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Signs and Symbols

| | |
|------|---|
| ! | strong move |
| !? | interesting, good move |
| ?! | dubious, weak move |
| ? | mistake |
| !?? | interesting but not good |
| !!!? | strong and interesting |
| ↑ | with the initiative |
| → | with an attack |
| □ | the only move, all other moves are dramatically worse |
| △ | made with the intention of the following move |
| ≒ | White is slightly better |
| ≓ | Black is slightly better |
| ± | White is substantially better |
| ∓ | Black is substantially better |
| +− | White has a winning advantage |
| −+ | Black has a winning advantage |
| ∞ | The position is unclear |

Foreword

Most opening books that are published these days fall into one of two categories – either they are broad repertoire books that cover a broad set of openings, or they are monographs that delve deeply into one particular line.

The chess book you are holding in your hands takes a refreshingly new approach. It is targeted at the adult amateur chess player who is not looking for a complete opening repertoire as offered in the repertoire books and does not have the time to dig into the wealth of analysis typically presented in the monographs. Instead, Daniel Lowinger offers his readers a select menu of opening ideas from which you can pick and choose. Whether you are looking for new ideas to add to your repertoire in 1.e4 or 1.d4 or 1.c4 openings; for White or for Black; sharp or quiet lines – this book has something for you!

What ties all of these original opening ideas together is that they offer you a chance to get away from the most theoretical lines while being backed by Daniel's sound and thorough research and analysis. And Daniel walks the talk – he is more than willing to apply the ideas in his own games!

I first met Daniel in 2006, when my family – my wife Jen, our son Martin and I – visited New York. We had made the acquaintance of Daniel's dad, Bob, through ICC, and met for lunch. Daniel and Martin, who are about the same age, played a lot of blitz games, and we also discussed some of Daniel's games and chess activities. What struck me most was Daniel's passion for the game of chess and his curiosity in always wanting to learn more about the game. These traits now benefit you, the reader!

I was happy to learn that Daniel decided to follow his passion by embarking on a career in chess as a coach, organizer, player, and writer. His writing style clearly shows his passion for the game and the curiosity of independently looking into lines that are not the most common, backing his ideas with thorough research and independent analysis.

I hope you will enjoy this book as much as I have and that Daniel's creative ideas will help you succeed on the chess board!

GM Lars Bo Hansen
Orlando
June 2015

From the Author

Many of my students are adult class players. Unlike their scholastic counterparts in the chess world, they labor without pomp and circumstance, working hard to achieve new levels of understanding, or a new level of tactical vision. When their work bears fruit, they rarely have someone to celebrate with. Most cannot afford a full-time coach: as adults, they are inundated with a wide range of financial obligations.

My sympathies have always rested with these unheralded players. As a child, my local chess club was comprised almost entirely of adult class players. They taught me the ropes, giving me lessons and playing training games with me. They were patient, supportive, and kind. With the scholastic boom of the last decades, such players are increasingly overlooked. I hope they are not forgotten, since though children often excel at chess, chess is not a child's game.

What comes easily and effortlessly to some children demonstrates far more resistance when the mind of an adult tries to grasp it. My students are inspiringly dedicated: they put their hard-earned money on the line to take lessons with me. They buy books, attend tournaments, and do everything they can to push their understanding forward. But so many times, their efforts fall short: they tell me that the books they buy do not speak to them. It is as if the author is writing in a different language, making assumptions that they do not follow, omitting explanation when they seem most called for.

This book is written primarily for these players, though I hope it is beneficial to anyone who picks it up. When choosing which lines to pursue in analysis, I imagine my students and ask myself: what questions would they have? What moves would they be interested in, and what explanations would they require? This is what guides me throughout the book.

Given the breadth of openings covered, it was unthinkable that I would have personal tournament experience with every one of the ideas I present. But I believe that we should practice what we preach; or, more exactly, preach what we practice. Therefore, I have tried by and large to present material I am familiar with from *praxis*. The few recommended lines that I have not played personally are nevertheless lines that were in my analysis and preparation files, information I intended to use if and when the right opportunity arose, and that I had worked on thoroughly.

A comment about my approach: I aim in my analysis to be thorough, but *this is **not** a repertoire book*. By that I mean that I do not offer a comprehensive set of moves to be played against any and all tries from an opponent. Instead, I am presenting various insights and ideas into a diverse set of openings. In my numerous years of teaching adult class players, I have found that what primarily holds them back from advancing to the next level is not a lack of memorized moves, but rather a gap in their conceptual understanding. *The focus of my approach is on a conceptual exposition.*

Needless to say, the 3...♖d8 Scandinavian is one such opening, but for that I refer you to my first book, the 3...Qd8 *Scandinavian: Simple and Strong*.

Dan Lowinger
Alexandria
July 2015

Part II

Petite Path to Parity

Make no mistake: the moves recommended in this section are strong. However, after extensive analysis, I have found that the opponent can more or less neutralize the suggestion. Their path to parity is, as I say, petite – that is, narrow. In many cases, they have to navigate significant complications with machine precision, otherwise you will take the advantage. I discarded many possible continuations which I both had practical experience with, and had analyzed extensively, when those variations gave the opponent too wide a berth. These are not shallow traps.

It is highly unlikely that your opponent will know the equalizing continuation. In many cases, *praxis* has not yet even demonstrated it. It was only in analysis with the computer that I was able to find them. The only way your opponent would know it is either through sharing your taste in reading (e.g., reading this book) or through targeted preparation.

As I say in the Introduction, this book is written primarily for the adult club-level player. More specifically, I have in mind those inhabiting my native country, the United States. Here in the US, games at the club level rarely enter the databases. The tight playing schedule of American Swisses practically prohibits preparation anyway, as you find out your next round's opponent moments before the game is set to begin. If you are in the majority situation, i.e., you are not playing folks who are prepped through the roof for you, then you can confidently bust out the moves in this section. Even if your opponent finds the petite path, it is just a path to equality, not advantage. Sometimes, as we know, this is simply unavoidable.

A final word: in addition to limiting myself to strong moves, I also limited myself to interesting ones, leading to original play. I submit that exposure to the thought process that leads to such moves is itself a useful lesson; at least, I have found this to be the case with my own students. Enjoy!

Chapter 5

Forcing French: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♚f6 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e5 ♚fd7 6.♙×e7 ♚×e7 7.♚b5!?

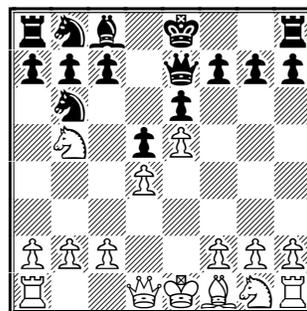
The Classical Variation of the French defense, 3.♘c3 ♚f6, has a reputation for being solid and, in the opinion of some, a bit boring. It is no surprise that giants of imagination like Alekhine declined to follow Steinitz's prescriptions (4.e5 ♚fd7 5.f4), charting their own courses. To Alekhine's effervescent genius we owe the sacrificial idea 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e5 ♚fd7 6.h4!?, but this gem has been significantly dulled by the effects of extensive analysis over the course of a century, and is well known to the chess community at large.

Thankfully the older idea of 4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e5 ♚fd7 6.♙×e7 ♚×e7 7.♚b5!?, for which we are indebted to that imaginative pioneer Chigorin, is little analyzed and little known, despite its introduction as early as 1885. Intriguingly, at 62.9%, it has the highest winning percentage of any seventh move, according to ChessBase! Let's see what it is all about:

(30) Chigorin – Arnous de Rivière
Paris 1883

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♚f6
4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.e5 ♚fd7 6.♙×e7
♚×e7 7.♚b5 ♚b6 (D)

The main line. Understandably, Black does not like the idea of retreating, 7...♚d8, which does not score well. But Arnous de Rivière is ill-equipped to handle the intensity of this continuation.



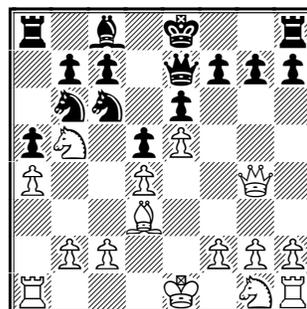
8.a4!

Matters get heated quickly. Black's knight is immediately targeted, and it does not have an abundance of escape squares.

8...a5?

It is as if Arnous de Rivière does not appreciate the severity of the situation, wishing to manage the threats on auto-pilot. This halts the advance of White's a-pawn, of course, but is a clear positional error. Now White's knight can never be dislodged from Black's heartland via pawn attack, unless Black moves his c-pawn, which would surrender the vital d6 square.

9.♙d3 ♚c6 10.♙g4! ♚± (D)



Opening Originals

With matters settled in his favor on the queenside, White wastes no time in turning his attention to Black's depleted kingside.

10...g6 11.c3

It is desirable to prevent a disruptive incursion at b4.

11...a7

Black wishes to trade White's dangerous knight.

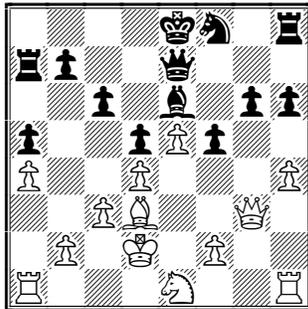
12.a7 13.f3 14.h4

White has a healthy advantage and initiative. Black's "bad French bishop" is playing its stereotyped part perfectly; meanwhile, White has a comfortable piece deployment and huge head start on his attack.

14...f5?

Better was to halt the h-pawn with 14...h5, then make a quick play to trade bad for good bishops, i.e., 15.f4 b6 (Δ...a6).

15.f4 h6 16.g4 17.gxf5 18.d2 19.g3 20.e1 (D)



White is in no rush; the deficiencies of Black's position can hardly be remedied. Black's king has no safety anywhere on the board and his pieces have little space to maneuver. White's move prepares f2-f4, after which h4-h5 will increase in effect, since Black can then no longer try to lock the position by responding ...g6-g5.

20...g8 21.f4 b6 22.f3 23.g1

Notice Chigorin's admirable patience in executing his plan. He coordinates all his forces, taking g5 under firm supervision before hitting with the decisive h5-lever.

23...ag7 24.h5 25.h4 26.h7 27.hxg6 28.hxg6 29.h5 30.f7 31.h4 32.g4 33.f5 34.f5 35.f5 36.g2+ 37.c1 38.g7 39.h7

The point is made. Now is quite a reasonable time for resignation. Who knows what the standards of chivalry demanded in Chigorin's day!

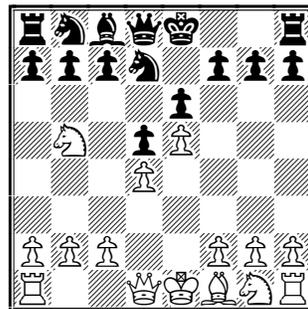
33...g3 34.e6 35.e3+ 36.b1 37.e6 38.h6 1-0

(31) Lasker – Brüning

USA 1901

The following game was played during the second world champion's 1901 simultaneous exhibition tour of the US.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 4.f6 4...g5 5.e7 6.e5 7.f7 8.d7 9.e7 10.e7 11.b5 12.d8 (D)



Black may wish to preserve a semblance of apparent French Defense normalcy, not entering the critical main line variations where his experience with typical French structures does him no good. But this choice does not transpose to any main line variation. Instead, Black does not seem to get the normal level of counterplay against

Strong Sidelines for Club Cats

White's center, while White has some interesting maneuvers in store.

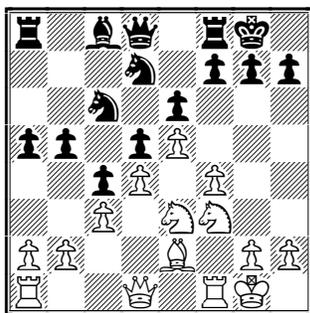
8.c3 a6 9.♟a3 c5 10.♞c2

The c2-square proves to be much better for the knight than c3. Here it supports the center unobtrusively, unlike in some French variations, in which the knight ends up on e2, from c2 it does not get in the way of any other pieces.

10...♞c6 11.f4 0-0 12.♞f3 c4

Given how well supported White's center is, Black most frequently seems to switch to this plan, of attacking the queenside. But releasing tension on White's center is very risky, as it frees White for kingside operations.

13.♞e2 b5 14.0-0 a5 15.♞e3! (D)



This knight proves the hero of this entire variation. Having discouraged Black from pursuing continued central pressure from c2, it now makes its way to the ideal aggressive post on e3, where it pressures d5 and supports the attacking advance f4-f5.

15...♞b6 16.♞e1 b4 17.♞d1!±

Simultaneously playing defense and offense. The bishop covers a4, preventing Black from invading with his knight; at the same time, it prepares to redeploy to c2, pointing at Black's kingside.

17...f5

It has become clear that White's threats on the kingside are faster and

more severe than Black's on the queenside; therefore, Black has to take time out to attend to them. If Black ignores them, e.g., 17...♞e7 18.♞c2 ♞a7?? (♠...♞b5), White wins with the standard bishop sac on h7: 19.♞xh7+ ♞xh7 20.♞g5+ ♞g6 21.♞b1+ f5 22.exf6+ ♞xf6 23.♞g4#.

18.exf6± ♞xf6

White now has a significant positional advantage, given the weakness of the e5-square and Black's bad light-square bishop.

19.g3 bxc3 20.bxc3 ♞d7 21.♞c2 g6 22.♞g4

Elegant positional play from Lasker, taking control of the e5-square.

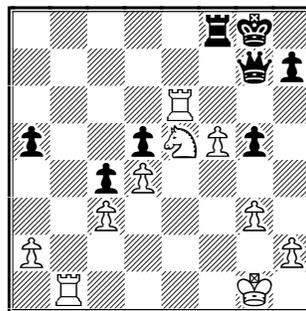
22...♞g7 23.♞fe5 ♞xe5 24.♞xe5 ♞a4 25.♞b1 ♞xc2 26.♞xb6 ♞ab8 27.♞xe6 ♞b1 28.♞xb1!

It is what is left on the board that counts: Black's remaining pieces face domination, as Black has so little space.

28...♞xb1 29.♞xb1 g5?

The straw that breaks the camel's back: Black had more than enough to handle already, without allowing a passed pawn right near his king!

30.f5+- (D)



30...♞c7

The pawn is immune: 30...♞xf5? 31.♞b8+ ♞f8 32.♞ee8 costs Black everything.

31.f6 ♞c8 32.♞bb6 ♞c7 33.♞g2

Opening Originals

The man is cool as a cucumber. And why not? What is Black going to do?

33...g4 34.♟×g4

Thank you, any more gifts?

34...♞b8

This was Black's idea, luring White's knight away so that his rook did not have to stay on defensive duty against the advance of the f-pawn. But nothing works.

35.♞×b8+ ♜×b8 36.♟e5

The trade did nothing to help Black's cause: White has more than what he needs to get the job done.

36...♞c8

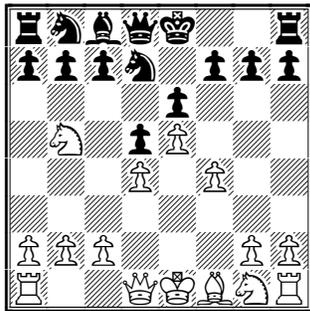
What else? 36...♞b2+ 37.♞h3, and the fantasy ends before it has begun.

37.♞e8+ ♜×e8 38.f7+ ♞×f7 39.♟×f7 ♞×f7 40.♞f3 1-0

(32) Geller – Borisenko

Kazan 2008

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♟c3 ♟f6 4.♞g5 ♞e7 5.e5 ♟fd7 6.♞×e7 ♜×e7 7.♟b5 ♞d8 8.f4 (D)



White starts his attack without delay. The more popular move, 8.c3, from the previous game, often transposes.

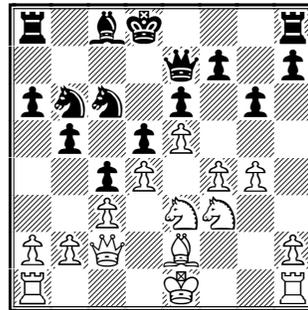
8...a6 9.♟a3

We are familiar with White's intentions from the previous game.

9...c5 10.c3 ♟c6 11.♟f3 b5 12.♟c2 c4

As we have already had occasion to discuss in this book, modern players tend to favor piece dynamism over blocked pawn structures. The fact that this was still a preferred plan in 2008 suggests that Black simply cannot generate meaningful piece play against White's center, so sturdy is it.

13.♟e3 ♟b6 14.♞e2 ♞e7 15.♞c2 g6 16.g4 ♞d8 (D)



Black thinks twice about putting his king on the kingside. Still, it is hard to imagine anyone being happy to make this move. Black's king simply cannot find respite. Meanwhile, White continues his kingside assault.

17.h4 h5

Black tries his best to halt the advancing troops, but it is only a matter of time.

18.g×h5 ♞×h5 19.♟g5±↑ ♞h8 20.h5 ♞c7 21.0-0-0 g×h5 22.♞×h5 f6 23.♟f7 ♞g8 24.♟g4

The kingside invasion is irrepressible. It has been a long time since we have devoted any attention to Black's stalled forces on the queenside.

24...f×e5 25.f×e5 ♞d7 26.♟f6 ♞g8 27.♞df1 b4

The knight is not to be touched: 27...♞×f7? 28.♞×f7 ♞×f7 29.♟×d5+ wins Black's queen.

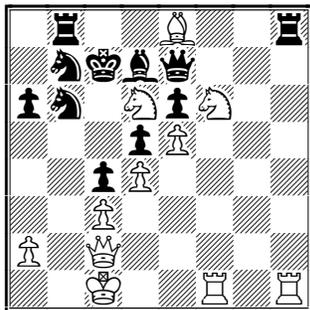
Strong Sidelines for Club Cats

**28. ♖d6 ♜ab8 29. ♙g6 ♜h8
30. ♗h7**

White is denied his rook's penetration on the h-file, but he is ready to come down on f.

30... ♖xc3 31. ♖xc3 ♜xh7!!

A superb active try! Black is sick of passively defending, or he would have chosen 31... ♗d8. The jockeying is amusing: 32. ♗f6 ♗b7 33. ♙e8!. (D)



White gets his penetration come hell or high water! The point is that Black cannot win a piece, as 33... ♜xh1 34. ♜xh1 ♙xe8 drops the queen after 35. ♜h7.

32. ♜xh7 ♙g5+ 33. ♜b1 ♙e3?

Spoiling it! White is suddenly caused serious problems with 33... ♗e7 34. ♜g7 ♗a4+! 35. ♜a1 ♜b2. It could all end in a perpetual after 36. ♙xa4 ♙xa4 37. ♜xb2 ♙g2+ 38. ♜a3 ♙xf1 39. ♜xa4 ♙d8 40. ♗b7+ ♜d7 41. ♗c5+, etc. Wild stuff!

34. ♜a1 ♗a4

Now he is too slow.

35. ♙e8! ♜xc8

Undoubtedly played with a heavy heart, but 35... ♜b2? loses now to 36. ♜xd7+ ♜b8 37. ♙xb2+ ♗xb2 38. ♜b7+ ♜a8 39. ♙xc6 with mate to follow shortly. But without his rook, Black has no attack.

**36. ♗xc8+ ♜d8 37. ♗d6 ♗xc3
38. ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 39. ♙h7+ ♗e7
40. ♙h8 ♜c7 41. ♙c8+??**

I think we can safely assume that this is a typo in the database. Must be 41. ♙a8.

**41... ♜b6 42. ♙d8+ ♜c6
43. ♙xe7 ♜b6 44. ♗c8+ ♜a5 1-0**

(33) Lowinger – Oussedik

Internet 2014

The idea of sparring with a peer to improve one's play was pioneered by the Patriarch of Russian Chess, former world champion Mikhail Botvinnik. Only published in 2006, *Botvinnik's Secret Games*, by Jan Timman, is a revealing book, showing just how seriously Botvinnik regarded his training games, and their contribution to his grip on the title.

Canadian master Elias Oussedik, whose national rating is nearly 2300, is one of my sparring partners. He also happens to be a strong opening theoretician and French player. The following was one of our 10 minute + 2 second delay training games, conducted on the internet.

**1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♗c3 ♗f6
4. ♙g5 ♙e7 5. e5 ♗fd7 6. ♙xe7
♙xe7 7. ♗b5 ♗b6**

The modern approach, acknowledging that typical French ideas are out the window, but avoiding the kinds of problems we saw in the previous two games.

8. a4 a6 (D)

