

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Series Foreword | 4 |
| Bibliography | 5 |
| Introduction | 7 |
| 1 Smyslov Variation: The Quiet 5 ♘f3 | 18 |
| 2 Smyslov Variation 5 ♗c4: The Old Line | 53 |
| 3 Smyslov Variation 5 ♘g5: Into the Abyss | 101 |
| 4 Advance Variation: Nunn-Shirov Attack | 153 |
| 5 Advance Variation: Short's Line | 186 |
| 6 Advance Variation: Fourth Move Alternatives | 228 |
| 7 Panov-Botvinnik Attack | 266 |
| 8 Quasi Panov-Botvinnik | 311 |
| 9 Exchange Variation | 332 |
| 10 Two Knights Variation | 353 |
| 11 Fantasy Variation | 375 |
| 12 King's Indian Attack and 2 ♗e2 | 398 |
| Index of Variations | 423 |
| Index of Complete Games | 431 |

Series Foreword

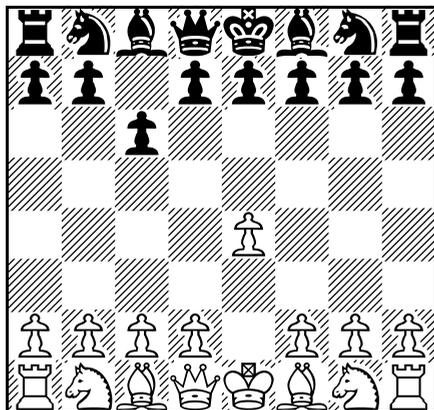
Move by Move is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate – as much as possible – lessons between chess teachers and students.

All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and to study chess in general.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Introduction



The Caro-Kann, **1 e4 c6**, is a king's pawn mirror to what the Slav is to queen's pawn openings. Black immediately prepares to build a light-squared wall in the centre next move with ...d5, challenging White to tear it down. Really, this is the start of a theological dispute: The battle of the irresistible force versus the immovable object.

Our minds create our own demons and what I have noticed about the Caro, unlike any other opening I have written about, is that I am unafraid of a single White strategy or line. I know in my heart that if I play the position correctly, Black's position remains sound, no matter what White throws in our direction. White has an array of strategies to choose from:

1. White goes directly after our king, in an effort to force it to kneel in submission. The Mainline (Chapters 2 and 3), and the Nunn-Shirov variation (Chapter 4) represent the nonsense approach of playing for checkmate. The good news is our position is not so easy to overrun. Indeed, as so often happens, White shoots for the moon and misses, ending up floating in space.

2. White seizes space and squeezes. Chapters 5 and 6, the Short Variation and 4th Move Alternatives in the Advance, represent this philosophy. We are happy to engage in such wars of attrition and must patiently unravel, trusting in the inherent soundness and solidity of our position.

3. White deliberately weakens his structure in order to increase the dynamic activity of his pieces. In Chapters 7 and 8, the Panov-Botvinnik and Quasi-Panov, White takes on an isolated queen's pawn, drastically increasing his piece activity in the short term. Often the game morphs into its cousin, the hanging pawns position. In each case our strategy is simple: Blockade; swap; avoid mate! If we are successful, White's attacking forces melt away, like the remnants of snow on a warm spring day.

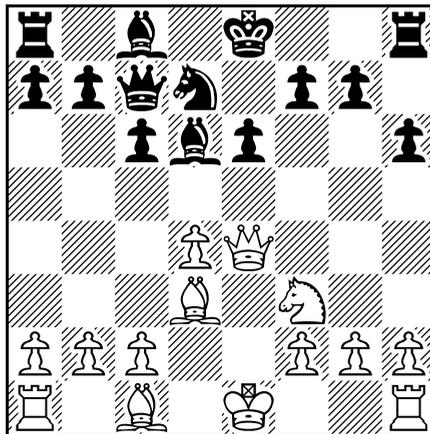
4. White tries to sidestep the main lines and goes rogue on us. The Two Knights, Fantasy Variation and 2 ♘e2!? (Chapters 10, 11 and 12) are examples of this strategy. The Two Knights has been defanged theoretically and the Fantasy, although growing in popularity, doesn't scare me either. As for 2 ♘e2!?, which is somewhat dangerous, it loses its sting if we are aware of the line and ready for it.

5. Last, White lures us into a structure in which he has experience. The Exchange Variation (Chapter 9) and the King's Indian Attack (Chapter 12) represent this team. Neither poses much theoretical danger. It is just a matter of us matching our opponent's knowledge of the structure.

How the book is structured

The chapters are given in order of importance or popularity, although perhaps I could have just as easily upgraded the Advance lines, Chapters 4, 5 and 6, over the Mainline.

When you try to solve a problem, it's wonderful if you discover a solution. On the other hand, if you come up with three possible solutions, there is the danger of confusion. Sometimes too many answers can be the same as no answer at all. For this reason, I narrowed Black's repertoire mainly to my own preferences in the Caro. For instance, in Chapter 3, we exclusively cover 10... ♖c7 and ignore the older and now fading 10... ♖f6 line.



This way the reader isn't confused by multiple choices in each chapter. Your lines are hard enough to remember without doubling or tripling your homework!

Many players choose the Caro simply because they think it's a conceptual opening which requires little study. Extinguish this crazy notion from your minds! Please scroll forward to Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 7 if you don't believe me! There are many variations where our lives depend upon our memories, as well as our understanding, so the study of the sharper chapters must be thorough.

As in all *Move by Move* books, after the question-and-answer theoretical opening section of each game the reader gets the opportunity to test him or herself with interactive exercises in the middlegame and ending. I realize some people buy the book solely for the opening, but why not make use of the entire book as a training tool as well? This book is written in a casual style, to resemble a chess lesson as closely as possible, including banter and debate between teacher and student.

The History of the Caro-Kann

Please relax. I promise not to talk about Horatio Caro and Marcus Kann, the inventors of the opening. The opening lingered on the fringes during the late 19th Century. I assume because the idealistic romantics of the time considered it a caddish and unchivalrous opening. Capablanca was the first World Champion who perceived the true worth of our opening and began shedding light on its strategic qualities. He used it in his crushing strategic destruction of Aaron Nimzowitsch in the great New York tournament of 1927 (Chapter 6). People began to take note. If Nimzowitsch, the high priest of positional play, could be made to look laughably incompetent against the Caro-Kann, then perhaps the opening had some merit after all. Then Botvinnik, Smyslov, Petrosian and, most importantly, Karpov took up the opening's mantle. In the present day the Caro is mainstream, with many of the top GMs in the world keeping it in their repertoires.

Game 1

H. Atkins-J.R. Capablanca

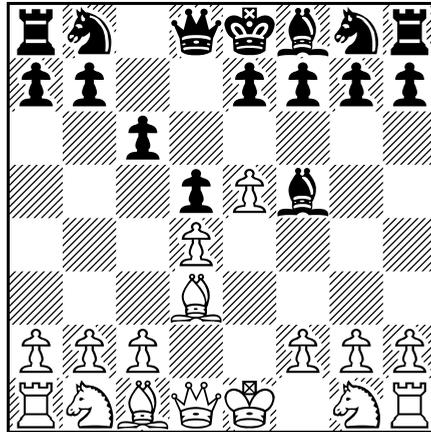
London 1922

A mismatch can be more instructive than a game between two super-GMs. One side creates small errors while we get to watch the other exploit them.

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♟f5

We look at this position in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

4 ♟d3



You should consider this line no less than a windfall from the heavens. Today, we understand that virtually every other Advance line is an improvement for White.

Question: What is wrong with White's last move?

Answer: After the swap White remains with a bishop stuck on the same colour as his central pawns.

Question: What is wrong with that?

Answer: If his pawns are on dark squares and his bishop is also of the same breed, then who minds the store on the light squares?

4... ♙xd3 5 ♚xd3 e6 6 ♘e2

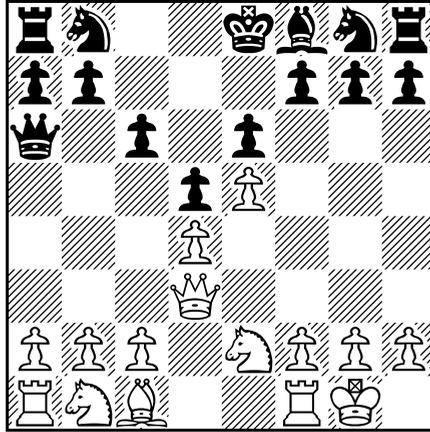
Question: Why did White play the knight to a passive square, rather than f3?

Answer: White dreams of 0-0, f4 and eventually f5. He won't have time for this plan.

Instead 6 ♘f3 c5 (even here, there is nothing wrong with the Capa plan of swinging the queen to a6) 7 c3 ♘c6 8 a3 c4 sees the game turn into a rotten Advance French for White. By magic, Black's c8-bishop exchanged itself for White's powerful bishop on f1. After 9 ♚c2 ♘ge7 10 ♙g5 h6 11 ♙h4?! g5! 12 ♙g3 ♘f5 13 ♘bd2 h5! 14 h4 g4 15 ♘g1 ♙e7 White's h4-pawn falls, De Gremont-A.Karpov, San Giorgio (simul) 1995.

6... ♚b6 7 0-0 ♚a6!

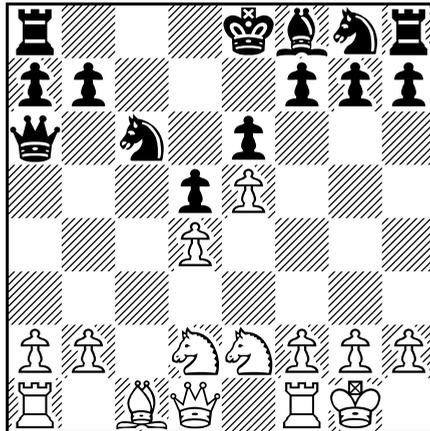
An ending suits Black fine. Nimzowitsch actually invented this plan 10 years before this game.



8 ♕d1

After 8 ♖f4 ♗xd3 9 ♘xd3 ♘e7 10 b4?! (he creates a gash on c4 to halt ...c5 later on – probably too high a price) 10...♖f5 11 ♙b2 h5 12 ♘d2 ♘d7 13 a4 ♙e7 14 c4?! dxc4 15 ♘xc4 ♘b6 16 ♘xb6 axb6 17 a5 ♙d8 18 axb6 ♗b8 19 ♘c5 ♙xb6 20 ♗fd1 ♙xc5 21 bxc5 the d5-square beckoned to Black's all-powerful knight, O.Duras-A.Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian 1912.

8...c5 9 c3 ♘c6 10 ♘d2 cxd4 11 cxd4



Exercise (planning): Black would like an ending, preying upon White's bad bishop. How can we force one?

Answer: 11...♗d3!

The queen is too powerful here. White reluctantly consents to the swap.

12 ♖b3 ♖xd1 13 ♜xd1 ♘ge7 14 ♙d2 a5

Capa grabs some space and commences queenside action.

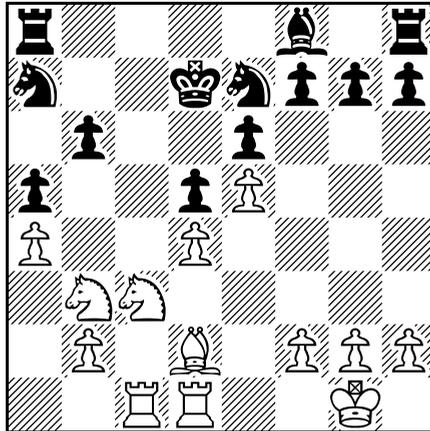
15 ♜ac1 b6

In order to play ...♙d7 without harassment from a knight check on c5.

16 a4 ♙d7

It's an ending, so there is no need to castle. The king makes himself useful on d7, covering c6 and also e6 if Black plays a future ...f6.

17 ♘c3 ♘a7!



Multipurpose: He covers b5 and makes room for the other knight on c6.

18 ♙f1

Question: Why doesn't White play ♖b5 anyway and use the pawn as a way to control c6?

Answer: The pawn on b5 would be terribly insecure after 18 ♖b5?! ♗xb5 19 axb5 ♜c8. The b5-pawn is in grave danger of falling to a ...♗c8-♗a7 manoeuvre.

18...♗ec6 19 ♙e2 ♜c8 20 ♙e1 ♙e7 21 ♖b1 f5

I would keep the pawn tension with 21...f6.

22 exf6?!

Questionable judgement. Black's e6 is not so weak, whereas now d4 will be a source of worry for White.

22...♙xf6

Question: Doesn't this give Black a backward e-pawn?

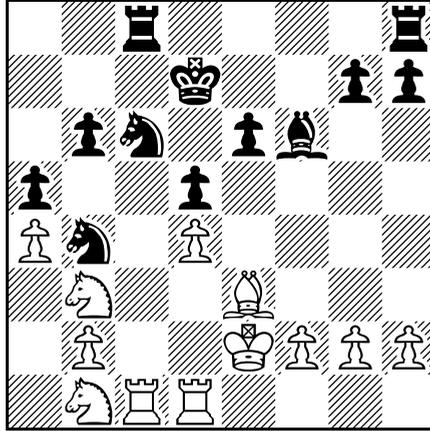
Answer: Only on paper. The pawn isn't weak in the slightest since Black enjoys ample de-

fenders and White isn't even remotely close to attacking or pressuring it.

23 ♖c3 ♜b4!? 24 ♙d2

White remains under pressure after 24 ♙xb4 axb4 25 ♜d2 ♜c6 26 ♜f3 ♜a8 27 ♜a1 ♜a7, intending to double rooks.

24...♜ac6 25 ♙e3

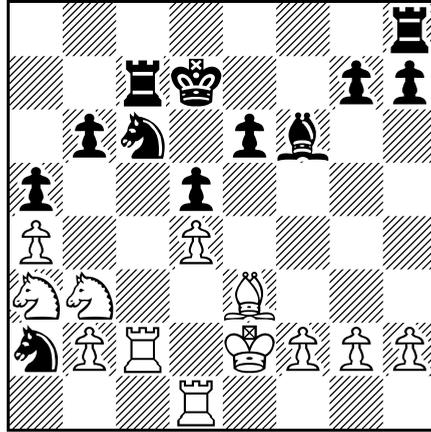


Exercise (planning): Black can take control over the c-file. How?

Answer: 25...♜a2! 26 ♜c2 ♜c7?!

After ploughing the field, Capa forgets to plant the seeds. This is Black's one and only small stumble of the game. Even in one-sided games, the favourite sometimes endures a little setback. To be consistent, Black should play 26...♜cb4! 27 ♜xc8 ♜xc8.

27 ♜a3?!



Exercise (planning): The idea is ♖b5 to harass Black's rook on c7, but as we shall see, the move is inaccurate. How did Capa prevent White's ♖b5 next move?

White has missed his chance. He could have played 27 ♙f4! forcing Black's rook to back up and waste time.

Answer: 27...♗hc8! 28 ♗cd2

The point: 28 ♖b5? drops a pawn to 28...♗xd4+!

28...♗a7! 29 ♗d3 ♖b4 30 ♗d2 ♗c6 31 ♗b1 ♙e7 32 ♗a1 ♙d6 33 h3 ♗c7 34 ♗ad1 ♗a2!

Playing for tricks on a3 and c3.

35 ♗a1 ♙xa3 36 ♗xa2

This confused rook is the old man who, upon waking, discovers he misplaced his teeth.

36...♙b4 37 ♗d1

Martial arts training teaches that when in combat, limbs and mind must move as a single unit. Such is clearly not the case here for White. Just look at that rook on a2, and all his other pieces for that matter! White has clearly lost the battle of the queenside, although I suppose one can't lose a thing if it was never owned in the first place.

37...♗c4 38 ♗c1 ♖c6 39 ♗xc4?!

He shouldn't open the d5-square for Black. Better was the stoic 39 ♗aa1.

39...dxc4 40 ♗d2

Allowing one of the greatest endgame players of all time to reach a classic good knight versus bad bishop ending. Not much better was the line 40 ♗a1 ♗e7 41 ♗c2 ♗d5.

40...♙xd2

Of course!

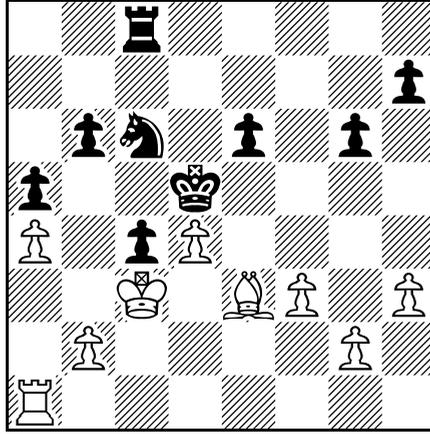
41 ♙xd2 ♙d6

Now Black's king takes up a dominant position on d5.

42 ♔c3 ♕d5

Did White's king arrive late or did Black's get there early? Bit by bit, Black's position continues to improve, almost at a glacial pace.

43 ♖a1 g6 44 f3



Exercise (planning): How can Black make progress?

Answer: 44...♖b8!

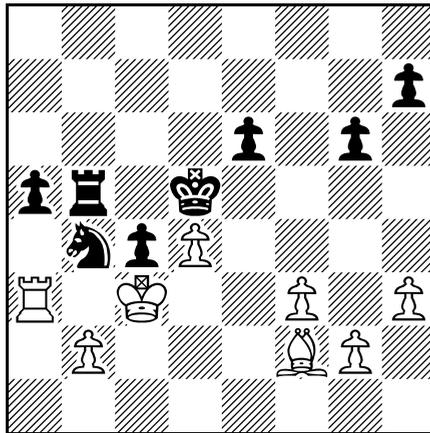
Here comes ...b5.

45 ♖a3

White's rook must babysit the b3-square.

45...b5 46 axb5 ♖xb5 47 ♕f2 ♘b4

Threat: ...♘d3.



48 b3

White gratefully eliminates one of his problems, but his troubles are far from over.

48...cxb3

Now Black gets an outside passer.

49 ♖xb3

49 ♜xb3 ♖a2+! 50 ♖c2 ♜xb3 51 ♖xb3 ♖c1+ 52 ♖c2 ♖e2 wins, since ♖d3 is met with a knight fork on f4.

49...♖c6+!

Capa prefers to keep things as they are rather than go for 49...♖d3+ 50 ♖a4 ♜b2 51 ♜xd3 ♜xf2 52 g4 ♜h2 53 ♖xa5 ♜xh3 54 ♖b4 h5! when it isn't so clear if Black has enough to win.

50 ♖c3 ♜b1 51 ♜a4 ♜c1+ 52 ♖d2

52 ♖d3 ♖b4+ 53 ♖e3 ♜c3+ 54 ♖f4 ♖c6 is also tough on White.

52...♜c4 53 ♜a1 a4 54 ♜a3 ♖a7

Capa refuses to pluck the fattest apple on the tree and prefers to destroy the blockade on a3 rather than win d4.

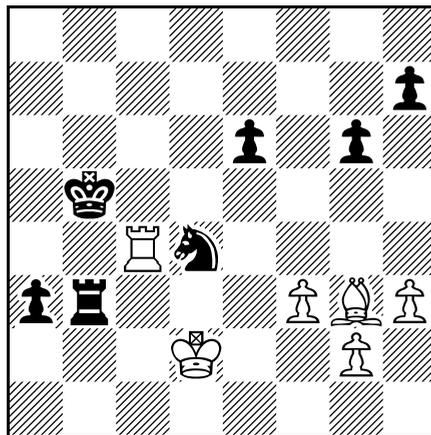
55 ♜a1 ♖b5 56 ♜b1 ♖c6 57 ♖d3 ♜c3+ 58 ♖d2 ♜b3! 59 ♜c1+ ♖b7! 60 ♜c2

White can't afford to swap rooks: 60 ♖c2? ♜c3+ 61 ♖d2 ♜xc1 62 ♖xc1 ♖c6 63 ♖c2 ♖d5 64 ♖d3 a3 deflects and wins.

60...a3 61 ♖g3!?

We can't blame the despised and misunderstood bishop for going AWOL. White loses even if the bishop faithfully fulfils his duty: 61 ♖e3 ♖a6! 62 ♜c6+ ♖a5 63 ♜c8 ♜b2+ 64 ♖d3 a2 65 ♜a8+ ♖b4 66 ♖d2+ ♜xd2+! 67 ♖xd2 ♖a3 and wins.

61...♖xd4 62 ♜c7+ ♖b6 63 ♜c4 ♖b5!



Capa never missed such little endgame tactics. The knight can't be touched.

64 ♜c8 ♖c6! 65 ♜a8 ♜b2+ 66 ♖e3 ♜xg2 67 ♖f2 ♖b4! 0-1

I'm not sure if the knight, the hero of this game, is keeping fit or having one. White's unfortunate rook, in a desperate and losing battle to halt the surge of the a-pawn, reminds me of the child endeavouring to stay awake as long as possible. In the end, sleep always overcomes.

Summary

A secret loses its charm if everyone in the room knows the secret: Black achieves equality at a minimum if White goes in for the sorry 4 ♟d3 line, where he simply duels with a plastic sword.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Grandmaster John Emms, the man I turn to when all my emails end with question marks, and to International Master Richard Palliser for the final edit of this book.

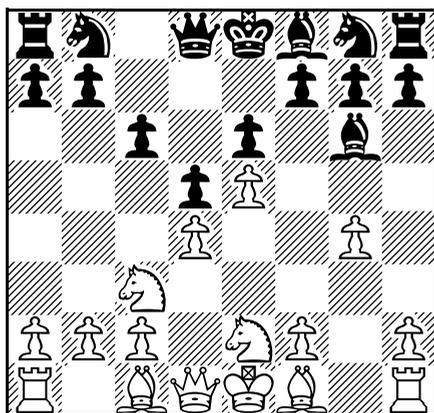
Thanks too to Nancy for proofreading and turning on the kettle (Lord only knows I need caffeine before writing a single word), as well as to Tim for all the comp work and also for introducing me to a bizarre new technology called a 'laptop'.

Good luck with the Caro-Kann. May your opponents grate their teeth in frustration upon seeing you play 1...c6!

Chapter Four

Advance Variation: Nunn-Shirov Attack

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♟f5 4 ♞c3 e6 5 g4 ♟g6 6 ♞ge2



Essentially this line is favoured by what Lincoln called “rule or ruin” opponents. We must brace ourselves for White’s lunge in the Nunn-Shirov Attack, first popularized in the 80’s by GM John Nunn and currently championed by Alexei Shirov. This line is the darling of type-A personalities! White happily cuts his safety net and agrees to a controlled mutation of his structure in exchange for activity and open lines, by creating a self-inflicted gash in his own kingside with 5 g4. He also develops his knight to c3, ensuring that his centre will eventually dissolve when Black plays ...c5, since White has no c3-pawn backup. Our position constantly finds itself on trial with each variation on the prisoner’s dock, so we must be ultra prepared to face this one.

White has access to two plans after he clears the centre by exchanging his d-pawn for our c-pawn:

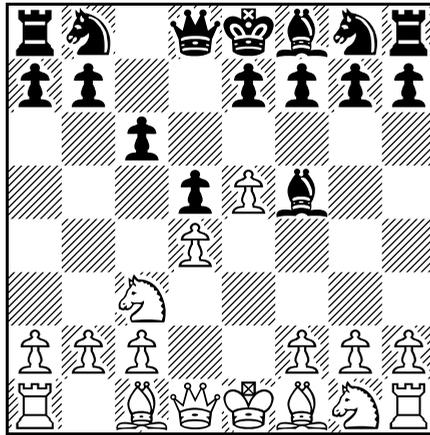
The Caro-Kann: Move by Move

1. He plays his knight to f4, where it harasses our bishop on g6, and more importantly, White prepares a sac on d5, usually with the set-up: ♗g2, ♖e2 and 0-0-0. Anand shows us how to deal with this plan in his game against Shirov.

2. White plays his knight to d4, in preparation for f4 and f5. The final game of the chapter is a good example of how to navigate as Black against this plan.

Game 18 A.Fedorov-Z.Gyimesi Croatian Team Championship 2004

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♘c3



We are about to enter White's most ambitious and violent option against the Caro-Kann, the Nunn-Shirov Variation.

Question: What is so violent about it?

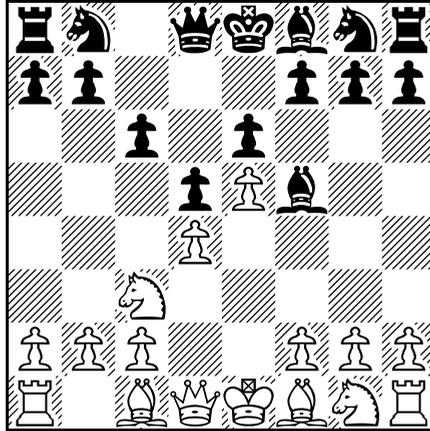
Answer: Please ask me that question again after White's next few moves!

Question: It doesn't even look logical to post a knight on c3. This deprives White of a c3 option when Black engineers ...c5. How will he maintain his pawn centre?

Answer: White has no intention of maintaining a pawn centre for very long. He gladly trades his d-pawn for Black's c-pawn. In this way he allows Black greater central influence, but also opens the game and clears d4 for a white piece. Many times White is even willing

to give away his e5-pawn in an attempt to clear lines to Black's king, which often loiters in the middle of the board for an uncomfortably long time. Most of us think of Advance Caro lines as a closed variation, similar to the Advance French. Expunge this thought from your mind when we include the Nunn-Shirov line, which generally bursts quickly into a wide open game.

4...e6



I feel we should stand up to White's attempt at intimidation and boldly challenge in the main lines. If you know what you are doing, you have more than enough resources to survive the coming onslaught. However, if you are disinclined to enter these admittedly scary theoretical battles, then Black, seeing White's next move, does have a few jujitsu-like anti-g4 options: 4...♖b6, 4...h5 and 4...a6.

Question: I understand that 4...h5 prevents g4, but how do the other two lines prevent g4?

Answer: 4...♖b6 and 4...a6 don't prevent g4, but do discourage it. Black responds to 5 g4 in those lines with 5...♙d7! and follows with ...e6 and ...c5. This leads to positions similar to the Advance French, except that White has the extra but undesirable weakening move g4 tossed in.

Exploring in a little more detail:

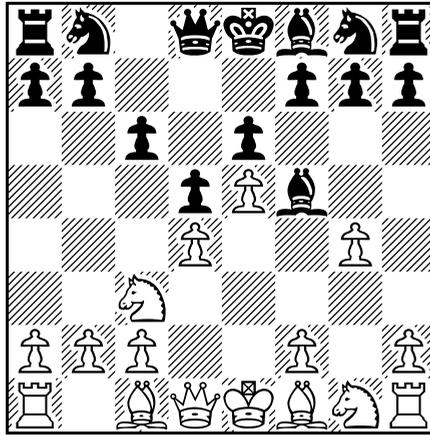
a) After 4...♖b6 5 ♙d3! (5 g4 ♙d7! is what I was talking about in the above note) 5...♙xd3 (perhaps Black can try the very risky 5...♖xd4!? 6 ♘f3 ♖g4 7 h3 ♗h5; sure, White has a massive development lead for the pawn, but the position is closed and Black should also have his chances) 6 ♗xd3 e6 7 ♘ge2! even though Black managed to swap off his bad bishop for White's good counterpart, the position still slightly favours White due to his extra space and his ability to advance further on the kingside with ♘g3 and f4-f5 ideas.

The Caro-Kann: Move by Move

b) 4...h5 (the only real way to halt g4) 5 ♖d3 ♙xd3 6 ♜xd3 e6 7 ♘f3 ♜b6 8 0-0 ♜a6 9 ♜d1 ♘d7 10 ♘e2 ♘e7 11 ♙g5 ♘g6 12 c3 c5 13 h3 ♙e7 14 ♚e1 ♚c8 15 ♜d2 and White retained a tiny edge due to his extra space, V.Baklan-R.Dautov, Plovdiv 2003.

c) 4...a6 5 ♙e3 (White simply tries to outwait Black for ...e6; if 5 g4 ♙d7!) 5...e6 6 g4 ♙g6 7 ♘ge2 with a position similar to the games in this chapter, except that Black has substituted the less desirable ...a6 in place of ...c5, E.Sutovsky-I.Stohl, Kaskady 2002.

5 g4

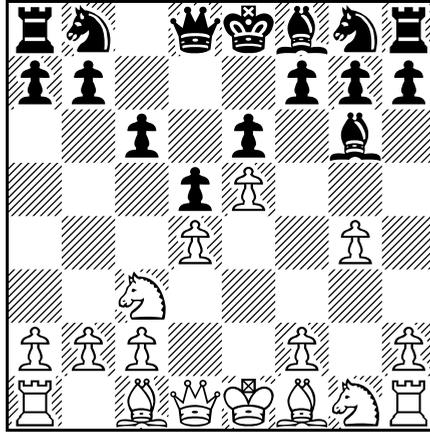


A move based on the conceit that White can blow away the Caro-Kann, perhaps Black's most solid response to 1 e4. White opens a door which may never close. He accepts the risks entailed in overextension in order to seize an initiative. Most inventions have their up and down sides. Fire warms but also burns down the village. White hopes his forceful play will not later be labelled reckless. For our safety, we fasten our seat belts and enter White's joyride. We saw this coming, so please try to remain calm for the remainder of this chapter!

Question: Can White play calmer with something like 5 ♙d3?

Answer: We would love it if White swaps away his good bishop for Black's traditionally inferior bishop.

5...♙g6



6 Nge2

Question: Why develop the knight on a sub-optimal square?

Answer: e2 isn't such a bad spot for the knight. White's purpose:

1. Rapid development.
2. White's knight overprotects d4 since he knows ...c5 is coming.
3. White may go after Black's bishop with the plan Nf4 and h4.

6...c5

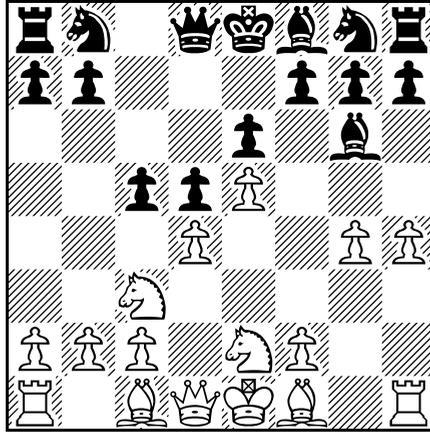
Principle: Confront a wing attack with a central counter. Here ...c5 is especially potent since White lacks a back-up c3 move and so his centre will dissolve.

Question: Does White generate enough play from the open lines and piece activity to justify such damage to his pawn structure?

Answer: My heart says no, but the people who play this line as White obviously think so!

We won't be covering alternatives like 6...f6, 6...h6 and 6... Ne7 , the last a Karpov favourite which he should maybe think about giving up, since he has scored a dismal 19% with it!

7 h4



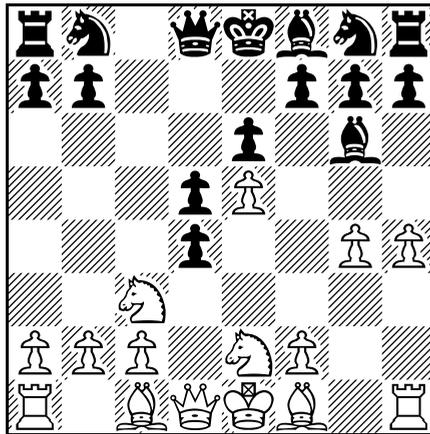
Threatening the not so subtle h5. We examine 7 ♔e3 later in the chapter.

7...h5!

Proven best through practice. Black meets confrontation with escalated confrontation. The alternatives:

a) 7...h6 (I don't like this move as much as the text; White's gigantic space advantage must be challenged vigorously across the board) 8 ♔e3 ♖c6 9 dxc5 ♜xe5 10 ♘f4 ♕h7 11 ♙b5+ ♜c6 12 ♚e2 ♞ge7 13 0-0-0, S.Pinkovetsky-H.Wunderlich, correspondence 2004. White leads in development in an open position and will soon menace dangerous sacs on d5. The computers say equal, but my intuition says stay away from Black.

b) The intention of 7...cxd4 is to distract White's knight, so Black can play ...h5 without worrying about ♘f4.



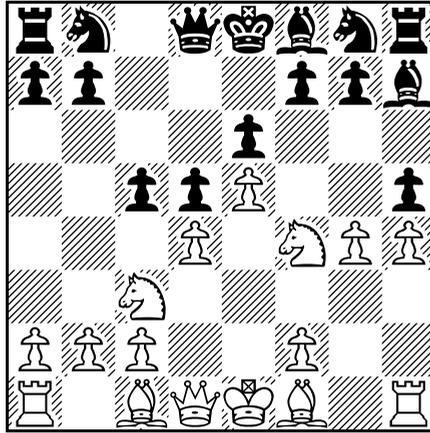
Now White normally goes 8 ♘xd4.

Question: What if White refuses to be denied ♖f4 and recaptures with his queen?

Answer: 8 ♜xd4?! ♗c6 9 ♜a4 h5 was tried in F.Lozano Martin-A.Gonzalez Ramirez, Pasao 1997. Now 10 ♖f4 ♗h7 11 ♗xh5 a6 gives Black an even better version of his pawn sac than he gets in the mainline since he gained time kicking White's queen.

After 8 ♗xd4 h5 9 ♗b5+ ♗d7 10 f4 hxg4 11 f5 ♜xh4 12 ♜f1 exf5 13 e6 fxe6 14 ♗xe6 ♜e7 15 ♜e2, as in A.Kovchan-I.Ivanov, Tula 2007, 15...♗f7 leads to a forced draw after 16 ♗xd7 ♜xd7 17 ♗g5+ ♗f6 18 ♗ge4+! dxe4 19 ♗xe4+ ♗f7 20 ♗g5+.

c) After 7...f6 8 h5 ♗f7 9 f4 ♗c6 10 ♗e3 ♗h6 the position looks like an Advance French on steroids and Black looks okay, S.Nurkic-A.Profumo, Italian Team Championship 1995.
8 ♖f4 ♗h7!



Our anti-venom.

Question: Why did Black just give away his h-pawn for nothing?

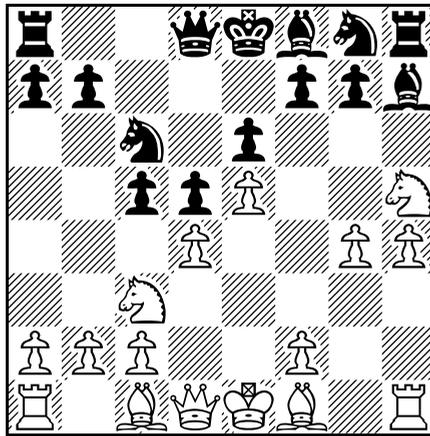
Answer: It wasn't for nothing. He gets to deflect White's knight away from the centre and gains considerable time. White's centre is about to crumble, so we shouldn't begrudge giving him a crumb or two in return.

Question: Is the sac obligatory?

Answer: No. Black can also go for the crazy 8...♗c6!? 9 ♗xg6 fxe6 10 ♗e2! (best according to theory) 10...♜b6 11 ♖f4 cxd4 12 ♗xg6 ♗b4+ 13 ♜e2. Welcome to a typical game in this line, A.Morozevich-E.Bareev, Sarajevo 2000. *Houdini* insists Black sac a rook at this point, helpfully claiming it's even after 13...♗ge7! 14 ♗xh8 ♗xe5.

9 ♖xh5 ♜c6

Black relentlessly applies pressure to White's crumbling centre. The alternative is 9...cxd4 10 ♗xd4 ♜c6: for example, 11 ♙b5 ♜ge7 12 ♙g5 (12 ♙h6 is flashy, but really doesn't worry Black much after 12...♞g8, M.Khachian-C.Lakdawala, Internet (blitz) 2003; Schandorff claims a clear advantage for Black in this position) 12...a6 13 ♙xc6+ ♜xc6 14 ♗a4 b5! 15 ♗f4 (if 15 ♙xd8 bxa4 16 ♙g5 a3 17 b3 ♞c8 White has huge problems defending down the c-file and on b4) 15...♗c7 16 0-0-0 b4 17 ♜xd5 (or 17 ♜e2 ♞c8 with mounting threats on the c-file and the loose e-pawn) 17...exd5 18 ♞d2 ♜d8!, J.Ehlvest-E.Bareev, Moscow 2001. White doesn't get full compensation for the piece.



10 dxc5

Well, there goes White's centre. Otherwise:

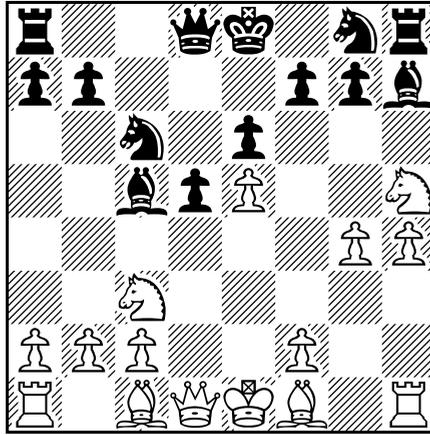
- a) 10 ♙e3 cxd4 11 ♙xd4 and Black stood slightly better after the trick 11...♙xc2! in A.Holmsten-S.Pedersen, Bergen 2001.
- b) 10 ♙b5 cxd4 11 ♗xd4 ♜ge7 yet again transposes to the Ehlvest-Bareev game mentioned in the above note.
- c) 10 ♜e2?? is a big blunder. Now instead of the rote 10...cxd4? of 'goodnightmrtom'-C.Lakdawala, Internet (blitz) 2011, I should have spotted 10...♜b4! which wins material.

10...♙xc5!

Question: Isn't Black going a bit crazy giving up a second pawn – and with check to boot!?

Answer: In chess, unlike the world, there is no injustice. This line is essentially an ideological battle between those who believe in the law (us) and those who believe in lawlessness (our misguided opponents!). As believers of chess laws we can't be negotiated with or bribed. White violated the laws of chess with this line and we must bring him or her to jus-

tice, even if it means sacrifice. We offer up g7 in the name of rapid development.



11 ♖g2

Schandorff considers this White's best line. I'm not so sure White has a best line available to him at this point and feel he struggles to maintain a slight disadvantage!

Question: I will ask the obvious: why didn't White take another pawn with 11 ♖xg7+?

Answer: White can, but Black gets a huge initiative for it after 11...♗f8 12 ♖h5 d4 13 ♖b5 when Black has many tempting paths at his disposal, including 13...♔d5, all which offer more than adequate compensation for the sacrifice since White's scattered forces are in disarray.

11...♗g6 12 ♖g5

Once again White isn't tempted by the low hanging fruit on g7: 12 ♖xg7+ ♗f8 13 ♖h5 ♖xe5 (threat: ...♖xg4! which undermines White's h5-knight) 14 ♖f4 ♗xh4 and Black stands better:

1. He has the stronger centre.
2. White's pawns are more vulnerable.
3. Black leads slightly in development.

12...♗e7!?

Novelty. Black wants to play ...♗b6 in one go without a rest stop on c7. Black also looks good after the straightforward 12...♗c7 13 0-0 ♖xh5 14 gxh5 ♖ge7 15 ♗e1, as in T.Bae-E.Hermansson, Aarhus 2003, and then 15...♖d4.

13 f4

As usual, the time expended to grab g7 isn't worth it to White: 13 ♖xg7+ ♗f8 14 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 15 ♖h5 ♖xh5 16 gxh5 ♗b6 with advantage Black.

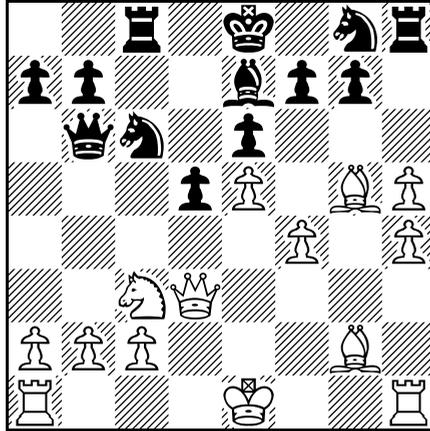
13... ♗xh5

Just so he doesn't have to think about ♖xg7+ on every turn!

14 gxh5 ♗b6

The aim of insurgency isn't so much to kill an enemy as much as harass the occupier. The idea is to make it so costly in blood, as well as coin, that they pack up and leave. At this point Black achieved this goal and White's forces, after their initial surge, began a gradual retreat.

15 ♗d3 ♖c8



Exercise (critical decision): White's king feels the heat. Where to put him? White can castle queenside or he can slide his king over to f1. One leads to a dynamically balanced position, the other to disaster. Choose wisely.

16 ♔f1?

Answer: Here White's king position is loose and exposed, like the lizard crossing a boulder in plain view of the birds of prey circling above. He had to enter the lair with 16 O-O-O! ♖b4 17 ♗f3 d4 18 a3 dxc3 19 axb4 cxb2+ 20 ♔b1 ♗xb4 (20...f6!? is for the brave of heart!) 21 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 22 ♗xb7 ♖c7 23 ♗e4 ♖xh5 24 ♔xb2 with a dynamically balanced ending.

16... ♖xh5

Simple chess:

1. White's attack is no more.
2. White is overextended, defending his many weaknesses.
3. White's pieces lack targets.

Conclusion: White is in deep trouble.

Black can also play 16... ♗xb2! 17 ♖b1 ♗xe5! 18 fxe5 ♗xc3 19 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 20 ♖xb7 f6 with advantage.

17 a3?

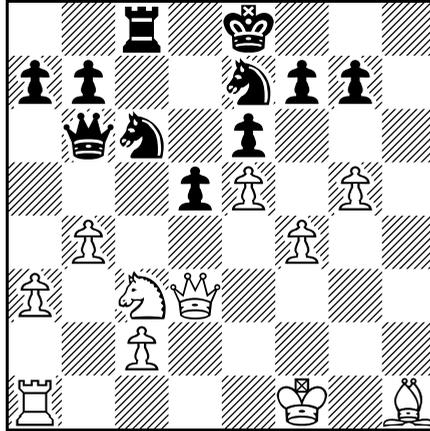
As unpleasant as it was, he had to try 17 ♖b1.

17...♗xg5 18 hxg5 ♖xh1+ 19 ♗xh1 ♘ge7

Cautious. There is nothing wrong with taking on b2 either: 19...♖xb2! 20 ♖b1 ♖xa3 21 ♘b5 (21 ♖xb7? ♖c1+ wins instantly) 21...♖xd3+ 22 cxd3 ♖b8 23 ♘d6+ ♗f8 24 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 25 ♘xb7 a5.

20 b4?!

Marginally better was 20 ♖b5 ♖e3 21 ♘e2.



Exercise (multiple choice): Everything looks good for Black.

We have a choice. Pick the most efficient method:

- a) 20...♘f5, playing for attack;
- b) 20...♖d4, cashing out into an ending.

Answer: 20...♖d4! 0-1

The simplest. White's game is like an open casket at a funeral; he doesn't want to look inside. He can't be faulted for resigning. The ending is utterly without hope for White after 21 ♖xd4 ♘xd4 22 ♖d1 ♖xc3 23 ♖xd4 ♖xc2 picking off a second pawn.

Summary

A fearful player battles him or herself as well as the opponent. Let's boldly face White down and enter the mainlines with 4...e6, avoiding the chicken out, less sharp lines like 4...♖b6, 4...h5 and 4...a6.