

# Playing 1.d4

## The Indian Defences

*– a grandmaster guide*

By

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# Preface

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This is the second book of a two-volume repertoire for White with 1.d4. The first volume offered an ambitious repertoire against 1...d5. Now I complete the repertoire by covering everything else! The major openings covered are the Indian defences, in particular the Nimzo-Indian, King's Indian and Grünfeld Defences.

As in the first book, the repertoire is based entirely on big mainlines, which guarantees its reliability and strength. Firstly, you cannot expect to get anything against well-respected openings by trying a little sideline or just by playing safe. The main lines, on the other hand, have not become main lines by chance. They have slowly but surely evolved and proved their strength over the years, so by choosing main lines you gain reliable weapons. Secondly, the main lines are sharp and put the maximum pressure on the opponent, both theoretically and in practice. This corresponds perfectly with the philosophy behind this work, which is that White should strive for the initiative and show that moving first matters. Developing the pieces fluidly to active squares and trying to take the centre with pawns to seize space – these are key elements in the various White set-ups presented here.

In the first volume the challenge in meeting 1...d5 was often to build up a space advantage by achieving e2-e4. In this volume, playing e2-e4 is usually much easier since Black has declined to occupy the centre with a pawn. Black's general plan is to create counterplay against White's space advantage. Thus the challenge in this book is to keep control and not let Black seize the initiative. I will explain the details later, but in general I have chosen the lines in my repertoire so that White will be the one attacking – I don't like using the white pieces to grab a gambit pawn and then defend desperately for the next 30 moves.

I wish to repeat what I said in the first book. Playing White is like serving in tennis – with a good serve you either win directly or, if the opponent manages to return the ball, at least you get the chance to take the initiative and dictate the rest of the duel. In this book I offer you an excellent first serve. But every tennis player knows that it is important to have a decent second serve as well. This may also be true in chess, especially in this computer age, so having a safe alternative is a good idea. Thus, throughout the book I offer hints of where you could devote some of your further investigations.

I am confident this repertoire will be an effective weapon now and for years to come. I hope it brings you many aces!

Lars Schandorff  
Denmark, August 2012

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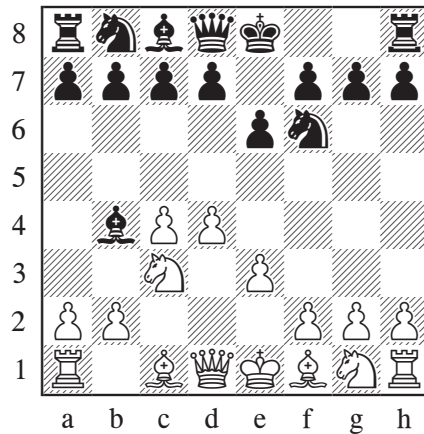
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# Introduction to the Repertoire

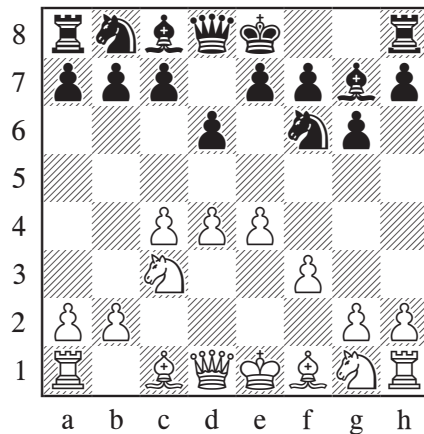
## Chapter 1: Nimzo-Indian

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4** The Nimzo-Indian is one of Black's most respected defences and we meet it by following the Patriarch with **4.e3**. We will generally follow up with ♘ge2 and a2-a3, breaking the pin while avoiding any damage to our structure. Then White will start increasing his grip on the centre.



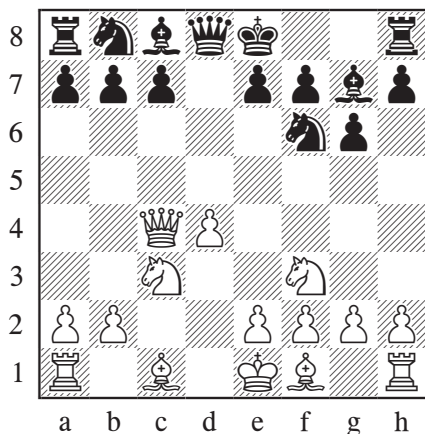
## Chapter 2: King's Indian

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6** The King's Indian can be a dangerous counterattacking system but with **5.f3**, the Sämisch Variation, we support our centre and potentially prepare to expand. The only side likely to be doing any attacking on the kingside is White.



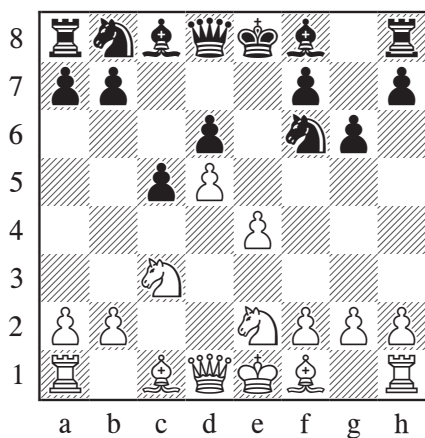
## Chapter 3: Grünfeld Defence

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5** Against the Grünfeld Defence it is easy to achieve e2-e4; the trick is to do so while keeping control. We manage that with the Russian System: **4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♞b3 dxc4 6.♞xc4** Of course e4 is on the way.



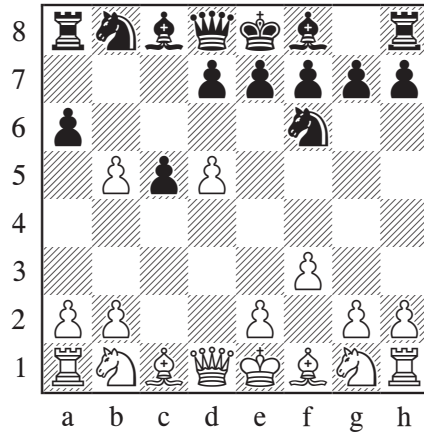
## Chapter 4: Modern Benoni

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6** The Modern Benoni is another opening where Black does not strive for dull equality; he wants to attack, but we will foil his plans. With **7.♘ge2** we have good chances to obtain a favourable version of the ...c5 variation in the King's Indian.



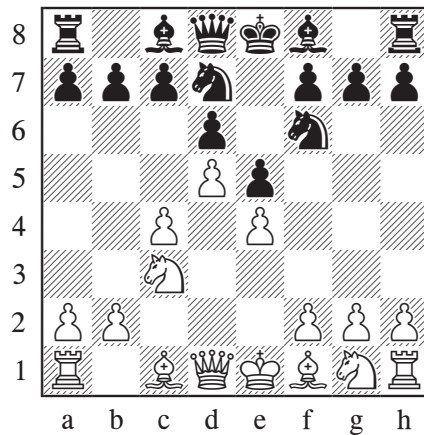
## Chapter 5: Benko Gambit

**1.d4** ♖f6 **2.c4** c5 **3.d5** b5 **4.cxb5** a6 The dream of any Benko Gambit player is to sac a pawn for a never-ending initiative on the queenside. We decline the offer with **5.f3**, preparing to build our traditional centre. In the main line, it will be White who sacrifices to seize the initiative.



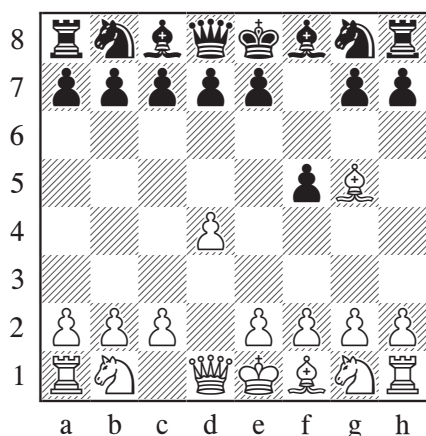
## Chapter 6: Old Indian

**1.d4** ♖f6 **2.c4** d6 **3.♖c3** ♖bd7 The Old Indian can create some move order confusion, but not for us. After **4.e4** e5 **5.d5** White secures a space advantage and arranges his pieces in a similar fashion as in Chapter 2.



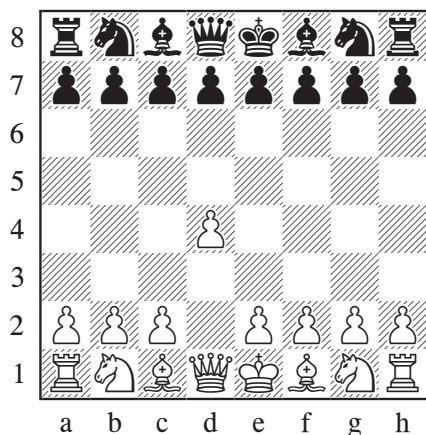
## Chapter 7: Dutch Defence

**1.d4 f5** The Dutch stands apart from the Indian defences covered in the previous chapters, and the ensuing play may take on a totally different character. Our chosen system with **2.g5** will often lead to an open fight, in which White's lead in development and Black's airy kingside may take their toll.



## Chapter 8: Minor Lines

Every repertoire book needs a hodgepodge chapter to cover all the stragglers and oddities. In this case some are fairly respectable, such as the Czech Benoni and Budapest Gambit. Others, such as 1...e6, 1...d6 and 1...g6, will sometimes transpose to mainstream systems but all offer independent possibilities. I will refrain from listing the full contents here, but rest assured that all the important bases are covered.





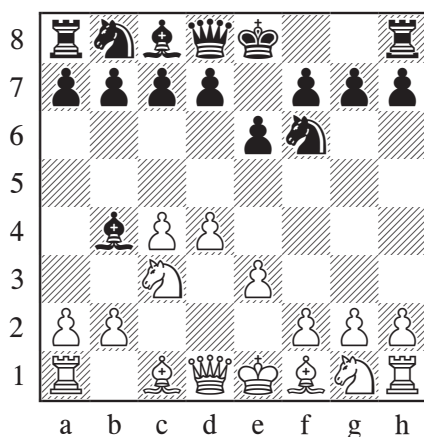
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# Chapter 1

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## Nimzo-Indian

*With the lights out, it's less dangerous  
Here we are now, entertain us*  
– Nirvana



**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3**

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### 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6

This is by far Black's most popular choice in the whole Indians-complex and a very flexible system indeed. A lot of options are kept open while Black makes sure he doesn't show his hand prematurely. He can still play ...d5 and transpose to a Queen's Gambit, or even ...c5 with a Modern Benoni. Most of the time though, he intends to play the Nimzo-Indian.

### 3.♘c3

Which we allow! Please notice that the move 3.♘c3 is forced to make our repertoire coherent.

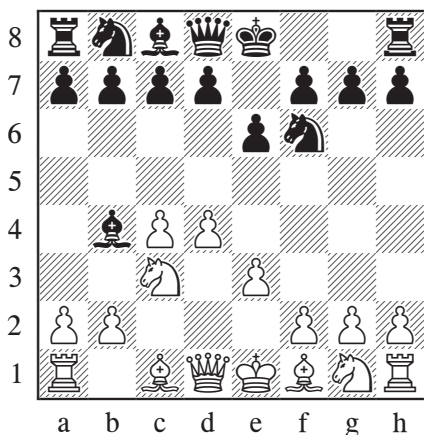
If we instead opted for the choice of the majority of White players, 3.♘f3, then after 3...d5 we could no longer transpose to the beloved Exchange Variation from *Playing 1.d4 – The Queen's Gambit*, at least not in the version I like.

As an alternative to the Nimzo you definitely could consider the Catalan with 3.g3, where White strives for a small long-lasting positional pull.

### 3...♗b4

If Black plays 3...d5 we just take with 4.cxd5 and are happy! Then we are still in book, albeit not the one that you are holding in your hands right now. Another direct transposing move is 3...c5 4.d5 with a Benoni. That is covered later on in this volume.

### 4.e3



The real Nimzo. “Old School” some would say, “Eternal” others might reply. It is certainly true that the line has been around for a long time. The move 4.e3 might look a bit modest, but you shouldn't be deceived. Behind it lies a deep strategic concept that actually creates a sharp positional struggle right from the beginning.

Lately more forceful tries like 4.♖c2 and 4.♘f3 have been heavily debated, and the slightly bizarre 4.f3 has even appeared in a World Championship match. However when these sharp lines have been exhausted people tend to return to the evergreen 4.e3. The reason is easy to understand. The 4.e3 Nimzo-Indian leads to a complicated manoeuvring game, where the better player wins. It is extremely difficult to play for both colours, so I will dwell on some of its distinct features.

## Nimzo Features

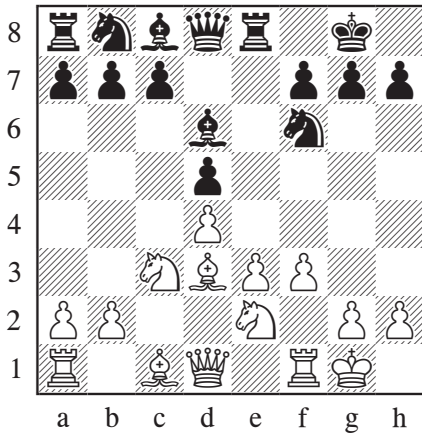
The Nimzo-Indian is a so-called hypermodern opening where Black primarily uses his pieces to fight for the centre instead of just occupying it with pawns as in traditional openings such as the Queen's Gambit Declined or the Slav. By pinning the knight Black prevents e2-e4. Later, depending on how White reacts, Black will decide which pawn formation he will strive for.

The e4-square is very important. Black can launch a light-square strategy with ...b6, ...♗b7 and often ...♘e4 and ...f5 as well. Despite all these efforts a small white pawn move like f2-f3 can throw a spanner in the works and stop the fun.

Black has a simpler and more straightforward way to control e4 and take his share of the centre into possession – that is to play ...d5 himself. Then the pawn structure is very dynamic and often will end up being quite

similar to the Queen's Gambit Exchange variation examined in the other book in this series. Here is an example:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♚b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3  
d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♘ge2 ♜e8 8.0-0 ♙d6 9.f3



The biggest difference between the Queen's Gambit and the Nimzo is the passive white bishop on c1. In the Queen's Gambit it is very active on g5; here it is restrained behind the pawns.

Fortunately the dark-squared bishop has decent prospects of a bright future. If we for a moment forget about the hanging e3-pawn in the diagram position, the bishop could be developed to b2 (after first b2-b3). Then later when Black attacks the white centre with the typical ...c5, White can simply take it with dxc5 and suddenly the bishop operates on a wonderful diagonal all the way towards the opponent's king. The other way to get the bishop out is the manoeuvre ♙c1-d2-e1-g3/h4.

Finally the most characteristic feature of the Nimzo-Indian arises after Black plays ...♙xc3 and White takes back with the b-pawn. Then White has the bishop pair, but also a somewhat shattered structure with double pawns on the c-file. Which is the more important depends on the exact position.

## Follow the Patriarch

To deepen our understanding let's see a few games by the great masters. Just as in the corresponding chapter on the QGD Exchange Variation in my other book, we will have Botvinnik as our sturdy guide. The Patriarch was also one of the pioneers in the 4.e3-Nimzo.

### GAME 1

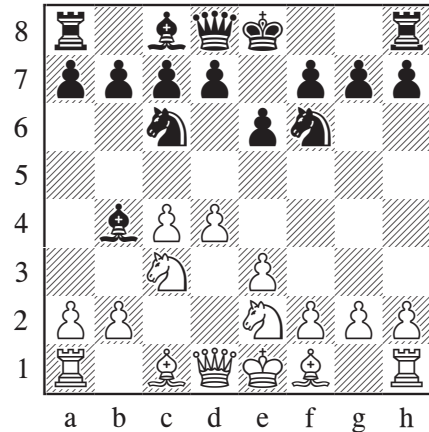
Botvinnik – Taimanov

Moscow (4) 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♚b4 4.e3 ♘c6

A sideline. I have included the game mainly for two reasons.

5.♘ge2

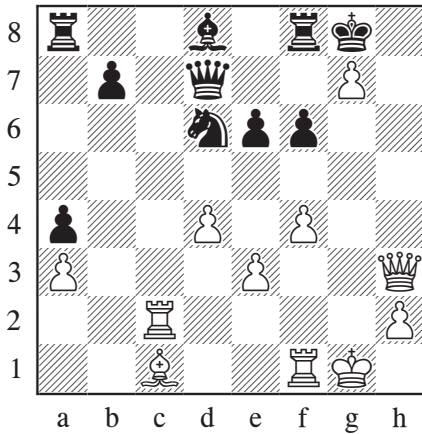


This is the first! With this important knight move White prevents the doubling of his pawns on the c-file. Next he plans to play a2-a3 and question the black bishop.

5...d5 6.a3 ♙e7

Black withdraws. After 6...♙xc3† 7.♘xc3 White just enjoys the pair of bishops.





27...♖e8?

Black returns the favour. He sees 27...♞xg7† 28.♞g2 winning the queen, but misses 27...♔xg7! 28.♞g2† ♔f7, when the king hides on e7 or e8.

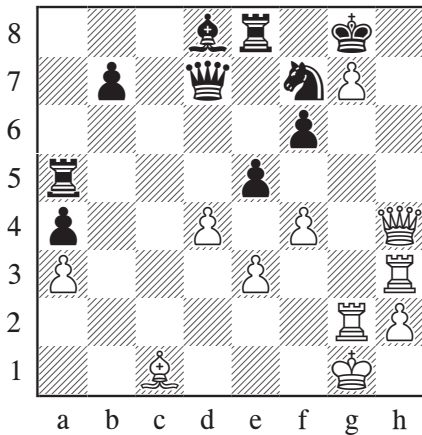
28.♞h8† ♔f7 29.♞h5† ♔g8 30.♞g2

Now it is over.

30...♔f7 31.♞f3

The next rook comes.

31...♞a5 32.♞h4 e5 33.♞h3



Threatening mate. Black must surrender his queen.

33...♞xh3 34.♞xh3 exf4 35.exf4 ♖b6

36.♖b2 ♞b5 37.♔f1 ♖a5 38.♞c2 ♞b3  
39.♞d7 ♞be3 40.♞xa4 ♞e1† 41.♔f2 ♖c7  
42.♞xe8†  
1–0

Here is another game from 1952. It may sound old, but the chess content is very fresh.

## GAME 2

Botvinnik – Smyslov

Moscow (5) 1952

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♖b4 4.e3 c5 5.♘ge2

Here we have this key move again.

5...d5 6.a3 cxd4

Exchanging the bishop with 6...♞xc3† 7.♘xc3 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♞xc4 is more common – see page 31 for more details.

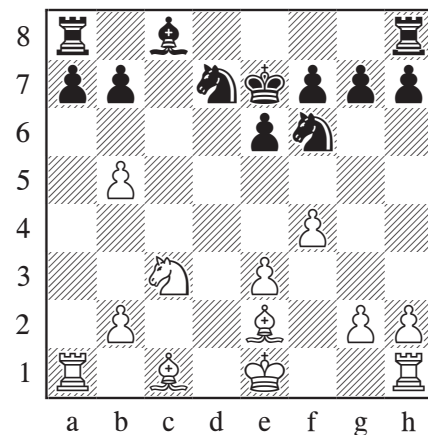
7.axb4

Of course White takes the bishop.

7...dxc3 8.♘xc3 dxc4

Now White gets a strong initiative in the ending. On 8...0–0, White answers 9.cxd5 exd5 10.b5! ♖e6 11.♞e2 with a positional plus.

9.♞xd8† ♔xd8 10.♞xc4 ♘c6 11.b5 ♘e5  
12.♞e2 ♔e7 13.f4 ♘ed7



**14.b3!**

The dark-squared bishop gets out via a3.

**14...♞d8 15.♙a3† ♚e8 16.♙d6**

And immediately is the dominant figure on the whole board. Black is strategically lost already.

**16...♞b8 17.♙c7 ♞d7 18.♙b6 ♞d5**

18...a6 19.bxa6 bxa6 20.♙b5+–

**19.♞xd5 ♞xd5 20.♞xa7 ♞xa7 21.♙xa7 ♞d7 22.e4 1–0**

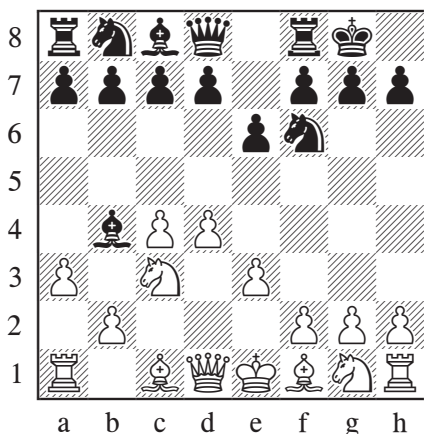
Let's try an even earlier game!

**GAME 3****Botvinnik – Keres**

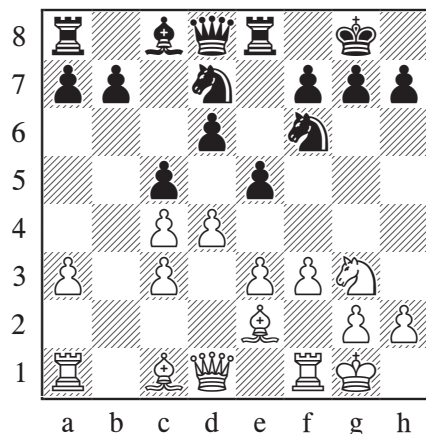
The Hague/Moscow (10) 1948

**1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0–0 5.a3**

Botvinnik fancied this. Personally I prefer to develop with 5.♞ge2, but that is another story. This game is important because it shows the typical Nimzo-Indian pawn structure.

**5...♙xc3† 6.bxc3 ♞e8 7.♞e2 e5 8.♞g3 d6 9.♙e2 ♞bd7**

Not the optimal square for this knight. Better was 9...b6. The knight may later go to c6.

**10.0–0 c5 11.f3****11...cxd4**

I don't think Black should release the tension in the centre, but it is not easy to suggest a plan.

**12.cxd4 ♞b6 13.♙b2**

The slumbering bishop wakes up.

**13...exd4 14.e4**

14.♙xd4 was simple and strong.

**14...♙e6 15.♞c1 ♞e7?**

15...♞c8 was necessary.

**16.♞xd4!**

The point of White's 14th move. Now there is maximum pressure along the long diagonal.

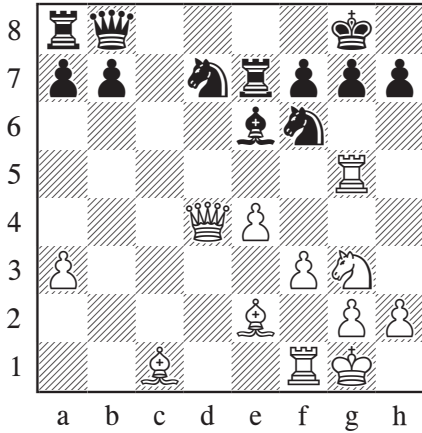
**16...♞c7 17.c5!**

Opening up the position and activating the rook.

**17...dxc5 18.♞xc5 ♞f4 19.♙c1 ♞b8 20.♞g5!**

Going for the attack. Botvinnik finishes in style.

20...♘bd7



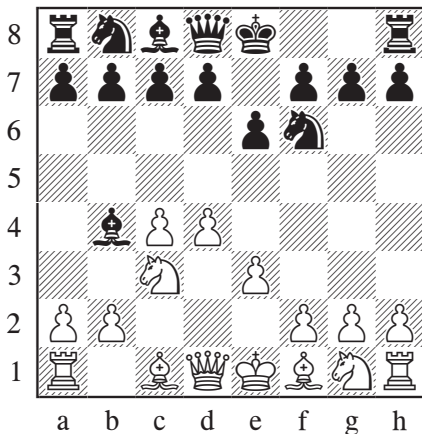
21.♞xg7† ♕xg7 22.♘h5† ♖g6 23.♞e3  
Black is mated.

1–0

By now it is quite clear that the potential of White's dark-squared bishop is very high. After these instructive games, let's move on to theory in the year 2012. It is most likely that something has happened since Botvinnik's days.

## Various 4th Moves

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3



The big mainline is 4...0–0, but let's begin with the other serious 4th moves from Black.

The two most important are 4...b6 and 4...c5. A good response to both systems is the already familiar move 5.♘ge2.

The line 4...b6 is covered in Games 4-6, and 4...c5 in Games 7 and 8.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to 4...0–0, which is covered in depth in Games 9-12. Of course there are many other legal moves, but it is impossible to cover everything. I will mention a few of them here though.

For 4...♘c6 see Game 1 above.

4...d5 is quite often played, but it has little independent value. White could just answer 5.♘f3 if he plays that move in the mainlines. But we don't! So I'll recommend the promising 5.a3!, when we are suddenly in the last chapter of *Playing 1.d4 – The Queen's Gambit*, after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4.

4...d6 is too modest to pose any problems: 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.♘ge2 e5 and now just 7.d5± with extra space and a pleasant position.

4...♘e4 looks active, but could in fact just be a waste of time: 5.♞c2 f5 (5...♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗e7 7.♗d3±) 6.♗d3 0–0 7.♘ge2± Taking on e4 might work, but this is much simpler. We are ready to castle and then we can always play f2-f3 and maybe even e3-e4.

4...♗xc3†

Black does not even wait for White to play a2-a3, so basic logic tells us that this move cannot be good.

5.bxc3 d6 6.♗d3 0–0

More usual is 6...c5 7.♘e2 ♘c6, but the position is closed and the exact move order