

Double Trouble Scandinavian Style

Two Repertoires for Black

Marek Soszynski

Foreword by Al Lawrence



2024

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Two Repertoires for Black
by Marek Soszynski

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Preface

I have always been interested in 1.e4 d5, but wondered whether Black must play his queen to a5 (2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♗c3 ♖a5) or whether (after 2...♗f6) Black must play some gambit or other. Aren't there other possibilities? Of course there are! In which case, let's have a book that is not a packed directory full of all sorts of black and white possibilities with countless tightly-nested game fragments, and is instead a straightforward volume of repertoire recommendations. Well, here is that very book. It is the kind of opening book that I would have wanted myself – I hope that it is yours too.

I thank all those people who encouraged me and helped me with my work on the Scandinavian Defense. And of course this book is dedicated to the love of my life. She knows who she is, most of the time.

Marek Soszynski
October 2023
Birmingham, UK

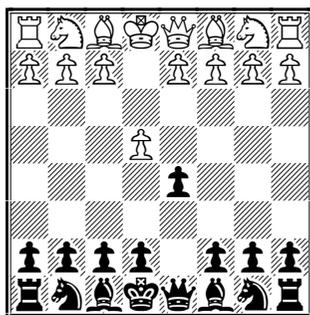
P.S. To players with the white pieces – kindly close this book immediately! For a start, the diagrams will be the wrong way up for you.

Part One

Chapter 1

Introduction to Double Trouble

White opens with 1.e4. That is what happens most of the time. After all, it is the strongest and most assertive move. Now, who knows what wiles and wickedness White wants from his opening. The Exchange Spanish (1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.♞b5 a6 4.♞xc6) heading for an endgame? A tactical Morra Gambit (1.e4 c5 2.d4) against the Sicilian? The devious Chigorin Variation (1.e4 e6 2.♞e2) against the French? We cannot be sure. So we, as Black, have really not a moment to lose if we want to turn the tables for it to be us who choose the tabletop battleground. To that end, we play 1.e4 d5!. We go into the details later. First, an explanation of the structure and content of the book.



The book is in three parts. Part One, besides introducing the book generally, covers the very first moves of the Scandinavian Defense and White's early deviations. Then Part Two covers ♞d6 + g6 systems, while Part Three covers the very different ♟f6 system. This is the *Double Trouble* that our white opponents will face. They will not know what kind of Scandinavian they are getting in to: it could be 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞xd5 or it could be 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♟f6. And it gets worse for them. We will not even be playing the first-choice black continuations of these lines. So most of White's top-line preparations will be wasted.

Double Trouble Scandinavian Style

Each of the three parts of the book has a few theory chapters to begin with. In those chapters I show the best moves for both sides plus White's most common moves, while concentrating almost entirely on helping Black through the early part of the game. So these chapters are not exactly surveys, and will not have many game references. They form repertoire recommendations for Black; ways for Black to combat White's moves. Above all, remember that from the starting position (i.e., no moves) White has some sort of advantage. So, even with best play by Black, it is impossible to force White into an inferior position. Of course it is possible to exploit White's inevitable inaccuracies in positions that we will be familiar with – as a result of studying this book.

Note that what I offer is a skeleton repertoire for Black against 1.e4. This is neither a middlegame manual nor a best games compendium (though there are many good games within). I merely want to get you past the first few moves safely and with reasonable prospects for the rest of the game. That is not easy. White had the first go and chose the most aggressive move. Of course no repertoire book can solve all your problems as Black. There will always be that insurmountable issue of not having the first move.

A further word about the analysis. This is not an encyclopedic book of over-long analytical lines that would be impossible to remember. (If there are any longish variations, this is usually only to prove a point.) However good your powers of recall, and even if you have an opening book within sight, eventually the variations will run out, or your opponent quickly deviates anyway, and then you are on your own. This modest book will take you to a point – admittedly only an early point in most cases – where you have a good-enough position from the opening to “just play chess.” You can find some long analyses elsewhere, or get your engine to generate them. Good luck recalling them!

Your engine? My preferred analysis engine is Andrea Manzo's Shash-Chess, a derivative of Stockfish. The latter is the world's strongest engine by a clear margin and has been so for some time. It has two drawbacks in its evaluations, however. These do not affect Stockfish's gameplay, i.e., its usually commanding performance in matches, tournaments and test suites. When it comes to assessments, in my opinion ShashChess is more reliable (less volatile when switching back and forth from one color to the other) and more realistic for human play (in other words, its evaluations are more conservative). For example, a clear advantage (\pm) for Stockfish may in practice, in over-the-board or “crossboard” reality, be only a slight advantage (\cong) for human chessplayers.

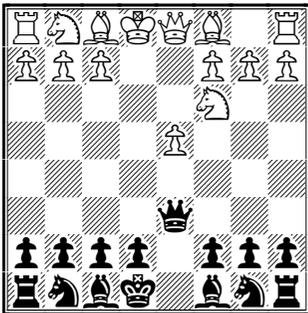
As I said, in this book there are very few game references in the analytical chapters. Why not? Because it would be perverse and pointless to determine the best moves (after much book research and computer analysis) and then half-desperately search (very often in vain) for games by decent players in which those moves happen to occur. Only then to quote games *in the theory section* that in fact went on to be decided much, much later by a random blunder or a lengthy technical endgame – in Black’s favor we hope. I agree that the study of complete games is required for the improvement of one’s chess overall. (And there are sixty-four annotated games for you here.) This book, though, is primarily for the enhancement, by diversification, of one’s opening play. Speaking of which, a word of advice that this book will help you to follow. Do not change your repertoire – add to it!

Finally, at the end of each Part, there are a number of illustrative games. Never mind the theory, here are the continuations that are actually played in games by masters and some lesser players too. Some of these games are inspirational or influential; some show alternatives to the theory (and often why the theory is better); others are harsh lessons or roller coasters. These are real-life human “case studies” so to speak, not book or computer-aided analyses (excepting the correspondence games and the one Stockfish game of course). It is true that the examples are selected somewhat, though not entirely, in Black’s favor; nevertheless, all of us who will play Black should be heartened and encouraged by White’s frailties and failures. These sample games are arranged in date order (except for Chapter 16), and have some references back to the theoretical sections.

Chapter 7

Kurajica Variation: 4...g6

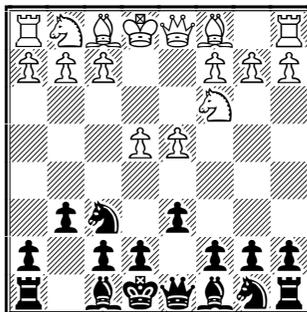
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖×d5 3.♘c3
♚d6 4.d4



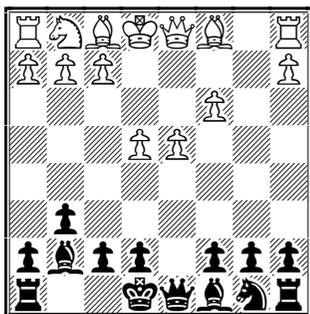
So, 4...g6 or 4...♘f6 first? Even assuming Black strongly desires to play a kingside fianchetto, the question is whether he should commit to it immediately, or develop his kingside knight first. Now, is that choice between 4...g6 and 4...♘f6 5.♘f3 g6 such a big deal? Most of the time it is not, as they will merge. The black knight will go to f6 in almost all conceivable future circumstances and that is why the vast majority of players – including g6-ers – move the knight first, which also preserves their options.

Why be a g6-er at all? One immediate reason is to delay a decision about the c8-bishop. Where should that go for the best? Perhaps (after suitable preparation) f5, g4 or even b7, not to mention other squares, but it really depends on events. Therefore, Black spends time on his other bishop first, where the verdict seems clearer. Since the queen on d6 is already blocking the f8-a3 diagonal, there is a reasonable case for the f8-bishop to relocate to the longest dark diagonal, h8-a1.

What is achieved with the fianchetto when it does come has been called a Scandinavian-Pirc hybrid. The standard start to the Pirc Defense is 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6.



So, frankly, that is a slightly unhelpful characterization, positionally speaking. If anything, the main line in this part of the book should be considered a Scandinavian-Grünfeld hybrid. The standard start to the Grünfeld Defense is 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5; from there the usual continuation is 4.c×d5 ♗×d5 5.e4 ♗×c3 6.b×c3 ♘g7.



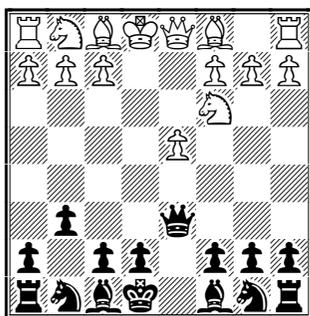
Next comes 7...c5. Black is applying pressure to the white d-pawn using a g7-bishop, a c5-pawn, and his queen (later a rook) on the half-open d-file. That is much more like what we hope to do as Black against 1.e4.

Back to the question. Let's name our options. 4...g6 is called the "Kurajica Variation" whereas 4...♗f6 5.♗f3 g6 was later known as the "Czebe Variation." Because of what we said about the knight going to f6, the latter will be our main line, but first we look at 4...g6. We must check whether that leads to any notable differences and independent lines.

4...g6

This variation is named for Bojan Kurajica (b. 1947), a Croatian grandmaster who has played and written about different varieties of the ♗×d5 Scandinavian Defense, and who appears to be the strongest, most frequent player of the variation that bears his name. The name of "Kurajica Variation" (pronounced something like *Coo-Rye-Czar*) was cemented into place by Gary Lane who devoted a chapter to it, using that heading, in his 2005 book. It is that chapter of his that must have been most players' introduction to ♗d6 + g6.

We have already said that 4...g6 is likely to transpose to 5...g6 lines (Chapter 8). Here we consider avoidance of that: Section 7A: 5.♗f3 and Section 7B: 5.♗b5. For lines involving ♗g1-e2 compare them unfavorably to Chapter 8 (in the notes to 5.♗f3). Also, 5.♗ge2 ♘g4?! is played in Game 6: Csoke-Horvath.



Section 7A: 5.♗f3

1.e4 d5 2.e×d5 ♗×d5 3.♗c3 ♗d6 4.d4 g6 5.♗f3 ♘g7