



Squeezing the King's Indian Defence

Semko Semkov and Yuriy Krykun

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Squeezing the King's Indian Defence

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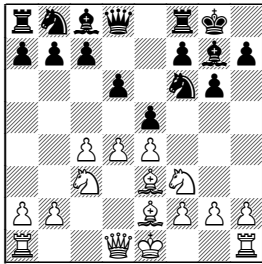
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Chess Publishing (www.chesspublishing.com)

Preface by Semkov

In 2007 I wrote the book *Kill KID 1*. While White still achieves 56% in the Four Pawn System, the modern engines have grounded it down to a few very long variations, where the heated tactical fight lulls to drawish endgames. Thus the attempt to crush the KID by a brutal assault has more or less failed.

This book offers another approach. It presents a full repertoire based on the Gligoric System – 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗f3 0-0 6.♙e2 e5 7.♙e3



Do not mix it with the Classical System, which features 7.0-0. The crucial difference is that White does not commit his king to any flank yet. That makes Black's thematic attack with ...f5-f4, ...g4 pointless.

The Gligoric Variation aims to strangle the opponent in a positional vice. Its most prominent feature is solidity. In many games White wins

without having to calculate much. The Gligoric is one of the most fire-proof approaches against the King's Indian. Indicatively, it was Karpov's weapon of choice against Kasparov in their legendary matches. Perhaps it is the best way to keep the opponent at bay while still preserving fair winning chances.

Most importantly, this system allows White to play chess without having to memorise tons of variations. I specifically focused on typical positions and methods of handling them. You'll discover that all the play against a closed centre could be boiled down to two plans – opening the queenside with b2-b4, or crushing the kingside with g3, ♘g2, f4.

Although I avoid, as a principle, *double-edged* lines, I often recommend *sharp* plans, provided that *we* are the attacking side! For instance, I developed several new ideas where we thrust the h-pawn instead of humbly castling short.

The book proposes a cutting-edge repertoire, which could withstand even deep home preparation. I hope that it will serve you for years.

Semko Semkov
Sofia, July 2020

Preface by Krykun

I have always had an odd feeling while facing the King's Indian Defence over the board or analysing it. It always felt that Black's strategy was highly suspicious – or even incorrect – but somehow Black always kept finding a lot of resources to keep the position complicated enough.

Just as any 1.d4/1.c4/1.♭f3 player, I always needed an ambitious and practical solution against this extremely popular opening. Now, what are our choices? Interestingly, it is exactly against the KID that White has an immense number of sensible variations to choose from. Those can be as aggressive as the Four Pawns Attack or the Sämisch, as principled as the Classical System, as solid as the Averbakh Variation or the Fianchetto system, or as peaceful as the Exchange Variation. The list keeps going: the trendy Riasantsev line with ♕e2, ♕e3 followed by a kingside assault has been all the rage; it is always possible to resort to the semi-forgotten lines such as the Seirawan system with ♕d3 and ♖ge2, etc.

So, how does a 1.d4 player choose what to do against the King's Indian?

Of course, the answer would largely depend on your style as well as the existing opening repertoire. It is no secret that the positions in closed openings (1.d4, 1.c4, and 1.♭f3) are highly transpositional; you'd rather need to think of the big picture of your entire repertoire than just asking yourself "what do I play against the King's Indian?". For example, a 1.e4 fan can play whatever he likes against the Sicilian, as his choice does not influence and is not influenced by his repertoire against the French, the Caro-Kann, or whatever else.

Instead 1.d4 players need to use a different perspective. For example, it is not possible to look at a system like 1.d4 ♭f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 unless you are fully committed to playing the Sämisch type of positions against the Benoni and the Grünfeld as well. Or, for instance, let's mention the Fianchetto System. Once you decide to play g2-g3, you have to play g2-g3 literally against everything: the KID, the Grünfeld, the Benoni, the Benko, maybe you even need to play the Catalan.

Most experienced players who go 1.d4 also like to once in a while start with 1.♭f3 and 1.c4. That is

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also something to be taken into consideration because such systems as the Averbakh, the Riasantsev or the Seirawan Variation, where the knight remains on g1 for a while, cannot be used if you want to start with 1.♠f3.

On the opposite, this book should suit all sorts of players. No matter what first move you prefer, you'll be able to benefit from our proposed repertoire.

Most opponents could be placed in two categories. The players in the first group love theoretical research and principled lines. Whenever I face them, I know they would willingly enter some 25-move-long line in the Classical Variation, they would be aware of the latest theoretical ideas, and so on.

The second type of players love the King's Indian for its versatility. They just want to get a tangled game, that is it! In this case, they would do their best to avoid top-notch theoretical fights in favour of flexible moves like ...c7-c6, ...♠bd7, ...♞c7, etc, and settle for a long battle.

Don't get me wrong, that second group does not necessarily consist only of players who are lazy to study theory! You'll often see 2600+ rated GMs to embrace this approach as they want to avoid theoretical discussion with someone who will be outplayed if left to his own devices. Against the first group of players, I might be tempted to choose qui-

et lines, such as the Averbakh, the Petrosian, or even the Exchange Variation. Against the second type, I would much rather play very aggressively to make them uncomfortable in a situation where lack of precise knowledge most likely means instant trouble.

However, the Gligoric Variation, interestingly, does the job of making both groups of players rather uncomfortable! The first type will not be that well prepared as our choice is not nearly as popular as the main lines. Believe me, those KID players have their hands full as they need to first deal with the most frequent variations like the Classical System and the Fianchetto. This is a huge boon for us!

At the same time, our weapon of choice is ambitious and direct enough to make the second type rather unhappy as well. In many lines they will be forced to make committal choices, which is exactly what those players hate.

Objectively speaking, it would be an insurmountable task to refute the King's Indian. There is no forced win to be found, even in the most principled lines. And, even if that was the case, it would be impossible to memorize all this stuff. But in modern chess, that is the case in almost any opening. What really matters is not whether your engine whines "0.00" after the opening or if it happily screams "+0.30"!!. If you have no idea what you are sup-

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posed to do later on, this engine advantage would not help you! In fact, many players would not even be able to tell when they are slightly better or when some complicated position is objectively equal, as our evaluations tend to be biased and dependent on how much we know about the position, who is our opponent, what the tournament situation is, and so on.

Our task instead was to help you understand the arising middlegames (and sometimes even endgames!). I have always felt that Gligoric is an

ideas-based system, and studying it should be an enlightening and instructive experience. The character of play does not require a lot of calculation, so knowing typical plans, manoeuvres and common tactical blows should earn you a lot of easy points. I myself cannot wait to use it again, as so many fresh ideas have been discovered during this amazing journey.

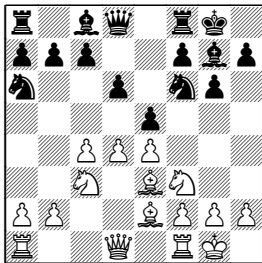
Good luck!

Yuriy Krykun

Saint Louis, August 2020

Main Ideas

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♕g7 4.e4
d6 5.♗f3 0-0 6.♖e2 e5 7.♖e3
♗a6 8.0-0



The knight development on a6 has gradually faded out of fashion these days. It is used mostly to avoid heavy theoretical disputes in the Mar del Plata Variation. Only a few grandmasters employed it as a main weapon in the KID – Gallagher, Kozul, Smirin, Kempinski, Kovalev, Saric – players who are not famous theoreticians. Topalov, Kasparov and Carlsen choose it only occasionally, and the only prominent GM who is still playing it seems to be Luke McShane.

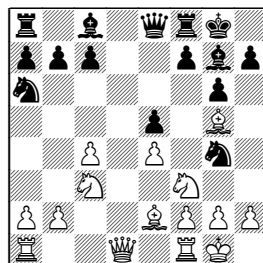
Move order

Black usually leads out the knight to a6 after ...e5 first, to avoid 6.♖e2

♗a6 7.♖f4!? ♗h5 (I consider 7...e5!? in Chapter 12/ line B.) 8.♖g5 h6 9.♖e3. White can use the tempo ♖d2 to castle long. That brings about sharp original positions. We'll be meeting ...♗a6 most often after 6...e5 7.♖e3 ♗a6, when 8.0-0 transposes to most frequent move order 7.0-0 ♗a6 8.♖e3.

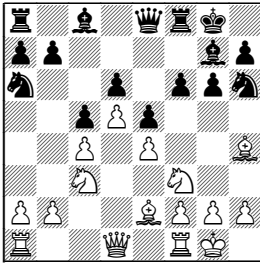
Main pawn structures

By putting the knight on a6 Black shows that he does not seek a quick attack on the kingside with ...f5. Instead he aims to complete comfortably development with ...c6, ...♗d7, probably ...♖b6. He is not planning to take on d4 and hopes to get a symmetrical pawn structure of the following type: 8...♗g4 9.♖g5 ♖e8 10.dxe5 dxe5



Although this is the most popular approach for White, **my suggestion is to avoid it**. The engines may claim that White is better all the time because of his space advantage on the queenside, but practice proves that Black's position is very resilient. We even risk to fall under attack when Black fully consolidates.

Another typical scenario is to close the centre with d5:



Again, this is something I preach not to do.

I recommend d5 only after 8...c6 9.♖e1 ♜e8. First of all, we have no choice since Black was threatening to take on d4, and second, the inclusion of ♖e1 ♜e8 is in our favour as his rook is more menacing on f8.

You may ask what we are trying to achieve then.

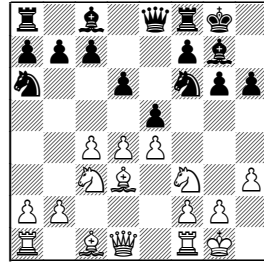
Our main goal is to maintain the tension in the centre.

Play commonly continues **8...♗g4 9.♙g5 ♖e8 10.h3 (10.♖e1) 10...h6 (10...f6) 11.♙c1!**

If the Black knight is on a6, we retreat the bishop to c1.

There are a few notable exceptions from this rule. One of them is 8...c6 9.♖e1 ♗g4 10.♙g5 f6 11.♙h4. The tactical reason is that Black cannot prevent 12.c4-c5, favourably opening the centre.

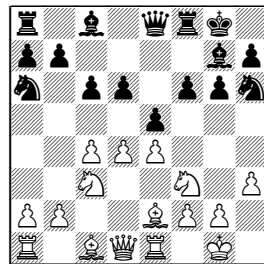
11...♗f6 12.♙d3



It is important to know that we can part with any of our bishops in order to preserve our centre fluid – 12...♗b4 13.♖e1! or 12...♗h5 13.♙e3! (a novelty!) 13...♗f4 14.♙xf4!

You should also know how to deal with **...f6+♗h6**. In that case we break through the queenside with c4-c5 or b4-b5. Here are concrete examples of the thrust c4-c5:

Analysis



13.c5!

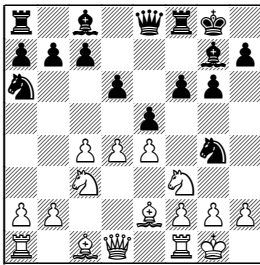
The idea of this “sacrifice” is that 13...dxc5 14.dxe5 fxe5

15.♙xa6 bxa6 16.♙e3 is positionally gloom for Black. But White's idea is much deeper. He aims to impose full domination in the centre after:

13...exd4 14.♖xd4!! dxc5 15.♖d1 ♗c7 16.♙f4 ♗e6 17.♙d6±.

Next is an example of c4-c5 in its purest form:

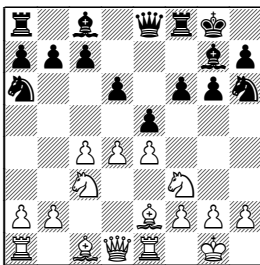
Baron Rodriguez-Comas Fabrego
Torrevieja 1997



11.c5! dxc5 12.♙xa6± (12.d5!?!±).

Now follows a more intricate case when we use additional resources as ♗d5 and the X-ray of the rook from e1:

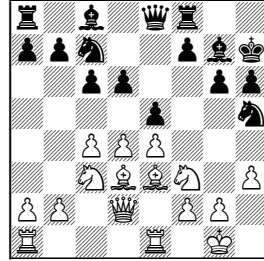
Analysis



12.c5! exd4 13.♗d5 c6 14.♙xa6 cxd5 15.exd5 (10.♖e1 in action!) 15...♖f7

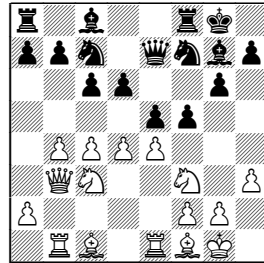
(15...♖d7 16.c6±) 16.♙c4 dxc5 17.b4! cxb4 18.♙xh6 ♙xh6 19.♖xd4+–.

Analysis



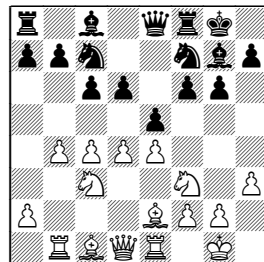
16.c5!? ♗e6 17.♙c2 exd4 18.♗xd4, when 18...♗xc5? stumbles into 19.♗f5!! gxf5 20.exf5+–.

Analysis



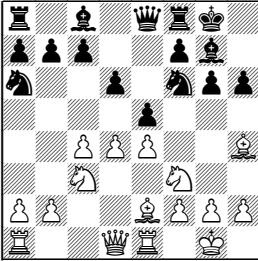
17.c5! rips open the centre in favour of the more active white pieces.

Goganov-Savitskiy
blitz, St Petersburg 2013



15.c5! dxc5 16.bxc5 exd4, when 17.♖xd4! ♘e5 18.♗b4 would be obviously pleasant for White.

Analysis

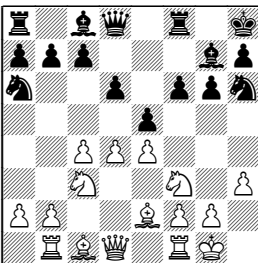


12.♙xf6 ♙xf6 13.c5! dxc5 14.♙xa6 with the better pawn structure.

We see that c4-c5 is not just a tactical device. It is a plan of its own, which aims to disrupt Black's entrenchment.

The other major plan is to push b4-b5

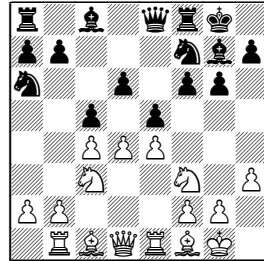
When c4-c5 does not work, we should play ♖b1.



Black has prevented the check from c4, so c4-c5 is ineffective. Therefore, we prepare b2-b4. Note that we must do it immediately since ♖e1 and ♙f1 would give Black time

to manoeuvre his h6-knight to e6. Maslak successfully defends in practice the symmetrical pawn structure that arises after ...c5 dxe5.

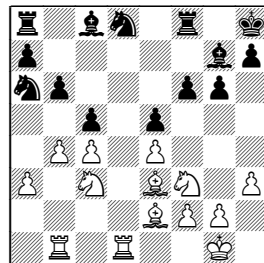
Yevseev-Maslak
Peterhof 2007



15.dxe5 dxe5 16.a3 ♘d8 17.b4 ♘e6 18.♘d5 ♗f7 19.♙d2 ♘b8 20.♙d3 1/2-1/2.

It was better to insert 18.h4 h5 to forbid any Black's activity on the kingside, but even then it is unclear how to break through.

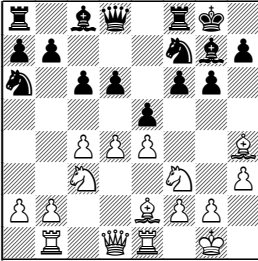
If we return one diagram backwards, we'll notice that 12...c5 is not too attractive with a knight still on h6 as 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.a3 ♘f7 15.b4 b6 16.♙e3 ♗xd1 17.♗fxd1 ♘d8



18.h4! opens a second front on the kingside and dooms Black to a passive defence.

Besides, the plan with b4 is seen also with a bishop on h4:

Anand-Topalov
Monte Carlo rapid 1999

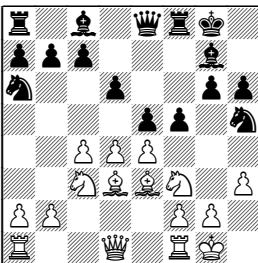


13...♖c7 14.b4 ♖e6 15.d5 ♖d4
16.♖xd4 exd4 17.♗xd4 g5 18.♙g3 f5
19.♗d2 f4 20.♙h2 ♖e5 21.dxc6 bxc6
22.b5 f3 23.♙xe5 ♙xe5 24.♙xf3±.

Finally, I'd like to mention positions where:

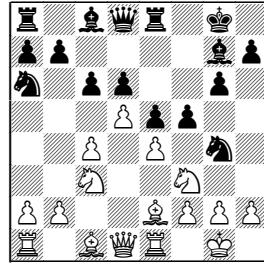
Black plays ...f5

The golden rule is to open the centre with exf5. That secures our king against attacks and offers us riskless pressure against the f5-pawn:



14.exf5 gxf5 15.♙e2! ♖f6 16.♞e1 ♗e7
17.♖h4! A typical method of fighting against ...f5 – 17...♗f7 will be met by 18.f4 and 17...♗h7 by 18.g3.

Analysis

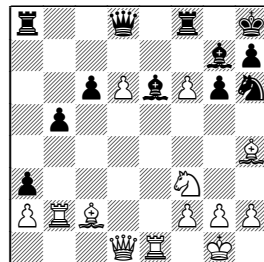


12.exf5! gxf5 13.h3! ♖f6 14.♙g5±.
White aims to provoke e4 with ♗d2, ♖h4, ♙d3.

Theoretical status

The ♖a6 System is not covered adequately in the books. Khalifman's proposition for White is one of the rare cases when c4-c5 is insufficient for an edge – 8...♖g4 9.♙g5 ♗e8 10.c5 exd4 11.♖d5 has been neutralised lately.

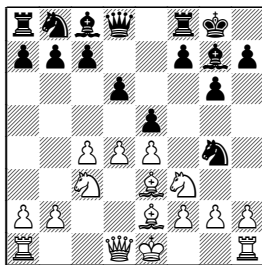
Kotronias takes Black's side, but 8...c6 9.♞e1 ♖g4 10.♙g5 f6 11.♙h4! ♖h6 12.c5! exd4 13.♙xa6 dxc3 14.♙c4+ ♗h8 15.cxd6 cxb2 16.♞b1 b5 17.♙b3 a5 18.♞xb2 a4 19.♙c2 ♙e6 20.e5 a3 loses after 21.exf6:



Black cannot cope with the d-pawn because of his exposed king.

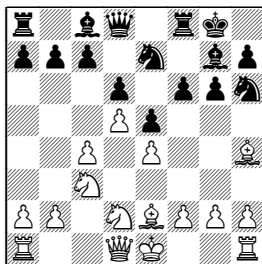
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9...♗c6 19 10.d5 ♗e7 11.♗d2 f5 19

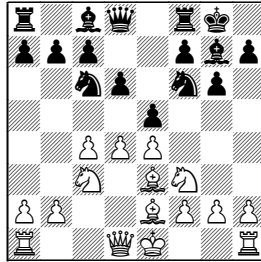
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14...♔h8 49
14...♗f7 50
14...d5 51

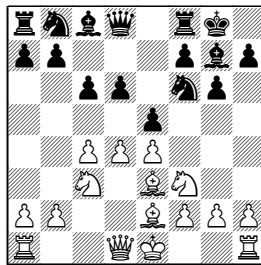
12...g5 52

Chapter 3. 7...♘c6?!



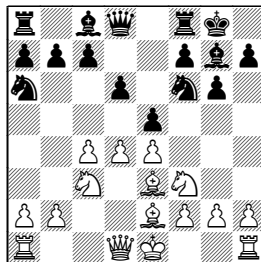
- 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2 ♘d7 69 (9...c6 69)
- 9...♘e8 72
- 9...c5 73

Chapter 4. 7...c6



- 8.d5 ♘a6 88 (8...c5 88)
- 8...♘g4 91

Chapter 5. 7...♘a6

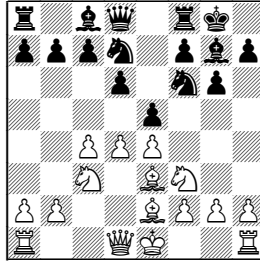


- 8.0-0 ♘g4 (8...♙e8 112; 8...♙e7 112; 8...c6 112; 8...h6 113; 8...exd4 114)

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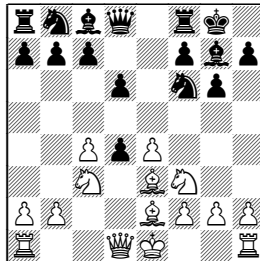
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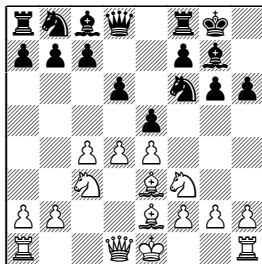
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10.0-0 ♖e7 11.♞ae1 170
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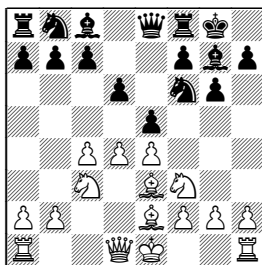
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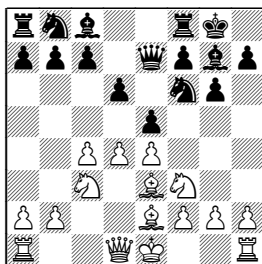
9.0-0 (9.d5 183) 8...♘g4 9.♙c1 ♘c6 184 (9...♘d7 184; 9...♘a6 184)

Chapter 9. 7...♙e8



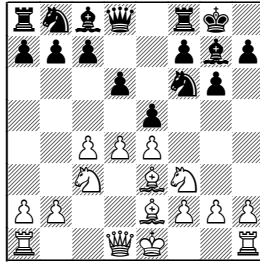
8.dxe5 (8.d5 191) 8...♘g4 9.♙g5 (9.♙d2 191) 9...♘xe5 192

Chapter 10. 7...♙e7



8.dxe5 198 (8.d5 198)

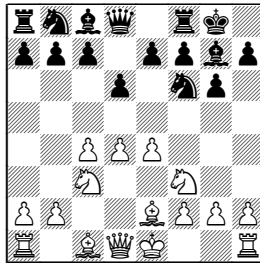
Chapter 11. Rare Seventh Moves



7...♞e8 206

7...♙g4 207

Chapter 12. Rare 6th Moves



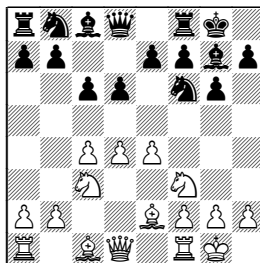
6...♙g4 7...♙e3 ♖fd7 218 (7...♜c6 218; 7...♜bd7 219)

6...♜a6 223

6...♜c6 224

6...c5 225

Chapter 13. 6...c6 7.0-0



7...a6 235; 7...♜bd7 237; 7...♞c7 239; 7...e5 240; 7...♜a6 241