc6!



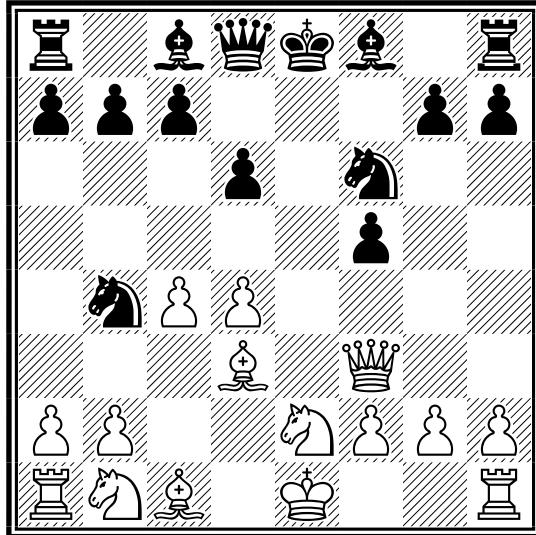
Position after 6. ... Nc6!

Of course! Now 7. Bxf5?? loses to 7. ... Qe7+, and 7. d5 Ne5 forks bishop and queen.

7. Ne2

Simpler, and probably stronger than 7. Be3. Things get very complicated after 7. Be3 f4!?, or even 7. Be3 d5!?. Neither alternative is disadvantageous to Black.

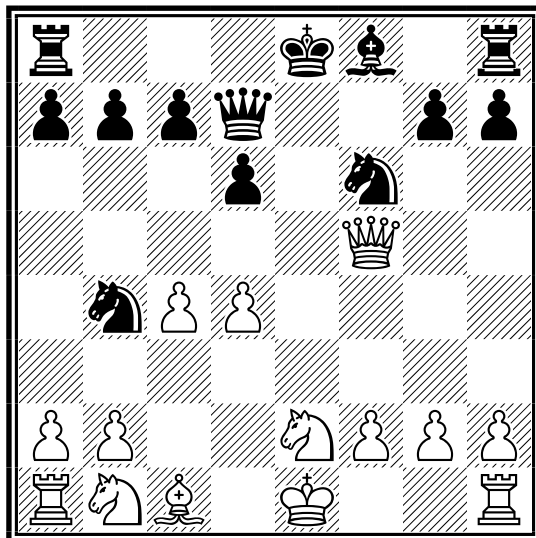
7. ... Nb4!



Position after 7. ... Nb4!

Now Black gets a nice attack for the pawn.

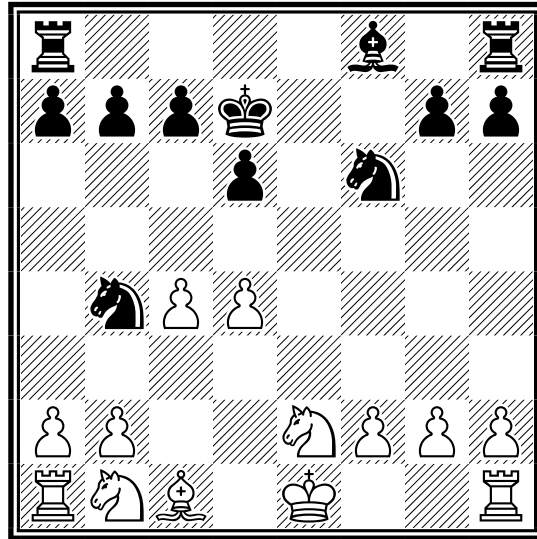
8. Bxf5 Bxf5 9. Qxf5 Qd7!



Position after 9. ... Qd7!

The White queen has no retreat and must trade to avoid 10. ... Nc2+.

10. Qxd7+ Kxd7



Position after 10. ... Kxd7

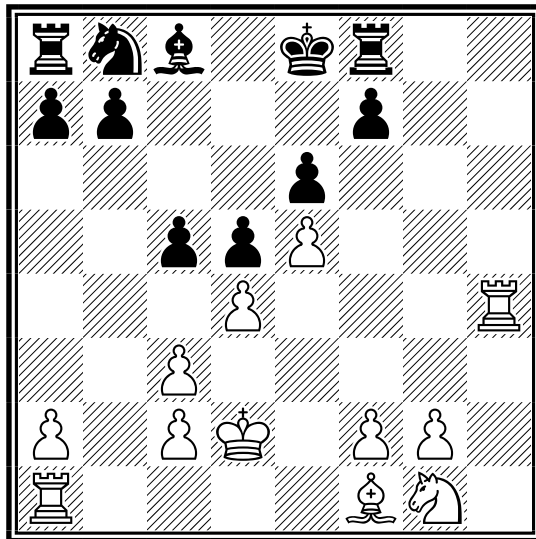
With White to play, Black nevertheless has an attack with excellent chances to regain the pawn and continue the attack.

York Variation of MacCutcheon Variation of the Classical French Defense

York Variation of the MacCutcheon Variation of the Classical French Defense

by James A. Riechel (*pennname*: James A. York)

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bg5. The Classical French Defense. 4. ... Bb4. The MacCutcheon Variation. 5. e5 h6 6. Bd2 Bxc3 7. bxc3 Ne4 8. Qg4 Nxd2. (Normally, 8. ... g6 or 8. ... Kf8 is played.) 9. Qxg7 Rf8 (forced) 10. Kxd2 Qg5+ 11. Qxg5 hxg5 12. h4 gxh4 (essentially forced) 13. Rxh4. So far we have been following Archakova-Lauberte, 1962. Now comes the new move. It is a theoretical novelty. 13. ... c5. The so-called York Variation.



The York Variation: Position after 13. ... c5

Black has many advantages in the position, despite his pawn deficit. In no particular order:

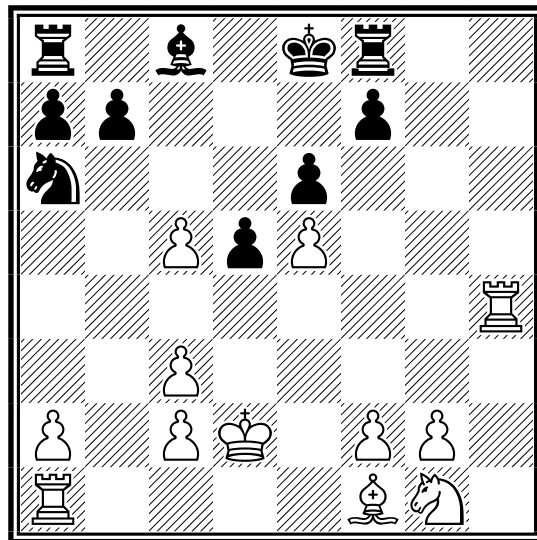
1. Black's king is mobile, whereas White's king is stuck in the center. The Black king can either stay in the center (Ke7), castle queenside (o-o-o), or move to the queenside (Kd8-c7).
2. Black's queenside pawns are mobile, whereas White's center pawns are immobile. For example, the Black pawn at c5 can either capture (cxd4), or advance (c4), at some point in the future.
3. Black has one pawn island, versus White's two pawn islands. Also, White has an isolated pawn on the a-file, and doubled pawns on the c-file.
4. Black's weakest point (the pawn at f7) is doubly over-protected.
5. Black can easily expand on the queenside with his pawns and pieces.

6. dxc5 is not an immediate threat. It triples White's c-pawns, and lessens the protection of White's spearhead (the pawn at e5).
7. ...Nc6 is coming. It is both a strong attacking and defensive move.
8. Black can take control of the g-file, if necessary, and when appropriate.

White has winning chances based mainly on dynamic advantages, and his extra pawn. Black has winning chances based on both static and dynamic advantages in roughly equal measure, despite his pawn deficit. In my opinion, with best play, a draw is likely.

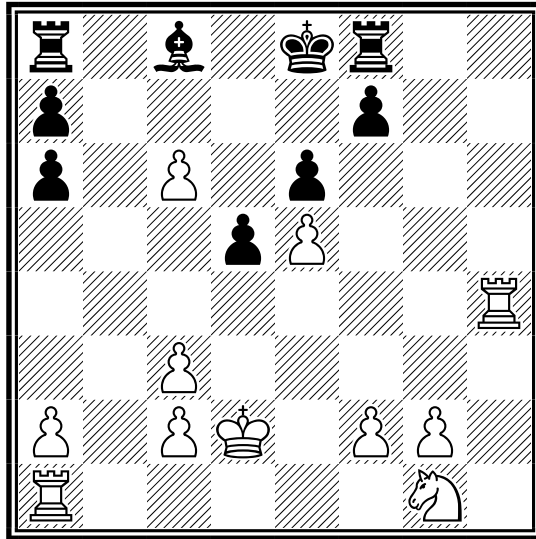
For example:

14. dxc5 Na6!



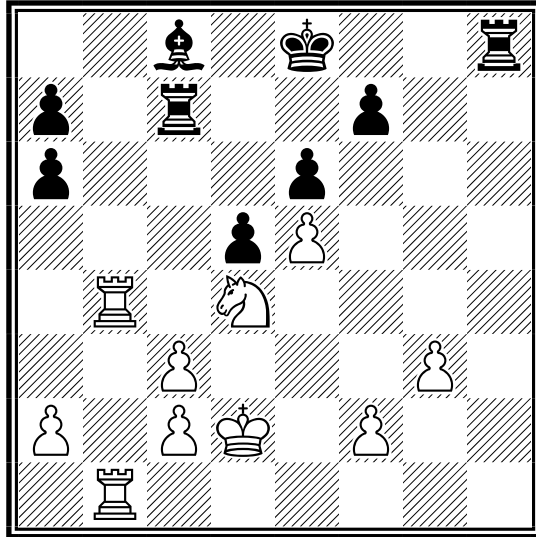
Position after 14. ... Na6!

15. Bxa6 bxa6 16. c6



Position after 16. c6

16. ... Rg8 17. g3 Rb8 18. Rb4 Rb6 19. Rab1 Rxc6 20. Nf3 Rh8 21. Nd4 Rc7



Position after 21. ... Rc7

And now White is hard pressed to make progress. Black may even have the advantage.

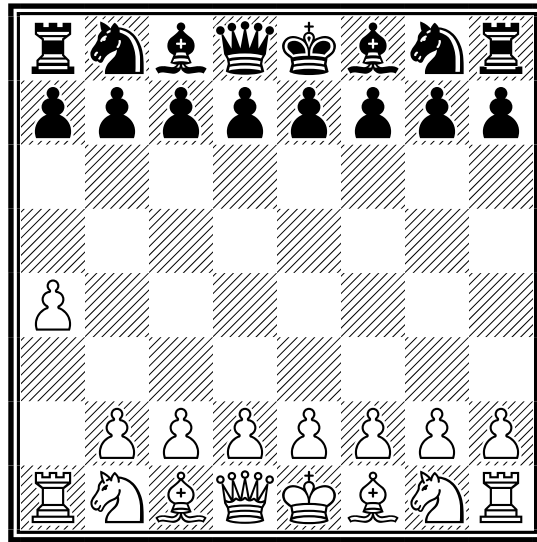
1. a4: the Polgar System?

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In a dream the other night, all three of the Polgar sisters, led by their spokeswoman Susan, told me to write a book or article entitled: "1. a4: the Polgar System." I've decided to write an article. I'm not so sure I believe in dreams, so consider this as an alternative title: "1. a4: An Interesting Try."

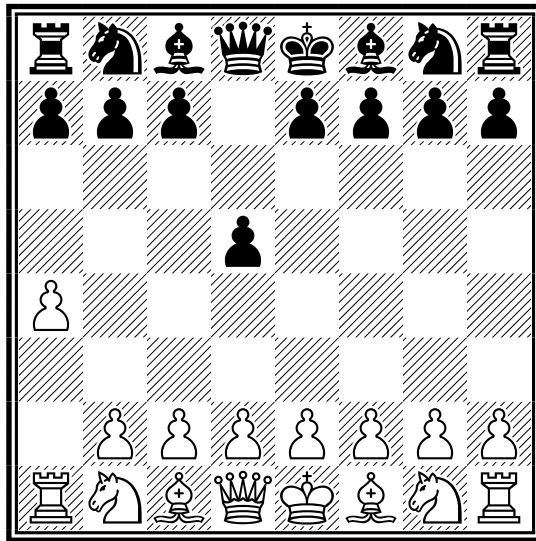
1. a4 is not without merits. Let's take a look at the position:



Position after 1. a4

With 1. a4, White claims queenside space, but also White wants to post a strong knight on the square c4. The move 1. a4 prevents Black from easily kicking away the knight once on c4 with a move such as ...b5. Notice, too, that White's b1 knight has two routes to arrive to c4, either via a3 or via d2. Who's to say which route the knight will choose? It leaves Black guessing.

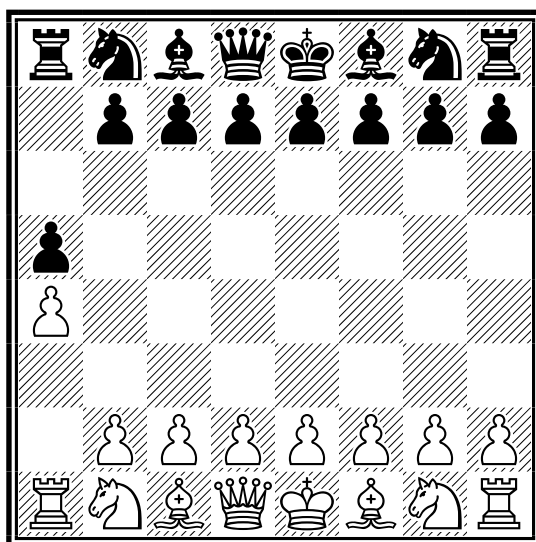
1 ... d5 must be considered the main line. Let's take a look:



Position after 1. ... d5

With 1. ... d5, Black for a long time denies White a post on c4 for a minor piece, most especially the b1 knight. Now White will have to challenge the d5 pawn with a pawn advance to e4 before a minor piece can hope to occupy c4. In order, moves such as d3, Nd2, and e4 will assist in this regard. After Nd2 is played, the White knight on d2 supports e4, and is ready to leap to c4 once the Black pawn on d5 is cleared. More on this later.

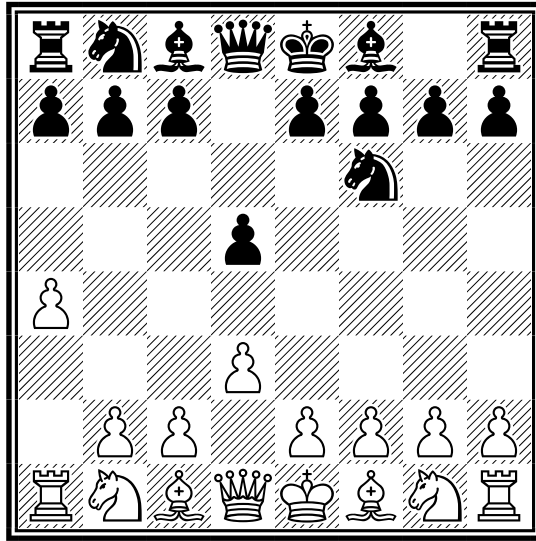
Before moving on, let's look at an important first move alternative for Black, namely 1 ... a5.



Position after 1. a4 a5

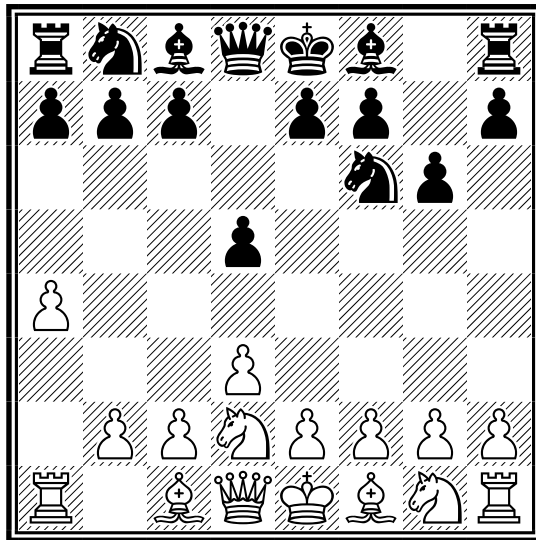
1 ... a5 is certainly not bad, and playing symmetrically could catch White off guard. Now both players can continue with their original plans, but they are not obliged to. White could still try to post a knight on c4, and Black could still try to post a knight on c5. Or more regular play could develop elsewhere on the board, almost as if 1. a4 a5 was never played in the first place, even though it was. If play develops elsewhere, my instincts tell me Black's chance to equalize against White in the opening have increased since the game began with 1. a4 a5.

Let's return to the main line: 1. a4 d5. White wants to continue consistently, so 2. d3 is played, preparing Nd2 to be followed by e4. Black wants to preserve his pawn on d5, and therefore prevent the advance e4, so 2. ... Nf6 is played. Let's take a look:



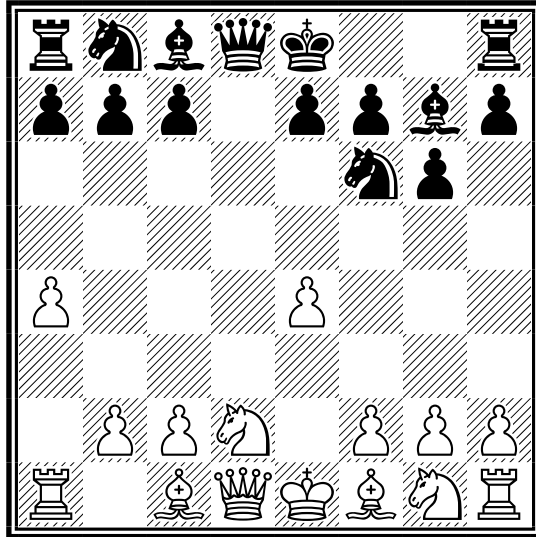
Position after 2. d3 Nf6

Continuing: 3. Nd2 is played. Now the advance e4 cannot be prevented, but it shouldn't worry Black. I don't believe Black should commit his queenside forces until White reveals his intentions. Also, I believe Black's center is fine for now. Advancing ...e6 or ...e5 prematurely commits Black. Therefore, I suggest Black should play 3. ... g6 to prepare Bg7 and o-o.



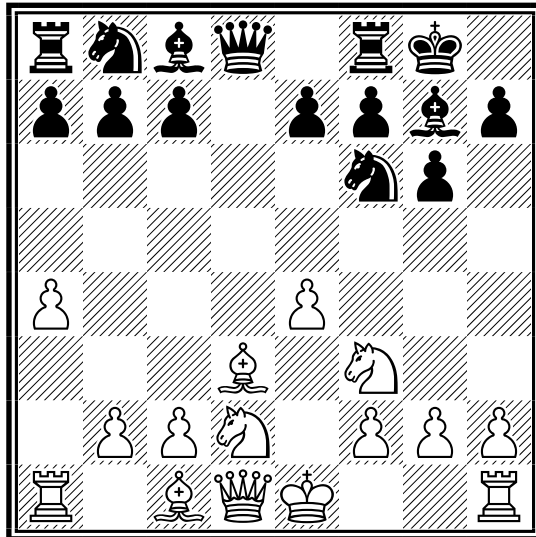
Position after 3. Nd2 g6

Black threatens to castle in two more moves, so White can't afford to waste time. 4. e4 is played. Black can't allow exd5 and Nc4, so 4. ... dxe4 is played. White responds 5. dxe4. Black calmly continues 5. ... Bg7.



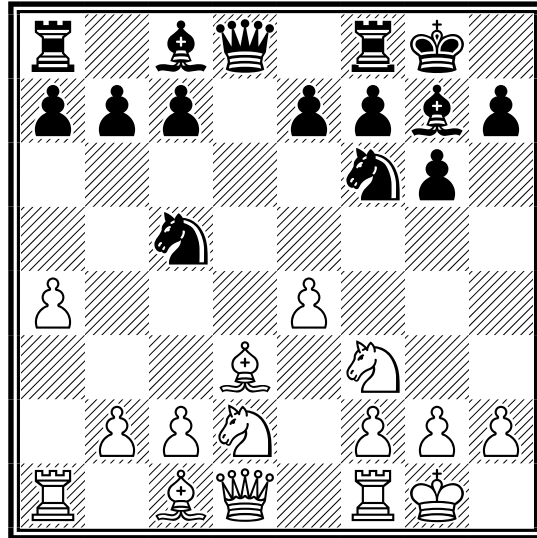
Position after 4. e4 dxe4 5. dxe4 Bg7

White is behind in development, and e4 needs additional support, so 6. Bd3 is played. Black completes his kingside play by 6. ... o-o. White needs to castle quickly or face serious troubles. Ne2 is too slow, so 6. Nf3 is played.



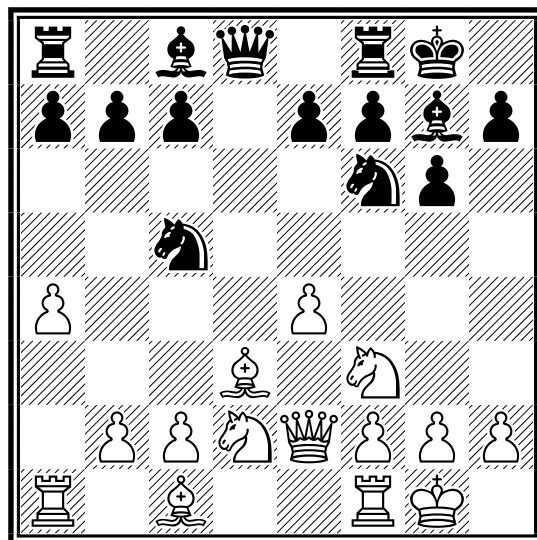
Position after 5. Bd3 o-o 6. Nf3

Black can now choose a number of deployments. I favor ...Nbd7 preparing ...Nc5 as the most flexible. For example: 6. ... Nbd7 7. o-o Nc5.



Position after 6. ... Nbd7 7. o-o Nc5

The pressure on e4 and d3 is tremendous. White's play is forced: 8. Qe2.



Position after 8. Qe2

With Black to play, chances are approximately equal. This variation deserves some practical tests. Black's game is freer, but White exerts tremendous pressure on the light squares in the center and queenside.